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INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, the relation of Victorian women writers to the dominant ideologies regarding female education, notions of masculinity and femininity, and the "proper spheres" of the sexes has become the focus of increasing research and discussion. When I began my own part-time research in 1972, relatively little work in this area had appeared, but by the time of its near completion in 1980, numerous contributions were already published, one of them being my own discussion of the Finale to Middlemarch, which forms the last section of chapter two in this dissertation.¹ It is not part of my project here either to review the nature or scope of these modern studies or the range of nineteenth-century material which concerned itself with the "Woman Question," except in so far as it is illustrative of a point in my own work. The bulk of reference to all such material has been confined to the bibliography at the end.

The danger of any study which concerns itself with a thematic question is that of treating themes as objects to be

discovered and extracted from a text. To avoid this temptation and any which would divorce the content of a novel from questions of its form, I felt it was essential to remember that every answer is partly determined by the nature of its question, and that the usefulness of any answer depends on the appropriateness of its question. My search for appropriate formulations for questions about sex and gender in George Eliot's work led gradually to dissatisfaction with some traditional modes of enquiry. For example, any question such as, "what did George Eliot believe were the proper spheres for men and women?" would be unacceptable because it begged the question as to how ideas can be said to be present and to function in a novel. It also seemed inadequate to establish the novel's relation to Victorian notions of femininity by reference to some kind of authorial system of rewards and punishments for female characters. It seemed self-evident that authorial "approval" of Dinah Morris, Romola, or Dorothea Brooke, matched by an equivalent "disapproval" of "egoists" like Hetty Sorrel, Rosamond Vincy, or Gwendolen Harleth, simply could not account for the complexity, ambiguity, and, even, contradictions regarding femininity and masculinity which emerge from the novels. At the same time, it was necessary to guard against conflating (and thus avoiding) these finer complexities of sex and gender under broadly generalizing "human" abstractions. Such a tendency might ultimately explain The Mill on the Floss, for example, in moral terms which resolve any discernible conflict of sex and gender into a "human" problem. Such a move would make it possible to turn Maggie Tulliver's death into an idealized celebration of renunciation, giving Maggie a "moral victory over herself," as Catherine MacMahon concludes.
Maggie has achieved a kind of moral triumph before her death; she has shown a strength of character that surpasses that of Philip Wakem, Stephen Guest, even that of the Anglican minister, Dr. Kenn. Like Lear after the storm, Maggie is ready to say, "Ripeness is all."²

In such a formulation George Eliot's relation to issues of nineteenth-century feminism, which must necessarily engage with questions of difference in ideas and experience of the sexes, simply disappears and, by its concluding move, denies those very differences. It abstracts Maggie—and the men to whom she is ostensibly compared—to a condition whose only difference is expressed in terms of an ideal morality.

My own effort to avoid generalizing moral terms and to focus on aspects relating primarily to differences of sex and gender revealed the ways in which a tendency to apply "human" categories in criticism can obscure those significant issues which operate in a text because of distinctions of sex and gender. I felt it was necessary to formulate my questions in terms of the ways in which issues regarding male and female spheres and the nature of masculinity and femininity can be said to be constructed by the working of the text itself. Such an approach, it was hoped, could avoid the use of methods which, though not unpopular in the past, seemed insufficient given the complexities of the questions as presently conceived. The essential task, therefore, was not to establish what George Eliot "says" about men and women in any moral terms of approval or disapproval, but to show how the structural and

thematic decisions made in each text determine the nature and extent of the "questions" each novel, itself, raises about men and women.

Attempting to find a satisfactory approach to the problem of how issues of masculinity and femininity are established in a work of literature called into question any simple notion of the novel as a unified whole. Since my task was to identify different processes at work in the novel and to analyse their relation to one another, it could not be assumed that those relations would necessarily "agree" with each other in some coherent way. In an effort to resist working from such an assumption, I have tried to make practical distinctions among various terms such as "text," "novel," "narrative," and "fiction," some of which parallel current critical practice, and others which are constructed for my own purpose. When wishing to emphasize the practice and process of reading and interrelating the various aspects of language, structure and discourse, I have used the word "text," to differentiate it from the "novel," which I use to refer to the work as a whole, the "text" after it has been worked upon by the reading of it. The "novel" is the completed object about which certain conclusions are reached; the process of reading the "text" yields those conclusions that presume to say what the "novel" is "about." The term "fiction" applies to those aspects of the text which consist of the characters, dramatized events and dialogue which are offered to the reader as the internal "reality" of the novel. The term "narrative" as an adjective refers to those aspects of the text which are marked by language and grammatical positioning of a "voice" which the reader takes as being outside the fiction, both relating it and
relating to it. That voice is often simply called "George Eliot," but I prefer to refer to it as the "narrator," to distinguish it from the historical person, George Eliot, as author.

An essential premise of this study, then, is that the issues which can be said to relate George Eliot's work to the nineteenth-century debates on the roles of men and women must be found within the very texts that construct them, and that they are not extractable as independent entities. The nature of the text, its language, thematic and structuring categories, determine the form and content of the issues it raises and the limits to the questions and answers it allows. This premise applies not only among the novels, but within each one, where certain questions may be seen to be attended to and others ignored, or, indeed, where solutions may be found which do not wholly satisfy the questions which the text itself seems to have raised. Thus absences, discrepancies, and contradictions, the apparent "accidents" of the text, require critical attention as much as those aspects which appear to be there by design.

My intention is to establish the usefulness of a practice of reading with reference to questions of sex and gender, to illuminate thereby certain less apparent, relatively unexplored dimensions of the novels, but also to relate those dimensions to certain critical questions which have long claimed attention. Thus the usefulness of my approach would be tested to some extent by its ability to offer insights into problems which are already agreed to exist. The relation of Maggie Tulliver to her environment and the question of solution to the conflict raised in *The Mill on the Floss,*
for example, will be related closely to considerations of the possibilities of female experience which are allowed or disallowed by the text, rather than evaluated in purely moral or aesthetic terms; an investigation of the treatment of male and female spheres established in *Middlemarch* will offer perspectives on the familiar critical concerns with the novel's use of the web as a structuring device and with the role of the narrator; and, finally, analysis of the treatment of sex and gender in *Daniel Deronda* will suggest new ways of looking at the long-debated question of the relation between the two "halves" of that novel.
Since my wish to find an appropriate critical method with which to discuss George Eliot's relation to the "Woman Question" contained no desire to argue exclusively for a feminist approach, but rather to complement other already legitimated areas of interest in George Eliot scholarship, I felt it unnecessary to include accounts of those wider areas, choosing instead to concentrate on developing analyses of particular primary texts. Making my essential task that of establishing a valid critical approach to what are usually considered feminist issues led me to choose also to exclude extensive discussions of traditional George Eliot criticism, except where it seemed useful to illustrate how my own findings raised certain implications for that criticism. Only in the case of Daniel Deronda have I covered certain critical approaches in detail, because they were relevant to my own arguments about the way in which that novel can or cannot be said to be unified.

My decision to analyse these three particular novels rested on the belief that they suggested most obviously a central concern with the peculiar problems of womanhood. At the outset I could not estimate the extent to which these novels would actually prove to deal most thoroughly with these problems. Interestingly, my investigation produced unexpected results with regard to The Mill on the Floss, which I had initially chosen not only in order to include an early novel as a balance against the two more substantial, later ones, but also because, of all the early works, it seemed to focus with conscious force on the experience of its central female character, promising to make the problems...
of female experience crucial to its concerns. My initial assumption, however, that *The Mill on the Floss* would offer an early example of how issues of masculinity and femininity are part of the very structure of the novel, proved not to be borne out in practice. Consequently, in the shaping of this study, the chapter on *The Mill on the Floss* has taken on a largely introductory role to the later chapters, serving to show ways in which a text can seem to raise questions of sex and gender and also avoid them. It thus provides a preliminary and largely contrasting model against which to compare the more positively complex and sustained treatment of these questions as they are found in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. 
THE MILL ON THE FLOSS

...early I perceived that men never, in any extreme of despair, wished to be women. 1

Were brothers so dear, then, Antigone? We have no brothers. We see no men into whose lives we dare look steadfastly, or to whose destinies we look confidently. 2

The Guardian review of The Mill on the Floss remarked in 1860, that the novel "...is one of the boldest pictures ever attempted, of the way in which the soul makes trials for itself," 3 the "soul" being Maggie Tulliver, the predominating, central focus of this novel, which, when still in manuscript form, was referred to as "Sister Maggie." The Guardian's conclusion summarizes The Mill on the Floss solely in terms of Maggie Tulliver, whereas it might be more accurate to say that the novel is a "bold picture" of the way it "makes trials for itself," since it is the categories which the novel itself assumes, which result in the construction of conflict. In

1 Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1850), p.35.
2 Ibid., p. 194.
this particular case, the conflict can be seen as arising from the way the narrative pushes towards a desire to achieve reconciliation as a means of avoiding yet other conflicts consequent upon the necessity of making exclusive emotional choices in adulthood. However, it is also possible to see how the narrative seems, almost despite itself, to indicate other ways that such conflict cannot be explained purely in terms of a "character essentially noble but liable to great error," and that the desired reconciliation is, indeed, impossible. All of the "trials" set up in the text of the novel are not represented as having their origins exclusively within Maggie herself, but also ask to be recognized as having been determined by external factors, in particular, by social attitudes and expectations concerning the role and behaviour of women.

A lack of distinction between the nature and origin of the traps Maggie Tulliver is caught in characterizes much of the early criticism of the novel, of which The Saturday Review offers a concise example. It is a criticism which does not--or cannot--see that the text of the novel specifically requires that Maggie's personal history be comprehended within a social context which itself does not--or cannot--understand that its own contradictory attitudes to male and female children and its constructed beliefs about morality, loyalty, honour, etc., are incapable of offering sufficient explanation or relief for the kinds of emotional conflict posited for Maggie Tulliver. Hence, the Saturday Review finds

a direct way of avoiding the necessity of acknowledging the difficulties Maggie Tulliver's story presents, by simply denying them, a tactic also used by characters within the fiction itself: "what does it all come to except that human life is inexplicable, and that women who feel this find the feeling painful?" Some other critics, such as the aforementioned Guardian reviewer, went further toward recognizing the presence of specific conflict in the novel, but could only locate it in the problem of Maggie's attraction to Stephen Guest, and conclude that such a subject was unfit for treatment:

The picture of passion gradually stealing like a frightful and incurable poison over not merely principle and self-respect, but even over the faith and honour to the unsuspecting and confiding which the very opinion of the world helps us to hold sacred... is one which had better never been set before us with so much plainness.  

The assumed values in this review, noticeable in phrases like "principle and self-respect," "faith and honour" and "the very opinion of the world helps us to hold sacred," point up again the source of the problem readers confronted with The Mill on the Floss, precisely because they are the kinds of values which the novel renders problematic. This process begins with the fact that from the outset, Maggie's complex emotional being is presupposed by the text, and her needs and desires, her trials and errors, are presented often in opposition to the values of her environment; Maggie's feelings receive the full weight of narrative support.

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Although this specific narrative focus seems self-evident, it needs to be examined, because its subtle working from the very opening paragraphs is an essential determining factor in the structuring of the novel. It is prepared for in the opening narrative remarks, where the significance of natural descriptions is suggestively widened by the use of language more commonly associated with that which is human and essentially emotional: "A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green banks to the sea, and the loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its passage with an impetuous embrace." 8

That broad, emotionally coloured perspective gradually focusses in towards the source of the vision, a personal narrator, whose remarks about the effect of the river point to the area of experience which will demand the reader's sympathetic attention: the river and narrator are presented as in imaginative, emotional relation to one another, "It seems to me like a living companion while I wander along the bank and listen to its low placid voice, as to the voice of one who is deaf and loving." (I, i, 4) As it proceeds towards the eventual focus of attention, Maggie herself, the narrative gets ever closer to establishing the focal point of internal experience, of feeling, fantasy and desire, against which the external world figured in the novel will be viewed. The Water and the river gradually and more intensively come to

signify that emotional area of experience which is of central concern, but which also is seen to have a power of insistence which can shut out awareness of the practical, objective reality outside it:

I am in love with moistness, and envy the white ducks that are dipping their heads far into the water here among the withes, unmindful of the awkward appearance they make in the drier world above. (I, i, 4)

Beyond the slightly humorous, reminiscent tone of the passage lies a double consciousness which points to incompatibilities at work in the whole novel, and which the "I" of the narrator seems both to see and to wish to avoid seeing. There is the desire for immersion into the flow of emotion, into "moistness" and the forgetful deafness it causes, the "little girl," Maggie, like the narrator, is "rapt in" the movement of the mill wheel (I, i, 6), and on to her is transferred the effect of the narrator's earlier observation that the "rush of the water and the booming of the mill bring a dreamy deafness...like a great curtain shutting one out from the world beyond." (I, i, 5) But the end of the passage about the ducks clearly breaks away from the tendency towards total immersion; the reference to the "awkward appearance" of the ducks clearly registers their ridiculousness when viewed from a perspective not their own, from the "drier" world of practical consciousness. Thus envy of the ducks expresses a real wish while at the same time it recognizes that human experience cannot choose to inhabit only the medium of the emotions; unlike the ducks, its consciousness is capable of being "mindful" of both feeling and thought, of the "moist" dimension of internal, emotional experience, and the "dry" one of external, objective reality. The relation
between the external and internal worlds, however, as they are constructed dramatically in the course of the novel, is not made reconcilable. At the end of Chapter One, the reader is prepared to engage with the entrance of Maggie Tulliver into the "drier world" beyond her dreams and feelings, the world of "what Mr and Mrs Tulliver were talking about, as they sat by the bright fire in the left-hand parlour, on that very afternoon. . . ." (I, i, 6) The reader is made gradually more conscious, too, of how that world can demonstrate its own kind of excluding deafness to the claims of feeling. The sense of implicit separation of Maggie from the "drier" world of the "very bright fire to tempt her" (I, i, 6) makes itself felt in the narration's abrupt abandonment of Maggie and the introduction of the fact that the world, from which at the moment Maggie is only superficially isolated, is, in fact, occupied with matters which reveal her real and profound separation from its interests: "'What I want, you know,' said Mr Tulliver--'what I want is to give Tom a good eddication; an eddication as'll be a bread to him.' " (I, ii, 7)

With Mr Tulliver's words and the assumptions behind them comes a first glimpse of how external factors, social attitudes and practices, affect the forms in which Maggie experiences emotional conflict. More specifically, they introduce those assumptions about male and female children which Maggie's own "nature," her actions and desires, repeatedly contradict. The "little girl" of Chapter One is left outside not only in physical terms, but in the mental space of Mr Tulliver's thoughts and expectations. He is concerned with his son's education, which he sees as a means to prepare Tom for a profession that will make him a match for any other man involved with business, "lawsuits, and
arbitration, and things." (I, ii, 7) In contrast to the confusions and mysteries of the complex male world of business, Mrs Tulliver reveals the limitations of the literal-minded world she inhabits, which confines itself exclusively to domestic matters of meals and clean linen. The only effect that the issue of Tom's education has on her is its requirement that she plan a larger meal to feed the aunts and uncles who are coming to be consulted about it.

The introduction of Maggie and the expressed attitude of her family towards her shows how she, as a girl, is seen to relate to the concerns about education, work, marriage and domesticity, which have been presented to the reader prior to Maggie's entrance. The first mention of Maggie suggests both her failure to conform to normal expectations of female children, and the confusion such failure causes those who entertain such expectations. It also, finally, spells out the reason for the deep consternation about Maggie, that her lack of conformity will make her less valuable as a marriage-able commodity:

"It seems a bit of a pity, though," said Mr Tulliver, "as the lad should take after the mother's side istead o' the little wench. That's the worst on't wi' the crossing o' breeds: you can never justly calcilate what'll come o'nt. The little un takes after my side, now: she's twice as 'cute as Tom. Too 'cute for a woman, I'm afraid. . . It's no mischief much while she's a little un, but an over- 'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep--she'll fetch none the bigger price for that."
(I, ii, 12)

The construction of Maggie's childhood conflicts, especially as experienced in relation to her brother, Tom, depend on the way she experiences and has reinforced for her, the irreconcilability of needing to be loved by her brother,
as the little girl she is, but wanting also to be like her brother, that is, apparently loveable for what she is.

The unequal criteria of established attitudes towards boy and girl children reveal the following disparity: Tom's value to others and himself is guaranteed by what he objectively is, a boy, a brother, and a son, whereas Maggie's value is constantly in question, because of her inability to match up to the required notions of female value. The effectively real nature of the disparity between Maggie and Tom is repeatedly represented in terms of money and property value, revealing forcibly that the values the reader is required to comprehend are humanly constructed, and arbitrary, not necessarily inherent in the object valued. A typical example of how such relations are represented comes in the early episode in which Maggie offers to pay for the loss of Tom's rabbits. Her savings amount to more than the sum required, so she is objectively able to repay the loss and buy new rabbits, but the money is rejected by Tom because it is hers. He replies to her offer by stating nothing about the actual, objective situation and everything about what appears to him to be Maggie's objective deficiency:

"What for?" said Tom. "I don't want your money, you silly thing. I've got a great deal more money than you, because I'm a boy. I always have half-sovereigns and sovereigns for my Christmas boxes, because I shall be a man, and you only have five-shilling pieces, because you're only a girl."

(I, v, 49)

The assumption about inherent female inferiority is an easy one for Tom, since it is only the repetition of an attitude held by the older generation, like Mr Wakem, who can assert the simple truth, when his son defends Maggie as having
no part in her father's and brother's quarrels, " 'What does that signify? We don't ask what a woman does--we ask whom she belongs to.' " (VI, viii, 249)

The text further establishes the arbitrary quality of male attitudes towards women by showing how Tom's relations with other male characters, like Bob Jakin and Philip Wakem, have certain qualities analogous to those which, when applied to Maggie, assume a validity-by-definition which they do not necessarily possess. In this way Tom's attitudes and behaviour towards Maggie are implicitly questioned and prove to be explicable, like his attitudes to Philip and Bob, mainly in terms of assumed superiority based on power. Tom's superior attitude to his sister, in terms of their gender difference, is shown to be the same in kind as his equally arbitrary notions of superiority based on physical strength or higher social status. Tom's attitude towards his social inferior, Bob Jakin, is a mixture of admiration for Bob's practical knowledge and a desire not to let that admiration endanger Tom's own need to believe in his superior social standing in relation to Bob, who could climb the trees like a squirrel, and had quite a magical power of detecting hedgehogs and stoats; and . . . had courage to do things that were rather naughty. . . . Such qualities in an inferior, who could always be treated with authority in spite of his superior knowingness, had necessarily a fatal fascination for Tom. (I, vi, 69)

When Mr Tulliver's bankruptcy comes to the knowledge of Bob Jakin, he offers Tom the savings he was putting aside to buy himself a pack. The offer is reminiscent of Maggie's earlier one to replace the rabbits, but the terms in which Bob's offer is refused have changed. This time Tom is cognisant of the generosity of the offer, and the fact that the
money Bob offers is insufficient to solve the problem. The masculine pride of the first refusal is apparent in this second one, but the essential difference is that Bob is not, as Maggie was, made to feel the inferiority of the offer:

"You're a very kind fellow, Bob," [jor.] said, colouring, with that little diffident tremor in his voice, which gave a certain charm even to Tom's pride and severity, "and I shan't forget you again, though I didn't know you this evening. But I can't take the nine sovereigns; I should be taking your little fortune from you, and they wouldn't do me much good either." (III, vi, 378)

Maggie, however, responds only to the feeling which lies behind Bob's gesture; she expresses her gratitude by the value she puts on the gesture, "'I think you're the kindest person in the world!'" (III, vi, 378), but also shows her understanding of the motive as one she has long known and wished that Tom would recognize in all her many "offers" to him:

"If ever Tom or my father wants help that you can give, we'll let you know--won't we, Tom? That's what you would like--to have us always depend on you as a friend that we can go to--isn't it, Bob?" (III, vi, 380)

It is exactly that kind of friendship which Tom's view of himself as a man excludes: "'I don't want to take anything from anybody, but to work my own way,'" (III, vi, 379) and which future events will prove necessary to Maggie, because of Tom's inability to incorporate them into his self-estimation as a man. It is, moreover, Bob Jakin's relatively unfixed social-status within the otherwise rigidly viewed class relations of St. Ogg's, which allows him to be relatively unhindered by those notions which will judge Maggie's subsequent behaviour harshly. His taking Maggie in, therefore, will underline how those attitudes of public respectability that condemn her are not expressions of moral values inherent in human nature, but socially constructed notions.
Philip Wakem's intimate and complex relation to Tom and Maggie more thoroughly points to ways in which the novel suggests that factors lying outside Maggie's own personal needs contribute to the conflicts she experiences. Philip's role both offers alternatives to accepted notions of masculinity and clarifies how Maggie's needs are not explicable merely as female aberrations. Maggie, as a woman, and Philip, as a cripple, both exist outside of the active business world of St. Ogg's, and their exclusion is itself a way of indicating the limitations of ideas of masculinity that are confined to business success. Philip and Maggie are alike in that both, because of their objective qualities, are denied ways of living significantly according to their own felt needs in a society whose notions of male and female exclude them from certain spheres of action. In that world, neither cripple nor woman can find useful or fulfilling roles outside the purely private and personal. In so far as Philip's condition makes him sensitive, imaginative, and physically weak, he is, in Tom's eyes, like a girl. As long as those qualities either serve Tom's own needs, such as feeding his own less colourful imagination, or showing him skills in which he is deficient, or give him comfort and encouragement when his own invalid state makes him equal to Philip, then he can acknowledge and value both Philip and Maggie. Dependency and weakness are thus shown to be determined conditions and not inherent to one's sex. Tom's own experience of intellectual inferiority at school makes him feel "more like a girl than he had ever been in his life before," (II, i, 217), but as his confidence develops and when he recovers his strength after wounding his foot, he returns again to estimating his worth according
to assumptions of strength and effective power guaranteed by the fact of his maleness.

Having gone far to reveal the questionable basis of such assumptions, however, the text goes on to indicate how real the actual power of them is, and how their strength comes paradoxically from an essentially question-begging foundation. This fundamental begging-of-the-question, which proves to have the power to effect enormous consequences by negation, can be seen in the narrator's comment about Tom's lack of concern with the complexities involved in a question such as Maggie’s friendship with Philip Wakem:

Tom was not given to inquire subtly into his own motives, any more than into other matters of an intangible kind; he was quite sure that his motives as well as his actions were good, else he would have had nothing to do with them.

(V, v, 120)

The man who, dramatically, exemplifies the error inherent in Tom's assumption about male superiority is, ironically, his own father, Mr Tulliver himself, who

was, on the whole, a man of safe traditional opinions; but on one or two points he had trusted to his unassisted intellect, and had arrived at several questionable conclusions; among the rest, that rats, weevils, and lawyers were created by Old Harry. (I, iii, 16-17)

The bankruptcy of the Tullivers is dramatic proof of the fallacy upon which Mr Tulliver's beliefs and those shared by his son are based. It not only shows the disastrous consequences that can accrue from wrong reasoning, it also proves the destructive power of pride based on false notions of manliness. Ironically, too, the sense of responsibility which makes Tom wish to make good his father's debts, and his active pursuit of the means to achieve that end, simply reinforce the very beliefs which the bankruptcy itself calls into question.

Other important assumptions, such as family pride, act as
further reinforcements, as does the fact that Maggie is in no position, practically, to do anything herself to "save" the situation. It becomes, therefore, indisputable that only Tom is capable of doing anything about reversing his family's downfall; consequently, when Maggie accuses her aunts and uncles of scolding and interfering instead of helping her father, the truth of Tom's feeling that "it was no use to talk so," (III, iii, 338) is equally undeniable.

The necessity of accepting the truth of Tom's position is, however, always balanced in the text's preparation of an even stronger necessity to see the limitations of that truth in relation to the truth of Maggie's feeling, and the conflict it causes her because of its irreconcilability with Tom's view. Although the objective facts of Tom's position cannot be denied, the truth of Maggie's assertion is equally obvious: "'you are a man, Tom, and have power, and can do something in the world.'" (V, v, 126) The claim to whole truth which Tom presumes from his position is constantly challenged; the basis of the challenge lies in the premise that Maggie's need to be loved and her desire to be valued have the power of real, determining forces, even though they run counter to, and are in conflict with, notions of what constitutes proper behaviour in females.

The early chapters of the novel deal repeatedly with the ways in which natural impulse and social attitudes are at odds, not only in Maggie, but also in Tom. Maggie's overriding need to be loved comes constantly up against her equally strong desire to be admired for qualities such as her intellect, which are not considered valuable in girls. Equally, Tom's fondness for his sister is often stifled by his equally strong wish to exercise what he considers his prerogative to judge her,
because he is a boy: "...he was very fond of his sister, and meant always to take care of her, make her his housekeeper, and punish her when she did wrong." (I, v, 56) The essential difference between the two children, however, lies in the fact that Tom's opposing tendencies are easily accommodated within his own estimate of himself, because they are supported by adult opinion. Maggie's desire to be loved, however, is disastrously in opposition to her ability to be lovable in terms of adult criteria. The conflict produced by this opposition leads to repeated patterns of frustration, giving rise to reactions which are rebellious, and therefore "bad," unworthy of love, and which create remorse and guilt and further frustration in Maggie, because the overriding desire to be loved and accepted was their cause in the first instance. The cutting off of her hair precisely images the complexities of conflicting feeling at work in Maggie. She wishes to be loved, but knows that she is not loveable, as a little girl, because that would depend on her being like her cousin Lucy, which she clearly is not. The difference between them is like the contrast between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten. Lucy put up the neatest little rose-bud mouth to be kissed; everything about her was neat—

Maggie always looked at Lucy with delight. She was fond of fancying a world where the people never got any larger than children of their own age, and she made the queen of it just like Lucy...only the queen was Maggie herself in Lucy's form.

(I, vii, 90)

Maggie can only resemble Lucy in her dreams; Maggie's reality is one in which her exuberant energy expresses itself in unruliness, and non-conformity to the behaviour prized in girls. Her uncontrolled energy is like the unruliness of her dark hair, which takes on the function, for her mother and
aunts, and then Maggie herself, of signifying her unacceptable form and nature. Cutting off her hair is both a defiant gesture at the imposed limitations of being a girl, and an act of self-punishment for not matching up to the criteria of lovable-ness which are part of those very limitations.

Maggie's escape to the gypsies dramatically acts out the desire to escape from her contradictory feelings and the environment which gives rise to them. It shows her desire to run away from the punishments she seems to call upon herself, and to find the home which will give her the love and acknowledgement she craves. At the same time, it shows the fallacy of thinking that such solutions are possible, that she can "run away from her shadow." (I, xi, 160) Her choice of refuge is founded on her fantasy that the gypsies "would gladly receive her, and pay her much respect on account of her superior knowledge." (I, xi, 160) The gypsies do more than simply represent a make-believe other world; they also quite specifically stand for those qualities of spontaneity and "lawlessness" in Maggie, which do not fit into her world, where rules of conduct are made clear in the attitudes of aunts and uncles and exhibited with precision in a pretty, blond cousin. The failure of Maggie's dream of being the gypsies' queen does not result so much in illumination for her, as for the reader, who sees the same wish for acceptance being re-shaped into other "fictional" ideals, only to be quashed again by the "hard, unaccommodating Actual." Maggie's dream of acceptance is also recognizable, for example, in the vague cause and

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effect belief she has in the possession of knowledge making her worthy of love; she learns that the acquisition of book learning does not guarantee happiness in the way she had supposed when she connected her father's accepting love of her with his admiration of her "'cuteness." The mistake in Maggie's reasoning and its connection with her femaleness itself is crushingly revealed in Tom's assertion, when Maggie visits him at school, that girls are "too silly" to learn things like Latin. (II, i, 223) When Tom states his opinion in the form a question which presupposes the truth of its answer, "'Girls can't do Euclid, can they, sir?' " Mr Stelling simply affirms the opinion as fact: "'They can pick up a little of everything, I daresay. . .They've a great deal of superficial cleverness; but they couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow.' " (II, i, 232) Maggie's response indicates exactly how the fallacy of her assumptions has been revealed, but with the irony, for the reader, that it is only another, more effective "fiction" about the abilities of girls which succeeds in keeping her from pursuing the learning she wants: "she had hardly ever been so mortified. She had been so proud to be called 'quick' all her little life, and now it appeared that this quickness was a brand of inferiority." (II, i, 232-3) There is much force in the word "appeared": it indicates both that Mr Stelling's judgement has only the appearance of truth, but also, the irony that the falseness of the opinion does not render it ineffective as a force. It is quite literally true, as Maggie concludes, that she "would have been better to be slow, like Tom" (II, i, 233), since her value is measured
according to criteria which are in complete opposition to her wish to be "quick."

Meeting Philip Wakem renews Maggie's hopes, however. Because he is an invalid male and cannot be destined for a role in the active world of men which Tom will have access to, Philip can function for Maggie as the ideal brother. She invests him with the ability to love her in a way Tom cannot:

"'I wish you were my brother. I'm very fond of you. And you would stay at home with me when Tom went out, and you would teach me everything--wouldn't you? Greek and everything?" (II, vi, 287) But the actual relations between Maggie's father and Mr Wakem, the reality of that world men "go out" to, and from which Philip and Maggie are excluded, prevent the possibility of such dreams. After her father's downfall, left on her own to face the reality of being at home with neither practical nor intellectual outlets for her energy, Maggie attempts to deal with the feelings of desire and resentment caused by her condition by believing they can be transformed into a kind of spiritual ecstasy of denial. Having had to abandon dreams of desires fulfilled, she responds to the persistence of those desires by attempting to deny their existence. Her secret meetings with Philip Wakem show her that the truth of feelings cannot be so easily avoided, but only repressed. In reply to her claim that

"'Our life is determined for us--and it makes the mind very free when we give up wishing, and only think of bearing what is laid upon us, and doing what is given us to do,'" Philip says, "'But I can't give up wishing... . . .It seems to me we can never give up longing and wishing while we are thoroughly alive. There are certain things we feel to be beautiful and
good, and we must hunger after them.' " (V, i, 54) Maggie's response contains elements of the conflict which she lives out in the rest of the novel: " 'Oh, Philip. . .I wish you didn't feel so.' But her heart began to beat with something like Philip's discontent." (V, i, 55)

The problem of Maggie's own conflicting feelings of "hunger" and wishing she "didn't feel so," is a way of stating her position from beginning to end. Philip, as a spokesman for the reality of suffering and desire, provides a crucially important perspective for giving feelings a validity as real determining forces that cannot be wished away by imposing a text upon them, as Maggie attempts to do by her reading of Thomas à Kempis. The importance of the strength of Maggie's feelings comes out fully in Book Six, which dramatically works out the consequences resulting from her habitually repressed passionate nature experiencing the force of sexual attraction. By making this confrontation with problems of sexuality centrally important to the plot of The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot poses the problem that exists when real, motivating passions cannot adequately be accounted for or understood because of the "fictions" which exist about them, whether these be in the form of social notions of propriety or literary conventions of romance.

George Eliot establishes the sense of the reality of feeling, as opposed to ideas about it, by creating and exploring a further dichotomy between romance and realism which echoes back to and qualifies the dichotomies of male and female, thought and feeling, moisture and dryness, the river and St. Ogg's, dream and reality, which are established from the beginning of the novel. An investigation of the relations among those dichotomies both illuminates the nature
of the conflicts created in the novel and indicates the
problems inherent in their formulation. The limits of
"fictions" become both a problem for Maggie and for the
reader of the text.

II

The long narrative introduction to Chapter One of Book
Four, "The Valley of Humiliation," makes a lengthy comparison
between "romance" and "reality," contrasting the "sign of a
sordid life" (IV, i, 3) one reads in the ruins of once-flooded
villages on the Rhone, with the "ruins of the castled Rhine,"
which tell of a "day of romance," (IV, i, 4) when robber barons
"represented the demon forces for ever in collision with
beauty, virtue, and the gentle uses of life." (IV, i, 4)
"Therefore," concludes the narrator, "it is that these Rhine
castles thrill me with a sense of poetry," whereas the villages
on the Rhone "oppress me with the feeling that human life--
very much of it--is a narrow, ugly, grovelling existence, which
even calamity does not elevate, but rather tends to exhibit in
all its bare vulgarity of conception." (IV, i, 4) The
comparison points clearly to the fact that the novel is
not intending to "thrill" its reader with a sense of "romance"
and "poetry," but that its task lies closer to the "sordid"
reality of the ruined villages on the Rhone:

I share with you this sense of oppressive narrow-
ness; but it is necessary that we should feel it,
if we care to understand how it acted on the lives
of Tom and Maggie. (IV, i, 6)
The reader's awareness of the "large vision of relations . . . to which every single object suggests a vast sum of conditions" (IV, i, 6) is directed in the text by repeated indications that society depends upon its own constructed "fictions" in order to remain ignorant of the exact nature of its lived relations and the pressures which determine them. Variations on the idea of escape into fictions work at several different levels of the text, not least in Maggie herself, where it is shown how she clearly needs to construct make-believe, ideal worlds in which she will be loved and accepted, constantly "refashioning her little world into just what she should like it to be." (I, vi, 69) But Maggie's flights into fantasy are lessons in futility for her, teaching the impossibility of escape from reality, while at the same time they are a means of constructing for the reader a greater sense of the intransigent materiality of that world Maggie wishes to escape. This awareness becomes strategically necessary as the position from which the reader can recognize the novel's challenges to assumptions about the kinds of truth idealized fictions can contain.

In an article entitled "George Eliot and the Romance," Alexander Welsh discusses how George Eliot's intentions as a novelist lead her into using traditional romantic literary devices to make anti-romantic points. Given George Eliot's intention, he concludes, because the truthfulness which interested George Eliot involved the repudiation of a literary genre as well as simply a new definition of the relation of the novel to real life, the sense of real life, where it comes through strongly, served
only to gain by each situation parallel to that of the romance. *The Mill on the Floss*, in this sense, amounts to a serious parody. 10

In making his point Welsh cites a few explicit examples, such as parallels between the novel itself and the romantic novels which Maggie and Philip discuss. Maggie's response to her reading is a rejection of the standard formula of the fair-haired heroine winning the noble hero and leaving the dark-haired woman to the unhappy fate she had always been destined for: "'As soon as I came to the blond-haired young lady reading in the park, I shut it up, and determined to read no further. I foresaw that that light-complexioned girl would win away all the love from Corinne and make her miserable. I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness.'" (V, iv, 102)

Here the romantic theme is turned ironically to indicate the pressure of the actual life which is exerting its pressures on Maggie in ways she is herself unconscious of, for Philip unknowingly foreshadows later events when he playfully replies, "'Well, perhaps you will avenge the dark women in your person, and carry away all the love from your cousin Lucy. She is sure to have some handsome young man from St. Ogg's at her feet now, and you have only to shine upon him--your fair little cousin will be quite quenched in your beams.'" (V, iv, 102)

The areas of potential conflict for Maggie are indicated through the various positions vis-à-vis "reality" contained in the language of her reply, "'Philip, that is not pretty of

you, to apply my nonsense to anything real.' " (V, iv, 102-3) Her "nonsense" is not the playful pretense that she seems to wish to see it as here, but an expression of a real desire to be loved like her fair-haired cousin. And Maggie's inability to comprehend the reality of those feelings, her insistent attempts to behave well despite her feelings, is represented in her formulation that Philip's remark is not a "pretty" one. What the reader is gradually placed in a position to see, and what Maggie is presently unable to see, is that the reality of her feelings and of the relations she lives are not "pretty" and cannot be experienced truthfully by applying such ideas to them. 11

Part of the "real" to which Maggie refers, but which is as yet undisclosed to her, is the relationship between Lucy and Stephen Guest. That relationship is introduced in terms which further indicate how the novel challenges conventional fictions when they are a means of avoiding the truths which lie outside them. Lucy's and Stephen's courtship, their "Duet in Paradise," comments ironically on fictions of romantic sentiment, and prepares the reader to register by contrast the real confusion and emotional intensity which Maggie's entrance into their world will cause.

In his conversation with Lucy about Adam and Eve's final

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11 Swinburne's reaction to the novel unconsciously acknowledges this very point while attempting to reject it, when he says, regarding Maggie's attraction to Stephen Guest: "If we are to accept as truth and fact, however astonishing and revolting, so shameful an avowal, so vile a revelation as this; in that ugly and lamentable case, our only remark. . . must be that now at least the last word of realism has surely been spoken, . . ." Carroll, George Eliot: The Critical Heritage, p. 164.
duet in Haydn's Creation, Stephen claims that though it may not suit his voice, "'it exactly suits my feeling, which, Philip will have it, is the grand element of good singing.'" (VI, i, 156) As she sits down to the piano, Lucy remarks, "'Philip burst into one of his invectives against 'The Creation' the other day. . . . He says it has a sort of sugared complacency and flattering make-believe in it, as if it were written for the birthday fête of a German Grand-Duke.'" (VI, i, 156) Stephen dismisses the judgement easily: "'Oh, pooh! He is the fallen Adam with a soured temper. We are Adam and Eve unfallen, in Paradise,'" (VI, i, 156) --the Adam and Eve at the end of Haydn's Creation, who are still unaware of the impending Fall. At one level, Stephen's response is quite correct: his relation to Lucy is paradisal precisely in its absence of conflict, but ironically, also, because of its absence of real feeling, since their expression to one another is confined to notions about feeling. Significantly, Stephen does not allow himself to consider the possible validity of Philip's judgement about the Creation, but dismisses it from a position within the make-believe itself.

Music functions in Stephen's and Lucy's courtship as a means to avoid the expression of feeling; their singing serves as an escape from real "doubts and fears" (VI, i, 156) into a safe, imaginary world of pure harmony:

Surely the only courtship unshaken by doubts and fears, must be that in which the lovers can sing together. The sense of mutual fitness that springs from the two deep notes fulfilling expectation just at the right moment between the notes of the silvery soprano, from the perfect accord of descending thirds and fifths, from the preconcerted loving chase of a fugue, is likely enough to supersede any immediate
demand for less impassioned forms of agreement.

In this case, the linnet-throated soprano, and the full-toned bass, singing,

"with thee delight is ever new,
with thee is life incessant bliss,"

believed what they sang all the more because they sang it. (VI, i, 156-7)

In contrast with Lucy and Stephen, Maggie's emotional and physical experience of music is a means of indicating how the repression of her energy and capacity for sensuous experience becomes in her young adulthood a repression of her sexuality, as the language underlined in the following passage indicates: Maggie is described as sitting alone at the piano, playing over the tunes she had heard the previous evening,

until she had found out a way of producing them so as to make them a more pregnant, passionate language to her. . . she would often take up a book of studies rather than any melody, that she might taste more keenly by abstraction the more primitive sensation of intervals. (VI, vi, 210)

Paradoxically, Maggie's move towards "abstraction" here is a move towards immediate physical sensation and away from the "abstraction" which turns feeling into idea, as music had functioned for Stephen and Lucy. Maggie's playing is a search for a "language" of direct communication with feeling; Stephen's and Lucy's music, in so far as it is a means of avoiding that communication, is in direct opposition to it.

Beneath the blissful statements Stephen and Lucy believe in, because they sing them, lies the irony of the imminent fall from innocence, an irony which George Eliott's own musical sophistication could well have recognized as indicated by Haydn's music, a point which Siegmund Levarie makes in an article entitled "The Closing Numbers of Die Schöpfung."

Here he argues from musical evidence that the final duet, which Stephen and Lucy sing, is a parody of the first duet
in Part III, in which Adam and Eve exalt God and His creation, and, furthermore, that the final duet, which Stephen assumes to be safely within Paradise, clearly points to the coming Fall from the ideal: "after indicating to us the glory of God and the bliss of Paradise [Haydn's] music leaves us at the end in earthy uncertainty, where we belong." 12

As an introduction to Book VI, "The Great Temptation," this scene between Stephen and Lucy offers detailed evidence in support of Welsh's view that certain fictions in the text function with dramatic irony to indicate where the text's concerns with reality are to be located by the reader, so that, for example, by the time Lucy decides that she will bring about a "'pretty ending to all my poor, poor Maggie's troubles,' " (VI, iii, 188) the inappropriateness of such fictional parallels to "real life" is immediately registered by a reader, who senses its contrast with the unconscious reaction of Maggie to Lucy's words, as she "tried to smile, but shivered, as if she felt a sudden chill." (VI, iii, 188)

There is, however, another fiction at work in the novel, which seems to function differently from those anti-romantic fictions discussed so far. This is the myth of St. Ogg; the various treatments of this smaller fiction provide clues as to other ways in which issues of the larger fiction, the novel itself, can be understood.

The chapter in which the myth is first presented opens with a description of the actual, prosaic present--Mr and Mrs Glegg at home--and moves from there to a review of the ancient

past, and finally, to a recounting of the myth of St. Ogg and
the Virgin. The sense of the present is in the very tense of
the verbs in the opening sentences, and is confined exclusively
to the reality of commercial activity which literally gives
life to the town of St. Ogg's.

In order to see Mr and Mrs Glegg at home, we
must enter the town of St. Ogg's—that venerable
town with the red-fluted roofs and the broad ware-
house gables, where the black ships unlace them-
selves of their burthens from the far north, and
carry away, in exchange, the precious inland
products, the well-crushed cheese and the soft
fleeces. . . . (I, xii, 178)

Insistence on this reality comes in the final clause of the
paragraph, in which any suggestion that the white fleeces have
something other than a commercial value is denied with some
refined irony: "the soft fleeces, which my [readers have doubtless
become acquainted with through the medium of the best classic
pastorals." (I, xii, 178) The reader is warned that the
intent of this particular narrative is as far-removed from
that "best classic pastoral" as it is possible to get.

Even the ancient history of the town is described in
language which includes its present, the whole being like a
"continuation and outgrowth of nature," the town carrying
with it "the traces of its long growth and history like a
millenial tree." (I, xii, 178) with the introduction of the
myth of St. Ogg, however, the sense of history alters from
that in the first three paragraphs. It becomes clear that
the plane on which the narrator wishes to engage the reader
has shifted, when she claims to have the patron saint's
"history" in "several manuscript versions," and then con-
cludes: "I incline to the briefest, since, if it should not be
wholly true, it is at least likely to contain the least
falsehood." (I, xii, 179) The irony of the logic in this assertion, assuming as it does a co-relation between quantity and quality of truth, signals that the reader must consider consciously the kind of truth and the kind of history now under discussion. The myth of St. Ogg is not history like the story of St. Ogg's the town. The myth is neither history as chronicle of human experience in time, nor as evidence of an event whose truth can be established by reference to external, objective evidence. The narrator's comment about the probability of its truth or falsehood thus disrupts the categories of truth and history as they functioned in the beginning of the chapter. The truth of the myth lies in its ability to express the nature of human need and desire. The force of its relevance depends on the reader's being convinced of it being a true image of desire fulfilled. Its link with the other kind of history, comes through the fact that its validity can depend upon a kind of relevance to human experience, whether that of the Middle Ages or Maggie Tulliver.

The conflict for the young girl in the myth is between her craving to be rowed across the river and the judgement of "men thereabout" (I, xii, 180) that her desire is foolish. St. Ogg brings about the miracle of transformation, because he recognizes that such desire cannot be made a matter of judgement. Thus the myth seems to require assent to an emotional truth, that desire for fulfilment is valid solely because, as St. Ogg recognizes, "'it is enough that thy heart needs it.'" (I, xii, 180) St. Ogg's blessedness, then, resides precisely in the fact that, as the Virgin says, he did "not question and wrangle with the heart's need, but wast smitten with pity, and didst straightway relieve the same.'" (I, xii,180)
The young girl "with her worn and withered look" (I, xii, 180) before her transformation is paralleled in the child Maggie, who reminds Philip Wakem of fairy tales of transformation, "of the stories about princesses being turned into animals." (II, v, 278) The narrator's comment supplies the answer that links the enchantment to the desire expressed in the myth: "I think it was that her eyes were full of unsatisfied intelligence, and unsatisfied beseeching affection." (II, v, 278. My emphasis) Additional parallels between Maggie Tulliver's "story" and the "story" of the myth emerge: the conflict between Maggie's "heart's needs" and the attitudes of her family and the people of St. Ogg's is imaged in that between the young girl and the men by the river who consider her "foolish." And the early symbolic suggestions of water and the river connected with emotional life, indicated in the opening chapter, become associated with the sense that crossing the river in the myth is an image of finding emotional need satisfied, of being no longer in want. But Maggie Tulliver's own "history," in the specific time and space of St. Ogg's, is constructed so as to suggest, ultimately, that the felt needs of human beings in real, as opposed to "fictional" worlds, may be experienced as true, but do not find the kind of reconciliation promised by the myth.

In its own way, the myth of St. Ogg functions similarly to the other anti-romantic devices used elsewhere in the novel to ensure that the reader will not dismiss the emotional conflicts Maggie lives in a particular, material world, by explaining them away by means of other inadequate fictions, such as notions of honour, respectability or even, the fitting behaviour of young ladies. Within the novel, such
notions are represented as having real, determining effects upon actions and attitudes, but are also made to be seen as means of evading other truths about emotional need. Tom Tulliver's insistence on the exclusive truth of similar notions about his family's honour and his role as a man evidence his inability to recognize his own "heart's needs," which he expresses only at the moment of final vulnerability, when he is alone with Maggie on the flood.

In the chapter entitled, "Waking," Maggie, having succumbed to the temptation to go down the river with Stephen Guest, sleeps on the ship bound for Mudport and dreams her variation of the St. Ogg myth:

She was in a boat on the wide water with Stephen, and in the gathering darkness something like a star appeared, that grew and grew till they saw it was the Virgin seated in St. Ogg's boat, and it came nearer and nearer, till they saw the Virgin was Lucy and the boatman was Philip--no, not Philip, but her brother, who rowed past without looking at her; and she rose to stretch out her arms and call to him, and their own boat turned over with the movement, and they began to sink. (VI, xiv, 321-2)

This form of the myth expresses quite specifically the nature of Maggie's conflicting desires: in the dream she is paired with Stephen in one boat, and the subsequent events of the dream show how that pairing signifies the potentiality of the future, of adulthood, and the exclusive choices of sexuality; the other boat which passes Maggie by contains those other people who are images of ideals she cannot bear to sacrifice, Lucy as an ideal self-image, Philip as the ideal brother conflated and identified with Tom, the desired, real brother. The urgency of Maggie's need for acceptance in terms of her past, rather than her future, her gesture towards Lucy and Tom, literally capsizes the boat she occupies with Stephen, destroying the possibility of choosing that other, alienating future.
Maggie's waking within the dream indicates her fundamental desire to have what she had never had except in fleeting, past moments, the all-accepting love embodied in the idea of being "a child again in the parlour at evening twilight, and Tom was not really angry." (VI, xiv, 322)

But "from the soothed sense of that false waking" in her dream, Maggie passes to the "real waking" (VI, xiv, 322) and the necessity of facing the actual situation in which she has placed herself. The myth-dream, for the reader, is a form of fictional construction which reveals Maggie's conflicting desires, but it also works for Maggie as one of those escapist fictions which avoid conflict by constructing new solutions; as such, it contrasts with the harsh daylight reality Maggie wakes to and in which she must consider the actual consequences of her action and the choices she can make.

In her confrontation with Stephen on the boat, some of the forces seen to have been in conflict in the child Maggie are freed in the context of the urgent need to decide clearly about her future relationship with Stephen. The old requirement that she submit to masculine authority, for example, is ironically twisted in her relation to Stephen. His only fear in their new situation is that Maggie will choose to act independently of his wishes, he "became more and more uneasy as the day advanced, under the sense that Maggie had entirely lost her passiveness." (VI, xiv, 325) Her old struggle to find acceptable means to assert herself, moreover, does find appropriate expression in her refusal to be pressured by Stephen. But at the same time, the reader can sense a profound at irony that this crucial moment, when Maggie's assertiveness is based on her own conviction, when she exerts herself with unquestioning moral confidence, her behaviour works contra-
dictorily to Stephen's and society's wishes. When Stephen finally pressures Maggie by insisting they have gone too far not to marry, the text's reliance on the reader's full grasp of the various levels of "reality" at stake becomes crucial: "'Good God, Maggie!' said Stephen, rising too and grasping her arm, 'you rave. How can you go back without marrying me? You see nothing as it really is.' " (VI, xiv, 334) Neither Maggie nor Stephen can understand the "reality" to which the other refers. Through the gradual working out of the levels of truth and untruth contained in the "fictions" with which the narrative plays up to this point, the reader registers the dual significance of Stephen's remark, a duality which contains within it the crux of Maggie's conflict.

What "really is" in Stephen's eyes, is the moral judgement which St. Ogg's will inevitably and effectively employ against Maggie if they do not return as a married couple. What he does not see in terms of what "really" is, is that those attitudes and judgements are based on notions of prescribed behaviour which themselves cannot recognize the contradictory but true feelings which cause Maggie's conflict and her desire to be free from it.

It is from the point of Maggie's decision to return to St. Ogg's without marrying Stephen that public opinion is endowed with power in excess of the individuals who express it, and they become abstracted into "the world's wife." (VII, ii, 350) The women of St. Ogg's disappear as individual human beings and exist in their power of judgement. The possible outcome of events between Maggie and Stephen which would be acceptable to St. Ogg's is expressed, characteristically, as the collective voice which wishes to believe in the very fictions which have been challenged
through the text in the ways indicated so far:

"Poor Miss Deane! She is very pitiable; but then, there was no positive engagement; and the air at the coast will do her good. After all, if young Guest felt no more for her than that, it was better for her not to marry him, what a wonderful marriage for a girl like Miss Tulliver—quite romantic!" (VII, ii, 351)

The fact that Maggie refuses to marry Stephen and follows instead the course consistent with her desire to honour the "calmer affections" (VI, xiv, 331) of the past, reveals the trap in which she is caught: the very fact that she has not married Stephen Guest becomes the grounds for believing her motives to be based "merely on unwomanly boldness and unbridled passion," (VII, ii, 352) motives which are in exact contradiction to those which made her refuse to marry Stephen. What only the reader registers is the deeply inbuilt irony when Maggie's attractiveness to another, her own passionate feelings finally have a real correlation to others' expectations, living that correlation in terms of an adult relationship is denied her because of the real power of those attitudes and notions which are seen to be based on "fictitious" grounds.

By making St. Ogg's a collective force, unable to comprehend Maggie's conflicting desires, and by making Maggie's conflict, itself, one of exclusive alternatives, the text leaves no possibility other than destruction; the truth of the "heart's needs" as represented in the St. Ogg myth is placed in unresolvable conflict with the truth of the determining pressures which limit the possibilities of the individual human being at any historical moment. Formulating the problem in these terms means there can be no real equivalent to the "transformation" in the myth, no emergence for Maggie into adult sexuality, no promise of living with the "joy of love."

(VI, xiv, 331)
But, equally, the text ostensibly refuses to accept the impossibility of reconciliation, by representing it in the death reunion of Tom and Maggie. As Gillian Beer concludes, "What we have in The Mill is an apparently deterministic order which in its conclusion whirls backwards into desire, instead of into understanding and rationalisation." 13

Maggie's past has been represented explicitly in terms which show her as a girl-child conscious of not meeting the requirements of loveableness according to the notions of her world. When her "passionate sensibility" (VI, vi, 210) makes her loveable in terms of sexual attraction, the fatal irony is that her own need for reconciling her desires with the desires of her past, and the inability of the people who represent that past to understand that conflict, necessitates the novel's "whirling backward into desire." Given the conflict as it has been constructed, George Eliot is unable, ultimately, to find a way for Maggie, as a woman, to assert her identity in terms of adult independence, and the reader cannot help but feel a deep ambivalence which both sees the necessity of the conclusion but rejects its exclusiveness.

In the early stages of the novel, Maggie's conflicts are represented in terms which are largely gender specific; they are seen to arise from experiences and attitudes which have to do with the way she can estimate her value to herself as a female. But in later parts of the text, the focus on the specific differences which gender make in shaping Maggie's conflict are no longer made so apparent. Instead, the

narrative voice takes up a position which seems to wish to preclude inferences that could be based on special pleading for the sexes. A general point is made, including even the slightly perverse gesture towards impartiality in the general reference to "man," which wishes to show how moral values as abstract notions often exist in complete opposition to the power of human impulses, and, as such, prove totally inadequate as guides for truly moral behaviour:

"... the man of maxims is the popular representative of the minds that are guided in their moral judgment solely by general rules, thinking that these will lead them to justice by a ready-made patent method, without the trouble of exerting patience, discrimination, impartiality--without any care to assure themselves whether they have the insight that comes from a hardly-earned estimate of temptation, or from a life vivid and intense enough to have created a wide fellow-feeling with all that is human." (VII, ii, 363)

This statement is made in terms which avoid the suggestion, already established elsewhere in the text, that a specific problem for women exists in the relation between ideas about morality and the actual forces which cause an individual to behave in a certain way. Thus, this general narrative comment tends away from acknowledging that much of Maggie Tulliver's conflict between "passion and duty" (VII, ii, 362) has to do specifically with being female. The terms of Maggie's unacceptability as a girl-child, the impossibility of her ambitions complying with expressed expectations of her as a girl, and the consequent necessity of her self-repression in order to live in any kind of ease with her social environment, all point the way to problems which cannot adequately be considered without specific reference to social attitudes towards male and female. As Gillian Beer has noted about the organicist form of the nineteenth-century Bildungsroman:
its emphasis[is] upon the gradual assimilation of the young man (say, Wilhelm Meister) to his environment. In that organicist form we are left with a sense both of completion and disillusionment—the autocratic self acquiesces at last to the humdrum terms of its own survival within society. But *The Mill on the Floss* demonstrates that for the heroine, as opposed to the hero of the *Bildungsroman*, there can be no such accommodation. 14

Given Maggie's wish to reconcile her desire for love with the contradictory forms in which acceptable loving are presented to her, there is obviously no accommodation and only the going backwards into the fantasized recovery of childhood innocence, before the contradictions were felt, the innocence expressed in the image at the end, of Tom and Maggie "clinging together in fatal fellowship" and "living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together." (VII, v, 400) This momentary vision of the two children linked together in their childhood marks the end of the "history" of Tom and Maggie. In its echo back to the opening pages of the novel, where the narrator, in recalling the past of childhood, falls asleep and dreams, this ending takes on a dream quality of its own, as though the whole novel were an expression of a dream-wish.

In the world of determined history only dreams fulfill desire, and there are moments in *The Mill on the Floss* which mark this disparity between the "wet" dream-world of wish-fulfilment and the "dry" material world of consciously lived experience. These moments suggest a consciousness that the

14 Beer, p. 87.
text's own construction of fantasy fulfilment in the flood insufficiently answers the questions which precede it. One such moment occurs in the Conclusion, which registers clearly the difference between nature's and human beings' capacities to repair the damage done to them:

Nature repairs her ravages--repairs them with her sunshine, and with human labour. The desolation wrought by that flood, had left little visible trace on the face of the earth, five years after. (Conclusion, 401)

Reference to the incompleteness of nature's repairs is then repeated, but this time with language that suggests that the human memory's awareness of the damage is inherent to that incompleteness. The "scars" and "rending" are human, because never forgotten, and, as part of emotional experience, never fully reparable:

Nature repairs her ravages--but not all. The upturned trees are not rooted again; the parted hills are left scarred; if there is a new growth, the trees are not the same as the old, and the hills underneath their green vesture bear the marks of the past rending. To the eyes that have dwelt on the past, there is no thorough repair. (Conclusion, 401)

The desire for reconciliation, for reparation, is basic to the whole working of The Mill on the Floss; the ending of the novel, despite its drive back into desire, which Gillian Beer rightly points to, still remains at some level conscious of the impossibility of its being satisfied. That same awareness is also fully present in another significant moment in the novel, which also clearly points to the impossibility of resolution of contradictory conditions, and how the conflicts Maggie Tulliver experiences, as a girl-child, cannot find answers within a social order that denies its offspring the validity or expression of their needs. The moment comes early in the novel and calls attention both to the nature
of Maggie's problems in terms of her sex, and foreshadows the impossibility of its resolution given the terms in which the problem is constructed in the novel. When Mr Riley comes to discuss Tom's education with Mr Tulliver, Maggie, hoping to impress him with her superior intelligence, shows him the pictures in her book of Defoe's *History of the Devil*; when she comes to the illustration of the witch-dunking, she says:

"It's a dreadful picture, isn't it? But I can't help looking at it. That old woman in the water's a witch—they've put her in to find out whether she's a witch or no, and if she swims she's a witch, and if she's drowned—and killed, you know—she's innocent, and not a witch, but only a poor silly old woman. But what good would it do her then, you know, when she is drowned?" (I, iii, 21)

The end of the novel resonates with implications from that witch-trial. The reader's option of imagining the dead Maggie as a "romantic heroine," an "innocent" victim, seems no more tenable than St. Ogg's choice to consider her guilty while she was alive. The needs and demands of her being are represented in conflict with the contrary opinions and demands of her social world, which have, themselves, an inverse relation between their truth and effective power similar to the past's belief in witches. The "trials" Maggie undergoes have an outcome with an irony built into them just like the witch-dunking: if she swims she is guilty, if she drowns, she's innocent, in any case, she's dead. At the end of the novel no comfort is offered like that wished by Maggie as an answer to the "witch's" suffering, a hope that the innocent woman will "go to heaven and God would make it up to her:" (I, iii, 21) reparation cannot be made for the kinds of trials experienced by a young woman caught "between passion and duty," (VII, ii, 362) if her choices are fixed.
by "moral judgments [which] must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot." (VII, ii, 362)

The dream quality of The Mill on the Floss pervades the text, linking the beginning with the end. The narrator who immerses herself in the dream of the mill and duckpond in Chapter One, wakens, claiming, "Before I dozed off I was going to tell you what Mr and Mrs Tulliver were talking about." (I, i, 6) But like Maggie's "false waking" in her dream on the boat to Mudport, the narrator's "waking" takes place within the "dream" of the whole fiction she is about to present, the entire text of the novel being a dream of the past, the expression of desire for the resolution of conflict. The novel itself is the vision of "the eyes that have dwelt on the past," (Conclusion, 401) which are motivated by the desire for reconciliation and waken to the knowledge of its impossibility. The novel's force comes through the powerful expression of felt conflict and the strength of desire. Ultimately, the strength and force of the need expressed proves more urgent than those moments which recognize that the conflict, rendered in these terms, is unresolvable. In Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda, the conscious mind of the narrator pushes further and further towards a more precise examination and representation of the "special circumstances that mark the individual lot" (VII, ii, 362), especially where they have particular significance for the different experience of men and women. The Mill on the Floss is primarily an expression
of the impact of those circumstances as felt by a young woman; in the later novels, George Eliot's conscious postulation of the categories of emotion and intellect as sources of knowledge makes the representation of those circumstances and their implications for femininity and masculinity not merely a question of expression, but constructs them as a problem for subtle and probing analysis.
Let it not be said, wherever there is energy or creative genius, "She has a masculine mind."

But men do not look at both sides, and women must leave off asking them and being influenced by them, but retire within themselves and explore the ground-work of life till they find their peculiar secret.  

In Chapter Twenty-two of Middlemarch, Dorothea and Will discuss Will's professional plans, and Dorothea suggests he might be a poet, to which Will replies:

"That depends. To be a poet is to have a soul so quick to discern that no shade of quality escapes it, and so quick to feel, that discernment is but a hand playing with finely ordered variety on the chords of emotion—a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge. One may have that condition by fits only."  

Dorothea answers Will, "'But you leave out the poems...I think they are wanted to complete the poet. I understand what you mean about knowledge passing into feeling, for that seems to be just what I experience. But I am sure I could never produce a poem.' " (xxii, 342) An important element in Dorothea's reply is the suggestion that the process Will attributes to the poet is not necessarily his prerogative

1 Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, p.36.
2 Ibid., p. 113.
3 George Eliot, Middlemarch, Cabinet Edition, Ch. xxii, pp. 341-2. Subsequent reference to this text will appear with chapter and page numbers immediately following a quotation.
alone. People who cannot write poems, may still experience life "poetically," a process which implicitly rejects a strict dichotomy between thought and feeling and explicitly assumes an interdependent relation between them. Will's remarks about poetry represent a refusal to accept the exclusivity of intellect and emotion and insist, instead, upon the possibility of a dynamic relation between them. It is the promise of living in terms which acknowledge that relation which informs Dorothea's final choice of Will at the end of the novel; the process by which the text convinces the reader of the validity of Dorothea's choice depends, moreover, on the reader's willingness to engage in what George Eliot calls "emotional thinking." In her essay, "Notes on Form in Art," dated 1868, just a year before the beginnings of Middlemarch are first recorded, George Eliot defined poetry in its "wider sense as including all literary production of which it is the prerogative & not the reproach that the choice & sequence of images & ideas--that is, of relations & groups of relations--are more or less not only determined by emotion but intended to express it." Earliest poetic form, she says, arose "in the same spontaneous unreflecting way" as "the curves of the bivalve shell. . . grow & are limited by the simple rhythmic conditions of its growing life." That analogy serves George Eliot to show how "Poetic Form was not begotten

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4 For the first mention of "Middlemarch" by George Eliot, see Gordon S. Haight, George Eliot: A Biography, p. 420.
6 Ibid., p. 435.
by thinking it out or framing it as a shell which should hold emotional expression," 7 although she concludes that such is the case as literary forms change over the ages and "must by and by cease to be purely spontaneous:"

the form itself becomes the object & material of emotion, & is sought after, amplified and elaborated by discrimination of its elements till at last by the abuse of its refinement it preoccupies the room of emotional thinking. 8

Middlemarch gives evidence of attempts to redress that balance, to recover the "emotional room" created by poetic/literary form and to make it accessible to the reader, in turn, making the reader conscious of that access. The very process of the "intercommunication of sensibility and thought." 9 thus becomes posited as a central experience of the novel.

The main narrative strategy of Middlemarch employs a fiction-reader-narrative nexus which makes the reader construct meaning from the text by means of a complex and accumulative working of that nexus. The resulting "web" of meaning parallels, but is distinct from, the "web" of relationships constituted in the fiction itself. The reader's predisposition to "enter" the fictional world of Middlemarch by a non-reflective, emotional engagement with it is controlled and modified by the demands of the narrative discourse, which intervenes and often acts to discourage any tendency towards an uncritical, emotional reading. In this way, the narrative strategy encourages a consciousness of the reading itself, and of how

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7 Pinney, Essays, p. 435.
8 Ibid., p. 436.
9 Ibid.
meaning may result from the complex interrelationship of connections in the text, never from single, isolated "threads."
The narrator's commentary both qualifies and distances the reader's experience of the fiction and provides another "thread" in the complex and subtle final reading of the text. The whole strategy of Middlemarch directs the reader towards an awareness of the relationship between thought and feeling required by the reading of the text, while at the same time, the nature of that relationship is explored by the text. 10

The challenge to assumptions about the opposition between thought and feeling takes much of its shape and direction in Middlemarch in an examination of the way men and women construct their expectations and decide their actions by processes marked by imbalances of emotion and intellect. The differences and distances between men and women are represented, moreover, in terms of those imbalances, which reflect assumptions that men are "naturally" creatures of intellect and women "naturally" creatures of emotions. By means of the three-way nexus of reader-narrator-fiction, the reader is challenged both to "feel" and critically to evaluate the relationship between thought and emotion. By responding to that challenge the reader becomes inevitably engaged in questions which relate ultimately to attitudes regarding the

10 To some degree my reference to narrative discourse is indebted to formulations such as those offered, for example, by Roger Fowler, see Ch. iv, Linguistics and the Novel (London, 1977) and Colin MacCabe. My own formulation, however, does not assume that the narrative discourse in Middlemarch (as an example of a realist text) is "dematerialized to achieve perfect representation--to let the identity of things shine through the window of words." (MacCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on some Brechtian Theses," Screen, 15, No.2 (Summer 1974), p.8) My argument attempts to show, rather, how the narrative discourse in Middlemarch functions as a part of the web of meaning which the reader must construct; it is not simply the interpreter of that web.
values and limitations of notions of masculinity and femininity when they are defined exclusively in terms of intellect and emotion.

Originally the story of Dorothea Brooke, Mr Casaubon and Will Ladislaw was not part of the novel George Eliot began in 1869 and referred to as "Middlemarch." This novel was to be only the story of Tertius Lydgate and the Vincy, Garth and Featherstone families. By joining the "Miss Brooke" and original "Middlemarch" stories, George Eliot provided herself with a structure which would profoundly determine the practice of reading the final novel, that which became Middlemarch. The combination of Dorothea's and Lydgate's stories makes easy analysis of isolated characters or situations untenable, because echoes of contrast and similarity between the stories of the two main characters continually affect the reader's assessment of their function; judgement about one necessarily qualifies judgement of the other. Our comprehension of the issues involving Dorothea's marriage to Mr Casaubon and her eventual choice of Will Ladislaw, and our judgement of Lydgate's marriage to Rosamond Vincy depend on continual attention to implied comparisons, contrasts, and similarities among the several relations. An important result of this process of comparison reveals how assumptions about male and female roles—both public and private—crucially affect how choices are both perceived and made.

In his study of *Middlemarch* Jerome Beaty had the following to say about George Eliot's decision to join the two parts of the novel:

To the reader of the finished novel the similarity between the careers of Lydgate and Dorothea is obvious. Both have high ideals which come to nothing or little more than nothing; in both cases an unwise and unhappy marriage plays a part in obstructing the realization of these ideals. That this is the theme of the Dorothea story, with the added implication that for a woman in nineteenth-century England the only possible way of realizing these ideals was through marriage, is clear in the Prelude and in that part of the "Miss Brooke" story we know was written before it was joined to "Middlemarch." We cannot be sure, however, that this theme was part of the author's original conception of "Middlemarch." It is possible, then, but not certain, that the two separate works were joined when it became apparent to the author that their themes were similar. 12

To stress the similarities between Lydgate and Dorothea, and to suggest further, that Dorothea's ideals are "fulfilled" in marriage fails to recognize the way in which the whole text of *Middlemarch* explores, as a problem, the ideals upon which men and women make decisions and the possibility of those ideals being effectively realised. In his article, "Lydgate and the Heroic Aspiration in *Middlemarch*," Ian Milner states that the combined story of Lydgate and Dorothea becomes a "complementary illustration of a common experience." 13 While the treatment of Lydgate and Dorothea may tend to illustrate conclusions about "common experience" on the one hand, that experience is, nevertheless, crucially qualified by evidence that sex profoundly determines the limits of what is considered to be "humanly" possible. Paradoxically, those obvious

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similarities between Lydgate and Dorothea as "ardent" souls (i, 12; xvi, 251) lead to awareness of the differences between them and how those differences are revealed in terms of the way socially prescribed attitudes about sexual spheres define the range of experiences open to men and women, and how the victims themselves, both consciously and unconsciously, participate in the very processes which limit them.

The opening phrases of the Prelude to Middlemarch immediately introduce the idea of history, of time and event affecting the shaping of human lives. In addition, they introduce at once the narrator's assumptions about the reader's relation to that sense of history, as one who possesses not only the capacity for intellectual assessment of it, observing the "behaviour" of human beings in the "experiments of time," but as one who "cares" to know about such things, and will, by extension, "care" about the objects of study, one who has the capacity to "smile with gentleness at the thought of the little girl walking forth...to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors." (Prelude, 1) The capacity to perceive the irony of the image of the young St. Theresa is assumed not to preclude the basic sympathetic response of the reader, an assumption which works throughout the novel. The Prelude does not demand of the reader an imagining of some universal quality of sainthood applicable to St. Theresa, but emphasizes her existence as a particular woman at a particular moment in history. The irony of the young girl and her brother being turned back when "domestic reality met them in the shape of uncles," (Prelude, 1) points directly to the conflict between "great resolves" and "domestic reality" determining the nature of the lives in Middlemarch.
The importance of the careful comparison built up between St. Theresa and the "later-born" Theresa (Prelude, 2), whose history is awaited, is twofold; it suggests both the basic identity between the two women as "ardently willing souls," (Prelude, 2) and the basic difference between them as determinations of the historical time in which each is located.

An issue specifically related to women emerges in the contrast between the historical context which could allow St. Theresa an "epic life" of action, and the "meanness of opportunity" which prevents "later-born" Theressas from finding such a life of "far-resonant action." (Prelude, 2) The parallel between Dorothea and St. Theresa resides not in their desire for martyrdom and sainthood (a desire which is often treated with irony), but rather in their need to live actively in a sphere which extends beyond the confines of women's traditional domestic life. Those, like Dorothea, coming after the times which brought such outlets for St. Theresa, would try

with dim lights and tangled circumstances. . .to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggles seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness; for these later-born Theressas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul. Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance, and the other condemned as a lapse. (Prelude, 2)

The lack of a "coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge" constitutes the critical difference between the narrative assumptions about St. Theresa's world and that of Dorothea Brooke, the course of Dorothea's life and its mistakes being placed precisely in the context of the absence of a clear system of values and beliefs consistent with her desire for action. Among other things, Middlemarch
examines the process of learning by which Dorothea attempts to attain knowledge of herself and her possibilities which is at the same time both intellectually and emotionally valid. The reader is both implicated in the process and made to observe its development, it being carefully indicated how the reader must be aware, not only of the nature of the enquiry, but of his or her own assumptions about the nature of the learning and the knowledge being sought. The reader is the "who" of the first word of the text and is implicitly one of the potential "some" at the beginning of the Prelude's final paragraph:

Some have felt that these blundering lives are due to the inconvenient indefiniteness with which the Supreme Power has fashioned the natures of women; if there were one level of feminine incompetence as strict as the ability to count three and no more, the social lot of women might be treated with scientific certitude. Meanwhile the indefiniteness remains, and the limits of variation are really much wider than any one would imagine from the sameness of women's coiffure and the favourite love-stories in prose and verse. (Prelude, 2-3).

The hope of an easy arrival at "scientific certitude" is discouraged, the suggestion made that causes of female "incompetence" cannot simply be explained in quantifiable terms. In addition, the quality of "indefiniteness" acquires a positive ambiguity; its use becomes not necessarily simply the explanation of female blundering but a suggestion of variation and possibility. Subtly the narrator presents both the context for the subject of the fiction and the mental set expected of the reader.
II

The first five chapters of Book One present Dorothea Brooke, her family and her friends, and indicate both the ways traditional attitudes towards women, their education and their social role, limit the range of possible expression for Dorothea's energies, but also the ways in which Dorothea, in particular, perceives and relates to the world which thus limits her. Dorothea is projected as a "later-born" Theresa to whom is promised "perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity." (Prelude, 2) Dorothea's "spiritual grandeur" is presented, moreover, with unmistakable irony, while at the same time, it is made clear that, when compared to those social attitudes which estimate a young woman's value solely in terms of her marriageability, Dorothea's ardour cannot be dismissed as simply ridiculous:

Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom, by good looks, vanity and merely canine affection. (i, 9)

That Dorothea can be "enamoured" of qualities, not people, and "rash in embracing whatever seemed to her (my italics) to have those aspects," tells of a kind of inexperience which sees what it most wants to see. But the narrative attack on social assumptions about marriage makes clear how successful guidance for such inexperience cannot be found from the prevailing attitudes of society's more experienced, adult members.
"Enamoured" gives the clue that Dorothea too easily mistakes people for ideas she would like them to represent. Embracing qualities in such a way, however, is made to seem clearly preferable to choosing a mate for reasons of physical appearance and "canine affection," implying nothing much more than the loyalty and obedience that results from a relation of total dependence. In contrast to such values, those expressed by Dorothea's ardour are presented as a sublimated form of a capacity for emotional, even potentially sexual, response, which Dorothea is unconscious of but which repeatedly urges its presence on the reader. In proportion as the text indicates Dorothea's suppressed emotional and sensuous capacity, it indicates the emptiness of the social attitudes expressed on the surface of the life around her. The developing contradiction between the expectations of the outer world and the suppression of Dorothea's inner responses becomes a means by which the text establishes Dorothea's essential estrangement from her social environment.

The jewel-sharing scene between Dorothea and her sister Celia suggests how Dorothea keeps her capacity for sensuous response in check; she tries to describe a spiritual feeling about the colour of the jewels, but the strong, sensuous nature of the language she uses belies the intention of pure spirituality she wishes to convey: "It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. I suppose that is the reason why gems are used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of St. John. They look like fragments of heaven." (i, 17) What Dorothea does not register, as the reader can, is the essential dissimilarity of the elements in the analogy she constructs, the physically sensuous nature of "scent"
not being in any way "like" a vision, which, by definition, is wholly ideal. Such a disjunction between Dorothea's formulation of her experience signals her inability consciously to acknowledge the physical pleasure she feels: "All the while her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy." (i, 17) In a similar vein, Dorothea cannot directly admit the pleasure of riding, considering it "an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it." (i, 11-12) The fact that she perpetually puts off her renunciation of it not only makes ironic comment on Dorothea's attempts at spirituality, but it also underlines the actual force of the unconscious pleasure.

Passages such as these offer the reader access to the character of Dorothea, and aspects of that character which are not contained in either her own or her neighbours' understanding. The whole text thus establishes a relationship between reader and narrator which is different in mode from the fictional discourse alone, and which functions to expose, among other things, where the unconscious, unarticulatable issues in the fiction are at work. An analysis of the dinner conversation about riding, which takes place between Sir James and Dorothea, gives an indication of the way the reader's comprehension of the issues at stake depends on the comprehension of meanings outside the characters' own consciousness. Sir James calls Dorothea "a perfect horsewoman," which, he claims, "Every lady ought to be. . .that she may accompany her husband." (ii, 29) Sir James's unspoken assumptions as to
the superiority inhering in the idea of "husband," have already been made questionable in a passage immediately preceding his pronouncement to Dorothea. The working of this passage depends, furthermore, precisely on the effectiveness of confidentiality which the narrative voice presumes from the reader:

A man's mind—what there is of it—has always the advantage of being masculine,—as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm,—and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality. Sir James might not have originated this estimate; but a kind Providence furnishes the limpest personality with a little gum or starch in the form of tradition. (ii, 28-9)

The qualification about a man's mind, "what there is of it," immediately sets the ironic tone, which is one of condescension, in its way a parody of the male assumption of superior knowledge that can indulge the weaknesses of women, a tendency already attributed to Sir James. This tone then directs the way the apparently straightforward explanation about a "man's mind" having "always the advantage of being masculine" will be read, which in its turn, depends on the reading of the analogy on which the argument is based: "as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm." At one level the comparison asks for the following associative link to be made: Sir James — masculine — advantage — birch-tree — higher kind = superior, and by implication: Dorothea — feminine — disadvantage — palm — lower kind = inferior. Other factors, however, challenge the ease of this comparison and thus call Sir James's assumptions into question, and illustrate how the text directs the reader to basic issues of masculinity and femininity in the novel. One obvious key to the irony of the passage, which ultimately turns back on Sir James, is its basic logical construction which, despite the elaborate analogy, remains an "explanation" of man's mind simply in terms of itself.
The argument by analogy, of men and women as trees whose "higher" or "lower" nature corresponds to their being more or less complex botanical structures, is meant to suggest that male superiority is somehow proven, when it remains nothing other than a statement of practical male advantage and not of a superiority scientifically demonstrable through structural difference. The associations evoked by the birch-tree and palm, moreover, add another challenge to the apparent certainty being argued. The very examples chosen to embody the "proof" of the argument visually suggest the exact opposite attributes to those intended. The birch-tree, intended to exemplify the masculine mind as a more complex organic specimen has all the features of smallness, slenderness, and delicacy associated with notions of femininity; the "soaring palm," though supposed to exemplify the female as on the lower rungs of the evolutionary scale, visually suggests strength, size and ascendancy associated typically with the masculine. Consequently, on another level of reading the argument, the categories it proposes seem reversible, and the woman identifiable with the superior "birch-tree" and the man with the inferior "soaring palm." Thus the cumulative effect of the passage does more than simply suggest that ideas of male superiority are matters of traditional prejudice, it illustrates how the "masculine" intellect can give the stamp of objective certainty to matters which are inherently ones of opinion and value. And thus the narrator actually "proves" in this argument how the errors of prejudice about men and women can be committed by the "masculine mind" in the name of reason.

When it comes to considering Sir James's meaning of "perfect horsewoman" (ii, 29), when applied to Dorothea, the reader's assessment of the superbly ambiguous "soundness" of
of his "ignorance" is implicitly engaged in the reading of his conversation. When Dorothea answers him by saying that she has made up her mind "'not to be a perfect horsewoman, and so... should never correspond to [his] pattern of a lady,'" (ii, 29) her remark is to be considered in the light of all that the reader has understood so far of Dorothea's suppressed sensuousness and efforts to achieve spiritual perfection. Her remark indicates her continued reluctance to surrender to the stimulating pleasure of riding, perhaps even a fear of the consequences of the joys of sensuous experience, implied in her remark, "'I have had very little practice and should be easily thrown.'" (ii, 29) At the same time, the level of potential meaning makes one aware of the more profoundly ironic possibility that if, indeed, Dorothea were to be a "perfect horsewoman," in the fullest sense of expressing her passionate nature in that activity, she would even more truly "never correspond to [Sir James's] pattern of a lady." (ii, 29) In such a case, Dorothea would be likely to present a far more uncontrollable "predominance" than that which Sir James felt so confident "he could always put down when he liked." (ii, 28)

The sense that Dorothea's "spiritual" reasons for giving up riding are in contradiction with her natural capacity for sensuous pleasure gives ominous significance to Mr Casaubon's contribution to the conversation, when he summarizes the issues he sees involved in Dorothea's reluctance:

"We must not inquire too curiously into motives," . . . Miss Brooke knows that they are apt to become feeble in the utterance; the aroma is mixed with the grosser air. We must keep the germinating grain away from the light. (ii, 30)

Dorothea's ignorance of her own motives makes her see this statement as a confirmation that Mr Casaubon could "understand
the higher inward life," (ii, 30) while the reader is in a position to read Mr Casaubon's remark as an expression of a potentially repressive nature likely to keep Dorothea even further from an understanding of her own emotional and sexual nature, which she has already successfully hidden from herself, metaphorically, "keeping [it] away from the light."

The language of seeing and illumination in Book I specifically reveals the nature of Dorothea's mistaken perceptions and accounts for her reasons for marrying Mr Casaubon. It becomes increasingly apparent, for example, that Dorothea's desire for moral guidance and her lack of wider experience lead her to ascribe to Mr Casaubon a capacity for revealing truths, which prove, however, incapable of revelation through the intellect alone, and which Mr Casaubon's own emotional store proves ultimately incapable of providing.

In the following passage Dorothea contemplates her vision of marriage to Mr Casaubon:

There would be nothing trivial about our lives. Everyday-things with us would mean the greatest things. It would be like marrying Pascal. I should learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it by. And then I should know what to do, when I got older; I should see how it is possible to lead a grand life here--now--in England. I don't feel sure about doing good in any way now; everything seems like going on a mission to a people whose language I don't know... (iii, 40)

The impression of the almost adolescent dreaming of a young girl works both ironically and sympathetically here. It is clear to the reader and, partly, to Dorothea, that the real future of her dreams is hard upon her, hence the simultaneous use of language implying both the present and the future, the conditional "would" and "should" applying no longer to an unseen future, but the "here--now--in England." Dorothea's
confusion and sense of ignorance come through in the image of herself as a missionary who does not know the natives' language. In a later passage, her misconception of the truth-conveying capacity of language is contained in her feeling that Latin and Greek were "those provinces of masculine knowledge" that "seemed to her a standing ground from which all truth could be seen more truly." (vii, 93) Her feeling about not knowing the language is accurate enough, but the irony is that she is caught into denying her own "truth" by believing that the language which represents the established traditions of masculine learning, from which she has been excluded, contains the capacity of revealing a totalizing truth.

The implied sense of Dorothea's isolation is both expressed and called into question in the image of her wanting a "standing ground" from which "all truth could be seen more clearly," since that position, acquired through formal learning, contradicts the missionary zeal which is based on involvement in the lives of others, not in surveying them from a safe distance. The limitations and confusions connected with Dorothea's sight, both literally ("'I am rather short-sighted,'" [iii, 42]), and metaphorically (as Celia remarks, "'Please don't be angry with Dodo; she does not see things,'" [vi, 81]), reverberate with potential significance and irony. Such an example occurs in Dorothea's apparently straightforward and simple reply to her uncle with regard to Mr Casaubon: "'I am grateful to Mr Casaubon. If he makes me an offer, I shall accept him. I admire and honour him more than any man I ever saw.'" (iv, 56) Dorothea's use of the word "saw" here illustrates her limited "vision," particularly when compared with a similar situation in another section of the novel, where the verb "know" is used;
speaking of Mary Garth's estimation of the Reverend Farebrother, the narrator remarks, "Mary admired the keen-faced handsome little Vicar. . . .more than any man she had had the opportunity of knowing." (xl, 204) In contrast to Dorothea, Mary Garth is represented throughout the novel as one who obstinately refuses to create dreams or illusions either for herself or others, her eyes being "clear windows where observation sate." (xiv, 209)

Unlike Mary Garth, Dorothea prepares to marry on the strength of promises, which are products of her own imagining. When she says to Celia, " 'Everything I see in him corresponds to his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology,' " (ii, 27) she ironically reveals the limitations of her own vision of the man, in comparison to which Celia's view of him, complete with "two white moles with hairs on them," (ii, 26) has a healthy accuracy which Dorothea's idealised constructions cannot see.

Although Dorothea's real ignorance is located in her belief that marriage will mean the end of the ignorance she feels, she never doubts the worth of her desire to build cottages for her uncle's tenants, a work which Celia dismisses as Dorothea's "notion." (iii, 45) Significantly, the passage quoted above, expressing Dorothea's feeling of ignorant isolation, ends thus,

"I don't feel sure about doing good in any way now; everything seems like going on a mission to a people whose language I don't know;--unless it were building cottages--there can be no doubt about that. Oh, I hope I should be able to get the people well housed in Lowick: I will draw plenty of plans while I have time." (iii, 40)

Dorothea entertains "no doubt" about her cottages; she has no "opinion" about them. She knows the material good of people being well-housed, and this knowledge gives weight to her
expressed desire to be engaged usefully in the world she lives in. The ironic treatment of Dorothea's "plans," where it occurs, reveals more the distance between her desire and the possibility of its being realised, than it condemns the desire itself. Even Dorothea's silly and sentimentalized conclusion about the significance of her cottages—"it would be as if the spirit of Oberlin had passed over the parishes to make the life of poverty beautiful!" (iii, 44)—does not destroy the fact that, in comparison to Mr Brooke and Mr Casaubon, who have the power to affect such material conditions, Dorothea is and remains constantly active in her concern for the actual lives around her. "Mr Casaubon," by contrast, "apparently did not care about building cottages, and diverted the talk to the extremely narrow accommodation which was to be had in the dwellings of the ancient Egyptians, as if to check a too high standard." (iii, 46-7) His response confuses Dorothea, who attempts to find reasons to explain its apparent "indifference." (iii, 47) Her previous sense of urgency to draw plans while there was yet time before her marriage anticipates a hope that marriage would absorb her in learning to view the wide vistas of truth Mr Casaubon's life and work are to reveal to her. The hope is undermined and the reason for urgency ironically turned with Dorothea's awakening consciousness that Mr Casaubon's approval of her work on the cottages is likely to be no more than the approval husbands allow themselves to bestow on any other of the harmless occupations of their wives' "leisure moments." (iii, 47) It would not occur to him to forbid it any more than it would occur to him to forbid the ineffectual activities of "other women [who] expected to occupy themselves with their dress and embroidery." (iii, 47) Thus the criterion
that womanly activity will be ineffectual is understood as the reason for countenancing it. The double process by which Dorothea registers this truth but is unwilling to accept it, is signalled in the remark, "Dorothea felt rather ashamed as she detected herself in these speculations." (iii, 47) What she is unable--and unwilling--to see is the ultimate uselessness of Mr Casaubon's "knowledge" for her, or how his attitude to her projected work prophesies the uselessness she will feel as the limitations of her role as wife reveal themselves. Before marriage Dorothea adjusts her naive disappointment that Lowick did not have "a larger share in the world's misery, so that she might have had more active duties in it," by making "a picture of more complete devotion to Mr Casaubon's aims, in which she would await new duties. Many such might reveal themselves to the higher knowledge gained by her in that companionship." (ix, 115)

Awareness of the potential contradictions in store for Dorothea results from another kind of adjustment and adaptation of understanding which the text requires of the reader. An estimate of the conflict of interest between Dorothea and Mr Casaubon depends on a gradually developed perception of the gulf between Casaubon's attitude to women and work and Dorothea's wish to combine a loving marriage with an active relation to the world in which she lives. The reader's resulting sense of foreboding is, however, never simply identifiable with that expressed by any of the characters in the novel, each of whom criticizes the impending marriage from his or her own limited attitudes and expectations. Celia, for example, accurately catches the danger for Dorothea in her striving for spirituality, in her remark, "'O Mrs Cadwallader,
I don't think it can be nice to marry a man with a great soul." (vi, 80) But her choice of the word "nice" also expresses the limits to marriage which would satisfy her. Similarly, Mrs Cadwallader's wishing Dorothea "joy of her hair shirt," (vi, 88) rightly catches the martyr-seeking element which bodes ill for Dorothea, but the correctness of that perception does not validate Mrs Cadwallader's conviction that Dorothea would have been "sane and sensible" had she married Sir James, because he would never have contradicted Dorothea, so she would have had "no motive for obstinacy in her absurdities." (vi, 88) Thus the reader is discouraged from accepting any particular attitudes or conclusions about Dorothea's marriage as expressed by characters within the fiction itself. Just as Dorothea's "wrong reasoning" works eventually to "right conclusions" (iii, 34), so the narrative strategy relies on a similar procedure in the reading of the text, in order that, "starting a long way off the true point, and proceeding by loops and zigzags, we now and then arrive just where we ought to be." (iii, 34-5)

The narrative strategy of the long passage introducing Dorothea's reactions to Rome on her honeymoon attempts to validate Dorothea's emotional needs and frustrations in order to guarantee the reader's subsequent recognition of the oppression that characterizes her life as Mrs Casaubon and mistress of Lowick, an oppression, moreover, the cause and like of which no character in Middlemarch comprehends. There are, the narrator proposes, those people whose response to Rome is mediated by their ability to fit their experience, both imaginatively and intellectually, into a keen sense of historical process. They resemble the same people referred to
on the first page of the text, as those "who care much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time:" (Prelude, 1)

To those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions which unite all contrasts, Rome may still be the spiritual centre and interpreter of the world. (xx, 295-6)

These projected "students" of Rome have a double function; ostensibly the narrator uses them as a contrast to Dorothea and her inability to comprehend the Rome she experiences, but when the narrator addresses them, they effectively become the readers of the novel, not hypothetical, fictional visitors to Rome:

let them conceive one more historical contrast; the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism, fed on meagre Protestant histories and on art chiefly of the hand-screen sort; a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principles, fusing her actions into their mould, and whose quick emotions gave the most abstract things the quality of a pleasure or a pain. . . (xx, 296)

By means of this narrative manoeuvre, the reader has been given credit for a "quickening power of knowledge" and challenged to use it in comprehending Dorothea's situation. Furthermore, by apparently presenting the actual data which make up the "historical contrast" under consideration, the narrator persuades the reader to accept two kinds of information: one is external, pertaining to circumstances affecting Dorothea, such as her meagre education and Puritan upbringing, and one is internal, her "ardent nature" and "quick emotions." Presented thus as facts, the internal factors escape the danger of being condemned by the reader as irrelevancies or simply temperamental excesses.
Dorothea's particular position is further clarified with the introduction of other possible feminine responses to Rome and the rejection of them, both because they are shallow, and because they are foreign to Dorothea's "nature":

The weight of unintelligible Rome might lie easily on bright nymphs to whom it formed a background for the brilliant picnic of Anglo-foreign society; but Dorothea had no such defence against deep impressions. . . . (xx, 296)

It is thus made plain that the discussion is not about superficialities. The ultimate narrative tactic to claim the reader's allegiance to Dorothea's case spells itself out in such detail, extending its general application beyond the particular problem of Dorothea in Rome, that it stands as an example of a major way the narrator directs the reading of the novel by means of "emotional thinking." 14

Not that this inward amazement of Dorothea's was anything very exceptional: many souls in their young nudity are tumbled out among incongruities and left to "find their feet" among them, while their elders go about their business. Nor can I suppose that when Mrs Casaubon is discovered in a fit of weeping six weeks after her wedding, the situation will be regarded as tragic. Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity. (xx, 297-8)

Syntactically varied constructions alternate in this passage in such a way as to suggest, at first, no anchored

14 Pinney, Essays, p.436.
viewpoint, and yet they all work towards the final statement, which simultaneously claims both assent and resistance: the reader wishes to agree to the general truth of the conclusion as formulated, but to prove it wrong in the individual case, that is, to disprove his or her own possible "stupidity."

The syntactical variations establish sympathy for Dorothea, first of all, by assuming a shared acceptance of stereotyped normality in female behaviour, and then by calling into question that very normality as a criterion for dismissing the serious nature of Dorothea's situation. Statements like the following establish the assumed normality: "Not that this inward amazement. . . was anything very exceptional," and "some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary is not unusual." Between these two statements, however, others intervene to establish the terms of the discussion on another level. The statement about the unexceptional nature of Dorothea's inward "amazement" is apparently justifiable in terms of mere frequency: "many souls in their young nudity are tumbled out among incongruities are left to 'find their feet' among them while their elders go about their business." Yet the apparently straightforward statement of fact in the latter is undermined by the formulation of the first part. Had the narrator referred simply to "many young ladies," the phrase would have corresponded to that level of the discussion which talks comfortably in abstract generalities about "finding one's feet" and "elders going about their business." But the easy assumptions behind these activities are called into question when the subject is formulated not as young persons generally, but "many souls in their young nudity." The word "nudity" takes on the sense of an exposed vulnerability which challenges the ease that chooses to consider
that condition perfectly "usual" and therefore unworthy of attentive sympathy. But the point is made subtly. The authorial voice continues in a tone of urbane supposition about "normal" behaviour, while the identity of the observer shifts from an assumed abstraction for the sake of argument, to the reader: "nor can I suppose that when Mrs Casaubon is discovered in a fit of weeping...the situation will be regarded as tragic," since what is usual, by definition, does not elicit such sympathy. The final narrative move identifies both narrator and reader as the "we" who "do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual." But the "we" is also contained in the generality "people," and thus the reader is implicated as one of those who chooses to be moved or not. The narrative then proposes the consequences of a choice which accepts the "element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency," a response which eludes the "coarse emotion of mankind." The capacity to perceive and feel fully "all ordinary life," if such a capacity existed, "would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat," prospects of acute perception which express the intended sense of impossibility, but not the threat or danger implied in the final prospect that "we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence." The danger of exposure originally associated with the "many souls in their young nudity," has become the potentially threatening experience of anyone, of "us," the implication being that it is the avoidance of the threat which motivates "our" apparent lack of sympathy for the usual. There is an implicit but emphatic assumption that everyone's deepest consciousness would acknowledge "that roar...on the other side of silence," and in this way the
passage insists that the inner life of each individual, each reader, as it were, is as vulnerable as that implied in the words "souls in their young nudity." The passage has moved from observing a particular external phenomenon—Dorothea crying—to challenging the potential emotional response of the reader. In consequence, the final general statement reverberates with possible meaning, because of all that has preceded it: "As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity." The final word has been the point which the whole of the passage has been intended to prove, that emotional insensitivity to "ordinary" life generally, and Dorothea's experience, in particular, is equal to emotional stupidity, and the challenge is clearly made to the reader to recognize the nature and working of such stupidity, not only in the fiction of Middlemarch but in the practice of reading it.

A later passage describing Dorothea's disappointment on her honeymoon uses language of the intellect and emotions in such a way as further to establish the necessary interdependence of those faculties. Mr Casaubon's "way of commenting on the strangely impressive objects around them had begun to affect [Dorothea] with a sort of mental shiver." (xx, 301) In the phrase "mental shiver," physical, emotional and intellectual responses are combined, marking the essential difference between Dorothea and her husband, a

15 In a letter to a friend (24 September 1876) Emily Davies describes a conversation she had with George Eliot about the education of women, in which the idea of "emotional stupidity" is made clear. "...she hoped my friend would explain to the girls that the state of insensitivity in which we are not alive to high and generous emotions is stupidity, and spoke of the mistake of supposing that stupidity is only intellectual, and not a thing of the character—and of the consequent error of its being commonly assumed that goodness and cleverness don't go together, cleverness being taken to mean only the power of knowing." GEL, Vol. VI, p. 287.
difference then given further narrative clarification:

...he had perhaps the best intention of acquitting himself worthily, but only of acquitting himself. What was fresh to her mind was worn out to his; and such capacity of thought and feeling as had ever been stimulated in him by the general life of mankind had shrunk to a sort of dried preparation, a lifeless embalmment of knowledge. (xx, 301)

This is at once a description and judgement of Mr Casaubon. In answer to all that is still "fresh" to Dorothea, her susceptibility to the "strange impressions" to which she seeks explanations that will clarify her relation to them, and inform her life, Mr Casaubon offers separation and death. In the language reserved for Mr Casaubon there is an explicit lack of all physical or emotional vitality, that "quickness" is absent which, in the narrative passages quoted above, was made the pre-condition for full understanding. Mr Casaubon cannot be numbered among "those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes," (xx, 295) and his defences against the world are of such impenetrability, that he cannot be numbered even as one of the "quickest of us" who walk about "well wadded with stupidity." (xx, 298) His desire merely to "acquit" himself is his one means of escaping the dangers of felt response either to the world or to his wife. Whatever capacity there had been in Mr Casaubon for "thought and feeling" has been extracted and externalized, made a dead object. The sense of Mr Casaubon's almost total emotional debilitation becomes the grounds for sympathy for him. Significantly, the one time the narrative language grants Mr Casaubon the immediacy of directly felt response is at the moment he faces the certainty of his own death.
Here was a man who now for the first time found himself looking into the eyes of death—who was passing through one of those rare moments of experience when we feel the truth of a commonplace, which is as different from what we call knowing it, as the vision of waters upon the earth is different from the delirious vision of the water which cannot be had to cool the burning tongue. (xlii, 229)

Mr Casaubon's response to Dorothea's gestures of affection not only conceals any answering strength of emotion, it amounts to rejection. He could make no "other sign of acceptance than pronouncing her, with his unfailing propriety, to be of a most affectionate and truly feminine nature, indicating at the same time by politely reaching a chair for her that he regarded these manifestations as rather crude and startling." (xx, 303-4) Mr Casaubon's fear and incapacity render him unable to respond to Dorothea's ardour, and make him merely concerned to observe what he considers the proper forms of marriage, "He had not found marriage a rapturous state, but had no idea of being anything else than an irreproachable husband, who would make a charming young woman as happy as she deserved to be." (xx, 305) And this same lack of emotional involvement with Dorothea is paralleled in his work: "With his taper stuck before him he forgot the absence of windows, and in bitter manuscript remarks on other men's notions about the solar deities, he had become indifferent to the sunlight." (xx, 303)

Dorothea becomes gradually more associated with the metaphorical "germinating grain," (ii, 30) which cannot be "indifferent to the sunlight" but must, by necessity, grow towards it. The process of Dorothea's "real" education, as opposed to the one she had imagined for herself, investigates both the internal and external factors which determine the oppression she feels in her marriage, which stifle her "growth." An indication of how these several factors combine
can be found in a passage concerning Dorothea's arrival at Lowick after her honeymoon. Her boudoir has become a "ghostly blue-green world," where everything "seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before," (xxviii, 2) indicating the shrinking of Dorothea's projected hopes for the broad horizons marriage would open to her. Her own vitality, the "warm red life in her lips," (xxviii, 2) contrasts with the cold lifelessness of her surroundings whose very solid immobility resembles both the deadness of her relationship to her husband and the oppressive inactivity of her role as Mistress of Lowick: "she saw the long avenue of limes lifting their trunks from a white earth, and spreading white branches against the dun and motionless sky. The distant flat shrunk in uniform whiteness and low-hanging uniformity of cloud," (xxviii, 1) the whole scene becoming for Dorothea, the "still, white enclosure which made her visible world." (xxviii, 2) The feelings given to Dorothea and her perception of the physical objects around her challenge the truth of the conventional attitude that Dorothea was passing through "that transitional life understood to correspond to the excitement of bridal felicity, and keeping up the sense of busy effectiveness," (xxviii, 2-3) a view whose illusory nature is exposed by the adverbial addition, "as of a dream which the dreamer begins to suspect." (xxviii, 3) Such guidance is intended for the reader, however, and does not express Dorothea's consciousness. She still expects, it is said, to find "duty in some new forms of inspiration" which will "give a new meaning to wifely love":
Meanwhile there was the snow and the low arch of dun vapour—there was the stifling oppression of that gentlewoman's world, where everything was done for her and none asked for her aid—where the sense of connection with a manifold pregnant existence had to be kept up painfully as an inward vision, instead of coming from without in claims that would have shaped her energies—"What shall I do?" "Whatever you please, my dear." . . . (xxviii, 3)

The "meanwhile" takes on the immobility of the external, physical surroundings and promises little change or new direction towards conceptions of "wifely love." (xxviii, 3) The "brief history" (xxviii, 3) of Dorothea's "oppressive liberty" shows no prospect of receding into a past.

Dorothea's sense of oppression, however, is not presented as a wrong done to her, but as grounded in the very facts of, and conventional attitudes towards, her position as a woman, and a woman of a particular social class. It is the "stifling oppression of the gentlewoman's world," and, as such, it is more acutely felt than capable of clear articulation by Dorothea. What actually makes the oppression keenly felt is located in its tendency to force women, like Dorothea, to look constantly inward, literally to create reasons and motives for action, a tendency which is necessitated precisely because reasons for action do not urge themselves from needs originating in the world outside themselves. The desire to live in active relation to the world is not denied to such women, it is assumed not to exist at all.

Within marriage, Dorothea lives out the oppressive relation to her husband in ways which are similar to those she lives in social terms. The personal relationship between husband and wife cannot escape incorporating the assumed relation of the woman to society. Dorothea must accept her husband's limitations and the limitations he imposes upon
her, because no other choice is open to her, just as her own desires to engage in action and decisions which extend beyond her blue-green boudoir are stifled simply by the fact that their existence is denied. Similarly, Dorothea's need for a relationship of mutuality in her marriage, which urges her repeatedly to approach her husband, is persistently denied her. Both Dorothea's "wild illusion in expecting a response to her feeling," (xxi, 323) and the necessity painfully to recognize her own separate identity from her husband are early experiences of her marriage.

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves; Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she could devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling—an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects—that he had an equivalent centre of self... (xxi, 323)

The language here, emphasizing an integrated process of feeling and reflection, underlines the text's insistent premise that "true" knowledge accrues only through a process of emotional and intellectual cognition. It further indicates that such knowledge does not guarantee comforting conclusions because based on charitable or complaisant intentions. The narrative strategy operates so as to prevent Dorothea's experience being read as reducible to the merely personal or psychological. By making the reader's knowledge different from Dorothea's, it ensures that the expectations and assumptions of the social order be recognized as determinants of that personal experience. The process by which Dorothea learns is presented as a living-through of severe self-repression, both in terms of her own needs and in terms of the way those needs are denied. What the reader "knows" and what Dorothea
"knows" about this process are two different things. When Dorothea approaches her husband in the knowledge of his illness, for example, her reaction to being rejected by him is expressed in terms of an intensity which Dorothea would not acknowledge to herself, but which nevertheless suggests profoundly alienated feeling from her husband:

... she saw her own and her husband's solitude—how they walked apart so that she was obliged to survey him. If he had drawn her towards him, she would never have surveyed him—never said, "Is he worth living for?" but would have felt him simply a part of her own life. Now she said bitterly, "It is his fault, not mine." In the jar of her whole being, Pity was overthrown... And what, exactly, was he?—She was able enough to estimate him—she who waited on his glances with trembling, and shut her best soul in prison, paying it only hidden visits, that she might be petty enough to please him. In such a crisis as this, some women begin to hate. (xlii, 232-3)

Evidence of the functioning of unacknowledged feelings, which become more insistent in proportion to their suppression, is apparent in other passages, such as Dorothea's visit to her old home, when she is given the task to convince her uncle of his duties to his tenants, duties which she feels herself and wants the opportunity to exercise. The passage indicates Dorothea's capacity for felt response to the wider world of economic and social relations and how that capacity has been denied expression in marriage:

Dorothea had gathered emotion as she went on, and had forgotten everything except the relief of pouring forth her feelings, unchecked; an experience once habitual with her, but hardly ever present since her marriage, which had been a perpetual struggle of energy with fear. (xxxix, 176)

Dorothea's self-repression and Mr Casaubon's repeated rejections of her bring about, ironically, the one thing Mr Casaubon himself most dreaded. He becomes the victim of a situation which originally had been only the vision of his
own groundless fears: ultimately Dorothea does sit in
judgement upon him and his work:

she pictured to herself the days, and months, and
years which she must spend in sorting what might be
called shattered mummies, and fragments of a
tradition which was itself a mosaic wrought from
shattered ruins. . . . Doubtless a vigorous error
vigorously pursued has kept the embryos of truth
a-breathing; the quest for gold being at the same
time a questioning of substances, the body of
chemistry is prepared for its soul, and Lavoisier
is born. But Mr Casaubon's theory of the elements
which made the seed of all tradition was not likely
to bruise itself unawares against discoveries: . . .
it was as free from interruption as a plan for
threading the stars together. And Dorothea had so
often had to check her weariness and impatience
over this questionable riddle-guessing, as it
revealed itself to her instead of the fellowship in
high knowledge which was to make life worthier:
(xlviii, 312-13)

In this passage various examples of the novel's concern
about valid knowledge are presented at once, and the "web" of
comparative relation among Mr Casaubon and Lydgate, Dorothea
and Rosamond, becomes more complex. Dorothea's recognition of
the uselessness of Mr Casaubon's arbitrary speculations is
balanced by the ironic suggestion with which the passage ends,
that her own speculations about marriage's promise were equally
unfounded. Dorothea's ideas about the knowledge she will gain
in marriage are revealed as erroneous and as opposed to the
kind of knowledge, made equally erroneous, that her husband
seeks. But the observations expressed by the narrator in
lines five to ten, however, introduce a possibility of valid
relation between speculation and experiment which are akin to
Lydgate's expectations of himself as a scientist, and which
explicitly contrast his basic approach to knowledge with that
of Mr Casaubon, and, indeed, of Dorothea. At the same time
as Mr Casaubon and Lydgate are contrasted in terms of their
intellectual capacities they are identified in terms of
their attitudes to marriage and their misguided
assumption that it is an institution designed to serve their needs. In this way Lydgate's and Casaubon's mistakes about marriage are both parallel with Dorothea's and in contrast to hers. In addition, Dorothea's failure as Mr Casaubon's wife parallels Rosamond Vincy's failure for Lydgate, despite the fact that both women are, themselves, essentially contrasted in terms of their reasons for marrying, Dorothea wanting moral answers to life in marriage to a scholarly clergyman and Rosamond seeking social advancement in marriage to a medical man with aristocratic connections.

Such negative and positive aspects in each character and the way in which those aspects are weighted differently, depending on context and the character with whom each is compared, gives that sense of the web constructed of the subtlest grey areas of human experience, traditionally considered the great realist achievement of Middlemarch. But the complexity of correspondence and difference between Lydgate, Dorothea, Rosamond, and Casaubon, and their respective marriages, is also an essential means by which the text constructs the issues of emotional and intellectual disjunction in male and female experience and attempts to establish those values which will give final assent to Dorothea's marriage to Will Ladislaw. The treatment of Lydgate and Rosamond, and their relationship, as it runs concurrently with both Dorothea's first marriage and her growing relation to Will Ladislaw, crucially affects the degree to which the reader is persuaded of and made to respond to "emotional thinking" as an issue established in the text. An examination of the Lydgate - Rosamond marriage indicates the important areas of similarity and contrast between Dorothea and Lydgate as "ardent" souls (1, 12; xvi, 25) and provides further means for distinguishing
between male and female "ardour" and the forms each can take, privately and publicly.

III

When Lydgate is first introduced by Mr Brooke, the young doctor's professional ambition is emphasized: "I think he is likely to be first-rate--he has studied in Paris, knew Broussais; has ideas, you know--wants to raise the profession." (x, 137) In the later, longer introduction to Lydgate, the narrator presents Lydgate's ambition as a product of the "growth of intellectual passion." (xv, 218) For Lydgate, this passion assumes shape in his medical studies, making the promise of fulfilling an ambition practically possible:

his scientific interest soon took the form of a professional enthusiasm; he had a youthful belief in his bread-winning work...and he carried to his studies in London, Edinburgh, and Paris, the conviction that the medical profession as it might be was the finest in the world; presenting the most perfect interchange between science and art; offering the most direct alliance between intellectual conquest and the social good. Lydgate's nature demanded this combination: he was an emotional creature, with a flesh-and-blood sense of fellowship which withstood all the abstractions of special study. (xv, 219)

There is a clear contrast here between Dorothea's vague yearnings for beneficent work and Lydgate finding the specific, practical channels for his emotional nature to exercise itself. In a letter of 1870, with regard to the difference in men's and women's expectations and the purpose of their education, George Eliot expressed the feeling that women should be able to develop their intellectual capabilities, not just as a "defence against passionate affliction," but also, for the sake of the pleasure in the knowledge of things in themselves, and
freedom from the necessity to limit their activity to areas which refer either to their actual or potential relation to men:

...We women are always in danger of living too exclusively in the affections; and though affections are perhaps the best gifts we have, we ought also to have our share in the more independent life—some joy in things for their own sake. It is piteous to see the helplessness of some sweet women when their affections are disappointed—because all their teaching has been, that they can only delight in study of any kind for the sake of a personal love. They have never contemplated an independent delight in ideas as an experience which they could confess without being laughed at. 16

The above letter was written in July 1870, when George Eliot was working on the original "Middlemarch" story, i.e. the Lydgate, Vincy and Garth parts, before the decision later that year to develop the "Miss Brooke" story and include it in the novel. 17 It is possible, therefore, that George Eliot's occupation with ideas about female education, such as those expressed here and in other correspondence of 1869 and 1870 regarding the founding of Girton College, led towards her decision to join the stories of Dorothea and Lydgate. For both Lydgate and Dorothea are counted among the "good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little," (xv, 219) but there is a clear indication that Lydgate's education and professional possibilities, as a man, give him opportunities denied to Dorothea and which mean that she, as a woman, is precluded from finding practical avenues for her yearning "to make her life greatly effective " (iii, 39):

The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent; and with such a nature struggling in the bands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency. (iii, 39)

Dorothea's education "on plans at once narrow and promiscuous" (i, 9), provides her with material to feed her ideals, but at the same time, it assumes that she neither needs nor wants channels in which to realise them. The only means her imagination finds to satisfy her "eagerness to know the truths of life" (i, 12) becomes the hope of marriage to a man who will reveal them to her.

The parallels between Lydgate's and Dorothea's careers, however, do not simply rely on a contrast of the available channels for intellectual and professional fulfilment open to men and women. They produce a more complex analysis of the effect of the different spheres of education and activity open to the sexes, implicitly arguing that the conventional role offered to a man makes him as prone to self-delusion as a woman's role makes her, but his errors take a different course and are based on different assumptions. Women like Dorothea are, at worst, encouraged, and at best, left alone, in an ignorance which confuses intellectual with emotional needs, perceiving them as vague yearnings and then making the error that marriage can satisfy them. For men like Lydgate, the subordination of the private, domestic life to the professional one encourages the assumption that the intellect is the sole touchstone for action, resulting in male behaviour being based on a belief that superior intellectual knowledge and power in the field of their work guarantee the same kind
of superiority and control in the field of personal relationships. The reader's awareness of this conclusion depends, moreover, upon the ways in which the narrative strategy, working with the categories of intellect and emotion, prevents the same fallacious assumptions being applied to the reading of the text.

The episode of Lydgate's passion for Madame Laure provides information about what is called the "fitful swerving of passion to which [Lydgate] was prone, together with the chivalrous kindness which helped to make him morally lovable." (xv, 228) Just as Dorothea's attraction for Mr Casaubon was based on an idea, rather than an understanding of the man, Lydgate's love for Laure is based on a "remote impersonal passion for her beauty," which turned into a "personal devotion" blind to the person herself. (xv, 229) Lydgate resolves that his "impetuous folly" will be the last, "since marriage at some distant period would of course not be impetuous." (xv, 228) The easy assumption contained in "of course" signals the kind of arrogance of control Lydgate perpetually exhibits in matters concerning his feelings and relationships, the prime and most disastrous examples of which are with Rosamond Vincy and Mr Bulstrode. The significant point the reader must register from Lydgate's Parisian affair is the sign that he believes himself intellectually capable of recognizing and avoiding emotional commitment in future.

Three days afterwards Lydgate was at his galvanism again in his Paris chambers, believing that illusions were at end for him. He was saved from hardening effects by the abundant kindness of his heart and his belief that human life might be made better. But he had more reason than ever for trusting his judgment, now that it was so experienced; and henceforth he would take a strictly scientific view of woman, entertaining no expectations but such as were justified beforehand. (xv, 232)
Dorothea's education and general assumptions about women do not discourage her from "entertaining expectations" about marriage's capacity to satisfy all her intellectual and emotional desires. On the other hand, assumptions about his intellectual superiority lead the ardent Lydgate into an equally disastrous marriage, because, unlike Dorothea, but equally fallaciously, he assumed that intellectual and emotional expectations have no bearing on one another.

When aspects of the language in early descriptions of Dorothea and Lydgate are compared, an interesting parallel reveals itself. Dorothea is, metaphorically, "short-sighted" in her perception of Mr Casaubon, because she is "enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects." (i, 9) Lydgate, too, is similarly unable to see certain connections affecting his life, because he is "enamoured of that arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation." (xvi, 249-50) Neither object of Dorothea's nor Lydgate's enthusiasm is opened to criticism, whereas the inability to see larger relations, because of that enthusiasm, is. Both Lydgate and Dorothea are made liable to great error, but from opposite starting points.

A number of warning signals with reference to Lydgate lead towards the conclusion that the text of the novel distinguishes carefully between the validity of Lydgate's goals and the means by which he intends to achieve them. Shortly after the passage quoted above from Chapter Fifteen, Lydgate is described
in that agreeable after-glow of excitement when thought lapses from examination of a specific object into a suffusive sense of its connections with all the rest of our existence--seems, as it were, to throw itself on its back after vigorous swimming and float with all the repose of unexhausted strength... (xvi, 250)

The description contains a strong sense of shared experience by the narrator, who seems to identify with "that agreeable after-glow," an identification given confirmation later in the phrase "our existence." But significantly, Lydgate's thoughts are not then given in indirect discourse, which leaves ample room for a mediating narrator, but in direct quotation, thus clearly marking a distinction between Lydgate's and the narrator's "voices":

"If I had not taken that turn when I was a lad," he thought, "I might have got into some stupid draught-horse work or other, and lived always in blinkers. I should never have been happy in any profession that did not call forth the highest intellectual strain, and yet keep me in good warm contact with my neighbours. There is nothing like the medical profession for that; one can have the exclusive scientific life that touches the distance and befriend the old fogies in the parish too. It is rather harder for a clergyman; Farebrother seems to be an anomaly." (xvi, 250)

Lydgate's thoughts given in quotation marks have an autonomy which asks to be judged in the light of the preceding section already marked by narrative assent. Lydgate's conscious thought reveals that he can make "connections" which assume only the easiest of comfortable barriers between his work's intellectual interest and the warm human contact of its day-to-day routine; his conscious mind frames the "caring" aspect of his work in nothing more emotionally demanding than "befriending the old fogies." The narrative proceeds, however, to indicate exactly that area of human contact which already attracts Lydgate, but which he is unwilling to acknowledge fully; it is, moreover, that area of attraction to Rosamond
Vincy which will require the degree of emotional perception that has been absent from his actions so far:

This last thought brought back the Vincys and all the pictures of the evening. They floated in his mind agreeably enough, and as he took up his bedcandle his lips were curled with that incipient smile which is apt to accompany agreeable recollections. He was an ardent fellow, but at present his ardour was absorbed in love of his work and in the ambition of making his life recognised as a factor in the better life of mankind--like other heroes of science who had nothing but an obscure country practice to begin with. (xvi, 250-51)

The opening of this passage provides straightforward description, although it stops short of providing actual detail of those "agreeable recollections," as if Lydgate were not able or interested in clearly defining them to himself. The brief statement, "He was an ardent fellow," shifts that voice of external description to one of narrative authority which clearly and specifically explains Lydgate's internal make-up. The fact that he is "absorbed" in "love of his work," however, signals the possibility that his conscious awareness of other factors affecting his life may be limited, that he may be unable, for example, to see how "love" and "agreeable recollections" have more to do with Rosamond Vincy than with the work and "warm contact" with his neighbours, which he has consciously connected with his good feeling. The narrative remark introducing the subsequent paragraph confirms this suspicion of Lydgate's lack of awareness: "Poor Lydgate: or should I say, Poor Rosamond: Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing." (xvi, 251)

Lydgate's self-evaluation, his assumptions of intellectual control in all aspects of his life, become clearly problematical in these few pages. By the time one reaches the phrase, "or should I say, Poor Rosamond:" the dangers in Lydgate's perceptions have been registered, as is the discrepancy hinted
at between the strict demands he makes on his intellect in work and his laxity with regard to understanding problems where feelings are concerned. He is described, for example, as bringing a much more testing vision of details and relations into this pathological study than he had ever thought it necessary to apply to the complexities of love and marriage, these being subjects on which he felt himself amply informed by literature and that traditional wisdom which is handed down in the genial conversation of men," (xvi, 248-9)

the reader's response to Lydgate's estimate of such wisdom being qualified by having had an example of its vacuity in the conversations of Mr Chichely and company, in Chapter Ten.

In an essay of 1865 on "The Influence of Rationalism," George Eliot described the intellectual process by which the great scientific contributions to nineteenth-century thought were made possible, as "that patient watching of external facts, and that silencing of preconceived notions, which are urged upon the mind by problems of physical science." In Lydgate the effects of intellectual and scientific exactness are contradicted by "preconceived notions" in personal and emotional spheres, in ways which make the apparently harmless reference to masculine "geniality" in the above quotation at least profoundly inadequate, and at most, ironically menacing.

Numerous descriptions of Lydgate's early months in Middlemarch provide specific illustrations of the ways his "spots of commonness" function, which, says the narrator, lay in the complexion of his prejudices, which, in spite of noble intention and sympathy, were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world; that distinction of mind which belonged

18 Pinney, Essays, p.413.
to his intellectual ardour, did not penetrate his feeling and judgment about furniture, or women, or the desirability of its being known (without his telling) that he was better born than other country surgeons. (xv, 227)

The "spots" referred to in the "complexion" of Lydgate's prejudices imply blemishes, fifty per cent of which, says the narrator, are to be found "in ordinary men of the world," a suggestion that appears to excuse them on the grounds of frequency alone and which works ironically in the light of the passage on Dorothea in Rome, in Chapter Twenty, where the tendency to excuse suffering on the basis of frequency is explicitly challenged by the narrator. The fact that Lydgate does not apply the "distinction of mind" which characterizes his "intellectual ardour" to all spheres of his life, makes his "spots of commonness" not merely blemishes, but also blind spots, Lydgate's equivalent to Dorothea's short-sightedness. But whereas Dorothea errs by instilling even "the most abstract things" with the "quality of a pleasure or a pain" (xx, 296), perceiving all things with the full weight of her feelings, Lydgate errs from the opposite direction, assuming that his intellect and his emotions--except as they combine in the vague pleasure of "warm contact with his neighbours"--are otherwise distinct from each other. Just as Mr Casaubon's practice of sorting his documents into "pigeon-holes" (ii, 25) suggests his inability to see the true connections between the elements of his work, so Lydgate's tendency to separate his intellectual from his emotional life is a metaphorical pigeon-holing which precludes the experience of illuminating synthesis between his work and his personal relationships. Lydgate's "spots" are linked, moreover, with masculine experience generally. The remark that they are largely those of "ordinary
men" echoes back to Sir James's presumption about the advantages of a man's mind, and the ironic narrative comment implying that "tradition"—such as the prejudices of "ordinary men"—provides the "limpest personality" with the "starch" of assumed superiority (ii, 29). Like Sir James, Lydgate unquestioningly assumes the validity of that traditional wisdom about women supplied and "handed down in the genial conversation of men." (xvi, 249) The effect of these associations is to make Lydgate's "spots of commonness" more than character definition of a particular man; they represent a shared ideology as to the nature of masculine experience generally, and thus Lydgate's mistakes, like Dorothea's, become generalized examples of how prevailing attitudes about male and female experience determine individual limitations.

The narrative of Lydgate's marriage to Rosamond Vincy and the irreconcilable tension between its demands and the demands of his medical research reveals problems of masculine limitation comparable to those of feminine limitation apparent in the treatment of Dorothea's marriage to Mr Casaubon. But Lydgate's limitation emerges as different in kind; the fact of his having the intellectual and practical advantages of men, as well as the emotional potential of Dorothea, suggests his mistakes are the more culpable. Descriptions of Lydgate are weighted with critical language referring to egotism and arrogance, and there is a strong suggestion of ignorant pride at work in him, which is partly excused and also ironically criticized by the narrator. Although Lydgate is considered typical of "ordinary men of the world," he escapes complete censure because his pride "is made lovable by an expression of unaffected good-will." (xiii, 187) Yet "made lovable" is
ambiguous: the quality of this being a saving grace is countered by the sense that Lydgate's egoism is no less present for being wrapped in masculine generosity, itself, depending on an assumption of superiority. Although, on the one hand, it is admitted that Lydgate was a man "still in the making" with "virtues and faults capable of shrinking and expanding" (xv, 226), descriptions of his "conceit" in terms like "massive" and "benevolently contemptuous" give the ominous sense of it being fully established:

Lydgate's conceit was of the arrogant sort, never simpering, never impertinent, but massive in its claims and benevolently contemptuous. He would do a great deal for noodles, being sorry for them, and feeling quite sure that they could have no power over him; he thought of joining the Saint Simonians when he was in Paris, in order to turn them against some of their own doctrines. (xv, 227)

The example of the Saint Simonians provides an amusing, even sympathetically ironic David-and-Goliath touch to Lydgate's naivety, while at the same time it points up the sheer size of his arrogance and the ignorance upon which it is based. An additional irony to the example of the Saint Simonians lies also in the fact that one of their main "doctrines" was the absolute equality of the sexes, which lies behind and further informs the serious indication that Lydgate's good-will and sympathy are made possible because he can feel himself in a position of superior power. 19 His role as a doctor requires

19 See Richard K. Pankhurst, The Saint Simonians, Mill and Carlyle: A Preface to Modern Thought (London, 1957), Ch. 8; p.108: "The religion of Saint Simon...would transform the 'social individual' from man only to man and woman. It would put an end to 'the shameful traffic' which under the name of marriage 'so frequently consecrated the monstrous union of devotion with selfishness, of intelligence with ignorance, of youth with decrepitude.' " Cf. the Lydgate and Casaubon marriages.
his patients to submit to his superior knowledge, an attitude Lydgate expects from his wife and one which tells ironically against Dorothea's desire to surrender to the superior knowledge she believes her husband will offer her. Considerations such as these which link the narratives of the several characters provide important signposts towards the way in which Lydgate's position as a husband and professional man is to be read, and how the power contained in those roles does not necessarily guarantee the superiority they may assume.

After Mr Brooke's dinner party in Chapter Ten, a lengthy comparison is given between Lydgate's reactions to Dorothea and to Rosamond. One function of this passage may be to play with the possibilities of love interests which might develop in the course of the novel, but which, ultimately, deliberately contradict conventions which expect the "hero" and "heroine" to live happily ever after. 20 The passage which ends Chapter Ten is important because it supplies information about Lydgate's responses to women at the same time as it explains and provides implicit criticism of his lack of interest in the novel's "heroine," Dorothea. His reaction to Dorothea is given as a direct quotation, as are his reactions to Rosamond which open the succeeding chapter, again emphasizing the absence of narrative approbation. Of Dorothea, Lydgate thinks:

"She is a good creature--that fine girl--but a little too earnest. ...It is troublesome to talk to such women. They are always wanting reasons, yet they are too ignorant to understand the merits of any question, and usually fall back on their moral sense to settle things after their own taste." (x, 139)

20 Regarding the sense of a potential love relationship between Lydgate and Dorothea, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar remark: "Eliot's development of this expectation and her subsequent disappointment of it demonstrate exactly how imprisoned Dorothea and Lydgate are in sexual categories," and, I would add, indicate the extent to which the novelist is concerned more with analysing the nature of their division than with finding a means of uniting them. See The Madwoman in the Attic (London, 1979), p. 519.
Lydgate's assumptions here connect him with previous critical references to masculine arrogance, one example being that a man's ignorance is by definition, of a "sounder quality," (ii, 28) and another, Mr Casaubon's response to Dorothea's eagerness to learn: "[he] consented to listen and teach for an hour together, like a schoolmaster of little boys, or rather like a lover, to whom a mistress's elementary ignorance and difficulties have a touching fitness." (vii, 94) Such reverberating similarities among Sir James and Mr Casaubon and Lydgate render Lydgate's evaluation of women's intelligence questionable. His generalizations about Dorothea's ignorance, in particular, may not conflict with reader assessment of her actual education and experience, but they clearly conflict with what the text has indicated regarding Dorothea's potential and capacity. Certainly Lydgate's tendency to draw conclusions about one woman's intellectual capacity from generalizations about the ignorance of "such women" as a body, tells more about Lydgate's unconscious sense of superiority than it informs of Dorothea's deficiencies. But perhaps the most subtle information about Lydgate lies in his formulation of the effect ignorance has on women like Dorothea, that "they usually fall back on their moral sense and settle things after their own taste." (x, 139) By equating "moral sense" with "taste" and placing both in opposition to intellectual understanding, and by seeing them as a retreat from real efforts of comprehension, Lydgate reveals his own tendency to reserve only his work for the application of that "distinction of mind" of which he is capable. He appears unable, or unwilling, to appreciate the difference between "moral sense," which is concerned with the ability to perceive and judge motives and values in human behaviour, and "taste," which simply implies preference.
Just as Mr Casaubon provides material for Dorothea's illusions to feed upon, such as her belief that scholarship will provide the key to living a good and useful, widely effective life, so Rosamond Vincy appears to validate Lydgate's general assumptions about women, which prove, however, to be ultimately, drastically wrong. In particular contrast to the loose formulations about ignorance, moral sense and taste with which Lydgate summarizes his impression of Dorothea's deficiencies, his evaluation of Rosamond, which follows immediately afterwards, is characterized by a sense of precise and assured intelligence, both with regard to what women "ought to be," and to what, from first acquaintance, Lydgate is convinced Rosamond is. Here again the formulation is in direct quotations to emphasize Lydgate's responsibility for his own estimations: "'She is grace itself; she is perfectly lovely and accomplished. That is what a woman ought to be; she ought to produce the effect of exquisite music.'" (xi, 140)

In order that the reader may avoid the trap of indulging in the same generalities as Lydgate, the narrative finds ways of presenting Rosamond Vincy in terms which cannot be easily subsumed under a stereotype of mindless femininity. She is given her own particular, recognizable intelligence, which is, however, made the product of an idea of female education based entirely on appearance and accomplishment. Rosamond is shaped by, and formulates her needs according to, an educational premise which actually denies the existence of a working, critical intelligence in women. The treatment of Rosamond's character and desires serves the novel's concern with issues of male and female, both as a challenge to assumptions about the "natural" superiority of male intelligence and the
"naturally" emotional nature of women.

IV

In a letter to Mrs Nassau Senior, in October 1869, George Eliot spoke about the one area of the "Woman Question" about which she had no doubts, that is the issue of female education and the necessity of its development, if there were to be any hope of equality and mutual respect between the sexes:

But on one point I have a strong conviction, and I feel bound to act on it, so far as my retired way of life allows of public action. And that is, that women ought to have the same fund of truth placed within their reach as men have; that their lives (i.e. the lives of men and women) ought to be passed together under the hallowing influence of a common faith as to their duty and its basis. And this unity in their faith can only be produced by their having each the same store of fundamental knowledge. It is not likely that any perfect plan for educating women can soon be found, for we are very far from having found a perfect plan for educating men. But it will not do to wait for perfection. 21

And in a letter of the previous year to Emily Davies, the founder of Girton College, George Eliot expressly mentioned the dangers to relationships between the sexes resulting from the discrepancies in their education discouraging mutual experience and encouraging dependence and ignorance in women:

The answer to those alarms of men about education is, to admit fully that the mutual delight of the sexes in each other must enter into the perfection of life, but to point out that complete union and sympathy can only come to women having opened to them the same store of acquired truths and beliefs as men have, so that their grounds for judgment may be as

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GEL, Vol V, p.58.
far as possible the same. The domestic misery, the evil education of the children that come from the presupposition that women must be kept ignorant and superstitious, are patent enough. 22

Rosamond Vincy is a representation in fictional terms of the case that false presuppositions about women's education contribute to that "domestic misery" which both partners do not realize is produced by their own collusion with the very assumptions which produce it.

Rosamond's expectations correspond perfectly to the education she has received, the value of her education and her fantasies being measured exclusively in terms of acquisition and appearance. The hint of inherent deception in Rosamond's training is even present in the phrase, "She was admitted to be the flower of Mrs Lemon's school," (xi, 143) the proverbially beautiful and sweet-smelling flower of the lemon tree giving a thoroughly false impression as to the bitter taste of the fruit it promises. Rosamond's expensive education has concentrated on providing "all that was demanded in the accomplished female" (xi, 143); her "mental acquisition," "propriety of speech," and "musical execution" were all considered "quite exceptional." (xi, 143) In fact, she is thoroughly trained in the perfect display of appearances.

There is the further implication that the high cost of such an education, as an investment for the future, is intended to bear direct relation to the income of the man who will find its accomplishments irresistible. As Rosamond's father says, when she chooses to marry Lydgate, "What have

you had such an education for, if you are to go and marry a poor man?" (xxxvi, 122)

Clear narrative emphasis is laid on the attractive but misleading nature of Rosamond's appearances. She "put her hand to touch her wondrous hair-plaits--an habitual gesture with her as pretty as any movement of a kitten's paw," an observation which concludes with the statement, "Not that Rosamond was in the least like a kitten; she was a sylph, caught young and educated at Mrs Lemon's." (xvi, 242) The phrase "caught young" extends the question of Rosamond's education beyond the obvious way in which it reflects her own personal preoccupations and desires. It implies a collective attitude towards such an education, suggesting that Rosamond is as much acted upon as acting; thus a subtle parallel is drawn between her "vulnerability" and that of Dorothea in Rome. In her way, too, Rosamond is implicated among so many "souls in their young nudity...left to 'find their feet'...while their elders go about their business." (xx, 297)

Both Dorothea and Rosamond share the position of being victims of their elders' established attitudes, but Rosamond has the added quality of being a victim precisely because her own desires do not run counter to the expectations of the rest of the world. Dorothea is made only a potential victim, because her life, both before and after marriage, is characterized by a persistently felt tension between the needs of her "ardent nature" and the opportunities offered to it by the world she must live in. While Dorothea's intelligence and energy constantly seek purpose outside the prescribed spheres of female activity, Rosamond's are perfectly consistent with those her education has led her to expect. The attitudes
which Dorothea experiences as oppressive, Rosamond has
dedicated her life to satisfying perfectly, in the hope that
they will end with the ultimate prize of a higher social
status, itself, the final acquisition in appearances, to be
acknowledged with envy and all possible outward show of respect
and admiration.

For Rosamond the world is so totally a matter of external
appearance that she does not have any consciousness of a self
which is not, in essence, a role to be played: "She was by
nature an actress of parts that entered into her physique;
she even acted her own character, and so well, that she did
not know it to be precisely her own." (xii, 175) In those
incidents in which feeling, in a woman like Dorothea, would
overwhelm any other level of consciousness, the language
describing Rosamond's reaction indicates a gulf between her
consciousness and any directly felt emotional response she
might have. When she first encounters Lydgate, for example,
Rosamond's reaction is represented as an observation of herself:
"she took" the result of the meeting "to be a mutual
impression called falling in love" (xii, 176), and when it
appears that Rosamond's romance with Lydgate may not evolve
according to her plan, her feelings are given as though
part of a scenario rather than as directly lived experience:

She felt that she was beginning to know the pang
of disappointed love, and that no other man could
be the occasion of such delightful aerial building
as she had been enjoying for the last six months.
Poor Rosamond lost her appetite and felt as forlorn
as Ariadne--as a charming stage Ariadne left behind
with all her boxes full of costumes and no hope of
a coach. (xxxii, 41)
When household debts threaten the Lydgate marriage, the narrative recognizes that disaster for Rosamond is located in the fact that for Rosamond to deny herself things is tantamount to denying her her very existence, since her social and personal identity consists exclusively in the life that money can buy her. Rosamond's situation is a perfect representation of the relation between identity and money, which Marx formulated in the following passage from the 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts:

That which exists for me through the medium of money that which I can pay for, i.e. which money can buy, that am I, the possessor of the money. The stronger the power of money, the stronger am I. The properties of money are my, the possessor's properties and essential powers. Therefore what I am and what I can do is by no means determined by my individuality. 23

The obvious character in Middlemarch who seems an embodiment of this relation is Mr Bulstrode, and the similarity of his position to Marx's formulation suggests at the same time his essential difference from Rosamond: unlike Mr Bulstrode's relation to the material means by which he defines himself, Rosamond's is one of total dependence on the power and willingness of men to supply her with that means. Rosamond's alienation from the actual working world that produces the money which determines her existence is indicated early in her first dreams of social advancement, which, says the narrator, contained "nothing financial, still less sordid... she cared about what were considered refinements, and not about the money that was to pay for them." (xii, 178) Rosamond's

concept of Lydgate as a doctor is similarly incapable of acknowledging the serving function of his profession, or the intellectual commitment of his research; she can only see it as an activity for acquiring things. Hence the ease with which she can wish that Lydgate were not a doctor (xlv, 280), a wish that essentially amounts to a denial of Lydgate's sense of his identity as a man.

The potential opposition between Rosamond's ideas and Lydgate's desires regarding his work is introduced at the moment when Lydgate is conscious of mounting household debts, but has not felt their pressure keenly enough to speak of them to Rosamond: "'Why, what can a man do when he takes to adoring one of you mermaids? He only neglects his work and runs up bills.'" (xliii, 248) There is an indication that Lydgate registers the contradictions between believing he can enjoy an ideal marriage and yet dedicate himself to his work; he is not capable of registering that his own attitudes and his choice of a wife to match them are largely responsible for the contradictions he is experiencing. His early optimism about combining his work with his marriage conspicuously omits consideration of the woman, the other "centre of self" (xxi, 323): "'I feel sure that marriage must be the best thing for a man who wants to work steadily. He has everything at home then--no teasing with personal speculations--he can get calmness and freedom.'" (xxxvi, 115) Lydgate's choice of the word "freedom" here is puzzling; freedom for, or from, what? The context of his remark concerns the "chaos" of courtship, which has resulted in Lydgate's work being "in confusion" (xxxvi, 115), but about which he confidently
asserts, "'a better order will begin after.'" (xxxvi, 115) Lydgate himself is made the source of his own contradictions in the language he chooses to use. If his formulation is to make sense, "freedom" has to mean the freedom of the husband to secure the "order" which serves his requirements. By assuming implicitly that a wife exists for the needs of the husband, Lydgate fails to recognize the actual, real, conflicting interests of his and Rosamond's relationship. For Rosamond, Lydgate's work can only have merit as a means to "make discoveries," whose value exists totally in their ability to lead the Lydgates on to attaining "a high position in some better place." (xliii, 249)

A narrative summary of Lydgate's evaluation of Rosamond's suitability as a wife indicates how his evaluation is based primarily on an assumption that female intelligence is meant to correspond to man's only in so far as it serves his needs:

Lydgate thought that after all his wild mistakes and absurd credulity, he had found perfect womanhood—felt as if already breathed upon by exquisite wedded affection such as would be bestowed by an accomplished creature who venerated his high musings and momentous labours and would never interfere with them; who would create order in the home and accounts with still magic, yet keep her fingers ready to touch the lute and transform life into romance at any moment; who was instructed to the true womanly limit and not a hair's breadth beyond—docile, therefore, and ready to carry out behests which came from beyond that limit. (xxxvi, 120-21)

Apart from the touch of romantic idealization which turns his wife into a domesticated Lorelei, Lydgate's estimate of Rosamond's suitability closely resembles Mr Casaubon's judgments of Dorothea's:

Providence, in its kindness, had supplied him with the wife he needed. A wife, a modest young lady, with the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex, is sure to think her husband's mind powerful. Whether Providence had taken equal care of Miss Brooke in presenting her with Mr Casaubon was an idea which could hardly occur to him. Society never made the preposterous demand that a man should
think as much about his own qualifications for making a charming girl happy as he thinks of hers for making himself happy. As if a man could choose not only his wife but his wife's husband!

(xxix, 10-11)

The striking similarity between Lydgate and Casaubon here underlines the novel's concern with the problematical nature of attitudes which assume the priority, as by nature, of male interests. It further indicates, by the way, how readers who do not register this concern in the text can participate in those very assumptions by concluding, for example, that all would have been well had the novelist only allowed Dorothea to marry Lydgate. Such reactions by contemporary reviewers called Lydgate "ten times the better man" than Will Ladislaw, 24 or complained that the novel "gave [Dorothea] no chance of marriage with the one man. . .in her neighbourhood. . .whom she could perhaps have helped to something great and noble." 25

Lydgate's particular "spot of commonness" with regard to women--and in this case, "commonness" has also the added sense of "commonly held" view--causes him to make his greatest single error and reveals his inability to recognize that everything he finds attractive in Rosamond indicates material and mental pre-occupations in direct conflict with those he professes. The summary of Lydgate's attitude, ending Chapter Thirty-six, indicates the space the narrative has created between Lydgate's estimation of his position, and that open to the

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reader, further recalling earlier estimates which make Lydgate's mistaken assumptions less personal than held in common with other men.

Chapter Thirty-six, concerning Lydgate's and Rosamond's weaving of their own "gossamer web" (xxxvi, 110) of illusions about each other's fitness to satisfy their projected ideas of love and marriage, ends with the following narrative observation: "Lydgate relied much on the psychological difference between what for the sake of variety I will call goose and gander, especially on the innate submissiveness of the goose as beautifully corresponding to the strength of the gander." (xxxvi, 126) The mock-serious sophistication in the suggestion that the idea under discussion is so clichéd and generally accepted as to require variety in its expression, works ironically against the language of apparently scientific certainty implied in words like "psychology," "innate," and "corresponding." But they, in turn, are contradicted by the single, added word, "beautifully," which suggests how Lydgate makes his intellect appear to give the weight of scientific truth to what is, in essence, a value judgement.

The ironic treatment of Lydgate here exposes his propensity to assume scientific validity in what are matters of his own taste. That early passage which implicitly questions that the advantage of men's superior minds is proven by analogy between the palm and birch trees finds its echo here, and the effect of this cumulative weighting against such assumptions further challenges the confidence of certainty in Lydgate's first appraisal of Dorothea's intelligence as merely reflective of her "taste." In such moments the gradual and cumulative effect of the narrator's strategy leads to the opposite conclusion from Lydgate's: the "innate submissiveness of the goose" and
the "strength of the gander" are seen not, as Lydgate supposes, as the essential qualities of a given substance, but the result of chosen behaviour, learning and power.

After their marriage, the scene in which Lydgate first speaks of money troubles to Rosamond depicts the basic pattern of a struggle where common interest is seen from totally irreconcilable viewpoints. There is an inevitability in the attitudes and reactions of both Lydgate and Rosamond, which makes judgement of them seem futile. Given the make-up of each, their vision must be incompatible, and yet, certain aspects of the narrative language describing this incompatibility suggest that Lydgate's blindness to Rosamond's nature is more culpable than is her inability to grasp the reality of their situation and enter into attempts to remedy it. The following passage introduces Lydgate's growing awareness that Rosamond is not living up to his expectations:

There was gathering within him an amazed sense of his powerlessness over Rosamond. His superior knowledge and mental force, instead of being, as he had imagined, a shrine to consult on all occasions, was simply set aside on every practical question. He had regarded Rosamond's cleverness as precisely of the receptive kind which became a woman. He was now beginning to find out what that cleverness was—what was the shape into which it had run as into a close network aloof and independent. No one quicker than Rosamond to see causes and effects which lay within the track of her own tastes and interests, she had seen clearly Lydgate's pre-eminence in Middlemarch society, and could go on imaginatively tracing still more agreeable social effects when his talent should have advanced him; but for her, his professional and scientific ambition had no other relation to these desirable effects than if they had been the fortunate discovery of an ill-smelling oil. And that oil apart, with which she had nothing to do, of course she believed in her own opinion more than she did in his. Lydgate was astounded to find in numberless trifling matters, as well as in the last serious case of the riding, that affection did not make her compliant. He had no doubt that the affection was there, and had no
presentiment that he had done anything to repel it. For his own part he said to himself that he loved her as tenderly as ever, and could make up his mind to her negations; but--well: Lydgate was much worried, and conscious of new elements in his life as noxious to him as an inlet of mud to a creature that has been used to breathe and bathe and dart after its prey in the clearest of waters. (lviii, 79-81)

Two different levels of discourse comprise this long account of Lydgate's reaction, revealing the limits of narrative support to his judgement upon Rosamond. At one level, in the middle of the passage, there is an account of events which clearly indicates that Rosamond is unquestioningly acting independently and with her own judgement, motivated by reasons which are alien to Lydgate. No sympathy for Rosamond's motives is implied, but at the same time, there is in the passages before and after this section, implicit narrative criticism of Lydgate's assumptions, seen, for example, in the language which indirectly represents his reactions: he "was astounded to find...that affection did not make her compliant" (ll. 22-24), and "he said to himself that he loved her as tenderly as ever" (ll. 27-28). Significantly, the syntax of the last statement, "he said to himself that he loved her," is reminiscent of Rosamond's own mode of indirect response, which tells itself about feelings, rather than experiencing them directly. The language reporting Lydgate's reaction to the change in his marriage and the accuracy of his judgement is made questionable by words like "superior," "compliant," and "negations," which indicate Lydgate's own feelings about himself and the fact that his expectations have not been satisfied. In other parts of the passage, however, narrative commentary underlines how Lydgate's confused frustration, succinctly indicated in the final "but--well:" (l. 29), is partly the result of his own easy, unconscious assumptions of rightness
and power, imagining without reflection, that his own "superior knowledge" (1.2) would be a "shrine to consult on all occasions" (1.4). The narrative passage which provides a detailed analysis of Rosamond's inadequate appreciation of Lydgate's relation to his work, which for her is only felt in the significance of social status, provides a source of sympathy for Lydgate. But at the same time, that very understanding of Rosamond's limitations precludes any easy identification by the reader with Lydgate's expectations and disillusionment. By providing certain information and attitudes which Lydgate does not recognize, the narrator puts the reader in a position which need not share Lydgate's bewilderment at the fact that "affection did not make [Rosamond] compliant." (1.24) The final narrative remarks, however, weigh heaviest against Lydgate. Although the medium in which he finds himself seems to have "elements" that have become "noxious" to him, the image of that medium as a muddied water, where once the predatory fish enjoyed the freedom and power over its victims "in the clearest of waters," implies that Lydgate's feelings assume that his situation is caused wholly by external circumstances, while the unchanging nature of the predator/prey relation remains unquestioned. The final narrative comment thus opens up issues operating in the text which are separate and different from those operating in the characters' own consciousness.

There are other passages in which Lydgate's desire to retain some affectionate bond with his wife, in order to make their marriage bearable, is rendered with clear narrative sympathy, as in the following:
It was more bearable to do without tenderness for himself than to see that his own tenderness could make no amends for the lack of other things to her. The sufferings of his own pride...were keen enough, yet they were hardly distinguishable to himself from that more acute pain which dominated them—the pain of foreseeing that Rosamond would come to regard him chiefly as the cause of disappointment and unhappiness to her. (lxix, 257)

Although there is no sympathy for the values which have made Rosamond a "young creature who had known nothing but indulgence, and whose dreams had all been of new indulgence, more exactly to her taste," (lviii, 94) narrative comments on Rosamond carefully suggest criticism but often without explicit judgement as to her personal culpability. In the remark, she had "that controlled self-consciousness of manner which is the expensive substitute for simplicity" (xlili, 242), the sharp focus of criticism is not merely aimed at Rosamond's personal "character," but at social attitudes which value and purchase the kind of education Mr Vincy bought for his daughter. By the time Lydgate has lost hope of solving his severe financial problems, Rosamond's inability to understand the nature of the affair is presented with an understanding which indicates that an environment of family, social life and education, which in no way provides routes of activity for women beyond self-interest, but simply encourages the ego's desires for gratification, has rendered Rosamond thoroughly inadequate to grasp the complexities and demands of the reality of her marriage. Although the style of their response to difficulty differs, Rosamond and Mrs Tulliver are essentially similar in that they define their role as wife, and have it confirmed for them, exclusively in terms of the material circumstances of their lives, and both are totally unequipped to act constructively
when that world is threatened. Rosamond's inadequacy, like Mrs Tulliver's, is as much a consequence of her being a victim of determining circumstances as it is the result or expression of personal egoism.

In his discussion of the tone of the language in Middlemarch, Derek Oldfield chose as one of his examples of the contrast between Dorothea and Rosamond the different ways they respond to their husband's needs:

It is clear that a highly significant distinction is made between Rosamond and Dorothea, and that this distinction has been conceived in terms of sensitivity of utterance. Thus, Lydgate remembers Dorothea's "tones of emotion" (Ch. 58), when she cried: "--think what I can do--"

that voice of deep-souled womanhood had remained within him as the enkindling conception of dead and sceptred genius had remained with him. . .the tones were a music from which he was falling away. . .when Rosamond said in her silvery neutral way, "Here is your tea, Tertius." (Ch. 58)

She throws the same "neutrality" into her later words, echoing with significant difference of tone the words of Dorothea, "What can I do, Tertius?"

In addition to the fact that Dorothea's sensitivity and Rosamond's cool neutrality can be reflected in the same words, the echoed phrase reflects the novel's persistent concern with the problem exactly expressed in the words, "What can I do?"

It is a question which occurs repeatedly to Dorothea, often indicating frustration at finding so little she can do in the way of active work in the world around her. An obvious example is found in Chapter Three:

What could she do, what ought she to do?--she, hardly more than a budding woman, but yet with an active conscience and a great mental need, not to

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be satisfied by a girlish instruction comparable to the nibblings of a discursive mouse. . . . (iii, 39)

Again, when Dorothea is viewing her prospective home at Lowick,

She felt some disappointment, of which she was yet ashamed, that there was nothing for her to do in Lowick; and in the next few minutes her mind had glanced over the possibility, which she would have preferred, of finding that her home would be in a parish which had a larger share of the world's misery, so that she might have had more active duties in it. (ix, 115)

Even the narrative irony as to the lengths Dorothea's disappointment may take her does not make the disappointment less understandable, or the desire for useful work ridiculous.

On returning from her honeymoon, Dorothea is overcome by a sense of the uselessness at the heart of the "oppressive liberty" of the "gentlewoman" who, when she asks, "'What shall I do?'" receives the answer, "'Whatever you please, my dear.'" (xxviii, 3) If one may do anything, nothing one can do can be assumed to be considered of real consequence. Even Dorothea's desire to be a help to her husband is repeatedly rejected, so that when she turns to Lydgate in the face of her husband's illness and says, "'Help me, pray... Tell me what I can do,'" (xxx, 26) the reader both acknowledges Dorothea's genuine wish to act effectively and registers the practical futility of the desire.

Similarly, Rosamond's reply to Lydgate, "'What can I do, Tertius?'" (lviii, 93) evokes a double response, because on the one hand it expresses Rosamond's complete contrast to Dorothea in her lack of sensitivity to her husband's needs, while on the other, it has its aptness as an answer to a husband, who until his moment of need, had been entirely content with a wife whom he expected to be "that perfect piece
of womanhood who would reverence her husband's mind after the fashion of an accomplished mermaid, using her comb and looking-glass and sighing her song for the relaxation of his adored wisdom alone." (lviii, 76)

Narrative sympathy for Lydgate is reserved largely for his personal sense of intellectual and professional loss:

For he was very miserable. Only those who know the supremacy of the intellectual life—the life which has a seed of ennobling thought and purpose in it—can understand the grief of one who falls from that serene activity into the absorbing soul-wasting struggle with worldly annoyances. (lxxiii, 314)

The narrator does not condemn Rosamond as the cause of Lydgate's downfall, but registers the terrible ways that Rosamond's reaction to her own losses makes Lydgate's position feel unbearable; at the same time, Rosamond's reactions are made understandable in the context of her life. Her habitually gratified ego, her sense of decorum and taste, her almost desperate cleverness and her inability to acknowledge feeling—for herself and consequently for others—have been given full support from her environment. Too easily one can assume that egoism like Rosamond's is meant to be seen as uniquely her "character," or an expression of her moral deficiency. It is presented rather as the consequence of a complex, highly determined interaction between personal desires and social values and practices. The image of the candle and pier-glass illustrates the workings of Rosamond's ego, the result of which is an illusion which the ego creates but is powerless to see:

Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a house maid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all direction; but place now against it a lighted
The course of Rosamond's marriage reveals how she continually tries to see events as an arrangement to suit her own needs, until she finds, ultimately, through her encounter with Will Ladislaw and then Dorothea, that "it is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement." (xxvii, 403)

Rosamond's response, "'What can I do?'" carries more potential meaning than simply the expression of cool neutrality which "fell like a mortal chill on Lydgate's roused tenderness." (lvi, 93) In the larger patterns of the text, what Rosamond might do, and what she does do, become more than a question of the workings of one woman's ego, and take their place among the larger questions about the relationship between public attitudes and the possibilities for action expected by and for women. The following paragraph at the end of Chapter Sixty-five describes Lydgate's reflections after the scene in which he berates Rosamond for having secretly written to his uncle for money. The passage contains certain aspects which extend the significance of the scene beyond its concern with just the personal relationship of these two individuals:

She spoke and wept with that gentleness which makes such words and tears omnipotent over a loving-hearted man. Lydgate drew his chair near to hers and pressed her delicate head against his cheek with his powerful tender hand. He only caressed her; he did not say anything; for what was there to say? He could not promise to shield her from the dreaded wretchedness, for he could see no sure means of doing so. When he left her to go out again, he told himself that it was ten times harder for her...
than for him; he had a life away from home, and constant appeals to his activity on behalf of others. He wished to excuse everything in her if he could—but it was inevitable that in that excusing mood he should think of her as if she were an animal of another and feebler species. Nevertheless she had mastered him. (lxv, 205)

The opening sentence introduces the sense of the general being indicated by the particular, "that gentleness," and "such words and tears" are assumed to have the same effect on any other "loving-hearted man" as they do on Lydgate. The particularly masculine quality of Lydgate's response and the suggestion of assumed superiority appears in the description of him comforting his wife with his "powerful tender hand," this same impression being further reinforced by Lydgate's desiring both "to shield her" from further trouble and "to excuse everything in her if he could." The dash following that statement introduces the narrative summary of the scene: "--but it was inevitable that in that excusing mood he should think of her as if she were an animal of another and feebler species. Nevertheless she had mastered him." Whatever humour there was present in earlier assumptions about the "goose and gander" being suitably matched has disappeared, and the particular consequences of that attitude now confront Lydgate with the crushing irony that his wife has "mastered" him. The way Lydgate has thought about his wife and women generally has, indeed, made it inevitable that he should think of his wife as an animal of a weaker species, since he has always started from the premise of assumed "natural" superiority in kind. The fact that the "feebler species" could master him not only points out the gulf between Lydgate's and Rosamond's interests, it gives hard evidence of the fallacy of Lydgate's reasoning.
Immediately, the opening of the next chapter extends the point about Rosamond's having no life outside the home and expands the way in which Lydgate's work offers him a means of refracting the candlelight from self-interest, in ways which are simply not available to Rosamond:

He had no longer free energy enough for spontaneous research and speculative thinking, but by the bedside of patients, the direct external calls on his judgment and sympathies brought the added impulse needed to draw him out of himself. . .it was a perpetual claim on immediate fresh application of thought, and on the consideration of another's need and trial. (lxvi, 206)

Lydgate recognizes the value of a relation to the world which the "gentlewoman's oppressive liberty" denies Rosamond and Dorothea; the demands of Lydgate's work come—as Dorothea had longed for them—"from without in claims that would have shaped her energies." (xxviii, 3) The description of Lydgate's work and its demands for both a caring and intellectually rigorous response receives full narrative support and could almost stand precisely for the work Dorothea feels the want of, work which "would be directly beneficent," (xlvi, 307) but which is not open to her, as a woman. The description also reflects back on Rosamond's life, which remains throughout, confined to "habitual industry in small things," (lxxxi, 396) and which, Lydgate himself recognizes, makes their trouble "ten times harder for her." (lxv, 205) In the original manuscript, the phrase referring to Rosamond was "natural industry," which George Eliot altered to "habitual," and about which Jerome Beaty remarks, "The minor shift from 'natural' to 'habitual' keeps the point of view less than omniscient, keeps it outside Rosamond at this point," and, he concludes,
"manipulation of point of view was an important factor in George Eliot’s revision of this chapter." 27 From the standpoint of the novel’s concern with the limitations of women’s experience, the alteration stresses precisely how Rosamond’s behaviour need not be understood simply as a reflection of her individual "nature," but, equally, as a result of learning, of "habit." This point is made by means of the change in narrative distance noted by Beaty, making Rosamond and the factors which determine her existence visible from various perspectives and not allowing them to appear from a single, omniscient view of Rosamond’s "inner being." By the substitution of the word "habitual" for "natural" the text makes possible a stress on the function of external factors in the shaping of behaviour.

In an essay on Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft in 1855, George Eliot dealt with the consequences of social attitudes towards women and work, which we see her treating further in Middlemarch:

Men pay a heavy price for their reluctance to encourage self-help and independent resources in women. The precious meridian years of many a man of genius have to be spent in the toil of routine, that an "establishment" may be kept up for a woman who can understand none of his secret yearnings, who is fit for nothing but to sit in her drawing room like a doll-Madonna in her shrine. No matter. Anything is more endurable than to change our established formulae about women, or to run the risk of looking down on them. *Sit divus, dummodo non sit vivus* (let him be a god, provided he be not living), said the Roman magnates of Romulus, and

27 Jerome Beaty, "Middlemarch" from Notebook to Novel, p. 112.
so men say of women, let them be idols, useless absorbents of precious things, provided we are not obliged to admit them to be strictly fellow-beings, to be treated, one and all, with justice and sober reverence. . . . 28

The hard insistence of want in this passage is present in *Middlemarch* where, behind the particular histories of invididual characters, the working pressure of general attitudes towards women is made apparent. At the same time as Rosamond and Lydgate are particularly responsible for the consequences of their actions--each is more or less "blameworthy" in personal terms--they are also represented through a perspective which requires comprehension of character and action in terms of shared social attitudes and assumptions, which the text opens to question. The following paragraph summarizing Lydgate's frustration and disappointment offers a clear example of how the narrative technique employs various points of view, thus leading the reader away from identifying too readily with only Lydgate's perspective:

He went out of the house, but as his blood cooled he felt that the chief result of the discussion was a deposit of dread within him at the idea of opening with his wife in future subjects which might again urge him to violent speech. It was as if a fracture in delicate crystal had begun, and he was afraid of any movement that might make it fatal. His marriage would be a mere piece of bitter irony if they could not go on loving each other. He had long ago made up his mind to what he thought was her negative character--her want of sensibility, which showed itself in disregard both of his specific wishes and of his general aims. The first great disappointment had been borne; the tender devotedness and docile adoration of the ideal wife must be renounced, and life must be taken up on a lower stage of expectation,

as it is by men who have lost their limbs. But
the real wife had not only her claims, she had still
a hold on his heart, and it was his intense desire
that the hold should remain strong. In marriage, the
certainty, "She will never love me much," is easier
to bear than the fear," I shall love her no more."
Hence, after that outburst, his inward effort was
entirely to excuse her, and to blame the hard
circumstances which were partly his fault. (lxiv,
180-81)

In this passage narrative sympathy for Lydgate is strong,
while at the same time, assent to the values and attitudes which
give rise to his trouble is withheld. The subtle combination
of support and judgement in the narrative works throughout
the novel, and its effect is to insist that sympathetic
understanding and keen critical evaluation need not be
mutually exclusive. Varying degrees of narrative distance
from Lydgate's feelings are marked in the paragraph.
A relative objectivity opens the passage, the syntax of the
third person establishing a degree of distance, which is
re-inforced by phrases like "he felt that" (11.1-2) and
"his wife," rather than "Rosamond." (1,4) The crystal image
then introduces an ambiguity of viewpoint: it is not clear if
it supplies a narrative interpretation of Lydgate's feeling,
or if it is meant to function as a representation of Lydgate's
conscious feeling. But the ambiguity itself assists the
transition from the first sentence's clear authorial distance
to the rest of the paragraph, whose language reveals by
indirect methods Lydgate's actual feelings at the same time
as it indicates that authorial assent to them does not
necessarily follow. The explicit narrative interjection,
"he thought," (110) warns away from automatic concurrence
with Lydgate's analysis of his wife's character. He must
take responsibility himself, as it were, for those attitudes
which expect unquestioning regard for his "specific wishes," and his "general aims." (11.12-13) Sympathetic response to
Lydgate's disappointment and renunciation, moreover, is tempered by indications in phrases like "tender devotedness" and "docile adoration of the ideal wife" (1.15), that his expectations were based on mistaken assumptions not shared by the narrator. Yet the clearly authorial interpretation, "as it is by men who have lost their limbs," (1.17) and the fact that Lydgate does not want to lose what love he has for Rosamond introduce a sympathy for his situation, which still does not lose sight of the mistakes in his own attitudes and behaviour--those "circumstances which were partly his fault." (1.25) The distance from which the reader can "see" Lydgate both sympathetically and critically has been created by the narrative discourse distinguishing between those two ways of seeing. Ultimately, however, Lydgate's position is comprehended as an inevitable result of the contradictions between the premises upon which he based his expectations and the consequences of both his own and others' actual deeds. The necessity of Lydgate having to "bear the burden" of Rosamond is registered as a logical and necessary consequence, which nevertheless recommends the reader's sympathy. In this respect Lydgate's situation is reminiscent both by contrast and similarity to that of Dorothea and Mr Casaubon, both marriages depending, ultimately, on the one partner having to "bear the burden" of the other. As David Daiches points out, the "association of Lydgate's role as a doctor with his role as a lover is--in retrospect at least--ominous." 29

By the end of the novel, Lydgate's relation to his wife is described thus: "He had chosen this fragile creature, and had taken the burthen of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carrying that burthen pitifully." (lxxxvi, 409) The situation recalls Dorothea, who, in recognizing her husband's needs instead of accusing him of injustice, "felt something like the thankfulness that might well up in us if we had narrowly escaped hurting a lamed creature." (xlii, 235) The essential difference between Lydgate's and Dorothea's positions resides in the fact that Dorothea's need to support her husband is not presented as an inevitable result of circumstances, but as an emotional choice. The crippled marriage of Lydgate and Rosamond is the result of a complex determination of shared social attitudes, in which Lydgate's undervaluation of emotional knowledge and his mistake of taking a wife as an ideal object to suit his needs are the factors to which his suffering is made a logical conclusion. The Casaubon marriage is crippled for similar reasons of wrong attitudes, but Lydgate as victim of those attitudes is also made culpable for them in a way which Dorothea is not.

Lydgate's and Dorothea's inabilities to comprehend their mistakes until it is too late receive different narrative treatments, which ultimately undermine the text's attempt otherwise to challenge the notions of intellect and emotional capacity being necessarily gender-specific. Valid excuses are provided for Dorothea's intellectual shortcomings. In fact, this discrepancy points to a basic and profoundly ironic contradiction existing between the working out of Lydgate's fate and the apparent project of the novel to establish the validity of emotional knowledge for both sexes; this irony lies in the fact
that it is essentially by intellectual strategies that the reader is persuaded of the "truth" of Lydgate's situation, and by emotional approaches to the "caring" reader that the "truth" of Dorothea's experiences asks to be acknowledged. Thus the narrative technique ultimately participates in the very constructions that distinguish between thought and feeling in male and female experience, which on other levels are implicitly challenged. Ultimately, the effect of this double standard of treatment is to give a unique value to Dorothea and to the emotional knowledge she gains.

The fact that Dorothea's readiness for self-sacrifice is rendered unnecessary and an alternative partner for her provided in Will Ladislaw amounts to a judgement upon Mr Casaubon's and Lydgate's attitudes to women and marriage. The offer of Will Ladislaw to Dorothea can be read as an offer of the promise of mutuality in relationship, a promise denied by the assumptions of male superiority inherent in the attitudes of Mr Casaubon and Lydgate. There is, however, an essential problem in the discrepancy between the strategies which are employed to analyse the deficiencies of the Lydgate and Casaubon marriages and those which attempt to establish assent to the promise of relation in a marriage between Dorothea and Will Ladislaw. And ultimately, that difference in narrative strategy affects the success by which the novel as a whole succeeds in making a dynamic interdependence of thought and feeling both part of its subject and a necessary method of reading. The essential differences in the Lydgate/Casaubon relationships and that which Ladislaw comes to stand for can be traced through an examination of the language of
the mediating narrator and in the defining images by which Ladislaw is presented in the text.

V

Consistent with the self-repression which became the pattern of her marriage, and with her unwillingness to be an agent in her ill husband's further suffering, Dorothea was prepared to comply with his unstated wishes in the event of his death. This preparedness, however, contained an awareness of the consequent cost to herself which such an assent would mean, an awareness which had been noticeably absent from her initial readiness to marry Mr Casaubon: "...she simply felt that she was going to say 'Yes' to her own doom: she was too weak, too full of dread at the thought of inflicting a keen-edged blow on her husband, to do anything but submit completely." (xlviii, 316) Mr Casaubon's death before the promise could be expressed saves Dorothea from that ultimate in martyrdoms which she had been in the habit of seeking. But Mr Casaubon's death is not merely a means of granting Dorothea an escape from martyrdom; structurally, it provides her with a position both similar to and different from that from which she was led originally to marry Mr Casaubon. The conditions of widowhood make Dorothea single again, but financially independent and responsible for the estate she inherits. The situation provides a new context within which Dorothea must make the decisions which ultimately define her to herself and to the rest of the world. Dorothea's widowhood
provides a new context within which she can learn to recognize the nature of her own needs and the possibilities of fulfilling them. At the same time the reader is asked to compare and judge the similarities and differences of the two contexts, and finally to assent to Dorothea's new knowledge and to accept the limits it assumes. In this process Will Ladislaw is a key figure.

The difference in Will's attitude to Dorothea, from that of others, is introduced in the passages from the Casaubon honeymoon in Rome, where, for example, Will rejects Naumann's wish to paint Dorothea as the embodiment of an idea, of "beauty in its breathing life, with the consciousness of Christian centuries in its bosom." (xix, 289) In contrast to the reclining Ariadne, "antique beauty...arrested in the complete contentment of its sensuous perfection," (xix, 289) Naumann views Dorothea as a "sort of Christian Antigone--sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion." (xix, 290) Will Ladislaw's reaction, in its "unaccountable touch of ill-humour" (xix, 291), indicates both the confusion of his own unformed feelings about Dorothea, and, more specifically, a basic refusal to limit her to the confines of any ideal definition. He says to Naumann, "'...you want to express too much with your painting... And what is a portrait of a woman? Your painting and Plastik are poor stuff after all. They perturb and dull conceptions instead of raising them.' " (xix, 291) He continues: "'Language gives a fuller image, which is all the better for being vague... As if a woman were a mere coloured superficies: You must wait for movement and tone. There is a difference in their very breathing. They
change from moment to moment." (xix, 292) The suggestion is introduced that the freedom which Will Ladislaw insists upon for himself, socially and professionally, he also wishes to confer on Dorothea. Although, ironically, Will is not without his own tendencies to idolize Dorothea, the crucial point is made that he gives her the feeling that she is acceptable to him as herself, whereas with Mr Casaubon she comes to recognize that she was "never able to repose on his delight in what she was." (xlviii, 306) The spontaneity and freedom Will signifies for Dorothea become associated with his own social independence, a topic introduced with his first appearance at Lowick. Mr Casaubon's description of Will Ladislaw reveals the source of social class and values by which Will is judged, rather than serving as any objective account of Will himself:

"On leaving Rugby he declined to go to an English university, where I would gladly have placed him, and chose what I must consider the anomalous course of studying at Heidelberg. And now he wants to go abroad again, without any special object, save the vague purpose of what he calls culture, preparation for he knows not what. He declines to choose a profession." (ix, 119)

With regard to Will's lack of financial means, Mr Casaubon says, "'I have always given him and his friends reason to understand that I would furnish in moderation what was necessary for providing him with a scholarly education and launching him respectably.'" (ix, 120) The critically qualifying words "scholarly," and "respectably," recognizably refer to Casaubon's own self-definition which he projects on to Will, who, he says, "'. . . is chiefly determined in his aversion to these callings [law and medicine] by a dislike to steady application, and to that kind of acquirement which is
needful instrumentally, but is not charming or immediately inviting to self-indulgent taste.' " (ix, 121) Significantly, it is Dorothea, alone, who wishes to understand and interpret Will's behaviour generously, refusing to accept limiting definitions or to impute self-indulgent motives, both being responses which, ironically, she will come to feel the absence of in her marriage. For at this point, Dorothea's view of Mr Casaubon is limited by that "short-sightedness" which causes her to attribute what is, in fact, her own generosity to her bridegroom. When Mr Casaubon remarks that he has supplied Will with "moderate supplies for a year or so" for him to be "tried by the test of freedom," (ix, 121) Dorothea replies,

"That is very kind of you... It is noble. After all, people may really have in them some vocation which is not quite plain to themselves, may they not? They may seem idle and weak because they are growing. We should be very patient with each other, I think." (ix, 121-22)

Will Ladislaw's refusal to conform to conventional expectations of work, and his lack of a specific social identity, are made significant for Dorothea, because they release him from embodying those very attitudes which have defined her own subjection, both in her social circle and in her marriage. Both Dorothea and Will thus become associated with that quality of "indefiniteness" first mentioned in the Prelude (p.2), which, in the course of the novel becomes associated with change and possibility, and contrasts with the rigidity of Mr Casaubon as well as with the "scientific certitude" (Prelude, 3) which Lydgate ultimately experiences as less than accurate when presumptuously applied to personal relations.
The degree to which Will Ladislaw's indefiniteness is a negative measure of his function in the novel has long been a focus of critical attention. In *The Great Tradition*, F.R. Leavis sees this quality as proof of Will Ladislaw's being an expression of wish-fulfilment on the part of the novelist. Will Ladislaw, he says, "has no independent status of his own--he can't be said to exist; he merely represents, not a dramatically real point of view, but certain of George Eliot's intentions--intentions she has failed to realize creatively," because they are essential to a desire to represent the author's own self-idealization in her heroine. Ironically, Leavis condemns Ladislaw in language which is similar to Mr Casaubon's, insisting that Will should be fixed in a position from which he can be defined. Other characters in the novel, enjoying a fixed and respectable social status, also condemn Will Ladislaw for his want of definable social position. Sir James considers Will "slight, volatile, and likely enough to show such recklessness as naturally went along with a position unriveted by family ties or a strict profession." (lxii, 144) Mrs Cadwallader likens Will to "an Italian with white mice," (1, 330) and Mrs Chettam sums up the general attitude, when she remarks to her son at the close of the novel, "'It is difficult to say what Mr Ladislaw is, eh, James?'" (lxxxiv, 437)

Raymond Williams has noted the similarity between criticism such as Leavis's and those of characters in the novel itself.  

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31 Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (London, 1970; rpt. Paladin paperback, 1976), p.76, where Williams notes "that some of these critics speaking with active distaste of Ladislaw sound remarkably like Mrs Cadwallader."
William himself recognizes Will Ladislaw's function in the novel for Dorothea when he points out how Will's very quality of indefiniteness is the essential factor differentiating him from everyone else: "coming from 'nowhere,' belonging 'nowhere,' he is able to move, to relate and so to grow in ways that the others are not. And it is to this, after all, that Dorothea responds." What is more, Dorothea's response to Will connects her crucially with her felt position as a woman, because, unlike the people close to Dorothea, Will imposes no restricting definitions upon her.

The task of portraying changeability and movement in a character can easily result in abstraction and idealization, and George Eliot's awareness of this danger is traceable in the way in which Will's tendency to idealize Dorothea is treated with narrative irony, as in the following passage:

He was rather impatient under that open ardent goodwill, which he saw was Dorothea's usual state of feeling. The remote worship of a woman throned out of their reach plays a great part in men's lives, but in most cases the worshipper longs for some queenly recognition, some approving sign by which the soul's sovereign may cheer him without descending from her high place. That was precisely what Will wanted. But there were plenty of contradictions in his imaginative demands. It was beautiful to see how Dorothea's eyes turned with wifely anxiety and beseeching to Mr Casaubon; she would have lost some of her halo if she had been without that duteous preoccupation; and yet at the next moment the husband's sandy absorption of such nectar was too intolerable; and Will's longing to say damaging things about him was perhaps not the less tormenting because he felt the strongest reasons for restraining it. (xxii, 333-34)

In addition to Will's generosity having its counterbalance in pride, his capacity for change has its negative aspect in its tendency towards indecision:

.. .indefinite visions of ambition are weak against the ease of doing what is habitual or beguilingly agreeable; and we all know the difficulty of carrying out a resolve when we secretly long that it may turn out to be unnecessary. Will did not confess this weakness to himself, but he lingered. (lx, 107)

Equally, Will's unconventionality is not free from the inclination to resent the fact that he is not socially acknowledged by the very people whose attitudes he scorns, a resentment which in effect offers a kind of recognition to the very principles he despises:

Will was in a defiant mood, his consciousness being deeply stung with the thought that the people who looked at him probably knew a fact tantamount to an accusation against him as a fellow with low designs which were to be frustrated by a disposal of property. Like most people who assert their freedom with regard to conventional distinction, he was prepared to be sudden and quick at quarrel with any one who might hint that he had personal reasons for that assertion—that there was anything in his blood, his bearing, or his character to which he gave the mask of an opinion. When he was under an irritating impression of this kind he would go about for days with a defiant look, the colour changing in his transparent skin as if he were on the qui vive, watching for something which he had to dart upon. (lx, 108)

There is an essential difference between the text's treatment of Ladislaw and that of Lydgate, which exposes the difference in their function in the novel. The ironies concerning Lydgate are a means of indicating precisely where his expectations are at odds with his experience, and where those contradictions are registered is where Lydgate, as character and as man, is most clearly defined. With Ladislaw, however, the text seems to be working a reverse practice; since Will's indefiniteness, his lack of rigid definition as a character and as a man is precisely what is significantly different about him, the narrator's points of irony about him seem not much more than a gesture towards the demands of realism. The main effort to clarify Will Ladislaw's function is seen in the careful
preparation of the images used to persuade the reader of his role to offer a freedom of relation to Dorothea, which she is otherwise denied. In that early conversation concerning horseback riding, Mr Casaubon's essentially repressive nature was revealed in the language he used to express Dorothea's reluctance to ride: "We must keep the germinating grain away from the light." (ii, 30) When Dorothea later interprets Mr Casaubon's attitude towards Will's "growing" (ix, 122) as one of generosity, the reader is prepared to recognize her mistake, since Mr Casaubon's negative response to such "growth" has already been registered. At the moment when Casaubon makes his remark about the germinating grain, neither he nor Dorothea is conscious of the needs of the growing plant for air and sunlight, which gradually become analogous in Dorothea's marriage to her want of illumination and freedom of expression. By keeping the germinating seed in the perpetual darkness of emotional and, it is presumed, sexual repression, Mr Casaubon effectively prepares its death. In contrast to Mr Casaubon's association with images of darkness and subterranean tombs, Will Ladislaw is associated with images of sunlight and air, signifying him as an agent of freedom and growth. The eve of Mr Casaubon's attempt to make his final claim on Dorothea is preceded by a description of her sense of oppression and death, whose opposite she identifies with the image of Will:

This afternoon the helplessness was more wretchedly benumbing than ever; she longed for objects who could be dear to her, and to whom she could be dear. She longed for work which would be directly beneficent like the sunshine and rain, and now it appeared that she was to live more and more in a virtual tomb, where there was the apparatus of a ghastly labour producing what would never see the light. To-day she had stood at the door of the tomb and seen Will Ladislaw receding into the
distant world of warm activity and fellowship—
turning his face towards her as he went. (xi, 307)

His refusal to accept restricting definitions of himself
makes Will Ladislaw ready to respond to Dorothea's need for
freedom, which her belief in her ideal function as a servant
to her husband had necessarily suppressed. An example of
significant dialogue indicating the contradictions awaiting
Dorothea in marriage is found in a passage about Dorothea and
Casaubon, when she speaks to him before their wedding, "with
more freedom than she ever felt before, even pouring out her
joy at the thought of devoting herself to him, and of learning
how she might best share and further all his great ends."
(v, 71) The irony of Mr Casaubon's reply is unnoticed by
Dorothea, but registered as a signal of contradiction by the
reader. Mr Casaubon is incapable of accepting the kind of
love Dorothea offers, and has to abstract from her emotional
offering those representative ideas about feminine behaviour
which he considers intended for the fulfilment of masculine
needs: "'The great charm of your sex is its capability of an
ardent self-sacrificing affection, and herein we see its
fitness to round and complete the existence of our own.'"
(v, 71)

The treatment given Dorothea's marriage relies on a
recognition that her sense of duty and her feeling for Mr
Casaubon are part of her conscious experience, while other
narrative features suggest the presence of an unconscious
desire for freedom of action and expression. Social attitudes
and educational limitations as well as Dorothea's own
misguided judgements are offered as explanations for the
mental and physical restrictions she encounters. It is in the region of emotional growth where Will Ladislaw is made central to Dorothea's changing consciousness and changing experience. Metaphorically, he is given to represent elements of light and air essential to growth, the very elements which Mr Casaubon fears.

The process by which Will enters Dorothea's emotional experience is presented in terms which are meant to be understood as being below Dorothea's own consciousness. An obvious example of such a double mode of recognition is in the passage concerning Dorothea's disillusionment upon her return from Rome, when she sees the miniature of Will Ladislaw's grandmother, "who made the unfortunate marriage," (xxviii, 4) and she wonders if she found "it out to be a mistake, and taste the salt bitterness of her tears in the merciful silence of the night." (xxviii, 4-5)

Here was a woman who had known some difficulty about marriage. Nay, the colours deepened, the lips and chin seemed to get larger, the hair and eyes seemed to be sending out light, the face was masculine and beamed on her with that full gaze which tells on whom it falls that she is too interesting for the slightest movement of her eyelids to pass unnoticed and uninterpreted. The vivid presentation came like a pleasant glow to Dorothea: she felt herself smiling, and turning from the miniature sat down and looked up as if she were again talking to a figure in front of her. But the smile disappeared as she went on meditating, and at last she said aloud--

"Oh, it was cruel to speak so! How sad--how dreadful!"

She rose quickly and went out of the room, hurrying along the corridor, with the irresistible impulse to go and see her husband and inquire if she could do anything for him... She felt as if all her morning's gloom would vanish if she could see her husband glad because of her presence. (xxviii, 5)

The physical resemblance between Will Ladislaw and Aunt Julia is only the triggering link between them in Dorothea's imagination. Aunt Julia's unhappy marriage is the affective link which
leads Dorothea to think of Will, as she associates her own "taste [of] the salt bitterness of tears," with Aunt Julia. Thus she feels a "new companionship" (xxviii, 5) with Will's grandmother, but when the face of the miniature gradually transforms into Will's, Dorothea cannot consciously admit the "companionship" she feels with him. The language of Dorothea's physical sensations indicates her distance from her own feelings; it "came like a pleasant glow," "she felt herself smiling," the latter construction, emphasizing by its very indirection, Dorothea's resistance to any conscious recognition of the source of her pleasure. As Dorothea meditates on her meeting with Will, her smile fades as she comes to the point at which she presumably remembers Will's revelations as to the futility of Casaubon's work. Dorothea's reaction contains a complex message about her motivation: there is a conscious, intended sense of pity for Mr Casaubon, but one which suggests also an unconscious recognition that she felt pleasure in thinking of Will Ladislaw, which she wants (in both senses of the word) to feel for her husband. And the feeling that "all her morning's gloom would vanish if she could see her husband glad of her presence," expresses a desire which her less than conscious meditations had found gratified in the presence of Will.

In the course of her marriage, the mere chance of seeing Will Ladislaw becomes for Dorothea, like a "lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air," (xxxvii, 134) and the contrast between Casaubon's restricting response to her and Will's open acceptance is made explicit. The narrator has Dorothea become aware of how
"she was always trying to be what her husband wished and never able to repose on his delight in what she was," (xlvi, 306) and later, when she thinks how unjustly Will has been judged by her friends, Dorothea makes a clear comparison between him and Mr Casaubon, observing how Will "was a creature who entered into every one's feelings, and could take the pressure of their thought instead of urging his own with iron resistance." (1, 340) The use of words suggesting release, such as "repose," "take the pressure," contrast with the repression and subjection implied against Mr Casaubon in the phrase, "urging with iron resistance." Language of release and freedom, and their association with repeated images of air and sunlight, defines the important qualities in Will Ladislaw which Dorothea feels offer her a medium in which to express her particular self.

An important distinction to be made considering the ideality of Will Ladislaw is between that of an agent or of a medium for Dorothea's emotional growth. Unlike Lydgate's promise for Rosamond as the bringer of advancement and higher social status, or Casaubon's promise to bring Dorothea mental or moral enlightenment, Will Ladislaw is not seen as having the power to do anything; the emphasis is on the possibility of relationship between Will and Dorothea, rather than on Will as the bringer of any thing, such as a "perfect love." The medium in which Dorothea feels capable of living for herself is what Will finally seems to promise her, and the promise of relationship towards which the novel moves is reminiscent of that described by Margaret Fuller in Woman in the Nineteenth Century, upon which George Eliot based much
of the discussion in her essay on Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft:

I have urged on Woman independence of Man, not that I do not think the sexes mutually needed by one another, but because in Woman this fact has led to an excessive devotion which has cooled love, degraded marriage, and prevented either sex from being what it should be to itself or the other.

I wish Woman to live first for God's sake. Then she will not make an imperfect man her god, and thus sink into idolatry. Then she will not take what is not fit for her from a sense of weakness and poverty. Then if she finds what she needs in a man embodied, she will know how to love and be worthy of being loved.

That her hand may be given with dignity, she must be able to stand alone. 33

As David Daiches has pointed out, to assume that Will Ladislaw is "being proposed. . . as in all circumstances the ideal husband of the ideal woman. . . is grossly to over-simplify George Eliot's art. We are never left in doubt of the fact that Dorothea's actions are restricted by the time and place and circumstances in which she lives; that, indeed is the theme of the Prelude." 34 Dorothea's widowhood serves as a means to delineate those elements of that context which pertain specifically to her aims and expectations of herself as a woman. The position and experience of widowhood delimit the scope for action which Dorothea assumed she could enjoy as

33 Margaret Fuller, p.167. In her essay, George Eliot had this to say about Margaret Fuller's book: "It has the enthusiasm of a noble and sympathetic nature, with the moderation and breadth and large allowance of a vigorous and cultivated understanding. There is no exaggeration of woman's moral excellence or intellectual capabilities; no injudicious insistence on her fitness for this or that function hitherto engrossed by men; but a calm plea for the removal of unjust laws and artificial restrictions, so that the possibilities of her nature may have room for full development." Pinney, Essays, p.200.

34 Daiches, p. 43.
an independent woman. Only after an experience of the limits of that independence is she in a position to see the kind of possibility offered by marriage to Will, which the apparent freedom of widowhood and financial independence fail to grant.

As the widowed Mrs Casaubon, Dorothea makes a concerted effort to reject what seems to be "the prospect of her life," a life "full of motiveless ease--motiveless, if her own energy could not seek out reasons for ardent action" (liv, 12):

"I have delightful plans. I should like to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make a little colony, where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well. I should know every one of the people and be their friend. I am going to have great consultations with Mr Varuio; he can tell me almost everything I want to know." (liv, 26-27)

Her project echoes that of Goethe's Faust, himself a clear representative of what Terry Eagleton claims in Dorothea is a desire for "Romantic self-achievement through a unifying principle of action." 35 Faust, at the end of his search for the single moment he would choose to last forever, finds that promise of perfection in the prospect of draining a piece of land and seeing it the home of a working community. George Henry Lewes describes the occasion thus, in his biography of Goethe:

"A marsh, he says, "extends along the mountain's foot, infecting all that is already won; to draw off the noisome pool would be a crowning success. I lay open a space for many millions to dwell upon, not safely it is true, but in free activity." 36

Faust, blinded by Care, nevertheless orders the digging of the dykes, convinced of the supreme value of work:

Seize ye your tools; your spades, your shovels ply;
The work laid down, accomplish instantly:
Strict rule, swift diligence,—these twain
The richest recompence obtain.
Completion of the greatest work demands
One guiding spirit for a thousand hands. 37

The irony of the blind Faust’s position is contained in his mistaking the sound of the spades digging what he assumed to be the dykes (Graben), for what is, in fact the digging of his own grave (Grab). For Dorothea, the irony of her taking on a project of Faustian proportions is different; although with Faust she shares the conviction of the supreme importance of useful work, her actual circumstances, as a young widow in a small, provincial English parish, and the effect of those actual circumstances on her life, make her capacity to achieve such work personally impossible. By the end of her widowhood, her real opportunities make it clear that Dorothea can only entertain lingering hopes of a work which is made faintly ridiculous: "what was there to be done in the village? Oh dear! nothing. Everybody was well and had flannel; nobody’s pig had died." (lxxxiii, 417) The only far-reaching action she can take with any effect, such as support for Lydgate’s infirmary, makes no more demand upon her energy than the signing of a cheque. Dorothea’s money, itself, cannot purchase active employment.

Das Abgesteckte muss sogleich geraten.
Auf strenges Ordnen, raschen Fleiss
Erfolgte der allerschönste Preis;
Dass sich das grösste Werk vollende,
Genügt ein Geist für tausend Hände.
Early in Dorothea's widowhood, the effective limits which prevent her from active work are signalled in a passage where she prepares to examine a map of Lowick, "to help her in making an exact statement for herself of her income and affairs," (liv, 11) when she is interrupted by the arrival of Will Ladislaw, who has decided to leave Middlemarch rather than be thought to remain in hopes of marrying a rich widow. This same activity is paralleled in their final meeting shortly after the point at which Dorothea's dismay at their being nothing "to be done" in the village is ironically presented (lxxxiii, 417); this time the map of Lowick, which Dorothea had been examining with great hopes some months previously, has been replaced by one of Asia Minor. The place where she had hoped to find useful work and involvement has become, symbolically, no more accessible than a world whose existence she can feel only through the effort of memorizing its geographical data. Dorothea's map-reading at the end, like the prospect of her life in Middlemarch, becomes merely a fruitless exercise: "there was no reason why this should end any more than a merry-go-round." (lxxxiii, 418) It is this meaningless exercise, however, which is interrupted by Will Ladislaw and which culminates in Dorothea's final decision to give up her wealth and social position to marry him.

In that previous "farewell" scene in the early weeks of Dorothea's widowhood, Will's resistant pride at being labelled a fortune-hunter and Dorothea's knowledge of her husband's codicil prevent each of them from communicating with the openness of their earlier meetings. Dorothea expresses
her still dim but growing comprehension of the limitations of her choices, particularly as she feels them as a woman:

"Two years ago I had no notion... of the unexpected way in which trouble comes, and ties our hands, and makes us silent when we long to speak. I used to despise women a little for not shaping their lives more, and doing better things. I was very fond of doing as I liked, but I have almost given it up..." (liv, 18)

In this context, "giving up" no longer means the indulgent giving up of a particular pleasure for the sake of a spiritual superiority, as in Dorothea's earlier wish to give up riding (1, 12); at this later point, she seems clearly to be giving up her desire to be an instrument of wide-reaching action, and to be "giving in" to a recognition of her own limited possibilities.

Dorothea's marriage to Will Ladislaw is partly made the result of a certain learned resignation, while at the same time it is a consequence of Dorothea's recognition of her own certain needs and an expression of an assertive independence against the pressure to ignore those needs and conform to a conventional role commensurate with her social class and fortune. Dorothea's choice of Will contradicts the general assumptions about women ironically presented in the very opening of the novel, that "Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them." (i, 11)

Dorothea comes finally to act so as to be counted among the questionable "lunatics," not, however, because of her "opinions," but because of needs she has come to acknowledge.
The reader's acknowledgement of the validity of Dorothea's decision is established partly through the function of money in her relationship with Will Ladislaw; indeed, as the role of money operates more and more obviously as a determining factor in people's lives, the process by which the novel creates its categories of value becomes clearer. Not only does the treatment of money give a sense of the "form and pressure" of material existence, it clarifies the issues about personal value, which are central to the stories of Lydgate and Dorothea. How each chooses, consciously and otherwise, to relate to money, becomes a way of indicating the extent to which each is open to the "form and pressure" of other kinds of needs in their existence, and how these needs are, or are not, instrumental in affecting their life choices.

VI

Dorothea's and Will's relations after the death of Mr Casaubon are characterized by a tense restraint which contrasts sharply with the mutuality of their early meetings. The relative safety of those earlier moments alters with the pressures produced by Dorothea's money and the class and social attitudes connected to it. The mutual misunderstanding which pervades Will's and Dorothea's conversations in Chapters Fifty-four and Sixty-two illustrates the ways that social power, money and prevailing attitudes towards it, affect Will and Dorothea's possibilities of relationship, on the one hand, because they are determined by these factors,
and on the other, because they, each separately allow themselves to suppose that the other accepts those determinants as absolute. In the first "farewell" conversation between Will and Dorothea, in Chapter Fifty-four, the reasons keeping them apart are explicable in terms of personal pride on Will's part and embarrassment on Dorothea's because she is aware of the contents of the codicil and assumes Willis, too. Gradually, however, the growing attraction between Will and Dorothea is checked by equally strong factors which are generated by external causes related to Dorothea's material position, whose influence is undeniable. The stalemate between them is, in its way, an acknowledgement of Ruskin's observation, "If all the money in the world, notes and gold, were destroyed in an instance, it would leave the world neither richer nor poorer than it was. But it would leave the individual inhabitants of it in different relations." 38

By Chapter Sixty-two, Will is aware of the contents of Mr Casaubon's codicil and has been informed also of the shady background of his mother's family. Dorothea, conscious that she is powerless to help Will by giving him the money she feels he is entitled to, has been presented with the local rumour of a flirtation between him and Rosamond Lydgate. And although she wishes not to believe it, the possibility is enough to make her able to misunderstand Will, when he says,

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"I have been grossly insulted in your eyes and in the eyes of others. There has been a mean implication against my character. I wish you to know that under no circumstances would I have lowered myself by—under no circumstances would I have given men the chance of saying that I sought money under the pretext of seeking—something else. There was no need of other safeguard against me—the safeguard of wealth was enough." (Ixii, 151)

Ultimately Dorothea refuses to accept the restricted relationships imposed by the possession of Mr Casaubon's fortune; she "gives them up" for the promise of relationship founded on grounds which entertain no prospects of gain, whether moral, mental, social, spiritual, or financial. It is Dorothea who has something to give up in the eyes of the world, so it is she who must choose Will and take the greatest gamble:

"Oh, I cannot bear it—my heart will break," said Dorothea, starting from her seat, the flood of her young passion bearing down all the obstructions which had kept her silent—,

. . . . . . . . . . .

"I want so little—no new clothes—and I will learn what everything costs." (lxxxiii, 426-27)

By this point in the novel the "cost of everything" has accumulated a weight of metaphorical meaning beyond the purely monetary. The change is already clearly noticeable in the language with which Dorothea's angry feelings are expressed after the episode in which she believes to have seen Will making love to Rosamond:

Why had he brought his cheap regard and his lip-born words to her who had nothing paltry to give in exchange? He knew that he was deluding her—wished, in the very moment of farewell, to make her believe that he gave her the whole price of her heart, and knew that he had spent it half before. (lxxx, 389-90)
By the time Dorothea says, "I will learn what everything costs," (lxxxiii, 427) a clear sense has been established that her experience has taught her what money can and cannot buy.

As a rich widow, Dorothea's prospects of pleasure were limited to the possibility of spending her money on a cause which would better the material conditions of the lives around her. But she is denied the opportunity actually to work towards the ends she desires; she can only become involved at a distance. Her money will do the work that she cannot. Money thus exercises power and substitutes for Dorothea's own labour. The power of Dorothea's money has its negative side as well; it embodies Mr Casaubon's attempt to determine his wife's future after his death. The codicil itself is an image of Mr Casaubon's desire to give his fears and jealousies a shape and power and offers confirmation in fictional form of Marx's assertion that money "turns real imperfections and phantoms--truly impotent powers which exist only in the individual's fantasy--into real essential powers and abilities." 39 Mr Casaubon's earlier reaction to Dorothea's wish to give her money to worthy causes signals how his own jealousy of Will Ladislaw, a "phantom" of his own imagination, will turn itself into a real effective power as money:

He did not care himself about spending money, and was not reluctant to give it. If he ever felt keenly any question of money it was through the medium of another passion than the love of material property. (xliv, 254)

Mr Casaubon's emotional impoverishment is ultimately to be read in his attempt to cut Dorothea off from love by the threat of material loss.

In the case of Lydgate and Rosamond, the quality of their married relationship and its future is equally registered through their relation to money. Their marriage is "saved," finally, by Lydgate "giving up" his desire to live and work in direct relation to the needs of the Middlemarch community and in personal research to further medical knowledge generally. On the contrary, that direct relation becomes inverted and the success of his work is measured in terms of money:

He had gained an excellent practice, alternating, according to the season, between London and a Continental bathing-place; having written a treatise on Gout, a disease which has a good deal of wealth on its side. His skill was relied on by many paying patients, but he always regarded himself as a failure; he had not done what he once meant to do. (Finale, 459)

Lydgate's tragedy is thus located in the discrepancy between his expectations of himself as a professional, and as a man. His errors of male prejudice, which presumed authority and superiority in all things, ultimately negate the possibility of passionate attachment, whether to his work or to his wife, and that negation is registered by the definition of self in terms of money, which is its opposite:

If we assume man to be man, and his relation to the world to be a human one, then love can be exchanged only for love, trust for trust, and so on. . . . Each one of your relations to man—and to nature—must be a particular expression, corresponding to the object of your will, of your real individual life. 40

40 Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," Early writings, p. 379.
The varied language of love and money applied throughout
the course of Lydgate's marriage and Dorothea's marriage and
widowhood, gradually establishes values of human exchange,
similar to those contained in the above quotation from Marx's
*Early Writings*, and which indicates the opposition of such
values to those of financial exchange. However circumscribed
her own lot in the context of the theoretically possible lives
of all women, Dorothea's choice to marry Will Ladislaw is
constructed as a recognition that needs of her "real individ-
ual life" in the particular historical moment in which she is
placed, can find their "particular expression" in that choice.
It is because the potential of Dorothea's and Will's rela-
tionship has been presented indirectly and largely through
implied contrast to Dorothea's first marriage and that of the
Lydgates, that Dorothea's declaration, "I will learn what
everything costs," (lxxxiii, 427) carries a weight beyond a
concert for commodities and suggests a distinct choice between
love and money.

The process of Dorothea's changing assessment of her own
needs and possibilities is located between and marked by two
conversations between her and Celia at the beginning and end
of the novel. In Chapter Four, when Celia tells Dorothea that
Sir James feels quite sure that Dorothea is fond of him,
Dorothea responds "passionately,"

"Fond of him Celia! How can you use such
expressions?". . .
"Dear me, Dorothea, I suppose it would be right
for you to be fond of a man whom you accepted for a
husband,"
"It is offensive to me to say that Sir James
could think I was fond of him. Besides it is not the
right word for the feeling I must have towards the
man I would accept as a husband." (iv, 51)
Dorothea's decision to marry a man for reasons which satisfy her "theoretic" nature (iii, 39) bears evidence to the strength of her opinions and at the same time proves their contradiction to aspects of her emotional nature, which such opinions necessarily denied. That Dorothea has moved away from insisting on living those contradictions is evident at the end of the novel, when she tells Celia of her decision to marry Will Ladislaw. Celia asks, "'Is he very fond of you Dodo?'" and Dorothea replies, "'I hope so. I am very fond of him.'" (lxxxiv, 442) The final textual moment by which Dorothea's experience is given the greatest weight of narrative assent occurs immediately upon this answer. When Celia thinks "it would be pleasant to hear the story" (lxxxiv, 442) of Dorothea's coming to marry Will, Dorothea replies,

"If you knew how it came about, it would not seem wonderful to you."
"Can't you tell me?" said Celia, settling her arms cozily. 
"No, dear, you would have to feel with me, else you would never know." (lxxxiv, 442)

Dorothea's response reads like an indirect paraphrase of the novel itself: it is a long involved narrative which the reader would, conventionally, settle back "cozily" to enjoy, but which challenges that complacency by asking continually to be read by a process in which emotional and intellectual response are in constant interrelation. If Dorothea's decision to marry Will Ladislaw persuades the reader, it is because of the success with which the text has worked "poetically" by developing images of freedom and growth and personal value which can convince only in so far as the reader experiences
them as "passion" wedded to "thought."  

The total process by which Lydgate's narrative is understood, however, does not seem adequately accounted for by Dorothea's explanation to Celia. Examination of the levels of discourse required in Lydgate's narrative has shown that feeling "with" him does not lead necessarily to "knowing" all that the text reveals. Sympathy for Lydgate is kept distinct from a critical evaluation of the reasons for it. This discrepancy between the methods of cognition asked by the text when dealing with Dorothea and Lydgate, respectively, points to a problem which Middlemarch bequeaths to Daniel Deronda, as The Mill on the Floss bequeathed the problem of its incompatible categories to Middlemarch: although the text ostensibly relies on a dynamic process of "emotional thinking" from the reader, in order, among other things, to preclude exclusive definitions of masculinity and femininity as either intellectual or emotional, finally the novel seems to establish the determining nature of attitudes which do function according to such dichotomies. The text may challenge the exclusivity of definitions of masculine and feminine and indicate the necessity of a fully human participation in both intellectual and emotional "education," but the limits of that project are finally evident in the fates of Lydgate and Dorothea and the textual explanation of them, being defined and determined by the fact of their sex. In other words, the "answer" to the problem Middlemarch asks about possibilities for men and women cannot be given.

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41 Pinney, Essays, p.435.
42 Ibid., p.436.
merely in terms which express the need for a more refined capacity of feeling in men and a more thorough education of the intellect in women.

Finally, Dorothea gives up her place in the community she knows for the sake of a personal love which promises a certain freedom from the confining definitions she had earlier accepted for herself. As Celia observes, Dorothea is giving up the known life of provincial Middlemarch and Lowick to "'go amongst people who don't know who you are.'" (lxxxiv, 434) But above all, Dorothea is sacrificing the prospect of having "plans" for an active life that would extend beyond the life of wife and mother. The truth of the past, however, is also the prospect of the future: Dorothea says, with a tone of resignation, to Celia, "'I never could do anything that I liked. I have never carried out any plan yet.'" (lxxxiv, 440)

Despite the emotional knowledge Dorothea has gained of herself, the resignation contained in her remark essentially confirms the limits of her possibilities as a woman, and failure to recognize this has meant that readers disappointed that no happy-ever-after ending provides Dorothea with a suitably heroic husband, find themselves in company with those who object to the ending because it fails to supply a sufficiently positive answer to the feminist questions raised by the novel. 43 Henry James's observations about

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43 In a letter to John Blackwood, Lewes made the following comment about the novel's ending, "'Everybody' seems greatly agog as to how Middlemarch will end and Mrs Lewes feels perfectly sure that everybody will be disappointed." (GEL, V, 333) And in a letter to Sarah Hennell, George Eliot wrote: "Expect to be immensely disappointed with the close of Middlemarch. But look back to the Prelude." (GEL, V, 330) For a summary of negative responses by present-day feminists, see Zelda Austen, "Why Feminist Critics are Angry with George Eliot," College English, 37, No. 6 (Feb 1976), 549-561.
Dorothea and Lydgate are at the core of his criticism of the novel as an "indifferent whole," and reveal more the conventionality of his expectations than an awareness of the challenges to stereotype implicit in the treatment of those characters. James, for example, considers Lydgate more "noble" than Will Ladislaw, and "the real hero of the story," going on to say, "we regretted strongly...that the current of [Lydgate's] fortunes should not mingle more freely with the occasionally thin-flowing stream of Dorothea's." And in condemnation of the portrait of Will Ladislaw, James calls him a "woman's man," whereas Lydgate, he says, is "treated so little from what we may roughly (and we trust without offence) call the sexual point of view." Such observations seem only to reveal how thoroughly the young James was unaware of his own collusion with the very assumptions about femininity and masculinity which the novel questions.

Thus both modern feminist critics and earlier critics like James indicate a limited appreciation or acceptance of the complexity of the issues regarding men and women which emerge in Middlemarch, which, above all, refuse to grant imaginatively those freedoms or possibilities to Lydgate or Dorothea beyond the limits of the determining attitudes and practices which define their identity and spheres as man or woman. And yet, the narrative discourse and even the fiction itself implicitly and repeatedly challenge those limits and the ideologies that


set them. Ultimately, however, despite the attempt to examine the problematic nature of male or female value residing in either the intellect or the emotions, the novel's conclusion seems to be an affirmation of that disparity. Dorothea's value as a woman resides essentially in her capacity for feeling, and Lydgate's value, although largely registered in negative terms, is of a tragically defeated intellect. For Lydgate as well as for Dorothea, Sidney Colvin's conclusion seems appropriate: "There is no sense of triumph...there is rather a sense of sadness in a subdued and restricted, if not thwarted destiny." 46 What both readers and the text itself seem often to lose sight of, is how the determining factors which make for that sense of connection between Dorothea and Lydgate are not the same for men as for women.

The sense of resignation with which the novel ends, the determinism which refuses to provide ideal solutions for Dorothea and Lydgate, and the obvious parallel between them as "thwarted" human beings, however, encourage the conclusion that Middlemarch is ultimately not concerned with specific issues that make the experience of men and women essentially different. Barbara Hardy reaches such a conclusion in the following observation about the effect of George Eliot joining the Lydgate and Dorothea stories:

.. one of the consequences of the assimilation is the way in which Lydgate's tragedy qualifies our response to Dorothea's. Any suggestion of a feminist moral is controlled and extended by the complex plot, which puts Dorothea in her place as an example less of a feminine problem than of the frustrations of the human condition. 47

Professor Hardy then goes on to conclude, "This is made emphatically plain by George Eliot's revision of the end of the novel." 48 The fact that the revised endings of Middlemarch are successively generalized and non-specifically feminist in their language, does not, however, negate the obvious ways in which the novel is seen to concern itself with the differences between men's and women's expectations and possibilities, and how they are understood and explained largely in terms of sex-defined roles; consequently the Finale alone is a misleading guide as to the feminist perspective of the novel as a whole. An examination of those various versions of the Finale reveals, moreover, how in specific ways the changes themselves can be seen to be consistent with, rather than contradictory to, those feminist concerns discernible in the rest of the text.

47 Barbara Hardy, The Novels of George Eliot (London, 1959)

48 Ibid.
On September 13, 1872, George Eliot wrote to Alexander Macmillan, "Middlemarch is done—all except a small Finale, which I prefer reserving a little." 49 She and Lewes were about to set off on one of the many European trips they habitually undertook when George Eliot had finished a novel. This time there were Middlemarch proofs to correct while they were abroad and the Finale to write. According to Lewes's diary, from Friday the 13th of September to Monday, the 16th, they visited the Cross family and departed for Dover on the 17th, arriving in Homburg on the evening of the 22nd of September. Given the disruptions of packing, visiting, travel, and even ill-health on the 16th and 17th, it seems unlikely that George Eliot would have written the Finale before arriving in Homburg. Lewes records in his diary for 2 October 1872, "Polly finished the Finale to 'Middlemarch,' which we sent to Blackwood." 50 And then with what seems to be phenomenal speed, there is evidence of the proof of the Finale arriving back in Homburg, being revised and returned to Blackwood by the 8th of October. 51

So the manuscript version of the Finale—see pp. 150-152 below—and the alterations to that version, which formed the

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50 Ibid., footnote four, p. 313.
51 Ibid., p. 315. Footnote nine reads, "'Finished the proofs of "Middlemarch"--the Finale!' (G.E.L. Diary, 8 October 1872.)"
Finale of the first edition, were both written within the space of, at most, seventeen days, that is, September 17 to October 2, the shortest possible period of time being a mere six days, between October 2 and October 8. The point which makes this time scale more than an interesting exercise in detective work is the particular and striking differences between the manuscript and first edition versions, and finally, the differences between the first edition version and the final one which George Eliot adopted in 1874. In both cases, the specific intensity and particular explicitness of the first edition ending prompt the questions, firstly, what factors gave rise to its existence out of the manuscript version, and secondly, what led George Eliot to revert back in 1874 to a version even less specific than her original manuscript version?

In his article, "The Text of the Novel: A Study of the Proof," Jerome Beaty provides the texts of the three different versions of the Finale, which are laid out in parallel below. They will be referred to as one, the manuscript version; two, the version of the first edition (the corrected proof of the manuscript version); and three, the altered version of 1874, which became the version adhered to in the Cabinet Edition of 1878. An analysis of the changes made among these three versions provides important evidence for consideration in any discussion of the novelist's response to particular issues regarding women and how they could or should be represented in her fiction.

Manuscript Version #1

1 Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful.

2 They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling with imperfect conditions.

3 Among the many criticisms which passed on her first marriage nobody remarked that it could not have happened if she had not been born into a society which smiled on propositions of marriage from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age, and, in general, encouraged the view that to renounce an advantage to oneself which might be got from the folly or ignorance of others is a sign of mental weakness.

4 While this tone of opinion is part of the social medium in which young creatures begin to breathe, there will be collisions such as those in Dorothea's life, where great feelings will take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion.

First Edition #2

1 Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful.

2 They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling under prosaic conditions.

3 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.

4 While this is the social air in which mortals begin to breathe, there will be collisions such as those in Dorothea's life, where great feelings will take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion.

1874 Edition #3

1 Certainly those determining act of her life were not ideally beautiful.

2 & 3 They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state.

4 In which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion.
5 For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it.

6 It is not likely that a new Theresa will have the opportunity of reforming a conventual life, any more than a new Antigone will spend her heroic piety in daring all for the sake of a brother's burial; the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is forever gone. But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know.

7 Her finely-touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible. Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth.

8 But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive; for the growing life of the world is after all chiefly dependent on unhistoric acts,
and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is owing to many of those who sleep in unvisited tombs, having lived a hidden life nobly.

and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.
The general structure of the Finale remains the same in all three versions, the significant changes coming in particular words and phrases, which have been underlined, and most especially, in the extensive alterations to the third sentences of versions one and two, and the second sentence of version three. The first change appears in the second sentence. Version one reads, "struggling with imperfect conditions," and the proof copy is changed to "struggling under prosaic conditions." The result suggests a shift away from the potentially optimistic; the changed preposition gives comparatively greater force to the power or the "weight" of the conditions which affect the "determining acts" of individual lives, and the change from "imperfect" to "prosaic" marks a subtle narrative move from a relatively objective estimation of the conditions, which even contains the possibility of "perfection," to a more specific evaluation of those conditions as being by nature pervasively humdrum, emphasizing how the achievement of "ideally beautiful" acts is far from possible under any circumstances, since "there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it," a thesis which stands unaltered in the centre of all three versions of the Finale.

The changes in the third sentence between versions one and two are the most extensive. In the manuscript, reference is restricted to a single "determining act" in Dorothea's history: her decision to marry Mr Casaubon. In version two, the criticism passed on Dorothea's marrying Mr Casaubon extends more generally to "remarks passed on Dorothea's mistakes," going beyond the single decision to marry Mr Casaubon and
asking the reader to consider exactly what those "mistakes" were. In addition, narrative accusations against people "remarking" on Dorothea's mistakes become more specific, and suggest their extension beyond the fictional world of Middlemarch to that of the reader, a position which the narrative voice makes explicit when referring later to "we insignificant people" preparing the lives of future Dorotheas. This broader application of narrative judgement is subtly prepared in the change between the phrase in version one, "if she had not been born into a society," to the version in number two, "if the society into which she was born."

This change of phrase shifts the emphasis away from hypothetical other societies, to the relation in any one society between its beliefs and practices and their effects on its individual members.

In section three of versions one and two the accusation against a society which can "smile on" a proposition of marriage by a "sickly man to a girl less than half his age," is retained; the general remarks about "renouncing advantage to oneself" are deleted. Instead, a reference is added to the specific social attitude towards women's "knowledge" and, by implication, their education, resulting in this sentence taking on a new, specifically accusatory tone. The contrast between the verb "smiled on" with the object of the smiles, "motley ignorance," has an effect close to sarcasm. Motley may be a matter of innocent smiles under certain entertaining circumstances, but when attributed to "ignorance," it not only suggests the "patchy" quality of that ignorance, but renders the smiles no longer ones of pleasure, or even complacent indifference, but signs of pervasive hypocrisy, extending
further to "rules of conduct which are in flat contradiction with [the society's] loudly-asserted beliefs."

The forceful emphasis on specific criticism in these changes extends also to the fourth section. The important change between versions one and two is consistent with the new tone of accusation apparent in the third section. Version one reads "while this tone of opinion is part of the social medium in which young creatures begin to breathe," and version two reads, "while this is the social air which mortals begin to breathe." By substituing "air" for "opinion" particular stress is added to the determining effect of dominant social attitudes. "Opinions" implies the existence of other, perhaps more congenial, opinions, so that the possibility of choice of influence exists. But in the revised proof, the idea of a medium in which one may or may not be harmed, depending upon the quality of the prevalent "opinion," has been replaced by language which makes the power of social attitudes as inescapable as the very air one breathes. The changed second version thus gives the weight of the inevitable to belief in the determining power of ideology.

The two central and connected ideas which remain unaltered in all three versions and at the centre of the Finale, are the inescapable determining effects of dominant attitudes and practices and the knowledge that "we insignificant people" are responsible "with our daily words and acts" for the ways in which individual lives are affected. But it is the changes in section eight between version one and two which alter the idealist statement in section six. In section eight the area
under discussion is extended from Dorothea's particular fictional case to that of the non-fictional world of the reader. The manuscript version concludes, "for the growing life of the world is after all chiefly dependent on unhistoric acts, and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is owing to many of those who sleep in unvisited tombs, having lived a hidden life nobly."

This final section was changed in those few days in Homburg to the revised proof, which became the first edition and which was retained in the later 1874 edition: "for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs." The change from "growing life" to "growing good" seems to be a straightforward refinement of meaning, life in itself, not being essentially in question, but the quality of life, its "good." The more significant change, however, is that in the days between versions one and two the generally optimistic tone implicit in the words "after all" and "chiefly" was dropped, and changed to the explicitly qualified word "partly." The conviction, or even desire to believe in the "good" of the world being affected by the acts of individual people has been thus reduced to the point of a reluctant acknowledgement. Similarly, that "we"are better off for having shared in the lives of individuals like Dorothea, is, in the final version, no longer positively "owing to the many," but "half owing to the number..." The statement has become more particularly
defined, no longer a general "many," but a limited, even identifiable "number" of people. And the assertion that one's well-being is owed almost exclusively to them is replaced by the more qualified statement that such lives are only to some extent responsible for other people's well-being. This changed emphasis away from the power of individuals to affect the directions of other lives suggests that at the time of writing version two George Eliot may have had reason to recognize a problem her novel had created but which she was either unable or reluctant to acknowledge when writing the manuscript version of the Finale. If her fiction represented so thoroughly the ways in which commonly held prejudices and traditional practices determine the course of individual lives, how it is possible to insist finally on any very great power of single individuals to counteract such pressures? This consciousness of the ultimately limited benefits to individual lives like Dorothea's, is reflected in the changes of the novels' last phrase. As Jerome Beaty says,

It does not seem fanciful to say that the difference in tone of the two versions of the Finale may be summed up in the difference between the final words. After a thousand and more pages, the reader of the manuscript ends Middlemarch on the word "nobly", the reader of the novel on the word "tombs." 53

It may be that one obvious reason for changing this last sentence is the awkwardness of finishing the whole, vast narrative with an adverbial phrase. But the effect of the change, in terms of its meaning, seems greater than that reason alone would support. The changes of actual words in

this ending must also be considered. "Having lived a hidden life faithfully" would have been as awkward as, if not more awkward than, the original manuscript version, but we cannot know whether the decision to move the awkward phrase preceded a decision to alter the two single words. In any case, the combined effect of replacing "nobly" with "faithfully" and finishing the novel with the word "tombs" is consistent with the modified tone limiting any sweeping claims for the individual's power to alter the determining effect of social forces. By replacing "nobly" with "faithfully," moreover, George Eliot moves away from a straightforward judgement of the quality of the person's life, to a greater emphasis on the active effort in the living of it. This alteration is then associated the more readily with Dorothea's speech, in which she explains to Will Ladislaw her own guiding "belief":

"That by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower."

(XXXIX, 179)

The difference between Dorothea's belief and the effect of the whole novel lies in the fact that the narrative ends with an express awareness of the effective limits of that belief, while at the same time acknowledging its "nobility" in the individual case. In summary, the most significant changes between the manuscript version and the altered proof express a specific awareness of the general social causes for Dorothea's "mistakes," and, furthermore, an extension of that awareness to a more qualified, even resigned, expression of the limitations of single lives in affecting those causes.
Two letters of George Eliot's during the period of writing her manuscript Finale and revising it in Homburg throw interesting light on the way that actual events may have triggered ideas and reflections in the novelist's mind, which ultimately found expression in the altered ending of Middlemarch. On September 25, the third day of their stay in Homburg, George Eliot wrote to Mrs. William Cross:

The air, the waters, the plantations are all perfect—'only man is vile.' I am not fond of denouncing my fellow-sinners, but gambling being a vice I have no mind to, it stirs my disgust even more than my pity. The sight of the dull faces bending round the gaming tables, the raking-up of the money, and the flinging of coins towards the winners by the hard-faced croupiers, the hateful, hideous women staring at the board like stupid monomaniacs—all this seems to me the most abject presentation of mortals grasping after something called a good that can be seen on the face of this little earth.  

In Lewes's diary of 26 September, the following entry is made: "Miss Leigh (Byron's granddaughter) having lost 500£, looking feverish and excited. Painful sight:"

Then in a letter to John Blackwood, written two days after she sent him the completed manuscript Finale of Middlemarch, and more than a week after the above incident was recorded, George Eliot returns to it again, describing the particular incident of Miss Leigh:

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55 Ibid., footnote six, p. 314.
The Kursaal is to me a hell not only for the gambling, but for the light and heat of the gas, and we have seen enough of its monotonous hideousness. There is very little dramatic "Stoff" to be picked up by watching or listening. The saddest thing to be witnessed is the play of Miss Leigh, Byron's grand niece, who is only 26 years old, and is completely in the grasp of this mean, money-raking demon. It made me cry to see her fresh young face among the hags and brutally stupid men around her. 56

The language of angry disgust in words like "hateful," "hideous," "hags," and "brutally stupid," describing the environment of the Kursaal, contrasts markedly with the expression of sadness conveyed at the sight of the "fresh young face" caught "in the grasp of this mean, money-raking demon." What strikes one as significant with relation to the alterations made to the Finale in the days immediately after these letters were written is the possibility that thoughts upon this episode may have had a direct effect upon the Middlemarch endings, and ironically belie George Eliot's remark that there was "very little dramatic 'Stoff' to be picked up by watching and listening." It seems possible that the experience of the Kursaal gave George Eliot a new, living reminder of the forces affecting women's lives and may partly explain the reasons for her making the profoundly negative qualifications to the proof copy from the more optimistic statements of the original manuscript version of the Finale.

To proceed to the alterations of 1874, it is necessary to seek possible explanations for the equally striking

changes between the first edition of the Finale and the final version of 1874. What had been three sentences in the first two versions is conflated to only two shortened sentences in the 1874 version. The move towards resignation, noted in the manuscript changes, remains, but the specific sense of angry accusation, spelled out in detail in section three of the first edition, is altered. The particular "prosaic conditions" crucially affecting the "determining acts" of women, in particular, have been absorbed into the single, general phrase, the "imperfect social state." It is as though George Eliot became reluctant to express through a personal narrative voice any specific accusations which could be assumed to represent her private opinion.

Can this change of position be explained other than that George Eliot finally had "cold feet" when it came to facing implications regarding the "woman Question," which, nevertheless seem to be present in her novel? Evidence suggests that George Eliot did have a deep-seated reluctance to take a public stand expressing her own views about current political issues and the "woman Question" in particular. In a letter to Mrs Peter Alfred Taylor in July 1878 she gives an extensive explanation of her long-standing unwillingness to express her opinions publicly:

I thought you understood that I have grave reasons for not speaking on certain public topics. No request from the best friend in the world—even my own husband—ought to induce me to speak when I judge it my duty to be silent. If I had taken a contrary decision, I should not have remained silent till now. My function is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of the nobler emotions, which make mankind desire the social right,
not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artistic mind, however strongly moved by social sympathy, is often not the best judge. 57

A refusal publicly to advocate specific solutions to social and political issues does not, however, preclude the ability to perceive the nature and implications of those questions. One can argue that the greater and more exact the awareness of the complexity of those questions, the more understandable may be the reluctance to pronounce solutions to them.

*Middlemarch* gives ample evidence of the novelist's sense of the complex workings of social forces, and also how the artistic medium was a necessary means of expression, not least because George Eliot's highly sophisticated intellect recognized the very dangers inherent in its own too exclusive application. In a letter to Dr Joseph Frank Payne in January 1876, she wrote concerning her intention as an artist:

...my writing is simply a set of experiments in life—a endeavour to see what our thought and emotion may be capable of—what stores of motive, actual or hinted as possible, give promise of a better after which we may strive—what gains from past revelations and discipline we must strive to keep hold of as something more sure than shifting theory. I become more and more timid—with less daring to adopt any formula which does not get itself clothed for me in some human figure and individual experience, and perhaps that is a sign that if I help others to see at all it must be through that medium of art. 58

This express position may have its own specific bearing on the changes in the *Middlemarch* Finale of 1874. Events in

57 GEL, Vol. VII, p.44. Haight notes that Mrs. P.A. Taylor was interested in "women's rights," and that she had "urged Marian to lend her influence in support of the cause" of J.S. Mill's bill to enfranchise women." See Haight, *Biography* pp. 99 & 396.

Homburg at the time of revising the manuscript Finale for the first edition may partly account for the changed tone and emphasis of the second version; similarly, there are signs of certain considerations occupying George Eliot at the time of the final revision, which may help to explain what may at first appear to be simply a straightforward retraction of the specific charges which had clearly been inserted between versions one and two.

On November 11, 1873, John Blackwood asked George Eliot if she and Lewes had seen Alexander Main's proposed revised preface for a second edition of his *Wise, Witty and Tender Sayings from the Works of George Eliot*, this edition to include extracts from *Middlemarch*. Blackwood sent her a copy of the preface with the comment,

> It seems to me that our friend puts the case rather too strong in favour of his compilation as compared with the works. I am sure he does not intend what his words may seem to convey, but will Lewes and you look at the points where I have put a query? 59

George Eliot's reply to Blackwood on November 12, is as follows:

> With regard to the Preface of the "Sayings," of which I had seen nothing till you sent it, I more than agree with what you say; I totally object to the 1st clause which you have marked with a note of interrogation and to the "if at all" of the 2nd. Mr Main himself, I have no doubt, is free from the misunderstanding which the clauses are likely to convey to others.

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59 *GEL*, Vol. V, p.456. In a letter to Main, dated two days later, Blackwood wrote, "I am sure that nothing could be farther from your thoughts than to say that the teaching of her, the most condensed and unsermonising of writers, could be best and most easily approached from a Volume of Extracts such as yours, but that is how these passages may most naturally be interpreted. There was a preface to the first edition and my advice is merely to add to it the fact that the second edition is further enriched by extracts from *Middlemarch* with the Author's consent." (*GEL*, Vol. V, p.460.)
If it were true, I should be quite stu- tified as an artist. Unless my readers are more moved towards the ends I seek by my works as wholes than by an assemblage of extracts, my writings are a mistake. I have always exercised a severe watch against anything that could be called preaching, and if I have ever allowed myself in dissertations or in dialogue which is not part of the structure of my books, I have there sinned against my own laws. 60

From about this same time and throughout the spring of 1874, George Eliot began correcting proofs of the seven-and-sixpenny edition of *Middlemarch*, which was the first to contain the third version of the Finale. It is possible that the issues raised concerning Main's proposed second preface to the "Sayings," like the Kursaal episode in 1872, had their effect on changes made in the re-writing of the Finale. In this case, events may have renewed a consciousness of the dangers of "preaching" and the possibilities of crude meanings being extracted from the novels as "messages" from the author. In her letter to Blackwood of 12th November, George Eliot went on to say,

> Unless I am condemned by my own principles, my books are not properly separable into "direct" and "indirect" teaching. My chief doubt as to the desirability of the "Sayings" has always turned on the possibility that the volume might encourage such a view of my writings. 61

One cannot dismiss entirely the possibility of J.J. Harvey's suggestion that George Eliot's deletions in the Finale between versions two and three were in response to the verdict of her reviewers, who, says Harvey, "really pounced on this passage." 62 Harvey gives as an example a

quotation from the *British Quarterly Review*, which he says, was "moderate" in its opinion that the Finale really has no foundation at all in the tale itself . . . we find in this passage a trace that George Eliot is, on reviewing her own work, a little dissatisfied with her own picture of the "prosaic conditions" to which she ascribes Dorothea's misadventures; and that she tries to persuade herself that they were actually more oppressive and paralyzing than they really were. 63

Harvey's summary of the *Fortnightly Review*'s position seems to show an appreciation of the intricate ways the novel concerns itself with the "Woman Question" and society:

While the reviewer agrees that Dorothea does not yield to social pressures in marrying Casaubon, but is simply deluded about him, it argues that George Eliot shows that "it is society which so nurtured women that their ideals cannot but be ideals of delusion". 64

The remarks of the *Fortnightly Review* are, moreover, consistent with the evidence of George Eliot's concern with the problem of "preaching" in her novels, particularly as it was a problem brought to her attention by Main's proposed new preface to the "Sayings." Thus it is possible that the deletions of 1874 can be seen as a result of George Eliot's concern that the novel as a whole provide the evidence of her perception—her "teaching"—rather than "proof" that she was retreating from the complex issues of women's relation to their social world, an issue which I have argued is basic to

the design of *Middlemarch*.

But a still further significant aspect to the changes in the *Middlemarch* Finale and their relation to George Eliot's treatment of issues specifically relating to women, leads back to the gambling episode in the Kursaal, which captured the novelist's attention at the time of writing and re-writing the first versions of the Finale, for this event has been recognized as the germ of the portrait of Gwendolen Harleth, which opens *Daniel Deronda*. 65 I have already suggested that George Eliot's experience in the Kursaal may have played a part in affecting the tone and specificity of the charges against society that are spelled out in the second version of the Finale; later, in 1873 to 1874, when the novelist deleted those very accusations in favour of the more general phrase "imperfect social state," she was already at work on the novel that would embody the story of Gwendolen Harleth. 66

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65 In his footnote referring to the episode in George Eliot's letter to Blackwood, Haight includes the following item: "In his review of Cross in the *Nineteenth Century*, 17 (March 1885), p. 483 Lord Acton says: 'a young lady over whom George Eliot wept in the gambling rooms at Homburg, and who remembers the meeting, served as the model of Gwendolen Harleth.' " *(GEL, V, footnote six), p. 314.*

66 In his biography of George Eliot, Haight connects the Kursaal episode of 1872 with the later portrait of Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda*, but makes no reference to its possible significance for the actual work of the Finale to *Middlemarch*, which the novelist was working on at the time. See Haight, *Biography*, pp. 457 and 469.
Although *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* are separated in publication by four years, the evidence of actual events of 1872 to 1874 suggests a much more intimate connection between them in terms of the processes by which George Eliot, consciously or unconsciously, shaped the content of her novels. With this awareness of the real proximity of the two novels in mind, another sentence which remained unaltered in all three versions of the Finale of *Middlemarch* takes on a new importance:

> But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know. (Finale, 465, my emphasis)

It is perhaps the case that the "fresh young face" of the young woman, which touched George Eliot's imagination in Homburg and which takes shape in *Daniel Deronda*, had already been imagined as an example of the "sadder sacrifice" intimated at the close of *Middlemarch*. If so, then the specific accusations in the first edition, which were revoked in 1874, were the more readily dispensable, not only because they smacked of "preaching," and still less because George Eliot felt they were unfaithful to her text, but because they were already acquiring fictional form, being "clothed in human figures," in the novel to come.
DANIEL DERONDA

Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. . . . There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman. 1

The narrative structure of Middlemarch required that human action be understood as depending necessarily on a dynamic inter-relation between intellect and feeling. Thus it implicitly challenged any view of the "proper" roles of the sexes based on the separation of mind and emotion and reflecting a parallel belief in separate spheres for men and women, the public and the private. But just as the structuring categories of "wet and dry," "passion and duty," proved ultimately inadequate to the issue raised by the text of The Mill on the Floss, so the image of the wife and the feeling/thought categories of Middlemarch, together, come to have their limitation: although challenged on the one hand, ultimately, the categories of thought and feeling are little altered as categories of sexual definition. What is

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1 Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, p. 108.
essentially more troublesome is the disparity between Lydgate's intellectual arrogance being proposed as the result of social and sexual prejudices about male superiority, and Dorothea's emotional nature having a weight and a value which seems presumably inherent in her womanhood. In the figures of Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda, George Eliot found other means of treating issues of masculinity and femininity which remain consistent to her commitment to determinism, but which do not have to rely on exclusive categories in order to account for the differences in male and female experience.

Between *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* George Eliot abandoned the web as a basic structuring device; the consequent establishment of new organizing principles resulted in a radical restructuring of the questions about men and women in the latter novel. In *Middlemarch* the web image provided a means of working through a narrator-text-reader nexus so as to require the reader's conscious response to the creation of meaning from the fictional discourse and the narrative discourse, thus attempting to ensure engagement with the epistemological issues of emotion and intellect central to the subject and structure of the whole novel. At the same time, the web offered a means of indicating within the fiction the inter-relatedness of personal lots and the determining nature of social attitudes and practices. The exclusive use of past time, too, containing the novel wholly in a short period some forty years prior to the time of writing, contributed a further sense of spatial confinement in the narrative, inherent in the idea of the web. The combination of that
distance and the structuring device of the web helped to produce that sense of the characters' being ultimately caught in a given social framework at a given moment in history. Within such a construction, the sexes, and women in particular, are represented finally as "trapped" by the forces which define them and their place, and the web image takes on an appropriately sinister significance.

The determining nature of time and space is stressed in Daniel Deronda, but the use of these devices in this novel is altogether less rigid. Space and location not only define a person's actual social relations, they also, and often, indicate a character's feeling of relation to the outside world. In contrast to Middlemarch, the material world of Daniel Deronda ranges far beyond England, bringing in Europe, the United States, and, finally, the Middle East. Its vision pertains to the essential relations of nineteenth-century Western society. Accompanying the breadth of spatial reference is the significance of the narrator's reference to time as it opens out the reader's relation to the text by demanding a consciousness of how time can be both limiting and liberating as a referent to history. At any given historical moment one is located in a particular set of relations, but it is also the case that the mind can construct meanings beyond the confines imposed by the chronological time in which any one being is isolated. Time is lived largely through determining external events and pressures, but it is also possible to think through time and consider the possibility of other relations existing outside of any one historically
determined moment. John P. Kearney, in an article entitled "Time and Beauty in Daniel Deronda," notes this important double function of time in the novel, calling it "organic, objective time and imaginative, subjective time," referring to W.J. Harvey's remarks on time in Character and the Novel:

We are aware of the richness and freedom of our subjective experience liberated from time by memory and imagination; yet we are also aware in some sense of this freedom contained in an objective or organic time, which manifests itself in the larger rhythms of life and nature and which bears us irreversibly in one direction towards one final end. 

This double way of thinking of time provides the possibility of a double consciousness of the working of the text, allowing for an awareness of the significance of and relation between subjective time and objective time, both as categories relating to the way the novel is read and categories at work in the text itself. Metaphorically, times takes on "spatial" qualities: in a moment one feels subjectively the significant meaning of connections across time, while, objectively, one also recognizes the determining nature of events happening in and through time, from the past, in the present, and towards the future. To take an example from the novel itself, at the same time as one is aware of the particular conditions which determine the lives and decisions of Gwendolen, Alcharisi, Lydia or Mirah, one is also made

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2 John P. Kearney, "Time and Beauty in Daniel Deronda: Was She Beautiful or Not Beautiful?" Nineteenth Century Fiction, 26, No.3 (December 1971), p.300.

aware of ways in which significant comparisons between them can be made in terms of their identity as women, outside of their own particular histories. An explicit instance of this possibility can be seen in a comparison of the lot of Lydia Glasher with Gwendolen, considered from outside the actual sequence of events in the narrative chronology of the novel. From that perspective it is clear that Gwendolen's future becomes theoretically what, in the narrative time of the novel, is Lydia's present: the son of Lydia's past becomes the heir of Grandcourt's present property, and Gwendolen's future is an inheritance of Lydia's isolated present in the novel, a yearly allowance and the house at Gadsmere. Such an example also points towards another use made of the categories of time and space in establishing the questions of male and female possibilities in terms of the time and space they inhabit and inherit: ultimately Daniel is offered a place in history, in "objective" time, while Gwendolen must accept her position exclusively within "subjective" time, as a point of consciousness, outside history. Thus "objective" time and history become associated with a public sphere of male experience, and "subjective" time becomes identified with the private sphere of female experience, and thus the spatial and temporal categories combine to illuminate the spheres which men and women inhabit separately. It is the reader, however, who is depended upon to experience and appreciate simultaneously, both "objective" and "subjective" time.

The arbitrary aspect of time is introduced at the outset of the novel in the epigraph to Chapter One:
Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even Science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the stars' unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is at Nought. 4

A consciousness of the relativity of time is expressed, demanding awareness of how any given moment may be a "beginning," and drawing attention to the factitiousness of narrative time. The ordering of the novel itself reflects this consciousness, the reader being plunged in medias res and only provided with another "beginning" fifteen chapters later when the events which precede the first pages of the novel are related, the arbitrary opening of the actual text being the coincidental moment when Daniel Deronda and Gwendolen Harleth become conscious of each other for the first time. The epigraph to that later chapter, some two hundred pages later, expresses appropriately that other function of time as a framework in which cause and effect, the determining nature of sequential moments, are perceived:

Men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible history. The astronomer threads the darkness with strict deduction, accounting so for every visible arc in the wanderer's orbit; and the narrator of human actions, if he did his work with the same completeness, would have to thread the hidden pathways of feeling and thought which lead up to every moment of action. . . .(xvi, 244)

A significant consequence of the more complex treatment of space and time in Daniel Deronda is its freeing of the reader to make sense of the text outside of the limits

4 George Eliot, Daniel Deronda, Cabinet Edition, Ch.i, p.3. All subsequent references to this text will appear with chapter and page numbers immediately after a quotation.
which were inherently confining in Middlemarch. In the later novel, the narrator does not openly challenge the reader to be conscious of a chosen role as one "who cares," as she does in the first page of the Prelude to Middlemarch and throughout that novel, but, on the contrary, leaves the reader to make use of the possibilities of consciousness which the flexible categories of time and space offer in the novel. This consciousness becomes then a kind of tool with which to create resonant meanings from the complex and often disordered sequence of fictional event. The disruption of time in the narrative, guaranteed by the non-sequential ordering of the text, means, moreover, that received categories by which experience is customarily understood and explained in sequential time are the more readily disrupted and called into question. The reader is thus prevented from assuming the validity of easy categories by which the text can be judged; at the same time, the assumed categories are themselves exposed as ones which can both determine lives like Gwendolen's and Daniel's, and be resisted by them.

Accompanying this opening up of the reader's relation to events in the novel goes another important change of assumption about the epistemological relation between feeling and intellect, which was intimately connected to the narrative "web" of Middlemarch. There, the critical treatment of the relation between intellect and emotion was largely gender specific, and focussed particularly in the characters of Lydgate and Dorothea, the successful integration of emotional and intellectual learning being to a large extent reserved for Dorothea. Although Lydgate learns something about the
possibilities of emotional knowledge, he seems ultimately trapped in inherited categories of masculine thinking. In Daniel Deronda, those gender distinctions previously assumed in the problem of "emotional intellect" are explicitly shifted across the sexes, a move which profoundly challenges assumptions of gender categories in relation to thought and feeling. 5

Lloyd Fernando, in New Women in the Late Victorian Novel, discusses the relation between emotion and intellect in George Eliot's work and draws some conclusions similar to those I have arrived at without prior knowledge of his work. Although there are many points where our findings correspond, there are others where the particular focus of my investigation disagrees. I do not consider it useful, for example, to pursue the idea of Lydgate and Dorothea being "each the nearest ideal complement of the other." 6 My reasons have as much to do with a wish to avoid such categories as with a conviction that the text does not, primarily, encourage their use, as I trust the arguments of my previous chapter have indicated.

Where the complementary qualities of Dorothea and Lydgate do come together is in the character of Daniel Deronda, and the implications of this move will be found to be significant.

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5 The phrase "emotional intellect" occurs in Chapter xli, p.359, of Daniel Deronda, and the idea itself is also given dramatic shape in Chapter xxxvi, when Daniel urges Gwendolen to use her feelings as a source of knowledge and to develop her interests to give a "larger home" for her feelings. (p.266). Such ideas express that relation between feeling and thought which are dealt with centrally in Middlemarch.

for the way in which the questions of notions of masculinity and femininity are dealt with in the later novel. For the moment, one need only observe that this shift marks an important departure from George Eliot's earlier inclination to adhere to the traditional practice of locating the capacities for feeling in women and rationality in men. A careless reading of *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch* might conclude that George Eliot believed such gender exclusiveness to be innate, whereas even in these novels there are clear indications of their being ideologically determined to a large extent. The categories of masculinity and femininity as they apply to Daniel Deronda and Gwendolen Harleth profoundly challenge assumptions of their being strictly determined either biologically or historically. It becomes clear, for example, that the dangers of living in terms of desired, projected realities are not exclusively attributed to women, as they tend to be in the earlier two novels, and as they are implicitly expressed in the "Brother and Sister" poem, where the narrator/sister claims for her brother the power to open up to her the necessities of rational thought:

Grasped by such fellowship my vagrant thought
Ceased with dream-fruit dream-wishes to fulfill;
My aery-picturing fantasy was taught
Subjection to the harder, truer skill

That seeks with deeds to grave a thought-tracked line,
And by "What is," "What will be" to define. 7

7 George Eliot, *Jubal and Other Poems*, Cabinet Edition, p. 206. The first date for this poem is 1869, which makes it contemporary with the beginnings of *Middlemarch*; it was republished in 1874, when George Eliot was working on *Daniel Deronda*. See Haight, *Biography*, p. 472.
Throughout Daniel Deronda the functions of and the possibilities for integrating thought and feeling are explored in terms of both men and women, but most specifically, in Deronda, himself, and in Gwendolen Harleth. And the result of such exploration extends the question of "emotional intellect" beyond any form it took in Middlemarch. The move to apply categories of thought and feeling across the sexes in Daniel Deronda leads to the need to address questions about aspects of sex as a biologically determining fact as well as about the problematic nature of gender identity being both a product of historical determinations and a response to them. Finally, the implications which emerge from the opening out of these questions apply to the text's ability to provide answers concerning the extent to which men and women may choose or must inherit the position in which they see themselves and by which they are seen in the world.

Of all George Eliot's novels, Daniel Deronda is the only one that can be considered truly contemporary, in that it addresses problems of a society which, in its broad outlines, is one the novelist inhabited as a mature woman. But the novel's concern with contemporary society is also based largely on its projected concern with the future and the search for possibilities of living in ways which effectively wed the real and the ideal. The following reading of the text and analysis of its answers, particularly with regard to women and the complexities of gender definitions, reveal how such solutions, however much one may wish to assent to certain
values contained in them, must inevitably ignore the contradictory nature of women's experience of the material worlds in which such solutions are to be realised.

While always engaged with the problems of the extent and limits of women's position in society, George Eliot's work never offers radical solutions to them. In Daniel Deronda, the complex nature of the exploration of those problems reveals important challenges to sexist ideologies and evokes questions about notions of masculinity and femininity which have not hitherto been made apparent in her work. The task of this chapter will be to examine the nature and implications of those challenges and to show how, ultimately, the questions raised do not find answers within the structure of the novel which poses them so clearly. My focus will be on the two questions which have persistently engaged critics' attention; those are, the nature and relation of the two "halves" of the novel, and the characterization of Gwendolen and Daniel; analysis of these areas will, it is hoped, contribute useful material for assessing more satisfactorily the relation of the Daniel "half" of the novel to the Gwendolen "half."

II

Since F.R. Leavis's famous suggestion that there is a "great novel" in Daniel Deronda "to extricate...for separate publication as Gwendolen Harleth," 8 much critical attention

has been given to defining the two "halves" of the novel and discussing their significant relation. In 1955 Maurice Beebe concluded that the stories of Gwendolen and Daniel are "counterpointed variations of a single theme," 9 which consists of illustrations of the individual before and after redemption: "The pre-redemption illustrated by Gwendolen is seen always in terms of the post-redemption of Deronda." 10 Such an analysis seems possible only if one reduces the text, as Beebe has done, to a "novel of ideas," 11 and/or ignores all other aspects of the text which counteract the possibility of a unitary reading of it. David Carroll's attempt to define the unity of Daniel Deronda does implicitly recognize that a simple egoist-altruist split between the Daniel and Gwendolen stories does not fully account for the working of the novel, but Carroll's solution is to make Daniel, the "titular hero," 12 also the real hero, as it were, and to define the "halves" of the novel in terms of Gwendolen's and Mordecai's contrasting relation to him. The central focus becomes Daniel's "disease of sympathy" 13 and the central question,

10 Ibid., p.176.
11 Ibid., p.168.
13 Ibid., p.373.
how he will resolve the competing demands of Mordecai, who "requires him to be a national messiah," and Gwendolen, who "wants him as her personal saviour." Although one welcomes recognition that the altruism of the Daniel half should be treated as problematic, Carroll's analysis seems nevertheless to have to reduce Gwendolen's role to one of warning for Daniel, so that her function basically is to provide a negative education for the hero. Thus, although Carroll tries to redress an imbalance in the novel as weighted by Leavis, his own efforts err on the side of denying Gwendolen's narrative a weight comparable to Daniel's own. Ultimately, too, this approach gives the question of personal moral choice predominance, only this time in terms of the rejection of egoism and embracing of altruism, not in terms of the reader renouncing what Gwendolen "represents" in favour of what Daniel "represents," but of Daniel embracing the public altruism that Mordecai "represents" and rejecting the exclusively personal altruistic choice Gwendolen "represents."

Robert Preyer, writing just a year after Carroll's essay was published, concentrates less on the question of personal choice and more on the way the novel offers solutions to the liberal-humanist desire for real possibilities for vocation in a world increasingly determined by "the operation of vast impersonal forces." Preyer's main contribution is his recognition of the broader social analysis the novel engages

in and its wider thematic interest, but his reading still culminates in Gwendolen and Daniel representing "negative" and "positive" solutions to the problem. His critical solution places Daniel positively at the centre of interest, as Carroll's solution did, and also reduces Gwendolen's narrative to the level of a cautionary tale, as Beebe's reading did: "The way of Deronda is the way of George Eliot, and the way of Gwendolen is its negative counterpart. That Deronda's is the 'right way' is shown by the fact that Gwendolen... eventually comes around to it..." 16

Preyer's solution echoes a similar straightforward dichotomy. The Gwendolen half of the book, he says, "offers a detailed examination of the way in which a failure to heed our deepest awareness brings nemesis in its train. As such, it constitutes what we might call a negative demonstration of the thesis George Eliot wishes to propound. The positive side of the thesis [is] the account of a man who follows his deepest awareness and achieves Salvation..." 17

Harold Fisch, writing in 1965, attempts a comparative evaluation of the "disjunctive school" of critics, 18 of which Leavis is generally considered the founder, and those who argue for the unity of the novel, as David Carroll does. Fisch's essay offers two specific statements which help to clarify points arising from the limitations found in the

16 Beebe, p. 171.
17 Preyer, p. 50.
18 Harold Fisch, "Daniel Deronda or Gwendolen Harleth?" Nineteenth Century Fiction, 19, No.4 (March 1965), 345.
Beebe, Preyer and Carroll studies. One is that the "contrast, as such" between the Gwendolen and Daniel sections of the novel "is not in dispute." Indeed, even though George Eliot herself explicitly stated that she "meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there," Fisch argues that George Eliot "is herself acutely conscious of the difference in timbre and effect between the two halves of the novel; and more than that, this very difference is, in a way, the central theme of the novel." The other important and significantly different point Fisch makes is in recognizing that the treatment of Gwendolen as an "insignificant thread in human history" is not simply to make a moral point about the size of her ego, but to show that the "confrontation of Gwendolen's private dilemma...with the echoes of historic change shortly to be manifested in the lives of men and nations is fundamentally ironical," the main irony of the novel being "that arising from the contrast between Gwendolen's search for happiness and Deronda's undertaking messianic responsibilities." Daniel's function is not merely to provide an ideal moral contrast to Gwendolen, but, says Fisch, "to provide a perspective by means of which the relative insignificance of her world and its affairs may be properly perceived."  

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19 Fisch, p.345.
20 GEL, Vol. VI, p.290, in a letter to Barbara Bodichon, 2 October 1876, quoted also in Fisch, p.346.
21 Fisch, p.349.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p.350.
Without seeming to realize it, Fisch reveals the very area of disjunction in the novel where questions concerning differences in sex and gender could contribute to the task of clarifying the problem of the relationship between the two halves of the novel. To do this it is necessary to look further into the nature of the irony Gwendolen's narrative produces in relation to Daniel's, and a key to this is also, if unwittingly, provided by Harold Fisch, when he finds it necessary to abandon the "metaphor of visual perspective, because the real trouble is much more one of different orders of time." 25 He goes on to describe those orders in terms recognizable as those by which the novel indicates the separate spheres of the sexes themselves:

In the domestic world which is that of Gwendolen, the time dimension which operates throughout is that of the individual life, time as it appears in the reflex of our own consciousness. In the epic type of novel we discover a different kind of time-measurement, what may be called periodic or historical time, 26 and it is ultimately the latter category, the "objective" time in which Deronda is granted a significant place and from which Gwendolen is excluded. Apparently unaware of the implications of his own conclusions, Fisch arrives at a point at which a feminist perspective can usefully illuminate the precise nature of the disjunction Fisch has perceived.

Evidence symptomatic of male critics' consistent failure to consider the particular problematic of the position of

26 Ibid., p. 356.
women in George Eliot's novels is found, ironically, in the very essay which points unconsciously to feminist implications. Fisch concludes that George Eliot's acute, history-conscious mind, if she were writing today, would have as its themes, "the extermination of European Jewry, the atomic bomb, and the rise of the new African states." An obvious theme he excludes from his projections, and whose importance has not diminished in the hundred years since George Eliot first wrote about it, is the question of women and the historical and ideological determinants which affect their identity and role in the world.

Before proceeding to examine these questions as they take shape in Daniel Deronda, it will be useful to look at another, later study of the novel by Thomas P. Wolfe, whose approach differs from the earlier studies, but which, equally, stops short of posing questions which could explore further the implications of gender identity as they are constructed in the novel. Wolfe, like most critics before him, sees the Gwendolen-Daniel halving of the novel as a culmination of a "long series of central egoist-altruist pairings in Eliot's fiction." But Wolfe finds the source of these pairings not in an abstract moral schema, nor in a desire for realizing possibilities of vocation in a deterministic world, but in the conflicts of George Eliot's own psychopathology. He argues that Gwendolen is an expression of George Eliot's own desire

27 Fisch, p.351
for self-assertion and dominance and that her "idealisation and identification with Deronda's abnegation of will" is "a defense against, and disavowal of, the longings for omnipotence given over to Gwendolen." 29 Although the question of George Eliot's particular psychopathology may be ultimately beside the point, Wolfe's approach is important in that it recognizes, particularly with regard to Gwendolen, how the novel deals clearly with psychological symptoms and conflicts, and that these are not pointing to moral questions alone, but must be understood as basic to individual human experience.

Wolfe explains Gwendolen's desire for dominance in terms of an unsatisfactory resolution of the Oedipal complex, giving thereby a convincing psychoanalytical account of the hysterical symptoms she manifests. In this way he makes significant connections between various of Gwendolen's reactions, which, unaccounted for, appear to have a more or less arbitrary relation. For example, he connects Gwendolen's fear of the portrait of the drowning man with her fear of Grandcourt as the avenging father, both being part of her unconscious sense of guilt resulting from the Oedipal desire to kill the father and replace him: "Finally, with Grandcourt's death, Gwendolen confronts and purges this pursuer, her unconscious guilt, in the 'daylight' of consciousness. She sees what she has always been, a 'guilty woman.' " 30

Psychoanalytical concepts such as Wolfe uses here offer new means for discussing conflicts between desire and necessity

29 Wolfe, p.5.
30 Ibid., p.34.
without imposing essentially moral values in the analysis of those conflicts. What Wolfe's approach does not examine is the ways in which Deronda's "femininity" may be important other than as simply a measure of George Eliot's own self-idealizing identifications with him, and this example indicates how Wolfe's approach generally does not recognize the problematical nature of gender attributes. Thus, despite the distance travelled in terms of Wolfe bringing the complexity of psychoanalytical principles to bear on the novel, his analysis still leaves no room for the discussion of how Gwendolen and Daniel both raise questions about the essential qualities of masculinity and femininity. Recognition and examination of these questions are necessary in order to account more fully for the complexity of the novel and to give full weight to the relation between its two "halves," as well as, ultimately, to account more thoroughly for that sense of "tragic irony" with which the novel ends. 31 Our task is not to find out what Daniel Deronda has to "say" about the "Woman Question" except through an examination of the way that question is seen to be formulated and emerges through the structure and language of the text.

Rather than discussing the novel yet again in terms of the usual bisections critics have chosen in the past, the Gwendolen-egoist-English half versus the Daniel-altruist-Zionist half, I propose to look at these halves by means of another bisection in the novel, that of men and women. Such an approach will consider how the spheres of men's and women's activity are established in the text, as well as how the categories of masculine and feminine both reflect those spheres and reveal contradictions in them. By using a new direction from which to look at the novel, I hope to provide a fresh and relevant perspective from which to revalue the usefulness of its traditional divisions.

Because the novel engages with the way the present prepares the future, it is important first to examine how the assumptions about proper spheres for male and female thought and action in the present time of the novel are registered, because these assumptions are, in their turn, those to which Gwendolen and Daniel have a problematic relation in terms of their roles as the novel's main bearers of the future. That two different spheres for men and for women are assumed by the older generation of characters, though not necessarily openly acknowledged, becomes increasingly clear, as does the fact that the causes of Gwendolen's mistakes can be traced both to her ignorance of
some, and her resistance to other, differences, both actual and assumed, between the worlds of men and women.

The early narrative introductions to the various members of the Gascoigne family provide one means by which those differences are established. Brother Rex's affection for his sister is qualified by the fact that he fills more of her small world of experience than she ever can of his: "He returned Anna's affection as fully as could be expected of a brother whose pleasures apart from her were more than the sum total of hers," (vi, 79) and Anna reflects the very limits that such separateness imposes on young women. Her first conversation with Gwendolen indicates an understanding beyond Gwendolen's, of the isolation of a young woman and the distance between her domestic world and the wider world her brother has access to, and along with that understanding, Anna expresses an implicit resignation which Gwendolen's own ignorance precludes. Anna recognizes that coming of age requires her to believe she is entering a social milieu where men and women appear to relate in some kind of mutual authority over and against the world of children: "'I am come out, and all that,'" she says, but the "and all that," indicates the vagueness and uncertainty of where that "out" actually is located, or what real relation she can have to it. (iii, 43) But Anna has basically only the experience of being a dutiful daughter and sister. Consequently, her statement, "' in reality I like to go black-berrying with Edwy and Lotta as well as ever,'" is a truer indication of where she actually feels her "reality" to be. (iii, 43) Anna reveals, moreover, that she is conscious
of her ignorance, of having no experience of that adult world to which she is suddenly meant to have significant access: " 'I never know what to say. It seems useless to say what everybody knows, and I can think of nothing else, except what papa says.' " (iii, 43)

Anna's words are at once an expression of her naivété and an unconsciously knowing description of the role which her mother has thoroughly adopted. Mrs Gascoigne, like Mrs Davilow, we are told, was "inclined to imitation and obedience," (iii, 38) the difference between the two women residing in the fact that Mrs Gascoigne's husband possesses a strength of opinion, the imitation of which means that his wife's "pliancy had ended in her sometimes taking shapes of surprising definiteness." (iii, 39)

Many of her opinions, such as those on church government and the character of Archbishop Laud, seemed too decided under every alteration to have been arrived at otherwise than by a wifely receptiveness. And there was much to encourage trust in her husband's authority. He had some agreeable virtues, some striking advantages, and the failings that were imputed to him all leaned toward the side of success. (iii, 39)

Indeed, the Reverend Gascoigne's very beneficence, his tolerance "both of opinions and conduct" is based on his ultimate assumption of authority, "because he felt himself able to overrule them." (iii, 40)

That a wife can function happily by reflecting her husband's authoritative opinions is disproved by the presence of Mrs Davilow. In contrast to her sister, Mrs Davilow never had even the appearance of male authority as an influence to imitate, but only its power to be ruled by. With the exception of her briefly happy marriage to Gwendolen's father, who had died "when his little daughter was in long
clothes," (iii, 29) her experience of marriage is characterized by the absence of her husband, "who had for the last nine years joined his family only in a brief and fitful manner," (iii, 28) and whose presence in earlier years leads Gwendolen to conclude, " 'I have always, ever since I was little, felt that mama was not a happy woman.' " (xxvi, 21) and to account for that unhappiness as being caused by marriage, which she feels must be a "dreary state, in which a woman could not do what she liked, had more children than were desirable, was consequently dull, and became irrevocably immersed in humdrum." (iv, 52) The evidence, moreover, of Mrs Davilow's own "worn beauty" (iii, 32), her confession that " 'all my best ornaments were taken from me long ago,' " (xxiv, 412) and her response to her daughter's own wedding, " 'Thank God you bear it so well, my darling!' " (xxxi. 117) combine to suggest that there are assumed areas of suffering in marriage for which there is only silence. Other aspects of the text occasionally, almost unobtrusively, reinforce the premise that a real male power silently dominates domestic relations. Such reinforcement serves also to emphasize the space between the spheres of the women in home and family and those in which the husbands and fathers move. An example, such as the following, also indicates the absolute dependence of women on the good-will of the men who keep them: "Who is so much cajoled and served with trembling by the weak females of a household as the unscrupulous male--capable, if he has not free way at home, of going and doing worse elsewhere?" (iv, 56-7) That space between the domestic world of female experience and the other world of male activity offers the definition of male freedom; it is the
"elsewhere" which men create for themselves and to which they alone have access. Another apparently casual observation later in the novel makes the same point, though less sinisterly, that men have a basic freedom, denied to women, which leaves them free to come and go--both physically and emotionally--having other areas than home to give substance to their lives: there is a "sort of joyous expectation," says the narrator, "which makes the present more bearable than usual, just as when a man means to go out he finds it easier to be amiable to the family for a quarter of an hour beforehand." (liv, 202) In both instances the comments are ostensibly intended as illustrations of Gwendolen's behaviour, but their larger, ultimately ironic function, shows how Gwendolen's actual, material circumstances, totally deny her the freedom and power belonging implicitly to the men the narrative employs to describe her behaviour. The analogy remains only apparent.

Those silent areas of wifely suffering and the unknown but feared "elsewhere" to which men have recourse are contained in the secret world of men's affairs outside marriage to which Lydia Glasher belongs. As the "kept" woman, beyond the bounds of legality, she represents the "elsewhere," but as Grandcourt's mistress and mother of his children, as a woman, in fact, she is like all lawful wives and mothers in her essential dependence. That Gwendolen should learn of that secret world of Lydia Glasher and its relation to her at the "Whispering Stones," is totally appropriate to the way in which its existence is kept secret, known only as gossip, mainly among men. Indeed, Mrs Davilow is hardly conscious of such
"secret" areas, while at the same time she appears to have been a victim of them. When Gwendolen introduces the subject of illegitimacy, the narrator remarks that Mrs Davilow "disliked" for her daughter to hear "what is called knowledge of the world; and indeed she wished that she herself had not had any of it thrust upon her." (xxix, 84) The very secrecy of such knowledge, coming as it does largely through rumour, provides the means by which men such as Mr Gascoigne and Sir Hugo can be both aware of it and at the same time ignore it, without the necessity of acknowledging its contradictions to the expressed values of the respectable, public world of matrimony, property and inheritance.

There is, however, narrative pressure on the reader to acknowledge the reality of that rumoured, shadowy world, and to recognize, moreover, that the notion of "two worlds" serves those who wish to deny the existence of certain relationships which contradict their publicly asserted values relating to marriage and the family; the secret world is of women for men. Gwendolen's anticipation of her meeting with Lydia Glasher at the "Whispering Stones" reveals the size of her ignorance of that shadow world: "She found herself back again at the Whispering Stones. They turned their blank grey sides to her; what was there on the other side? If there were nothing after all?" (xiv, 224) But behind the stones she finds herself "in front of some one whose large dark eyes met hers at a foot's distance...she was unmistakably a lady, and one who must once have been exceedingly handsome." (xiv, 224) Gwendolen has literally to face the existence of this other woman, and her claim to relation with her, if she marries Grandcourt. This is the "encounter with reality" for which her experience so far has made her unprepared.
Furthermore, Gwendolen's vague feeling of terror, "as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and said, 'I am a woman's life,' " (xiv, 225) introduces a level of identity between Lydia and Gwendolen, as women, which marks the veil of secrecy between their worlds as a constructed barrier between them in the service of certain social interests. Thus the reader may see, although Gwendolen may not, the fallacy which could assume that the unsanctioned world of Lydia Glasher's relation to Grandcourt could be considered in isolation from the world of legal marriage and inheritance, which denies it.

The description of Lydia at Gadsmere makes explicit the implications of her banishment from the legitimate domestic worlds of wives and mothers, while at the same time, it represents Lydia herself essentially through her feelings as a wife and mother, regardless of the illegality of her status. What appears initially to be the description of any number of country homes in pleasant surroundings gradually reveals itself as Lydia's place of exile; the "stone lodges...looked like little prisons;" (xxx, 92) and the house itself is not set in a rural landscape, the environment of country houses where families are in close social contact with one another. On the contrary, Lydia and her "four beautiful children" (xxx, 93) are banished to a landscape where no women or children exist. Belonging essentially to that "elsewhere" of male experience, it is necessary that Lydia live where "outside the gate the country, once entirely rural and lovely, now black with coal-mines, was chiefly peopled by men and brethren with candles stuck in their hats..." (xxx, 92) The fact of her seclusion and the knowledge that "there were no gentry in
carriages to be met, only men of business," (xxx, 93)
underlines the way in which Lydia, as a woman and mother out-
side the limits of the world of legality, and socially
countenanced marriage, must be denied, as a threat to its
very existence. But at the same time, it is also made clear
that Lydia's existence is determined by a double standard
designed to suit men. Sharp narrative irony reveals the
effect of this double standard on women by summarizing the
first years of Grandcourt's and Lydia's affair as if it
existed only in the gossip about it:

> Most of those who remembered the affair now wondered what had become of that Mrs Glasher whose beauty and brilliancy had made her rather conspicuous to them in foreign places. . . . Grandcourt had of course got weary of her. ... a man in his position would by this time desire to make a suitable marriage with the fair young daughter of a noble house. (xxx, 93-4)

The passage then shifts from the tone of indifferent
sophistication to one which shows with biting irony the
consequences resulting from this double standard:

> No one talked of Mrs Glasher now, any more than they talked of the victim in a trial for manslaughter ten years before; she was a lost vessel after whom nobody would send out an expedition of search; but Grandcourt was seen in harbour with his colours flying, registered as seaworthy as ever. (xxx, 94)

The ironic ambiguity in the use of the word "vessel" seems
both to be accepting the traditional notion of women as
intrinsically the "weaker vessel," while at the same time,
it challenges it by suggesting that Lydia may be considered
a "lost" vessel in terms of social censorship, precisely
because her contradictory position within accepted codes of
conduct literally requires her to be "lost" from view, and
thus, from public consciousness. Only in that way can
Grandcourt's "registration" as "seaworthy" be valid. The ease, moreover, with which men like Mr Gascoigne and Sir Hugo ignore these implications and give cognisance to Grandcourt's arrangements is largely responsible for that validity which grants him his "seaworthiness." The presentation of Mr Gascoigne's moral accommodation of the rumours of Grandcourt's private affairs gives clear evidence of this double standard in operation:

Mr Gascoigne had not heard; at least, if his male acquaintances had gossiped in his hearing, he was not disposed to repeat their gossip, or give it any emphasis in his own mind. He held it futile, even if it had been becoming, to show any curiosity as to the past of a young man whose birth, wealth, and consequent leisure made many habits venial which under other circumstances would have been inexcusable. Whatever Grandcourt had done, he had not ruined himself; and it is well known that in gambling, for example, whether of the business or holiday sort, a man who has the strength of mind to leave off when he has only ruined others, is a reformed character. (ix, 134-5)

The clearly related idea, that Grandcourt's behaviour may well have "ruined" someone else, is precisely the idea which Mr Gascoigne's way of seeing can avoid. In addition, his acceptance of Grandcourt's behaviour, which would be "inexcusable" in someone else, rests on another double standard, which allows men of "birth, wealth and consequent leisure" behaviour which can be paid for.

The same language of personal responsibility turned into a matter of debts and payment as a way of clearing the

32 In *Adam Bede* the first extended narrative description of Arthur Donnithorne deals with the same subject with similar imagery, describing Arthur with ironic effect, as a "generous fellow, who will have property enough to support numerous peccadilloes, who...if he should happen to spoil a woman's existence for her, will make it up to her with expensive bon-bons packed up and directed by his own hand. ... .The chances are that he will go through life without scandalising any one; a seaworthy vessel that no one would refuse to insure." *Adam Bede*, Cabinet Edition, Ch. 12, pp. 185-6.
conscience, is later attributed to the Rector's mental excusal of Grandcourt, or at least, his refusal to question the man's conduct, now that he is to marry Gwendolen:

But of the future husband personally Mr Gascoigne was disposed to think the best. Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes from the dirty tobacco-pipes of those who diffuse it; it proves nothing but the bad taste of the smoker. But if Grandcourt had really made any deeper or more unfortunate experiments with folly than were common in young men of high prospects, he was of an age to have finished them. All accounts can be suitably wound up when a man has not ruined himself, and the expense may be taken as an insurance against future error. This was the view of practical wisdom; with reference to higher views, repentance had a supreme moral and religious value. There was every reason to believe that a woman of well-regulated mind would be happy with Grandcourt.

(xiii, 207)

The non sequitur of the final sentence exemplifies the capacity for double-think which arises from a situation where different standards are applied, with the consequence that amounts to a refusal—even an inability—to consider questions of personal responsibility with any consistency. The "well-regulated" mind such a wife as Grandcourt's would require really means one whose ignorance and sense of dependence would render it adaptable to any necessity required of it. Only a paragraph later, the narrative affirms this reading with a description of Mr Gascoigne's habitual attitude towards his audience, in this case, the prospective bride:

The Rector's mode of speech always conveyed a thrill of authority, as of a word of command; it seemed to take for granted that there could be no wavering in the audience, and that everyone was going to be rationally obedient. (xiii, 208)

The combination of "rationally" and "obedient" provides a neat example of conscious narrative irony revealing the equivocation which the division between men and women encourages; the term "rational," while appearing to invoke impartial standards, when coupled with "obedient," points to
the actual function of Mr Gascoigne's "reasons," which are nothing more than his particular wishes and confidence that his authority is the ultimate guarantee of their validity.

When Gwendolen's acceptance of the idea of marriage to Grandcourt is expressed in terms of material necessity and social advantage, that is, in accordance with the Rector's own "reasons" for supporting the marriage, he is not really prepared for her to see those reasons for what they are, but wishes that she silently "obey" them, as befits a dependent young woman. Gwendolen says to her uncle, "I am not foolish. I know that I must be married some time--before it is too late. And I don't see how I could do better than marry Mr Grandcourt." 

(xiii, 210-11) For his part, Mr Gascoigne, it is said, was a little startled by so bare a version of his own meaning from those young lips. He wished that in her mind his advice should be taken in an infusion of sentiments proper to a girl, and such as are presupposed in the advice of a clergyman. . . . He wished his niece parks, carriages, a title--everything that would make this world a pleasant abode; but he wished her not to be cynical--to be, on the contrary, religiously dutiful, and have warm domestic affections.

(xiii, 211)

The source of the Rector's discomfort is Gwendolen's challenge to the conspiratorial silence that expects women to live by an ideology of "domestic affections" ignorant of the reality of matrimony's prime function of exchange and perpetuation of property. Women's role defined in terms of the material function of marriage is either to provide wealth or sons to inherit existing wealth. The position of Mrs Davilow as widow and mother of four daughters, relying solely on financial support from her brother-in-law, perfectly represents the dependence inherent in the woman's position, which Gwendolen's
remarks to her uncle explicitly acknowledge. The dominant influence of male interest in the world of property is so all-pervasive, moreover, that it seems nothing other than natural that a woman like Lady Mallinger should account for all her deficiencies in its terms;

Lady Mallinger felt apologetically about herself as a woman who had produced nothing but daughters in a case where sons were required, and hence regarded the apparent contradictions of the world as probably due to the weakness of her own understanding. (xx, 338-9)

The comfortable balance of light irony and sympathetic humour in this comment about Lady Mallinger belies the significance of the assumptions revealed by it, because both the content and the placing of this apparently parenthetical description of Lady Mallinger provide an important clue to the reality of the older generation of women in the novel and how that reality relates to Gwendolen. Lady Mallinger's assumption that her inadequacy is proven by her failure to produce sons is true, because that necessity of bearing sons has been made a measure of a woman's adequacy. But it is also the case that this limited function as a breeder of sons brings about the very ignorance and inadequacy which makes her erroneously confuse the cause for the effect. The "contradictions" which thus confuse Lady Mallinger are not merely "apparent." As the reader comes to understand them, they have the status of a determining reality in which Daniel is to become a man and Gwendolen, a woman. It is therefore significant that the comment about Lady Mallinger immediately precedes Chapter Twenty-one, whose epigraph proposes an image of the ignorance Gwendolen has of these relations and offers an implicit suggestion that the reader need not share that ignorance.
The epigraph which opens Chapter Twenty-one sets out in detail the nature and consequences of ignorance, seen as a blind giant, who, let him but wax unbound, would make it a sport to seize the pillars that hold up the long-wrought fabric of human good, and turn all the places of joy dark as a buried Babylon. And looking at life parcel-wise, in the growth of a single lot, who having a practised vision may not see that ignorance of the true bond between events, and false conceit of means whereby sequences may be compelled--like that falsity of eyesight which overlooks the gradations of distance, seeing that which is afar off as if it were within a step or a grasp--precipitates the mistaken soul on destruction? (xxi, 340)

With reference to Gwendolen, the effect of the image of the blind giant depends on the ironic relation of power to blindness: the enormity of Gwendolen's ignorance is suggested by "giant," while the irony depends on the idea that the incapacity of blindness, when it is ignorance, can have such a huge power of destruction. Yet, for Gwendolen, it is her very ignorance of relations, her "blindness" to them, which gives her that sense of power which leads not to the destruction of others, but to the brink of her own moral and psychic self-destruction. She is capable of believing herself powerful precisely because she is blind to the "true bond" of relation between herself and the rest of the world. George Wing, in his discussion of the significance of the above epigraph, asserts that "the events and dismay described in Chapter Twenty-one simply do not illustrate, . . . the massive power of destruction detailed with such elaborate imagery in its motto." 33 On the contrary, this discrepancy seems entirely

appropriate as an illustration of the blind nature of ignorance. In the gradual process by which conscious and unconscious motive accommodate themselves to the pressure of events leading to Gwendolen's decision to marry Grandcourt, we see exactly the working of that "false conceit of means whereby sequences may be compelled."

The importance of the epigraph, however, is not confined to Gwendolen's "falsity of eyesight." The phrase, "who having a practised vision," calls to mind that implied narrative address to the reader which opens Middlemarch: "Who that cares much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time. . . ." 34 Implicit to the narrative of Middlemarch and to the working of the epigraph to Chapter Twenty-one of Daniel Deronda is the assumption that the reader will recognize the necessity of having or developing a "practised vision" that can recognize ignorance, which is ultimately capable of estimating accurately the "true bond between events" which different perspectives in the novel both reveal and conceal. Wing's article notes particularly how the epigraph introduces the chapter which takes up the action chronologically from Chapter One, after the intervening nineteen chapters have filled in gaps of previous time, in order to explain the histories of Gwendolen and Daniel before their first meeting. 35 Given the function of this chapter, therefore, as the beginning of the

34 Middlemarch, Prelude, p. 1.
35 Wing, p. 18.
rest of the chronological narrative, it is fitting that the epigraph should implicitly address the reader, offering indications of authorial intention in a manner similar to the opening of Middlemarch.

The way in which the reader must learn the "facts" in the midst of ignorance, the necessity to make speculations which may or may not be validated by subsequent knowledge, make for an awareness of the problems of "learning" as they take place in the fiction. For Gwendolen, in particular, the acquisition of knowledge through time is a piecemeal and precarious affair.

She, like Daniel, is caught in her own temporality, but the reader is not. Thus it is possible to see responses as characters formulate them within the limits of their own chronological time and to see at the same time the limitations of those formulations. The reader cannot literally "know" everything at once, just as Gwendolen cannot, but is, nevertheless, in a position to see back to the dramatic irony of Gwendolen's assertions to her mother in Chapter Twenty-one, when she says, "'I mean to do something...But mind you don't contradict me or put hindrances in my way. I must decide for myself. I cannot be dictated to by my uncle or anyone else. My life is my own affair.' " (xxi, 352)

The reader functions through a perspective provided by the narrator, but also through the construction of relations as they have been set up within the fiction and through the dramatization of characters' responses to those relations. Significant reading of the text emerges then from the sequential reading and the connections and associations which occur across that reading. Thus one moves imaginatively in a process of reading which demands the "testing vision of details and
relations." 36 Lydgate wished to bring to his work, but which he had not thought it "necessary to apply to the complexities of love and marriage." 37 It is to these complexities that Daniel Deronda addresses itself, examining "those minute processes which prepare human misery and joy, those invisible thoroughfares which are the first lurking places of anguish, mania and crime, that delicate poise and transition which determine the growth of happy or unhappy consciousness." 38

In Daniel Deronda the requirements of a "testing vision," the task of seeing the correct "bond between events," are not directed to the chronological narrative of events alone. Taking Gwendolen and Lydia Glasher to illustrate, it is clear from the terms of the fiction that their interests are presumed to be in direct opposition to one another. Yet it becomes equally clear that they are inextricably bound together and that their identity as women gives them a kinship which runs counter to their apparent opposition in terms of the plot of the novel. Thus, for instance, the effect of Gwendolen sensing vaguely that Lydia is an example of a "woman's life," (xiv, 225) relates them both to womanhood generally, a relationship which is increasingly emphasized. External evidence also supports this point and can be found in William Baker's edition of George Eliot's holograph notebooks used in the preparation of Daniel Deronda, in which George Eliot made the following note on the name "Gwen" from Charlotte Yonge's History of Christian Names:

36 Middlemarch, Ch. 16, p. 248.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., p. 250.
Gwen is used in Welsh in the double sense of the colour white & of a woman, perhaps for the same reason that "the fair" so often stands for a lady in poetry. 39

The description of Lydia herself is both particular and at the same time suggests potential similarities with the present and future Gwendolen: "She was an impassioned vivacious woman, fond of adoration, exasperated by five years of marital rudeness." (xxx, 95) On this plane of comparison, the episode of the diamonds on Gwendolen's wedding day, the material link the fiction constructs between the two women, becomes a symbolic rite of passage for Gwendolen, revealing her position within that "reality" of which she was still ignorant and had only a vague sense at the "Whispering Stones," where the narrator remarks, "Gwendolen's uncontrolled reading, though consisting chiefly in what are called pictures of life, had somehow not prepared her for this encounter with reality." (xiv, 230) The words of Lydia's letter accompanying the diamonds claim a specific identity between the two women that belies the public and social opposition between them, which attempted to keep their existence secret from one another:

"These diamonds, which were once given with ardent love to Lydia Glasher, she passes on to you. You have broken your word to her, that you might possess what was hers. Perhaps you think of being happy, as she once was, and of having beautiful children such as hers, who will thrust hers aside. God is too just for that. ... I am the grave in which your chance of happiness is buried as well as mine." (xxxii, 123)

The diamonds are not only the outward sign of Gwendolen's status as Grandcourt's legal wife, they signify the secret bond

between Gwendolen and Lydia. The possession of the diamonds
becomes the arbitrary sign of a marriage bond whose basis
lies in the exchange of property rather than in personal
commitment. The diamonds are no longer mirrors for Gwendolen's
own isolated self-regard; they are an image of the price she
has paid for her marriage:

a new spasm of terror had made her lean forward
and stretch out the paper towards the fire, lest
accusation and proof at once should meet all eyes.
...In her movement the casket fell on the floor
and the diamonds rolled out. She...fell back on
her chair again helpless. She could not see the
reflections of herself then; they were like so
many women petrified white...((xxxii, 123-4)

The diamonds have become a symbol outside herself of her
implication in a chain of relations whose determining power
dwarfs the power she had arrogated for herself in her
childhood fantasies. Her experience represents the consequences
of the "power of Ignorance," and the scene of the diamonds
reveals momentarily Gwendolen's "blindness" and gives in a
symbolic instant a glimpse of that full reality which her
ignorance had chosen.
The gradual revelation of Gwendolen's mistaken assumptions about her possible relation to the world and power to control events, depends also on the ways in which the reader is persuaded to accept the psychological validity of Gwendolen's desires and not simply to account for them as the reflections of a shallow egoism. One way such recognition is accomplished is through the complex and subtle ways the reader is not allowed to take refuge in easy categories of masculinity and femininity, but must give exact consideration of the meaning of such terms when they are used. Thus far we have outlined ways in which the text sets up the existence of separate spheres for men and women and how they function both in public and private, the private being a product of the public and often in contradiction to its professed notions. We shall look now at the ways in which definitions of femininity and masculinity are largely presented as a product of experience of those constructed spheres, and how understanding of those terms depends on an understanding of the relations which shape them.

The narrative use of time invites the reader to appreciate Gwendolen's experience theoretically, to see how it is determined by the particular social constraints she experiences as a woman, and also, how she potentially shares the fates of other women like Lydia Glasher, or Alcharisi, or Mirah. Such reflections are necessary to appreciate the general conditions which determine Gwendolen's individual experience. The device
that often signals her particular experience, as opposed to her kinship with other women, can be found in the language which presents her predominantly in terms of a felt sense of spatial relation. The centre of self is often presented as a place from which one accurately, or otherwise, "sees" oneself in relation to others, as an early narrative example shows:

"Gwendolen will not rest without having the world at her feet," said Miss Merry, the meek governess; --hyperbolical words which have long come to carry the most moderate meanings; for who has not heard of private persons having the world at their feet in the shape of some half-dozen items of flattering regard generally known in a genteel suburb? And words could hardly be too wide or vague to indicate the prospect that made a hazy largeness about poor Gwendolen on the heights of her young self-exultation. (iv, 53)

Phrases such as Gwendolen "meant to lead, (iv, 53) or she "felt well equipped for the mastery of life," (iv, 54) also echo the kind of blind self-confidence with which Lydgate enters Middlemarch. In this way allowance is made for similarities of passionate ambition between a young woman and a young man, and the question of self-regard extends beyond that represented by Rosamond Vincy in a context of conventional notions of femininity. The objects of Gwendolen's passions are, however, determined by her mental and physical experience, which is restricted to concerns considered suitable for females and which, therefore, prevents her from being able to see herself in a relation to the world such as male experience and education provide:

this delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead. For such passions dwell in feminine breasts also. In Gwendolen's, however, they dwell among strictly feminine furniture, and had no disturbing reference to the advancement of learning or the balance of the constitution; her knowledge being such as with no sort of standing-room or length of lever could have been expected to move the world. (iv, 53)
The mentally and physically limited environment in which Gwendolen's desires take shape is opposed to that other environment of formal learning enjoyed by men, indicated through the allusion to knowledge of Greek and mathematical principles in reference to Archimedes and his assertion, "Give me but one firm spot on which to stand, and I will move the earth." Implicitly, the point is made that there is no more audacity of ambition in Gwendolen's passion than in any felt in "masculine" breasts, but the explicit point is that she is incapable of a perspective that can imaginatively or theoretically position her consciousness outside the scene in which she feels those passions. Gwendolen's mind and feelings are hemmed in by the one reality of narrow domestic and social relations, the "feminine furniture" which contrasts strikingly with the other image of knowledge open to men, one whose significance depends on a projected positioning so wide that the world itself can become the object acted upon.

The problem of feeling where one is in relation to others recurs in numerous contexts in the novel, gradually revealing George Eliot's concern with the way selfhood is experienced in terms of spatial relation to that which it considers to be the rest of the world. Much critical attention has been drawn to the idea of Gwendolen as a "princess in exile," (iv, 55) with the emphasis on the way the phrase reflects the enormous capacity of her desire to imagine herself as the object of central significance in the world. But there are other important implications to this phrase. It is, on the

one hand, a reflection of the size of Gwendolen's self-regard, but it also depends on the fact that others are willing to treat her with the deference of subjects. From this angle, and quite explicitly, Gwendolen's effective power is seen to be comparable to the actions of husbands and fathers, the difference being, however, that Gwendolen's power is a construction largely of her own imagination, whereas the power of husbands and fathers is effective in actual relations and is given positive value. The narrator gives a warning to the reader about arriving at "conclusions" about Gwendolen "without comparison," (ix, 56) but the effect of the comparison offered turns out to be deeply ironic:

I remember having seen the same assiduous, apologetic attention awarded to persons who were not at all beautiful or unusual, whose firmness showed itself in no very graceful or euphonious way, and who were not eldest daughters. ... Some of them were a very common sort of men. And the only point of resemblance among them all was a strong determination to have what was pleasant, with a total fearlessness in making themselves disagreeable or dangerous when they did not get it. (iv, 56)

The suggestion is that such power, "inspiring fear," (iv, 57) is a quality not belonging exclusively to spoiled females. But the real difference between Gwendolen and the men she resembles is apparent in the middle of this long narrative comparison, and which has been mentioned above: "Who is so much cajoled and served with trembling by the weak females of a household as the unscrupulous male--capable, if he has not free way at home, of going and doing worse elsewhere? " (iv, 56-7)

Gwendolen is not free to exert her power elsewhere, for good or ill, and that is the ironic point about her needing
to play the princess in exile. She is not exiled from anywhere, but confined to playing her role in the domestic circle of mother, sisters and whatever admirers that circle may attract. The danger of which the reader becomes aware, is that the power Gwendolen uses in that restricted domestic context gives her an erroneous sense of the power she believes can be effective elsewhere. This is the primary indication of the gigantic proportions of her ignorance, the "falsity of eyesight," which "overlooks the gradations of distance," and causes Gwendolen to marry Grandcourt on the false assumption that "she was going to have indefinite power over him." (xxviii, 56) The real exile is not Gwendolen, but Lydia Glasher, and the absence of any power or homage attached to her is made clear in the chapter which introduces Lydia and her relation to Grandcourt, the very placing of this chapter being significantly between the chapters which dramatize first, Gwendolen's ignorance and the material pressures leading her towards marriage, and secondly, the marriage itself.

Gwendolen's fits of "spiritual dread" (vi, 90) are connected to her playing the role of the powerful centre of domestic attention, and are even a sign of her unconscious knowledge of its factitiousness. These experiences of dread are felt, moreover, in terms of spatial relation:

Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself. . . .but always when someone joined her she recovered her indifference to the vastness in which she seemed an exile; she found again her usual world in which her will was of some avail. . . .With human ears and eyes about her, she had always hitherto recovered her confidence, and felt the possibility of winning empire. (vi, 90)
A metaphorical language of felt exile, describing Gwendolen's internally experienced feeling of impotence, contrasts to the pretense of exile used in descriptions of her domestic "rule." The moments of dread convey to Gwendolen herself a sense of being the "insignificant thread" (xi, 181) which defines her essential relativity in terms of the world and "objective" time, and which at most other times she wills herself to ignore. To accept that insignificance would be to have to surrender the whole imagined construction of power upon which her precarious sense of self had been erected and which alone is felt to guarantee her identity. As forces outside that domestic empire reveal themselves more and more and exert their irresistible pressures, the "hideous flaw" (xxi, 353) which should prevent Gwendolen from marrying Grandcourt seems to hold less prospect of humiliation than that of poverty or being a governess. Resistance to the threat of humiliation dominates the language expressing Gwendolen's feelings in the face of conflicting choices: "for the first time the conditions of this world seemed to her like a hurrying roaring crowd in which she had got astray, no more cared for and protected than a myriad of other girls, in spite of its being a peculiar hardship to her." (xxi, 354) The existence of a daunting, vast world outside and her unfitness to maintain her identity, her sense of position, in the face of its pressures and judgements, is given dramatic shape in Gwendolen's consultation with Herr Klesmer. When she asks him about the prospect of solving her problems by becoming a performing artist, Klesmer says that her "notions. . .have no more resemblance to reality than a pantomime." (xxiii, 387)
Klesmer presents a challenge to the role of princess on centre-stage among the guaranteed audience at home, and provides a perspective on Gwendolen's fits of dread, giving them a reference beyond her personal feeling by referring specifically to the actual world Gwendolen's dread would have to face: " 'You would have to keep your place in a crowd, and after all it is likely you would lose it and get out of sight.' " (xxiii, 389)

Further material shaping the context in which Gwendolen makes her decision comes just two chapters prior to her encounter with Klesmer and just before Chapter Twenty-one, which illustrates the workings of Gwendolen's blind ignorance. This is the inserted narrative in which Mirah recounts her own history in that world of the theatre which Gwendolen imagines as the solution to her conflicts. Mirah's narrative here supplies numerous points of comparison to Gwendolen and qualifies any definition of the nature and limits the reader puts on Gwendolen's perspective. Mirah, like Lydia, and unlike Gwendolen, is a literal exile, taken away by her father from the close safety of a home associated, above all, with a loving mother. The size of her world and the necessity of working in it as a paid performer put Mirah in a position in which she must learn to judge the "gradations of distance" (xxi, 340) in order to survive. Her occupation in the theatre makes her aware, moreover, of its ambiguous relation to her own life, to the world in which she earns a living; she relates her experiences in terms of a consciousness that constantly strives for a "practised vision" (xxi, 340) testing her observations
in terms of her own feelings:

"Even at first when I understood nothing, I shrank from all those things outside me into companionship with thoughts that were not like them; and I gathered thoughts very fast because I read many things--plays and poetry, Shakespeare and Schiller, and learned evil and good. (xxix, 317)

Mirah is presented as having found a position from which she can see and feel the contradictions which Gwendolen's experience necessarily keeps hidden from her. Mirah, having a sense of her own self, is in a position which can see the difference between acting and living:

"...it was like a sharp knife always grazing me that we had two sorts of life which jarred so with each other--women looking good and gentle on the stage, and saying good things as if they felt them, and directly after I saw them with coarse, ugly manners." (xxix, 318)

Gwendolen's sheltered sphere of activity is seen as having saved her from the early pain and confusion experienced by Mirah, but, equally, the restricted knowledge it depends upon prevents her from comprehending the discrepancies between reality and play acting. For Gwendolen, drama has been solely a means of providing the opportunity of "getting a statuesque pose" (vi, 82) for herself and of being the centre of attention and admiring regard. Her comparisons with herself and Rachel, the famous Jewish actress, are confined to questions of appearance," 'Do I look as well as Rachel, mamma?' " (vi, 76) Gwendolen, we are told rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes. (vi, 74)
The danger of Gwendolen's perspective is represented in the combination of the swamp and the satin shoes, the safe, ironic humour of it lying in the sense that it is only in the fiction of "genteel romances" that there is a literal possibility of swamps and satin shoes coming together in such wanderings. But the dramatic irony lies in it gradually becoming clear that Gwendolen, in her metaphorical satin shoes, wanders into a swamp of potential psychological destruction, and it is precisely the limitations of her experience, which has only focussed on "satin shoes", that render her blind to the presence of that "swamp." Two pages later this potential dramatic irony is indicated in Gwendolen's discussion of women, theatre, and crime, and it further points up the distance between her own and Mirah's experience. Gwendolen, remarking on the appropriateness of a high voice, says, "...it is more feminine; and the more feminine a woman is, the more tragic it seems when she does desperate actions." "(vi, 76)

When her mother replies, "...if there is anything horrible to be done, I should like it to be left to the men," " and that she didn't think Gwendolen, who is "'afraid to be alone in the night," " would be "'very bold in crime," " Gwendolen retorts "impatiently," "'I am not talking about reality, mamma." "(vi, 76-77) The languid inertia of Mrs Davilow, her assuming that "anything horrible to be done" would be left to the men, underlines at once both the assumption that such assertion should naturally be considered "masculine," and how that very assumption indicates the constructed distance between the sexes. But that distance is precisely a determining factor in Gwendolen's ignorance and her future shows all too exactly the "reality" of which she is presently ignorant, and
how "desperate actions" can take material shape in women's plans, where the felt "pathos" is no longer a question of "seeming."

In contrast to Gwendolen, Mirah, faced with the disparity between the art she had read and acted and the values of the world in which she works, indicates her ability to question that discrepancy: "'Is this world and all the life upon it only like a farce or a vaudeville, where you find no great meanings? Why then are there tragedies and grand operas, where men do difficult things and choose to suffer?'' (xx, 323) She demands ways of relating reality to the experience of art; Gwendolen is incapable of seeing the possibility of such a relation.

The further lesson that Mirah's experience teaches her, which Gwendolen's does not, is her potential as property. She hears the speculation voiced about what "market" her father intends her for (xx, 321), but escapes the imminent danger of being caught in another kind of "swamp," because she has learned to see herself in relation to the desires of people around her, not just in terms of her own, and she wills herself, consciously, to act against them. The account of Mirah's escape from her father presents a clear and significant contrast to Gwendolen when looked at in the context of the language discussed in the epigraph to Chapter Twenty-one, and in the spatial language of Gwendolen's felt position of self, particularly her dread of the crowd and Klesmer's warning that she could get lost in it. When danger from her father's conspiracy with the Count is most threatening, Mirah's language
in recounting it suggests the sense of clear vision which actually saves her: " '. . .it seemed to me that my mind had been lit up, and all that might be stood out clear and sharp.' " She continues, " 'I watched everything in spite of the darkness. I do believe I could see better then than ever I did before: the strange clearness within seemed to have got outside me.' " (xx, 328) And she does, in fact, see the Count and escape from being sold. Gwendolen cannot, and does not.

In his long study of Daniel Deronda Thomas P. Wolfe claims that the depiction of Mirah exhibits the "weight of positive valuation" George Eliot had to employ in order to establish Mirah's innocence, that she might fit the "conception of love that underlies the Deronda vision," which Wolfe sees as a "cherishing fantasy of a world without will, whose representatives are children. . .on whom is bestowed an inflated moral significance." 41 He contrasts Gwendolen's "childish egoism" with this other kind of childishness: "Gwendolen's 'innocence' is an ignorance of 'evil,' . . .Mirah's 'innocence' is that she cannot do evil." 42 In support of his negative assessment of Mirah, Wolfe says, "It is particularly suggestive that at one point, as Mirah reports her history, the first person pronoun 'I' appears several dozen times in about half as many sentences." 43 Wolfe does not offer further explanation, but in the light of our discussion, the use of the pronoun can be seen as a means to convey directly that assumption of self which consciously perceives, judges, and acts in relation to the

41 Wolfe, p. 25.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
world outside it. Such a consciousness contrasts directly with Gwendolen, whose sense of identity is so fragile that she is constantly taut with the necessity of exerting her will that she might obtain a sense of self through having effected response from others. "She meant to do what was pleasant to herself in a striking manner; or rather, whatever she could do so as to strike others with admiration and get in that reflected way a more ardent sense of living. . . ." (iv, 53)

It is important to stress, however, that the main psychological differences observable between Mirah and Gwendolen are never given in isolation from differences in their social relations. That difference lies mainly in the fact that Mirah is forced to be a part of the very working world from which Gwendolen's class position excludes her, but whose existence will be seen to affect her materially and absolutely through its laws of marriage and inheritance.

In Gwendolen's case, her energies and awareness are both shaped by and confined to an existence which is largely ignorant of the larger social and economic world which determines its very nature and values, that world being the world of male power which operates in silence and secrecy, and it is this separation plus the woman's ignorance consequent upon it, that figures largely in shaping Gwendolen's near ruin. Mirah's being part of a larger world from which Gwendolen is excluded constitutes an important level of reference at work in the novel, and one which can be seen as indicative of the wish to prevent Mirah from functioning purely as an ideal. This attempt succeeds at least in so far as Mirah serves to clarify more precisely that particular
difference between her and Gwendolen which partly lies in Mirah's clearer vision of the distinctions between art and life, ideas and material reality, which results directly from the material necessity of being engaged with them. Gwendolen's "blind" ignorance is largely the result of the fact that the material relations which determine the nature and choices of her social world are unknown to her; she is, as it were, made blind to them.

An obvious example of a woman who is provided the means to escape such a position as Gwendolen's, is Catherine Arrowpoint, who, like Mirah, offers a further means of refining the perspective by which the conditions of Gwendolen's existence can be evaluated. The text makes clear, moreover, that the difference between the two "maidens" and their "choosing" is not sufficiently accounted for in terms of moral categories, because the material differences in their positions are essential determinants in the freedom of choice each enjoys. By and large, Gwendolen is not only financially dependent and thus unable to decide the material aspects of her life, she is also surrounded by women who are mainly models of intellectual and emotional passivity as well. Only Catherine Arrowpoint, particularly in her bid to marry Herr Klesmer, displays the kind of effective assertiveness lacking in the other women. She acts from a sure judgement that that which will promise to give her the essential value of her future life exists only in her relation to Klesmer. Like Mirah, she is presented with a fixed capacity of vision, but she is also the extraordinary case in the novel of the English woman with discernment and passion, and not only the will to choose her future, but the material independence to do so.
Nirah, however, remains the more significant model for the novel as a whole, because the conditions of her separation from her mother, and her entry into a working relation with the world, provide equally important evidence to be considered in relation to Daniel, as well as Gwendolen. In contrast to both Daniel and Gwendolen, Mirah exists in the novel with a fully constituted consciousness of self. She is constructed on the premise of a complete identity which can be assumed by the reader, "she had begun her work before self-consciousness was born," (xxxii, 143) whereas the project of presenting Gwendolen and Daniel focusses on the very nature of the process by which their consciousness of self changes.

In contrast to Mirah, who is separated from her family and cast into the working world at a young age, Gwendolen is locked in a perpetual state of infantile relation with her mother, a condition symbolized by the "pretty little white couch" in which she sleeps next to the "black and yellow catafalque known as the 'best bed,' " in which her mother sleeps. (iii, 35) These sleeping arrangements indicate both Gwendolen's emotional infancy and sexual immaturity, her refusal to identify her desires with the usual lot of women, to marry and share "the best bed" with a husband. Thus a double view of Gwendolen's response is constructed, on the one hand, as pathological symptom, and on the other, as positive refusal to enter into relations whose negative consequences for other women have been clearly revealed to her. Both positions are a passive and an active indication of Gwendolen's reluctance to accept the "normal" process by which girl children are expected to take their places within the patriarchal social structure. It is, moreover, in her very attempt to reject the necessity of submitting to the normal
lot of women, that Gwendolen finds herself fulfilling the "masculine" task of providing for her mother and sisters; the consequences of her action, however, reveal ironically, the total ineffectiveness of her plan for self-assertion. It is made clear, moreover, that this will for self-assertion lacks a proper object other than an immediate sense of pleasure, a goal which has a largely negative quality like the avoidance of pain or that feeling of spiritual isolation Gwendolen is prone to when she is alone. But even more important, Gwendolen is ignorant of the actual relations of the world in which she wishes to be assertive. A clear indication of this ignorance is given through her mistake of dreading Herr Klesmer as "part of that unmanageable world which is independent of her wishes." (xxiii, 377) In so far as Klesmer is part of everything that exists outside her own wishes, Gwendolen is right, but to identify him with the "unmanageable world" shows also an inability to see that the artistic "world" of which Herr Klesmer is a part, is not equivalent to the world of property interest and marriage relations which she is attempting to escape. It is the latter world which is the threatening one, in which she does not and cannot have an effective part, not even, ironically, to ensure that Grandcourt does leave his property where she felt it was morally due. All of her education in life has made her unfit for anything but to be part of that world which presses in upon her. In the interview with Herr Klesmer, where Gwendolen makes her last bid to find a future on her own terms, the passage referring to her misplaced dread of Klesmer concludes:
The inmost fold of her questioning now, was whether she need take a husband at all—whether she could not achieve substantiality for herself and know gratified ambition without bondage. (xxiii, 378)

The formulation is filled with ironic indications of what the rest of the novel will reveal to be Gwendolen's mistaken assumptions, that is, that she is never in a position to "take" a husband, that "substantiality" is not something one achieves from external sources, and that there is no structure of relations in which "gratified ambition" is a possibility for a woman, some form of "bondage" being the only relation offered to them. Not only is it made clear that Gwendolen does not understand the forms that bondage will take, but also that the torturing mental bondage of her marriage to Grandcourt must be understood in terms of her fundamental position as a woman and victim of circumstances dictated by male interests, and not simply as her own personal "tragedy." In the terms of Gwendolen's own psychology, however, her narrative shows her emergence from a narcissism incapable of comprehending the difference between itself and its reflection, and therefore, of formulating itself as a separate, perceiving subject; this Gwendolen finally achieves when she can say, "'I only know I saw my wish outside me,' " in the moment of Grandcourt's drowning (lvi, 231) and when, finally, and painfully, she accepts the fact of Daniel's life being separate from her own.

Ultimately, Gwendolen has to recognize the essential passivity of her role as a woman, which her earlier desires had refused to accept. Her unwillingness to accept the limitations of being female had shown itself in her frustration at not being free to do as she willed, to act independently. This sense of frustration is clearly dramatized in an early conversation with Grandcourt, where Gwendolen reveals both the
passivity and submission expected of women, and, in the punctuating activity of her whip, her resentment and resistance to that position. The tension of the scene is located in the love-game between man and woman as convention might expect it to be played, but this, in its turn, has to be read in the context of the counter-tension of Gwendolen's internal war, which, in Freudian terms, Juliet Mitchell describes, as the refusal "to accept the applicability of castration to all females." 44

The examples of adventure Gwendolen cites in her conversation with Grandcourt are typical conventional "boyhood" fantasies of strength and daring, and in that sense they are in keeping with Gwendolen's slightly facetious manner; but her depiction of girlhood destinies in terms of being passive objects for other people's pleasure expresses a recognition of the limits of her expectations, and her whipping the rhododendron bush underscores her suppressed desire, nevertheless, to exercise the command and assertion reserved for men:

"We women can't go in search of adventures--to find out the North-West passage or the source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like the flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about the plants; they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous. What do you think?" Gwendolen had run on rather nervously, lightly whipping the rhododendron bush in front of her. (xiii, 199)

The scene offers a good example of George Eliot's technique of presenting material to be analysed consciously by the reader, while at the same time making it clear that the fictional character is unaware of the significance of his or her own actions. Gwendolen's remarks, although apparently light-hearted chatter, nevertheless can be read as expressing her desires. And it is not she who is made aware of the significance of her own words' juxtaposition to the whipping of the rhododendron bush; it is the reader who supplies that emergent meaning and the significance that the rhododendron is, moreover, one of those very plants which is presented for the delight of others, and that there is, therefore, the suggestion that the only effective direction available for Gwendolen's frustration leads backwards, against herself.

The whipping motif is repeated throughout this meeting with Grandcourt, indicating the way actions can reflect contradictory elements: the action with the whip indicates not only Gwendolen's desire to exert power, like the men she is complaining about not being; it also reflects the real limits of her power, since in beating the bush, she is in a sense, beating herself. In the wider action of the novel, her decision to marry Grandcourt, based on false assumptions about her effective power, leads only to self-punishment. Gwendolen's blindness to these possible outcomes is indicated in this early encounter with Grandcourt. The physical ground they cover is matched by the metaphorical ground covered in their conversation. They proceed to a point where Grandcourt presses in upon the very precarious ground of Gwendolen's sense of self, when he asks, " 'Are you as certain of yourself as
you make others about you?' " To which Gwendolen replies:

"I am quite uncertain about myself; I don't know how uncertain others may be."

"And you wish them to understand that you don't care?"...

"I did not say that," Gwendolen replied, hesitatingly, and turning her eyes away whipped the rhododendron bush again. She wished she were on horseback that she might set off on a canter. It was impossible to set off running down the knoll.

"You do care, then," said Grandcourt, not more quickly, but with a softened drawl.

"Ha! my whip!" said Gwendolen, in a little scream of distress. She had let it go--what could be more natural in a slight agitation?--and--but this seemed less natural in a gold-handled whip which had been left altogether to itself--it had gone with some force over the immediate shrubs, and had lodged itself in the branches of an azalea half-way down the knoll. (xiii, 200)

This little drama acts out both Gwendolen's unease about herself, her desire either to escape or command, and, ultimately, the necessity of using the unconscious symbol of command, her whip, to extricate herself from Grandcourt's pressure. The double edge to Gwendolen's resolving of the situation is apparent, in that the casting off of the whip is not only a last resort, a temporary stratagem to escape, but can also be read within the internal symbolism of the scene, as an image of the events to come, in which Gwendolen's escape to Leubronn is only an apparent act of effective self-assertion; the whip is ultimately surrendered. That Gwendolen's gesture of wilful independence in throwing her whip is a foreshadowing of her ultimate position of weakness is signalled in the two words "as if," contained in the closing description of the scene:

She could run down now, laughing prettily, and Grandcourt was obliged to follow; but she was beforehand with him in rescuing the whip, and continued on her way to the level ground, when she paused and looked at Grandcourt with an exasperating brightness in her glance and a heightened colour, as if she had carried a triumph. . . . (xiii, 200)
Gwendolen's old sense of success is recovered, but in conflict with that external exultation are signs to indicate the "astonishment and terror" (xiii, 201) she begins shortly to feel in terms of her own vulnerability, and which are presented to her, literally, when she comes face-to-face with Lydia Glasher, who provides a further source of external pressure demanding another kind of consciousness from Gwendolen.

So far discussion has concentrated upon defining how the text establishes ideas of Gwendolen's "masculine" responses, as exhibited in her wish to take an active, commanding role in determining her life, what Thomas Wolfe calls her "effort to 'perform' the dominating role of the father she has replaced," 45 which she does by affecting the role of the law-giver in the home and making her mother's and sisters' attention focus entirely on gratifying her wishes. Now we shall turn to Daniel to examine how, in contrast to Gwendolen, his "femininity" is established in the novel. It is crucial to underline here the significance of the fact that the nature and definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" are not formulated in the text according to biological determinants alone, but as descriptions of the more or less active or passive responses Gwendolen and Daniel manifest; in each case "masculine" and "feminine" have both positive and negative value. By treating of masculine and feminine aspects in both sexes, the novel constructs a complex position which indicates, on the one hand, the determining nature of a person's biological sex, but on the other, the psychological working of counter pressures which resist that

45 Wolfe, p.5.
determination. Because the terms of Gwendolen's active resistance to her female role have hitherto been explained purely in moral terms, critics have only seemed able, unconsciously, to register the positive aspects of her behaviour by reference to the way in which the Gwendolen "half" of the novel is full of vitality and somehow more "real" than the Daniel "half." The treatment of Daniel's femininity, for its part, has usually been considered part of the unconvincing idealism of that section of the novel, or simply dismissed as unrealistic, in so far as it is not properly "masculine." F. R. Leavis's revaluation of Daniel Deronda in 1960 does not revalue its earlier view of Daniel: "There is... significant agreement that the hero is not a man... Deronda... is very positively feminine—very positively a feminine expression." 46 In so far as criticism has continued to use or simply to accept positions which agree with such summaries, it has not been in a position to recognize the extent to which gender attributions are actually made problematic in the working of the novel itself.

The questions the novel explores concerning Gwendolen's and Daniel's masculinity and femininity are formulated in specific relation to their existence within a patriarchal social structure. The significance of the relation of gender to the demands of such a structure is also the major concern of another text's account of the process by which

male and female individuals take their places in the patriarchal order, that is, Freud's construction of the Oedipal complex. Paradigmatic reference to the Freudian model can illustrate the complex ways Daniel Deronda both accepts the law of patriarchal necessity, which demands that femininity and masculinity must primarily serve the interests of the future, but also, how it profoundly challenges that law by acknowledging the internal pressures which resist that necessity and make gender attributes both problematic and shifting.

In an ideal resolution of the Oedipal conflict, the girl child, like the boy, first desires to be united with the mother, but she recognizes that impossibility, because of the lack of a penis, the attribute which signifies the father's privileged relation to the mother, and she accepts her own "castration" by identifying with the mother and transferring her wish for a penis to the wish for a baby-as-substitute at some future time. For the boy child, the desire for the mother comes up against the necessity of competing with the father, if his desire for union is to be fulfilled, but the threat of castration persuades him to repress that present desire in favour of the promise of inheriting the father's role and power at some future time, becoming a father himself, and in that way perpetuating the social order he inherits. As Juliet Mitchell sums it up, "Recognition of her 'castration' is the female infant's entry to girlhood, just as the acceptance of the threat and deference to the father in exchange for later possibilities is the boy's debt to his future manhood." 47

47 Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism, p.96.
Using this as a schematic model for a perspective on the norm expected of Gwendolen as woman, her ambition and assertiveness can be seen as a refusal of the potential mother in her, or, as Wolfe says, they unconsciously exhibit Gwendolen's "rebellion against the 'castrated' position" because they are, symbolically, a gesture of "overthrowing and replacing 'the father,'" the image of that powerful internal authority. Thus her reactions of fear and dread of the portrait of the dead face and Grandcourt at the moment of drowning are responses to the externalisation of the patricidal wish. Daniel, on the other hand, as numerous critics and Wolfe himself have seen, exhibits "feminine," that is, passive qualities which are contrary to the norm expected by society. The prescribed male route necessitates the eventual replacement of the father by the son as active authority in order for the law and civilization to continue. But Daniel, like Gwendolen, does not respond to the Oedipal problem according to these best interests of society. Like her, he has no actual father, but as she denies a femininity which will mean subjection, and wishes to usurp the father's role, Daniel assumes the presence of his father in his uncle, Sir Hugo, and concludes that he is therefore no "real" son in the sense of being a legal heir to the future, with the authority and position of the father. The "secret" (xvi, 249) Daniel presumes to know, the "wrong" he feels has been done to him, can be seen as functioning similarly to castration, since his presumed bastardy would deny him his inheritance, not simply

48 Wolfe, p. 26
49 Ibid., p. 27
50 See Wolfe, pp. 25-27, and 33-35.
in terms of material property, but in terms of the acknowledged role of the rightful, future father: "The uncle whom he loved very dearly took the aspect of a father who held secrets from him--who had done him a wrong--yes, a wrong. . . ."

\[(xvi, 249) 51\]

The significant move the novel introduces is in making Daniel's response to this presumed knowledge a choice towards femininity, in direct contrast to Gwendolen's response to her "castrated" position. Whereas Gwendolen's ignorance makes her blindly assertive, Daniel's causes the opposite effect:

\[. . .the idea that others probably knew things concerning him which they did not choose to mention, and which he would not have had them mention, set up in him a premature reserve which helped to intensify his inward experience.\]

\[(xvi, 250)\]

Daniel's refusal to display active resentment at his sense of injury is analogous to the response which a girl is expected to show in an ideally resolved Oedipal situation, that is, Daniel reacts by identifying with the mother. Not only does he persist in repressing his own wishes with reference to others, he constantly is put into and accepts the role of doing service to Sir Hugo and his wife, "he had always been leaned on instead of being invited to lean,"

\[(xxxvii, 293)\]

assuming the role of the female, exhibiting those traits of loving acceptance and passivity characteristically considered "feminine."

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51 See also Wolfe, p. 26. In his discussion of the Oedipal complex, Wolfe remarks, "And actually the language that George Eliot uses to describe the 'chief epoch' in Deronda's psychic life. . .is wholly congruent with the Freudian description of the female 'castration complex.' "
But just as Gwendolen's "masculine" responses have a positive as well as a negative side, so do Daniel's "feminine" responses. His idealization of his mother and his willingness to serve others rather than make claims for himself are given narrative assent as the ground of his deeply sympathetic nature: "To Daniel the words Father and Mother had the altar-fire in them; and the thought of all closest relations of his nature held still something of the mystic power which had made his neck and ears burn in boyhood." (xxxvii, 293) This statement is followed by a detailed narrative defense of Daniel's "sensibility" by way of contrasting it to the experience which the "average man" would credit:

The average man may regard this sensibility on the question of birth as preposterous and hardly credible; but with the utmost respect for his knowledge as the rock from which all other knowledge is hewn, it must be admitted that many well-proved facts are dark to the average man, even concerning the action of his own heart and the structure of his own retina. (xxxvii, 293)

As each bit of this passage relates to the next, the significance of the whole gradually emerges as an implicit challenge to given assumptions about the "average man's" knowledge and an implied wish to assert that Daniel's "feminine" qualities have a valid place in male experience and knowledge. The direction of the argument is indicated initially with the reference to men's knowledge as "the rock from which all other knowledge is hewn," a premise which the working of the remainder of the passage reflects back upon ironically by juxtaposing it with different ideas of what can constitute valid knowledge. Scientific facts about the action of the heart and structure of the retina are given as areas
of knowledge which men may appropriately claim, although it is also made clear that even men may often be in ignorance of these kinds of knowledge. But the words "heart" and "retina" have another function besides the literal. The passage plays on their metaphorical meaning, in terms of feeling and vision, suggesting further limits to that male knowledge which claims to be the source of all other knowledge; not only can it be shown that men have been ignorant of scientific truth in history, but, also, that they may be ignorant of the "knowledge" of imaginative sympathy for which words like "heart" and "retina" may also have meaning. Ultimately, the passage makes a claim on behalf of this knowledge of "sensibility" which the "average man" is not usually assumed to be awake to:

A century ago he and all his forefathers had not the slightest notion of that electric discharge by means of which they had all wagged their tongues mistakenly; any more than they were awake to the secluded anguish of exceptional sensibility into which many a carelessly-begotten child of man is born. (xxxvii, 293)

The working of the whole passage gives fresh implications and weight to the apparently obvious meaning of the words in the final phrase, in which "man" is not just synonymous with "human," and "carelessly" is not just synonymous with "indifferently." The implication is that men's false notions about what knowledge is appropriate to the male sex may be precisely those very notions which cause the anguish into which children are born, because men are encouraged to be care-less. In contrast to Gwendolen, who exhibits just such masculine "care-lessness" Daniel is presented as an emotionally "caring" man. Unlike Gwendolen he has transferred his own sense of being wronged to an idealized mother who takes the
form in his imagination of a victim, as indicated by Daniel's association of Mirah with the "tragedies" of women in general, and by association, of his own mother. When Daniel first sees Mirah at the edge of the river,

his mind glanced over the girl-tragedies that are going on in the world, hidden, unheeded, as if they were but tragedies of the copse or hedgerow, where the helpless drag wounded wings forsakenly, and streak the shadowed moss with the red moment-hand of their own death." (xvii, 281)

The narrative voice does not attempt here to speak as though in Daniel's own thought; the tone of the language describing the hidden sphere where woman is victim is not being signalled as exclusively Daniel's, with the result that there is a sense of generalized reference associating the ideas expressed back to that other secret area outside accepted social relations which Lydia Glasher inhabits and which becomes a part of Gwendolen's life. But there is at the same time the sense of Daniel's own "secret," the belief that his origins spring, too, from that area of shame and secrecy. The explicit connection in Daniel's mind between Mirah and his mother as victims of actions and relations outside the spheres of accepted social behaviour, reveals itself in his reaction to Mirah as he stops to help her: "The agitating impression this forsaken girl was making on him stirred a fibre that lay close to his deepest interest in the fates of women--'perhaps my mother was like this one.' " (xvii, 285)

His "saving" Mirah and installation of her with the Meyricks establishes for Daniel a double existence which neatly, and inversely, mirrors the doubleness of Gwendolen's life. She has secret knowledge of a real wrong done, but chooses not
to identify with it, implicitly assenting to its perpetuation because of a mistaken notion of her own ability to assert her will. Daniel, on the other hand, imagines a wrong having been done to himself, but rather than make claims on his own behalf, uses that sense of injury to avoid injuring others. He accepts his own injury rather than compete for a position which could inflict injury on others. The narrative direction to read Daniel's "feminine" qualities in this way is indicated in the following description of him, which occurs in the chapter prior to his finding of Mirah:

He had his flashes of fierceness, and could hit out upon occasion, but the occasions were not always what might have been expected. For in what related to himself his resentful impulses had been early checked by a mastering affectionateness. . . . So it was that as Deronda approached manhood his feeling for Sir Hugo, while it was getting more and more mixed with criticism, was gaining that sort of allowance which reconciles criticism with tenderness. (xvi, 266-7)

Playing against that level at which Daniel reveals a "feminine" acceptance of his position are the pressures from outside which express demands for him to accept an appropriately masculine role in the world. His uncle wants him to "get a passport in life," (xvi, 265) and Hans Meyrick warns him, "'You must know where to find yourself.' " (xvi, 275) Daniel's inability to find a suitable role for himself expresses the dilemma and irresolution caused partly by his feeling of being "disinherited," in a masculine sense, and of his "feminine" passivity in response to that injury. The process which leads to Daniel's discovery of his actual parentage, and which thus gives him his manhood, is initiated with the discovery of Mirah, precisely because of that very sympathy and "hatred of all injury" (xvi, 266) which defines his "feminine"
qualities. This is yet another means by which the very structure of the novel sets up the terms by which the questions of masculinity and femininity are opened up for revaluation. But the questions are complex: Daniel's "femininity," like Gwendolen's "masculinity," has its negative side. In his role as passive responder to Gwendolen's needs, as the recipient of her "idealizing projections," Daniel reveals the dangers inherent in the passive, feminine position, a fact which critics have overlooked when concentrating solely on Daniel's positive role as an "objectification of the moral life" in Feuerbachian terms. Even Thomas Wolfe, who sees Daniel's being a "product of [Gwendolen's] projections" having generally "unfortunate consequences," nevertheless concludes that "the narrative view of Deronda is coincident with Gwendolen's, for whom he is the (more or less) 'blank' screen for idealizing projections." 54

On the contrary, the dangers of such idealization as Deronda's position is subject to are formulated both through the narrator and in the dramatic content of the novel. It is made clear that the obvious emotional result of self-abnegation

52 Wolfe, p. 30.

53 Albert Cirillo puts this case when he says, "Daniel's reality lies in his ideality--that is, in his relation to Gwendolen as an ideal which overcomes her narrow egoism. In these terms he is an objectification of moral life... the object Feuerbach spoke of when he said that 'man is nothing without an object.'..." (Cirillo, "Salvation in Daniel Deronda: The Fortunate Overthrow of Gwendolen Harleth," Literary Monographs 1 (1967), 203.

54 Wolfe, p. 30.
is reduction to the point at which it is no longer possible to make claims for oneself, or, indeed, of allowing oneself to feel them. This is the ultimate consequence of the exclusively receptive "feminine" role of Daniel, and it is important that only with the advent of Mirah does the narrative suggestion of Daniel's unease with that role begin in earnest. Until that point he has played the self-denying part so thoroughly that the sense is given of his only being dimly conscious of having desires for himself. An example of the kind of narrative direction which suggests the problematic nature of Daniel's role as other people's ideal occurs in a conversation with Mirah, when she tells Daniel how Hans Meyrick

"said yesterday that you thought so much of others you hardly wanted anything for yourself. He told us a wonderful story of Bouddha giving himself to the famished tigress to save her and her little ones from starving. And he said you were like Bouddha. That is what we all imagine of you."

"Pray, don't imagine that," said Deronda, who had lately been finding such suppositions rather exasperating. "Even if it were true that I thought so much of others, it would not follow that I had no wants for myself. When Bouddha let the tigress eat him he might have been very hungry himself."

(xxxxvii, 287-8)

Where idealization of Deronda does exist, is in George Eliot's endowing him with that capacity for knowledge that comes by means of a finely working dynamic relation between emotional sensitivity and intellectual acuteness. Such a dynamic is central to the narrative of Middlemarch, but there it was largely indicated negatively in the way that conventional social attitudes were seen to consider that emotional and intellectual knowledge could easily be considered exclusive of each other. In Daniel Deronda, Dorothea's "ardour" and emotional discrimination co-exist with Lydgate's belief in
and experience of intellectual practice; thus by the "feminizing" of a male character, the antithesis formulated between Dorothea and Lydgate is liberated from rigid distinctions of sex. If the weight of an idealizing narrative is present in Daniel Deronda, it is in the implied messages that the inability fully to recognize and respond to the dynamic interdependence between emotional and intellectual experience is a measure of moral stupidity. After the momentous interview in which Mordecai first suggests his wish for Daniel to commit himself to Mordecai's purpose, the next chapter opens with the narrative remark that "with the usual reaction of his intellect [Daniel] began to examine the grounds of his own emotion," (xli, 351) and the passage concludes with the rhetorical question:

Why should he be ashamed of his own agitated feeling merely because he dressed for dinner, wore a white tie, and lived among people who might laugh at his owning any conscience in the matter as the solemn folly of taking himself too seriously?—that bugbear of circles in which the lack of grave emotion passes for wit. From such cowardice before modish ignorance and obtuseness, Daniel shrank. But he also shrank from having his course determined by mere contagion, without consent of reason; or from allowing a reverential pity for spiritual struggle to hurry him along a dimly-seen path. (xli, 352)

The negative side of an exclusively emotional receptivity is indicated: a too willing or too exclusively developed capacity for sympathy may lead to impetuous response to any and all demands upon it; there is also the equally dangerous possibility that a "too reflective and diffusive sympathy" may be in "danger of paralysing...that indignation against wrong and that selectness of fellowship which are the conditions of moral force." (xxxii, 132) Daniel's longing
for a "definite line of action" (xxxii, 132) in which knowledge and practice "could both be gathered up into one current with his emotions," (xxxii, 132) and his expectant position before the world could have expressed Dorothea Brooke's longings in *Middlemarch*:

he longed to be yet was unable to make himself--an organic part of social life, instead of roaming in it like a disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without fixed local habitation to render fellowship real.

(xxxii, 133)

In the text this passage is formulated as a direct question in anticipation of a positive answer: "how" and "whence" will the "needed event" come which will "make" Daniel what he "longed to be?" (xxxii, 133) For Dorothea and Gwendolen no such answer is available, no positive public role is proposed as a real possibility. For Dorothea, the desire is confined to the expression of it; for Gwendolen, the attempt to construct her own answer results in revealing her ignorance and incapacity in the face of the determining forces which ensure that individual desires adapt to the interest of society and future generations. Here, again, one can see how Freud's formulation of the Oedipal conflict offers illustration of the way the dominant interest of the social order must be to ensure that the individual's desired "possible" should give way to the required "necessary" upon which the future depends. Gwendolen and Daniel are each represented at points of possible resolution, and the course of the novel in this context can be said to concern itself with the power of social determination over a "free" gender choice of the individual psyche.
The boy and girl who both thought all had a penis, who both were attached to the mother as the only important 'other,' must part ways, never to coincide again except in neurosis or psychosis, except in perversions, and except in all those perpetual neurotic, psychotic and perverse moments that lie behind normality. In these moments there is unleashed an aspect of the psychological sex one might have been were it not for culture's interpretation of the different places to be assigned to the sexes. 55

Gwendolen's marriage choice and the consequences which attend it are indicative of a reluctance to surrender her "masculine" desires, despite her apparent acceptance of the social values implied in being a wife and potential mother. Daniel's meeting with his mother and inheritance of his identity as a Jew provide the image of a positive acceptance of the male role he lacked previously. The implied comparison of these two solutions, set up through the text, shows how the novel both reveals the problematic nature of gender identity, but also assents, finally, to the limits which patriarchy puts on its expression. Ultimately, a balancing out of the masculine and feminine in both sexes is not achieved. The qualities which constitute Daniel's "femininity" are to some extent assimilated within the male role he accepts, but the positive aspects of Gwendolen's "masculine" response to the contradictions of the female role offered to her are finally negated and disallowed by the woman's role she ultimately accepts.

The presence of Lydia Glasher, hidden from the world of

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55 Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism, p. 95.
legal marriage and property inheritance, exemplifies that reality in *Daniel Deronda* which is "in flat contradiction" to the society's "own loudly asserted beliefs." 56 Lydia is a disrupting presence who indicates how expressed values of the social order can contradict its lived relationships. Gwendolen's decision to marry Grandcourt, despite Lydia's presence, is at once a collusion with those contradictions and an attempt to avoid the consequences of them by believing that, as Gwendolen asserts, "'everything is to be as I like.'"(xxvii, 44) By her refusal to honour Lydia's claim as Grandcourt's "natural", if not legal, wife, because she is mother of his actual, if not legal, heir, Gwendolen still expresses the wish to avoid the conditions of womanhood; since she cannot arrogate the freedom of the father's role, which would signify for her full and complete control of her life choices, she chooses, instead, symbolically, to replace the mother, that is, the woman who exists already as Grandcourt's wife and mother of his children. Gwendolen's own financial situation and that of her family lead her to a decision to marry Grandcourt, which in her eyes is a last desperate bid to retain the possibility of an assertive freedom for herself, but in psychological terms, it can be seen as a bid which amounts to an attempt to live outside the law, that law, in this instance, being experienced as "naturally" patriarchal. It is the workings of the power of

that "law" in Gwendolen's unconscious which generates her fear of Grandcourt, and, indeed, of Lydia herself. 57

The conflict inherent in the social order is reflected in the contradictions between an ideology which views marriage as the "only happy state for a woman," (iii, 37) and the realities of mistresses and illegitimate children. On the social level Gwendolen's repudiation of the mother's claims for her son means that she is colluding for her own ends with a system which no longer functions for the real interests of future generations. So on both a social and psychological level it is appropriate that Gwendolen and Grandcourt must live, literally, without a future. Their position is perfectly imaged in their yachting existence at the end of their marriage, where the size and appearance of their world is reduced and reproduced entirely through the reflection of mirrors which surround them. In a context which presents this result as an image of the defeat of effective and rightful patriarchy, it is also fitting that Gwendolen's consciousness at this point recognizes that her particular unhappiness cannot be "soothed by the possibility" of motherhood:

Gwendolen felt that to desire a child for herself would have been consenting to the completion of the injury she had been guilty of. She was reduced to dread lest she should become a mother. (liv, 194)

All of Gwendolen's imaginative power and energy, which previously was figured in terms of active, outward movement

57 See Wolfe, p. 29, where he says, the "intensity of Gwendolen's guilt" is accounted for in "the link between the wrong to Lydia and the earlier 'wrong' to the father, each the price of a continued life of unrivalled dominion, a life of freedom and pleasure and play."
towards doing that which gave her pleasure, has literally no place to go and is directed back against her in terms of dread of her own hatred and the actions it might lead to. Daniel becomes the appropriate focus for her need to be saved from this position, because his feminine qualities preclude him from representing the punishing male whose laws she has defied. Symbolically, her "deliverance" comes through the death of Grandcourt, and the acceptance of Daniel as the source of moral authority. In terms of the values set up in the course of the novel, he thus becomes the proper, morally functioning father, the authority which Gwendolen had previously denied, but comes to accept.

V

Assent to the end result of Gwendolen's "moral" education, together with her acceptance of guilt and isolation, is essentially required by the novel, which nevertheless makes clear the price Gwendolen must pay in terms of the once unlimited desires of her ego. Here the motif of spatial positioning reappears with renewed significance. Gwendolen has had to recognize the limitations of her possibilities as a woman, and this recognition is represented once again in terms of her sense of spatial position in the world. No longer princess in exile, implying
that somewhere there is a position of authority and command which has been denied her, Gwendolen must finally accept in real, social and psychological terms, that she inhabits a very small place in relation to all other individuals. Her own sense of significance alters until she "felt herself reduced to a mere speck" (lxix, 398), "getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving." (lxix, 399)

The world is not Gwendolen's to command; she has had to accept her womanhood and its limits. In addition, the narrative passage accompanying the above descriptions of Gwendolen's sense of smallness and relative position contains important elements which indicate the project in the novel which has made this painful recognition necessary:

There comes a terrible moment to many souls when the great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind, which have lain aloof in newspapers and other neglected reading, enter like an earthquake into their own lives--when the slow urgency of growing generations turns into the tread of an invading army or the dire clash of civil war, and grey fathers know nothing to seek for but the corpses of their blooming sons, and girls forget all vanity to make lint and bandages which may serve the shattered limbs of their betrothed husbands. (lxix, 398)

In Book Two, another passage referring to Gwendolen both echoes and states further implications contained in the above passage:

Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant?--in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely; when women on the other
side of the world would not mourn for the husbands and sons who died bravely in a common cause, and men stinted of bread on our side of the world heard of that willing loss and were patient; a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unfelt, until their full sum made a new life of terror or of joy.

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

(xi, 181-2)

By the end of the novel, Gwendolen, the "insignificant thread" of the beginning has come to feel and see herself in the position she has, in fact, always held, except in her own consciousness. At the beginning of her story, one of those "girls and their blind visions," by the end of the novel she has acquired through a process of suffering and a growth of awareness consequent upon it, a "vision" of her relative insignificance in the world.

But alongside and simultaneously with this specific message about Gwendolen, comes another level of message in both these passages, whose intention is to connect all family and domestic relationship to the wider issues of "human history" (xi, 181) and the "great movement of the world, the larger destinies of mankind." (lxix, 398) In both sections the narrative emphasizes the immediacy with which family relations are experienced when they are physically endangered by wider public events. The narrative specifically links the "speck" of the subjective moment in individual experience with its relation to the external events of "objective" time: "Women would not mourn for husbands and sons who died...in a common cause," (xi, 182) "grey fathers know nothing to seek but the corpses of their blooming sons," and "girls forget
all vanity to make lint and bandages which may serve the
shattered limbs of their betrothed husbands." (lxix, 398)
The link between the necessity of the project to show
Gwendolen's progress into consciousness and the evocation of
family relations under threat is located in the final statement
of that first passage and shows how woman's position and the
experience of "subjective" time is seen to relate to
"objective" time, the location of events in the external
world where men fight and die for causes. Gwendolen, the
girl with "blind visions," matters precisely because she is
a woman, and it is women as mothers who are, literally, the
vessels of future generations. This biological function is,
however, given moral value by the narrative, making the
emotional bond between mother and child the source of the
adult's emotional and moral strength. Women matter as mothers,
because "they are the Yea and Nay of that good for which men
are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne
onward through the ages the treasure of human affections."
(xi, 182) That the mother is centrally necessary for the
perpetuation of the race, and more essentially, of its values,
is a central premise of the novel, and assent to that premise
has much to do with the novel's ability or otherwise to persuade
the reader to assent to the necessity of Gwendolen's suffering.
There are, on the other hand, elements in the text which
disrupt the stated ideology of motherhood. These same elements
produce sufficient tension and ambiguity to make it impossible
to see the novel simply as a prescription for an ideal of all
moral good to be found in the values of womanhood which
Daniel Deronda (and Daniel Deronda) ultimately choose.
The two important models for the "good" mother are Mrs Meyrick and Mirah's remembered mother. In both cases, the source of that goodness lies in a sense of loving attachment located in earliest memories of physical warmth and comfort, "roots" of love which Mrs Meyrick contrasts with "'liking or gratitude--roots that can be pulled up. Mother's love begins deeper down.' " (xxxii, 147) This construction is supported in the comparative representation of Mirah's and Daniel's earliest memories. The story of Mirah's past, as related to Mrs Meyrick, begins with the statement, "'I remember my mother's face better than anything,' " (xx, 313) to which Mrs Meyrick replies, "'I can understand that... There are some earliest things that last longest.' " Mirah continues: "'Oh yes, it was the earliest. I think my life began with waking up and loving my mother's face; it was so near me, and her arms were round me, and she sang to me.' " (xx, 313) In contrast to Mirah, Daniel, "straining to discern something in that early twilight" of his first memories, "had a dim sense of having been kissed very much, and surrounded by thin, cloudy, scented drapery, till his fingers caught in something hard, which hurt him, and he began to cry." (xvi, 245)

Mirah consciously locates her moral sense in her memory of her mother's love; she recalls the vision of her mother to comfort her and she repeatedly uses the earliest feeling of love associated with her mother to judge the authenticity of the apparent affection she receives from people in the world away from home, which she is thrust into by her father:

"... always there were men and women coming and going, there was loud laughing and disputing, strutting, snapping of fingers, jeering, faces I did not like to look at--though many petted and caressed me. But then I remembered my mother." (xx, 317)
Confessions like this support the narrative claim to Gwendolen's significance as a woman, every young girl being a potential mother and source of those affections by which all others are tested. Mirah serves then as a contrast to both Gwendolen's and Daniel's experience, because she possesses those early experiences and responds to their subsequent loss by actively and consciously incorporating the memory of the loving mother into her own self.

A comparable memory is missing from both Gwendolen's and Daniel's histories. Gwendolen, moreover, refuses her female destiny by unconsciously preserving her infantile dependence on her mother, at the same time as she reacts to the external world with presumptions of "masculine" assertiveness, assuming power to control her circumstances. Daniel, in the belief that his male destiny has been denied him, reacts in a "feminine" way by developing his sympathetic responses and the habit of self-denial which accompanies them. Unlike Mirah, he has to create for himself a projected, ideal mother from whom he was separated, and it is this ideal, moreover, which is largely accountable for the scrupulous conduct he exhibits towards Mirah. Instead of resenting the father whom he imagines to be the source of his injury, Daniel chooses to identify with the victimised mother, and he creates from that position an idealization of her as the primary love-object. Until he can distinguish the real relation with his mother from the idealized, he cannot be free to move onward, to assume the role which guarantees the future, that is, manhood, marriage and fatherhood. He must separate himself from the mother and, symbolically, recover the father in him, just as Gwendolen must surrender the will to be the father and recover the woman and mother
in herself.

The working out of the principles of the "good" or "bad" parent, however, is continually disturbed and implicitly challenged by disconcerting contradictions in the text. There is the major contradiction at work in the English property owning classes, where on the one hand, there is the acknowledged world of married mothers who provide, or fail to do so, the male heirs of that property, and on the other, the hidden world of mothers like Lydia Glasher and her children, who in terms of the community and the future, simply do not exist. On another contrasting social level is Mrs Meyrick, the good mother whose existence is defined in terms of family, property being only a means of sustaining the family or a reflection of its "best" memories, as in the prints belonging to the late Mr Meyrick. In terms of the value of domestic affections and their relation to and influence in the "larger destinies of mankind," (lxix, 398) the Meyricks are spatially contained within the four walls of the small house they inhabit. In addition, the mother and daughters are independent of Hans, their male representative in the outside world: "They could all afford to laugh at his Gavarni-caricatures and to hold him blameless in following a natural bent which their unselfishness and independence had left without obstacle." (xviii, 295)

The presence of Daniel's mother, however, provides the critically important disruption to any easy assumption about moral values and motherhood, because she reveals the essentially problematic nature of individual desire running counter to and resisting the ideological expectations of the external world. The case of Daniel's mother and its connection with Gwendolen,
whose story is being played out along side Daniel's meeting with his mother, reveals how the issue of motherhood relates further to the problematic question of gender identity and, ultimately, how it is impossible to arrive at any easy exposition of the novel's prescriptive intention to celebrate the value of motherhood.

In his essay "Salvation in Daniel Deronda: The Fortunate Overthrow of Gwendolen Harleth," Albert Cirillo comes to the following conclusion about the ultimate significance of Daniel in the "saving" of Gwendolen, at the same time drawing an analogy between her and Daniel's mother:

For both Gwendolen and the Alcharisi, Daniel's mother, the metaphor of the ingenious puppets is apt; it embodies their lack of emotion, the unreality of their lives and their failure to refer their artistry to the larger conception of the world of humanity. In this larger conception and projection lies true morality. Gwendolen is an "immoral" character who is "saved" through her contact with Deronda, the "moral" character who does give himself fully to humanity, through the timeless continuity of his race consciousness. By means of this contact she fully realizes her own nature in living to be "one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born." 58

This formulation reflects accurately one level of meaning discernible in the novel, but it equally fails to recognize the other areas of significant expression which cut across it and make moral categories far more question-begging issues than Cirillo's view allows. Thomas Wolfe comes closer to locating the junction of conflicting pressures at work when

58 Cirillo, p. 228.
he says,

The novel does not merely suggest that a tyrannical tradition is better than having no traditions at all—a condition that had left Daniel afloat, without oars. It argues, in the imagined careers of Gwendoelen and the Princess, that the tyranny of the cultural will is inescapable, and is ruinous to those who rebel, because it is there, intractably in the "conscience." 59

This "cultural will," however, cannot be considered an abstract or universal category, but must be understood as it is worked out in the novel as the will to perpetuate the (patriarchal) social order, as a necessary precondition for the existence of any future (value). If one maintains awareness of that socially ordering principle signified in a phrase like "cultural will," it is possible to pinpoint where a conclusion like Cirillo's simply does not account sufficiently for the full complexity of the novel. The "humanity" which Daniel can give himself "fully" to, the "timeless continuity of his race consciousness" are, in the last instance, simply not presenting him, as a man, with the insoluble conflicts which were experienced by his mother, as a woman. But the categories Cirillo uses do not make this precise and necessary distinction, when they refer to "humanity" and the "timeless continuity of race consciousness." Daniel, in contrast to his mother, has prepared for him and accepts his "destiny" as a male within the patriarchal order, whose structure contains the seeds of the conflict his mother experiences as a female. It is a premise of that order that it cannot continue if males are not given their "inheritance," and if women do not accept the

59 Wolfe, p.44.
cultural necessity of motherhood. Daniel becomes a man by losing his mother in order to gain a wife, an inheritance for the future; Gwendolen loses the father, in that her conscience "teaches" her no longer to arrogate the power reserved for male authority. In the drowning of Grandcourt Gwendolen says, "'I saw my wish outside me,'" (lvi, 231) but, in the last moment, she jumps into the water, accepting responsibility for that "guilty" wish: "'I was leaping away from myself--I would have saved him then. I was leaping from my crime.'" (lvi, 231-2) That action is the symbolic moment of Gwendolen's "salvation" and entrance into her womanhood, because it recognizes and surrenders the wish to kill the father, the male source of authority and power. After the death of Grandcourt, Gwendolen accepts the identification of herself with her mother, a step which she had hitherto resisted. Mrs Davilow was accepted by her daughter, "not merely with all the old affection, but with a conscious cherishing of her mother's nearness, such as we give to a possession that we have been on the brink of losing."
(lxiv, 322-3)

What still must be accounted for, however, is the way in which the novel registers the sense of a particular price which must be paid for Gwendolen's acceptance of her womanhood. Both F.R. Leavis and Henry James seem to sense, but do not (or cannot) consciously articulate this aspect of a portrayal of felt contradiction in the lot of Gwendolen.

In comparing Henry James's portrayal of Isabel Archer with Gwendolen Harleth, F.R. Leavis attributes
the "completeness" of George Eliot's characterization of Gwendolen to the fact of the novelist being a woman, but he does not seem to realize the full implications of his observations:

It isn't that George Eliot shows any animus towards Gwendolen; simply, as a very intelligent woman she is able, unlimited by masculine partiality of vision, and only the more perceptive because a woman, to achieve a much completer presentment of her subject than James of his. This strength which manifests itself in sum as completeness affects us locally as a greater specificity, an advantage which, when considered, turns out to be also an advantage over James in consistency. 60

It is not clear exactly what constitutes the limitations of "masculine partiality of vision," nor the meaning of the phrase "the more perceptive because a woman," as Leavis intended them. One could say that he shows a lack of awareness that certain notions of "masculine partiality of vision" and belief in female "perceptiveness" are profoundly questioned by the novel. Or one could allow that his remarks register how George Eliot's perception is determined by her experience as a woman and that, therefore, it knows, at some level of consciousness, the specific conflicts arising from women's inherent position in the patriarchal order and the limitations against which Gwendolen and Alcharisi rebelled. Henry James, in his essay "Daniel Deronda: A Conversation," recognizes these "limitations" but does not acknowledge their origins as part of the specific experience of Gwendolen as a woman:

The universe forcing itself with a slow, inexorable pressure into a narrow, complacent, and yet after all extremely sensitive mind, and making it ache with the pain of the process—that is Gwendolen's story. The very chance to embrace what the author is fond of calling a "larger life" seemed refused to her. She is punished for being narrow, and she is not allowed a chance to expand. 61

What James does not say, and his resort to the verb "seems" suggests an unwillingness to acknowledge what at some level he sees, is that it is necessary for Gwendolen to be refused a "larger life," that she is punished, she is not allowed to expand, because she is a woman. And that is where any sense of tragic irony in the novel must be located, in the knowledge that Gwendolen's "punishment" is necessary for the perpetuation of the cultural order, and that the chance for "expanding" in a way of her own choosing must be denied her as a woman, if that future is to be guaranteed.

There is, moreover, a profound irony in the recognition that the process by which Gwendolen's "blind ignorance" changes into perceptive knowledge must also reveal the effective boundaries of that knowledge. The essence of tragedy in the "antagonism of valid principles" 62 as George Eliot formulates it in her essay on Antigone, is relevant to Daniel Deronda. In this context, the "elemental tendencies" which Gwendolen and Alcharisi feel and express against "established law" are something more essentially demanding within the psyche than the claims of a selfishness

defined within the limits of individual morality.

In order fully to comprehend the relation between Gwendolen and Alcharisi, both the similarities and differences of their claims must be acknowledged, which means that Alcharisi's charges against the cultural order in which she was brought up cannot simply be written off as they seem to be, for example, by Constantius in James's "Conversation":

one feels that one has been appealed to on rather an artificial ground of interest. To make Deronda's reversion to his native faith more dramatic and profound, the author has given him a mother who on very arbitrary grounds, apparently, has separated herself from this same faith and who has been kept waiting in the wing, as it were, for many acts, to come on and make her speech and say so. This moral situation of hers we are invited retrospectively to appreciate. But we hardly care to do so. 63

The use of "moral" both here and, for instance, in Albert Cirillo's account of the novel's conclusion, fails to grasp the real conflicts as they are formulated in the text. The ultimate significance of the novel is not to be found in Daniel's "morality" emerging triumphant over the narrow "immorality" of Gwendolen, in order that she can accept on faith the promise that she may " 'live to be one of the best of women,'" (lxx, 407) but in its facing the way in which an essential portion of that moral triumph depends on a certain sacrifice of energy and desire in women, and, moreover, how the necessity of that moral triumph cannot, in itself, justify the sacrifice in every case. The

"morality" critics so often have referred to in Daniel Deronda is not self-justifying, but present in terms that do not ignore the price paid by women who are caught in, but are resistant to, the necessary process which guarantees the perpetuation of the social order in which that "morality" is located and by which it is determined.

In considering how the conflict for women in the patriarchal order is most fully expressed in the novel, and especially, in comparing Gwendolen and Alcharisi, conscious distinctions need to be made between them as individuals and as women who have also to be daughters, potentially wives and mothers, inheritors of a role which is mainly that of creating the real heirs of the law, their sons.

Often comparisons are drawn between Gwendolen and Alcharisi, such as that made by Thomas Wolfe,

...that the psychology of the Princess is essentially the psychology of Gwendolen, differently clothed. The late and unexpected command performance by Alcharisi reintroduces the dangerous and problematical themes in Gwendolen's story. The history of this actual "princess in exile"...brings together the career of the performing artist with Gwendolen's real and imagined performances. Her confession to Deronda, suggestively juxtaposed with Gwendolen's confessions, repeats these central issues: the assertion of the will in defiance of the father, the resentment of womanhood, the desire for an expansive "male" freedom, the performing self, the fear of love, and the sense of terror at failing to maintain an image of an omnipotent self. The Princess has realised Gwendolen's youthful fantasies. ...  

64 Wolfe, p.42.
The experience of being a girl child within the inherited social order is similar for both the Princess and Gwendolen; for them, "happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt," (li, 131) and both women resist that restriction by insisting on the freedom to follow an individually designed pattern. There is, however, an essential difference between them, in that Gwendolen does not represent, as Daniel himself cannot deny his mother does, a woman with "'a right to be an artist, though my father's will was against it. My nature gave me a charter.'" (liii, 183) Gwendolen may have the ego-centredness of Alcharisi, but it is always represented in its relative "insignificance." Gwendolen assumed "masculine" powers for herself, but only as a reactive response, a form of protest, to the restrictions of the world in which she found herself; unlike Alcharisi, she has no real object for her desires or stage on which to express them. Simply to link Gwendolen and Alcharisi as examples of performers, with that word carrying the meaning primarily of self-regarding narcissism, insufficiently accounts for both characters, especially if one acknowledges the fact that the text never offers an answer to Alcharisi's declaration, "'...you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl.'" (li. 131)

If one grants validity to Alcharisi's claims for herself as an artist, then her dissimilarity to Gwendolen is as important as her similarity, and the complex implications of the impossibility of such claims being acceptable to the world are even more striking: Alcharisi cannot be both artist
and mother; her rebellion is a rebellion against the order upon which the future depends. Protest and motherhood are mutually exclusive. In this context, Alcharisi's relation to the mythical Melusina is perhaps more significant than Barbara Hardy's mention of it in a footnote to the Penguin edition of the novel recognizes, when she concludes, "George Eliot is probably drawing on Melusina for an image of inhuman suffering, physical and mental." 65 Melusina's appearance in the text accompanies a narrative remark concerning Daniel's thought that his mother's "worn beauty had a strangeness in it as if she were not quite a human mother, but a Melusina, who had ties with some world which is independent of ours." (li, 122) According to French legend, as a punishment for imprisoning her father in a cave, because he had offended her mother, Melusina was enchanted by her mother and turned into a snake from the hips down every Saturday. When she married, she made her husband promise never to come to her on a Saturday night. He became jealous, however, and broke his promise, only to discover his wife in her enchanted form. As a consequence of having been discovered, Melusina was doomed to leave her home and children, and wander forever. 66

It is not just the similarity between Alcharisi and Melusina as victims of lasting torment which is significant here, but that their tortured destinies result from their having assumed "masculine" qualities which were themselves.

a result of a direct expression of desire to act outside the
prescribed relations into which they were born. In Melusina's
case, her initial punishment came because of an act of
defiance against the father, her ultimate punishment,
separation from her home and children, following upon it.
The discovery that she was made symbolically into a male,
a serpent from the waist down, and that in such a form she
could not receive her husband as his wife, brings about the
punishment which deprives her of her motherhood altogether.
Alcharisi's refusal to accept her predetermined destiny
as a female, that of a Jewish daughter, wife and mother,
amounts to wilful usurpation of male power, for which she, too,
is tortured. Alcharisi's account is marked by language
associative of a myth such as Melusina's. Her feelings as a
daughter are expressed in words of imprisonment, of having
unnatural forms imposed upon her:

"I hated living under the shadow of my father's
strictness. Teaching, teaching for everlasting--
'This you must be,' 'that you must not be'--
pressed on me like a frame that got tighter and
tighter as I grew." (li, 130)

But after her rebellion and its consequences, she admits,

"... it is not true to say that I have changed
... here within me is the same desire, the same
will, the same choice, but... events come upon us
like evil enchantments... I am forced to be
withered, to feel pain, to be dying slowly. Do I
love that? Well, I have been forced to obey my
dead father. I have been forced to tell you that
you are a Jew, and deliver to you what he
commanded me to deliver." (li, 130-1)

Associative links between Alcharisi and Gwendolen
connecting them as serpent figures go back to the opening
of the novel, where, in a conversation regarding Gwendolen,
she is described variously as having "'got herself up as a
sort of serpent," "and as having a " 'sort of Lamia beauty.' " (i, 11) 67 In this context the narrative questions attributed to Daniel's consciousness in the opening paragraph of the novel take on additional resonance, when he considers fundamental questions about Gwendolen, "Was she beautiful or not beautiful?. . .Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams?" (i, 3) A problem is stated, questions are asked, not answered. Even those people who speak easily of Gwendolen's temptress qualities (" 'Woman was tempted by a serpent: why not a man?' " [1,11] ), are presented as casually playing with the notion of identifying her with a serpent. As such, they, too, raise questions and plant seeds of association whose significance the reader is left to consider. Certainly the Lamia-Melusina connection cannot be read as a straight signal of Alcharisi's or Gwendolen's "evil" natures, any more than Keats's Lamia can adequately be explained by the judgement of Appolonius upon her. The thread which does seem clearly to link Alcharisi and Keats's Lamia, however, is that their destruction results from their inability to be what the world of reason and philosophy (in Lamia) or of patriarchal law (in Daniel Deronda) demands. The essential being of both women is captivating in its vitality and beauty, but essentially contradictory to the world's interest. Gwendolen's link with these figures lies in her struggle with these same conflicting forces, but in her

67 Katharine Briggs begins her entry for Melusina in A Dictionary of Fairies, with the remark, "The story of Melusina may be called the French romance version of the classical Lamia," p. 285.
case, it is largely an internalized struggle with the desires of the unconscious.

The outcome of Alcharisi's torment, the conscience which forces her to make herself known to her son, is the working of what Wolfe calls the "cultural will," the conscience which is ultimately necessary if the sons are to inherit their places in the future. Gwendolen's and Alcharisi's submission to the dictates of womanhood is presented as a social necessity whose price is essentially the surrender of assertive vitality. Daniel's acceptance of the inheritance of his manhood, on the other hand, means the necessity of surrendering certain aspects of that "feminity" which made up a large part of his moral attractiveness to others. Instead of entering with full sympathy into the torment of his mother, as he was moved to do with Gwendolen, Daniel is made, finally, to assert himself, and in terms of a felt opposition, which had hitherto been left unexpressed. At one point early in his meeting with his mother, Daniel is described as "fired with an intolerance that seemed foreign to him," (li, 126) and later in the scene between them, in reaction to his mother's claim that she is not ashamed of saving him from "the pelting contempt that pursues Jewish separateness," he asks,

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68 Wolfe, p. 44.
"Then why have you now undone the secrecy?—no, not undone it—the effects will never be undone. But why have you now sent for me to tell me that I am a Jew?" said Deronda, with an intensity of opposition in feeling that was almost bitter. It seemed as if her words had called out a latent obstinacy of race in him. (li, 137-8)

That very source of his fully sympathetic nature, which the earlier part of the novel treats at length, had relied largely on Deronda's internalized identification with his mother. The irony is that that idealized source of sympathetic response ultimately must reject him in order for Deronda to be able to accept his maleness, his inheritance, and his destiny as a Jew, both the inheritor and giver of the future law. In the symbolic form of the papers in his grandfather's chest, Daniel is to inherit his birthright and to hand it on to the next generation. It is significant that this inheritance is represented in the form of language, ideas, laws, the forms which are also the instruments that formulated and expressed the duties and laws against which Daniel's mother rebelled. In that chest, she says, are the "'things that were thrust on my mind that I might feel them like a wall around my life—my life that was growing like a tree.'" (li, 140-1) This contradiction between the male and the female's relation to the order into which they are born, represented in the difference between Daniel's and his mother's acceptance of that order, is never fully reconciled in the text's conclusions, and indicates, furthermore, where the limits of the problems and possibilities for male and female experience are ultimately confined. At his final parting with his mother, there is the following description of
to Deronda's nature the moment was cruel: it made the filial yearning of his life a disappointed pilgrimage to a shrine where there were no longer the symbols of sacredness. It seemed that all the woman lacking in her was present in him as he said, with some tremor in his voice---

"Then are we to part, and I never be anything to you?"

"It is better so," said the Princess, "in a softer, mellower voice." (l.iii, 176)

The main force of Daniel's meeting with his mother is the necessity that he consciously recognize the ideal image he had created of her, and which accounted largely for his "feminine" sympathy for others, and that the real woman is not the reflection of that ideal. When reference is made to "all the woman lacking" in Alcharisi being "present" in Daniel, there is a sense in which it is not necessary to take that as a moral judgment against the Princess, but simply as so, as that which Daniel must accept, the measure of the distance between the real and the ideal. What the real mother's recounted history expresses is the presence of needs and desires which only the crudest categories of masculine and feminine can condemn. Yet, at the same time that those qualities which make Daniel seem more "womanly" than his mother are given positive value through the text, the problem of idealization contained in them is also made apparent and has a recognizable parallel in Gwendolen's idealization of Daniel. Both idealizations must ultimately be given up: Daniel's in relation to his mother, and Gwendolen's in relation to him. Each must accept the reality of the other person as a separate existence with equal claims
to assert, and surrender the necessity of making them representations of constructed, emotionally invested ideals.

On the one hand the novel seeks through Daniel's narrative a positively projected answer to Mirah's question, whether it is possible to find "great meanings" in the world (xx, 323), while at the same time it also exposes the limits, indeed the dangers, of idealization in personal relations, when one's own needs can be projected so completely on to others that they simply disappear as separate beings with claims for a life of their own. Gwendolen, for example, is said to be unable to "imagine" Daniel,

otherwise than always within her reach, her supreme need of him blinding her to the separateness of his life, the whole scene of which she filled with his relation to her—no unique preoccupation of Gwendolen's, for we are all apt to fall into this passionate egoism of imagination, not only towards our fellow-men, but towards God. (lxix, 386)

Daniel, faced with the pressure of Gwendolen's need of him,

wished, and yet rebuked the wish as cowardly, that she could bury her secrets in her own bosom. He was not a priest. He dreaded the weight of this woman's soul flung upon his own with imploring dependence. (lvi, 222-1)

His own feeling of having had his tenderness for his ideal mother rejected by the real one makes him less able to forsake Gwendolen, and yet, on another level, "all the while he felt as if he were putting his name to a blank paper which might be filled up terribly." (lvi, 223)

The significance of this relation between Gwendolen and Daniel and Daniel and his mother depends on the accumulation of complex meaning of notions of masculinity and femininity as they emerge through the novel. One can
argue that what Daniel feels in relation to Gwendolen precisely reflects that threat contained in the surrender of self which his mother recognized as inherent in the prescribed role of womanhood which she rejected. By giving Daniel that very "femininity" his mother refused, it becomes a quality which can no longer be seen as exclusively belonging to women. When looked at across the boundaries of sexual identifications, it reveals itself both positively, as a means of sympathetic understanding, and negatively, as a route towards self-annihilation, where no counter-claims are made possible. When Gwendolen's "passionate egoism of imagination" (lxix, 386) projects itself on to Daniel it is a small step for the reader to see how he, as a passive object of her needs, is a comparable model to the prescribed role of the Jewish woman as receiver of male demands. To make that parallel run counter to usual sexual stereotypes renders the problems which emerge from applying stereotypes that much more obvious.

VI

A double pressure of recognition works throughout the novel: one towards acknowledging how, in the individual case, the blurring of conventional categories of masculine and feminine offers ways of seeing desire in androgynous terms, which cannot be adequately accounted for by means of socially constructed categories, which, themselves, need to confine definitions to strictly male and female categories.
But set against the text's pressures for wider discernment on the level of the individual, another, counter pressure shows how the rigid correlational categories of sex and gender are ultimately necessary to the interest and survival of the social order and must, therefore, finally be the effective determinants in the shaping of men's and women's lives. This pressure is felt largely through the project of the Jewish part of the novel, which is to offer an image of idealism as an imaginative and effective presence that can shape a future which, in contrast to the English society depicted, is not subject exclusively to the values of material interests. The novel's opposing formulations of the idea of inheritance provide important evidence of the way tension exists in the text between the possibility of the ideal and the determining force of real relations.

In terms of the English sections of the novel, inheritance is understood as material wealth, the patrimony which is handed down from father to son and which carries with it a particular, publicly recognized social position. After it has been revealed to Daniel that his father is not Sir Hugo, and by implication, of course, that his inheritance lies elsewhere, Sir Hugo says to him,

"I couldn't have loved you better if you'd been my own--only I should have been better pleased with thinking of you always as the future master of the Abbey instead of my fine nephew; and then you would have seen it necessary for you to take a political line. (1, 113)

Up until the point at which Daniel's true relation to his "uncle" is revealed, his putative bastardy carries most strongly the association of his being disinherited, a situation which makes Gwendolen acutely conscious of how her marriage
to Grandcourt will amount to her disinheriting his own bastard children. The disjunction between parenthood and inheritance is represented in the existence of that secret domestic life of Lydia Glasher and her children, hidden in the midst of a money-making, male-dominated locale, and the public scene of Gwendolen and Grandcourt's marriage, whose external form is presented largely in terms of the couple's appearance in contexts where only the pleasurable fruits of what money and property can provide are obvious.

The torment Gwendolen's marriage causes her originates in the secret and precise knowledge she possesses of this disjunction, and the moral condemnation she knows to be contained in her having acted as though in ignorance of it. Set against her tortured sense of having sinned against the knowledge of someone else's claim, there is the fact of Gwendolen's actual incapacity to do anything to determine matters to satisfy her conscience. Ultimately, no action of hers can pass on the Grandcourt inheritance as she would wish. Since Gwendolen herself is an object, she literally has no voice. Indeed, by making her the recipient of Gadsmere and giving her a yearly allowance for life, Grandcourt's will underlines the way in which Gwendolen is objectified. Her total material dependence on him is virtually no different to being a mistress with no legal claims, and is a further indication of how the English world of property, inheritance, and the identity it confers, functions without the say of women, operating exclusively according to the traditional patrimonial pattern, in which women signify as far as they are objects of exchange. Their value is defined in their capacity to bring yet more property to a marriage, and provide
the sons as heirs to it.

The narrative comment on Daniel's anticipation of his uncle's pleasure in the fact of Grandcourt's death meaning that Sir Hugo's immediate family will retain his property, summarizes how women's relations to inheritance, their servicing role in the perpetuation of property ownership, give them their significance. Moreover, the structuring of the comment reveals how Daniel's sympathetic anticipation of "Sir Hugo's pleasure in being now master of his estates, able to leave them to his daughters," (lix, 257-8) is qualified for him--and for the reader--by a consciousness of the negative implications contained for women in Sir Hugo's apparently innocent and generous pleasure on his family's behalf: after the word "daughters" comes an indication of Daniel's new understanding, resulting from the need to recognize his mother's feelings about being a woman:

    or at least--according to a view of inheritance which had just been strongly impressed on Daniel's imagination--to take makeshift feminine offspring as intermediate to a satisfactory heir in a grandson. (lix, 258)

The fundamentally different relation which women have to the whole process which guarantees the inheritance of the next generation becomes obvious if one considers the vast difference in applied meaning between the apparently similar words "patrimony" and "matrimony," the former signifying that which is handed down from the father as inheritance, but the latter, in so far as it relates to the mother,
stresses the legal relation between men and women which provides the structure for that descent. 69

In opposition to inheritance as property in the English sections of the novel, is the idea of inheritance as it is presented in the Jewish sections, where Jewishness itself becomes an image for a personal and communal identity, one which contains within it, totally and inseparably, the whole of one's private and public relations, as Thomas Wolfe says about the significance of the "Jewish idea" in the novel:

[i] provided an environment that Eliot was looking for throughout her career as a novelist—an environment where personal relations and virtues mirror social relations and virtues; where an idea of community can become at the same time an idea of national politics; and, finally, where a private destiny is necessarily a cultural destiny—to discover oneself a Jew means precisely that. 70

The trunk of writing and records that Daniel inherits symbolically contrasts with the property he would have inherited had he been Sir Hugo's son; it is the social and religious ideals, which unite personal and social identity in terms of affection and duty, irrespective of material property, whose value is meant to be recognized in Daniel's Jewishness. This point is made the more emphatically when one compares the ideals contained in Daniel's Jewish identity with the lack of values in the English society, where

69 This observation emerged in a discussion with Catherine Hall, whose present research on "Domesticity and Capitalist Enterprise" in the nineteenth century promises the concrete historical evidence for many of those attitudes and practices I have noted in the novels, among them the real disparity contained in the words "patrimony" and "matrimony," that man's destiny has been in property, and woman's as property.

70 Wolfe, p. 25.
cloisters have been turned into stables, and Grandcourt, who in all externals would appear to be a representative of the country's values, can summarize the want of motivation in life by saying, "'What is a man to do though?... He must ride. I don't see what else there is to do.'" (xxxv, 218-19)

In place of such a vacuum are projected the values of Judaism, where duty and affection tie individuals both personally and publicly to their fellow beings. Given the fictional choices constructed by the novel, assent to such values by the reader is virtually guaranteed; the problem arises, however, when the role of the woman in this relation is analysed. That analysis results in a difficulty which relates closely to that traditionally expressed in terms of the "success" or the "failure" of the Jewish element in the novel, and the discrepancy between it and the English sections. The conclusion has been generally agreed by most critics, that the the "reality" of Gwendolen's narrative has an impact which Daniel's cannot produce, no matter how admirable the values it embodies. Given the tensions and contradictions relating to the roles of women in patriarchy, as they have emerged through our analysis so far, this discrepancy can partly be accounted for by the fact that the symbolic force which Jewish identity holds for Mordecai and Daniel is not (and is not seen to be) sustained in the same way for the Jewish woman. Thomas Wolfe comes near to recognizing this, but stops short of articulating it, when he says, "The last part of the novel, in working out the
Deronda-Mirah connection, shows the most enervated prose in George Eliot's oeuvre, and suggests how shallow is her imaginative engagement in that relationship. That "shallowness" may be a necessary result of George Eliot's inability or reluctance to engage her imagination too deeply with that relationship, because it was likely to raise problems which would only expose the limits of a project to use Jewishness as the means through which to establish an affirmation of possibilities of idealism in an existent social, ethical, religious structure.

The treatment of Daniel's mother in the novel sufficiently reveals the inherent problems for the role of women in the Judaic culture, but these are set against an equally strong intention to make Jewishness an image of integrated personal and public commitment for both men and women. And it is the latter desire which seems to have exerted sufficient pressure for the novel to withdraw ultimately from a full acknowledgement of those problems. Such an acknowledgement would have made it necessary to face ways in which Judaism, for women, cannot carry all the weight of opposition to the values of English society it is intended to. On the positive side, the Jewish model of marriage offers the guarantee that women are essential to the mode of religious and social inheritance in a way which contrasts to their merely material instrumentality in the English model. This difference serves to reinforce the Jewish idea of inheritance as one which gives the individual a personal and social identity in terms

71 Wolfe, p.23.
of culturally shared values, and it comes about because the law makes one's identity as a Jew determined solely through the Jewishness of the mother. One is a Jew, simply because one's mother is a Jew; according to the imaginative terms established in the novel, the Jewish mother is, literally, the "vessel" in whom "is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections," (xi, 182) because through her the individual acquires familial, social, and religious identity.

One important implication for the plot of the novel which knowledge of this function of the Jewish mother reveals is that Daniel must marry a Jewess; otherwise he is open to the charge of disinheriting future generations of the very birthright which was withheld from him. But it is equally clear that he must marry a Jewess who, unlike his mother, does not feel any of the conflict between her identity as a woman and her identity as a Jewish woman. A way of avoiding the possibility for such a conflict arising is for Mirah to have been actually withdrawn from the Jewish home and mother who might have provided her with the physical surroundings and pressures which could have revealed to her the problems inherent in her role, against which Alcharisi rebelled. And, furthermore, she is given a father, who himself, rejects his own identity and takes refuge in adopting the anti-semitism of the Gentile world.

By these means any reasons for the feeling of oppression Alcharisi experiences are precluded for Mirah. And what is more, her mother, and the memories of emotional security associated with her, can take on the role of ideal memory for
Mirah in a way similar to Daniel's image of his own lost mother. But the essential and, I think, intended, distinction between those two apparently similar images, is that Mirah's is meant to be seen as the healthy functioning of ideal memory, "this blessed persistence in which affection can take root," (iii, 27) which the narrator says is lacking in Gwendolen. What George Eliot has to ignore in Mirah is the fact that the conflicts embodied in Alcharisi and Gwendolen's experience are fundamental to the position of women in a patriarchal structure, whether Jewish or Gentile. What the reader is offered and must accept about Mirah is that she "'is full of piety, and seems capable of submitting to anything when it takes the form of duty,' " (xxxvi, 246-7) as Daniel tells Gwendolen.

The form this duty will take for Mirah as a Jewish wife and mother is, of course, never presented, and neither, significantly, is the fact that it cannot take the form of an equal footing or sharing of roles with men. One's identity as a Jew is guaranteed by the mother's Jewishness, but the execution of that inheritance in public terms is reserved exclusively for men, women having no part in the discussion, making or executing of the law. But the implications of the exclusion of women in major areas of Jewish public life, which is the other side of their role as providers of their children's emotional and moral roots, could not be openly acknowledged, because it would have introduced those very contradictions common to women in any patriarchal order. What George Eliot had to ignore was how Judaism and the
English social order share the same basic structure preventing men and women from fully sharing in the prospect of equal possibilities for action in the public world they are born into, and thus, the problem of Alcharisi possessing a "man's force of genius" in a woman's body cannot be resolved within either system.

A further contrast to Mirah's memory of her mother is seen in the way Daniel's idealized image of his mother is not based on a foundation of real affection. His "dim sense of having been kissed very much, and surrounded by thin, cloudy, scented drapery," and then catching his fingers "in something hard, which hurt him," (xvi, 245) contrasts to Mirah's memory of being near her mother's face and being sung to by her. A retrospective reading suggests that this scented drapery Daniel dimly remembers has more connection with his mother's adornment for public performance than with any comfort associated with her physical presence. This assumption is given further force by the discrepancy between the mother's role and the professional singer's, signalled in the "something hard" being most likely a piece of jewelry and indicative of the role his mother assumed which prevented Daniel having access to her as a mother; the absent, but implied opposite to the "something hard" is the softness and comfort of the mother's breast.

The difficulty, however, is that for all that one must assent to the infant's need for the secure affection Mirah remembers, the conflict Alcharisi embodies and confronts her grown-up son with, is represented as more thoroughly felt than
any of the ideal images of "good" mothers in the novel. The reason for this, and indeed, the reason for Gwendolen's position being more thoroughly felt, as Leavis implies, is because they both directly result from knowledge of real contradictions basic to their position as women within a patriarchal society. Mirah is herself idealized precisely in so far as she must not be seen to live out or express those same contradictions which are equally fundamental to the structure of Judaic culture.

Applied to the relation between the Judaic and Christian world, the novel's idea of "separateness and communication" offers the prospect of self-affirmation and mutual respect among communities and nations; applied to the two sexes, it produces a melancholy promise at best, because, ultimately, besides biological motherhood itself, that separateness between the sexes and the effective maintenance of it is not based on natural laws as much as on the necessity for women to submit to it as a duty. Thomas Wolfe again comes near to conscious acknowledgement of these implications, but does not make the link. "It is difficult," he says, "to formulate a response to the larger implications of the novel's ending, in which the imagined future life of Gwendolen narrows while that of Deronda expands. In a sense what happens is that, as Deronda is transformed into Mordecai, Gwendolen is transformed into the earlier Deronda." 72

72 Wolfe, p.35.
transformation itself reveals how the novel both explores and criticizes the stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity but at the same time, ultimately, represents the way in which these categories applied to the sexes are established by and for the social order, whose "interest" must prevail in the last instance, because the perpetuation of that order, as community itself, depends upon it.

Gwendolen learns through her suffering to accept the passive, feminine role, the "real" castration which Daniel's early sense of injury had led him to adopt, and with that role comes a new found capacity for sympathy and affection. Daniel, on the other hand, having been offered his true inheritance as a son, can nevertheless retain those feminine qualities his early life encouraged in him, but they no longer threaten to turn to a disease of moral indifference, because now he has the masculine identity which permits him to direct that sympathy outward, to find objects for it, to act for the public good. In terms of the time and space categories informing the text of the novel, Daniel retains the valuable sympathy associated with the "feminine" mode of being in subjective, private time, but is also given a place in which to act according to the "masculine" mode of doing in objective, historical time. Gwendolen, having learned the impossibility of doing as she liked, has to find ways of being within the subjective, private space and time of a woman's domestic life. Gwendolen learns to accept her womanhood, while Daniel is given his manhood, and quite literally, the promise of his patriarchal heritage. The essential and qualifying difference between them is that Gwendolen must acknowledge her real lack.
Having earlier fantasized her own capacity to lead, she is "disinherited" of the role of princess in exile, and forced to accept that she not only feels but is a "mere speck" in relation to the "wide-stretching purposes" facing Daniel. (lxix, 398) The objects of Daniel's desire are coincident with the adult role offered to him as a man, whereas Gwendolen can only learn the necessity of living with desire.

Thus it is, that despite the wish to give emotional and moral assent to the prospect of an effective idealism in Daniel Deronda, the text also evidences a real and irreconcilable separateness existing between the male and female worlds, and this separateness and its causes have a substantial part to play in accounting for the sense of two unequal "halves" in the novel, which critics have traditionally explained in terms of moral or aesthetic categories. The "fault" is not an artistic one, but one which is located in the conflict existing between individual desires, which do not necessarily recognize the boundaries of sexual stereotyping, and the needs of the social order, whose continuation depends on the perpetuation of cultural values which by necessity women must accept as the limitations of their lives. It is in the recognition of this necessity that the deep sense of resignation regarding Gwendolen resides, but it is nevertheless important to emphasize that its hope resides also in the character of Daniel Deronda himself. In him George Eliot pushed the emotional limits of masculinity beyond those accepted by conventional
stereotyping, giving him qualities of emotional intelligence for which she could find no appropriate form in earlier male characters. Although the integration of masculine needs in women is finally seen to be irreconcilable with social necessity, the novel gives the positive value of "feminine" sympathy an essential function in male experience.

VII

The final impression predominating at the end of Daniel Deronda remains, however, the gap between male and female experience, as if George Eliot's will to find ideal answers could not defend itself against the power of her own intellectual recognition and emotional knowledge of that gap. How deeply the separation permeates the text can be seen if one refers in detail to the formulation of the categories of masculinity and femininity and the roles of man and woman with the text of Milton's tragic poem, "Samson Agonistes," from which is taken the quotation which concludes Daniel Deronda. Ostensibly, the final quotation compares the deaths of Samson and Mordecai, both being visionaries among the Philistines, Samson's blindness working ironically to lead him, finally, to see "with inward eye illuminated." 73

The chorus in the poem compares Samson's "vision" with that of the Philistines, who in their eagerness for pleasure are blind to the consequences of their actions, both references recalling Gwendolen and her association with the "blind giant" of ignorance who would "make it sport to seize the pillars that hold up the long-wrought fabric of human good," (xxi, 340) and whose blindness "precipitates the mistaken soul on destruction." (xxi, 340):

So fond are mortal men
Fall'n into wrath divine,
As their own ruin on themselves invite,
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck.

(ll. 1682-86, p. 556)

By the end of the novel, Gwendolen, like Samson, has her inward vision restored. Samson's original blindness, however, signifies his betrayal of his vow to dedicate himself to God, and, therefore, to Israel, and the language he is given expresses that punishment as a loss of his manhood, a symbolic castration. His love for Delila leads to the loss of his hair, which for him means the loss of his identity as a man in the service of God and his people:

At length to lay my head and hallowed pledge
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
Of a deceitful concubine who shore me
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece,
Then turned me out ridiculous, despoiled,
Shav'n, and disarmed among my enemies.

(ll. 535-40, p. 531)

Of his relation to Delila Samson says,

I yielded, and unlocked her all my heart,
Who with a grain of manhood well resolved
Might easily have shook off all her snares;
But foul effeminacy held me yoked
Her bondslove; O indignity, O blot
To honor and religion! servile mind
Rewarded well with servile punishment:

(ll. 407-13, p. 528)
The word "effeminacy" has a double function in Samson's language, one projecting outward to refer to the nature of woman, and the other, turned inward, to express a lack of proper masculinity in himself, those qualities, that is, which are valued and honoured as belonging to men:

Effeminately vanquished? By which means
Now blind, disheartened, shamed, dishonoured, quelled,
To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My nation, and the work of Heav'n imposed,
But to sit idle on the household hearth
A burdensome drone? (ll. 562-67, p. 532)

"Effeminately vanquished" refers both to Delila's sexual "victory" and to Samson's sense of having been punished for being weak, like a woman, in succumbing to his attraction for her. Finally, his helplessness and consequent humiliation, his disgust with himself as a man, are expressed in terms which identify him as a woman. Thus, that which is given reference as "feminine" by male voices is accumulatively expressed in wholly negative terms.

The chorus's lengthy speech after Samson's meeting with Delila appears to summarize a thoroughly tried male conclusion regarding the dangers and inadequacy of women:

Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavished on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinished, judgement scant,
Capacity not raised to apprehend
Or value what is best
In choice, but oftest to attest the wrong?

Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best
Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil,
Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once joined, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent;

Favored of Heav'n who finds
One virtuous, rarely found,
That in domestic good combines:
Happy that house: 'tis his way to peace is smooth;
But virtue which breaks through all opposition,
And all temptation can remove,
Most shines and most is acceptáble above.
Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe,
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour;
So shall he least confusion draw
Of his whole life, not swayed
By female usurpation, nor dismayed.
(ll. 1025-59, p. 542)

The spirit of this summary recalls similar unspoken assumptions of male attitudes in Daniel Deronda, and in a similar way, "Samson Agonistes" concerns itself with the way men are the executors of the law (their own or God's) and women are its servants.

The tragedy of Samson is located in the necessity of self-destruction in the fulfilling of a higher duty. Again it is given to the chorus to express this point:

O dearly bought revenge, yet glorious:
Living or dying thou has fulfilled
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel, and how li'st victorious
Among thy slain self-killed,
Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoined
Thee with thy slaughterous foes.
(ll. 1660-67, pp. 555-6)

What this tragic sense cannot accommodate are the claims of the single female voice in the drama, that of Delila. Not only is Delila's account absent from the expression of the central tragic idea, but her feelings are ignored, or simply left outstanding. Delila's relation with Samson, according to his formulation, exists exclusively in terms of their sexual union. She, however, defends her betrayal of Samson by invoking a conflict of values between her personal love and her social duty, but each of her arguments is denied, leading her ultimately to conclude, "In argument with men a woman ever / Goes by the worse, whate'er be her cause." (ll. 903-4, p. 539) At first she approaches Samson
expressing the desire for forgiveness and a wish to serve
him to show her repentance. The words which express her
sense of conscience here could stand as a paraphrase of
Gwendolen's own ultimately awakened conscience and recognition
of the need to accept responsibility for the consequences
of her actions:

With doubtful feet and wavering resolution
I came, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,
which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge; yet if tears
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw),
My penance hath not slackened, though my pardon
No way assured...
If aught in my ability may serve
To lighten what thou suffer'st, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in my power,
Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.
(11. 732-47, pp. 535-36)

It is important to mark that in her confrontation
with Samson, who refuses to see her as anything but a
deceitful temptress, Delila argues from a sense that she
and Samson were mutually weak as human beings; her argument
does not make weakness an exclusive property of women:

Let weakness then with weakness come to parle,
So near related, or the same of kind;
Thine forgive mine, that men may censure thine
The gentler, if severely thou exact not
More strength from me than in thyself was found.
(11. 785-89, p. 537)

She pleads her case from love, also, arguing that she
acted from fear of losing Samson, but she admits that, in the
end, her actions were brought about by those very forces of
law and duty which Samson, himself, would evoke to justify
his actions against his enemies. Against the "powerful
arguments" of the Philistine rulers, Delila says, she could
not find adequate means of resisitance;
What had I
To oppose against such powerful arguments?
Only my love of thee held long debate;
And combated in silence all these reasons
With hard contest. At length that grounded maxim,
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men, that to the public good
Private respects must yield, with grave authority
Took full possession of me and prevailed;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining.
(ll. 861-70, p. 538)

The irony behind Delila's assumptions is revealed in
Samson's retort, which points exactly to the disjunction
which defeats her argument: woman's duty is to men, and
where men's social and personal needs coincide, to society;
where they do not, woman's obligations and interests are
decided by the man to whom she belongs. Samson outlines his
and Delila's relation to the Philistines, thus:

Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave
Parents and country; nor was I their subject,
Nor under their protection, but my own;
Thou mine, not theirs. (ll. 885-88, p. 539)

It is in reply to this speech that Delila remarks that
woman can never win an argument with a man, no matter what
her cause, and there is a distinct sense in which her
conclusion cannot be faulted as long as truth is a matter
which men have the power to construct and women are subject
to that power.

Effectively, the woman is excluded from the final debate
and left, both literally and metaphorically, no space for
the validity of her position to be acknowledged by either
text. The ultimate relation of Gwendolen to "Samson
Agonistes" is a double one; the first is located in her
identity as an ironic Samson figure, the "blind giant" of
ignorance who is intent on destroying the "long-wrought fabric of human good." (xxi, 340) By the end of the novel, however, Gwendolen has acquired a new way of seeing, a knowledge, which, according to the same epigraph, "is power, but it is a power reined by scruple, having a conscience of what must be and what may be." (xxi, 340) For a woman that knowledge leads only to resignation and silence. Gwendolen's passage into that knowledge and into her womanhood meant not only that she could no longer be represented as "blind" like Samson, but that she must be left voiceless and absent, like Delila. In a sense, therefore, another tragic dilemma exists separately from and running counter to the primarily intended tragedy of "Samson Agonistes," a tragedy which has its implications for Daniel Deronda. That tragic sense indicates the futility of women's voices in a social order whose structuring principles will not / cannot accommodate them. The irreconcilable nature of that problem is equally present in Daniel Deronda and is precisely registered in that acute sense of separation between Gwendolen and Daniel, and, indeed, between the two "halves" of the novel at its close. And it asserts itself also in the necessity of recognizing Alcharisi's claims for herself as at once valid and impossible.

In Henry James's "Daniel Deronda: A Conversation,"

Constantius remarks that

George Eliot always gives us something that is strikingly and ironically characteristic of human life; and what savours more of the essential crookedness of our fate than the sad cross-purposes of these young people. Poor Gwendolen's falling in love with Deronda is part of our own
luckless history, not of his. 74

Few statements about *Daniel Deronda* come so close both to hitting the mark on the one hand and passing so wide of it on the other. It seems hardly necessary to state that the problem of the novel simply cannot be expressed in terms of Gwendolen's "falling in love with Deronda," and his destiny lying elsewhere. On the other hand, it has been a major concern of this study to account for the "cross-purposes" in the text which James rightly points to. We can conclude, however, that the "cross-purposes" cannot adequately be understood unless the patriarchal context of the novel is recognized as a determining force which demands a separate inheritance of values and potential activity for men and for women. It is clear, moreover, that the implications which emerge from that recognition must form part of any final estimate of the novel's two separate conclusions for Gwendolen and Daniel, and it is the result of contemplating the novel and its conclusions within such a context that makes it seem part of what James calls our own "luckless history." For all the promise Daniel himself represents in pushing outwards the limitations of masculinity, the novel leaves an urgently persisting impression of the actual limits of femininity which Gwendolen must accept, and which make her, still, the "sadder sacrifice." 75

CONCLUSION

The problem of a conclusion is the implication of its being a summary: to summarize the "proofs" about the issues of masculinity and femininity in George Eliot's work would to some extent contradict the intention and method of this study. Essentially the "conclusions" reached here depend upon and are contained within the practice of reading across the texts with particular attention to questions of sex and gender. The efficacy of the approach in one sense lies in its ability significantly to alter or qualify any subsequent reading of the novels. It is the validity of the practice employed which is primarily under scrutiny here, rather than the extractable conclusions that can be drawn from it. There are, indeed, no revolutionary interpretations of George Eliot in relation to the "Woman Question;" but there is, I believe, a clearer and more precise analysis
of the subtle ways in which her work relates and contributes to the intricacies of that question. We find in George Eliot's work subtle and far-reaching evidence of the ways she was herself caught in the nineteenth-century ideologies of womanhood, but how her own peculiar combination of intellect and emotional perception penetrated the social practices which conflate sex and gender to define masculine and feminine by qualities of intellect and emotion and thus ensure the separate spheres of men and women.

In The Mill on the Floss, a dichotomy between a male world of "intellect" and a female world of "emotion" is most strictly delineated and provides much of the basis for the irresolvability of the conflict contained in the novel. Ultimately, Maggie Tulliver's "moist" world of dreams and feelings is irreconcilably isolated from the "dry" world of material reality, money and commerce and the attitudes which support these as the predominant structures of male power. The particular problem of Maggie's sex determining her choices is simultaneously proposed by the text and submerged within the irreconcilable categories of desire and duty, in which the novel finally plays out Tom's and Maggie's story, literally "swallowing" them up in the conflict. Ultimately, the argument is that if Maggie feels as she does and the world thinks as it does, there can be no solution. The flood becomes the only way, literally, of sweeping Maggie out of St. Ogg's, her conflict, and the novel.
In *Middlemarch*, whose project George Eliot said was "to show the gradual action of ordinary causes,"¹ that irreconcilable rift between intellect and emotion is strategically avoided by making the nature and extent of intellect and feeling in men's and women's experience inherent to the problem of the novel. In addition, the complex triangular structure of the narrative technique in *Middlemarch*, requiring the interrelation of reader, narrator and fiction, creates a distance between fiction and reader in which the interdependence of thought and emotion is demanded by the practice of reading. Requiring the reader to be conscious of the working of both intellect and emotion is itself a challenge to conventional stereotyped responses: by demanding both a "masculine" intellectual analysis of the text, "provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation,"² and asking the reader to "feel with" the characters, as Dorothea would ask of Celia,³ the narrative method implicitly questions those categories of feeling and thought which the "ordinary causes" in the fiction perpetuate as exclusive to either men or women. *Middlemarch* remains a modest challenge, however, posing more the need for, than the possibility of, the mutually interdependent relation of emotion and intellect in defiance of conventional sexual stereotypes. Ultimately, the dichotomy of thought and

² *Middlemarch*, Ch. xvi, p.249.
³ Ibid., Ch. lxxxiv, p.442.
and feeling prevails and is implicitly endorsed by the narrative technique. Dorothea's emotional knowledge is given the final value and assented to in terms of feeling itself. Lydgate's limitations, however, seen largely as the limitations of a "masculine" exclusivity of intellect, are made clear largely in terms of the intellect; we are persuaded of them by means of rational strategies and logical contradictions. This discrepancy in the narrative treatment of Lydgate and Dorothea finally reinforces the gender-specific responses which other aspects of the text call into question.

In Daniel Deronda, however, the connections masculine-male-intellect and feminine-female-feeling are finally dislodged and challenged in new ways. Besides making the "feminization" of Daniel possible, this disruption reveals the equally significant "masculine" aspect of Gwendolen; together both representations embody the conflicts inherent in culturally imposed gender identity. Noticeably absent from Gwendolen are the emotional investment, such as the narrative makes in Maggie Tulliver, or the reward for emotional learning, which the narrative grants to Dorothea Brooke. Because Gwendolen is free from the moral and emotional weight given to Maggie and Dorothea, the forces of material need and the power of ideological constructions in the shaping of women's (and men's) lives are focused the more clearly. This breakdown of the accepted categories of masculine and feminine in Daniel Deronda means that the novel can explore more radically than ever, the complex relationship between social (and moral) dictates and psychological needs.
In the characters of Daniel and Gwendolen problems of male and female experience are presented in terms of the contradictions between, on the one hand, desires which do not define themselves by sex, and, on the other, the laws of the social and moral order, which demand different forms of obedience, according to sex. To challenge those fixed ideas of sex and gender is to challenge the very basis of the social order. Such a challenge as Daniel's mother or Gwendolen represent endangers the entire fabric of kinship and property relations upon which that society is based. Ultimately, they seem to threaten to expose the very "abysses" George Eliot intimated in a letter to Mrs Nassau Senior in 1869:

I feel too deeply the difficult complications that beset every measure likely to affect the position of women and also I feel too imperfect a sympathy with many women who have put themselves forward in connexion with such measures, to give any practical adhesion to them. There is no subject on which I am more inclined to hold my peace and learn, than on the "Woman Question." It seems to me to overhang abysses, of which even prostitution is not the worst. 4

Daniel Deronda provides the clearest evidence as to what George Eliot may have feared from the "abysses" overhung by the "Woman Question." By positing the psychological forces which run counter to ideological constructions of femininity and motherhood, the novel profoundly questions its own intention to locate the source of human sympathy (and thus of morality) in the family,

and specifically, in the mother. In *Daniel Deronda* that overt assertion of mother-love as the essential and "natural" source of human sympathy receives its strongest challenge, where the pursuit of the ideal in the redeeming value of motherhood is matched by counter evidence that real, material and psychological forces, as manifested in Gwendolen's and Alcharisi's histories, contradict any simple assertion of that idea.

The "abysses" George Eliot feared do not take explicit shape in the novels, but their functioning presence is sensed in those spaces where the will to establish an ideal value for woman fails to match the persuasiveness of the reality to which the text also attests. On the one hand, the novels offer a sharply perceived diagnosis of the material and ideological constraints which radically divide women and men by experience and expectation, but ultimately, belief in determinism and fear of the abyss beyond which she could see no solutions, meant that George Eliot could only prescribe resignation to the reality which creates and survives on sexual division. But in the end, the reader remains conscious that making resignation a necessary and "human" response to the problems of existence runs counter to the internal evidence of the novels, that existence is not the same for all human beings; it requires more or less resignation, depending upon one's sex. The human necessity for the "unembittered compliance of the soul to the inevitable" 5 is complicated by the evidence that the

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"inevitable" is experienced differently for men and for women, and that it is largely "inevitable" because the advantages to male power structures guaranteed by the different spheres ensure the perpetuation of those structures, hence their appearance of "inevitability."

The example of Romola in comparison to Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda can illustrate the problem created by George Eliot when resignation is divorced from the context of sex and gender. In this novel, where the novelist tries to integrate the historical and the symbolic, the Renaissance woman, Romola, is destined to be the symbolic embodiment of the reconciliation of love and duty. In the process, however, the aspect of love, which is pleasure, or Eros, must be sacrificed to the selfless love of the mother/Madonna, which Romola comes to symbolize. The killing of pleasure in this symbolic framework is the price of self-sacrifice, but the reader is not meant to contemplate the implications of that cost, as that would challenge the validity of the symbol. The effectiveness of Romola's symbolism depends both on the application of exclusive gender roles for the sexes and on the fact that they will, at the same time, go unnoticed. For the symbolism of the novel to work, sex and gender must not be seen to be problematical; sex must be both an essential determining aspect of the symbol (i.e. Romola cannot be a man) but it must also go unacknowledged by the text. 


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or unwillingness to deal with the problematic nature of sex and gender, as experienced historically, confirms the truth of George Eliot's remark that "Romola is ideal." 7

In Middlemarch, where the role of the symbolic is weak and the demands of conventional realism greater, commitment to the "ordinary causes" of history makes sex and gender present as a problem of the text. Only in Daniel Deronda, where the experience of desire and the shaping of life choices are fully explored with reference to the complex interrelation between sex and gender, are the causes of resignation such as Gwendolen's accounted for in terms of socially and historically created divisions which determine the lives of men and women. Gwendolen, as a woman, is made neither the vehicle of symbolic love and fellowship, like Romola, nor granted an historically qualified, but emotionally fulfilling role, like Dorothea. She is the last of George Eliot's women in the line of Hetty Sorrel and Rosamond Vincy, unprotected by the investment of ideal value, and therefore able to show, as Hetty and Rosamond do, less complexly and less consequently, where the forces of male power operate in the social worlds of the novels. No sublimated value is imposed on Gwendolen; there is only awareness of the isolation and limits of her world at the end.

Daniel Deronda most trenchantly examines the way that

7 GEL, Vol. IV, p.103.
gender attributes are emotionally and psychologically independent from arbitrary definitions of sex; at the same time it reveals most thoroughly the effective divide between the sexes, the actual boundaries of activity which the social order imposes on men and women. George Eliot sought in Daniel to combine the feminine and the masculine, making a fitting agent of the future to integrate the qualities of mind and emotion, matching personal need with public duty. Ironically, her more persuasive achievement through Gwendolen was the representation of the ways in which the fact of sex, despite the complex integration of the masculine and feminine within the human psyche, effectively determines the woman's choices and the limits of her sphere.
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