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DRAMATIC DELINEATION OF HER MENTORS.

Rice University, Ph.D., 1974
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GEORGE ELIOT'S NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN
THE DRAMATIC DELINEATION OF HER MENTORS

by

Olive Ledlie

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis Director's signature:

Robert L. Patton

Houston, Texas

May, 1974
CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Chapter I. George Eliot's Theory of Fiction 25

Chapter II. George Eliot's Narrative Technique 57

Chapter III. Adam Bede and The Mill on the Floss: Mr. Irwine, Dinah Morris and Philip Wakem as Mentors
   i. Adam Bede: Introduction 93
   ii. Mr. Irwine and Dinah Morris 96
   iii. The Mill: Introduction 121
   iv. Philip Wakem 129

Chapter IV. The Narrator and Savonarola as Mentors in Romola
   i. Introduction 146
   ii. The Narrator 156
   iii. Savonarola 167

Chapter V. The Narrator and the Garths as Mentors in Middlemarch
   i. Introduction 184
   ii. The Narrator 200
   iii. The Garths 225

Conclusion 253

Bibliography 257
INTRODUCTION

Barbara Hardy, in her critical work on George Eliot, suggests that "George Eliot's dramatic delineation of her characters is indeed a subject for a separate study." This aspect of George Eliot's work has not been examined previously, and it is my purpose here to make such a study of a particular group of characters who appear throughout George Eliot's fiction. These characters have been described as "mentors" in Hardy's brief discussion of them. The term, of course, suggests that their specific relationship with other characters is one of a "priestly, psychotherapeutic or tutorial" nature. These mentors are "wise counsellors" who, by precept or example, or by a combination of these methods, educate the imagination and sensibility of other characters in the novels. Their function is to give intellectual and emotional direction with respect to action and/or conduct; almost all of them aim to teach Daniel Deronda's dictum, "the transmutation of self."

The mentor appears in nebulous form in George Eliot's earliest fiction with the Reverend Cleves in "The Sad
Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," and he continues to appear, with varying degrees of prominence and with varying success in the effectiveness of his or her teaching, until the final novel. Some of the more outstanding mentors are Mr. Gilfil and Mr. Tryan in *Scenes of Clerical Life*; Mr. Irwine, Bartle Massey, Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*; Philip Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss*; Dolly Winthrop in *Silas Marner*; Savonarola in *Romola*; Felix Holt in *Felix Holt, the Radical*; the Garths and Mr. Farebrother in *Middlemarch*; Daniel Deronda in *Daniel Deronda*. It is a commonplace that George Eliot's characters may be roughly divided into egoists and altruists, though the division is never as clear-cut as some critics have implied. But the mentors do tend to belong ideologically in the altruistic category, for they are as free as individuals can be from that "troublesome" "spot" of "self" which the narrator of *Middlemarch* sees as a universal flaw in humanity. They are aware, or know intuitively, that the world exists outside of them, indifferent to their particular dreams and desires. Many of the mentors, however, are flawed individuals, or their wisdom is ineffectual in its efforts to forestall the "inexorable law of consequences" which their disciples set in motion. Indeed sometimes, as with Mr. Irwine in *Adam Bede*, they may unknowingly play a determining role in the chain of events which bring this law into action. The reason the mentors are relatively ineffective is that,
generally, in George Eliot's fiction, experience alone seems to be the only true and lasting mentor. There are many more mentors throughout George Eliot's work than those I have referred to here. I have limited my study, however, to the mentors who seem best to illuminate the weaknesses and strengths, as well as the development of George Eliot's ability to present characters "dramatically as well as being allocated to moral categories."^5

The ultimate effect or purpose of all George Eliot's work was, of course, to enlarge the sympathies of the reader. Her clearly moral view of art was determined by the particular philosophical framework out of which she worked, and which was carefully thought out and expressed in reviews, articles and letters long before she began to write fiction. Since George Eliot is a philosophical novelist, and since her moral and aesthetic principles cannot be separated, it is frequently the practice of critics to view her characters as one-dimensional figures whose only function is to represent a metaphysical, religious, or sociological concept of the author. We see this kind of criticism in studies like those of Bernard J. Paris or Thomas A. Noble, who first delineate her philosophic background or her doctrine of sympathy respectively, and then neatly fit her characters into the various cate-
gories of her beliefs which they have chosen to examine. Such criticism tends to view George Eliot's characters primarily as "illustrative," that is, as "concepts in anthropoid shapes or fragments of the human psyche masquerading as whole human beings. . . .[W]e are not called upon to understand their motivations as if they were whole human beings but to understand the principles they illustrate through their actions in a narrative frame." For example, Joan Bennett sees Mr. Irwine as "a picturesque historical reconstruction rather than a living personality and Arthur and Hetty tend to become exemplars or symbolic figures illustrating important moral truths." The same kind of criticism is implicit in Richard Benvenuto's remark that "Eliot's ideas often seem to get in the way of her stories." Characters are included by inference when W.M. Jones notes that he suspects "that the plot [of Adam Bede] is only an elaboration of the abstract concepts set forth in [the] second chapter." And finally, U.C. Knoepflmacher sees the Scases as "terse, mechanical, and diagrammatic."

But George Eliot was very concerned that she should not create schematic characters, and I have chosen to study her mentors because they are particularly susceptible to the criticism of being what Hardy has described as pure
"moral examples." They are, indeed, on one level, "illustrative characters" whose function it is to teach, both within the story and outside it to the reader, some idea, some value, some way of life, which we know was an aspect of George Eliot's own beliefs, and which she wished to inculcate in the reader. But long before she began to write fiction she was acutely sensitive to the dangers of creating characters who were "only transparent shadows through which you see the bewigged embonpoint of the didactic poet." She intended to present "mixed human beings in such a way as to call forth tolerant judgment, pity, and sympathy." She saw as one her main artistic purposes that the reader "believe" in her characters, else her moral purpose in writing would be weakened. It is the "way," the narrative technique, that George Eliot uses to make her mentors "representational" or "real" as well as being "illustrative" or "symbolic" that is the primary concern of this study. Ian Adam briefly observes that "as a novelist her achievement is to make the abstract and concrete work hand in hand . . . ; analysis . . . becomes inseparable from its imaginative recreation." Bradford A. Booth also concedes that though George Eliot is a "thesis novelist," she has "an unusual facility in rendering the abstract concretely." Therefore temporal and spatial media are described with meticulous attention to detail,
and the mentors who are set within these realistic media participate in dramatic scenes, speak in decorous language, act in probable ways, think along psychologically fitting lines. George Eliot's intention in using these realistic devices, I argue here, is to involve her reader imaginatively with her fiction, to convince him of the solidity, the complexity, the particularity of her characters, the events, the environment, so as to make the reader feel with and for the characters as "breathing individuals" and not as allegorical or solely illustrative abstractions. For "appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity" (Essays, p. 270). Even in her last work, Impressions of Theophrastus Such, 1878, George Eliot still showed her deep concern with the necessity for reader involvement with her characters: "No man can know his brother simply as a spectator."

For it is "the highly individualized character [who] draws the reader into a very intimate connection with the fictional world and makes that world assume something like the solidity of reality . . . [which should teach the reader] to perceive and comprehend the world of reality more sharply and more sensitively than he otherwise might."

In addition to the habit of viewing George Eliot's
works as diagrammatic frames for her moral ideas, her narrator has constantly been accused of being too heavily and patently didactic at the expense of form. James is the most renowned initiator of this kind of criticism, but his views have persisted, in various distorted and diluted forms, to the present, particularly his dislike of the intrusive narrator who breaks the 'sacred illusion of reality.' F.R. Leavis, although he admires George Eliot mainly for her "moral seriousness," is the first important critic to rescue George Eliot from such Jamesian strictures as that which censured her for regarding the novel "not primarily[as] a picture of life, capable of deriving a high value from its form, but [as] a moralized fable, the last word of a philosophy endeavoring to teach by example." But even Leavis notes that James' criticisms are partly true—as indeed they are—particularly with reference to Felix Holt, the Radical (and I would include Daniel Deronda), where the "preponderance of the 'moral consciousness', working from the 'abstract' without being able to turn it into convincing perception, notably manifests itself." F.G. Steiner also criticizes George Eliot for her "difficulty in creating action and . . .[her failure] to turn into motion the ideas at hand . . .; the total lack of
technique of George Eliot's part is . . . unfortunate."

Studies in the fifties and sixties, however, by Hardy, Harvey, Reva Stump and, more recently, Henry Auster, have made a strong case in support of George Eliot as a highly skilled artist as well as being a novelist of "ideas."

It is generally accepted that George Eliot's didactic tendency becomes worse as her work continues, as the "massive intellect" gradually gets the upper hand. James' criticism of George Eliot, that "as time went on circumstances led . . . reflection to develop itself at the expense of perception" persists even in Richard Stang's discussion of George Eliot's theory of fiction: "the greatest change from her earlier critical theory as a periodical reviewer in the mid-fifties . . . was the importance of the place of ideas in the novel." Stang here echoes a common observation made about George Eliot's work, that there is a sharp contrast between the realism of her early fiction and the heavy intellectualism of the late work. In a still more recent study, Knoepflmacher substitutes "realism" and "idealism" for James' "perception" and "reflection" respectively, and, refining George Eliot's intellectual development in her fiction even further, discovers an altogether too perfect
pattern of "successive mental phases" in her first seven novels and short stories." 29 Mathilde Partlett observes that "the critics of George Eliot are substantially agreed in . . . the division of her works into two groups--her early realistic fiction and the later philosophical novels." 30 Bradford A. Booth also sees a developing emphasis on the "ideas" in George Eliot's work: "with Romola she led the novel out of the amusement park into the academic quadrangle." 31 Leavis notes that James "expresses . . . the current idea of her development . . . ; the view that, in the later novels, the intellectual gets the upper hand." 32 But Leavis modifies the antithesis between the early and later work: "although the supremely mature mind of Middlemarch is not yet manifested in The Mill on the Floss, the creative powers at work here owe their successess as much to a very fine intelligence as to powers of feeling and remembering." 33 I would argue that James' view should be modified even further, for the importance of "ideas" and that they should be made "incarnate" is emphasized as early as 1857, in the article "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: the Poet Young," where it is the artistic method used in conveying ideas which is questioned, not their inclusion in fiction. In 1866 George Eliot wrote to Frederic Harrison that she had "gone through again and again the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves
to me in the flesh and not in the spirit" (Letters, IV, 300, my emphasis). And finally, in 1876, she wrote that "there has been no change in the point of view from which I regard our life since I wrote my first fiction. The principles which are at the root of my effort to paint Dinah Morris are equally at the root of my effort to paint Mordicai" (Letters, VI, 318). There is little "change" in "her earlier critical theory" concerning the importance of ideas in her fiction, but there is a change in her ability (which is not always consistent or sustained) to render ideas into "breathing, individual forms" (Letters, IV, 301). The philosophy in George Eliot's work is comparatively consistent throughout the whole canon. She was thirty-seven when she began to write fiction and her intellect was already "massive" even at this stage in her career. Indeed her major concepts of egoism and altruism appear in her very earliest writing. Daniel Deronda is the only work in which George Eliot's intellect truly predominates and results in an excessively didactic thesis-ridden novel; and even there it is only in the Jewish half of the story. It seems to me that this arbitrary division of George Eliot's work fails to take Middlemarch into satisfactory account, where ideas are made incarnate with much greater artistic
skill and without the extent of the narrator's "intrusions" that we find, for example, in Adam Bede.

Since George Eliot saw the function of the artist as a teacher who was not overtly didactic her narrative technique employs the methods of both direction and indirection, of "telling" and "showing," in very deliberate ways and for specific ends, as the means of conveying her moral lessons. It is the degree to which these alternative methods are balanced or fused without jarring inconsistencies (which is seen at its best in Middlemarch), that marks the development in George Eliot's ability to dramatize her ideas. Teaching by indirection is achieved primarily, though not solely, through George Eliot's emphasis on realism in the portrayal of her fictional world and its characters.

But George Eliot also wished her readers to have an intellectual, or what I shall call a contemplative response to her work, as well as being imaginatively engaged by its realism. She intended that her readers would achieve a "wider vision," that they would feel and understand the relationship between the incarnate example and the universal idea. And it is to further this end that, as part of her narrative technique, George Eliot also
teaches directly, through the voice of an omniscient narrator. In this study I distinguish between the mentor as character and the mentor as narrator, and particular attention is given to the latter as an individual presence, "a dramatic entity," who is involved in specific relationships with the work, the reader, and the characters. We know from George Eliot's theory of fiction that she saw the role of the writer as that of a mentor, a teacher, and one of the main functions of her narrator is to enact this role. Contrary to custom I do not identify George Eliot's narrator directly with the author, though they are obviously intimately related, but the narrator speaks in many other voices and thus performs many different functions other than that of the definitive moral commentator whose views are indistinguishable from those held by George Eliot. The narrator often assumes the voice of a character, or a community, or the reader, or engages in objective summary and dramatic narrative, as a means of achieving some particular aesthetic effect. Kathleen Tillotson writes that

the narrator ... is a method rather than a person; indeed the 'narrator' never is the author as man; much confusion has arisen from the identification, and much conscious art has been overlooked. Writing on George
Eliot in 1877, Dowden said that the form that most persists in the mind after reading her novels is not any of the characters, but 'one who, if not the real George Eliot, is that second self who writes her books, and lives and speaks through them'. The 'second self', he goes on, is 'more substantial than any mere human personality', and has 'fewer reserves'; while 'behind it, lurks well pleased the veritable historical self secure from impertinent observation and criticism'.”

George Eliot's omniscient narrator has drawn much of the adverse criticism on her technique, and, of course, the omniscient narrator in general has been criticized since James' opinions became rules in the twentieth century. Even a sympathetic critic like Joan Bennett sees George Eliot's "manner of using . . . asides to the reader . . . [as] partly the result of distrust in her own creative power. . . . She reminds us that we are merely reading a story of which she is the narrator and she lets us know that she suspects us of being incapable of understanding the experience she has been at pains to give us." Steiner observes, with a sweeping generalization in connection with Middlemarch, that "omniscience is an author's most lazy approach"; "by interfering constantly in the narration George Eliot attempts to persuade us of what should be artistically evident." W.J. Harvey has ably defended George Eliot's use of the
omniscient narrator and Wayne Booth correctly argues, I believe, that when "we turn to the task of generalizing the effect of the entire work, making it seem to have a universal or at least representative quality beyond the literal facts of the case, it is not so clear that other devices [than external commentary] can even approximately serve." George Eliot's use of the omniscient narrator, however, is not the result of artistic uncertainty or stylistic laziness as Bennett and Steiner suggest. It is a deliberate technical device whose main (but not only) function is to involve the reader's intellect, and thus further the moral aim of George Eliot's art. It is her method of both contributing to the creation of concrete universals and teaching the reader to understand the meaning of her representative characters and incidents and their intricate relationships. Only the narrator, in Mr. Gilfil's phrase, sees "as God sees"; it is he alone who can help the reader to become aware of the narrow vision which besets mankind generally and leads him to misjudge his fellow-creatures. Total dramatization, total imaginative involvement, total illusion of reality, were not results George Eliot endeavored to produce.

Although it is the main, it is not the sole purpose
of George Eliot's narrator to make the reader aware of the wider significance of the particular events in her work. George Eliot's narrator also makes the reader participate in, and indeed, even help to create, her fictional world. The writer establishes a dramatic relationship between narrator, characters, and readers which, contrary to James' view, is neither passive nor conducive to the production of indifference in the reader.

Since I have already used the words "intention" and "response" several times and shall continue to do so throughout this study, and since I focus on George Eliot's works as though they are what Stanley Fish has called "strategies," my approach is open to the criticism that it falls into the "intentional" and "affective" fallacies. But I do not believe that the novel is an autonomous object, that the methods which the New Critics used to analyze poetry should be applied exclusively to prose. There is a certain degree of truth in Eliseo Vivas' criticism that W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley indulge in "'the taxonomic fallacy', or the act of damning by calling 'fallacy' any practice or mode of approach to intellectual problems one disapproves of." Of course, the Wimsatt
and Beardsley essays grow out of a valid concern that between biography and reader response the work itself will be lost. But then even Wimsatt acknowledges, quoting Professor Stoll, that words "come out of a head, not out of a hat;" or, as Vivas describes the relationship between the creator and the creation: "A poem is a telic affair; it does not come about by chance, nor does it make itself." An artist "intends" something, which may be conscious or unconscious. Another critic concerned with the author's intention argues that even though we may move away from the work temporarily when we consider the author's intention, this movement "is generated . . . by the work, not by something behind and beyond it." And Professor Slatoff, in his argument against viewing art as autonomous, notes that "literary works require that we respond not only to the words and formal structures themselves but to qualities of mind that they suggest and reflect."

I do not mean, however, to equate George Eliot's various particular stated intentions with respect to specific characters or actions in her work with actual execution. But I do believe that a knowledge of what Bradford A. Booth has described as "the literary con-
ceptions" of the novelist may be an aid to "understanding . . . the different techniques" which emerge from them. And I do mean to suggest that George Eliot's general and much-stated Intention, to teach, to educate the reader, does result in novels which may be viewed as "strategies." Her Intention leads her to employ an "affective" technique in her novels, in which, one might argue, as Fish does of "Paradise Lost," the "centre of reference is . . . the reader." Her work requires, at least in part, the method of "experiential analysis," with its primary emphasis on a work of art not as an autonomous object but as an experience, an on-going interaction between the words on the page and the reader's cumulative response to them. George Eliot would not have subscribed to Archibald MacLeish's statement that a poem should not mean but be. Like Arnold, art, to George Eliot, was "answerable to experience and, far from being its own purpose, [was] an active force in the life of its culture." To deny the relevance of such an interaction, as Wimsatt does in the "Affective Fallacy" essay, is to ask the reader, in particular the critic, "to talk about . . . [a work of art which] he has neither heard nor seen." George Eliot's narrative technique "intends" to create a "mode of response" which D.W. Harding has described in "Psychological Processes in the Reading of Fiction" as an extension of the mode of response made
by an onlooker at actual events . . . ; there is both an imaginative sharing . . . and an evaluation of the participants and what they do and suffer." It is to achieve this intellectual and emotional response that George Eliot uses both illustrative or symbolic and representational or mimetic modes of narrative, with an emphasis on the latter, in the dramatic delineation of her mentors. And it is George Eliot's actual achievement through the medium of writing which is the testing ground for whether or not she fulfills her Intention: to render "certain ideas thoroughly incarnate," and thus elicit a response which would enlarge the sympathies of the reader.
FOOTNOTES


2  Hardy, pp. 54-57.


4  See Adam, pp. 34-35; also Hardy, ch. V.

5  Hardy, p. 79.


"From Abstract to Concrete in Adam Bede," CE, 17 (1955), 89.


Hardy, p. 80.


Scholes and Kellogg, p. 84.

George Eliot, p. 15.


"Looking Inward," in Impressions of Theophrastus Such, Cabinet edition (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, [n. d]), pp. 5-6. All future references to Impressions will be cited in the text. W.J. Harvey notes that "there is no complete or critical edition of George Eliot's work. . . . The last edition of George Eliot's works to be published in her lifetime was the Cabinet Edition (1877-1880; Cross' Life and Letters was subsequently added)", in Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research, ed. Lionel Stevenson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1966), p. 298. Since Rice University Library does not possess the Cabinet edition of George Eliot's work, and since my own Cabinet edition is incomplete, I have used the Cabinet edition when possible and the best other available text where the Cabinet set is deficient.


29. *George Eliot's Early Novels*, p. 34.


32. *Leavis*, p. 34.

33. *Leavis*, p. 39. Leavis also argues that George Eliot's intellect does not lead to "patches, say, of tough or drily abstract thinking undigested by her art" p. 32.
"A Little Fable with a Great Moral" was written in 1847. The fable concerns two hamadryads; one spends all day looking at her reflection in a lake, while the other looks up at the sky. The former sees herself growing old and ugly and is very unhappy; the latter never knows that she has grown old and is always happy. The symbolism in the fable is very similar to that in "The Two Bed-chambers" in Adam Bede, where Hetty looks in her mirror and Dinah looks out of her window.


See Slatoff, p. 110. Kathleen Tillotson observes that "in novels, we say we prefer to be left alone, not 'told what to think'. This is very simple-minded; we are being directed all the while, by selection and emphasis and tone. Technically 'invisible', the author remains as a subliminal advertiser, a hidden persuader." "The Tale and the Teller," p. 7.

*Her Mind and Her Art*, p. 106.

41 Wayne Booth, p. 197.


45 "Mr. Wimsatt on the Theory of Literature," Comparative Literature, 7 (1955), 345.

46 Wimsatt, p. 4.

47 Vivas, 348.

48 Kuhns, 15.

49 With Respect to Readers, p. 132.

50 "Form and Technique in the Novel," p. 87.


52 Fish, "Literature in the Reader," 134.

54  Vivas, 349.

CHAPTER I

GEORGE ELIOT'S THEORY OF FICTION

There is a great deal of information available on George Eliot's theory of fiction, indeed so much that she is extremely vulnerable to those critics who demand a rigorous consistency between theory and practice. Her journalistic career shows the foundation of an aesthetic theory which in some respects did not change throughout her life. Much of it was modified however, and much of it she did not fully put into practice, but a knowledge of George Eliot's theory of fiction can help us to understand the novelistic ends she was at least trying to attain in her work.

From 1851, when she contributed her first article to the Westminster Review, until 1857, when she began to write fiction, George Eliot read, judged and wrote about virtually hundreds of novels, an exercise which made her acutely aware of the dangers to be avoided when writing fiction. The same year she published her first article in the Westminster she became its editor, holding this position until 1854. Although she contributed only a few reviews to it during this time she was still in close
contact with a fair cross-section of the literary productions of her day. After her union with Lewes in 1854 she wrote regularly for the Westminster, taking over the "Belles Lettres" entirely from July 1855 to January 1857. This section dealt in the main with one book, and then, as Pinney observes, went on "to notice as many as twenty-eight other titles at varying lengths" (Essays, p. 2). The Leader, a weekly periodical which Lewes had helped to found in 1850, was the second main journal to which George Eliot contributed, writing thirty-three short reviews and articles in all. Her journalism continued until she could obtain an income from her fiction, and after the success of "Amos Barton" only a few articles appear infrequently during the rest of her life.

When her journalistic career ended George Eliot continued to keep up a full correspondence, and her letters, particularly her exchanges with her publisher, Blackwood, become the main source for her theoretical remarks on the art of writing fiction. She did, however, in her early fiction, allow herself some rather bald digressions which bear directly on her aesthetic, particularly in "Amos Barton" and Adam Bede. These sections in her fiction, together with extracts from her reviews and letters which
seem most illustrative of the various sub-divisions into which George Eliot's aesthetic may be rather falsely divided, provide the basis for this discussion of her theory of fiction.

I use the term "falsely divided" advisedly, because George Eliot's moral and aesthetic principles cannot truly be viewed as discrete entities. They are like a web (to use one of her own metaphors) in which each thread is inextricably connected with another. Bernard Paris, among others, has carefully traced the development of George Eliot's moral principles, showing us that it was her religion of humanity, derived most heavily from Feuerbach, which determined the high moral purpose she believed art must fulfil. "Love," said Feuerbach, "does not exist without sympathy; sympathy does not exist without suffering in common." Human feeling is the most important element in man, and it is the sacred duty of "the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist . . . [to promote] the extension of our sympathies." On this moral point, the importance of feeling, which she put into aesthetic practice, George Eliot never wavered. Her "most rooted conviction [was] that the immediate object and the proper sphere of all our highest emotions are our struggling fellow-men and this earthly existence" (Letters, III, 231). Again and again, in reviews, letters,
novels, George Eliot returns to this theme:

If Art does not enlarge mens' sympathies, it does nothing morally. . . [The only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings, is that those who read them should be able to imagine and to feel the pains and the joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling erring human creatures (Letters, III, 111).

Perhaps her most lengthy statement on the moral purpose of art is her review of Ruskin's Modern Painters, and all of chapter seventeen of Adam Bede, as well as being concerned with realism, is a sometimes excessive statement that "Art [must] always remind us . . . [to] love that other beauty too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy."9

Like Arnold, art for George Eliot could do much to replace the old worn out religions which were failing many in this "age of doubt." Art, as religion once did, could teach us to love one another, to help one another.10 Art could teach that the disappearance of God need not mean that man was a self-seeking creature unable to aspire to that higher human nature which the myth of Christianity had traditionally attributed to the man-God, Jesus: "[In my] representation of human life . . . my books . . . [conclude] that the fellowship between man and man which has been the principle of development, social and moral, is
not dependent on conceptions of what is not man: and that the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the ideal of a goodness entirely human (i.e., an exaltation of the human)" (Letters, VI, 98). And in 1853 she wrote to Charles Bray that "I begin to feel for other people's wants and sorrows a little more than I used to do. Heaven help us! said the old religions—the new one . . . will teach us all the more to help one another" (Letters, II, 82). But if this high moral end of art is to be achieved, the moving of the reader outside his own self through the imaginative participation in the destinies of others, the success and degree of participation depends largely on the ability of the artist to feel and transmit these feelings within a reasoned pattern of fiction. It is through the artist's acutely developed sensibility that the writer renders a sympathetic fictional world. In her review of Kingsley's Westward Ho! George Eliot observed that "every great artist . . . [gives] us his higher sensibility as a medium; a delicate acoustic or optical instrument, bringing home to our coarser senses what would otherwise be unperceived by us" (Essays, p. 126). The language here is reminiscent of Wordsworth, the romantic poet George Eliot most enduringly admired: "What is a Poet? He is a man . . . endowed with more lively
sensibility . . . , [with] a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels."\textsuperscript{11} For Wordsworth too, who to some extent may be seen as a kind of literary mentor to George Eliot,\textsuperscript{12} art has a moral end: "The understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened and his affections strengthened and purified."\textsuperscript{13}

George Eliot believed that a necessary correlative to her views on the moral purpose of art was that the artist should adopt a realist aesthetic. Any attempt to define realism must proceed with caution and leave room for flexibility. One need only look at the fourteen definitions given at the end of George J. Becker's "Realism: an Essay in Definition,"\textsuperscript{14} or examine Becker's large edition of \underline{Documents on Modern Literary Realism},\textsuperscript{15} in order to confront the enormity of variation in individual concepts of "realism." Erich Heller, in "The Realistic Fallacy," echoes Auerbach's views when he says that "the confused history of man is largely the history of conflicting senses of reality, and the scope of bewilderment becomes infinite if we include the history of literature."\textsuperscript{16} But I am concerned here with what realism meant in the nineteenth century and what it meant to George Eliot in particular. Professor Becker's definition of the "modern realistic movement, initiated about the time of . . .
Flaubert," isolates "three major aspects" of this movement which may be used loosely in an examination of George Eliot's theoretical conception of realism. These three aspects are: (1) realism of method; (2) realism of subject; and (3) the adoption of a philosophical attitude which tends towards pessimistic determinism or at least passes "implicit judgments on man and his fate . . . which [are] in violent opposition to those traditionally accepted." 

Becker explains that realism of method is "conditioned by . . . [a] sense of the over-all importance of verifiable fact"; there is an emphasis "on documentation and observation." George Eliot was always concerned with particularity, with exactness, with accuracy of description; she strongly endorsed an empirical standard and struggled to realize it novelistically. This characteristic sometimes led her into difficulties: small ones like that pointed to by Blackwood concerning the inappropriate enumeration of each child's name at Milly's death scene in "Amos Barton," or huge ones, like the mountains of research which were the result of her desire for accuracy in Romola: "I took unspeakable pain in preparing to write Romola" (Letters, IV, 301). More often, however, her details lead to the verisimilitude and vivid represent-
ation which she wished to create, like the magnificent description of the dairy at Hall Farm, where we feel its coolness, we blink at the gleaming utensils, we see, smell and taste the milk and butter. In the Spring of the year she began writing fiction she revealed an almost scientific concern for concrete details, the stylistic means whereby she could keep her fiction firmly grounded in reality. Her laudatory review of Ruskin's Modern Painters noted that "the truth of infinite value that he teaches is realism - the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality."\(^{20}\)

Undoubtedly, as Haight points out, Lewes's scientific mind and George Eliot's participation in his experiments strengthened her tendency towards exactness and veracity in writing.\(^{21}\) The month before she began "Amos Barton" George Eliot and Lewes went on a fossil-hunting holiday at Ilfracombe; she accompanied Lewes on his walks and helped him collect and describe their finds. In her Journal she wrote that one of the results of this experience was that
I never before longed so much to know the names of things. . . . The desire is part of the tendency that is now constantly growing in me to escape from all vagueness and inaccuracy into the daylight of distinct, vivid ideas. The mere fact of naming an object tends to give definiteness to our conception of it—we have then a sign that at once calls up in our minds the distinctive qualities which mark out for us that particular object from all others (Letters, II, 251).

This desire to "escape from all vagueness" was clearly of extreme importance to a writer who wanted her readers to participate in the world depicted in her novels. In her Riehl article George Eliot noted that "appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity" (Essays, p. 270). Again we see how the particulars of her aesthetic theory cannot be separated from her moral principles. Vague generalizations were equated with insincerity, a lack of "genuine emotion," another "pernicious" fault in those who undertook the sacred duties of the artist. Young, whose poetry was "the reflex of a mind in which the higher human sympathies were inactive," was rebuked because "he habitually treats of abstractions, and not of concrete objects or specific emotions. . . . Emotion
links itself with particulars, and only in a faint and secondary manner with abstractions" (Essays, pp. 358, 367, 371).

Other aspects of realism of method which Becker cites are, first, an attempt "to approximate the norm of experience," that is, to create unsensational plots and ordinary characters, and second, the removal of the author from the novel so that the illusion of reality is as total as possible. We know that George Eliot did not subscribe to the latter concept, and I shall discuss her specific use of the omniscient narrator briefly later in this chapter with regard to didacticism, and more fully in the second chapter as a specific device which is part of George Eliot's narrative technique. She does, of course, especially in her early novels, depict village and provincial life with a careful attention to the ordinary, the commonplace, the "norm." There is, however, an occasional indulgence in the sensational, with tactics like Arthurs's last minute rescue of Hetty from the gallows, the sentimental union of Adam and Dinah at the end of Adam Bede (the product of Lewes's advice), the unprepared-for catastrophe at the end of The Mill, but her general standard is "truth to life." The famous chapter seventeen of Adam Bede is a digression, an essay
almost, which is one of the best standard descriptions of George Eliot's realistic "method." Here the narrator expresses delight in Dutch paintings which portray "faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence, which has been the fate of so many more among my fellow-mortals than a life of pomp or of absolute indigence, of tragic suffering or of world-stirring actions" (Adam Bede, p. 153). Her Riehl article, written in 1856, shows more clearly the interconnectedness of her realistic method and her moral principles. Here she praises Riehl for his truthful delineation of the German peasant; he avoids the pitfalls of many artists who portray "idyllic ploughmen," "idyllic shepherds" and "idyllic villages." To her strong sense of the high purpose of literature, these idealizations are positively wicked: "Our social novels profess to represent the people as they are, and the unreality of their representation is a grave evil." She continues:

Art . . . is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot. All the more sacred is the task of the artist when he undertakes to paint the life of the People. Falsification here is far more pernicious than in the more artificial aspects of life. . . . It is serious that our sympathy with the perennial joys and struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the humour in the life of our more heavily-laden fellow-men, should be perverted, and turned towards a false object instead of the true one (Essays, pp. 270-271).
The writer cannot persuade his reader to feel the hopes, fears, loves, despairs of the individuals in his novels by setting forth impossibly idealized or sentimentalized figures, defects George Eliot castigated with biting irony in many reviews, but perhaps most persistently in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (Essays, pp. 300-324). If "Art is the nearest thing to life" (Essays, p. 271), it must not depict an improbable reality. Like Wordsworth, she "wished to keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood," to lead the reader to "see beauty in . . . commonplace things" (Adam Bede, p. 154).

With regard to Becker's second major aspect of realism, "subject matter," with the underlying "conception that everything must be written about," George Eliot's practice must be judged here as modified or selective realism. She does treat most classes of society, including the village peasant, the artisan, the provincial middle-class, the country gentry and the aristocratic elite. But she does not explore the squalid depths of human life which came to engross the so-called "naturalists" like Gissing and Moore. She also avoided all direct references to one major aspect of human experience: sexuality. The exception is the felt sexual attraction and tension between Maggie Tulliver and Stephen Guest in
The Mill, most strongly suggested by the river imagery which is so prominent throughout the book. Other slight hints are the brutal, subordinating sexuality which is the intimated quality of the relationship between Dempster and his wife Janet, in "Janet's Repentence," and more obviously between Grandcourt and Gwendolen in Daniel Deronda. Although, from a modern viewpoint, George Eliot might be considered as limited in "realism of subject," contemporary reviewers criticized her for being too free in her depiction of what they considered the "coarser" aspects of life. Janet Dempster's gin-drinking and Dempster's brutality were both condemned as unsuitable subjects for polite literature; and the description of Hetty's pregnancy in Adam Bede was sharply criticized for its unseemly "obstetrical" precision. And Haight notes that "Bertrand Russell's mother, four years before her marriage, was allowed to read only the first half of The Mill." 26

The final aspect of realism which Becker has found common to the nineteenth century realistic movement is a philosophical world view which is critical of the human condition, and of human institutions, social, political and religious. The distinction between "naturalism" and "realism," Becker argues, is that "naturalism is no more than a philosophic position taken by some realists, show-
ing man caught in a net from which there can be no escape and degenerating under those circumstances; that is, it is a pessimistic determinism."28 George Eliot, we know, did believe in the determining nature of heredity and environment. The Mill on the Floss is, I believe, a novel which strongly expresses a philosophy of pessimistic determinism. Like many of her contemporary thinkers (Arnold's poetry provides the most pessimistic example), George Eliot saw man as an alien in an ontological reality which was utterly indifferent to him. Her determinism29 is most clearly expressed in her use of the tragic form in the novel, where she depicts the tragic human condition as one in which there is an "irreparable collision between the individual and the general ... ; [the individual is] compelled to give way to the general. Tragedy consists in the struggle involved."30 By the "general" George Eliot meant a universe in which all phenomena followed an "undeviating law" (the law of causation) which was invariable and irrevocable. In her first review, in 1851, of Mackay's The Progress of the Intellect, she praised his "recognition of the presence of undeviating law in the material and moral world--of that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still per-
versely ignored in our social organization, our ethics and our religion" (Essays, p. 31). Since George Eliot saw nature and humanity as one enormous complex network of relations, yet still an organic whole, man's every word or deed can have ever-widening consequences for society and his fellow-men; once set in motion these consequences must reach their natural ends, and their results can never be erased. The Reverend Irwine is unable to draw out Arthur Donnithorne's true reason for consulting him (Arthur's attraction to Hetty), and thus plays a major part in the events which ultimately affect the whole society of Hayslope.

But George Eliot, unlike Arnold (as the poet), or Hardy later, struggled to affirm some hope in her deterministic world. It is, in part, a kind of negative hope, an adjustment of "our individual needs to the dire necessities of the human lot." She saw this adjustment functioning when man followed "human duty . . . , [which] is comprised in the earnest study of this law and patient obedience to its teaching" (Essays, p. 31). And she also, unlike the "complete" naturalist, paradoxically, or perhaps inconsistently, believed that man could modify his fate and the world to a certain limited degree—a belief which has been described as meliorism: "The progress of the world . . .
can certainly never come at all save by the modified action of the individual beings who compose the world" (Letters, VI, 99). In spite of the fact that the world is rigidly determined, man can still exercise a certain degree of free will, and thus he is still responsible for his actions; he has the ability to learn from the past and can choose good over evil. It is his "duty" to do this at all times: "every mistake, every absurdity into which poor human nature has fallen, may be looked on as an experiment of which we may reap the benefit" (Essays, p. 31). The wider man's sympathies, the more inclined will he be to make the most fitting choice. To this very small extent man can influence his destiny and thus affect and modify the universe and the overall destiny of man. From this view, George Eliot's novels could be seen as an extended study in the interrelated consequences of good and evil choices. Tito, in Romola, is perhaps the most extended example of the consequences of the individual's corruption through his apparently free choice of evil.

It is George Eliot's conception of the universe and man's situation in it which not only influenced her use of the novel as a tragic form, but also accounts for the largeness and comprehensiveness of her fiction. Since she
saw the world as composed of phenomena which are extensively interrelated and interdependent her novels are composed of web-like patterns which reveal the interconnectedness of all things. The reader participates in the characters' interactions with family, society and history, and his own experience is thus imaginatively widened. James, biased by his own aesthetic rules, could only see Middlemarch as a "treasure-house of detail, but an indifferent whole." 32 Professor Steiner echoes James' opinion. But to a writer who viewed the universe as a composite vital organism, the unity of George Eliot's art was of the utmost importance to her.

It is easy to see why, philosophically, George Eliot endorsed a realist aesthetic, which demanded an objective, empirical approach to reality, as opposed to an idealistic one, with its subjective vision of the world. As at least a partial disciple of positivism, 33 she saw a subjective attitude towards reality as characteristic of the theological and metaphysical stages of knowledge through which humanity must pass before coming to the higher and third stage, the scientific or positive, with its objective relation to the world. This third stage leads to altruism, a condition of being George Eliot intended her fiction to foster. George Eliot illustrates again and again in her
work that a personal conception of reality implies an excessive emphasis on the ego, a false, misleading exaltation of the importance of self, which is both sign and symptom of the most chronic moral illness which she sees afflicting humanity: egotism. She emphasizes that we must see the world as it is, not as it should be or as we would like it to be. A subjective vision of reality can only have disastrous results, as we see in the extreme case of Hetty, whose blind egotism, whose little self-enclosed world of dreams, is summed up in the title of chapter nine of *Adam Bede*: "Hetty's World."

According to Becker's definition, we can see that George Eliot is a modified realist. But George Eliot's insistence that hers was a realistic aesthetic does not mean that all imaginative insight must be excluded; indeed she allowed the imagination more scope as her writing progressed. Although, like Wordsworth, she could say she "always endeavoured to keep my eye steadily on the subject," she also, like Wordsworth, left room for a little "superadding" of the imagination. Blackwood described her realization of character in this manner:

I never heard anything so good as her distinction between what is called the real and the imaginative. It amounted to this, That you could not have the former without the latter and greater
quality. Any real observation of life and character must be limited, and the imagination must fill in and give life to the picture (Letters, III, 427).

In an early letter to Blackwood she asserts her realism but here also there is the qualification which allows for a modification of truth: "Art must be either real and concrete, or ideal and eclectic. Both are good and true in their way, but my stories are of the former kind. I undertake to exhibit nothing as it should be; I only try to exhibit some things as they have been or are, seen through such a medium as my own nature gives me" (Letters, II, 362). A similar point is made in chapter seventeen of Adam Bede, where the narrator says that it is his "strongest effort" to give "a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind." And in "How We Come to Give Ourselves False Testimonials, and Believe in Them" (in language which is reminiscent of Coleridge's discussion of the secondary imagination), George Eliot observed that it is the imagination which sees the relation between details:

Powerful imagination is not false outward vision, but intense inward representation, and a creative energy constantly fed by susceptibility to the veriest minutiae of experience, which it reproduces and constructs in fresh and fresh wholes; not the habitual confusion of proven fact with the fictions of fancy and transient inclination, but a breadth of ideal association which informs every material object, every incidental fact with
far-reaching memories and stored resi-
dues of passion, bringing into new
light the less obvious relations of
human existence (Theophrastus Such, p. 197).

George Eliot's use of the term "false" here, which
she also uses in chapter seventeen of Adam Bede ("dread-
ing nothing [in writing], indeed, but falsity. . . . False-
hood is so easy, truth so difficult"), and in her Riehl
article ("Falsification . . . is . . . pernicious"), suggest,
when compared with Lewes's article on "Realism in Art:
Recent German Fiction," that their views on realism and
idealism, on the use and abuses of the imagination, were
similar; (I am not concerned with who influenced whom). 34
Lewes wrote: "Art always aims at the representation of
Reality, i.e. of Truth; and no departure from truth is
permissible, except such as inevitably lies in the nature
of the medium itself. Realism is thus the basis of all
Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but Falsism." 35
Since both George Eliot and Lewes rejected any belief in
an ideal "other" world, like the mythical other world of
religion, their conception of the ideal was grounded in
empirical reality. Therefore idealism and realism were
not opposing terms to them; rather idealism was part of
a continuum with realism; the ideal was the highest form
of the empirically real. Influenced by Feuerbach, George
Eliot believed that it was out of the deepest yearning
and potential for good in man that the myth of Christianity had been created. This myth, with its central figure, Christ, represented the ideal development towards which man could strive in this world. Therefore, when George Eliot represented what have been called "ideal" figures or "ideal" ways of life in her fiction she was not contradicting her views on realism, as Knoepflmacher argues in his work on the early novels, but rather permitting her imagination to show the highest possible experiential ideal which man could strive for and perhaps achieve. The artist, Lewes wrote, "must paint what he distinctly sees with his imagination; if he succeeds, he will create characters which are true although ideal." 36

George Eliot intended that her fiction would help man move towards his "ideal" development through the expansion of his sympathies. Clearly, to her, the novel must "teach" if it were to fulfil its function, and in this sense her fiction is didactic. She has often, however, been criticized for being too overtly and heavily didactic, perhaps most excessively in Daniel Deronda, which is, unquestionably, to use Kathleen Tillotson's term, a "'novel-with-a-purpose'." 37

But George Eliot was very insistent, again always
in theory, but also often in fact, that there was a difference between "teaching" and "preaching" "copybook morality." Miss Jewsbury, in her Constance Herbert, was accused of being "so emphatic in the enunciation of her moral that she forces us to consider her book rather in the light of a homily rather than of fiction" (Essays, pp. 134-135). The novelist must avoid the habit of pedagogic moralizing, like that of the insincere poet Young. He must not indulge in the "perpetual hortative tendency" of a didactic writer like Kingsley, whose "necessity for strong loves and strong hatreds, and his determination to hold up certain persons as models, is an obstacle to his successful delineation of character" (Essays, pp. 128-129). And in her review of Westward Ho! she observed that "no doubt the villain is to be hated, and the hero loved, but we ought to see that sufficiently in the figures of them. We don't want a man with a wand, going about the gallery haranguing us. Art is art, and tells its own story."38 Perhaps the clearest statement on her view of the way her essentially didactic end should be achieved is seen in an exchange of letters with Mrs. Peter Alfred Taylor and Frederic Harrison:

My function is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of the nobler emotions, which make man—
kind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures. . . . Aesthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching because it deals with life in its highest complexity. But if it ceases to be purely aesthetic—if it lapses anywhere from the picture to the diagram—it becomes the most offensive of all teaching (Letters, VII, 44; IV, 300).

The philosophic and moral ideas are there, of course, in the novels, and the didactic purpose is to make these felt, but they are rarely displayed baldly for their own sake as they are in bad novels like those of the "mind-and-millinary species," which are "the most pitiable of all silly novels by lady novelists . . . ; what we may call the oracular species—novels intended to expound the writer's religious, philosophical, or moral theories" (Essays, p. 310).

It would appear from this discussion of George Eliot's aesthetic theory that James was right when he observed that "she proceeds from the abstract to the concrete." But where he is wrong, I would argue, is when he says "we feel[that] in her," and adds the pejorative consequence, "that her figures and situations are evolved, as the phrase is, from the moral consciousness, and are only indirectly the products of observation." 39 James' criticism, of course, betrays his own aesthetic interests and techniques, but many of his followers have taken up his views on George
Eliot, dismissing her "loose baggy monster" novels as examples of Victorian stylistic retardation. But like James, George Eliot was an extremely self-conscious, deliberate artist, as Jerome Beaty's study of the creation of Middlemarch plainly shows. She was acutely aware, as we have seen, that literature should not be "a text to preach from." She struggled to make her ideas "thoroughly incarnate," to create "breathing human forms."

George Eliot believed "dramatic presentation . . . [to be] the highest quality of fiction" (Letters, II, 407). Perversion was a thorough example to her of what a novel should not be: "the power of dramatic presentation is entirely absent"; the characters are "merely described, not presented." It was her fear of being unable to meet the demands of "the highest quality of fiction" which deterred George Eliot from beginning to write: "I always thought I was deficient in dramatic power, both of construction and dialogue. . . .[Even Lewes] distrusted—indeed, disbelieved in my possession of any dramatic power" (Letters, II, 407). But after reading the opening chapter of "Amos Barton," Lewes "no longer had any doubt of her ability." George Eliot's criticism of the poet Young's use of abstract personifications is the best illustration I have seen of the way she contrived to translate her ideas from "the abstract to the concrete" without causing
the reader to "feel" the transition. Young's adherence to abstraction, or to the personification of abstractions... [springs from] the want of genuine emotion... We never find him dwelling on virtue or religion as it really exists—in the emotions of a man dressed in an ordinary coat, and seated by his fire-side of an evening, with his hand resting on the head of his little daughter; in courageous effort for unselfish ends, in the internal triumph of justice and pity over personal resentment, in all the sublime self-renunciation and sweet charities which are found in the details of ordinary life... An orator may discourse very eloquently on injustice in general, and leave his audience cold; but let him state a special case of oppression, and every heart will throb. The most untheoretic persons are aware of the relation between true emotion and particular facts (Essays, p. 371).

The emphasis throughout this passage is on the expression of ideas through feeling, through the use of strongly moving particular examples, like those which fill George Eliot's work.

George Eliot undoubtedly often violates most of her aesthetic principles in her novels. But many of her characters are fully delineated so that it can be said that she has thoroughly dramatized her ideas. Even though she worked out of a dense philosophical framework, even though she saw art as fulfilling a moral mission, she
tried to avoid the creation of flat "moral examples."
Each artist, as Auerbach points out, perceives reality differently. In the next chapter I shall examine the
narrative technique which George Eliot's particular
perception of reality and the moral purpose of her art
combined to produce.
FOOTNOTES

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2

Knoepflmacher, in George Eliot's Early Novels, writes: "Although her novels try to meet the standards of empirical veracity that she had upheld in her essays and reviews, her fiction gradually reacted on her theory and led her away from the naturalistic presentation of 'Amos Barton,' p. 12. In his review of Middlemarch James observed that "the author has commissioned herself to be real, her native tendency being that of the idealist. . . ." Rpt. in The House of Fiction, ed. Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p. 66.

3

It has been argued by several critics that George Eliot was strongly influenced by Lewes' theory of fiction. See P. Bourl'honne, George Eliot: Essai de Biographie Intellectuelle et Morale, 1819-1854 (Paris: H. Champion, 1933). Willey also accepts Bourl'honne's view; Kaminsky goes so far as to argue that "not only did . . . George Eliot accept . . . Lewes' critical theory, but she also made . . . it the basis of her own conception of the novel"(p.1008). Haight, however, does not agree with Kaminsky regarding the degree of Lewes' influence. It can at least be said with certainty that George Eliot's and Lewes' critical theories are extremely similar.

4

The following information on George Eliot's journalistic career is taken primarily from Pinney's "Introduction," Essays, pp. 1-10.
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George Eliot, Adam Bede (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, [M. d]), p. 154. All future quotations from Adam Bede will be cited in the text.

10  
George Eliot did not disregard the effectiveness of religion to continue to perform this function for those who believed in it: "I have no longer any antagonism towards any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves" (Letters, III, 231).

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12  
13  Wordsworth, Preface, p. 388.


16  Documents of Modern Literary Realism, p. 592.

17  "Realism," pp. 184, 195.

18  "Realism," p. 192.


20  Westminster Review, 65 (April 1856), 626.

21  R.T. Jones notes that George Eliot's images are often drawn from the physical sciences, in George Eliot (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 2. George Eliot's intense interest in Lewes' work surely renders questionable Steiner's remark that her "notions of scientific research are somewhat rudimentary," "A Preface to Middlemarch," p. 269. Michael York Mason more correctly observes, I think, that as a result "of many years contact with scientific work and problems in scientific discovery George Eliot's attitudes to science were intelligently developed when she came to write Middle-March," "Middlemarch and Science: Problems of Life and Mind," RES, n. s. 22 (1971), 151.

22  Wordsworth, Preface, p. 390.
23 "Realism," p. 192.

24 Claude T. Bissell commends George Eliot for her range of characters: "No other Victorian novelist moves more firmly and confidently through almost the entire range of nineteenth-century society. There are gaps, of course, but the total picture is a tribute to her catholicity of vision. Her success with rural types and with the world of middle-class commercialism is well known. Not so well known, perhaps, is her success with a more sophisticated and aristocratic society," "Social Analysis in the Novels of George Eliot," ELH, 18 (1951), 226-227.


26 A contemporary critic objected to the "dating and discussing the several stages that precede the birth of a child. We seem to be threatened with a literature of pregnancy.... Hetty's feelings and changes are indicated with a punctual sequence that makes the account of her misfortunes read like the rough notes of a man-midwife's conversations with a bride. This is intolerable. Let us copy the old masters of the art, who, if they gave us a baby, gave it us all at once. A decent author and a decent public may surely take the premonitory symptoms for granted." In David R. Carroll, ed. George Eliot: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 76.


31 "Notes on 'The Spanish Gypsy',' p.10.

32 "Middlemarch;" in The House of Fiction, p. 259. Much work has been done on the unity of Middlemarch; see especially David R. Carroll, "Unity Through Analogy: An Interpretation of Middlemarch," VS, 2 (1958-1959), 305-316, and Bert G. Hornback, "The Organization of Middlemarch," PLL, 2 (1966), 169-175. It has been suggested that the Fred/Mary plot has nothing to do with the Dorothea/Casaubon plot, but there are several indirect connections. Like Casaubon, Fred is an egoist, but still young enough to be saved by the influence of his wife and her family. The "dead hands" of both old Featherstone and Casaubon threaten to control the future destinies of Fred and Mary, Dorothea and Ladislaw. The happy marriage Fred and Mary achieve is, of course, parallel to that of Dorothea and Ladislaw. Fred and Ladislaw originally have much in common; both idle young men who have no vocation, both in need of reform; and both are finally rescued by their respective marriages.


35 "Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction," Westminster Review, 70 (1858), 493.

36 "Realism in Art," p.496.

38  
**Leader** (19 May 1855), pp. 474-475.

39  
**Partial Portraits**, p. 49, my emphasis.

40  
"Middlemarch" from **Notebook to Novel** (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press), 1960.

41  
**Westminster Review**, 66 (July 1856), 261.

42  
Haight, **George Eliot**, p. 212.
CHAPTER II

GEORGE ELIOT'S NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

In the opening chapter dealing with George Eliot's theory of fiction I emphasized that her aesthetic and moral aims could not, except for critical purposes, be separated. Professor Steiner argues that in George Eliot's work "it is technique which stands between the marble and the finished statue, between ideas and their coming alive on the stage."¹ But an examination of George Eliot's narrative technique reveals the specific aesthetic devices she used in her many successful efforts to make her undoubtedly moral and didactic ideas "thoroughly incarnate," to create characters who, in Mrs. Carlyle's words, seem to the reader "individual fellow-creatures" (Letters, III, 18), while simultaneously conveying the enduring truths and values they embody.² To fulfil her moral purpose, therefore, the situations and characters which George Eliot depicted in her novels had to be concrete universals.³ They must not be allegorical, that is, not "certain qualities [which the writer abstracts] from experience, and then . . . [uses] sensible images [as] mere conventions of presentation."⁴ I have already argued that George Eliot intended that her readers should respond
to her work in certain ways. Hegel's original definition of the concrete universal succinctly describes the general response to her fictional world which George Eliot's narrative technique seeks to produce: "The work of art ought not to bring before the imaginative vision a content of its universality as such, but rather this universality in the mode of the individual concreteness and distinctive sensuous particularity."  

Perhaps the major single device George Eliot uses to create these concrete universals is her self-conscious omniscient narrator, who usually reflects George Eliot's moral values. Her initial use of a male narrator in the *Scenes* and *Adam Bede* was a precaution to be wisely taken by any female novelist of the period who wished to be given serious consideration by both the critics and the reading public. The inferior status of women, their lack of education, the profuseness of silly novels by lady novelists which George Eliot herself despised, all contributed to her use of this subterfuge. Ian Adam observes that George Eliot "adopted the pseudonym . . . partly to avoid the prejudice against women writers, and partly, one suspects, to shield herself from direct criticism to which she was always hypersensitive."  

The Brontës, we know, also adopted male pseudonyms, probably for many of the same social reasons as George Eliot. But George Eliot's
case was clearly an even more special one, since before she began her novelistic career she had translated the "godless" works of Strauss and Feuerbach. In 1863, Richard Simpson, a Catholic journalist and editor of the Rambler, wrote that George Eliot had adopted a male pseudonym and the guise of "a young clergyman" in order "to show that the godless humanitarianism of Strauss and Feuerbach can be made to appear the living centre of all popular religions." But perhaps the most compelling reason which made a pseudonym a necessity for George Eliot was the fact that she had taken the morally reprehensible step of living with Lewes. Haight writes that both Lewes and Blackwood were well aware "that if Adam Bede were known to be by Marian Evans, the strong-minded woman who was living with ... Lewes, 'every newspaper critic would have written against it'." And when George Eliot, driven by the false attribution of her work to Joseph Liggins, told Blackwood that "the thing will soon come to a pitch that would oblige me publicly to declare myself the author" (Letters, III, 102), "this possibility struck terror into their [the Blackwoods'] hearts." In spite of their terror, however, by the time The Mill on the Floss was published George Eliot's true identity was known, but since the Scenes and Adam
Bede had both been overwhelmingly acclaimed by the critics and public, they could scarcely retract their views at this late stage. The Mill did not sell as well, however, as the earlier work, and George Eliot's identity was, in some measure, the cause. Richard Simpson wrote that "when the pseudonym was discovered, it had already served its purpose. George Eliot was already accepted as a great artist; her teaching had been dubbed clerical, and it was too late in the day to turn upon her and call her an atheist. . . . Under the circumstances, in 1860, after the lapse of a year, she published The Mill on the Floss—a novel which the critics, having their eyes anointed with the revelation of the author's name, treated, on moral grounds, more severely than they had treated Adam Bede, while they owed that the work maintained the writer's high credit as an artist." After Adam Bede, George Eliot never again pretends to speak in a male voice, but neither does the narrator become patently feminine; the sensibility, as Dickens had already realized, remains mutedly feminine. "If they originated with no woman," Dickens wrote of the Scenes, 'I believe that no man ever before had the art of making himself, mentally, so like a woman since the world began" (Letters, II, 424).

It was essential to George Eliot's ultimate moral
purpose that her narrator be omniscient and omnipresent. For since human nature is, realistically, limited in perception and understanding, then no character in the novels can make the necessary connections between words, actions and experiences, or know a character's ultimate motives, or fully understand the significance of the seemingly separate events in their contribution to the "meaning" of the whole story. Since she aimed to be realistic, George Eliot's characters are always limited in some way, and it is only the narrator who has the superior knowledge which enables her (in this chapter I shall use "her" in my references to the narrator) to see the "unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest."

To George Eliot's narrator, "there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which every single object suggests a vast sum of relations" (Mill, p. 239). The narrator, then, assumes an admittedly God-like role which is "unrealistic," but absolutely necessary if she is to make the reader see and understand the universal significance or meaning which her concrete details embody.

I have already pointed out that George Eliot's narrative technique consists of a combination of "showing" and "telling," and that it is often suggested that the narrator's intrusive commentary destroys the reader's
imaginative involvement in the story. But although we may see this commentary as sometimes removing the reader temporarily from the fictional world to the real—and indeed the narrator's distinctly moral commentary often involves our intellect rather than our emotions—the overall or more permanent effect is a consolidation of our "imaginative involvement with the characters." The narrator, of course, performs other functions besides that of "telling" moral truths: Barbara Hardy notes that "the narrative medium is composed of many voices," and she discusses the "intimate," the "prophetic" and the "dramatic." Perhaps the best example of the use of dramatic narrative is Hetty's flight to Windsor in search of Arthur, which "is restricted to Hetty's sensibility and experience." Other examples are the ironic use of the community's voice at the end of The Mill where the "world's wife" passes judgment on Maggie, or when the conservative doctors of Middlemarch comment on the audacity of Lydgate's use of medical treatments other than those they have sanctioned. Certainly we are "told" a great deal in George Eliot's work, but often the narrator's voice does not seem as heavily "intrusive" as the word seems to suggest.

I wish to stress this aspect of "imaginative involvement" in George Eliot's work not merely because it is often
ignored in the treatment of her ideas when separated from their fleshly embodiments, but because it was one of George Eliot's main intentions as an artist. In his discussion of George Eliot W.J. Harvey argues that the "fictional microcosm that George Eliot creates ... is a world surely designed for our contemplation, not for our imaginative participation." In disagreeing with Harvey I do not wish to imply that George Eliot wanted a total suspension of the reader's discerning intellectual faculties when reading her novels, that they should, in short, be merely read for the "story," or as "slices of life"; on the contrary, her intrusive commentary purposely makes this relation to the novels impossible. But I do suggest that George Eliot tried to achieve in her readers a simultaneous and seemingly paradoxical response to her work, one in which the reader was both imaginatively involved and contemplative. It is a hoped-for response similar to that which Wayne Booth suggests is achieved by Shakespeare: "Our emotional concern ... is firmly based on intellectual, qualitative, and moral interests. ... We experience a miraculous unity of what might have remained dissociated but for Shakespeare's ability to involve our minds, hearts, and sensibilities simultaneously." George Eliot does not always succeed in creating this response, but to say, as Harvey does,
that her fictional world is designed for our contemplation is to undermine the unchanging moral aim of a writer who upheld the supreme importance of the heart over the head, who spoke out constantly, in letters, reviews and fiction against the diagram looming heavily over the picture. Fred Vincy, to take a minor example, knows intellectually that he has behaved badly towards the Garth family when he borrows and loses their money, but he experiences no real remorse. It is only when he actually sees and feels in the Garth household the practical hardships his carelessness has caused that the consequences of his deeds are brought home to him. He illustrates concretely the selfish egoism which may result from contemplating abstractly rather than imaginatively participating as well in the sufferings of others.

It is largely George Eliot's narrator, with her combination of commentary and narrative details, who works, sometimes too consciously, to create this paradoxical response, and it is for this same reason that George Eliot never (or rarely) employs the device of a truly dramatic scene. It is not intended that the reader become so totally absorbed in the particular event that he fails to see its relationship with his own world and experience. The narrator therefore usually frames the
scene with some kind of generalizing commentary, or interpolates during the scene to point at motives or meanings which may be hidden to the speakers, but which are necessary for the reader to understand the true relations between characters and why they speak and act, or fail to, as they do in a particular scene. There is a rhythmic manipulation of the reader by the narrator in which dramatic scene and narrative voice, philosophy and story, ideas and concrete examples are merged constantly and, when successfully executed, easily, so that the reader is indeed both imaginatively and contemplatively involved with the work. A further function of the narrator's intrusion into the dramatic scene is to create a relationship with the reader who slowly, with the increasing analysis provided by the narrator, comes to stand with her, to be able to make connections and judgments when the narrator chooses to remain silent, until, finally, at the end of the novel, the reader has also achieved that superior vision which can see the "unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest," the concrete with the universal. It was this final expansion of vision which George Eliot hoped would be the lasting effect of her fiction on the reader.

George Eliot's narrator is a "dramatic entity" in
her novels, with clearly defined qualities of humor, irony, tolerance, earnestness, sympathy for her fellow-men, and a wide knowledge which includes the sciences, theology, philosophy, classical and modern literature. This personality is revealed in the authorial commentary and the dramatic relationships it establishes with the reader and the characters. Since George Eliot was so concerned with effect of the work on the reader and since the narrator is the ultimate guide and manipulator of the reader's sympathy and judgment, George Eliot always tries to create a familiar and trusting relationship between the narrator and the reader early in her novels. One of her devices for achieving this trust is to speak in a tone of personal reminiscence which makes her characters seem like known acquaintances, and which gives her fictional narrative the illusion of real remembered experience. The opening chapter of The Mill, with its repeated "I remember" and deeply personal tone, demonstrates this method of establishing an initial intimate relationship with the reader. Here the persona is an adult, who later turns out to be dreaming in her arm-chair, looking backwards with loving fondness on childhood days spent walking by the Floss, and there is a distinct implication (in spite of the ending) that the speaker is the rapt little girl in the scene also,
in later years, grown wiser and sadder. Throughout The Mill the narrator presents the action through this double perspective of both the adult speaker in the first scene and the child Maggie, the former always maintaining with the reader a wider ironic view of the narrow, intense experiences of the child. In the Scenes the narrator develops this intimate relationship with her story and the reader by actually appearing in "Amos Barton" as a little child in Shepperton Church, as a troublesome boy misbehaving during the Reverend Cleves' sermon in "Janet's Repentence," and in Adam Bede as the naive questioner of Adam many years after the events in the story occurred. Such actual appearances of the narrator in the novels disappear, but throughout the rest of her work (with the exception of Romola), the narrator always maintains a concerned and close relationship with both characters and readers.

The reader's confidence and trust in the narrator's authenticity, wisdom and guidance is heightened by George Eliot's frequent use of what Barbara Hardy has described as the "prophetic voice," a voice which reveals a knowledge of the outcome and ultimate unity of the diverse experiences depicted in her narrative. Sometimes the narrator directly reveals the future course of the novel (we know from the "Prelude" that Dorothea will be a
"foundress of nothing"), or darkly hints, for obvious suspense purposes, at hidden motives which may later be revealed (like Mrs. Transome's past adulterous relationship with Jerome in *Felix Holt*), or suggests possible turns the story might take. But most often this prophetic voice is used for the purposes of irony, so that the reader may share with the narrator the experience of seeing the inconsistency between the reality of the future and the dreams of the past or present. This use of prophetic irony is best seen in *Romola* and *Daniel Deronda* but it is there in her earlier work too. Young Tom and Maggie Tulliver think their lives will never change, that they will always be happy: "They trotted along and sat down together, with no thought that life would ever change much for them" (*Mill*, p. 36). The narrator knows, however, that "life did change for Tom and Maggie; and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives" (*Mill*, p. 36).

There are many other small devices which the narrator uses to create a personal and trusting relationship with the reader. She persistently addresses the reader directly as "you," or uses the more inclusive "we" in conversations with him so that the reader is drawn into a direct dramatic relationship with the narrator.¹⁹ The reader is frequently
asked questions, or invited to consider what the outcome of a situation will be, or encouraged to support the narrator in her judgment or to debate points with her. The narrator often asks the reader to accompany her into a drawing-room, to a tea-party, to listen in on an intimate conversation and to discourse together in analyzing or evaluating it. In this manner the narrator/reader relationship is not only strengthened but the reader is continually persuaded to participate directly in the life of the novel, in part, even, to contribute to its creation. The illusion of the novel as a self-contained heterocosm may thus be rendered an impossibility, but it is not, as we have seen, an illusion George Eliot wished to foster. Rather the fictional world of the novel becomes one which is contiguous with the reader's world and the separation between fiction and reality is blurred.

Since George Eliot's aim in writing was to enlarge the reader's sympathy and understanding the narrator continually strives to influence the reader's response to characters and situations in her work. In her early fiction the narrator often simply, and sometimes shrilly, exhorts the reader to feel as he (the narrator is male) does, to have compassion for an ordinary, drab man
like Amos Barton, to believe that Irwine, in spite of his pluralism and the opinions of some people, is not a reprehensible minister. She is much more subtle in her later efforts to elicit sympathy for Causabon, quietly revealing, often through his own consciousness, his fears about his scholarship, his disappointment in his marriage, his crippling inability to feel for anyone outside himself. The narrator may also berate the reader for his lack of vision or stupidity by inferentially including him with a group of facile judges like those who wrongly condemn Tryan in "Janet's Repentence." She often mocks both the reader and the narrator (another linking device) by her ironic references to the ignorance and backwardness of these times and people she is writing about and "our present advanced state of morality" (Mill, p. 24). In her later work George Eliot usually allows her more subdued and supremely "wise" narrator calmly, or with quiet irony, to point out the reader's limitations, primarily the result of too narrow vision. But here again she often mitigates her criticism by using the inclusive "we" so that the narrator/reader relationship will not be disrupted: "we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas" (Middlemarch, p. 612).
Not only does George Eliot's narrator consciously establish an intimate relationship with her reader, whereby she gains his trust, manipulates his response, and influences his opinions, but she also adopts various attitudes towards her characters which result in specific relationships with them as well. I have already noted that the personal, reminiscing tone of the narrator in the early work creates the feeling that her characters are "real" people actually known to the writer, and that she is deeply concerned with their lives and their outcome. Since the reader is involved with the narrator there is, by extension, a further involvement and interest with these seeming acquaintances of the narrator. Barbara Hardy believes that the narrator of the Scenes indulges in a great deal of special pleading for her "inarticulate" protagonists, and certainly the reader is left in no doubt that the narrator feels, and that he should feel too, compassion and sympathy for them. But even in The Mill the narrator still indulges in much direct special pleading for Tom, and especially Maggie, indeed, even for the Dodsons. And as late as Middlemarch there are some direct appeals for sympathy for Casaubon, Dorothea and Lydgate. The narrator generally adopts a finally compassionate attitude towards her characters because, again, she wished to further the moral purpose of her art, the
extension of the reader's sympathies for his fellow-
men: "The responsibility of tolerance lies with those
who have the wider vision" (Mill, p. 437). Since the
reader trusts the narrator, and is made to feel and
even partake of her superior knowledge and wisdom, it
is a natural corollary that the reader will be strongly
influenced by the narrator's tolerant attitude towards
a character. The narrator, however, often treats her
characters, even the ones she most admires, like Maggie
and Dorothea, with irony, which is sometimes relieved
or softened by humor, like the gatherings of "the
Christian Carnivora" awaiting Featherstone's death in
Middlemarch. Even though Rosamond's "torpedo contact"
is delineated with a cumulative deadly precision the
narrator does say that Rosamond's nature, upbringing and
education have all combined to make her what she is; and
even Rosamond is permitted one brief, if flitting, moment
of altruistic action when she tells Dorothea that Ladislaw
loves her. Hetty Sorrel is perhaps the only character
throughout George Eliot's work for whom the reader feels
actual antipathy on the part of the narrator, and the
unfair manipulation of a pathetically limited sensibility
by a vastly superior intellect which pleads for and pur-
ports to have "tolerance" and a "wider vision" is distaste-
ful to many readers who often recoil from the narrator's
judgment in this case.

George Eliot was deeply interested in the psychological constitution of human nature, and much of her narrator's commentary is devoted to the analysis of the motives which lead people to act or speak in a specific manner. This interest is one of her major contributions to the development of the novel, for George Eliot's delineation of the inner lives of her characters reaches its fullest growth in the "stream of consciousness" modes used by twentieth-century writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Here again we see the necessity for an omniscient, God-like narrator, for no character can ever have enough knowledge to know and fully understand the inner workings of another mind. The misunderstanding between the motives of a character and the opinions others have of him is one of the major themes which runs through George Eliot's work, and provides much of the material for the action. Motives, not surprisingly to a writer who saw all actions as the result of numerous conscious or unconscious influences on the individual, are generally extremely complex, usually mixed, and often unknown even to the character himself. Here also, as a means of influencing her reader, the narrator usually adopts a tolerant attitude
towards her characters, analyzing but rarely condemning their motives, though she is often bitingly ironic, slyly humorous, or quietly resigned about the rationalizations which the human mind uses to delude itself.

The major danger of the dichotomy between motives and opinions is, obviously, that it leads to misjudgment. It is a danger George Eliot intended the reader to be very conscious of and to learn from the actions of her characters the necessity for hesitation and deliberation in this singularly important aspect of living, the judging of others. The narrator's commentary here is certainly another means whereby George Eliot tries to correct the reader's faults, and it is, characteristically for George Eliot, the sympathetic heart and not the reasoning head which must be our ultimate guide: "Yet surely, surely the only true knowledge of our fellow-man is that which enables us to feel with him—which gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of circumstances and opinion."23 As in life, George Eliot's characters persistently misjudge each other, and the narrator is always there to criticize both characters and reader for their shortcomings:

Do not philosophic doctors tell us that we are unable to discern so much as a tree, except by an unconscious cunning
which combines past and separate sensations; that no one sense is independent of another. . . . If so, it is easy to understand that our discernment of men's motives must depend on the completeness of the elements we can bring from our own susceptibility and our own experience. See to it, friend, before you pronounce a too hasty judgment, that your own moral sensibilities are not of a hoofed or clawed character. The keenest eye will not serve, unless you have the delicate fingers, with their subtle nerve filaments, which elude scientific lenses, and lose themselves in the invisible world of human sensations ("Janet's Repentence," p. 251).

We may note here the direct address to the reader, the exhortatory tone of the narrator, and the characteristic use of a scientific allusion which is immediately qualified as an ultimate measure of man. In her last essays George Eliot is still concerned with this thorny problem, and can only conclude that "one cannot give a recipe for wise judgment: it resembles appropriate muscular action, which is attained by the myriad lessons in nicety of balance and of aim that only practice can give" (Theophrastus Such, p. 189).

The list of characters in George Eliot's work who misjudge each other is enormous, beginning with "Amos Barton" and continuing right through to Theophrastus Such. The collective community frequently speaks for individual opinion, illustrating the pervasiveness of
humanity's narrow, egotistical vision. The community misjudges Amos Barton, Mr. Tryan, Arthur Donnithorne, Maggie Tulliver, Lydgate and Bulstrode, Grandcourt—these are only a few. The reason we misjudge people, the narrator tells us, is because their motives are extremely complicated, and the extended analysis of the myriad trivial and selfish motives which lie behind Mr. Riley's recommendation of Mr. Stelling as a tutor to Tom Tulliver is one of the finest treatments of this subject throughout George Eliot's fiction: "there is nothing more widely misleading than . . . sagacity, persuaded that men usually act and speak from distinct motives, with a consciously proposed end in view. . . . Plotting covetousness, and deliberate contrivance, in order to compass a selfish end, are no-where abundant but in the world of the dramatist" (Mill, p. 23).

Most of Mr. Riley's motives are unconscious. Often motives are rationalized or deliberately hidden by a character from himself; Bulstrode, Savonarola and Tito are the best examples of individuals who use this common ploy in human nature. But we see it in many other characters as well. Adam Bede steadily refuses to admit to himself that the locket Arthur has given Hetty, which he sees by accident, can be the gift of another suitor, and rational-
izes away the too evident explanation. Ladislaw argues to himself that he should stay in England in order to make a career for himself, but the real motive is, of course, to be near Dorothea. And in Daniel Deronda, Gwendolen's desire for a life of ease and luxury are hidden under her consciousness of family need. Selfish motives can always be made to seem altruistic ones: Arthur Donnithorne plans to improve his estate, ostensibly for the good of his tenants, he thinks, but in reality to boost his own self-esteem. Maggie Tulliver rationalizes that "it would be kindness to Philip" to agree to meet him occasionally, but it is really her dreams for "books, converse, affection" (Mill, p. 284) which are her driving motives. The narrator's analysis of Philip Wakem's "justifying motives" which lie behind his persuasion of Maggie to agree to their hidden friendship is one which has a universal application and which unites narrator, reader and character in a common mode of behavior and again breaks down all barriers between George Eliot's fictional and the real world:

If we only look far enough off for the consequences of our actions, we can always find some point in the combination of results by which those actions can be justified: by adopting the point of view of a Providence who arranges results, or of a philosopher who traces them, we shall find it possible to
obtain perfect complacency in choosing to do what is most agreeable to us in the present moment (Mill, p. 289).

George Eliot's analysis of her character's psychological make-up is one of her major devices for making a character "realistic." It is "the psychological impulse," Scholes and Kellogg remark, which "tends toward the presentation of highly individualized figures."24 George Eliot believed that a reader would not "feel" with and for a character who was a hollow cipher, and she always tried to give her characters a solidity and vitality of their own. To this end most of her characters speak in a distinctive language which is revelatory of their inner natures, and fitting to the social class to which they belong.25 Dinah Morris has a strongly religious idiom,26 Mrs. Poyser's marvellous metaphorical speech entirely expresses her character and values. Adam's speech is appropriately simple and direct while Arthur Donnithorne's is graceful, smooth and easy-flowing. Gwendolen Harleth in Daniel Deronda characteristically speaks with wit, spirit and intelligence. Grandcourt's language is usually brief, a verbal expression of his aristocratic boredom, or it is slow and "languid," illustrative of his snake-like nature to which the narrator refers many times. Professor Steiner says of Middlemarch that "apart from touches of mannerisms, as in the case of Farebrother's household, she hardly
attempts to differentiate individual styles of expression. She lowers or raises her story telling voice but cannot disguise it."\textsuperscript{27} But Casaubon's rhetoric is distinctly his own. Hilda Hume notes that George Eliot "contrives, in the most subtle ways, to have . . . Casaubon's own speech betray him. Vocabulary, image, syntax, grammar—all make their contribution to the death-like mode."\textsuperscript{28} Rosamond's brief, superficial language clearly expresses the stubborn vacuity of her personality. Mary Garth, like Adam Bede, is direct and blunt in her conversations, in strong contrast to Rosamond. It is in \textit{Middlemarch} that the narrator's analysis and the character's speech and action work particularly well to illuminate or balance each other rather than remaining distinct external and internal modes of characterization.

George Eliot's characters often demonstrate that their inner natures have been determined by heredity; they are endowed genetically with certain qualities upon which their environment and chance circumstances work. Maggie Tulliver is George Eliot's most elaborate study of the inter-relatedness of heredity and environment in an individual, and their lasting influence on a total lifetime. These "fixed givens" in a character sometimes seem ultimately to leave the individual with little if
any freedom of choice, and indeed, George Eliot's novels, as Levine has pointed out, are more bleakly deterministic than is often supposed. Lydgate's "spots of commonness," whether inherited or conditioned by his social class, lead to his disastrous relationships with women, and his compassion for the weak and suffering makes him immensely vulnerable to Rosamond's tears and dependency, and to Bulstrode's suffering when the latter is rejected by the Middlemarch community. Dorothea's ardent nature combines with a society which denies a woman any education or vocation other than marriage, to form the tragedy of her life. Barbara Hardy astutely argues in her "Possibilities" chapter that there are moments of "crisis and decision" for George Eliot's characters that mitigate the deterministic quality of their lives. Arthur Donnithorne wavers on the brink of telling Irvine about his temptation towards Hetty; Maggie chooses not to marry Stephen Guest; Tito struggles with his conscience over whether or not to choose the noble way and search for his father; Esther Lyon refuses Transome; Bulstrode has several moments of critical choice; Gwendolen accepts Grandcourt; there are many examples of such moments of choice. But it is difficult to concede that these "possibilities" do indeed have much real validity, that, given the individual human natures, nurtured in specific
environments and submitted to variable chance circumstances, these characters could make alternate choices from those they do.

Since George Eliot viewed it as a major determining factor in an individual's life much of her novels deal with the environment in which her characters are placed. It was of Romola that George Eliot wrote: "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." This "medium" ranges all the way from a character's immediate home and family, to the wider society of the town or region, to the widest historical time and circumstances which can influence his life. George Eliot usually builds up the concreteness of an environment through the accumulation of a mass of realistic details which give her fictional world an actuality (with the exception of Romola) which help to make incarnate those philosophic, religious and social ideas that are the core of her work. Spatial reality is established by the precise nature of physical settings, and temporal reality is achieved through numerous references to particular dates and historical events. These realistic details are often charged with symbolic value, sometimes speaking for themselves or being commented
upon by the narrator, and their ultimate functional purpose is, of course, not only to enhance the realism of her world and characters, but to elicit that imaginative/contemplative response from the reader which will lead to his achieving a "wider vision."

Domestic environments, like old Mr. Jerome's home in "Janet's Repentence," Hall Farm in Adam Bede, Dorlcote Mill in The Mill, Mrs. Transome's home and the Reverend Lyon's bedroom in Felix Holt, Casaubon's and Bardo's house and library in Middlemarch and Romola respectively, the English and Jewish households on the Meyricks and Cohens in Daniel Deronda, are exceedingly concrete but also metaphoric expressions of their inhabitants. George Eliot frequently uses a physical landscape as an expression of a state of mind, or a way of life of the whole community, like the countryside through which poor Hetty wanders in search of Arthur, the opening description of Loamshrie in Adam Bede, the river in The Mill and Daniel Deronda, the landscape outside Dorothea's window at Lowick in Middlemarch. The values of a society are always shown to have a powerful determining effect on the outcome of the lives of George Eliot's characters, especially in The Mill, Romola, Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda. These values are usually made concrete through dramatic encounters between individuals from the
same or different strata of society: Mr. Brooke and Dagley, the country gentry like Chettam, Brooke, the Cadwalladers in *Middlemarch*; the gatherings of the aunts and uncles at the Tulliver home in *The Mill*; the archery contest for aristocratic society in *Daniel Deronda*. Although society often restricts an individual's aspirations, like Maggie's desire for education, Dorothea's wish to do good, or Lydgate's ambitions to reform medicine, society can in turn be totally disrupted by human action, as the community of Loamshire is by Arthur Donnithorne in *Adam Bede*. Or society may be shown to have a healing effect on the individual, as Silas Marner's faith in humanity, for example, is gradually restored through his renewed interaction with his fellow-men after he has found Eppie in place of his gold.

All George Eliot's novels except *Daniel Deronda* are set in the past. In 1859, while working on *The Mill*, George Eliot wrote to Barbara Bodichon: "at present my mind works with the most freedom and the keenest sense of poetry in my remotest past, and there are many strata to be worked through before I can begin to use artistically any material I may gather in the present" (*Letters*, III, 128-129). Barbara Hardy argues that George Eliot "seems to have needed the feeling of distance and understand-
ing, as a creative condition." Thomas Pinney sees George Eliot's reverence for the past as the outcome of the paradoxical "conservative-reforming" tendencies of her mind, taking the phrase from Basil Willey's work. There is no doubt that George Eliot looked with a special tenderness on the past, which she associated with her childhood, but she often uses the distance between the time of the novel and the present, as I have already suggested, as a means of ironically criticizing the present. Modern Milby is a "refined, moral and enlightened town" the narrator tells us in "Janet's Repentence"; Milby of twenty-five years ago was far below the "advanced state of things" at present; in The Mill we are again assured that in those dark days of the novel "ignorance was much more comfortable then than at present" (Mill, p. 107). The narrator in Romola ironically remarks that "in those times, as now, there were human beings who never saw angels." And Middlemarch has many ironic references to "the unreformed provincial mind": "As to any provincial history in which the agents are all of high moral rank, that must be of a date long posterior to the first Reform Bill." Philosophically, the past to George Eliot was of supreme importance because of her belief in the law of causation, or, to use one of her characteristic metaphors, because it is a seed-time
of the future. It cannot be forgotten, ignored, or discarded, for in it are the roots of the present; it has nourished what the individual and society have and will become.

Historical events, specific reference to dates, to the seasons all contribute to the solidity of George Eliot's fictional world. Realistically, clergymen like Mr. Gilfil or Mr. Irwine could not exist in the "modern" world of Daniel Deronda. The 1832 Reform Bill, seen as a great watershed in history by the Victorians, is of vital significance in Felix Holt and Middlemarch, both as a real event and as a symbol of potential, imaginary, or dangerous change. 36 The Napoleonic wars are referred to several times in Adam Bede but only to point up the insularity this particular community exhibits toward the historical event, which is at the same time susceptible to outside forces in the Methodist movement. The small ripple of reaction by St. Ogg's towards the Catholic Emancipation Act is suggestive primarily of the stagnant condition of that community's religious life which has been supplanted by the quest for material success. The corruption of the political events in fifteenth century Florence is a physical analogy to the spiritual corruption of Tito. Lawrence Poston emphasizes this connection when he points out that "the argument of the novel is enhanced by the parallels between the public and private action." 37
Throughout this discussion of George Eliot's narrative technique I have emphasized the importance of her narrator in the creation of the life of her novels. George Eliot's authorial commentary is rarely external or extraneous to the narrative; rather it almost always serves to enlarge the significance of the particular events in the work. The ultimate function of her narrative technique is to involve the reader contemplatively and imaginatively in her fictional world, to persuade him to enter it, to live with and through her realized characters, to think and feel towards them as the narrator does. The narrator establishes a congenial, trusting and influential relationship with the reader so that she may guide him to see connections between the trivial and the important, the transient and the permanent, the concrete and the universal. If the final purpose of all George Eliot's work is accomplished, the reader will, at the end of the novel, come closer to viewing life with the cautious judgment and wise tolerance of George Eliot's narrator. It is a vision which man had traditionally attributed to God, but one which George Eliot believed all men could be educated to strive towards, if not actually achieve. Maynard Gilfil describes this vision in simple conventional Christian terms to Tina in "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story":
"God sees us as we are altogether, not in separate feelings or actions, as our fellow-men see us. We are always doing each other injustice, and thinking better or worse of each other than we deserve, because we only hear and see separate words and actions. We don't see each other's whole nature."\textsuperscript{39} In the ensuing chapters I shall examine how some of George Eliot's narrators and mentors are dramatized, and how they try to bring about the wider vision which is the foundation of that altruistic condition of being that George Eliot intended her novels would produce in the reader.
FOOTNOTES


3  See "The Concrete Universal," in Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon, pp. 69-84.


6  George Eliot, p. 3.

7  Carroll, p. 225.

8  George Eliot, p. 268.

9  Haight, George Eliot, p. 289.

10  Carroll, p. 225.


13 The Novels of George Eliot, p. 177.

14 Hardy, pp. 177-178.

15 The Art of George Eliot, p. 79.

16 The Rhetoric of Fiction, pp. 133, 134.


18 Slatoff, With Respect to Readers, p. 129.

19 This inclusive verbal device is also discussed by Isobel Armstrong, pp. 124-126; and R.T. Jones, George Eliot (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 1.


22 Anderson discusses the "landscape of opinion" in Middlemarch, p. 151.


26 See Kathleen Watson, "Dinah Morris and Mrs. Evans: A Comparative Study of Methodist Diction," RES, n. s. 22 (1971), 282-294. Watson examines "the extent to which the diction of Dinah Morris is a faithful reproduction of that sect to which she belonged and how it will throw light on the principles which governed George Eliot's creation of the character and the degree of success she achieved." Watson concludes that "Dinah's speech is . . . far from being a completely realistic reflection of the Methodist ethos. . . . By omitting references both to the doctrinal element in Methodism and to the spiritual struggle which would normally accompany its profession George Eliot created a character which fulfilled the necessary redemptive role in the novel without the affirmation of beliefs which were unacceptable to her" 283, 294.


29 The Novels of George Eliot, pp. 135-154.

See Claude T. Bissell's extensive discussion of the values of society in "Social Analysis in the Novels of George Eliot," ELH, 18 (1950), 221-239.

The Novels of George Eliot, p. 156.


See Jerome Beaty, "History by Indirection: the Era of Reform in Middlemarch," VS, 1 (1957), 173-179. Beaty notes that George Eliot "presents history dramatically, within the story, as part of the lives of the characters; she rarely offers it directly to the reader as history,"p.175. Michael York Mason, however, quarrels with Beaty's implication that history is irrelevant to the novel. Mason argues that "allusions to the Reform Bill should not be discreetly ignored, but valued as signs of a communal change as complicated, doubtful, and real to George Eliot as Dorothea's. The lack of contact between the country and town elements is not a mark of the novel's lamented fragmentariness, but a sign of the real condition of voting England at which Reform was directed." "Middlemarch and History," NCF, 25 (1971), 420. Auster, Local Habitations, also discusses George Eliot's use of history, p. 49.
37 "Setting and Theme in Romola, NCF, 20 (1966), 365.

38 Hillis Miller writes that "the immanent omniscience of George Eliot's narrator is both like and unlike the knowledge traditionally ascribed to God." The Form of Victorian Fiction (Notre Dame and London: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 64.

CHAPTER III

ADAM BEDE AND THE MILL ON THE FLOSS: MR. IRWINE,

DINAH MORRIS AND PHILIP WAKEM AS MENTORS

i. Adam Bede: Introduction

Adam Bede, published in February 1859, was George
Eliot's first full-length novel. Its ideological frame-
work, its careful organization and its diversity of
characters are qualities which are characteristic of
almost all the rest of her work. Adam Bede was an
immediate success; the Athenaeum, the Saturday Review,
the Westminster Review, The Times all reviewed it favor-
able.¹ It was praised for its realism of setting and
color and its high moral tone.² Carroll writes that
"Mrs. Poyser, in particular, was seized upon with cries
of delight; she was quoted in Parliament; she was as
great as the glorious Sam Weller."³ Charles Dickens, who
tried to persuade George Eliot "to be a fellow labourer"
and write for All the Year Round, was enthusiastic in his
admiration:

Adam Bede has taken its place among the actual
experiences and endurances of my life. Every
high quality that was in the former book, is
in that, with a World of Power added thereunto.
The conception of Hetty's character is so
extraordinarily subtle and true, that I laid
the book down fifty times, to shut my eyes and think about it. I know nothing so skillful, determined, and uncompromising. The whole country life that the story is set in, is so real, and so droll and genuine, and yet so selected and polished by art, that I cannot praise it enough to you (Letters, III, 114-115).

During the past fifteen years an increasing amount of criticism has been written on the major and minor themes of Adam Bede. Its form, its various image patterns, its philosophical, religious and social ideas, its history of composition and reception, and its autobiographical content have all been studied in varying degrees of depth.4

The two major themes of the novel— that "consequences are unpitying," and the education of Adam's imagination and sensibility through suffering—are closely integrated, and both are distinctive concerns of George Eliot's work in general. The former is the basis for much of the action in Adam Bede, as the slow, but ever-widening consequences which follow from Arthur's seduction of Hetty are traced, culminating in a painful Nemesis which, though it does not lessen the evil of the past, is of some positive value for the future. The real positive value, quite apart from the superficial detail of the marriage between Adam and Dinah, the fundamental "progress" which comes from this harsh lesson, is Adam's growth in wisdom through
his painful experience. This growth is described by
the narrator as though it is a transforming religious
process, a conversion, in terms which George Eliot
had already used of Tryan, in "Janet's Repentence," and
which appear again and again in her work when characters
are "reborn" through suffering, when they undergo a
"transmutation of self": "Deep unspeakable suffering
may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the
initiation into a new state. . . . Doubtless a great
anguish may do the work of years, and we may come out
from the baptism of fire with a soul full of new awe and
new pity" (Adam Bede, p. 371). Adam's personal suffer-
ing enables him to move beyond his initial, egotistical
view that he had "always thought it a light thing that
men should suffer" to achieve that "wider vision" which
can understand that his tragedy is but the repetition of
a universal occurrence among his fellow-men: "O God, and
men have suffered like this before . . . and poor helpless
young things like her [Hetty]" (Adam Bede, p. 371).

The "happy ending" of Adam Bede, in particular the
marriage between Adam and Dinah, has disturbed many critics,
and, although it is the result of George Eliot's meliorism,
it does, I think, strike a false, sentimental note in a
novel which has been deeply concerned with the pervasive
negative consequences of evil. Yet Hayslope at the end is certainly not the same golden world that Knoepflmacher sees as being only temporarily disrupted by tragedy. J. S. Diekhoff comes much closer to the truth, I believe, when he questions "what now of the wrongs that can never be righted? What now of the foolishness, the viciousness of saying good may come of evil? Good has come of it, and the moral principle which was the central conception of Adam Bede has been denied."  

In spite of the disturbing happy ending, the deeply serious and "didactic" purpose of Adam Bede is, of course, that the reader, through his imaginative participation in Adam's particular tragedy, and through his simultaneous contemplative response to the major moral idea of the story, will, like Adam, have his sympathies enlarged and achieve a greater understanding of the meaning of evil and the consequences it can have which go far beyond its seemingly initial restricted circumstances.

ii. Mr. Irwine and Dinah Morris

There are two mentors in Adam Bede, the Reverend Irwine and Dinah Morris. I shall deal first with the one who is more thoroughly dramatized, Mr. Irwine, though
it should be observed at the outset that there are imperfections in George Eliot's dramatic delineation of both mentors. It is indicative, however, of George Eliot's ability to give her ideas form that Irwine and Dinah, two very different individuals, are both disciples of the religion of humanity. A contemporary critic noted the ideological similarity between them: "You fancy that there can be nothing in nature more diverse than the spiritually-minded, praying, and preaching Dinah Morris, and the carnally-minded, easy, gentlemanly Mr. Irwine. I tell you, again and again, says Mr. Elliot[sic], that there is no difference between them."  

Joan Bennett sees Irwine as "a picturesque historical reconstruction rather than a living personality," but I would argue rather that Irwine comes close to being a living example of that "ideal" class of clergymen in George Eliot's work whose views are humanitarian rather than doctrinal. Irwine's life is a particular realistic enactment of George Eliot's general belief that the "godless humanitarianism" of Feuerbach is at the center of any truly religious life.

One of the major steps George Eliot takes towards fulfilling her aim to create Mr. Irwine as a "living personality" is to place him in a social medium, or what Harvey has described as a "human context," which is one
of the most detailed and various to be found throughout her work. The different strata of the Midland society are distinctly delineated and Irwine takes his place, at the top, as an aristocratic clergyman who is on the same social level as the squirearchy, the Donnithornes. But rank, though it plays a highly significant role in the novel, only superficially defines Irwine. His distinctive nature and values are illuminated by "the web of human relationships in which . . . [he is] enmeshed." His private, familial, and public relationships are all fully demonstrated in several important scenes with Arthur, his mother and sisters, and the villagers. Irwine's religious tolerance is dramatized most clearly in his long, sympathetic conversation with Dinah in chapter 8, where he expresses genuine, and totally uncritical, interest in the circumstances which led her to become a Methodist preacher. His care for his parishioners, for humanity in general, despite his pluralism, is "shown" fully in his speech at Arthur's birthday feast and in his exchanges with the villagers afterwards. Much of Irwine's true standing in the community is established by what other people, besides the narrator, say about him, particularly by the respected Poysers, and the general acclamation which rings through the toasts and replies at the magnificent community ritual of Arthur's birthday
feast. But the most revealing commentary on Mr. Irwine's effective lack of doctrine is spoken by Adam, in a scene between the narrator and Adam which is supposed to take place years after Irwine's death: Mr. Irwine "preached short sermons, and that was all. But then he acted pretty much up to what he said; he didn't set up to being different from other folks one day, and then be as like 'em as two peas the next.... Mrs. Poyser used to say.... Mr. Irwine was like a good meal o' vitual, you were the better for him without thinking on it, and Mr. Ryde a zealous, doctrinal clergyman was like a dose o' physic, he gripped you and worretted you, and after all he left you much the same" (Adam Bede, p. 157).

The broad spatial medium of Loamshire, in which Irwine lives and performs his clerical duties, is described in detail by the narrator in the opening scenes of the novel. Its mildness, its abundance, its rootedness in a past of solid traditions and security, all in contrast to barren Stonyshire, are suggested in the concrete but simultaneously strongly symbolic (as many critics have noted) physical description of the landscape. And in a highly significant yet subtly unobtrusive comment at the end of "The Rector" chapter, as Irwine and Arthur ride off to Hall Farm, ostensibly for
Arthur to examine some Poyser puppies but in reality
to see Hetty, the narrator tells us that Irwine, and Arthur,
ominously, is excluded, "somehow harmonized extremely well
with that peaceful landscape" (Adam Bede, p. 58). This
sense of belonging and harmoniously functioning within
the physical setting and changing seasons of Loamshire
is one of the major criteria the narrator uses to manipu-
late the reader's response to the major characters in the
novel.

Not only is the spatial location and character of
the countryside defined exactly, but, perhaps more than
in any other George Eliot novel, the temporal dimensions
of Adam Bede are referred to constantly. The novel be-
gins on the eighteenth of June, 1799,\textsuperscript{12} Adam and Dinah
are married at the close of November 1801, and the
Epilogue takes place in June 1807. The date, of course,
provides George Eliot with an opportunity to make ample
use of her characteristic device of historical irony:
"Sixty years ago--it is a long time so no wonder things
have changed--all clergymen were not zealous. . . . [This
fact may disturb] our own enlightened opinions" (Adam Bede,
p. 151). There are constant reminders of the seasons,
the weather, specific dates (especially Arthur's birth-
day, Hetty's seduction, the passing months of Hetty's
secret pregnancy), and the time of day. On a realistic level the seasons and time generally are obviously highly important in this agricultural community, which regulates its life by them, but time, as Dorothy Van Ghent argues in her essay on *Adam Bede*, plays a highly significant symbolic role throughout the novel. Van Ghent examines the "great mass of slow time" in *Adam Bede*, "the patient rhythms of day and night, of the seasons, of planting and harvest, of the generations of men, and of the thoughts of simple people who are bound by deep tradition to soil and to community."¹³ She discusses Mrs. Poyser's eight-day clock at some length as a symbol of "the assured and saving values stored up through ages of experience"¹⁴ in the community. "The pace of *Adam Bede* is set to Mrs. Poyser's clock, to all that slow toil and patient discipline that have made daylight—and living—possible."¹⁵

Mr. Irwine, of course, is very much a clergyman of his time and could not realistically exist in England twenty years later (Adam tells the narrator Irwine was succeeded by the intolerant, strongly doctrinal Methodist, Mr. Ryde). Irwine has chosen the traditional career open to an impoverished eighteenth-century aristocratic gentleman. He is the product of the
tolerant, lax Anglican church which grew out of the fanaticism of the previous century and led into the often fanatical revivalist movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, and which George Eliot shows encroaching on even such an isolated community as Hayslope. Some historical forces then, George Eliot suggests, if not the Napoleonic wars, have a certain effect on the future of Hayslope. Irwine is one of a dying breed of aristocratic clergymen whose places are gradually being taken by working class preachers like the untypically mild Dinah Morris or the more typically doctrinal Mr. Ryde. A hint of the effect that this historical movement will have on the crumbling of the present social structure is quietly suggested through the laborer, Will Mastery, a convert to Methodism, turning against Irwine, disrespectfully calling him an "idle shepherd," an accusation which the pluralist and mildly epicurean Irwine does not even pretend to deny.

George Eliot's precision in delineating the communal life of Hayslope, in fixing its spatial and temporal dimensions, all build up a living picture of eighteenth-century village life, whose realistic atmosphere provides a concrete and vital context in which Irwine can be furthered developed as a fully rounded character.
A sense of the authenticity of the fictional world in which Irwine is placed is created by the appearance of the narrator in the novel, within the fictional world, which is characteristic of George Eliot's early work, and there is a constant effort by the narrator to maintain a direct relationship with the reader, so that the process of reading will be an immediate, experiential interaction between the reader, the "teller and the tale." The "reality" of Irwine himself is, of course, intensified by the narrator and Adam's talk about him as though he were an old, well-remembered friend. The general tone of the narrator in *Adam Bede* is always one of personal reminiscence; there is a strong sense of nostalgia for this past time in English life, a nostalgia which George Eliot expresses even in her last work, where "Looking Backward" apostrophizes "my father's England [which] seemed to me loveable, laudable, full of good men, and having good rulers. . . . [O]ur midland plains have never lost their familiar expression and conservative spirit to me. . . . I cherish my childish loves--the memory of that warm little nest where my affections were fledged" (*Theophrastus Such*, pp. 38, 39, 42). The magnificent description of Hall Farm in *Adam Bede* is lovingly recounted; the narrator
lingers over the seemingly familiar details, which, like the landscape, are also charged with symbolic significance. The pervading warm, personal tone of the narrator with regard to the community is carried over into much of the reflective commentary, and there are no strident rebukes of the characters' or readers' blindness like those which appear in the much harsher tones of "Janet's Repentence."

It is in chapter V, "The Rector," that George Eliot dramatizes Irvine's personality so that he does positively become a "living" character. The chapter is composed of several scenes involving Irvine and different characters which demonstrate how Irvine performs his clerical duties and leads a personal life in a manner which is expressive of his broad, catholic religious views and his humanitarianism in general.

At the beginning of chapter V, the narrator immediately establishes his (the narrator is masculine) sympathetic attitude towards Irvine: he is "a pluralist at whom the severest Church reformer would have found it difficult to look sour" (Adam Bede, p. 44). The narrator maintains this attitude consistently towards the minister: Irvine may have faults but he is nevertheless a good man,
kind to others but still enjoys comfort himself, more interested in Theocritus or Sophocles than Moses or Isaiah, but not without concern for the spiritual and worldly lives of his illiterate flock. Both narrator and scenes combine to establish the same sympathetic response to Irwine. The reader is asked to join with the narrator at the first appearance of Irwine, and all through the chapter significant details, together with some outright but mild exhortation by the narrator, function to mold the reader's judgment in favor of the minister.

The dialogue in the opening scene between Irwine and shoemaker Josuha Rann dramatizes Irwine's intelligence, his self-knowledge, his religious tolerance, his mild, non-doctrinal manner of teaching, as he tries to lead Josuha towards a wiser understanding and acceptance of views different from his own. He calms Josuha's fears about the influence of Dinah's preaching, and brushes aside Will Mastery's accusations that he is an "idle shepherd." All through the scene Irwine handles Josuha's bristling indignation about the Methodists with tact; his language is colloquial, gently and subtly persuasive: "it wouldn't become wise people, like you and me, to be making a fuss about trifles, as if we thought the Church
was in danger because Will Mastery lets his tongue wag rather foolishly, or a young woman talks in a serious way to a handful of people on the Green. We must 'live and let live,' Joshua, in religion as well as in other things. . . . I shall trust to your good sense, now, to take no notice at all of what Will Mastery says, either about you or me" (Adam Bede, p. 49).

But Irwine is not only a humanitarian in his public relations. His tolerance and kindness are living qualities which he practices each day with his family. His practice of these virtues is demonstrated in his relationships with his hard, proud mother, and his sickly unmarried sisters, whose care and need for financial support have caused Irwine to renounce marriage. At the close of chapter V, however, the narrator talks to the reader about the scenes which have just been presented, and there is here an excessive degree of that "special pleading" which Hardy sees operating most extensively in the Scenes: "his was one of those large-hearted, sweet-blooded natures that never know a narrow or a grudging thought; epicurean, if you will, with no enthusiasm, no self-scrourging sense of duty; but yet, as you have seen, of a sufficiently subtle moral fibre to have an unwearying tenderness for obscure and monotonous suffering" (Adam Bede, p. 56).
In chapter V of *Adam Bede* we see that the past has determined Irwine's character and future. In chapter XVI, so strong is George Eliot's feeling of the connectedness of things, that we see how Irwine's character determines his relationship with Arthur in a very special moment in time, and how, consequently, it affects the whole community. Again there is a dramatic scene, framed and interpolated by the narrator, but the questioning and answering pattern of the conversation between Irwine and Arthur, as Ian Adam has suggested, has a slight air of the philosophical dialogue about it. Yet both men speak in language which is entirely fitting to their personalities: Arthur always evasive, wishing Irwine to think well of him, resolving to act but failing to so so; Irwine, wise, kind, now, of course, speaking on a higher intellectual level to his educated companion than he had done with the artisan, Josuha. But Irwine, though Arthur badly needs a mentor at this point in his life, is restricted, even flawed, by his class and character from functioning as a truly helpful mentor. He knows and tells Arthur the major pervading truth of *Adam Bede*, that "consequences are unpitying"; but he does not understand the "dishonorable" quality in Arthur's character, which will
permit his immediate self-satisfaction to overthrow his wider responsibility and duty to others as the future landlord of Loamshire. And it is Irwine's aristocratic reticence, his class feeling for Arthur as a younger fellow Oxford scholar and a well-bred gentleman which prevents him, even as a connection between Arthur and Hetty crosses his mind, from encouraging Arthur to speak when he is on the brink of confessing his temptation towards Hetty. But "Mr. Irwine was too delicate to imply even a friendly curiosity" (Adam Bede, p. 150). The moment of choice for Arthur of an "alternative destiny" which Hardy discusses in her chapter on "Possibilities," is irrevocably lost, and Mr. Irwine, whose reaction here is determined by his breeding and background, is partly responsible for the tragic consequences which follow this failure in communication. No such well-bred delicacy holds Mrs. Bede's peasant tongue: she will speak out bluntly to Adam about Dinah's love for him, and thus radically change the course of these two lives.

In spite of Irwine's failure as a mentor to Arthur, he is a fully realized effective mentor to the community and to the reader. His life is an example to the community of his humanitarianism, and his per-
formance of his clerical duties an example of his belief in the essence rather than the doctrinal aspects of religion: "He thought the custom of baptism more important than its doctrine, and that the religious benefits the peasant drew from the church where his fathers worshipped and the sacred piece of turf where they lay buried, were but slightly dependent on a clear understanding of the liturgy of the sermon" (Adam Bede, p. 57). It is human feeling, not the individual doctrinal creed in which it has been encased, which is important to Irvine, and he demonstrates his beliefs in his private and his public life. Throughout the rest of the novel we see him actively helping others, the Poysers, Arthur, particularly Adam, and his words and actions give dramatic reality to the narrator's pleading that in spite of his faults Irvine is an actively good man. His wise words dissuade Adam from violence against Arthur, teach him the ambiguous nature of sin and punishment, and help to create in Adam the necessary largeness of mind and heart he needs to be able to forgive Arthur.

The Reverend Irvine is certainly a strongly symbolic figure and performs an important functional role in Adam Bede, but the medium in which he is placed, the attribution of many distinctive qualities to him by the
narrator, by the members of the Hayslope community, and by his own background and actions, all work to give him a solidity and vitality, to give his enduring meaning a "breathing, individual form" which goes far beyond his obvious moral relevance in the novel.

Although Dinah Morris is set within the same fully realistic medium of Adam Bede in which Mr. Irwine is placed, she is one of George Eliot's most poorly dramatized mentors. 16 Dinah's failure to actively engage the reader's sympathetic feeling is the result of George Eliot's failure to use some of the characteristic aspects of her narrative technique which function to create representative rather than illustrative characters. In spite of her overt Methodism, Dinah, like Irwine, is another follower of Feuerbach's religion of humanity. 17 Dinah is also a symbol of change, of the "mildly revolutionary force of Methodism," which threatens the complacency and insularity of the village community. Even contemporary critics, though they praised Adam Bede highly, were dissatisfied with her delineation:

Dinah, then, represents the religious principle . . . but . . . she wants the weight of that reality which distinguishes the rest. She is a spirit amongst bodies of flesh and blood. As the saying now
is—we do not believe in her. It is not that she is too good. . . . The author labours to make Dinah one of the group, and represents her—what such a woman would not be,—at home amongst them. . . . Though she uses some Methodist phrases, she has little of the animus of sect in her: she is liberal, eclectic, enlightened, independent, and therefore unreal. 19

And Lewes, in his private journal, perceptively confided the opinion that Dinah would not be liked by the public as well as George Eliot hoped: "Few women would care to be Dinah—they would like to have her beauty and goodness, but not her Methodism and mob cap."20

As with Irvine, the narrator is pointedly sympathetic in the description and analysis of Dinah. We are "told" many times that Dinah is warm, unselfish, loving, able to influence others by the sheer power of her speech and presence, and indeed, some of these aspects of her personality are imperfectly demonstrated. But even though the narrator makes several rather clumsy humanizing references to Dinah's rough, work-worn hands, her intuitive rapport with children and old women, and her ability to make excellent porridge for Lisbeth Bede, Dinah finally remains remote from the reader, illustrative of those ideas which she is supposed to represent.

There are several obvious artistic reasons which contribute to Dinah's dramatic failure. She first appears in chapter II, "The Preaching," which opens with the famous
long symbolic description of the landscape of "rich, undulating" Loamshire that nevertheless "lies close to a grim outskirt of Stonyshire" (Adam Bede, p. 12). Dinah is the outsider from the harsh, hungry land who paradoxically bears a message of love to what Creeger has described as the "spiritually hungry" country of Loamshire, where Dinah finds a "strange deadness to the word." The immediate juxtaposition of Dinah's appearance with the description of the landscape is a structural device to associate her with its symbolic implications: like Loamshire and Stonyshire Dinah is not all that she might superficially appear to be. Her denial of the world, seen in her rejection of Loamshire, is too limited a view of life to take, for it is a much more mixed and complicated affair than Dinah realizes or than her traditional religion can contend with. Her seemingly self-satisfied assertion at the end of her sermon of her own happiness is probably intended to reveal Dinah's limitations, but the words also convey a sense of inhuman sureness in her inviolability that distances the reader: "No lord nor lady can be so happy as me. . . . Think what it is--not to hate anything but sin; to be full of love to every creature; to be frightened at nothing; to be sure that all things will turn to good;
not to mind pain, because it is our Father's will . . . ;
[to be] sure that whatever he wills is holy, just, and
good" (Adam Bede, p. 25). Dinah learns, however, although
the process is never dramatized, that the love of God is
not enough to make her happy; that it is only in a human,
earthly love that she can find true fulfillment. 21 By
loving Jesus in Adam she becomes a true disciple of the
religion of humanity.

Before Dinah begins her sermon the narrator gives
a long preparatory description of her perfect physical
and spiritual beauty, a very straightforward attempt to
elicit a favorable response to Dinah. Her simplicity,
hers sincerity, her purity of mind are stressed, and the
narrator's assertion of Dinah's arresting presence is
given authenticity by the obvious device of the passing
traveller who is hypnotically drawn to listen to her.
Yet Dinah's sermon has no effect on any of her listeners
except the bovine Bessy Cranage, and even this is tempo-
rary. 22 "The village mind does not easily take fire, and
a little smouldering vague anxiety, that might easily
die out again, was the utmost effect Dinah's preaching
had wrought in them at present" (Adam Bede, pp. 21-22).
Dinah's ineffectiveness is, of course, pointedly referred
to by the narrator in a deliberate attempt to humanize
her, but it cannot counteract the effect of the whole sermon. One reviewer argued that "Dinah's sermon, eloquent and good in itself, does not strike us as probable under the circumstances--not what a woman would preach, though very like what the author would work out in his closet. Its plan is the result of reasoning, not impulse; what a person would write who had studied the line taken by St. Paul in his sermon to the Athenians." At the close of the sermon, the narrator tells us that Dinah's "sincere unpremeditated eloquence . . . [has revealed] the inward drama of the speaker's emotions" (Adam Bede), but the sermon does not seem to be spontaneous, and both the content and the Biblical phraseology of the sermon give no sense of Dinah's particular emotions; she uses familiar preaching devices of appealing to the hopes and, especially, the fears of her listeners. She exhorts them to renounce the traditional temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil and turn to God; there is little originality or individuation in her language or her appeal; the few "realistic" grammatical errors introduced for the sake of authenticity ring false. The scene is unfortunate in that it is our initial introduction to Dinah and appears too patently a mouthpiece for certain generalized religious truths which do nothing to build up a sense
of Dinah as a distinct personality. The result of both the narrator's commentary and the dramatized sermon is, therefore, to generalize Dinah to the extent that she remains too distanced from the reader.

Chapter XV, "The Two Bed-chambers," continues this distancing effect. The whole chapter, and the scenes in it, are related almost totally by the narrator, and a sharp, clumsy contrast is set up between Dinah the altruist and Hetty the egoist. The resulting response that George Eliot creates is, I believe, quite the opposite to that which she intended to elicit towards these two characters. It is this chapter which best supports Joan Bennett's assertion that George Eliot "loads the dice" against Hetty, who, in spite of the cumulation of realistic detail which surrounds her, is clearly the allegorical figure, Vanity. The scene between Hetty and Dinah has been described as a painting which "might be called 'Sacred and Profane Love'." The narrator's irony is heavy-handed and harsh: "Ah, what a prize the man gets who wins a sweet bride like Hetty!" (Adam Bede, p. 131); "her narrow bit of an imagination . . . [makes] but dim ill-defined pictures . . . of the future" (Adam Bede, p. 132). The narrator unfolds, with a relentlessly increasing persistence,
the evils of Hetty's character. She is not merely vain, like Bessy Cranage, she is totally without feeling. Hetty is not given a single saving virtue; the reader must be made to feel, and the majority of readers do not, that Hetty is as responsible for her sin as Arthur is. And then the narrator abruptly switches to Dinah to tell us that Dinah is everything that Hetty is not. The tone is totally laudatory, but some of the metaphors are unfortunate, and serve to further distance Dinah rather than engage the reader in the experience of the scene: dressed in her long white night-gown, Dinah looks like "a lovely corpse," and she walks as quietly "as if she had been a ghost" (Adam Bede, pp. 137, 139). Dinah looks out of her window while Hetty looks into her mirror; Dinah thinks of "all the dear people whom she had learned to care for" (Adam Bede, p. 135) while Hetty thinks only of herself; Dinah's heart overflows with love and tenderness while Hetty's is as hard as a stone.

The sharp structural juxtaposition of the two "types," for this what they are both presented as, is too clumsily obvious and heavily exaggerated in a work which makes loud claims for its realism, and the reader is alienated by the narrator's blatant and heavy manipulation of response. The lack of artistic subtlety in
the construction of the chapter and in the narrator's voice is echoed in Dinah's handling of her brief interview with Hetty. This interview is a parallel scene to that between Irwine and Arthur in the next chapter when he is on the point of confessing his temptation for Hetty. Like Irwine, Dinah fails too, only succeeding in frightening Hetty into silence by voicing her ominous premonitions that "trouble" will befall Hetty in the future. Here again is another moment of "crisis and decision," of "possibility" in Adam Bede to soften George Eliot's deterministic universe. But Dinah's vague and solemn language, her "corpse"-like appearance, her evident superiority and aloofness, repel rather than draw out Hetty; as in the scene between Irwine and Arthur, the moment to forestall the unpitying consequences of deeds quickly passes.

George Eliot's "diagram" totally dominates any "picture" in the construction and content of this chapter. The narrator does try to mitigate his elevation of Dinah at the close of the scene by referring to her inexperience and lack of "vision," but the designation of a "higher nature" and a "lower nature" to Dinah and Hetty respectively only finally serves to strengthen the allegorical nature of the whole chapter. And the
reader is left with this unsatisfactory remote vision of Dinah throughout most of the novel, for she does not appear again for thirty chapters, an omission which can only be described as a major lapse in George Eliot's aesthetic judgment. And when she does reappear, in chapter VL, her solemn prayer with Hetty reminds the reader of her aloofness, and her utter calmness in the presence of Hetty's despair and pending death, like her self-assurance at the end of her sermon, seems inhuman. The whole scene is similar to "The Two Bed-chambers" in the sharpness of the contrasts drawn between the two characters and in its distancing effect on the reader's response to Dinah.  

It is at this late stage in the novel that the narrator begins his efforts to persuade the reader that Dinah is caught in a painful dilemma, torn between her love for Adam and her religious vocation. Even though Dinah has been presented as a remote, inhuman character until this point in the novel, there might still be time to "humanize" her if George Eliot had followed her usual aesthetic process. Dinah's dilemma, her inner crisis of choice, needs to be examined in detail if the struggle in such a character is to seem believable and
is to engage the reader's sympathy and imagination. But, in contrast to the treatment of Adam, of Arthur, even of Hetty, who all also undergo great mental anguish, Dinah's psychological and moral crisis is not explored at all by the narrator, with the result that the reader does not feel, though he may understand, that it exists. Until the narrator begins to make vague references to Dinah's blushing in Adam's presence, Dinah has been, as Harvey observes, a static figure. Now we are to infer that her character is in a state of process. The change takes place, however, without George Eliot's characteristic use of the narrator to examine the conflicting choices which beset the individual in a momentous time of decision, and without the involvement of the reader in this process. Psychological analysis is one of George Eliot's main devices for giving her characters validity and individuality, and it is totally absent at this important moment. Dinah does flee to Stonyshire to think, but we never learn what disturbing motives, what inner arguments besiege her before arriving at her difficult decision, a decision which runs contrary to all that she has previously said about marriage.

Since *Adam Bede* is George Eliot's first full-length
novel, her inadequate application of her narrative technique may be attributed to inexperience, but it is an inexperience she does not exhibit in the delineation of the other major characters. We know little of Dinah's background; she only appears in other characters' domestic environments; she comes from Stonyshire, a country which is almost entirely embued with symbolic rather than realistic qualities; and she has no psychological depth. She is an outsider in the Loamshire community. Her isolation and remoteness are emphasized in her first appearance, compounded by her absence in the major part of the novel, and not successfully mitigated by her gratuitous marriage to Adam. The narrator's assertions of Dinah's goodness, altruism, love for others, are not demonstrated adequately enough through action and "in such a way" as to create a sense of Dinah's individuality, and her language has a generalizing quality which helps to fix her as a type. The blunt dichotomy between Hetty and Dinah in chapter XV mocks the narrator's usual pleas for tolerance and understanding of our erring fellow-creatures. The trusting understanding between the narrator and reader, that she cares about her creations and that she wishes her readers to join with her in this care, is
too obviously violated, with the alienating result that
the reader does not follow the narrator's lead in
judging the relative merits of Dinah and Hetty, and
empathetically participating in their lives and choices.

iii. The Mill on the Floss: Introduction

The "last words" (Letters, II, 504) of Adam Bede
were written in November 1858; The Mill on the Floss
followed quickly, and was published in April 1860. During
the intervening time George Eliot's real identity, much
to the consternation of Blackwood, had been revealed.
Both George Eliot and Lewes had become increasingly con-
cerned at the false attribution of Adam Bede to various
individuals. In April 1859; The Times published a letter
which directly stated: "Sir,—The author of Scenes of
Clerical Life and Adam Bede is Mr. Joseph Liggins" (Letters,
III, 48). This assertion was immediately contradicted
by George Eliot in The Times, but rumors and speculations
about the author's identity continued, and finally in
June she told Blackwood "of our resolution no longer to
keep the secret" (Letters, III, 105).

Undoubtedly the disclosure of George Eliot's identity
affected the critical reception of The Mill. Lewes re-
marked in his *Journal*, however, that the "less favorable . . . general talk" about the book was not only due to George Eliot's identity. . . . [He also expressed] doubt whether it is intrinsically as interesting as 'Adam.' Neither the story nor the characters take so profound a hold of the sympathies" (*Letters*, III, 291-292). Carroll notes that many readers objected to the "presentation of spiritual conflict and passionate love" in the novel. A number of the contemporary critics praised the first two volumes, but the last met with almost unanimous disapproval, as indeed it has in all subsequent criticism. George Eliot herself acknowledged that there was some basis for the general quarrel with the structural imbalance between the three volumes: "the tragedy is not adequately prepared. . . . I was beguiled by love of my subject in the two first volumes, [which] caused a want of proportionate fullness in the treatment of the third, which I shall always regret" (*Letters*, III, 317). But she would not acknowledge, as many critics argued, that she was wrong to depict Maggie in love with a man like Stephen Guest, that "mere hair-dresser's block." Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote to John Blackwood (and he forwarded the letter to George Eliot) that "the whole position towards Stephen . . . [was an] error. . . . It may
be quite natural that she should take that liking to him, but it is a position at variance with all that had before been Heroic about her. . . . The indulgence of such a sentiment for the affianced of a friend . . . was a treachery and a meanness according to the Ethics of Art."  

George Eliot replied in terms which are characteristic of her concept of the mixed quality of human nature: "If the ethics of art do not admit the truthful presentation of a character essentially noble but liable to great error—error that is anguish to its own nobleness—then, it seems to me, the ethics of art are too narrow, and must be widened to correspond with a widening psychology" (Letters, III, 318).

The Mill on the Floss is a Bildungsroman which traces the development of Tom and Maggie Tulliver within a fully delineated familial and social environment. It is both a sociological and psychological novel, the latter aspect predominating in the final two books. The children's relatively happy childhood is described with loving detail: "My love of the childhood scenes made me linger over them" (Letters, III, 374). But Tom and Maggie's different temperaments estrange them more and more as they grow up and adjust to the suffering caused by their father's bankruptcy and illness, until they are finally
united in death by the flood. Tom Tulliver has a simple psychological constitution; he is a Dodson, stern, unimaginative, but not devoid of kindness and feeling, and he supposedly understands and loves "Magsie" in his final concentrated moment of vision. Maggie, however, a Tulliver, is much more psychologically complex than Tom; like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, from which much of the imagery in The Mill is drawn, her life's journey is hard, continually beset with perils and temptations. Again, like Christian, Maggie carries a burden, which, to the secularized mind of George Eliot, is made up of character, environment, and chance.

This burden is Maggie's tragedy. We have seen that in her "Notes on the Spanish Gypsy" George Eliot wrote that "tragedy consists" in "the terrible difficulty" of the "adjustment of our individual needs to the dire necessities of our lot." The Mill is George Eliot's first full treatment of this tragic theme, where Maggie's individual needs, her heredity nature, come in conflict with the "oppressive narrowness" of her environment. Bissell sees society in The Mill as "an active agent. Not merely must the heroine subdue the tumult in her own soul; she must fight against the collective prejudices of a society
for which the greatest good can be reckoned only in terms of material success. 37

The "oppressive narrowness" of the industrial provincial society of St. Ogg's is epitomized in the life-style of the Dodsons and their merchant husbands. The "sordid life" of the Dodsons is described most clearly in "A Variation of Protestantism Unknown to Boussuet," where the famous contrast is made between the "romantic" castles of the Rhine and the drab, "commonplace" villages of the Rhone, metaphors for present day St. Ogg's. Maggie, intelligent, passionate, egotistical, idealistic in her demands and expectations of life, rebels against the "oppressive narrowness" of her "lot" and searches continually for "some explanation of this hard, real life" (The Mill, p. 251). But her rebellion is futile and the opiates she tries to alleviate the disparity between her inner desires and the outer reality--books, religion, Philip Wakem--provide no answers.

The Mill, as I have already suggested, is the most obviously and rigidly deterministic novel in all George Eliot's work. Like the witch at the beginning of the book who can either swim, and thus condemn herself as a witch, or drown, Maggie is trapped within the fixed givens
of her character and environment. The only seemingly undetermined factor in Maggie's destiny is chance. It is chance, set in motion by Lucy and Philip's individual and conflicting motives (but then they too act in character), which provides Maggie and Stephen with their fateful opportunity to elope. But Maggie's character determines that she cannot resist this chance, just as much as it determines that she must surely repent of her choice. Irwine had told Arthur Donnithorne that "[t]he man can never do anything at variance with his own nature" (Adam Bede, p. 149), a statement which seems particularly applicable to Maggie's case. For Maggie, it seems, character is "cut in marble."

Neither of the two determining aspects of life—environment and heredity character—can, for Maggie, be reconciled, and to the almost unanimous vexation of critics Maggie is finally allowed to slip out of her bleak dilemma into what may be construed as the comparative ease of oblivion in death. She is never shown living through that "terrible difficulty" of adjusting her individual needs to "the dire necessities of her lot."

The ending of the novel, the death by flood of
Maggie and Tom, has disturbed critics from the book's first publication to the present time. "The denouement," wrote a contemporary critic, "is altogether melodramatic." The flood undoubtedly comes too readily in answer to Maggie's final resolution not to return to Stephen and her frantic prayer for help. To Harvey its sudden appearance borders on the ludicrous. Barbara Hardy sees the ending as inconsistent because The Mill is a psychological novel which is suddenly taken over by an act of Providence: it is a novel which tells "difficult truths and consoling lies." To Speight and Haight, however, the ending is consistent with Maggie's psychological history if the flood is viewed as a symbol of "those ungoverned impulses and vague profound aspirations which bear Maggie to her doom" (The Mill, p. xx). Knoepflmacher sees the flood as symbolic of the destructive commercial forces of middle-class provincial society. And finally, to Levine the flood is symbolic of the redemptive water in Feuerbach, but used deceptively by George Eliot as a "fortuitous" event which allowed her to escape showing Maggie being "tested in [the] . . . complicated social world." Maggie must die, Levine suggests, because, like Arnold with Empedocles on Etna, George Eliot believed that "art which leaves the soul in despair is laming to the soul."
George Eliot's unconscious motives and meaning in the ending of the novel have elicited much psychological criticism. David Smith sees "the organizing principle of The Mill on the Floss . . . [as] an unconscious incestuous passion between Maggie and Tom Tulliver. . . . The river is symbolically associated with the erotic impulse in Maggie, and with movement toward erotic gratification." Michael Steig echoes Smith's views. He also regards the flood as representative of sexual impulse: "it brings her [Maggie] to Tom, erasing all past quarrels, cleansing all impurities, and bringing them to a quasi-sexual apotheosis of a death-embrace." And William R. Steinhoff argues that there is a biographical element in the ending: George Eliot "distinguishes between the defeat that dictated Maggie's last actions and her own resolve to make her union with George Henry Lewes meaningful by trying to make the present better than the past."

Obviously, the ending of The Mill can only finally be termed ambiguous. Passion, however, dominates over Maggie's intellectual and affectionate yearnings, which are satisfied by Philip, but it is ultimately duty which overthrows all else in Maggie's character. It is therefore fitting, I would argue, and perhaps the
only resolution possible, that the great climax of Maggie's life should be her union in death with Tom, who has become duty, synonymous with responsibility, with denial of self, with the ties of the past. 46

iv. Philip Wakem

Philip Wakem, the intelligent, deformed artist, is the chief mentor in The Mill. He tries to teach Maggie to understand her own nature, and functions as a prophetic guide to the reader. He also takes over the role of the narrator in her criticism and analyses of Maggie's psychological constitution, and acts as a control on the narrator's tendency to be uncritically subjective towards Maggie, whom we know is close to being a portrait of George Eliot herself. 47 Philip demonstrates that the "wider vision" which he shares with the narrator is a burden, like his deformity, a source of pain and suffering as well as the cause of his sympathetic understanding of others. Philip's role as mentor seems fairly straightforward. He tells Maggie, as she plays at being a religious martyr, that "stupification is not resignation" (The Mill, p. 286); that "the inmost truth of the old monk's [Thomas à Kempis] out-
pourings" (*The Mill*, p. 255) is that "resignation is the willing endurance of a pain that is not allayed" (*The Mill*, p. 286). He prophetically warns Maggie of the dangers which fanatical negation of self will bring: "You will be thrown into the world some day, and then every rational satisfaction of your nature that you deny now, will assault you like a savage appetite" (*The Mill*, p. 288).

Barbara Hardy has argued, without further elaboration, that Philip Wakem "fully convinces us of his humanity as well as his powers of moral criticism."

My primary concern here is how George Eliot creates his "humanity," and how his particular brand of humanity makes him peculiarly suited to perform his moral function as mentor to Maggie and spokesman for the narrator.

It has been said that *The Mill* is a psychological novel. In many ways, Philip is Maggie, a dramatic representation of a large part of her psychological being. Tom and Stephen are also, of course, symbolically, aspects of Maggie's personality: duty and sensuality. Philip's individual nature is largely revealed in several scenes with Tom and Maggie. In these scenes the narrator's commentary on the meaning, diversity and ambivalence of emotions, opinions and motives of the participants
interweaves closely and unobtrusively with the story so that the reader is often unaware of the degree to which his judgment and sympathy are being manipulated by the narrator and the carefully controlled dramatic scene.

When Philip first appears in the novel it is important to establish a sympathetic relationship between the reader and Philip. Therefore in the initial encounter between Tom and Philip (Book II, iv), Tom's "bovine" blunders, combined with Philip's own speech and action and the guiding voice of the narrator's infrequent interpolations emphasize Philip's intelligence and sensitivity. The reader is thus prepared to accept and believe in Philip later as a trustworthy moral guide and critic of Maggie.

The scene between Tom and Philip is an excellent demonstration of character dramatization through relationship. It also unites the narrow point of view of the young boys with the ironic, humorous, and informing voice of the adult narrator, who draws the reader directly into the scene: "(Philip, you perceive, was not without a wish to impress the well-made barbarian with a sense of his mental superiority)" (The Mill, p. 146). The whole scene is concerned, and the structure is emblematic of
the content, with the familiar problem of judging. Tom begins with certain preconceptions about Philip, molded by his father and by the traditional notion that the deformity which marks Philip out as "different" from the rest of the community must be an expression of "unsatisfactory moral qualities" (The Mill, p. 143). (Maggie, too, is different.)

When Tom goes to meet Philip for the first time the narrator uses what Hardy describes as the "dramatic voice"; we see Philip almost entirely through Tom's eyes: he "did not see how a bad man's son could be very good"; he must be a "spiteful . . . ill-natured hump-back" (The Mill, pp. 142, 144). But Tom's expectations, like the reader's, since Philip is the son of an unscrupulous man, are shaken, for he has "not a disagreeable face"; he is bright and advanced in his studies; he can draw to a degree which is enviable; he knows many fine stories of Greek heroes. Tom inwardly expresses momentary doubt as Wakem's son fails to comply with his prejudgment: "He found much difficulty in adjusting his attitude of mind towards the son of Lawyer Wakem" (The Mill, p. 145). But Tom acts totally in character. Early in the novel the narrator had described Tom as a "most rigid, inflexible" boy, with an "unmodifiable character,"

and the narrator's evaluation is fully dramatized through Tom's inability to adjust his attitude towards Philip. Tom therefore deliberately wounds Philip by alluding to his deformity, and the reader is taken back by the narrator into Tom's stubborn mind: "This hunchback must not suppose that his acquaintance with fighting stories put him on a par with an actual fighting hero, like Tom Tulliver" (The Mill, p. 147). Philip winces under Tom's allusion, and is provoked into a peevish derogatory reply. Triumphant, Tom is assured that his initial evaluation of Philip is vindicated: "Wakem's son, it was plain, had his disagreeable points" (The Mill, p. 147). Tom's judgment has come full circle; the scene structurally enacts the impenetrability of Tom's mind.

In the closing commentary with which George Eliot characteristically frames a dramatic scene the narrator expands on those character traits which Philip's interview with Tom has revealed, and which also have greater significance outside this immediate scene for the meaning of the novel as a whole: his imagination, his intelligence, his sharp insight, his painful sensitivity about his deformity and his strong desire--so like Maggie's--for love: "Philip felt indifference as a child of the south feels
the chill air of a northern spring" (The Mill, p. 148). Throughout the scene the narrator's appearance as a "dramatic entity," who speaks in and about the children, and with the reader, works to involve the reader intimately in this important first encounter between Tom and Philip.

The moving scenes between Maggie and Philip as children set the tone of a relationship whose basis scarcely changes throughout the novel. Maggie's attitude towards Philip, like Tom's, functions as a dramatization of personality: she is loving, tender, egotistic, eager for knowledge. And Philip, even as a child, demonstrates the intelligence and insight into Maggie's nature which only the narrator and reader have possessed until this point in the novel: to young Philip Maggie's eyes are "full of unsatisfied intelligence, and unsatisfied, beseeching affection" (The Mill, p. 158). This insight lasts throughout their relationship: in the last volume, Philip immediately intuits that there is an attraction between Maggie and Stephen, understands the reason in Maggie's character for this attraction, knows that she is struggling against it, and, of course, believes in her innocence at the end.

Since a great deal of Philip's "humanity" has now been dramatized, we can see his similarity to Maggie
and his suitability for the role of Maggie's mentor. These first scenes demonstrate Philip's sensitivity, his imaginative escape from a reality which is bitter to him into a world of literature, art and music; his longing for friendship and admiration which is subdued by his ugly deformed body; his fierce rebellion against his hard lot. Philip carries his equivalent of the constrictions of St. Ogg's upon his back. Except for the crippled body one might almost have a description of Maggie's temperament. The major difference between Maggie and Philip is that the latter knows and understands the complexities of his personality, while Maggie's knowledge of her basic nature is sharply limited.

It is a commonplace that Maggie is not sexually attracted to Philip, and the inference is then drawn that Philip is therefore a kind of impotent being, incapable of strong physical feeling for Maggie. But just as Maggie's passionate feelings are restrained by convention, by fear of self-indulgence, by duty, by ties to the past, so too are Philip's restrained, locked up in a physically deformed body which, as Tom harshly tells Philip, "ought to have put some modesty into your mind. . . . Who wouldn't laugh at the idea of your turn-
ing lover to a fine girl?" (The Mill, p. 302). Philip accepts the role of "brother and teacher" to Maggie because it is the one he knows she will accept. But he tells Maggie, though she does not understand its implication for her, that "a passion . . . [could answer] as well as a faculty . . . [to] lift me above the dead level of provincial existence" (The Mill, p. 286). He persuades himself that the "opportunity of culture" which his friendship will give Maggie can justify his wish to satisfy "the strong feeling he had for her," but "there was a surplus of passion that made him half independent of justifying motives" (The Mill, pp. 288, 289). His desire to see Maggie is likened to a "savage impulse," he suffers constantly under his perception that Maggie looks on him as a brother and not as a lover, but he still "clutched passionately at the possibility that she might love him" (The Mill, p. 269). Like Maggie, Philip longs for beauty in his life. But he wants not only aesthetic and intellectual fulfillment, but physical fulfillment as well: "'There are many other things I long for'--here Philip hesitated a little, and then said--'things that other men have, and that will always be denied me. My life will have nothing great or beautiful in it; I would rather not have lived'" (The Mill, p. 264).
Philip hesitates, of course, because he is afraid to reveal his true passionate feelings for Maggie; to her they must be hidden under his more acceptable aesthetic qualities.

It is because Philip is so like Maggie in temperament himself, passionately and intellectually, that his insight into her character and actions is penetrating, truthful, and believable to the reader. A large part of Philip's "humanity" comes from his not being an impartial observer or judge of Maggie, and the narrator engages in detailed psychological analysis of his unconscious and rationalized motives. Like Maggie, Philip deludes himself constantly about the mixed motives which lie behind his words and actions in his relationship with her. Love is the dominating motive, but it is by no means, as the narrator makes clear, a selfless love, in spite of all Philip's conscious efforts to convince himself of the contrary: "But you must not suppose that he was capable of gross selfishness, or that he could have been satisfied without persuading himself that he was seeking to infuse some happiness into Maggie's life--seeking this even more than any direct ends for himself" (The Mill, p. 269). The narrator's tone is both ironic and tolerant of Philip's humanly delusive, selfish motives.
The true motive behind his acceptance of the role of mere brother and intellectual guide to Maggie is his hope that "perhaps the feeling of love would grow, if she could come to associate him with that watchful tenderness which her nature would be so keenly alive to" (The Mill, p. 269). And again, although Philip speaks the truth when he argues against Maggie's escape into self-denial and renunciation, his motives are never disinterested: "Philip seriously believed what he said, but he said it with vehemence because it made an argument against the resolution that opposed his wishes" (The Mill, p. 287). Again, the response is entirely human.

Although there is a great deal of humanizing psychological analysis of Philip, George Eliot gives little attention to Philip's past familial history, apart from the highly significant problem of his early deformity. In a novel where parents play a significant role, Philip's relationship with his father is, surprisingly, scarcely explored at all. Mr. Wakem, however, an unscrupulous, hard man in business matters is portrayed, unexpectedly, as a kind, indulgent, even understanding parent, more pliable and forgiving than inflexible Mr. Tulliver and Tom. Mr. Gilfil's words in "Mr. Gilfil's
Love Story" are again borne out: "We don't see each other's whole nature"; and the reader is educated a little further in that momentous area of judging. All the major relationships in the novel can be seen as a series of paired incompatible psyches, of fathers and children, brother and sister, lovers and loved. The consequences of the dissonant union between Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver, like the tumultuous waters of the Floss in flood, spread out destructively to Tom and Maggie, Maggie and Philip, Maggie and Stephen, Philip and his father, even Stephen and Lucy, since Maggie annihilates their relationship.

Philip's personal experience of suffering produces in him a sensitive nature and that important "wider vision" which, in The Mill, uniquely suit him for his role as mentor to Maggie. Although, like Mr. Irwine and Dinah with Arthur and Hetty, his understanding has little effect on Maggie, he still convinces the reader of the wisdom of his judgment and substantiates and controls the narrator's detailed analyses and generalized commentary on Maggie. It is a significant artistic device to make Philip Maggie's lover as well as her mentor since his criticisms, warnings, and teachings are all made with a humanized intensity of feeling which results in a content and tone that involve the reader's heart as well as his head with the major moral problems that are the novel's basic concern.
FOOTNOTES

1 The general critical reception of George Eliot's work is discussed in the introduction to Carroll, *The Critical Heritage*, pp. 1-44.

2 It is interesting that two years after Adam Bede was published and George Eliot's identity was known, a Methodist periodical, the London Quarterly Review, criticized its irreligion, noting "the artistic skill which hides its evil beneath its good," Carroll, p. 105.


5 "There is a sense of completion and restoration. Suffering has yielded purpose; though not as Arthur intended, good has come out of evil," *The Early Novels of George Eliot*, p. 125.

6 "The Happy Ending of Adam Bede," ELH, 3 (1936), 227. Creeger sees at the end of Adam Bede not a golden but an autumnal world. The ending did not distress Blackwood, however; he wrote to George Eliot: "very early in the book I took it into my head that it could be 'borne in upon her' [Dinah] to fall in love with Adam" (*Letters*, II, 492).
7 Carroll, p. 81.

8 Character and the Novel, p. 52.

9 Auster discusses the various media in Adam Bede in chapter 5.

10 In Adam Bede George Eliot seems to have put into fiction the prescription in her Riehl article for a study which she would like to see made on "the natural history of our social classes": "If any man of sufficient intellectual breadth, whose observations would not be vitiated by a foregone conclusion, or by a professional point of view, would devote himself to studying the natural history of our social classes, especially of the small shop-keepers, artisans, and peasantry,—the degree in which they are influenced by local conditions, their maxims and habits, the points of view from which they regard their religious teachers, and the degree in which they are influenced by religious doctrines, the interaction of the various classes on each other, and what are the tendencies in their position towards disintegration or towards development,—and if, after all this study, he would give us the result of his observations in a book well nourished with specific facts, his work would be a valuable aid to the social and political reformer" (Essays, pp. 272-273).

11 Harvey, Character and the Novel, p. 52.

12 Goode discusses George Eliot's possible reasons for choosing this particular date.


14 Van Ghent, p. 217.

15 Van Ghent, p. 218.
The history of how George Eliot came to write *Adam Bede* is told in her Journal (*Letters*, II, 502-504).


Bissell, p.230.

Carroll, p. 95.


Dinah is not "static" as Harvey maintains, in *The Art of George Eliot*, p. 180; Creeger notes that Dinah undergoes some change, p.106; Hardy argues, correctly, I think, that "the change in Dinah, who has her limitations of sensibility too like Adam, is very much smaller," p. 39.

Several critics note Dinah's ineffectualness, particularly Goode and Knoopflmacker: "Despite her visionary powers, Dinah is rendered ineffectual by her rootlessness and fastidiousness. . . . She fails with the skeptical Loamshire peasants because, unlike them, she has not looked down sufficiently at the earth," *The Early Novels of George Eliot*, p. 107.

Carroll, p. 96. William F. Jones sees *Adam Bede* "as it develops after the sermon . . . [as] a lengthy example proving the general statements of Dinah's sermon," p. 88.
Goode discusses Dinah's sermon at some length, and points out that "there is no attempt to sentimentalize Methodism's ruthless exploitation of social injustice," p. 39.

"The Two Bed-chambers" chapter is discussed by Auster, pp. 119-120; Hardy, p. 87; Harvey, The Art of George Eliot, p. 141; Stump, p. 25.

The narrator does, however, try to create sympathy for Hetty in the description of her long, painful journey in search of Arthur.

R.T. Jones, p. 17.

Goode also makes this point, p. 39.


Without noting the need for psychological examination of Dinah's struggle, Diekhoff observes that "we do not believe that Dinah, disembodied spirit that she seems, can give up her marriage with God for more earthly ties," p. 223.

Watson also notes the absence of any discussion of the important change Dinah undergoes; there is no "struggle taking place in Dinah's soul. . . . It might have made Dinah a more interesting and sympathetic character," p. 293.

Carroll, p. 114.

The reviewer in the Guardian wrote: "Nobody who reads it can, we should think, avoid the feeling that in the last volume he passes into a new book. There is a clear dislocation in the story, between Maggie's girl-
hood and Maggie's great temptation," Carroll, p. 129.

34

Carroll, p. 121.

36 Thale discusses *The Mill on the Floss* from the point of view of being a sociological novel, pp. 36-57.

Bissell, p. 234.

38 Contrary to James' view, the drowning is prepared for; see Larry Rubin, "River Imagery as a Means of Foreshadowing in *The Mill*," *MLN*, 71 (1955), 18-22.


Carroll, p. 143.


"Incest Patterns in Two Victorian Novels," *Literature and Psychology*, 15 (1965), 147, 149.


"Intent and Fulfillment in the Ending of The Mill on the Floss," in *The Image of the Work*, by B.H. Lehman and Others (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press: 1955), p. 249. See also Keith Brown, "The Ending of The Mill on the Floss," *N&Q*, 9 (1964), 226; John Hagan, "A Reinterpretation of The Mill on the Floss*, *PMLA*, 87 (1972), 53-63. Hagan argues that "the whole of Maggie's story must be seen in reference to her tragic relationship with Tom" (62). There is essentially nothing new in this article to justify the use of the word "re-interpretation" in the title. Mark Spilka, in *Dickens and Kafka: A Mutual Interpretation* (Bloomington, Ind.: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1963) notes a similarity between the incestuous themes of Dombey and Son and The Mill: "George Eliot celebrates Maggie Tuiliver's girlhood love for her brother Tom; but when Maggie reaches puberty, her family is shattered by her father's bankruptcy: from that point onward, economic and sexual distress converge to drive her apart from Tom, until they are finally reunited by that flooded river, already associated with sexual passion, which drowns them in their last embrace—an image which recalls the incestuous deathward flow in Dombey," p. 264.


Leavis, who always directly identifies George Eliot with her narrator, sees "an element of self-idealization" in the portrayal of Maggie, p. 42.

Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot*, p. 79.
CHAPTER IV

THE NARRATOR AND SAVONAROLA AS MENTORS IN ROMOLA

i. Introduction

Even the most sympathetic reader of George Eliot's work would probably agree with the opening sentiments of the anonymous reviewer of Romola, published in 1863: "No reader of Romola will lay it down without admiration, and few without regret." Although James thought that it was "on the whole the finest thing she wrote," he criticized it for being "overladen with learning; it smells of the lamp." And even an admirer like Leavis remarks that "few will want to read Romola a second time, and few can ever have got through it once without groans." It is an intellectually stimulating but not a moving novel. "This monument of excogitation and reconstruction" reflects too patently the wearying effort which went into its research and writing. George Eliot first mentions her "Secret" to Blackwood in August 1860: "When we were in Florence I was rather fired with the idea of writing a historical romance--scene, Florence--period, the close of the fifteenth century, which was marked by Savonarola's career and martyrdom. Mr. Lewes has encouraged me to persevere in the project" (Letters, III, 339). Perhaps
this is one of the times when we could wish that George Eliot had not been quite so dependent on Lewes' judgment and guidance in her work. "Years before, in the Westminster Review, Lewes had glibly declared that in order to write a romance one "needs only to study Scott and the historical novelists; to 'cram' for the necessary information about costumes, antiquated forms of speech, and the leading political events of the epoch chosen'." Yet Lewes had also written, more perceptively, with reference to Charlotte Brontë, that "unless a novel be built out of real experience, it can have no real success. To have vitality, it must spring from vitality." He undoubtedly underestimated the extent to which a deeply serious writer like George Eliot would "cram" for such a project, and Haight's account of her exhausting research in Florence and London makes us understand why even Lewes could advise Blackwood to "discountenance" the "diffident author" from "the idea of a Romance being the product of an Encyclopaedia" (Letters, III, 474). In spite of Lewes' constant urging that she knew enough to get her novel under way, she remained convinced "that she can't write the romance because she has not knowledge enough" (Letters, III, 473), and even when work began it progressed painfully slowly and with many doubts: "'Utterly despondent about my book'; 'trying to write, trying to construct,
and unable'; 'brooding, producing little'; 'dreadfully depressed about myself and my work'; 'I almost resolved to give up my Italian novel'.

After talking with George Eliot about her problems in writing Romola, Blackwood wrote revealingly to his wife:

Her great difficulty seems to be that she, as she describes it, hears her characters talking, and there is a weight upon her mind as if Savonarola and his friends ought to be speaking Italian instead of English. Her description of how she real- ized her characters was very marvellous. I never heard anything so good as her distinction between what is called the real and the imaginative. It amounted to this, That you could not have the former without the latter and greater quality. Any real observation of life and character must be limited, and the imagination must fill in and give life to the picture (Letters, III, 427).

Here, it seems, is the root of the aesthetic failure of Romola, for since the author was so restricted, one might even say, obsessed, by her desire for historical accuracy, her imaginative life-giving quality was stifled or inhibited to such a degree that it could only function feebly and intermittently throughout the novel. George Eliot's own artistic instincts intuited this difficulty even before she began to write: "It may turn out that I can't work freely and fully enough in the medium I have chosen, and in that case, I must give it up" (Letters, III, 417). But Lewes' advice, as I have suggested, pre-
vailed over her better instincts and the laborious task was undertaken and painfully brought to completion. One can feel something like a note of righteous self-defence in George Eliot's reply to Sara Hennell's qualified reaction to *Romola*: "Of necessity, the book is addressed to fewer readers than my previous works, and I myself have never expected—I might rather say intended—that the book should be as 'popular' in the same sense as the others" (Letters, IV, 49). These are not the sentiments of a writer whose strongly reiterated aesthetic and moral purpose in writing professed to be the extension of the sympathies of the reader for his fellow-men. She was more tolerant of Anthony Trollope's comments on the first part of *Romola*, who cautioned "her not to 'fire too much over the heads of your readers'" (Letters, IV, 45); but then Trollope had diplomatically diluted his criticism with praise for "the toil you must have endured in getting up your work" (Letters, IV, 45).

The lifelessness which resulted from this rigid control of the creative imagination was noted in all the contemporary reviews of *Romola*. "However instructive it may be, it is not without a tax on our patience that we read long accounts of Florentine antiquities, and translations of sermons by Savonarola, and extracts from chronicles of
processions. . . . It seems a pity that these things should be done by the authoress of Adam Bede." Even the most favorable review, by R.H. Hutton, the only one which Lewes allowed into the "moral and intellectual hothouse" in which he kept George Eliot sheltered from criticism, commented on the stultifying effects of her choice of a historical setting for her novel. Hutton first commends her for "the constant and striking delineation of social features with which we are all familiar" in Adam Bede, with its "vivid detail, the dry humour, the English pictures." But the reader cannot (and indeed neither, it seems, can the author emotionally) "care about the light Florentine buzz with which so great a part of the first volume is filled. Its allusions are half riddles, and its liveliness a blank to us. Small local colours depend for their charm on the familiarity of small local knowledge." Contrary to the arguments of a modern critic, we never "reach the point where we feel at home in its narrow, winding streets and its broad squares." Throughout his discussion of the Florentine setting in Romola John A. Huzzard appears to confuse or erroneously equate accuracy of detail with liveliness of representation. Sir Leslie Stephen gets closer to the point: "Seven weeks in Florence is a brief period for acclimatization in a new social atmosphere. If an
intelligent Italian had spent seven weeks at the Charing Cross Hotel, walked diligently about Leicester Square and the Strand, read steadily at the British Museum, and rummaged old bookshops in back-streets, how much knowledge would she have acquired of the British costermonger?" Sir Leslie perhaps underestimates George Eliot's "massive intellect" but the essential thrust of his argument nevertheless remains valid.

Since it is the historical setting which is the ultimate cause of Romola's "failure" we must ask ourselves why George Eliot chose this particular period to embark on such a radical change in medium from her usual late eighteenth- or nineteenth-century setting. We know that when she visited Florence with Lewes she became interested in Savonarola's life and its conflicts. She had long ago lost her opposition to religion: "I have no longer any antagonism towards any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves. . . . I have not returned to dogmatic Christianity . . . but I see in it the highest expression of the religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind, and I have the profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christians in all ages" (Letters, III, 231). The "inward life" of Savonarola was a complex and paradoxical one, and the pressures which
the political and social temper of the times brought to bear on this devout yet egotistical man led to a moral dilemma which, in George Eliot's view, had widespread significance. Here was a particularly telling example of the continual struggle in humanity between good and evil, between duty and selfishness, between the altruistic and the egotistical ways of life. She wrote to R.H. Hutton: "I am sorry she [Romola] has attracted you so little; for the great problem of her life, which essentially coincides with a chief problem in Savonarola's, is one that readers need help to understand" (Letters, IV, 97). Romola realizes suddenly "that the problem before her was essentially the same as that which had lain before Savonarola [in his disobedience of the Pope]--the problem where the sacredness of obedience ended, and where the sacredness of rebellion began" (Romola, p. 273).

But a further problem which Savonarola and Romola share, and which has particular relevance to the nineteenth century, is their loss of faith: Savonarola finally cannot believe that his God will save him from the flames; and Romola's faith in humanity and God, in Tito and Savonarola respectively, is temporarily shattered. Tito and Savonarola also share similar, general "problems." They are both concrete representations of the universal "doubleness which
is the pressing temptation in every public career, whether of priest, orator, or statesman" *(Romola, p. 461).* Although Romola may seem to choose selfishly in her rejection of Tito, she chooses to "drift away" to death. After her baptism of suffering she is able to live without the support of any conventional transcendental doctrines; she becomes yet another follower of the religion of humanity while caring for the plague-stricken village, and returns to Florence to lead a truly altruistic life.

The "historical moment" of *Romola* was one of paradox, as R. H. Hutton observes several times in his review, a time of "liberal culture," of "turbid visionary mysticism," of "political falsehood which was just going to be called Machiavellian." It was a time of massive change, an era which produced such diverse men as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Machiavelli, the "bad" popes who were also great patrons of the arts, and a powerful religious reformer like Savonarola. There are obvious parallels in the period with George Eliot's own time, also an age of transition, of vast expansion in learning, of doubt and faith, which produced men like Keble, Newman, and the Oxford Movement, as well as the Higher Critics, great scientific thinkers like Darwin, Lyell, Huxley, humanists like Froude, Harrison, George Eliot herself.
Lawrence Poston argues that "critics have tended to view George Eliot's Romola as a Victorian drama in Florentine dress." Although the inclusiveness of his judgment is exaggerated, there is some truth to his statement. But the critics have not been as misguided as Poston implies, for the whole thrust of the "Proem" argues for the continuity between the past and present, emphasizing that the human condition and its problems in Florence of 1492 are essentially the same as in the present day, in spite of the accidents of history which might seem to have wrought great changes: Florence stands "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" (Romola, p. 2).

This historical period of transition, set in "the most civilized city in the world, and the chief source of the Renaissance," which from 1494-98 underwent a spiritual revival under Savonarola, allowed George Eliot to examine the function of religion in men's lives and to see a continuity between the two periods in the human needs it served. We are reminded of young John Stuart Mill before he discovered Wordsworth when we read Hutton's comments on George Eliot's qualifications on the new learning:

We find a younger generation, represented by Romola, and Dino, and Tito, that has inherited
this scholarship, and finds it wholly inadequate for its wants, looking upon that almost as dry bones which the older generation felt to be stimulating nourishment,—and either turning from it, like Dino, to the rapture of mystical asceticism, or using it, like Tito, as a useful sharp-edged tool in the battle of Florentine politics, or trying, like Romola, to turn it to its true purpose, viz., that of clarifying and sifting the false from the true purpose, in the great mysterious faith presented to her conscience by Savonarola.21

Characteristically, for George Eliot, a life of thought, of pure unadulterated learning, cannot satisfy the needs of the heart. Bardo, the Renaissance scholar, though freed from the narrowing bonds of religious belief, is still enslaved by his thwarted scholarly ambitions, a fifteenth-century Casaubon who lives with "the shadows of the dead." Baldassare, another scholar, teaches Tito to reverence only learning, to scorn religion, with the result that Tito has no moral values at all. Religion, through Savonarola, renews Romola's need to feel, although she, like George Eliot herself,22 learns to do without the "opium" of Savonarola's personal support, to find, like Piero de Cosimo, that it is "enough to live, without spinning lies to account for life."23

In the parallels between the fifteenth- and nineteenth-centuries George Eliot saw a continuity in the needs and the moral problems of humanity. There is a connection be-
tween the setting and theme of *Romola*, as Professor Poston argues, however imperfectly it is achieved; but the moral ideas in the book, the judgments which are made on human nature, are timeless and universal. I would not go as far as Carole Robinson in suggesting that in *Romola* we have a budding existentialist manifesto, but one can agree with her more moderate claim that it does have particular reference for the nineteenth century and some of the moral crises which were causing many thinking individuals to re-evaluate their beliefs and adopt new ones. George Eliot's work would indeed have been a complete failure if her historical novel had had no application to her own time, for her didactic intention in writing would then have been totally violated.

**ii. The Narrator**

Since few readers would dispute the soundness of George Eliot's "ideas" in *Romola*, what aesthetic reasons are the cause of its failure to engage a sympathetic response? What aspects of George Eliot's narrative technique are absent or used differently in this novel from her other work? How in particular, since I propose to examine the delineation of the mentor in the novel,
does the narrator deal with Savonarola? Chapter
Two argued that George Eliot's omniscient narrator is
the major artistic device with which she establishes
a dramatic relationship with both her reader and
characters, and which functions to elicit an imaginative/
contemplative response to her fiction. It was noted
that the personal, subjective tone of the narrator in
the earlier work draws the reader into the novel, that
the narrator carefully controls the reader's sympathy and
judgment towards the characters and action, points out
relationships and larger significances of meaning. But
there is no such intimate, engaged narrative voice in
Romola. After the "Proem" the reader is rarely addressed
directly; the narrator never once appears directly as "I";
there is no sense of the narrator as a viable, "dramatic
entity." The narrative voice, if it can be said to exist
here at all, is that of an impartial, perfectly balanced,
disembodied neutral, whose lofty, often sententious wisdom
conveys none of the warm sympathetic feeling for the human
dilemmas, for the contradictory aspects of human nature
which we feel in the earlier work. (I shall therefore refer
to the narrator in Romola as "it.") The voice is an abstract-
ion, a set of judicial scales eternally weighing the good
and evil in her characters, balancing the arguments for and
against their actions, coldly measuring the antithetical
motives which spring from their paradoxical natures. A description of the narrator, or rather the tone, is perhaps best summed up in some commentary on Savonarola and his relationship to the politics of Florence: "the finer shades of fact which soften the edge of such antithesis are not apt to be seen except by neutrals, who are not distressed to discern some folly in martyrs and some judiciousness in the men who burnt them" (Romola, p. 397).

It is difficult, indeed impossible, to enter into a dramatic relationship with a "neutral" voice. An uninvolved voice does not encourage the imaginative participation and sympathetic response which George Eliot intended to produce. The voice is devoid of humor; there is none of the witty irony here with which the involved narrator treats the inhabitants of Milby, Mrs. Poyser, the Dodsons, Dorothea. Apart from the grand historical irony created by the use of actual events and people, there is little of the usual wry historical comparison between the "enlightened" present and the "ignorant" past. Only occasionally is there this kind of irony in Romola: "It was a human foible at that period (incredible as it may seem) to recite quarrels, and favour scholarly visitors with the communication of an entire and lengthy correspondence" (Romola, pp. 65-66); or, "in those times, as now, there were human beings [like
Romola] who never saw angels" (Romola, p. 283). Criticism is sharp and sententious: "To the common run of mankind it has always seemed a proof of mental vigour to find moral questions easy, and judge conduct according to concise alternatives" (Romola, p. 454). The important question of judging is familiar, but the lofty, superior tone is not.

Although the neutral tone is the one which predominates, I do not mean to suggest that other narrative tones never enter the novel. But since the reader is kept at a distance from the narrator and its world for long periods of time, even one-sided criticism seems strangely removed: "The pre- vision that Fra Luca's words had imparted to Romola had been such as comes from the shadowy region where human souls seek wisdom apart from the human sympathies which are the very life and substance of our wisdom; the revelation that might have come from the simple questions of filial and brotherly affection had been carried into irrevocable silence" (Romola, p. 141). Even the substance of this criticism is neutralized by the narrator's earlier qualifications of the inadequacies of learning in Bardo and Tito which also can be said to "seek wisdom apart from the human sympathies." This tone of neutrality is very different from the tone of wise tolerance which I have suggested is the
essence of George Eliot's narrative voice and vision and which was summed up by Maynard Gilfil's remark to Tina. What is missing, of course, is the sympathy, a sympathy which George Eliot was so concerned to produce, which predominates in the earlier attitude. There is in this disengaged observer too much of the aspect of the scientist examining and analyzing the process and outcome of an experiment, or the biologist carefully dissecting an interesting specimen. The uninitiated reader is apt to listen only to the theory and forget the details. For example, the narrator observes several times that Romola is both attracted and repulsed by religion, and the reader moves back and forth as the narrator's judicious scale first tips one way and then the other: Romola feels alienated from her brother at his death-bed because of his fanatical superstitions, yet she is awed and impressed by Savonarola at the same time. She is curious to know "the thoughts of men who sank in ecstasy before the pictured agonies of martyrdom," yet she is aware of the narrowness and hypocrisy of many of Savonarola's ideas and his followers. She feels "that there must be some truth in what moves them [Savonarola and Dino]," yet she is repulsed by the evil visions of religious zealots like Camilla Ruccellai. Of course Romola is just in both her reactions towards religion, for the novel makes clear that religion
partakes of both higher and lower qualities and appeals
to the higher and lower instincts in mixed human nature.
The resulting aesthetic effect, however, is almost as
though the narrator were coldly saying, quite uncharacter-
istically for George Eliot: there is the evidence, now
judge for yourself. If the reader is certainly not so
controlled or manipulated as in earlier work, here he is
also not soimaginatively engaged.

This unusual distance which we feel in Romola between
the narrator, her characters, and readers, springs from
George Eliot's attitude towards her historical material.
The role of truthful historian, which she felt bound to
adopt in her treatment of her medium, she carried over
into her treatment of character. Savonarola, of course,
is an historical figure, but even Tito, who is developed
out of her imagination rather than out of "facts," is also
treated with an extraordinary amount of balance, his evil
actions and thoughts frequently being qualified or neutral-
ized by the narrator's commentary. Undoubtedly Romola is
treated with much more sympathy than this narrator ever
allows to any other character in the novel, and some effort
is made to manipulate the reader's attitude sympathetically
towards her. But this manipulation is performed mainly
through the narrator's repetitive references at the beginning
of the novel to Romola's ardent, loving nature (which is never dramatized, as Maggie Tulliver's or Dorothea Brooke's are), starved for affection, wise in learning but naive with respect to relationships and the realities of suffering and evil in the world. The narrator persistently refers to Romola's innocence; she is in "a state of girlish simplicity"; she "had never dreamed that there was a scholar in the world who would smile at a deficiency" (Romola, pp. 50, 55). Romola is completely taken in by Tito's beautiful appearance; she is "as simple and unreserved as a child in her love for Tito," as innocent, ironically, in matters of personal relationships as Tessa, that "tiny fish" who needs "very little water to make a perfect pool" (Romola, pp. 154, 95). Unlike George Eliot's other heroines, Romola is educated. She has the learning Maggie yearns for and which Dorothea lacks. Yet, as I have said, it is of no value in the establishment and continuance of human relationships. Rather, it is a hindrance here, for Tito cannot, in the face of Romola's piercing understanding of the extent of the baseness of his conduct, confess his sin to her of his abandonment of Bardo.

The remoteness of Romola, added to the distanced tone of the narrator and the alien nature of the Florentine milieu, all work to block the reader's imaginative response to the heroine. Romola, as George Levine points out, "is
never treated with the ironic detachment which at once humanizes Dorothea Brooke." George Eliot's treatment of Romola results in the creation of a purely illustrative character, not a representative one. The accumulation of elevating language surrounding her is enormous and tiresomely repetitive. She is referred to several times as being "as fair as a Florentine lily" (Romola, pp. 166, 173); she has a "noble nature," a "large nature," an "odour of queenliness" (Romola, pp. 113, 212, 167). To Tito, in his luxurious fantasy, she is a goddess, Ariadne to his Bacchus, a "Pléiad," whose nobility and purity, ironically, from the very beginning of their relationship, is an implicit accusation to him. Even to prosaic Monna Brigida, Romola "has that way of walking like a procession," and to Tessa and the people of Florence and the plague-stricken village she is a saint, a "visible Madonna." We see Romola finally as a symbol of a woman possessed with the general qualities of intelligence and deep feeling who is twice faced with a difficult moral choice between duty and disobedience, and who learns, finally, the universal lesson, as Levine observes, that there must ultimately come "a moment for her when the soul must have no guide but the voice within" (Romola, p. 425). After her second flight from Florence, Romola's sense of freedom and despair may, perhaps, be labelled an "existentialist
dilemma," but it is more true to say it is merely a human one, not confined to the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Levine more correctly argues that Romola becomes "the romantic heroine whose problems are universal and ultimately not dependent on the contingent and the conditional." But the elevation, the remoteness of Romola, acts as a barrier to prevent the reader's "imagining" and "feeling" with her in her great crises. The reader takes his cue from the narrator, and only calmly observes, contemplates, but is not moved to sympathy.

I have already argued that the temporal and spatial dimensions in George Eliot's novels are aspects of her narrative technique which function to create a realistic medium for her characters. George Eliot obviously tried to follow the usual "habit" of her "imagination" in Romola as well, but the alien nature of her historical material could not engage the imaginations of her English reader's in the same way as the media of her earlier—and later—novels. The great religious festivals, even though painstakingly accurate in detail, the political gatherings, the fairs, the sermons, all intended to convey the vital communal life of Florence, could not have the same "realistic" effect when compared to similar rituals like Arthur Donnithorne's birthday feast, the sermons and harvest festival in Adam
Bede, the clan gatherings of the Dodsons in *The Mill*, the great political debates in *Felix Holt*, the meetings of provincial society in the pubs and at the auction in *Middlemarch*. To the vast majority of readers even an admiration for George Eliot's accuracy in rendering her Florentine medium is impossible, since only Italian scholars like Anthony Trollope could, and still can, appreciate her subtle use of colloquial words and phrases which George Eliot's research told her were common at the time. The physical details of the architecture, the piazzas, the streets of Florence are all, of course, equally accurate, but again remote from the experience of most of her readers. They can only be comprehended intellectually, but not felt as living, known towns or regions, like Milby, Hayslope, St. Oggs, Treby Magna, *Middlemarch*. Again, the resulting effect on the reader is a restriction of sympathy for the characters and even for the important ideas which they embody. But the great "moral problems" which beset Romola and Savonarola, are, as we have seen, independent of setting. The same point could be made of all George Eliot's "ideas" in her novels, but it is the measure and test of her artistic achievement that her narrative technique is frequently able to make these ideas "thoroughly incarnate."
Yet another means of distancing the reader from her fictional world in *Romola* is George Eliot's sustained and heavily self-conscious use of art symbolism, an aspect of the novel which Barbara Hardy deals with in some detail in terms of its use as a "prophetic voice." This symbolism supplies much of the moral commentary on Tito's character, which more generally, in George Eliot's work, comes from the narrator. Tito is Simon the Greek betrayer; Bacchus, the hedonist; the "laughing Satyr" in Piero de Cosimo's "symbolical picture." The art symbolism also surrounds Romola. She is the Ariadne of Tito's picture, who is uncrowned in her disillusionment, Antigone in her ministrations to her father, blind Oedipus, the "sorrowing Magdalen" in the "symbolical picture," all suitably elevating images. Mrs. Hardy notes that the reader does not learn about Tito's past "until he ceases to withhold it from his own consciousness."²⁹ We initially "do not know much about Tito, except that he has a special sensibility to certain references,"³⁰ like Bratti's joke that he has stolen the jewels, his shock at Piero's request that he should sit for him as Simon, Bardo's casual remark that the price of Tito's jewels is "more than a man's ransom."

Mrs. Hardy argues that in her handling of Tito George Eliot "has moved a long way from her affectionate exposition
of character in the Scenes and Adam Bede." But I would argue that it is not a wholly satisfactory development in Romola, since it diminishes the narrator's usual ability to draw the reader into the novel. It is to the ultimate detriment of Romola that the "tone of familiarity" which Mrs. Hardy sees "diffused through her novels" appears only intermittently in Romola. It is the absence of the characteristic familiar voice and the consequent dramatic relationship between the "tale and the teller" that restricts the reader's sympathetic response, the major intention of all George Eliot's work. It is this major and distinctive change in George Eliot's usual narrative mode which results in the aesthetic failure of Romola.

iii. Savonarola

We have seen that Savonarola represents the major "ideas" of the struggle between the egotistical and altruistic life, between the choice of good over evil, between duty and disobedience. To George Eliot this universal struggle seemed more serious and difficult for the person in public life than for the private individual, like Romola. George Eliot tried to vitalize these ideas in her delineation of Savonarola as public mentor to Florence and private mentor to Romola. But finally, to George Eliot, the public and private moral values
of an individual cannot be separated, and in his public betrayal of his private avowals to Romola of submission to duty and altruistic love for others without regard for the self, Savonarola destroys both Romola's private and public faith in him as a spiritual leader.

Since Savonarola was an historical figure, and since George Eliot was scrupulously true to her sources, she was unable to individualize, to humanize, to dramatize him to the same extent possible if there were not such a severe check on her creative imagination. Savonarola's life, much more than Tito's and Romola's, was "dependent on certain grand political and social conditions which made an epoch in the history of Italy" (Romola, p. 178). The gross corruption of the Church, the revival of learning with its consequent religious scepticism, the violent political strife of the times all combined with "his ardent, power-loving soul" (Romola, p. 182) to determine (another familiar "idea" of George Eliot's in this novel) the course and outcome of his life. All George Eliot's factual knowledge of Savonarola, must, of necessity, come from the many sources she consulted on his life: histories, biographies, his own writings. In particular, her portrait owes much to Vallari's sympathetic but not uncritical biography of Savonarola, published in Italy in 1860, and to Machiavelli's
contemporary, sceptical evaluation of Savonarola's character and ambitions. The narrator, throughout Romola, continually tries to balance these two views of Savonarola, so much so that the reader is constantly aware of the narrator's perpetual argument on the dual devout and egotistical aspects of Savonarola's nature. The narrator finally sways the balance of sympathy in favor of Savonarola, uncharacteristically asserting that the pursuit of personal glory, when combined with great ends, must not be unduly condemned. The public figure cannot, it seems, be judged by the private individual. Romola, in her final revulsion towards Savonarola, is only partly right. Romola cannot see "as God sees," but then George Eliot seems to have decided that neither can the narrator here, since it is restricted by the facts of historical sources. Throughout the delineation of Savonarola there is a constant, strained effort to be just to him, to analyze assiduously his conflicting motives. But the characteristic compassion and tolerant sympathy which George Eliot's narrator usually conveys for her characters with deeply troubled consciences, like Bulstrode in Middlemarch, is, for the most part, absent.

We can observe the intellectual restraints working in the significant, initial construction of Savonarola's character. The narrator is completely absent; historical
accuracy demands that we are to learn about Savonarola from his contemporary citizens in Florence. There is to be no intimate relationship established between the narrator and the reader. The "resuscitated Spirit" in the "Proem" establishes a perspective of historical irony which pervades the whole novel, but which has particular significance for the main historical figure, Savonarola. The Spirit has listened to Savonarola preaching; to him Savonarola seemed "'a noteworthy man . . . somewhat arrogant and extreme. . . . But a Frate Predicatore who wanted to move the people—how could he be moderate. . . . How has it all turned out?'' (Romola, p. 6) the fifteenth-century Florentine wonders. Histories have been written on how it all turned out; the basic historical facts cannot be changed. The reader, inferentially, in theory if not in fact, is as omniscient as the narrator concerning the progress of Savonarola's life. Every reference and appearance of Savonarola is affected by this muted historical irony. The narrator cannot manipulate the reader's response to Savonarola with anything like the freedom which is available to it when the outcome of characters' lives is unknown. The "fixed givens" of the historical figure, in an historical setting, his personality, his background, his medium, severely limit George Eliot's creative freedom to involve her reader imaginatively with Savonarola.
The "Spirit" in the "Proem" also establishes the note of balance which will characterize the narrator's presentation of Savonarola throughout the novel. He has heard Savonarola denounce the very real wickedness of the clergy and of the people of Florence; yet Savonarola is "arrogant and extreme." But then, and the argumentative note begins, as it will continue in the course of the novel, if he were to do any good, to achieve any great ends, "how could he be moderate?" In the opening chapter, which is set in Nello's shop and which is the focal point for much of the choric commentary on the political and social life of Florence, this dual attitude towards Savonarola is continued and further developed. Nanni speaks out forcibly in favor of the monk, asserting his belief in Savonarola's visions that a scourge is coming to Florence. In reply, a Florentine citizen ridicules Nanni's belief in the Frate's visions, implying that Savonarola is a dreaming self-deluded mystic. Machiavelli expresses his admiration for the moving power of Savonarola's "great" oratory, while he still retains reservations about his "saintliness." Cennini, a sceptic, admits reluctantly that Savonarola's "life is spotless," to which Cei replies that "'he is satisfied with the pleasant lust of arrogance. . . . I can see it in that proud lip and satisfied eye of his. . . . He hears the air filled with his own name' (Romola,
p. 146). Later in the novel simple Monna Brigida tells Romola of Savonarola's influence on a wedding she has attended, innocently revealing Savonarola's purifying but also deadening effect on the happy ritual. Her words suggest a lack of moderation and an aspect of egotistical fanaticism in the views of Savonarola's disciples which are similar to those found in their mentor.

All these views on Savonarola, on his character, on his influence on his listeners, are given by sceptics and believers, by those who are mixed in their attitude towards him. All the opinions have their basis in historical fact. They combine to suggest both the greatness and the littleness of the man,—his egotism, his devout and just criticism of a corrupt Church and State and his efforts to turn people from their evil ways, his fanatical assertion and belief in himself as the vessel of God's prophetic visions. There is no attempt to influence the reader strongly for or against Savonarola. Until this point in the novel the narrator has merely neutrally recounted opinions, in proper historian-like fashion.

In chapter XXI, however, the narrator speaks at length about Savonarola, and we might here expect some of the sense of the narrator as a "dramatic entity" in Romola. But the voice is impersonal, and the content is rendered even more so by its being embedded in considerable historical document-
ation about the political and social temper of the age.
Florence awaits the entrance of the French army which
Savonarola has preached will fulfil his visions to scourge
and purify Florence. The narrator tells us that "this
man had a power rarely paralleled, of impressing his be-
liefs on others, and of swaying very various minds. . . .
Savonarola appeared to believe, and his hearers more or
less waveringly believed, that he had a mission like
that of the Hebrew prophets. . . . The idea of prophetic
gifts was not a remote one in that age" (Romola, pp. 180-1).
There is an objective quality to "appeared," and the final
sentence has the ring of the careful researcher. A few
paragraphs later there is a discordant ironic note, created
by the narrator's and reader's historical omniscience, in
the brief comment made at the end of Savonarola's force-
ful sermon in the Duomo: "A loud responding sob rose at
once from the wide multitude, while Savonarola had fallen
on his knees and buried his face in his mantle. He felt
in that moment the rapture and glory of martyrdom without
its agony" (Romola, p. 200).

At the close of this chapter (XXI) the narrator finally
begins an analysis of Savonarola's character which clearly
reveals its attitude towards him: one of clear-sighted,
almost scientifically balanced fairness:

His need of personal predominance, his
labyrinthine allegorical interpretations
of the Scriptures, his enigmatic visions,
and his false certitude about the Divine
intentions, never ceased, in his own large
soul, to be ennobled by that fervid piety, that passionate sense of the infinite, that active sympathy, that clear-sighted demand for the subjection of selfish interest to the general good, which he had in common with the greatest of mankind (Romola, p. 204).

The sentence is accurately balanced; four counts for Savonarola and four against. Then follows the characteristic statement on the difficulty of judging our fellow-men, but here judgment is rendered even more difficult for the narrator because Savonarola is an historical figure, not a fictional creation: "The mysteries of human character have seldom been presented in a way more fitted to check the judgments of facile knowingness than in Girolamo Savonarola" (Romola, p. 204). The narrator finally asserts the point of view, if such an evaluative term can be used, which will be adopted towards Savonarola throughout the rest of the novel, one which will constantly balance the paradoxical aspects of his personality. The voice uses the inclusive "we," a rare occurrence in Romola, to persuade the reader to feel sympathy for Savonarola:

We can give him a reverence that needs no shutting of the eyes to fact, if we regard his life as a drama in which there were great inward modifications accompanying the outward changes. And up to this period, when his more direct action on political affairs had only just begun, it is probable that his imperious need of ascendancy had burned undiscernibly in the strong flame of his
zeal for God and man . . . [for though] the victim is spotted . . . , it is not therefore in vain that his mighty heart is laid on the altar of men's highest hopes (Romola, pp. 204-5).

But although the narrator has exhorted the reader to share in its "wider vision," there is still here the attitude of scrupulous objectivity in the narrative tone, still the absence of any genuine, engaged compassion which we hear in the narrator's similar pleas for sympathy for other characters in other novels.

The two important scenes (in chapters XL and LIX) between Romola and Savonarola function as dramatic representations of the dual, conflicting aspects of his character. In the first scene Savonarola appears in a positive light, as a worthy and truthful mentor to Romola. Since the time of the first scene is one of emotional and moral crisis for Romola and since Savonarola has a direct and unwavering prescription for her dilemma, the narrator analyzes Romola's inner struggle, while Savonarola is presented dramatically. Savonarola here teaches Romola certain truths which are familiar in George Eliot's work: the sanctity of human ties--her marriage bond--must not and cannot be broken lightly: "My daughter, your life is not as a grain of sand, to be blown by the winds; it is a thing of flesh and blood, that dies if it be sundered" (Romola, p. 316). He urges Romola
to seek the "higher life," to abandon her desire for personal happiness, to bear her suffering willingly, to begin to live a truly altruistic life:

"Make your marriage—sorrows an offering too, my daughter: an offering to the great work by which sin and sorrow are being made to cease. The end is sure, and is already beginning. Here in Florence it is beginning, and the eyes of faith behold it. And it may be blessedness to die for it: to die daily by the crucifixion of our selfish will—to die at last by laying our bodies on the altar. My daughter, you are a child of Florence; fulfil the duties of that great inheritance. Live for Florence—for your own people, whom God is preparing to bless the earth. Bear the anguish and the smart. The iron is sharp—I know, I know—it rends the tender flesh. The draught is bitterness on the lips. But there is rapture in the cup.... Come, my daughter, come back to your place!" (Romola, p. 316).

Throughout the scene we see only the pious and worthy aspect of Savonarola, exercised in all its force to influence a sceptical mind which, in this moment of great need, experiences the inadequacies of reason to cope with suffering, disillusionment, and despair. This first scene with Romola elicits a respect, if not a feeling of sympathy for a "breathing, individual form," for Savonarola, for he speaks persuasively, sincerely, passionately, though the voice has the quality of a public orator. Yet historical irony, in place of the narrator, mutely qualifies the whole
scene, for both reader and narrator inferentially know that Savonarola will be unable to sacrifice his life for Florence or religion when the crucial test comes.

In the second scene (chapter LIX) between Romola and Savonarola the negative, egotistical, power-loving aspect of his personality is dramatized. Here the positions of the two characters are reversed. Romola now becomes a kind of mentor to Savonarola, admonishing him for placing his public ambition before his private compassion. In this scene, when it is now Savonarola who is passing through his mental crisis, both narrator and Romola probe his conscience. Unlike in the earlier scene, now Savonarola's speech does not flow easily; there is hesitation, evasion, silence in answer to Romola's searching questions about the truthfulness of his stated motives. Although he had earlier taught Romola to sacrifice personal satisfaction for love of State and God, now Savonarola equates his personal ambitions with God's plans and the good of Florence: "'The cause of my party is the cause of God's kingdom'" (Romola, p. 427). This display of supreme egotism repulses Romola and the reader; yet the narrator again tries to achieve a sense of objective balance in its attitude and the reader's response to Savonarola. The mental crisis, the narrator argues, which leads Savonarola to sacrifice
seven men to further his own party is the result of the
"hard struggle which made half the tragedy of his life--
the struggle of a mind possessed by a never-silent hunger
after purity and simplicity, yet caught in a tangle of
egoistic demands, false ideas, and difficult outward
conditions, that made simplicity impossible" (Romola, p. 425).

The duality of Savonarola's nature is yet once again
stressed and the severity of Romola's judgment is modified
in the next chapter as the narrator's disengaged, general-
izing tone pronounces its intellectual judgment: "It was
inevitable that she[Romola] should judge the Frate unfairly
on a question of individual suffering, at which she looked
with the eyes of personal tenderness, and he with the eyes
of theoretic conviction" (Romola, p. 435). Since Savonarola's
purpose as redemptive mentor of the Church and State was
"grand"; since "difficult outward conditions" of his historical
times contrived with his inner nature to test him harshly;
since he was a public and not a private citizen, he cannot
be judged as other men: "tender fellow-feeling for the
nearest has its danger too, and is apt to be timid and sceptical
towards the larger aims without which life cannot rise into
religion" (Romola, p. 435).

And so the two scenes balance each other, their structure
and content an embodiment of the objective, historical attitude
which the narrator takes towards Savonarola in particular and the novel in general. Almost all the narrator's references to Savonarola, after an initial reticence, partake of this note of judicious, scientific detachment, of neutrality. The narrator can scarcely be said to be present at all as a feeling, compassionate entity, seeing as Feuerbach's Christ sees, as the narrator does in the earlier novels. The narrator is never "immanent" in Romola, a quality which J. Hillis Miller believes is a general characteristic of the Victorian omniscient narrator, and which is frequently a quality which George Eliot's narrator exhibits. The choice of an historical medium, which to George Eliot's conscientious nature meant adherence to scrupulous accuracy, the stiltedness and alien sound and tortured syntax of much of the language, again the result of her efforts to be authentic, the use of a great historical figure whose life and character had been well documented, all lead to a strict control over her creative impulse which inhibits George Eliot's narrator's characteristic involvement in the novel and with the reader. George Eliot's striving for historical accuracy disrupts the balance of elements usually found in her narrative technique. The aesthetic "failure" of Romola is, ironically, a tribute to the importance of George Eliot's narrator as "dramatic entity"
in her work, sympathetically engaged with her fictional
world and its characters, and, most importantly, her readers.
FOOTNOTES

1  Carroll, p. 207.

2  Atlantic Monthly, 55 (1885), 675.

3  The Great Tradition, p. 50.

4  Leavis, pp. 47-48.

5  Haight, George Eliot, p. 353.

6  Frazer's Magazine, 36 (1847), 691.

7  Haight, George Eliot, p. 351.

8  Carroll, p. 208.

9  Carroll, pp. 198-205.

10  Carroll, p. 39.

11  Carroll, p. 199.

12  Carroll, p. 199.


14  George Eliot, p. 129.

15  One reviewer wrote that "This concentration of self in the reckless pursuit of a personal gratification is the strongest expression of that tendency in our race which is uniformly decried throughout Romola," Carroll, p. 219.
16 Carole Robinson examines "the motif of choice ... within the heroine" in "Romola: A Reading of the Novel," VS, 6 (1962), 30.


19 Avrom Fleishman notes the parallels between the two ages: "For the mind that desires clarity in an age of cultural transition—whether Renaissance or Victorian—not only religious but political ideals seem indelibly tainted by the partisanship and selfishness of their human embodiments," The English Historical Novel (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 161.


21 Carroll, p. 201.

22 See Knöepflmacher, Religious Humanism, who argues that there is a connection between Romola's religious disillusionment and young George Eliot's.

23 Levine suggests that "Romola's full moral experience depends on her liberation from external guidance and on absolute confrontation with self, regardless of the pressures of the external world," "Romola as Fable," in Critical Essays on George Eliot, pp. 90-91.

24 "Romola as Fable," p. 85.

25 Leavis argues that Romola "represents something other than the failure of a powerful mind to warm analysis into creation; she is a palpably emotional presence. Romola, in fact, is another idealized George Eliot, less real than Maggie Tulliver, and more idealized," p. 48.
26 Robinson, p 40.

27 "Romola as Fable," p. 90.

28 There is some truth, however, to Poston's assertion that "the argument of the novel is enhanced by the parallels between public and private action, the dilemma of Savonarola and that of Romola, the degeneration of Tito and that of the Florentine state" (p 365).

29 The Novels of George Eliot, p. 182.

30 Hardy, p. 181.

31 The Novels of George Eliot, p. 182.

32 The Novels of George Eliot, p. 158.

33 Huzzard points out that George Eliot's "verdict on the Friar is compounded from the idealistic and frankly devout Villari and the worldly Machiavelli" (p 164).

34 Harvey discusses the historical irony in the opening of Romola, The Art of George Eliot, pp. 112-3.

35 Miller, p. 84.

36 The Form of Victorian Fiction, p. 64.
CHAPTER V

THE NARRATOR AND THE GARTHS AS MENTORS IN MIDDLEMARCH

i. Introduction

After her difficulties with the medium of fifteenth century Florence in Romola George Eliot returned to the familiar ground of her native Midlands in Felix Holt and Middlemarch; apart from the Continental excursions in Daniel Deronda the novels following Romola are all placed in England. George Eliot's first reference to Blackwood concerning Middlemarch was made in February, 1869: "I mean to begin my novel at once, having already sketched the plan. . . . The various elements of the story have been soliciting my mind for years" (Letters, V, 16). But, Haight records, the "beginning was postponed by her trip to Italy; and its progress shattered" by the return of Lewes' son, Thornie, from Australia, who stayed with them during the last months of his fatal illness. In July 1869, she noted in her Journal: "Began Middlemarch (the Vincy and Featherstone parts)." She then set aside the work, however, for poetry, writing the "Brother and Sister" sonnets and "The Legend of Jubal." But she gradually returned to work on the novel and by March 1870 she could write, with a hint of the weariness and sad-
ness which surrounded her and Lewes after Thornie's death, that "my novel, I suppose, will be finished some day: it creeps on" (Letters, v, 81). In November of the same year she began a new story, tentatively called "Miss Brooke": "I am experimenting in a story, which I began without any very serious intention of carrying it out lengthily" (Letters, v, 124). By the end of the month, however, she had decided to combine the two stories. Jerome Beaty has meticulously studied the fusion of the discrete stories, examining evidence which exhibits the precise care George Eliot took in the creation of the final form of Middlemarch. The novel grew and grew until Lewes decided it could not be published in the usual three-volume format, but must be allowed to spill over into four. George Eliot feared that she had "too much matter, too many 'momenti'" (Letters, v, 137); but "I don't see how I can leave anything out," she wrote to Blackwood, "because I hope there is nothing that will seem to be irrelevant to my design, which is to show the gradual action of ordinary causes rather than exceptional" (Letters, v, 168). In December 1871 the first of the planned eight two-monthly parts was published, the final two books appearing consecutively in November and December 1872.

Although George Eliot wrote that "[no former book of mine has been received with more enthusiasm--not even Adam
Bede" (Letters, V, 357), most of the reviewers still considered Adam Bede to be the better work. One critic wrote that "though Middlemarch has stuff enough in it to fill out four or five ordinary novels ... it will not be permanently placed on a level with Adam Bede, Romola, or with the most exquisite of all George Eliot's works--the History of Silas Marner." To James "Middlemarch is at once one of the strongest and one of the weakest of English novels. ... Middlemarch is a treasure-house of details, but it is an indifferent whole." The Times reviewer concluded that "as a novel proper it is inferior to the earlier work; its plot is not exciting; it has not the liveliness, variety, and picturesqueness of its great predecessor [Adam Bede]." Many of the critics disliked what they considered George Eliot's too severe attack on Middlemarch society, which they saw culminating in part of the penultimate paragraph. And, indeed, in the 1874 edition, George Eliot removed the offending sentence. Hutton, Edith Simcox, and Barbara Bodichon were all struck by the novel's "melancholy" outlook, whereas Blackwood found himself "pausing upon nearly every page to laugh and think over something equally happy in thought and expression. There is a perfect wealth of thought and fun and then it is real life" (Letters, V, 199). Edith Simcox expresses the general opinion
when she noted the advance George Eliot had made in the psychological analysis and delineation of character:

[Its incidents are taken from the inner life, as the action is developed by the direct influence of mind on mind and character on character, as the material circumstances of the outer world are made subordinate and accessory to the artistic presentation of a definite passage of mental experience, but chiefly as giving a background of perfect realistic truth to a profoundly imaginative psychological study.]

All the critics commend the richness of the picture of provincial life which George Eliot paints, with its representatives and revealing social functions taken from every strata of society in the town and country. Middle-march finally secured for George Eliot an unshakeable place as a great Victorian novelist along with Dickens, Thackeray, and Trollope; she even became "respectable," and, as Haight tells, was now frequently invited to dinner.

Although the novel generally did not compare favorably with Adam Bede, it was acclaimed in many reviews and the sales were enormous. R.H. Hutton, a critic who had always been impressed with George Eliot's work, wrote a review of each part as it came out, and his only major objection, which persists throughout his criticism, is against the "cruelty of vivisection," the "rather acrid and . . . disagreeable and not unfrequently heavy sarccasms which the
author introduces . . . into her running comments." He takes exception to what he considers to be the narrator's biased attitude towards Rosamond, concluding, in the review of Book III, with the amazing assertion that "she cannot help making us feel, especially with Rosamond Vincy, that however conventional she may be, her's is a really sweet and loveable nature at bottom."\textsuperscript{11} Even in his final review of the whole novel Hutton still retains some shred of sympathy for Rosamond because the narrator has made a "dead set" against her.

Since Virginia Woolf's evaluation that \textit{Middlemarch} was "one of the few English novels written for grown-up people,"\textsuperscript{12} critical opinion has steadily come to regard \textit{Middlemarch} as George Eliot's finest work. Twentieth-century critics have generally reversed the Victorian evaluation of George Eliot's novels, seeing the early fiction up to \textit{The Mill} as naïve, sometimes clumsy, experimental work; yet \textit{Romola} or \textit{Felix Holt} cannot, I believe, be considered "better" novels than \textit{Adam Bede} or \textit{The Mill} merely because they belong in the second, "mature" phase of her career. Even the early work cannot be so neatly dissected into the "successive mental phases" that Knoepflmacher argues exist in her fiction. But there is a growth in the expansiveness of George Eliot's novels, and none of her other fiction exhibits to such a degree
the complexity, the comprehensiveness, the intricacy of structure and unity which are to be found in *Middlemarch*.

Although the panoramic scope of *Middlemarch* was observed and acclaimed from the beginning, we have seen that its "wholeness" eluded a perceptive critic like James. Even in the nineteen-forties it was still being described as not "'ideally done': it is set down just as it arose in the mind of the author, without arrangement and without any previous consideration of the form, everything being left in the confusion of life."¹³ But George Eliot was acutely conscious when writing that nothing should be included which did not contribute to the final organic unity of the whole work. Her awareness of the "form" of her fiction is clear from her "Notes on Form in Art," where the Coleridgean metaphor (which he derived from the Germans) emphasizes the organic nature of her art:

> And the fullest example of such a whole is the highest example of Form: in other words, the relation of multiplex interdependent parts to a whole which is itself in the most varied and therefore the fullest relation to other wholes. . . . The highest Form, then, is the highest organism, that is to say, the most varied group of relations bound together in a wholeness which again has the most varied relations with other phenomena (*Essays*, p. 433).

I wish to emphasize the massiveness of *Middlemarch*. 
because it is the wide scope of this "study of provincial life," it is the complex pattern of the "varied group of relations" and events which in themselves structurally embody, make "incarnate," one of George Eliot's major philosophical ideas—the connectedness of all phenomena—an idea which we have seen was of paramount importance in *Adam Bede*. Many critics have now extensively argued the case for the unity, the "wholeness" of Middlemarch.\(^{14}\) Analogies, parallels, contrasts in characters, action and imagery create the mass of connecting threads of the web-like structure of the novel. *Middlemarch* abounds with "images of weaving, binding, and linking";\(^{15}\) its intention is to show "the stealthy convergence of human lots . . . ., [to dramatize the] slow preparation of effects from one life on another" (*Middlemarch*, p. 70), to imbue in the reader a "new consciousness of [the] interdependence" (*Middlemarch*, p. 70) of every strata of society, from the Dowager Lady Chettam down to the laboring peasant Dagley. Professors Carroll and Anderson both note that the novel depicts society as a unified organism, and they refer to the "primitive tissue" of society and the community respectively. Egotism, of course, blinds the individual to a sense of the interconnectedness of the human lot: "We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to
feed our supreme selves" (*Middlemarch*, p. 156). But we must learn to see outside the self, as Dorothea does, when she realizes that Casaubon has an "equivalent centre of self," that she is "a part of that involuntary, palpitating life" (*Middlemarch*, p. 578) which exists beyond Casaubon's closed world. However, since Casaubon is a consummate egotist, Dorothea discovers that "the sense of connection with a manifold pregnant existence has to be kept up painfully as an inward vision" (*Middlemarch*, p. 202). Casaubon, tightly enclosed in his labyrinthise studies and his egotistical sensitivity, is an extreme example of the sterility and even absurdity of the disconnected life: he cannot unify his fragmentary knowledge, and he cannot unify his human relationship with Dorothea.

Michael York Mason has recently argued that George Eliot was influenced in her delineation of *Middlemarch* society by Herbert Spenser's "The Social Organism." Mason refers to a newly discovered "memorandum on Comte, [where] reform and medical progress are mentioned as signs of growing Comtean 'solidarity,' or social interdependence. . . . Growing interdependence is related to another image derived from science, that of the evolving organism."¹⁶ Like several other critics,¹⁷ Mason discusses the analogy between the organism of society and the organism of the body. Lydgate's
search for "the primitive tissue" which would "demonstrate
the most intimate relations of living structure" (Middle-
march, p. 110) is yet another concrete means of realizing
the abstract concept of universal connection. A few years
earlier, in response to the 1868 Reform Bill, George Eliot
had several times made the same analogy between the human
body and the body politic. Felix Holt tells his audience
that "society stands before us like that wonderful piece
of life, the human body, with all its various parts de-
pending on one another, and with a terrible liability to
get wrong because of that delicate dependence . . . ; no
fatal shock . . . [must] be given to this society of ours,
this living body in which our lives are bound up" (Essays,
pp. 420, 422). It is immensely ironic that Lydgate, so
aware scientifically "that living bodies . . . are not
associations of organs which can be understood by studying
them first apart, and then federally, but must be regarded
as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues" (Middle-
march, p. 110), should place his private life in a pigeon-hole,
fragmented from his intellectual and public life.

Yet another analogy to the organic unity of society
which is figured in the over-all structure of Middlemarch,
although one which George Eliot did not agree with, is
Casaubon's "Key to all Mythologies." He too, like Lydgate
in his rudimentary cell-theory research, seeks a unity, a
"primitive tissue" from which all religions, like the myriad parts of the human body, have sprung. George Eliot was certainly not a syncretist, but, insofar as an atheist could subscribe to the notion, she did believe, as the syncretists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century did, that "all religions are essentially one religion."\(^{18}\) But to George Eliot Casaubon's search for the key to all mythologies is a backward looking task. He "continues with a syncretic approach to myth which had already long been superceded."\(^{19}\) Will Ladislaw tells Dorothea that Casaubon is "crawling a little way after men of the last century—men like Bryant" (Middlemarch, p. 164), one of the most famous eighteenth-century syncretists. In her review of Mackay's Progress of the Intellect, 1851, George Eliot had much praise for Mackay, also a mythographer and syncretist like Casaubon. Casaubon is a kind of parody of Mackay: "Mr. Casaubon himself was lost among small closets and winding stairs, and in an agitated dimness about the Cabeiri, or in an exposure to other mythologists' ill-considered parallels, easily lost sight of any purpose which had prompted him to these labours" (Middlemarch, p. 147). In George Eliot's account of Mackay, however, written nearly twenty years earlier, we may note the similarity in the imagery with which she describes both men, and the diversity of their approach to research:
Now and then . . . we meet with a nature which combines the faculty for amassing minute erudition with the largeness of view necessary to give it a practical bearing; a high appreciation of the genius of antiquity, with a profound belief in the progressive character of human development--in the eternal freshness of the founts of inspiration, a wonderful intuition of the mental conditions of past ages with an ardent participation in the most advanced ideas and most hopeful efforts of the present; a nature like a mighty river, which, in its long windings through unfrequented regions, gathers mineral and earthy treasures only more effectively to enrich and fertilize the cultivated valleys and busy cities which form the habitation of man (Essays, p. 28).

In the Mackay review George Eliot indirectly expressed her own views on religious research: "theological and metaphysical speculation have reached their limit, and . . . the only hope of extending man's sources of knowledge and happiness is to be found in positive science, and in the universal application of its principles" (Essays, p. 28). For Casaubon's "key" myth George Eliot substituted the unifying "master key . . . of the presence of undeviating law in the material and moral world--of that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still perversely ignored in our social organization, our ethics and our religion. . . . In this view, religion and philosophy are not merely conciliated, they are identical" (Essays, p. 31). It is also Casaubon's method, which is not
empirical, with which George Eliot finds fault.²⁰

Like Strauss, George Eliot saw religion as myth, and myths, according to Basil Willey's definition, are "imaginative symbols--standing not for matters of fact, but for facts of mind; states of feeling."²¹ Throughout her work George Eliot emphasizes again and again that it is the common feeling which is attached to individual doctrines which unifies the different religious sects. She wrote to Charles Bray that "people are, for the most part, so incapable of comprehending the state of mind which cares for that which is essentially human in all forms of belief, and desires to exhibit it under all forms with loving truthfulness" (Letters, III, 111). Again, it is ironic that it is the man who is most devoid of feeling for anything outside his immediate self-gratifying ambitions who should be investigating the origin of myths which represented, to George Eliot, the most intense feelings of the human race.

The historical medium of Middlemarch, which covers the years immediately preceding the 1832 Reform Bill,²² is also intimately connected with George Eliot's conception of the unity of "the material and moral world" (Essays, p. 31). There are many variations on the theme of "reform" in the novel,²³ but the political Reform movement itself is used to emphasize the delicate balance which George Eliot believed
existed between the individual and society. Like Carlyle, George Eliot was always extremely conservative towards change of any kind, particularly political reform. In this belief she reflects a common attitude of her time, for the horrors of the "root and branch" measures of the French Revolution were only a generation away. In 1856 she wrote in "The Natural History of German Life" that "The nature of European men has its roots intertwined with the past, and can only be developed by allowing those roots to remain undisturbed while the process of development is going on, until the perfect ripeness of the seed which carries with it a life independent of the root" (Essays, p. 288). Change, progress, is possible, but George Eliot emphatically believed that it must be gradual, and in accordance with natural growth: "What has grown up historically can only die out historically, by the gradual operation of necessary laws . . . ; the internal conditions and the external conditions are related to each other as the organism and its medium, and development can take place only by the gradual consentaneous development of both" (Essays, p. 287). *Felix Holt, the Radical*, published when the "flood-gates" of reform were opened for the second time, in 1868, is perhaps George Eliot's most definitive statement in fiction on the dangers and delusions of radical political reform. In this novel she exhibits a frankly sceptical
attitude towards the ability of the ignorant "masses" to handle political power. She stands firm for the preservation of law and order, and she repeatedly criticizes the politicians who deceive the working man by telling him that Reform will be an instant panacea for all the ills that beset society. In 1868 George Eliot wrote an article for *Blackwood's* as a direct response to the passing of the second Reform Bill, and here her "conservative-reforming" beliefs are plain:

I expect great changes, and I desire them--
[But I don't expect them to come in a hurry, by mere inconsiderate sweeping. . . . The solution . . . To get the chief power into the hands of the wisest . . ., comes slowly, because men collectively can only be made to embrace principles, and to act on them, by the slow stupendous teaching of the world's events. . . .[We must be careful] that no fatal shock may be given to this society of ours, this living body in which our lives are bound up (Essays, pp. 424, 428-9, 422).

Clearly, political reform is treated in a much more muted fashion in *Middlemarch* than in *Felix Holt*, or in the "Address to Working Men," but the same attitudes towards it are evident. The political power that should be in "the hands of the wisest" is in the hands of a comic political hypocrite like Mr. Brooke. Lydgate tells Ladislaw that there "is no excuse for encouraging the superstitious exaggeration of hopes about this particular measure, helping the cry to swallow it whole and to send up voting popinjays who are good for nothing but to carry it. You go against rottenness,
and there is nothing more thoroughly rotten than making people believe that society can be cured by a political hocus-pocus" (Middlemarch, p. 341). Dagley, on the lowest end of the social spectrum, is a pitiful example of the ignorant man deluded by the wild promises of the Reformers: "for them say it as know it, as there's to be a Rinform, 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" (Middlemarch, p. 291). It is Ladislaw, an outsider to the community, who does something practically to bring about reform, and whose moderate accomplishments reflect George Eliot's mildly progressive view of history: "Will became an ardent public man, working well in those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days" (Middlemarch, p. 610, my emphasis). But he is "at last returned to Parliament by a constituency who paid his expenses" (Middlemarch, p. 611), a tangible sign of political progress and reform. George Eliot's optimistic meliorism asserts "the growing good of the world" in Middlemarch, and gradual, wise political reform is part of the slow progressive movement of humanity.

We have seen that the important idea of the connectedness of all phenomena is made concrete in many different and analogous ways in Middlemarch. The richness of detail,
the narrative skill evident in the delineation of the
variety of the groups "of relations bound together in a
wholeness" (Essays, p. 433) prevents the diagram from
looming oppressively and didactically over the picture.
Many other familiar ideas with which George Eliot was
habitually concerned appear in Middlemarch, realized
through different particular examples which give them a
renewed vitality. There is the old important tragic theme
of the individual in conflict with the general which
demonstrates George Eliot's ideas on free-will and determin-
ism: "Our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves/ Ay
truly; but I think it is the world/That brings the iron"
(Middlemarch, p. 25). This motto appears early in the novel,
and at its close George Eliot has shown that "there is no
creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not
greatly determined by what lies outside it" (Middlemarch,
p. 612). The characteristic concepts of true religion,
hypocrisy, and duty also appear again; the undeviating law
of consequences enters the life of almost every character,
the moral opposites of altruism and egotism are here in pure
and mixed forms, and the theme of vocation runs through the
novel. But these are only a few of the concepts which are
brought to life in Middlemarch. The variety and scope of
the novel reflects the abundance of ideas behind it: Middle-
march is George Eliot's "highest example of Form" (Essays,
p. 433).
ii. The Narrator as Mentor

Even those critics who see George Eliot becoming more and more "intellectual" as she grows older admit that, "In a great prose epic like Middlemarch, profound ideas and emotions find a common and reciprocal expression." In a novel as massive and complex as Middlemarch, there is, more than ever, a need for a narrator as mentor to guide and control the understanding and responses of the reader; there is need for an "imagination that reveals subtle actions inaccesible by any sort of lens" (Middlemarch, p. 122). Here the narrator becomes most like the compassionate God Mr. Gilfil spoke of to Tina, who "sees us as we are altogether . . . ; [who sees our] whole nature" ("Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," p. 174). It is in Middlemarch that, as Hillis Miller observes, the narrator "is precisely that all-inclusive 'consciousness of the species' which was Feuerbach's definition of Christ." Like the Christ of Feuerbach's religion of humanity, the narrator is distinctly, if "ideally," human, an infinitely "wise woman," as Quentin Anderson describes her, with "a divine knowledge, sympathy, and power of judgment which has arisen from the encounters of individual men with their fellows." 26

Most of the contemporary reviewers noted that the pervading tone of the narrator was ironic, and irony, as we
know, has played a dominant role in George Eliot's narrative voice from the beginning of her novelistic career. It is one of her major devices to control response and widen the reader's vision. But in Middlemarch the irony is rarely cruel or strident; it is frequently comic or pitying. We do not feel that the narrator is "loading the dice" against any one character. The narrator of Middlemarch, like the narrators of Dickens and Thackeray, "does not take up a position outside [the fictional world] . . . [She] moves within the community. . . . [She identifies herself] with a human awareness everywhere at all times within the world of the novel."27 Professor Miller goes on to say that "The narrator [in George Eliot] is an all-embracing consciousness which surrounds the minds of the characters, knows them from the inside, but also sees them in terms of their relations to one another and in terms of the universal facts of human nature which they exemplify."28

George Eliot was too conscious of the confused mixture of good and evil in humanity to create a narrator who judges harshly. Indeed, as we have seen frequently, this is one of the main lessons she tries to teach and one of the main faults she rebukes her readers for falling into. There is a sense of compassion, tolerance, and immense understanding of human nature in the narrative voice all through Middle-
march. Even Bulstrode, a man who is guilty of grave wrongdoing, the kind of religious hypocrite George Eliot privately disliked intensely and had publicly castigated in "Evangelical Preaching: Dr. Cumming," in 1855, is presented with strong pity. Through direct exhortation, through the delineation of Bulstrode's tortured inner thoughts, and her own supplementation and analyses of the motives he suppresses, the narrator creates an enormous amount of pity for this thoroughly "unlikeable" man. Leavis notes that the "analysis [of Bulstrode] is of the 'merciless' kind that only an intelligence lighted by compassion can attain." 29 Casaubon too, a character whom Celia, Chettam, Mrs. Cadwallader, and Ladislaw find physically and mentally repulsive, is presented in a manner which elicits compassion for him. George Eliot's delineation of Bulstrode and Casaubon illustrates the narrator's "true wisdom [which understands], if it does not approve of, other realities." 30 And finally, even Rosamond is not presented as entirely repulsive. The traditional education for women "of that time" has connived with a vacuous mind to mold Rosamond's character and values. The narrator asks the reader to "think no unfair evil of her, pray: she had no wicked plots, nothing sordid or mercenary... She was not in the habit of devising falsehoods, and if her statements were a direct clue to fact, why, they were not intended in that light--they were among her elegant accomplishments, intended to please. Nature had
inspired many arts in finishing Mrs Lemon's favourite pupil" (*Middlemarch*, p. 198).

In a novel of such magnitude as *Middlemarch*, George Eliot requires and uses a greater variety of narrative modes and manipulative narrative devices than had hitherto been necessary in her work. The first two paragraphs of chapter 10 provide an excellent demonstration of the way the narrator uses several different narrative tones and devices to establish her relationship with Casaubon, and to control the reader's response by creating specific relationships between narrator, reader, and the novel. The narrative technique of these two paragraphs exhibits those qualities which are part of Lydgate's approach to scientific research. He believes that "there must be a systole and diastole in all inquiry"; that "a man's mind must be continually expanding and shrinking between the whole human horizon and the horizon of an object glass" (*Middlemarch*, p. 468). Harvey, clearly influenced by his work on George Eliot, has described a similar narrative technique, in *Bleak House*, as one which creates an "effect of pulsation, of constant expansion and contraction, radiation and convergence."31

Young Ladislaw did not pay that visit to which Mr Brooke had invited him, and only six days afterwards Mr Casaubon mentioned that his young relative had started for the Continent. . . . .

Indeed, Will had declined to fix on any more
precise destination than the entire area of Europe. Genius, he held, is necessarily in-
tolerant of fetters: on the one hand it must have the utmost play for its spontaneity; on
the other, it may confidently await those messages from the universe which summon it
to its peculiar work, only placing itself in an attitude of receptivity towards all sub-
limine chances. The attitudes of receptivity are various, and Will had sincerely tried
many of them. . . . The superadded circum-
stance which would evolve the genius had not
yet come; the universe had not yet beckoned.
Even Caesar's fortune at one time was but a
grand presentiment. . . . Will saw clearly
enough the pitiable instances of long in-
cubation producing no chick, and but for
gratitude would have laughed at Casaubon,
whose plodding application, rows of note-
books, and small taper of learned theory ex-
ploring the tossed ruins of the world, seemed
to enforce a moral entirely encouraging to
Will's generous reliance on the intentions of
the universe with regard to himself. He held
that reliance to be a mark of genius. . . .

But at present this caution against a too
hasty judgment interests me more in relation
to Mr Casaubon than to his young cousin. If
to Dorothea Mr Casaubon had been the mere
occasion which had set alight the fine in-
flammable material of her youthful illusions,
does it follow that he was fairly represented
in the minds of those less impassioned person-
ages who have hitherto delivered their judg-
ments concerning him? I protest against any
absolute conclusion, any prejudice derived from
Mrs Cadwallader's contempt for a neighbouring
clergyman's alleged greatness of soul, or Sir
James Chettam's poor opinion of his rival's
legs,—from Mr Brooke's failure to elicit a
companion's ideas, or from Celia's criticism
of a middle-aged scholar's personal appear-
ance. I am not sure that the greatest man
of his age, if ever that solitary superlative
existed, could escape these unfavourable re-
fections of himself in various small mirrors;
and even Milton, looking for his portrait in
a spoon, must submit to have the facial angle of a bumpkin. Moreover, if Mr Casaubon, speaking for himself, has rather a chilling rhetoric, it is not therefore certain that there is no good work or fine feeling in him. Did not an immortal physicist and interpreter of hieroglyphs write detestable verse? Has the theory of the solar system been advanced by graceful manners and conversational tact? Suppose we turn from outside estimates of a man, to wonder, with keener interest, what is the report of his own consciousness about his doings or capacity; with what hindrances he is carrying on his daily labours; what fading of hopes, or what deeper fixity of self-delusion the years are marking off within him; and with what spirit he wrestles against universal pressure, which will one day be too heavy for him, and bring his heart to its final pause. Doubtless his lot is important in his own eyes; and the chief reason that we think he asks too large a place in our consideration must be our want of room for him, since we refer him to the Divine regard with perfect confidence; nay, it is even held sublime for our neighbour to expect the utmost there, however little he may have got from us. Mr Casaubon, too, was the centre of his own world; if he was liable to think that others were providentially made for him, and especially to consider them in the light of their fitness for the author of a 'Key to all Mythologies,' this trait is not quite alien to us, and, like the other mendicant hopes of mortals, claims some of our pity (Middlemarch, pp. 61-62).

In the opening paragraph of this chapter the narrator paints the most extended critical picture of Ladislaw that appears in Middlemarch; indeed the impression created here is fostered in the course of the novel, which accounts for the general feeling of dissatisfaction with Ladislaw as a suitable spouse for the high-minded Dorothea. It is, I suggest,
quite a deliberate mode of exposition on the part of the narrator. She wishes the reader to feel ambiguous towards Ladislaw, to see him as imperfect, self-satisfied, mildly egotistical, for this is not a world, as she makes clear in the "Prelude" and "Finale," where high ambitions are realized and perfect marriages are made. But the main concern of this first paragraph is to point out Ladislaw's opinion of Casaubon, for it will provide the basis for a fairly direct criticism of this judgment, which will extend to the judgments of other critics of Casaubon, and then, characteristically, move from the concrete example to its universal significance. The reader will thus be drawn into the fictional world while he experiences a contemplative response to it as well.

The narrator begins with her own personal response to Ladislaw's "too hasty judgment" so that an intimate tone is immediately established. She then draws the reader into her speculative discussion by posing a question for him to consider, and thus the dramatic relationship between reader and narrator is established: if Dorothea was deluded about Mr. Casaubon "does it follow that he was fairly represented in the minds of those less impassioned personages who had hitherto delivered their judgments concerning him?" Chettam, Celia, Mrs. Cadwallader, Ladislaw have all criticized
Casaubon, and the reader has, of course, been influenced by their criticisms. But these critics, and the "prejudice" towards Mr. Casaubon which the reader may have derived from them, are particular examples of that general condition of misjudging which afflicts humanity, and which the narrator intends to criticize.

The narrator must therefore lead the reader to see that both he and the characters in the novel are in error, or at least in partial error, since they are in possession of only partial truth. She begins by voicing her own personal opinion: "I protest against any absolute conclusion" about Mr. Casaubon. But she is not harshly adamant in her criticism of the reader's judgment; she merely speculates: "I am not sure that the greatest man of his age" is without flaw. The serious critical teaching process is then tempered with humor; the narrator must not sound like a solemn, didactic teacher pointing out the stupidities of the reader. Humor is one of the most common qualities of the narrative voice in Middlemarch, for, like Ben Jonson, whom George Eliot quotes in one of her epigrams, she saw the value of laughter in teaching: 32 "Even Milton, looking for his portrait in a spoon, must submit to have the facial angle of a bumpkin." The comic, deflating image has reference not only to Casaubon, whom Dorothea looks on as a kind
of Milton, but has reference for all lesser mortals—her readers. At this point in the second paragraph, the narrator, having thus established specific relationships with reader and character, having prepared the reader for the "lesson" which is to be learnt from Ladislaw's and all those other individuals' "hasty judgment" of Casaubon, can now turn towards the main thrust of her argument, the essence of her teaching which she, as mentor to the reader, wishes to convey: "if Mr Casaubon, speaking for himself, has rather chilling rhetoric, it is not therefore certain that there is no good work or fine feeling in him." The narrator is beginning, quietly and indirectly, to criticize the reader, although she appears to confine herself to her own views, to "I" and "me." But now she begins to use the inclusive "we" and "our" as she gently leads the reader to see the direct application that the misjudgment of the characters in her fictional world has in the reader's real world, and its connection with the reader's habitual mode of judging: "Suppose we turn from outside estimates of a man, to wonder, with keener interest, what is the report of his own consciousness about his doings or capacity."

A contemplative response is now being elicited; the reader is encouraged to take a wider view, to see this problem of judging not merely in respect to Casaubon, but to "a man," to any man, to his own fellow-creatures, to himself. Casaubon becomes a concrete example with universal significance.
Since this contemplative, imaginative connection between the reader and Casaubon has now been established, the narrator proceeds to directly criticize the reader, when her role as mentor will have its most telling effect. Yet she is still careful not to alienate the reader, careful not to look down on him from her superior knowledge. She accomplishes her intention by insisting on the intimate relationship which exists between narrator and reader, asserting that she too shares the reader's faults and failings, but that they both must learn and change:

"Doubtless his lot is important in his own eyes; and the chief reason that we think he asks too large a place in our consideration must be our want of room for him, since we refer him to the Divine regard with perfect confidence; nay, it is even held sublime for our neighbour to expect the utmost there, however little he may have got from us."

The disturbing ironic thrust here against humanity's hypocrisy is a characteristic used by George Eliot's narrator to jolt the reader out of self-satisfied complacency.

"His lot" is, of course, both Casaubon's lot and the lot of any individual; the fictional and real worlds are united. "Our" egotism is castigated; "we" are as narrow as Casaubon's critics in the novel; indeed "we" are religious hypocrites, like Bulstrode. The reader is not allowed to the watch the "puppet" in the novel perform his part, but is brought into collective
relationship with the character. He is made to feel that, to some extent, he is seeing himself: for if "Mr Casaubon... was the centre of his own world... this trait is not quite alien to us, and... claims some of our pity." We misjudge because we are all, like Casaubon and his critics, egotists, too self-centered to strive for a "wider vision."

The narrator has made two closely related points in this paragraph concerning the connection between egotism and misjudgment. By the close of the paragraph, as the narrator has controlled and directed the reader's response throughout, she can close with the final moving appeal for sympathy for Casaubon and by extension for all our fellow-creatures. And since we are now aware of the fading hopes, the self-delusion, the "universal pressure" which assail poor Casaubon in "his daily labours" we not only feel pity for him now, but every future reference to Casaubon is mingled with sympathy created by our "wider vision." The narrator has thus established a permanently compassionate relationship between narrator, reader and Casaubon.

We can see that a great deal is being done in this single paragraph, and the ease and variety with which the narrative voice achieves her several purposes here is a measure of the development of George Eliot's narrative
technique from her sometimes excessive special pleading in her early work or her occasional clumsy manipulation of the reader's judgment and sympathy. The ideas, however, have not changed from her earliest fiction. Mr. Gilfil had told Tina the "truth" of this paragraph: "We are always doing each other injustice, and thinking better or worse of each other than we deserve, because we only hear and see separate words and actions. We don't see each other's whole nature." But in Middlemarch we see George Eliot's theory of fiction and narrative technique, her moral ideas and her aesthetic aims, coalesce with a greater smoothness and persistence than she had hitherto been able to sustain.

There is the same subtle and varied use of the narrative voice in the extensive delineation of Lydgate in chapters 15 and 16, where the dramatic relationship between the narrator and reader is even more obvious, and the reader is asked again and again to participate actively in the life of the novel: "Does it seem incongruous to you that a Middlemarch surgeon should dream of himself as a discoverer?"; his "faults will not, I hope, be a reason for the withdrawal of your interest in him"; "If you think it incredible that to imagine Lydgate as a man of family could cause thrills of satisfaction which had anything to
do with the sense that she [Rosamond] was in love with him, I will ask you to use your power of comparision a little more effectively, and consider whether red cloth and epaulets have never had an influence of that sort" (Middlemarch, pp. 108, 111, 123).

In her treatment of Lydgate the narrator employs her "prophetic voice" in a new way, to gain the reader's sympathy for him, while at the same time using it in the old way, to create an ironic awareness on the part of the reader of the strong possibility that Lydgate's ambitions and plans will never be realized. Even before the narrator tells us of Lydgate's plans she makes the reader contemplate her generalizations about "the multitude of middle-aged men . . . who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little" (Middlemarch, p. 107). She invites the reader to consider, with her, his own possible involvement in the thwarting of his fellow-creatures' ambitions: "You and I may have sent some of our breath towards infecting them; when we uttered our conforming falsities or drew our silly conclusions; or perhaps it came from the vibrations from a woman's glance" (Middlemarch, p. 107). When the narrator immediately tells us that "Lydgate did not mean to be one of these failures," the reader is prepared to view Lydgate as the concrete example of that tragic universal human condition, the individual coming into conflict with
the general, just as the "Prelude" had established Dorothea as the female representative of this idea. The narrator uses a new device of verbal echo to connect Lydgate in the reader's mind with those "multitude" of failures in her generalized statement. Those failures "once meant to shape their own deeds"; "Lydgate did not mean" to be a failure; "He meant to be a unit" for bringing about reform in medicine; "he meant to innovate in his treatment"; he "did not mean to think of furniture at present"; his disastrous affair with Laure he "meant to be final"; "he did not mean to pay many such visits to the Vincy's himself"; "he did not mean to marry for the next five years"; "He had not meant to look at her or speak to her [Rosamond]; and, of course, in the "Finale" the narrator tells us that Lydgate "always regarded himself as a failure; he had not done what he once meant to do" (Middlemarch, pp. 107, 108, 109, 112, 114, 120, 122, 123, 610).33

The narrator's prophetic voice is also used in other ways to create a recurring sense of ominous uneasiness in the reader's early response to Lydgate. This particular use of the prophetic voice fosters the feeling of ironic pity for Lydgate which is similar to that created for Casaubon. When we have learnt of Lydgate's hopeful plans for the future the narrator describes him as "a happy fellow
at this time" (Middlemarch, p. 110). Two years and many chapters later our pity is again surely elicited when we read that "this strong man of nine-and-twenty... was intensely miserable" (Middlemarch, p. 431). Lydgate leaves Laure "believing that illusions were at an end for him"; "that madness which had once beset him about Laure was not, he thought, likely to recur in relation to any other woman"; "at present his ardour was absorbed in love of his work" (Middlemarch, pp. 114, 121, 123).

Many small additional words and phrases like these are used by the narrator to carefully build up an atmosphere of potential disaster for Lydgate which functions to engage the reader's sympathy who can see and anticipate Lydgate's impending doom.

The narrative voice in Middlemarch is as varied and condensed in her delineation of Dorothea, Lydgate's idealistic, reforming, frustrated and equally blind female counterpart. But if the "responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision" (The Mill, p. 437), and the narrator dramatizes this tolerance, the narrator still engages in much ironic criticism of her characters and readers. She either tells the reader directly, or indirectly through a dramatic scene, or both, the one usually illuminating and emphasizing the other, that all the main characters are egotists, that they'll have their
severe limitations, that they all contrive with circumstances to forge their tragic destinies. She often criticizes the reader's limitations directly in a general inclusive statement like the famous "we are all of us born in moral stupidity"; "we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas." Mr. Bulstrode's hypocritical habits of thought are as genuine "as any theory of yours may be . . .; for the egoism which enters into our theories does not affect their sincerity" (Middlemarch, pp. 156, 612, 382). We are all like Bulstrode: "we judge from our own desires, and our neighbours themselves are not always open enough to throw out a hint of theirs" and "if this be hypocrisy, it is a process which shows itself occasionally in us all, to whatever confession we belong" (Middlemarch, pp. 382, 453). Frequently the narrator's criticism takes the form of a universalizing abstraction which has a proverbial tone to it: "There is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men"; or "will not a tiny speck very close to our vision blot out the glory of the world. . . . I know no speck as troublesome as self" (Middlemarch, pp. 453, 307). All through Middlemarch the narrator constantly makes such general or personal criticisms of the reader, and indeed herself, in
order to guide the reader to see contemplatively the application which these characters and situations, with which he is also imaginatively involved, have in his own life and world.

In Middlemarch, more effectively than in any of her previous work, George Eliot successfully and fully dramatizes much of the extensive external commentary which her narrator makes on the characters. There is the famous opening jewel scene between Dorothea and Celia which illustrates Dorothea's ardent and passionate nature that had been obliquely referred to in the "Prelude." The scenes between Dorothea and Casaubon dramatize his pedantry and inability to feel which the narrator had earlier described both directly and metaphorically through the water and labyrinthine images. Lydgate's fatal blindness with regard to women is demonstrated in his conversation with Laure and in many scenes with Rosamond. We are made to feel with an intense reality Rosamond's hardness and tenacity for getting her own way in the brief replies, the meaningful silences with which she answers her husband. Bulstrode is dramatized most thoroughly through his own consciousness, as the convolutions of his reasoning and the deceitfulness of his plans illustrate and recapitulate the course of his past history which had been narrated earlier. Mary Garth's intelligence, wit and honesty are brought out in several
scenes with Rosamond, Featherstone, Fred, Mr. Farebrother and most particularly, her family. And every detail which the narrator tells us about Mr. Garth's honesty, integrity, and good-heartedness is illustrated in specific encounters with his wife and children. All these scenes, of course, ultimately function to make concrete the abstract concepts which these characters, in varying degrees, represent.

In Middlemarch there appears a relatively new narrative device which had been used in only one earlier novel, *Felix Holt*: the device of the epigram, or motto, as George Eliot called it, as chapter heading. Professor Higdon has extensively examined George Eliot's use of epigrams in his dissertation, a chapter of which has recently been published. Here he demonstrates that the epigrams are an organic part of the novels, that they are not mere external appendages. They perform various aesthetic functions which may hitherto have been more straightforwardly spoken by the narrative voice in the opening frame of a dramatic scene or by a narrative interpolation or generalization in the midst of a scene. Higdon observes that almost all the epigrams, whether literary quotations or of George Eliot's own invention, function in the same way, like symbolic titles to pictures. They are yet another means of guiding and manipulating response to the work. At times they consist of an abstract general-
ization which the chapter will make incarnate, like the epigram for chapter 70: "Our deeds still travel with us from afar,/And what we have been makes us what we are" (*Middlemarch*, p. 515). The ensuing chapter shows Bulstrode's Nemesis (Raffles), being morally murdered by Bulstrode. But the epigram is equally applicable to Lydgate too in this chapter. Again, an epigram may be used to create an initial atmosphere of sympathy and as a cautionary criticism of the reader when the material to follow is particularly revealing of the unpleasant side of a character. Thus, in chapter 42, when Casaubon, aware of his possible death, spitefully thinks of how his "dead hand" may control Dorothea's future happiness, George Eliot heads the chapter with a quotation from Henry VIII: "How much, methinks, I could despise this man,/Were I not bound in charity against it!" (*Middlemarch*, p. 305). The reader's response—to despise—is anticipated and forestalled by the bid for charity. The motto is also heavily ironic, when considered as Casaubon's conscientious external effort to control his jealous dislike of Ladislaw. In *Middlemarch* there are no long defenses of and pleas for realism in fiction like the excessive digression of chapter 17 in *Adam Bede*. Now the narrator briefly points out the method in one of the mottoes: "Let the high muse chant loves Olympian,/We are but mortals, and must sing of men" (*Middle-
march, p. 194), as she prepares to recount the growth of "love" in the bosom of Rosamond. Frequently the epigram is used as an ironic comment on character, as the famous quotation from Cervantes which heads chapter 2, and which illustrates Don Quixote's distorted vision and Sancho's deflating realism. The quotation is an allegory for Dorothea's and Celia's initial perceptions of Casaubon, whom they meet for the first time in this chapter. But it is the first of many references to the moral problem of vision and blindness which is one of the important themes of the book. Indeed almost everyone in Middlemarch suffers from distortion of vision to some degree; it permeates the social strata, from Chettam's illusions about Dorothea right down to Mrs. Dollop's firm belief that Lydgate is a body-snatcher. Here again an idea is given flesh and vitality in the ensuing chapter as well as casting an ironic and illuminating light on its incidents and characters.

Another narrative device which is developed much more consistently in Middlemarch than in previous work is the use of image patterns. This development, Barbara Hardy suggests, may be the result of George Eliot's increasing interest in verse. These images are generally spoken by the narrator, but sometimes also by the characters, and serve to illustrate states of mind, contrasts in character,
relationships between phenomena. They also, as with other verbal devices, gradually set up a kind of ironic echo in the reader's mind as the pattern of imagery develops, which helps the reader to see unity in the many diverse situations which fill this panoramic novel. Haight notes that the images in Middlemarch recur "like motifs in Wagner's operas, echoing the earlier occasions with a deeper significance." When the characters employ the images they are usually unaware of the ironic implication which their repetition has created. Barbara Hardy fully discusses the three image patterns of water, the "dark, narrow place," and the mirror, which illustrate the three important themes of egotism, frustration, and distorted vision. Ladislaw, in contrast to Casaubon, of course, is associated with images of light and open, fresh spaces, and Mark Schorer argues that through these images George Eliot "weaves[a] Christ analogy ... around Ladislaw." Schorer examines several kinds of images of "illumination, revelation, fulfilment, expectation," which reveal a "pattern of a classic religious experience" throughout the novel. Surprisingly, Hardy does not discuss the web imagery which pervades Middlemarch, a subject Haight takes up in the introduction to his edition of the novel. The web is, of course, the image which most centrally describes the concrete structure of the novel, and the "idea" of relationships which lies behind its construction. Through the
web imagery the reader is manipulated into seeing the complex pattern of cause and event which binds the smallest things with the greatest.

In the chapter on narrative technique I argued that one of George Eliot's devices for achieving realism in her work is her analysis of the psychological constitution of her characters. In Middlemarch the device is again employed, but on a much more extensive and searching scale. Dorothea, Lydgate, Casaubon, Rosamond, Ladislaw and Bulstrode all have their minds probed by their narrator, but it is not that disinterested probing that we have observed in Romola, which removes rather than involves the reader. Again we see the need for the God-like omniscience of George Eliot's narrator, for "who can represent himself just as he is, even in his own reflections?" (Middlemarch, p. 521). The reader too needs help in understanding the inner workings of the minds of these characters who humanly, realistically, hide, rationalize, or substitute ulterior motives for the real ones which are only known to the narrator. Bulstrode's "quantity of diseased" motives is particularly explored by the narrator and poor Casaubon's sensitive psychological make-up is the narrator's major avenue for establishing a sympathetic response towards him: "In spite of the blinking eyes and white moles... Mr Casaubon had an intense conscious-
ness within him, and was spiritually a-hungered like the rest of us" (**Middlemarch**, p. 205).

Inner natures, as always in George Eliot's work, are the product of heredity and environment, and these "fixed givens" are examined in all the major **Middlemarch** characters. Lydgate's traditional views on women as pretty adornments rather than as companionable helpmates are shown to be fatal to his career and happiness. Dorothea, of course, is endowed with an ardent nature for which society allows no outlet but the conventional woman's vocation of marriage. Bulstrode's impoverished upbringing and his power-loving nature combine with accidental circumstances to mold the outcome of his life. Here again, as in all George Eliot's work, there are many "possibilities" which, more realistically or probably, suggest destinies for the characters alternative to those which heredity and environment seem to force on them: George Eliot's determinism is again mitigated. There is the obvious early possibility of marriage between Lydgate and Dorothea, two idealists who might (unrealistically) have made a perfect union. There is the possibility, momentarily strongly feared by Ladislaw, that he too will be shattered by Rosamond's "torpedo contact." Casaubon might possibly have lived a few more hours to hear Dorothea's promise to carry on his work, a promise,
once given, she would have felt bound to keep. Bulstrode's history reveals many moments of "crisis and decision," many possibilities of different choices, from his first decision not to become a missionary to his last fatal one to murder Raffles. Fred Vincy's alternative destiny is obvious, and the major theme of his particular story: "Once more," as Barbara Hardy points out, "fate is seen as fragile, success as variable."

In *Middlemarch* George Eliot again strives to render "as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself," and the narrator delineates the ever widening circle of environments which affect the characters and their actions, from family, to society, to historical events. Dorothea is, in a sense, sacrificed by the stupidity of her uncle, who will not argue against her marriage because it is a suitable social and moneyed match. Society fosters the ignorance in which a woman must blunder her way towards her only possible vocation, marriage. Since *Middlemarch* is a "study of provincial life" and its effects on several dominant characters, the inhabitants of the town and country, with their different rituals and relationships, are all portrayed in detail. The dinner parties of the upper class (the Brookes and Chettams) and the middle class (the Vyncys) illustrate the values and
opinions of each society. Trumbull's auction, the trading of the horsedealers, Featherstone's death and funeral, the meeting of the Middlemarch merchants to exclude Bulstrode from the affairs of the town, the gatherings in the pubs, Dagley's "answering back" to Brooke all combine to create a rich and varied picture of provincial life. The widest historical setting of the Reform era not only grounds the novel in an actual temporal medium, but has, as I have argued, intimate connections with the ideas which George Eliot wished to promulgate in the novel.

In *Middlemarch* George Eliot's narrator is not radically different from the narrators in her earlier work (with the exception of *Romola*). But there is a sureness, a sophistication, a variability and diversity in the narrative voice and technique which marks an advance in stylistic accomplishment. The mentor/narrator teaches without preaching. She successfully forms a trusting dramatic relationship with the reader so that he is actively involved in the creation and understanding of the fictional world, able to see the unity in the details, the ideas in the concrete embodiments, to contemplate their connection with his own life and in the larger world around him. Here, because of the panoramic scope of *Middlemarch*, because of the mass of important and insignificant details, and because the narrator guides the
reader to see the relation between all things, George Eliot comes closest to achieving her moral purpose in art: to aesthetically bring about the expansion of the reader's sympathies, with a consequent tolerance which allows him to see his fellow-men existing in an organic society "as we are altogether, not in separate feelings or actions" ("Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," p. 174).

iii. The Garths as Mentors

In Middlemarch there are several different kinds of real, potential, or deceptive mentors. In no other novel of George Eliot's are there so many characters, who, in some form or another, try to teach their fellow-men. In no other novel do so many characters stand in need of reform: Dorothea, Casaubon, Lydgate, Rosamond, Ladislaw, Fred Vincy, Bulstrode--these are only some of the most outstanding--all need to change their modes of living, their beliefs, their aspirations in life. The great outer frame of the novel, the era of Reform, is itself a time of "teaching" for all England, but here, as in the "picture" of the fictional world of Middlemarch, the lessons are often mixed with human error and selfishness.

The wisest reformer, is, of course, the mentor/narrator,
whose pervasive task is to re-form the vision of the reader. But in the Middlemarch world there is one particular group which, both by precept and example, functions as mentor to the reader, to the community, and to Fred Vincy: the Garths. Since the Garth family plays such a significant role in Middlemarch it is remarkable that it has received scant critical attention. In July 1872 Lewes wrote to Blackwood: "Isn't the Garth Family a gem?" (Letters, V, 291). But little is said of it in contemporary reviews, and most modern criticism, when it does take note of the family, not without reason, centers on Caleb. One of the moral dimensions of the Garths as a unit is suggested by Harvey: "The Garths are the one solidly happy family in the book and as such provide a standard whereby the failings of the other marriages can be measured." 39 Robert Speaight perceptively but briefly observes that Caleb Garth plays a most significant role in the novel: "Caleb is perhaps the most completely sympathetic character George Eliot ever drew . . . ; he is the point of perfect balance to which the excesses and aspirations, the humours and disappointments, the failures and redemptions of the characters are implicitly referred." 40 The most detailed critical study of Caleb Garth is Russell M. Goldfarb's short article on Caleb as a representative of Carlyle's gospel of work. 41 Goldfarb argues persuasively that George Eliot was directly influenced in the creation of Caleb by
Carlyle's *Past and Present*. The Garth family bear directly on many of the more important ideas of the novel: Reform, religion, vocation, materialism, altruism, true marriage, duty, the relationship between the human and social organism.

Yet, in spite of the importance of Caleb Garth in particular, and the whole family as a unit, to the embodiment of certain central ideas in the novel, in spite of the fact that it is an exemplary, even "Arcadian" family, its members are no less individualized because of their ideological qualities. The realistic treatment, in language, in setting, in scenes, in familial relationships, effectively dominates the referential dimensions of the Garths, dimensions which can, as Scholes and Kellogg observe, tend "towards the de-
humanization of character." Leavis significantly singles out Caleb Garth as exhibiting "a peculiar quality of life which distinguishes George Eliot's creativeness." Barbara Hardy notes that Caleb Garth is prominent both in the story and in the moral scheme, but . . . [possesses] all kinds of attributes which bring him to life as a character yet have no obvious moral relevance—his simplicity, his slowness, his inadequate speech, his brusqueness, his tremendous enthusiasm, and his great respect for his wife. . . . Caleb and Mary Garth . . . are both animated portraits and highly effective moral examples. But with Caleb and Mary we are conscious both of the exemplariness and of a rich, varied, and mobile personal impression.
Characteristically, George Eliot uses a combination of "showing" and "telling" in her delineation of the Garth family, but there is a greater emphasis here than formerly on the dramatization of the narrator's external commentary than is usually found in George Eliot's work. There are many dramatic scenes in the Garth household and with other individuals in the community which not only demonstrate and support the narrator's external commentary but also go much further in their contribution towards creating a roundness and depth to the Garths as a realistic, "humanized" family.

Mary Garth's chief function is to act as mentor to Fred Vincy, but she is also an implicit ironic commentator, by sheer contrast, on Rosamond, Dorothea, and "the Christian Carnivora" (Middlemarch, p. 242) who hover at Stone Court waiting for old Featherstone's death. The single dramatic scene which takes place between Mary and Rosamond occurs in chapter 12. The scene opens with some generalized commentary by the narrator which places Rosamond in the category of the exquisitely beautiful woman with a powerful vacuity of mind which together form their main attractions for the opposite sex. We recall that in The Mill Mr. Tulliver deliberately, and to his cost also, chose a comely but empty-headed wife. Rosamond, a self-willed, exaggerated version of Mrs. Tulliver, is exactly the kind of ornamental, "stupid"
woman whom Lydgate considers a suitable appendage and diversion to the more serious and important public concerns of his life. (He is initially repulsed by Dorothea because of her intelligence.)

In contrast to Rosamond, Mary represents a kind of intelligent woman whose plainness, humor, and good sense keep her in touch with reality: "honesty, truth-telling fairness, was Mary's reigning virtue: she neither tried to create illusions, nor indulged in them for her own behoof" (Middlemarch, p. 84). Leavis notes that "If it were not a part of her strength to lack an aptitude for emotional exaltations, she [Mary] might be said to represent George Eliot's ideal of feminity." Yet the narrator's commentary on Mary and Rosamond is not as sharply dichotomized as her contrast between Dinah and Hetty in Adam Bede: "it would not be true to declare, in satisfactory antithesis, that she had all the virtues" (Middlemarch, p. 83). Rather, "Mary had certainly not attained that perfect good sense and good principle which are usually recommended to the less fortunate girl. . . . Her shrewdness had a streak of satiric bitterness continually renewed and never utterly out of sight" (Middlemarch, p. 84).

The dramatic scene between Mary and Rosamond which follows the narrator's general, controlling introductory
remarks focuses on the particular revealing qualities of the manner and content of the two women's language. Rosamond's vanity, her calculatedly indirect manner of speech, her indifference to anything which does not directly relate to herself, her stubborn "mildness," her trivial habit of thought, are all dramatized through her gestures and the short, tinkling sentences in which she converses with Mary. The dramatic delineation of Mary's character is also accomplished here through her distinctive language: Mary's "good sense, quick intelligence and fine strength of character appear as the poised liveliness, shrewd good-humoured sharpness and direct honesty of her speech." 47

The steadiness, the genuineness of Mary's personality, as opposed to the coyness and superficiality of Rosamond's, are demonstrated in Mary's role as mentor to Fred Vincy. Mary is the one constant, outspoken critic of the egotistical, self-pleasing side of Fred's nature which has been cultivated by his expectations from Featherstone. Fred's loving, outward-looking qualities are fostered by Mary's firm views (inherited from her mother and father), that she will only marry a man who has a vocation in which he is happy. There are many scenes between Fred and Mary in which she tries to teach him the folly of his ways: "My father," she tells him, "says an idle man ought not to exist, much less be married"; and "my father would think it a disgrace to me if I accepted a
man who got into debt, and would not work" (Middlemarch, pp. 103, 104.) She sharply tells Fred that he is "selfish," that she would "be ashamed to say that I loved a man who must always be hanging on others, and reckoning on what they must do for them" (Middlemarch, p. 188). But it is not, however, until Fred's idleness becomes the direct instrument for bringing grave sorrow to the entire Garth family that he truly begins to emerge from his selfish world. Although Mary tells Fred that "selfish people always think their own discomfort of more importance than anything else in the world" (Middlemarch, p. 187), it is Mrs. Garth who is the chief mentor for this practical expansion of Fred's sensibilities. He had listened and been influenced by Mary's teaching in theory only.

Fred is sorry, both for himself, and for the Garth family, when he abuses Mr. Garth's trusting nature and makes him responsible for his debt. But contemplating sorrow is not enough to teach him the error of his ways. The Shakespearean epigram for the chapter (24) succinctly describes the universal relationship between the offender and his victim, and the chapter dramatizes its general truth: "The offender's sorrow brings but small relief/To him who wears the strong offence's cross" (Middlemarch, p. 177). The epigram is clearly a device for involving the intellect of the reader, but the chapter itself engages the reader's imagination, developing
the idea of evil and its results through a realistic encounter between Fred and Mrs. Garth.

Mrs. Garth is the practical, more rational side of the Garth union, but, like Mary, her firmness and clarity of vision are tempered by a loving heart. The narrator describes Mrs. Garth's character, her values, and her attitude towards life and her husband at some length, for again, as with the entire Garth family, the aesthetic aim is to bring the undoubtedly "exemplary Mrs. Garth" to life. The narrator first establishes her own admiring attitude towards the character through a revealing selection of details which are also designed to mold the reader's judgment and sympathy. Although Mrs. Garth will play a significant part in bringing about Fred's reformation, she wisely does not try to reform her husband: "She had that rare sense which discerns what is unalterable, and submits to it without murmuring. Adoring her husband's virtues, she had very early made up her mind to his incapacity of minding his own interests, and had met the consequences cheerfully" (Middlemarch, p. 178). Mrs. Garth is a less elevated, more "realistic" version of Dorothea, a woman with both intelligence and strong affections. But unlike Dorothea's, Mrs. Garth's circumstances and place in society have not contrived to blind her vision or rob her of the
outlets necessary for these qualities of character to find expression. Mrs. Garth believes that a woman "might possess 'education' . . . without being a useless doll" (*Middlemarch*, p. 179), and her usefulness is dramatized in several realistic scenes with her children. The higher up one ascends in Middlemarch society the more the woman's role becomes fixed as that of the "useless doll." It is the role which frustrates Dorothea, the one which admirably suits Celia, and the one Rosamond aspires to and plays at. Mrs. Garth is, then, an implicit mentor to the reader in her portrayal of the possibility of marriage as a happy, fulfilling, even if circumscribed, vocation for a woman.

Hers is a kind of happiness which we may infer is similar to that found by Dorothea in her union with Ladislaw, though Ladislaw never appears in such a favorable light as Caleb Garth. Mary, as the "Finale" tells us, also achieves the same kind of happiness with Fred. All three women are shown to be, on certain levels, superior to their husbands, certainly Mary and Dorothea are distinctly so; they must all, however, ultimately find their vocation only in marriage.

But in chapter 24 Mrs. Garth is shown directly and concretely having a widening effect on Fred Vincy's narrow sympathies. Fred comes upon her in the most realistic medium possible as a setting for a woman who, in a sense, is as "ideal" as Dorothea. She is
making pies at the well-scoured deal table . . . , observing Sally's movements at the oven and dough-tub through an open door, and giving lessons to her youngest boy and girl, who were standing opposite to her at the table with their books and slates before them. A tub and a clothes-horse at the other end of the kitchen indicated an intermittent wash of small things also going on. . . . [With] her sleeves turned above her elbows, deftly handling her pastry--applying her rolling-pin and giving ornamental pinches . . . , [she] expounded with grammatical fervour what were the right views about the concord of verbs and pronouns with 'nouns of multitude or signifying many' (Middlemarch, pp. 179-180).

The richness of detail and the affectionate tone of the narrator towards Mrs. Garth are equally apparent here; the reader is strongly influenced to admire Mrs. Garth too. Like Mary, Mrs. Garth also functions as an ironic commentator on Dorothea, "imprisoned" in the pale "blue-green boudoir" at Lowick, idly looking out on the "chill, colourless, narrowed landscape" (Middlemarch, pp. 201, 202): a metaphoric expression of her husband's mind and her own circumscribed and frustrated life.

In chapter 24 Fred must confess to Mrs. Garth the debt his idleness had brought upon her husband, and the moment of confession is carefully prepared for so that the reader will feel the enormity of the consequences of Fred's careless action on the whole Garth family. But when the truth is out Mrs. Garth acts "gravely and decisively" by offering her savings to her husband. Mrs. Garth's positive attitude
towards her husband here parallels and contrasts with Rosamond's response to Lydgate's plea for help in a later, similar scene between a husband and wife confronted with debt, where "What can I do, Tertius," is spoken with "the most neutral aloofness" (Middlemarch, p. 434). The narrator, without any excessive pleading, gains an enormous amount of sympathy and respect for Mrs. Garth when her offer of money is described as being made with a "slight tremor in some of the words" (Middlemarch, p. 183). Since we already know of Mrs. Garth's strong character and unsentimental approach to the difficulties of life, this "tremor" is as appropriately indicative of the degree of her suffering as the copious tears the more ardent Dorothea constantly sheds in her moments of intense sorrow.

The narrator then directly makes the connection between Mrs. Garth's particular role as mentor to Fred here with the generalized epigram which was the abstract "title" to the chapter:

She had made Fred feel for the first time something like the tooth of remorse. Curiously enough, his pain in the affair beforehand had consisted almost entirely in the sense that he must seem dishonourable, and sink in the opinion of the Garths: he had not occupied himself with the inconvenience and possible injury that his breach might occasion them, for this exercise of the imagination on other people's needs is not common with hopeful young gentlemen (Middlemarch, p. 183).
Fred is learning to respond towards others as George Eliot wished her readers to respond to her fiction: to "imagine and to feel" as well as understand intellectually, the sufferings of his fellow-men. Finally, in the closing frame of the scene, the narrator again recalls the implications of the epigram to the reader's mind. Here, characteristically, the narrator draws on her dramatic relationship with the reader to strengthen the validity and acceptability of the criticism which is to include the reader and his world with that of Fred and Middlemarch: "Indeed we are most of us brought up in the notion that the highest motive for not doing a wrong is something irrespective of the beings who would suffer the wrong" (Middlemarch, p. 183).

Fred's education, his "transmutation of self" is as yet far from complete. He is still, as the narrator says of Lydgate, at a stage in life "which makes a man's career a fine subject for betting"; like Lydgate, Fred's "virtues and faults . . . [are] capable of shrinking or expanding" (Middlemarch, p. 111). Mrs. Garth continues to teach him by wisely telling him that Farebrother loves Mary; she believes "that the revelation might do Fred Vincy a great deal of good" (Middlemarch, p. 420). She recognizes, as her innocent husband does not, the easy, back-sliding aspect of Fred's character. Again, the narrator tells us, Mrs.
Garth is responsible for an expansion in Fred's vision: "Fred's light hopeful nature had perhaps never had so much of a bruise as from this suggestion. . . . Certainly this experience was a discipline for Fred hardly less sharp than his disappointment about his uncle's will" (*Middlemarch*, p. 420).

We know from the "Finale" that Fred turns out well; he and Mary achieve "a solid mutual happiness" (*Middlemarch*, p. 608). But in spite of all the teaching by precept which he receives from Mary and Mrs. Garth, none would have had any lasting effect without the practical help and example of inarticulate Mr. Garth, who is perhaps the most exemplary mentor in *Middlemarch*. Many of George Eliot's ideas find expression in Caleb Garth. He represents, as Goldfarb observes, Carlyle's gospel of work. His choice of career and his joy in its pursuit are intimately connected with the important theme of vocation in the novel. He intuitively understands the concept of the unity between the individual and society, and in his work exemplifies a harmonious relationship between man and nature: "Caleb Garth often shook his head in meditation on the value, the indispensable might of that myriad-headed, myriad-handed labour by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed. It had laid hold of his imagination in boyhood" (*Middlemarch*, p. 185).
He is also, as we shall see in this discussion, related to the theme of reform and George Eliot's concept of meliorism. For Caleb is a strongly redemptive figure in Middlemarch; he is the individual who has evolved, or progressed to that highest "ideal" but still "real" moral state towards which humanity must strive. Caleb, more significantly than all the other ideas with which he is associated, is a representative of that concept of duty which George Eliot believed to be most important, an idea which should be a real, viably functioning aspect of every man's life. When George Eliot made her famous statement on God, Immortality and Duty, to F.W.H. Myers at Cambridge in 1873, in which she pronounced "how inconceivable was the first, how unbelievable the second, and yet how peremptory and absolute the third," she was verbalizing a long-held belief which had found expression in her earliest fiction. Duty is defined in "Janet's Repentence" (1857) as "that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self, which is to the moral life what the addition of a great central ganglion is to the animal life" ("Janet's Repentence," p. 248). Duty, to George Eliot, was always synonymous with the altruistic life, and Caleb Garth's life is a pattern of this concept.

In spite of the variety of Caleb Garth's ideological dimensions, he is perhaps the most perfect example of George
Eliot's ability to make ideas "thoroughly incarnate," for there is nothing theoretical or abstract about Mr. Garth. He is a completely "realistic" picture of many ideas, dramatized in his speech, in his actions, in his work, in his relationships with his family and the community. He performs his function as mentor completely by example, never by precept, although the narrator, characteristically, and particularly since Caleb is not obviously "wise," guides the relationship and judgment of the reader so that he will understand as well as feel what Caleb represents.

It is the narrator who initially describes Caleb and his attitude towards work. It is she who must perform this task, not only because she can more easily establish her approving relationship with him and thus influence the reader to accept the teachings he embodies, but also because Caleb is too inarticulate and innocent a character to be able to define verbally his reverence for work, or how this feeling has shaped his life. In contrast to the more complex characters in Middlemarch, we learn very little about Caleb's background, except that as a youth, instead of becoming enamored with medicine or religion, like Lydgate and Bulstrode, his imagination was fired by the sights and sounds of labor which "had acted on him as poetry without the aid of poets, had made a philosophy for him without the
aid of philosophers, a religion without the aid of theology. His early ambition had been to have as effective a share as possible in this sublime labour" (Middlemarch, p. 185). Caleb, whose inarticulateness the narrator suggestively builds up with numerous references to the dumb movements of his hands when he is thinking, does not know and could not tell the reader that he had experienced such feelings as a youth. But Caleb possesses that inward knowledge which Teufelsdröckh searches for in "The Everlasting No" of Sartor Resartus: "A certain inarticulate Self-consciousness dwells dimly in us; which only our Works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible Precept, Know thyself; till it be translated into this partially possible once, Know what thou canst work at."50

It is significant also that in contrast to the narrator's procedure with other important characters in the novel, there is little or no psychological analysis of Caleb. Since his actions and way of life all stem from his altruistic devotion to work, he does not have devious, mixed, hidden or ulterior motives to struggle with or to torment his conscience. There is no dichotomy between his motives for action and the opinions others have of him, and he is therefore not susceptible to misjudgment in other characters' minds.
Caleb's individuality and exemplariness are given substance by the opinions of the community. He is "one of those precious men within his own district whom everybody would choose to work for them, because he did his work well, charged very little, and often declined to charge at all" (Middlemarch, p. 186). To Farebrother, Caleb is "an independent fellow: an original, simple-minded fellow. . . . He would make a different parish of Tipton, if Brooke would let him manage" (Middlemarch, p. 279). To Chettam Caleb is the "proper man to look after things" (Middlemarch, p. 279), and shrewd Bulstrode consults Garth on the management of Stone Court because "like every one else who had business of that sort, he wanted to get the agent who was more anxious for his employer's interests than his own" (Middlemarch, p. 505).

But although the narrator and other characters in the novel contribute to the reader's respect and understanding of what Caleb stands for, it is the dramatized domestic scenes in the Garth household which firmly engage the reader's imagination by giving a life and depth to Caleb's character which lift him out of the single category of pure moral example. The epigram for chapter 40, which is George Eliot's own invention, emphasizes the narrator's respect for Caleb and points to his contribution to progress:
Wise in his daily work was he:
To fruits of diligence,
And not to faiths or polity,
He plied his utmost sense.
These perfect in their little parts,
Whose work is all their prise--
Without them how could law, or arts,
Or towered cities rise?

Unlike religious hypocrites or would-be politicians like
Bulstrode and Brooke, Caleb lives and practices the concept
of duty in his family relationships and his work. The
implication of the epigram is that because such men as Caleb
exist, progress, civilization, is possible. Change in his
hands, in men and women of good moral fibre, is not a destruc
tive, self-serving force. Caleb gives that great nine
teenth-century symbol of change, the railway, a positive
moral value: "It may do a bit of harm here and there, to this
and to that; and so does the sun in heaven. But the rail
way's a good thing" (Middlemarch, p. 408).

Since chapter 40 immediately follows the encounter
between Brooke and Dagley we may also see the epigram and
Caleb himself as ironic reflections on the delusions of the
ignorant laborer who puts his faith in politics, in "Rin
form" rather than in daily work as the means for improving
his lot. Brooke, of course, is a self-deluded perpetrator
of these delusions, a representative of the "polity" who is
unwise in "his daily work" of running his estate. The
immediate structural juxtaposition of the pro-reformer
Brooke's visit to Dagley's neglected farm and Caleb's conversation with his wife on what the offers to manage the Chettam and Brooke estates mean to him dramatizes the difference between the true reformer and the hypocrite. Caleb, by his practical application of his plans for improvement, by his performance of his work with scrupulous honesty and disregard for self-interest beyond the satisfaction of seeing a job well done, concretely represents the practical reform which good men may bring about.

The scene in the Garth household in chapter 40 subtly demonstrates Caleb's quiet delight with Chettam's offer to manage the estates. He is deeply concerned with how to do the best and least expensive job, one which will be of utmost benefit to both tenant and landlord. He plans to "draw up a rotation of crops" (Middlemarch, p. 295), a kind of "Rin-form" which will be of practical good to men like Dagley. "It's a fine bit of work, Susan! A man without a family would be glad to do it for nothing" (Middlemarch, p. 295). Caleb's simple, work-man's language, quite unwittingly to himself, shows what real reform means, and how the individual must interact selflessly with the community to bring about "the growing good of the world":

... to have the chance of getting a bit of the country into good fettle ... and putting men into the right way with their farming, and getting a bit of good con-
triving and solid building done—that those who are living and those who come after will be the better for. I'd sooner have it than a fortune. I hold it the most honourable work that is. . . . It's a most uncommonly cramping thing. . . . to sit on horse-back and look over the hedges at the wrong thing, and not be able to put your hand to it to make it right. What people do who go into politics I can't think; it drives me almost mad to see mismanagement over only a few acres (Middlemarch, pp. 295-6).

The language expresses Caleb's untutored, instinctual wisdom, which is based not on abstract notions but in a deep-rooted feeling for the land and humanity, a concern for how they may work harmoniously together to benefit each other. Caleb intuits that "things hang together"; he understands "the nature of things" (Middlemarch, pp. 297, 300). There is no hint of self-interest in his reaction to Chettam's offer; his thoughts are all of the good he may accomplish by it. Now Mary need not be a governess, and he tells his wife that "I am thinking that I could do a good turn for Fred Vincy. . . . Fred might come and learn the nature of things and act under me, and it might be the making of him into a useful man" (Middlemarch, p. 300), which, in fact, it is. Again the direct, colloquial language is decorously fitting to the simple goodness of the character.

Caleb's ambitions, to carry "out a notion or two with improvements" on the land, and, in doing so, to help others, are free of any concern for that "troublesome spot" of "self." He stands out in sharp contrast with all those other ambitions
of the important characters in *Middlemarch*. Dorothea's plans for improvement are tinged by her "lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there"; and "it was not entirely out of devotion to her future husband that she wished to know Latin and Greek. . . . She wished . . . to be wise herself" (*Middlemarch*, pp. 6, 47). Ladislaw is attracted to Reform not for any altruistic ambitions to improve the political state of the country, but because it enables him to be near Dorothea: "It is undeniable that but for the desire to be where Dorothea was, and perhaps the want of knowing what else to do, Will would not at this time have been meditating on the needs of the English people or criticizing English statesmanship" (*Middlemarch*, p. 337). Brooke's dabbling in politics is yet another form of indulging his habit of "going into things." Lydgate's ambition to find the primitive tissue is not totally devoid of a desire for personal glory, and Casaubon's ambition to publish his Key to all Mythologies is identical with the satisfaction of self. Finally, Bulstrode's seemingly philanthropic ambitions are his way of atoning for his past sins and buying a place in heaven.

Although the scene in chapter 40 "shows" us Caleb's philosophy of life, it also provides us with a dramatization of other aspects of Caleb's personality and life in the many
details which have no direct bearing on his ideological dimensions. The happiness and naturalness of the talk of his family at the cosy breakfast table contribute to the picture of him as the fond father and husband in a truly united family—a rare phenomenon in Middlemarch. Although Caleb is concerned with reading his letters, "forgetting his tea and toast," he kindly does not forget to preserve intact "a large red seal" for his little daughter. The smaller children and Mary laugh and joke together in loving affection, while intelligent, plain Mrs. Garth presides over her family with stern but loving care. She is immensely proud of Caleb's offer of work and demonstrates her respect and affection in a moving gesture as she places her hand fondly on his shoulder as she reads his letter, and then tells her children directly that they should be proud of their father. We may recall this gesture two chapters later when we read that "Mr Casaubon kept his hands behind him and allowed her pliant arm to cling with difficulty against his rigid arm. There was something horrible to Dorothea in the sensation which this unresponsive hardness inflicted on her" (Middlemarch, p. 312). The whole scene illuminates a state of familial happiness which is found nowhere else in the novel, and is a dramatized muted criticism of the ghastly domestic scenes of the Casaubons and the Lydgate's. Caleb's domestic environment, like houses so often
are in George Eliot's work, is a metaphoric and metonymic expression of the simplicity, the genuineness, the goodness of his character.

The possibilities for reform, for teaching, for realizing one's ambitions, all closely related and sometimes identical activities in *Middlemarch*, are, like the outer frame of the Reform Bill was in fact, severely limited in *Middlemarch*. Lydgate's hopes for medical reform come to nothing and he is destroyed by his basil plant, Rosamond. Dagley, we know, will remain ignorant, living in squalor, after the Reform Bill is passed. But gradual reform, slow progress, is possible. Ardent, theoretic Dorothea finds a muted apotheosis in marriage with Ladislaw, and "the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive; for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts" (*Middlemarch*, p. 613, my emphasis). The Garth family, however, strikes the strongest redempative note in the novel. Its goodness, integrity, and sound happiness are portrayed in vivid dramatic scenes which have a lasting effect and influence on the reader's mind and imagination, and the suggestion that one of Mary's children is the image of Caleb Garth is a prophetic hint of hope for continuing, gradual progress in the future.
FOOTNOTES

1 George Eliot, p. 420.

2 Haight, p. 420.

3 Haight notes that George Eliot was writing "with less torment from diffidence and self-mistrust than she had felt for many years" (p. 433).

4 "Middlemarch" from Notebook to Novel.

5 Haight and Carroll disagree with regard to the novel's critical reception. Haight writes that "[f]rom the start Middlemarch was acclaimed a masterpiece" (p. 444); Carroll observes that "its contemporary reception was not by any means the universal shout of approval which recent critical orthodoxy might lead us to expect" (p. 28). The contemporary reviews support Carroll's argument.

6 Carroll, p. 346.

7 Carroll, p. 353.

8 Carroll, p. 28.

9 The deleted sentence read: "Among the many remarks passed on her mistakes, it was never said in the neighbourhood of Middlemarch that such mistakes could not have happened if the society into which she was born had not smiled on propositions of marriage from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age—on modes of education which make a woman's knowledge another name for motley ignorance—on rules of conduct which are in flat contradiction with its own loudly-asserted beliefs." Barbara Hardy argues that "whatever the reasons for the deletion, its effect is undoubtedly that of a clear movement away from the particular case of Dorothea. The precise references in this first version are, in the second, covered by generalization. . . . The more general and open statement glances at Lydgate, and at Bulstrode, Casaubon, and all the others, not merely at Dorothea's handicap as a woman" (p. 52).
10 Carroll, p. 323.

11 Carroll, pp. 290, 289, 295.


14 See especially Mary A. Arnold, "The Unity of Middle-
   march," Husserl, 1 (1968), 137-41; David R. Carroll, "Unity
   Through Analogy: An Interpretation of Middlemarch," VQ, 2
   (1958-59), 305-316; Martha Curry, "Middlemarch: Unity amid
   Diversity," BaratR, 5 (1970) 83-103; Suzanne C. Ferguson,
   "Mme. Laure and Operative Irony in Middlemarch: A Structural
   Analogy," SEL, 3 (1963), 509-516; Darrel Mansell, Jr., "George
   Eliot's Conception of 'Form'," in George Eliot, A Collection
   draws the conclusion that George Eliot's "Notes on Form in
   Art" reveal that "the principle of analogy is a unifying
   principle at work in her novels" (p. 67). Many critics agree
   with Mansell.

15 Haight, ed. Middlemarch, p. xix. Mark Schorer also
   notes the many images of connection in Middlemarch; see
   "Fiction and the 'Analogical Matrix'," in Critiques and Essays,
   p. 91.

16 "Middlemarch and History," NCF, 25 (1971), 421. For
   the details of the memorandum see Thomas Pinney, "More Leaves

17 See Andover, Carroll, Mansell.

18 Albert J. Kuhn, "English Deism and the Development
   See also Alex Zwerdling, "The Mythographers and the Romantic
   Revival of Greek Myth," PMLA, 79 (1964), 447-456; and Daniel
   P. Deneau, "Eliot's Casaubon and Mythology," American Notes &
   Queries, 6, no. 8 (1968), 125-127.
19

Mason discusses the different methods Casaubon and Lydgate use in "Middlemarch and History," p. 422. Calvin Bendient sees an analogy between Mr. Brooke's "trivial 'documents' [which] are the comic counterparts of Casaubon's; like the scholar, Mr. Brooke only talks of doing something with them," "'Middle March': Touching Down," Hudson Review, 22 (1969), 82.

21
Nineteenth Century Studies, p. 234.

22

23
Both Carroll and Mason see Reform as analogous to Dorothea's "reform," that is, her growth in vision.

24

25
The Form of Victorian Fiction, p. 84.

26
Miller, p. 85.

27
Miller, p. 64.

28
Miller, p. 83.

29
The Great Tradition, p. 70.

30

31
32 Leavis notes the humor in the narrator's voice in Middlemarch: the "encounters between women give us some of George Eliot's finest comedy... And the comedy can be of the kind in which the tragic undertone is what tells most on us" (p. 68).

33 Hilda Hume notes another verbal echo of "it were well" in Casaubon's language, and concludes that this use of the subjunctive rather than the indicative is further verbal evidence of Casaubon's "death-like arrest of energy," "Middlemarch as Science Fiction," (41).

34 David Leon Higdon, "George Eliot and the Art of the Epigraph," NCF, 25 (1970), 127-51. Steiner examines George Eliot's use of mottoes as another example of her lack of art. To him they "are illicit means of persuasion: the author not entirely confident in what she has written, stands behind our chair and whispers advice as to how we should feel about this or that part of her tale"(p.275).


36 Middlemarch, p. xix.

37 Schorer, "Fiction and the 'Analogical Matrix'," in Critiques and Essays, p. 96.

38 Schorer, p. 95.

39 The Art of George Eliot, pp. 146-147.


42 Steiner, p.265.
The Nature of Narrative, p. 204.

The Great Tradition, p. 93.

Hardy, The Novels of George Eliot, p. 80.

Leavis, p. 68.

Leavis, p. 68.

Lloyd Fernando, "George Eliot, Feminism and Dorothea Brooke," REL, 4 (1963), 76-90, notes that George Eliot was not an ardent feminist; she believed the woman's place was in the home.

"Caleb Garth of Middlemarch," p. 16. Mason, "Middlemarch and History," argues that "Caleb Garth is the representative of economic ethics that are commercial, or at least not wholly agricultural, and yet not materialistic as a consequence" (427).

CONCLUSION

George Eliot's philosophical background has been so thoroughly investigated that it frequently leads to the mechanical placement of her characters into the ideological categories to which they undoubtedly belong. What is often overlooked, however, is the extent to which George Eliot's moral and consequently didactic aesthetic functions to create representative or real characters rather than ones which are purely illustrative or symbolic.

Since George Eliot's primary intention was to educate the imagination and sensibilities of the reader, which would result in an expansion of his sympathy for his fellow-men, her narrative technique is always finally focused on her reader and the achievement of her moral purpose. It is the combination of George Eliot's use of realistic details with a narrative presence who is a "dramatic entity" that results, I have argued, in the creation of concrete universals as well as the development of a sympathetic and intellectual response to them.

The aim of my examination of some of the individual mentors in George Eliot's fiction has been to demonstrate how her narrative technique, in actual practice, attempts to render "ideas" "thoroughly incarnate." Sometimes, as
we have seen, George Eliot fails, or is only partially successful, in the creation of her concrete universals, but the artistic effort is always made to prevent the conceptual from predominating too heavily.

*Adam Bede* provides us with the unusual opportunity to study two mentors in the novel, one a success, the other a failure. Irwine, I have suggested, comes close to being a fully dramatized mentor, while Dinah remains aloof, always on a conceptual plane. The reader's first and lasting impression of Dinah is created in the long sermon she gives at the beginning of the novel, where her Biblical language and physical isolation has a disengaging effect upon the reader. The absence of any psychological analysis of her moment of "crisis and decision," together with the brief and sporadic nature of her appearances throughout the novel, do nothing to dispel the reader's unsympathetic response to Dinah.

Philip Wakem, in *The Mill on the Floss*, perhaps more directly than any other of George Eliot's mentors, takes the place of the narrator in his persistent and prophetic teaching of Maggie. He sees almost as clearly as the omniscient narrator, yet his love for Maggie creates an ambiguity of motives which contributes to a sense of his
realistic human imperfection. His clarity of vision also comes, of course, from the fact that he is a kind of alter ego for Maggie. Philip marks a stage in George Eliot's development in the delineation of the mentor, for in his portrayal the external commentary of the narrator is clearly demonstrated as well as expanded in several dramatic scenes.

*Romola*, though a "failure," is extremely significant for the light it sheds on the importance, indeed the absolute necessity, of George Eliot's "immanent" narrator in the creation of her fictional world. I have argued that the withdrawal or neutrality of the narrator, the result of the alien nature of her medium, brings about a corresponding detachment in the reader. Paradoxically, *Romola*, a mass of "realistic" details, does not seem like a "real" world; without the all-important narrator the details simply remain inanimate. Multiplicity alone does not yield a sense of reality.

In *Middlemarch* George Eliot's narrative technique functions at its best, and new devices are employed to achieve the moral purpose of her art. Here the narrator is more varied and unobtrusive in her manipulation of the reader, in teaching her truths, in intervening in the dramatic scenes. The chief mentors in the novel, the
Garths, are the finest example throughout George Eliot's work of her ability to embody her ideas in "breathing, individual forms."

Throughout her fictional career George Eliot's concern with the moral function of art remained constant, and her artistic devices for achieving this end, which are used in her early fiction, were developed, refined, added to, but also never radically changed. Contrary to Stang's theory, the importance of ideas in George Eliot's fiction is evident from the very beginning. The concepts of duty, of egotism, of humanism, of determinism, of judging wisely—and these are only a few of the more important—are always there. What changes from novel to novel is her artistic ability to create concrete universals. George Eliot's mentors do indeed belong to moral categories, but many of them are also presented, with varying degrees of success, as distinct personalities. Her narrative technique always attempts to widen the reader's vision by revealing both the individual cast of mind and the symbolic, universalizing significance of each particular mentor.
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