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Reading George Eliot Reading Shakespeare

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University,

Halifax, Nova Scotia,

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To Judy, Jason, and Stacy.

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Abstract

Although George Eliot's novels have been compared with Shakespeare's plays and poems on an *ad hoc* basis, no systematic analysis has been made of the many connections that do in fact exist between their texts. This thesis tries to fill that gap by analyzing the numerous Shakespearean allusions, references, mottoes, and extracts found in Eliot's novels, letters, notebooks, journals, and marginalia. By bringing this information together for the first time (which, it is hoped, may prove useful to further studies), an attempt is made to assess how Eliot assimilated Shakespeare's texts into her own.

Chapter 1, the Introduction, surveys Eliot's close reading of Shakespeare's plays and poems and comments on some of the moral issues and aesthetic principles which she admired in his work and seems to have adopted or elaborated on in her own fiction. Subsequent chapters are devoted to each of her novels. They examine the subtle ways in which she uses Shakespeare's texts in the portrayal of her characters and the development of her plots and themes. The Shakespearean allusions in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, which are used to encourage the reader to view Eliot's ordinary, non-heroic characters with sympathy and understanding, are discussed in chapter 2. The thematic parallels between *Adam Bede* and *As You Like It* are explored in chapter 3, while aspects of Hamlet's tragedy are compared with Maggie Tulliver's story in chapter 4. Chapter 5 argues that *Romola* and *Silas Marner* may be seen as experiments in realism and romance--prompted by Eliot's reading of Shakespeare--while chapter 6 argues that *Felix Holt* has a dramatic structure suggestive

of Shakespeare's plays. The discussion of *Middlemarch*, in chapter 7, centres on Eliot's many borrowings from Shakespeare's texts and identifies the various similarities of character, plot, and theme that are woven into her text; and *Daniel Deronda*'s theme of "hearing with eyes," a metaphor used by Shakespeare to refer to the power of the imagination, is analyzed in chapter 8. Chapter 9, the conclusion, comments briefly on why Eliot spent so much time and effort studying Shakespeare.

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My mother, Mrs. K. M. van den Broek, bravely read or re-read almost

all of Eliot's novels--she balked at *Romola*--and served as my informed proofreader. Moreover, she supplied me with very fine translations and made many helpful suggestions and observations. For all her work and effort, I will always be grateful. Likewise my supervisory committee, especially Drs. Marjorie Stone and Ronald Huebert. They also gave generously of their time, and their interest in my topic and thoughtful criticism helped me a great deal.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Within months of the publication of *Adam Bede* in 1859, people began to compare George Eliot with Shakespeare. Barbara Bodichon reported a Miss Bayley (or Bailey) as saying, "Have you read A.B.--it is quite Shakespearean! That man is one of the first intellects of the day etc. etc. etc." In April of the same year, Theodore Martin made a similar comment to John Blackwood:

The views of life and character are so large, so Shakespearean in their breadth of sympathy, the pathos so natural and searching, the humour so genuine, the style so pure, that one almost forgets it is a book and loses himself in the reality of the incidents. (*Letters* 3: 42)

Other Victorians defined Eliot's "Shakespearean" qualities in the same way. In 1866, Matilda Edwards referred to a line from *The Spanish Gypsy*, "Speech is but broken light, upon the depth of the unspoken," as "That wonderful Shakespearean line" (*Letters* 9: 55); and in 1879, Alexander Innes Shand observed, "Like Shakespeare, [Eliot] throws herself into her characters from the highest to the humblest; she breathes and thinks even in the lofty individualities which she has conjured out of the depths of her dramatic genius. . . ." They meant that Eliot shared Shakespeare's "breadth of sympathy."

By the time *Middlemarch* was published in 1872, Eliot was routinely seen as a latter-day Shakespeare. Alexander Main frequently rhapsodized, "what Shakespeare did for Drama, George Eliot has done for its modern substitute the Novel."² A more sober critic, like the writer of "The Author of Adam Bede and Nathaniel Hawthorne" (1860), also ranked Eliot with Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Goethe because, like them, she control-

led her "powerful intellect," thereby vitalizing and exalting her imagination.⁴ In 1873, John Fiske told his wife that Herbert Spencer considered Eliot "the female Shakespeare, so to speak; and I imagine he is not far from right" (*Letters* 5: 463). Finally, three years after Eliot's death, P. Bayne wrote an article entitled "Shakespeare and George Eliot" (1883), in which he more or less considered the two writers to be of equal stature.⁵

U. C. Knoepfelmacher has pointed out that, although many Victorians believed there to be parallels between Eliot and Shakespeare, most overlooked the fact that she had consciously imitated him, particularly in "the productions of her later phase."⁶ Part of the reason for this, I suspect, had to do with the fact that the Victorians did not have access to Eliot's letters and notebooks, which might have alerted them to her very close reading of Shakespeare. Gordon S. Haight's index to *The Letters* lists well over one hundred Shakespearean references, and other editors have identified numerous extracts from Shakespeare's work and comments about him in transcribed editions of some of the notebooks. Victorian critics may have realised that, apart from the chapter-epigraphs of Eliot's own devising, Shakespeare provided her with more than any other writer,⁷ but they did not really analyze how he had influenced her.

Modern critics have done some work in this area. For instance, in *George Eliot's Early Novels*, Knoepfelmacher discusses parallels between *The Mill on the Floss* and *As You Like It*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*; and between *Silas Marner* and *Pericles*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Barbara Hardy, in *The Novels of George Eliot*, talks

about Eliot's "Shakespearean use of running images," and compares themes in the novels to themes in *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Timon of Athens*, and *The Winter's Tale*. And David Carroll notes that there is a strong resemblance between the latter play and *Silas Marner*.⁸ Their criticism, and that of others, is enormously suggestive and leads to a better understanding of Eliot's indebtedness to Shakespeare, yet much more remains to be said on the subject.

As William Baker says, the availability of a number of notebooks alone, and the scholarship of their editors, now make it possible for Eliot studies to go beyond a "critical impressionism"⁹ to a more exact account of what she took note of. It is often said that her personal understanding of the world is reflected in the novels, and enough material exists in her letters, notebooks, essays, and marginalia, for a systematic analysis of whom and what she assimilated. Therefore, this study is prompted and shaped, for the most part, by what we know of her actual response to Shakespeare.

For a number of reasons, I do not attempt a comprehensive reading of how the nineteenth century as a whole received Shakespeare--how Eliot's predecessors and contemporaries (poets, writers, essayists, critics, theatre reviewers, actor managers, editors, Bowdlerizers, scholars) in Great Britain, Germany and elsewhere viewed Shakespeare, his art and things Shakespearean--or how all of these have influenced her. I do not attempt this because such a study would involve duplicating existing works¹⁰; it would be endless, if done properly; and, I think, it would pose problems where the question of Shakespeare's influence on Eliot is concerned.

Augustus Ralli's volume 1 of *A History of Shakespearian Criticism* is useful in demonstrating why it is very difficult to try to identify everyone who *may* have influenced Eliot on Shakespeare. Ralli selects fifty-one English, twenty French and twenty-nine German commentators who wrote on Shakespeare during Eliot's lifetime alone. We know that she read some of the critics cited in Ralli's book (there is evidence to show that this was the case, and I will analyze or comment on that evidence in due course). But there were other critics, not listed by Ralli, whom she read closely.¹¹ And since she also read Italian, Spanish and Hebrew, it is possible that she took note of Shakespearean criticism in those languages as well.

Not only would such a study be virtually open-ended; it would also be fraught with difficulties. Unless exhaustive analyses on all the critics who may have influenced her were made, wrong or misleading conclusions might follow. Louis Marder's *His Exits and His Entrances: The Story of Shakespeare's Reputation* is a case in point. Marder talks about Coleridge and Lamb preferring to read Shakespeare's plays, rather than seeing them performed, and cites "the sensitive George Eliot" as an exception.¹² His source for this observation is Eliot's letter to Sara Hennell, dated 5 December 1859, in which she writes,

I'm glad you have had pleasure in the acting. In opposition to most people who love to read Shakspeare [sic] I like to see his plays acted better than any others: his great tragedies thrill me, let them be acted how they may. I think it is something like what I used to experience in old days in listening to uncultured preachers--the emotions lay hold of one too strongly for one to care about the medium. Before all other plays I find myself cold and critical, seeing nothing but actors and "properties."
(*Letters* 3: 228-29.)¹³

Intentionally or not, Marder encourages his readers to see a significant contrast between Eliot, Coleridge and Lamb. But, before inferring that she continued to reject arguments for preferring to read Shakespeare, it is worth remembering that she is also on record as having voiced the opposite opinion. In a review of *As You Like It*, George Henry Lewes said: "A great writer, who sat near me during the performance, asked, with something of triumph, whether this did not satisfy me that it was a great mistake ever to see one of SHAKESPEARE'S [sic] plays acted!" (*Pall Mall Gazette*, 10 March 1865)¹⁴ The "great writer" was, of course, George Eliot, who, as late as May 28th, 1880, complained again about another of Shakespeare's plays not being able to withstand a bad production. While on her honeymoon with John Cross, she wrote to Charles Lewes:

Last evening, to satisfy J's curiosity, we went to see [Ernesto] Rossi in Hamlet. I had seen him in the part in London and thought him sufficiently bad then, but he is certainly far worse when he is intending to enrapture his own countrymen. Any thing so unintelligent, so--*drunken* as the performance last night I never saw on any stage English or foreign. In the scene with his mother he roared (hoarsely) and stamped, and pulled the poor woman's arms as if he meant to put them out of joint. One would be prepared to enjoy [Henry] Irving after seeing Rossi. (*Letters* 7: 288-90)

Marder does not mention Eliot's change in attitude, either because he did not make a detailed study of what she thought or, if he did, because he did not have the time and space in *his kind of study* to chart all her thoughts on the subject. He may well have known that she showed ambivalence about watching or reading plays, that, despite the two comments I have just cited, she continued to go to the theatre, thoroughly enjoying some Shakespearean productions while disliking others. Be that as it may, the result of Marder's study is that his comment on Eliot is incomplete and potentially misleading.¹⁵ But then it is very

difficult to represent accurately the various, sometimes contradictory, views held by every nineteenth-century person of note who commented on Shakespeare. Even if it was possible to know precisely what the nineteenth century as a whole thought about Shakespeare, we would be confronted with what modern critical theoreticians call an intertext, "a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located," and which cannot be "reduced to a problem of sources or influences."¹⁶

For all these reasons, I restrict the scope of my enquiry to a consideration of those texts that contain direct or circumstantial evidence suggesting that Eliot was influenced--in a variety of ways and to differing degrees--by Shakespeare's work and Shakespearean critics whom we know she read.

Here it might be argued that it is still difficult to talk about how any text selected by me has been influenced, since that presupposes that the text's ultimate meaning is known, and that is never possible. For instance, Claudia Hotter Gosselin, a proponent of Intertextuality, describes a text as an "active, generative mechanism in its own right," in which even the "writer is forced to function." The writer-text-reader relationship means that the meaning assigned to a text by a writer has no absolute authority over the way in which it can be interpreted by a reader. The writer and reader each deconstruct and reconstruct a text in accordance with their "preordered and predigested" senses of reality. Consequently, a text can have different meanings for different people. Literary borrowings within a text are fragments of earlier texts that can also have different meanings, and, since the borrowings "function as

generative mechanisms that stimulate the process of writing and as disruptive elements, undermining the supposed unity of the writer's voice,"¹⁷ it is virtually impossible to talk about a text's "real" meaning.

However, although I accept that a text is open to more than one interpretation, I do not accept that it is open to any. A theoretical perspective may lead to the conclusion that the ultimate meaning of a particular text is forever disappearing into the infinity of the inter-text; but in practice we approach a text as someone's creation and assume that the writer knew what s/he wanted to say.¹⁸ We also take note of when a text was written (if we did not, we would fail to see the joke in the story of the man who watched one of Shakespeare's plays and said afterwards that it was filled with everyday quotations). I do not wish to ridicule or ignore literary theories that have opened up new and exciting ways of looking at texts, but I cannot help agreeing with Stephen Greenblatt when he says that the study of literature "is [also] the study of contingent, particular, intended, and historically embedded works. . . ." ¹⁹ No doubt, my "preordered and predigested" sense of reality will affect my interpretation of Eliot's texts, Shakespeare's texts and Eliot's readings of Shakespeare's texts. But then, in freely merging history and theory with interpretation, I only claim to be engaged "in an eclectic form of literary study less obsessed with controlling truth than (perhaps) with its ability to provoke the pleasure of new ideas."²⁰

Thus, I begin my readings of Eliot's novels by locating their Shakespearean extracts, allusions and references. I then supplement

these with other Shakespearean material found in letters, essays, articles, reviews, Eliot's marginalia in books on Shakespeare, as well as transcribed and manuscript notebooks held in a number of public and university libraries in the United States and Great Britain. Having located the borrowings, I treat them as actual or rejected attempts on her part to create certain effects, patterns or meanings. I try to answer questions such as: Why this allusion, reference or epigraph? How does it help her? When was it written? What could she have had in mind? By interpreting her themes, plots and characters as well as her borrowings, and by tracing the ways in which they interact, I hope to make some interesting observations about her art and especially her use of Shakespeare.

Since the connections between the works of Eliot and Shakespeare vary from novel to novel and even within novels, I do not always claim the existence of direct influence. Sometimes the connections are of little consequence. Occasionally, there are figures of speech, betraying little more than her unconscious use of Shakespeare's language. But more often than not, her selections indicate that she deliberately imitated or emulated him. It is frequently the case that allusions to specific plays or poems, or references to how well one of her characters reads Shakespeare, are designed to make us see certain similarities between characters, plots and themes. But there are also times when she used Shakespeare as a point of departure for creating her own characters. In *Scenes of Clerical Life*, for instance, allusions to Shakespeare are designed to show how different her ordinary characters are from his heroic figures.

References to what Eliot's contemporaries or predecessors had to say about Shakespeare are also made, but only when there is evidence that she took notice of what they said and that they somehow mediated her response to Shakespeare. For instance, in my discussion of *The Mill on the Floss* I refer to a brief allusion to Goethe's--or more precisely, Wilhelm Meister's--reading of *Hamlet*, which suggests that Eliot was thinking of this play while writing Maggie Tulliver's tragic story. And in the case of *Romola*, I try to demonstrate that Eliot's artistic interests were influenced by what Lewes had to say about two particular theatrical productions of *Hamlet* and *Othello*. My aim is to focus on how and where Eliot experimented with aspects of Shakespeare's art.

The connections between Eliot's and Shakespeare's works vary in kind, and they also vary in frequency and complexity. Fewer and less sophisticated allusions and references to Shakespeare's work are found in the early and middle novels than in the later ones. In *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner* and *Romola*, there are, I think, significant Shakespearean allusions and references or structural parallels; but it is not until *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* that she introduced chapter epigraphs (Shakespearean ones included) and turned more and more to Shakespeare's dramatic structures and methods of delineating and presenting characters.

The early and middle novels contain less Shakespearean material, in part, because they are, generally speaking, less complex, less ambitious than the later ones: they do not have the same range of characters, plots and themes. Nevertheless, it is rewarding to see how Eliot began using Shakespearean references and allusions for her character analyses

and portayals and unifying ideas. His texts became more and more important to her as her artistic powers matured, and, in order to appreciate that, one should start at the beginning of her writing career. To my knowledge, her indebtedness to Shakespeare has never before been explored in this systematic way.

At the end of this introduction I will outline more thoroughly what each subsequent chapter will try to demonstrate or argue. But first, it is necessary to comment more widely on her reading of Shakespeare.

Eliot first read Shakespeare at Miss Franklin's school in Coventry, in 1832, at the age of thirteen.²¹ We do not know which edition she read there, but, given the time and the fact that the Miss Franklins were Baptists, it was probably an expurgated version. Henrietta Maria Bowdler's *Family Shakespeare* and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* were published in 1807; in 1818, Dr. Bowdler brought out a second edition to his sister's first, changing the name slightly to *Family Shakspeare*; and, as Noel Perrin points out, by 1821 the latter edition "suddenly leaped up to become the best-selling Shakespeare in England."²² It is also likely that Eliot's own religious fervour prevented her from seeing an unexpurgated edition until some time after 1841, when she met, among others, Charles and Caroline Bray and began her radical revision of many ideas and beliefs.

Thanks to the Shakespeare industry that had been gathering steam since the late seventeenth century, any number of eighteenth and nineteenth-century editions of complete or individual works may have been read or consulted by Eliot at one time or another after 1841. There

were many to choose from, including editions by Rowe, Pope, Cibber, Theobald, Warburton, Johnson, Malone, Boswell-Malone, Fuller, Collier, Knight, as well as adaptations of some plays by actor-managers like Garrick, Kemble, Edmund Kean, Macready, and Charles Kean. In my appendix, I list the editions owned by the Leweses, including Knight's twelve volume *Works* (1842-44). But whether that means that this was the edition "most readily available" to Eliot, as claimed by J. C. Pratt and V. A. Neufeldt,²³ remains a matter for speculation. In March 1845, Lewes wrote "Shakspeare [sic] and his Editors," in which he gave Knight and Collier mixed reviews. He demonstrated an extensive knowledge of Shakespeare's life, contemporaries, plays, poems and the academic debates on cruxes, and concluded by saying that most of Shakespeare's editors have been "men of fourth-rate scholarship, and first-rate inability."²⁴ Eliot even looked at Schlegel's translation of Shakespeare. In 1855 she wrote "Translations and Translators" for the *Leader* and praised his "faithful adherence to [Shakespeare]," adding, "more frequently the German is a feeble echo, and here and there it breaks down in a supremely fine passage." She cites examples from *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus* to show how misunderstandings of words or phrases can lead to absurd translations.²⁵ All this suggests that the Leweses worked with more than one edition. In view of these articles, it would not surprise me if at one time or another they owned or had access to copies of the Folios and/or Quartos.

It is certain, however, that once Eliot began reading Shakespeare, she continued to do so regularly until shortly before she died. From the notebooks, we know that the Leweses were particularly fond of reading

aloud to each other. In "Recollections of Berlin," she writes that during the delightful long evenings, "we read Shakespeare, Goethe, Heine, and Macaulay. . . ," and John Cross also notes that during those months spent in Germany (July 1854-March 1855) her Shakespeare reading list included *Measure for Measure*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar* ("very much struck with the masculine style of this play, and its vigorous moderation, compared with 'Romeo and Juliet'"), *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Henry IV*, *Othello*, *As You Like It*, *King Lear* ("sublimely powerful"), *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Coriolanus*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Richard III*, and *Hamlet*.²⁶

When the Leweses returned to England in March 1855 and Eliot stayed in Dover until Lewes found a place for them in London, she continued to read Shakespeare: *Venus and Adonis*, *The Passionate Pilgrim* and some of the sonnets. In July 1856, whilst at Tenby, in South Wales, where Lewes was engaged in his scientific studies, they were "reading zoology and Shakespeare aloud"; in April 1857, she read *Macbeth*, *The Tempest*, *Henry V*, *Henry VIII*, and the three parts of *Henry VI*. Her *Journal*, dated August 1, 1869, has the following entry: "Yesterday, sitting in Thornie's room [Lewes's second son who at the time was dying from paraplegia], I read through all Shakespeare's 'sonnets,'" and on September 10, 1869, she wrote that her reading for the week included *Macbeth*. Cross says that after Eliot recovered from the shock of Lewes's death in November 1878, "we read . . . a great many of Sainte-Beuve's 'Causeries,' and much of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth." Finally, in September 1880, three months before her death, they were still

reading a good deal together, Shakespeare included, with Eliot acting as Cross's teacher.²⁷

It is tempting to think that Shakespeare helped her decide to enter into a relationship with the married Lewes. Her dislike of marital laws based on narrow-minded conventions is reflected in a letter she wrote to Charles Bray on June 11, 1848--six years before she and Lewes began living together. Commenting on Jane Eyre's refusal to marry Rochester while Bertha lived, she said:

All self-sacrifice is good--but one would like it to be in a somewhat nobler cause than that of a diabolical law which chains a man soul and body to a putrifying carcase (*Letters* 1: 268).

She found Shakespeare's spirited portrayal of love much more appealing:

It is remarkable that Shakespeare's women almost always *make* love, in opposition to the conventional notion of what is fitting for woman. Yet his pictures of women are belauded. Is it so with contemporary dramatists?²⁸ (Eliot's emphasis)

Later, after reading Saint Marc Girardin's *Cours de Literature Dramatique* (1855), in which the author says that Shakespeare's women are not frank about expressing love, Eliot listed a number of Shakespearean heroines to disprove him.²⁹

Women "making love" and "the conventional notion of what is fitting for [them]" are recurring themes in Eliot's own stories and novels. One thinks of Caterina and Janet in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Dinah and Hetty in *Adam Bede*, Maggie Pulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, Romola, Esther in *Felix Holt*, Rosamond and Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, and Gwendolen, Mira and the Princess in *Daniel Deronda*. They all have--or develop--strong, natural feelings of one kind or another towards the men in their lives; most find it impossible to obey conventional notions and, while some escape their tragic, claustrophobic situations, others do not.

It is also interesting to note that some of these women are compared with Juliet, Desdemona, Imogen and Cleopatra. The latter belong to that group of Shakespearean heroines revered by some nineteenth-century bardologists. J. M. Nosworthy neatly summarizes the attitude when he says, "Shakespeare's . . . heroines, especially those of the Romances [and Imogen in particular], were exalted into paragons of womanly virtue."³⁰ Eliot was aware of the tendency, as her letter to the Brays, dated 15 February 1850, demonstrates: "It is amusing enough to see how those small celebrities, the Cowden-Clarkes, make their living out of Shakespeare" (*Letters* 1: 329-31). Haight explains that Charles Cowden-Clarke stayed with the Brays in January of that year while lecturing on Shakespeare at Coventry. Mary Cowden-Clarke's *Complete Concordance to Shakespeare* came out in 1844-45 and her *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* was about to be published (see *Letters* 1: 329-31n). That does not mean, however, that Eliot continued to laugh at the people who idolised Shakespeare's women and things Shakespearean. Years later (in September 1871), Alexander Main reminded her of the Cowden-Clarkes by telling her that they called him their "Shakespearean Son."³¹ By now she was more than willing to tolerate a small celebrity like Main, who also made a living revering Shakespeare and, later, Eliot herself.

In subsequent chapters I will argue that Eliot's allusions to Shakespeare's heroines indicate that she did not necessarily wish to disparage the idea that women should be willing to sacrifice themselves for all that is good and noble. Far from it. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that she was not a bardologist. Her comment to Bray, "one would like it [self-sacrifice] to be in a somewhat nobler cause than that of a

diabolical law," also suggests she was equally interested in attacking the unfair, oppressive laws often imposed on women by men--laws which denied women the opportunity or freedom to express themselves fully. Eliot's allusions to Shakespeare's heroines sometimes serve a dual purpose: they point to faults or character flaws in her women as well as to the brutal circumstances in which they often find themselves.

In a letter to John Morley, dated 14 May 1867, Eliot spelled out in greater detail--with the help of a Shakespearean allusion--where she stood on the issue of sexual equality. The letter was occasioned by the debates on female enfranchisement, which was proposed by J. S. Mill in an amendment to Gladstone's Reform Bill, and which Morley supported. Eliot supported it too, but with some qualifications:

I fear you may have misunderstood something I said the other evening about nature. I never meant to urge the "intention of Nature" argument, which is to me a pitiable fallacy. I mean that as a fact of mere zoological evolution, woman seems to me to have the worse share in existence. But for that very reason I would the more contend that in the moral evolution we have "art which does mend nature" [cf. *The Winter's Tale* IV.iv.95-96]. It is the function of love in the largest sense, to mitigate the harshness of all fatalities. And in the thorough recognition of that worse share, I think there is a basis for a sublimer recognition in women and a more regenerative tenderness in man.

However, I repeat that I do not trust very confidently to my own impressions on this subject. The peculiarities of my own lot may have caused me to have idiosyncrasies rather than an average judgment. The one conviction of the matter which I hold with some tenacity is, that through all transitions of goal towards which we are proceeding is a clear discerned distinction of function (allowing always for exceptional cases of individual organization) with as near an approach to equivalence of good for woman and for man as can be secured by the effort of growing moral force to lighten the pressure of hard non-moral outward conditions. (*Letters* 4: 364-65)

Commenting on the same letter, Gillian Beer writes: "That women are to be left at the mercy of their procreativity, caught between that and 'hard non-moral outward conditions' seems a melancholy upshot of her the

brooding. Yet how else can we read this letter?"³² It is a melancholic view; but the letter can also be read as suggesting that happiness is possible when there is a willingness to encourage and allow women to rise above their "zoological" limitations.

The letter's Shakespearean allusion aptly makes the point. Polixenes tells Perdita:

Yet nature is made better by no mean
 But nature makes that mean; so, over that art,
 Which you say adds to nature, is an art
 That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
 A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
 And make conceive a bark of baser kind
 By bud of nobler race. This is an art
 Which does mend nature--change it rather--but
 The art itself is nature.

(*The Winter's Tale* IV.iv.88-97)

J. H. P. Pafford points out that Shakespeare was not the first to make the "statement that any man-made means of improving nature is itself the creation of nature, since man and his powers are also natural. . . ." But in this instance Shakespeare uses the argument to show that we are not without influence in the great scheme of things, and he later reinforces the idea in Florizel's comment to Perdita: "Though Fortune, visible an enemy, / Should chase us, with my father, power no jot / Hath she to change our loves. . ." (V.i.215-17). It is precisely because Florizel is so generous and loving that he intends to elevate Perdita from her rustic origins: neither knows at this stage that she is a king's daughter. And as the play also makes clear, the minute Leontes learns to love Hermione without qualification, she is restored to "life."

Like Shakespeare, Eliot saw that our lives, which are often hard or unfair, can be improved, or at least made tolerable, by right moral

conduct through the influence of "love in the largest sense." And this is true not just for women. Once Silas Marner, for instance, comes to recognise this through the agency of Eppie, he improves his lot immeasurably.

Some critics have tended to undervalue this very important point, preferring instead to dwell on Eliot's conception of a deterministic Nature. For instance, when trying to account for the severe way in which Hetty Sorrel is "rejected," Knoepfmacher writes:

Adam Bede is ruled by a power as absolute as Milton's God. "Nature," the narrator informs us, knits men together, "by muscle and bone, and divides us by the subtler web of our brains; blends yearning and repulsion; and ties our heartstrings to beings that jar us at every moment". . . . This Nature stamps the personality of all men . . . and "has a language of her own, which she uses with strict veracity". . . . Those who dare to "extract the opposite of her meaning" . . . will suffer for their mistakes; even those who submit to her buffets soon learn, as small children do, "not to expect that our hurts will be made much of" Though equally harsh and demanding, Milton's God had been just; moreover, His justice was tempered by the Son's mercy. By comparison, the exacting Nature whose ways George Eliot's narrator tries to justify seems capricious and indifferent.³⁴

To some extent, Knoepfmacher is right: Eliot did see Nature imposing itself on people. In three letters she referred to "the skiey influences," recalling the Duke's comment to Claudio, "A breath thou art, / Servile to the all the skyey influences / That dost this habitation where thou keep'st / hourly afflict. . ." (*Measure for Measure* III.i.8-11). On July 15, 1861, she wrote to John Blackwood giving an account of Lewes's bad health saying, "I wish I could have sent you a letter with more welcome news in it to assist the skiey influences" (*Letters* 3:440); she told Mrs. Taylor on March 3, 1864, "I hope you are less abjectly under the control of the skiey influences than I am" (*Letters* 4: 134-35); and on January 31, 1866, she explained to Frederick Harrison,

"Today we have rain. . . . You don't yet know what it is be a sickly wretch, dependent on these skiey influences" (*Letters* 4: 231-32). The comments make clear that Eliot believed in some sort of severe, indifferent and imposing Nature holding sway over our lives. But how does Nature affect us? It is necessary to distinguish between accidents that befall us and the moral choices we make. The world is full of "skyeey influences," or "hard non-moral outward conditions," as she told Morley. Yet Nature holds no power over the ways in which we conduct ourselves towards one another. Claudio is in jail and threatened with execution because he is "servile" to Angelo's, not Nature's, influence.

Besides *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter's Tale*, Eliot also liked to quote from *As You Like It* when trying to distinguish between the world we necessarily have to endure and the one we can attain once we renounce selfishness and become sympathetic towards each other. *As You Like It* is the play most frequently referred to in her letters and novels, and an early letter to Maria Lewis, dated 27 February 1839, helps to explain why. Having heard that her friend was "in trouble" probably ill--Eliot wrote to comfort her: "I set so high a value on 'the sweet uses of adversity' that I am in danger of failing in sympathy" (*Letters* 1: 15-18). Duke Senior also speaks of "the sweet uses of adversity" (cf. II.i.1-17) when he muses on his state of exile. Eliot's letter reflects the religious fervour that characterizes many of the letters written during this period, a fervour not found in *As You Like It*. The letter contains five quotations from the Bible and nine stanzas from a hymn by Dr. John Ryland beginning, "'Sovereign ruler of the skies!'" Nevertheless, there is a parallel between the Duke's view of

world and Eliot's. "The sweet uses of adversity" help both to see their own relative insignificance in the great scheme of things and to place their faiths in powers greater than themselves. Each understands that there is more to the human experience than worldly interests, what the Duke calls a life of "painted pomp" (II.i 3).

Eliot continued to use the allusion after she renounced her Evangelicalism. While her father was ill, she wrote to Sara Hennell on April 26, 1848:

Dear Father is so decidedly progressing towards recovery that I am full of quiet joy--a gentle dawning light after the moonlight of sorrow. I have found already some of the "sweet uses" that belong only to what is called trouble--which is after all only a deepened gaze into life. . . . (Letters 1: 258-59)

This time she did not look to heaven for relief from life's adversities: as with Duke Senior, adversity taught her to make moral distinctions, to value that which gives joy and to put into perspective that which does not.

Eliot also liked to use Rosalind's lines, "O how full of / briers is this working-day world" (I.iii.11-12). Commenting on them, Thomas Pinney writes:

"Working-day": the phrase, originally from *As You Like It*, I.iii.12, is a key term in George Eliot's conception of realism. She uses it in the essay on "Evangelical Teaching" and "Three months in Weimar"; in *Adam Bede*, chs. 27 and 50; *Felix Holt*, Introduction; and *Middlemarch*, ch. 56. See also *Letters*, I, 44; 66. The *OED*, which cites the *Middlemarch* passage, glosses the term as equivalent to "workaday" in the sense of ordinary humdrum everyday life."³⁵

I suggest that the term was also used to outline Eliot's conception of morality. The phrase helps Rosalind to express her pessimism while she and Celia are still at the corrupt court. Her despondency all but disappears in the forest of Arden, where she is transformed into a

happy, vivacious woman. Arden has that effect on people. Even Oliver, intent on killing Orlando, succumbs to its moral influence. Only Jaques remains "melancholy." He tells Rosalind that his melancholy is

compounded of many simples, extracted from
many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation
of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps
me in a most humorous sadness.

(IV.i.16-19)

His "humorous sadness" may be glossed as "capricious" or "whimsical" sadness,³⁶ because his view of life, conditioned through living inside and outside Arden, is both comic and tragic. In the Forest of Arden, there is harmony: rustics live with noblemen, domestic animals with animals of prey; but beyond Arden lies the court of the usurping Duke. It remains to be seen whether or not the happiness found in the other-worldly Arden will extend to the "real" world, to which the exiled court returns at the end of the play--but the possibility exists. In Eliot's eyes, happiness is possible, but it is usually tempered with sadness. As she wrote in *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879),

Take a large enough area of human life and all comedy melts into tragedy, like the Fool's part by the side of Lear. The chief scenes get filled with erring heroes, guileful usurpers, persecuted discoverers, dying deliverers: everywhere the protagonist has a part pregnant with doom. The comedy sinks to an accessory, and if there are loud laughs they seem a convulsive transition from sobs; or if the comedy is touched with a gentle lovingness, the panoramic scene is one where

"sadness is a kind of mirth
So mingled as if mirth did make us sad
And sadness merry."

[*Two Noble Kinsmen*]³⁷

Jaques' ruminations over the complexity of life, its interconnectedness, and his subsequent "humorous sadness" usefully describe a side of Eliot's own nature. On September 21, 1857, she wrote to Sara Hennell: "I

am so glad there are thousands of good people in the world who have very decided opinions and are fond of working hard to enforce them--I like to feel and think everything and do nothing, a pool of the 'deep contemplative' kind" (*Letters* 2: 382-84). However, another side of her refused to be lulled into a passive, melancholic view of the world. On January 25, 1876, she wrote to Dr. Joseph Frank Payne,

my writing is simply a set of experiments in life--an 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 may strive to keep hold of as something more sure than shifting theory. (*Letters* 6: 216-17)

Throughout her fiction, Eliot looks forward to a time when people will once again find it possible to "fleet the time carelessly as they did in the / golden world" (*As You Like It* I.i.118-19), when they will create better lives for themselves by practising right moral conduct. But she also dwells on the "working-day world," a world of natural ills made worse by the unsympathetic, intolerant or careless behaviour of individuals or societies towards others. While she was still struggling to retain her faith, she told Francis Watts that her imagination was "an enemy that must be cast down," because it lured her with the shallow pleasures "of only 'working day' price." At that time--the letter is dated September 17, 1842---she believed that the only remedy was to listen to God's word and dwell on the "golden world" of heaven (*Letters* 1: 65-67). Once she ceased to be subject to God's authority, "love in the largest sense" became the vehicle for reaching such a world.

In subsequent chapters I will show that Eliot continually examined the circumstances and attitudes that must prevail before it is possible to live in a "golden world." By drawing attention to the Shakespearean

allusions, I will argue that Adam Bede, for instance, only finds true happiness when he abandons the excessive pride he takes in the "working day world" and accepts the "golden world" that Dinah represents for him. Similarly, I will point to Eliot's irony when she describes Hetty and Arthur Donnithorne as living in a "golden world": their irresponsibility temporarily plunges Hayslope into a "working-day world" period of guilt, shame, disillusionment and recriminations. It is fundamental to an understanding of Eliot's meaning that she holds individuals responsible for making right moral choices, however difficult those choices may be. Similarly, it is important to realize that she frequently resorted to plays like *As You Like It*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Measure for Measure* when making that point.

In a letter to Maria Lewis, dated March 16, 1839, Eliot identified another aspect of Shakespeare's work that interested her. She discussed the value of reading fiction and said that the following were worth spending time on: *Don Quixote*, Butler's *Hudibras*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gil Blas*, Byron's "Poetical romances," Southey's poetry, Walter Scott and especially Shakespeare.

Shakespeare has a higher claim than this on our attention but we have need of as nice a power of distillation as the bee to suck nothing but honey from his pages. However as in life we must be exposed to malign influences from intercourse with others if we would reap the advantages designed for us by making us social beings, so in books.

The letter implies that fiction should be realistic, and, therefore, the remark about Shakespeare is particularly interesting:

As to the discipline our minds receive from the perusal of fictions I can conceive none that is beneficial but may be attained by that of history. It is the merit of fictions to come within the orbit of probability; if unnatural they would no longer please. If it be said that the mind must have relaxation, "Truth is strange stranger than fiction." When a person has

exhausted the wonders of truth, there is no other resort than fiction; till then I cannot imagine how the adventures of some phantom conjured up by fancy can be more entertaining than the transactions of real specimens of human nature, from which we may safely draw inferences. . . . (Letters 1: 21-24)

Haight rightly says that we should not take this "pious homily" seriously,³⁸ because, while she said that reading fiction was permissible, "*always provided our leisure is not circumscribed by duty within narrow bounds*" (Eliot's emphasis), she frequently alluded to "the adventures of phantoms conjured up by fancy." Letters written about this time are peppered with echoes from religious works as well as fiction.³⁹

A much more thorough and mature statement about the need for realism in art is found in "The Natural History of German Life: Riehl," written for the *Westminster Review* and published in 1856. In it she said that "Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot." Since she considered the latter to be the artist's duty, she went on to say that the artist has a sacred duty not to falsify the "life of the People":

It is not so very serious that we should have false ideas about evanescent fashions--about the manners and conversation of beaux and duchesses; but it is serious that our sympathy with the perennial joys and struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the humour in life of our more heavily laden fellow-men, should be perverted, and turned towards a false object instead of the true one.

This perversion is not the less fatal because the misrepresentation which gives rise to it has what the artist considers a moral end. The thing for mankind to know is, not what the motives and influences which the moralist thinks *ought* to act on the labourer or the artisan, but what are the motives and influences which *do* act on him. We want to be taught to feel, not for the heroic artisan or the sentimental peasant, but for the peasant in all his coarse apathy, and the artisan in all his suspicious selfishness.⁴⁰ (Eliot's emphasis)

The article was not directly prompted by her reading of Shakespeare, but that reading did, I think, help her to formulate her ideas. As Haight says, "The Natural History" was written when she and Lewes were on a "zoological" trip, and "Sharing in Lewes's biological researches had intensified her desire to 'escape from vagueness.'"⁴¹ Sharing in his thoughts on Shakespeare probably intensified that desire as well. I have already mentioned that they were in the habit of reading Shakespeare aloud to each other, and it is significant that they were doing so at this time. It is very likely, therefore, that Lewes's views on Shakespeare's dramatic and poetic genius contributed to Eliot's thoughts on realism, and, more important, that those views encouraged her to learn from Shakespeare's art at a time when she was about to start writing her own fiction.

Lewes was probably the most influential of all the Shakespearean critics whom Eliot took note of. Both before and after he met her, he expressed a deep interest in the theatre, reviewed numerous stage productions and commented extensively on how Shakespeare's plays should be performed.⁴² In my discussions of *Romola*, *Silas Marner*, and *Felix Holt*, I will refer to some of these reviews and comments and will argue that she agreed with many of his ideas. And just as she learned from him, he learned from her. One of Eliot's notebooks points to the strong probability that she helped Lewes with some of his research for *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (1875), a book largely based on previously published reviews of stage productions and articles on drama. In his chapter "Shakspeare [sic] as Actor and Critic," Lewes suggests that Shakespeare was probably a bad actor because, "the delicate sensitive

ness of his organization, which is implied in the exquisiteness and flexibility of his genius, would absolutely have unfitted him for the presentation of characters demanding a robust and weighty animalism."⁴³ In *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 3, there are a number of entries about Shakespeare, which would have been useful to Lewes, including the following:

Chettle, editing the Groat's worth of Wit says Shakspeare [sic] was "excellent in the quality he professeth." The rest of the evidence is rather to the effect that his acting was indifferent.⁴⁴

Baker notes that the dating of Eliot's entries is difficult,⁴⁵ but it is reasonable to suppose that these entries were made while Lewes was still compiling information for his book and that she read, perhaps re-read, these commentators to help him.

In the same chapter, Lewes goes on to say that Shakespeare did know, despite the fact that he was probably an "indifferent" actor, how an actor should act---see the advice to the actors in *Hamlet*--and that the advice is still relevant. Shakespeare, he says, tried to make actors conscious of a need to feel and to represent the emotions of their characters, and in this respect the actor is much like the poet:

The poet cannot write while his eyes are full of tears, while his nerves are trembling from mental shock, and his hurrying thoughts are too agitated to settle into definite tracks. But he must have felt, or his verse will be a mere echo. It is from the memory of past feelings that he draws the beautiful image with which he delights us. He is tremulous again under the remembered agitation, but it is a pleasant tremor, and in no way disturbs the clearness of his intellect. He is a spectator of his own tumult; and though moved by it, can yet so master it as to select from it only these elements which suit his purpose.⁴⁶

In a letter written on March 16, 1855, while the Leweses were in Germany, Eliot shows that she agreed with this definition of the poet's art, that a balance should be struck between disinterestedness and

sympathy. She recollects visits to private galleries in Berlin and says that at one gallery she saw Kaulbach's "illustrations of Shakespeare, and we saw the originals of two from Macbeth." She goes on:

They are very *Germanesque*, but still, finer than any other attempt at Shakespeare illustration that I have seen. One of them represents the moment when Macbeth is girding on his armour and receives the news of his wife's death. The spirits of those he has murdered are hovering in the air above him and amongst them of course is Banquo with his children. This group of childish spirits, looking on in chubby composedness while their murderer is torn with contending passions, is the best bit of the picture. The Macbeth is too demonical--not Shakespearian. (*Letters* 2: 193)

What she meant by *Germanesque* may be seen in the following comment on the Germans in a letter to Charles Bray, also sent from Berlin but dated November 12, 1854:

It is very amusing to see how very comfortable the Germans are without many of the things which England considers the safeguards of society. The Germans eat their Bratwurst and Kuchen [sic] from house to house in gladness of heart though they have no episcopal establishment and though they have some other things which are thought very noxious with us. I think them immensely inferior to us in creative intellect and in the possession of the *means* of life, but they better know how to use the means they have for the end of enjoyment. One sees everywhere in Germany what is the rarest of all things in England--thorough *bien-être*, freedom from gnawing cares and ambitions, contentment in inexpensive pleasures with no suspicion that happiness is a vice which we must not only not indulge in ourselves but as far as possible restrain others from giving way to. There are disadvantages, of course, they don't improve their looks and carriages as we do, and they consider a room furnished when it has a looking-glass and an *escritoire* in it. They put their knives in their mouths, write unsit-out-able comedies and unreadable books; but they are decidedly happy animals. . . . (*Letters* 2: 184) (Eliot's emphasis)

Germanesque, therefore, means "crude" or "lacking in refinement or detail" or "over-simplified", all of which, when applied to art, tend to give "feeble representations of life and character." This was a charge brought by Eliot against Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth* and other novels by writers "not contented with the subdued colouring--the half tints of real life"

(George Eliot to Mrs. Peter Alfred Taylor," London, 1 February 1853, *Letters* 2: 85). For Eliot, "Shakespearean" meant the opposite: Macbeth is not simply a demon, as Kaulbach had apparently visualised and painted him; he is a complex man worthy of careful analysis and study.

A similar attitude towards the Germans is found in one of Lewes's letters and some of his articles on drama, suggesting that, although the Leweses read German criticism on Shakespeare, they were not always impressed with what they found. In a letter, dated September 18, 1856, written to Richard Moncton Milnes, Lewes said, "The German 'Shakspere ein Mythos' is unknown to me and with my consent shall remain so. There are few things revolutionize my liver more than German writing about Shakspeare [sic]" (*Letters* 8: 162-63). In his article, "The Drama: Authors and Managers" (1842), he indicated why his liver was thus affected. He said that he agreed in principle with Hegel's and Goethe's textual changes of Shakespeare, since some of the plays are "unactable." But he also considered the Germans "notorious as a patient, stolid public, who will sit out five-act operas, and who will accept of a greater proportion of dialogue to action than any other people of Europe. . . ."40

In "Shakespeare's Critics: English and Foreign" (1849), Lewes faulted both French and German critics of the stage for their dogmatism. Comparing French and English poetry, he said, "Our poetry is to theirs what our gardens are to theirs: a closer imitation of nature, with a greater disregard for mere technical excellencies." German critics, he went on, have supplanted French critical dogma with their own. Instead of imitating nature so "that there be no *incongruous* mixture of reality with fiction; and that our judgment be not shocked by a contradiction with the object which

we have in view" (Lewes's emphasis), the French imitate nature slavishly by insisting on the classical notion that the unities of time, action and place should be observed. The Germans, on the other hand, "[confound] dramatic art with poetic art."⁴⁹ Noting that Goethe, among others, considered Shakespeare's plays better read than seen, and that "To object to any stage representation of 'those immortal works,' is very generally considered to be a mark of delicate and refined taste," he said that reading Shakespeare does allow the imagination to soar "into a purely ideal region," whereas watching his plays often causes wonderment at the limited skills of actors. "But," he added, "if the impressions be thus in some measure degraded, on the other hand, they become greatly more intense." "[I]t must be remembered," he said, "that the *art of the dramatist* is not shown in the mere portrayal of mental states, but in the *adaptation* of those mental states to the purposes of the drama. A character may be drawn with skill, and yet not be dramatic" (Lewes's emphasis). Goethe, he said, was a great poet "but an indifferent dramatist," and, although he "has assisted us in the appreciation of certain passages, and of one character [Hamlet: cf. *Wilhelm Meister*]; . . . he has given us no assistance towards a clearer insight into dramatic art."⁵⁰

I will return to Goethe's reading of *Hamlet* in chapter 4, where I will argue that there are parallels between the tragedies of Hamlet and Maggie Tulliver. But here I wish to concentrate on Lewes's insight into dramatic art. In the same article he said that a play like *Othello* is successful because Shakespeare prepares us for the tragedy by indicating various aspects of Othello's character--his high-mindedness, chivalry, openness and affection--which Shakespeare the poet "delineate[s]" and Shakespeare the

dramatist turns into "dramatic agents in the development of his story."¹ In other words, a good play only results when there is a perfect fusion of poetry and drama. Lewes had said something similar in "The Drama: Authors and Managers" (1842):

It is always overlooked that all the drama is not alone poetry, but an applied form of poetry. This is admitted as an axiom, but disregarded as a practical guide. The drama is as much an art of itself, distinct from poetry, as painting is, the *fundus* of which is also poetry. A play is not alone language, passion, character, incident, not even story, but a peculiar combination and construction of these elements.²

He made the point again in "The Rise and Fall of the European Drama" (1845), where he deplored most nineteenth-century plays for their lack of substance and their emphases on mere spectacle or mindless amusement:

Men will at all times be pleased with any thing uncommon. . . . But there is a higher faculty in man which must also be delighted: he is not all sense, all wonderment; he has a soul: he has thoughts and emotions which demand their food. To this higher faculty Shakspeare [sic] appealed; and, in spite of the reality of animals and the curiosity to see children [act in his plays], the public flocked to Shakspeare's theatre, there to enjoy those higher pleasures which they could enjoy nowhere else.³

Finally, in "Shakspeare in France," published in *The Cornhill Magazine* in 1865, he explained that Shakespeare will never be as popular in France as in England, because "Without their poetry, the plays sink to the level of *dramas*, and, as *dramas*, most of them are surpassed in interest and construction by more modern works."⁴

Eliot also believed that for art to be great there must be a successful fusion of drama and poetry. It was precisely her disbelief in her ability to dramatise her work that prevented her from writing fiction until she was almost thirty-seven years old. In "How I Came to Write Fiction," she explains that the desire to write a novel had long been with her but that,

although she had made an attempt at "describing a Staffordshire village and the life of the neighbouring farm houses,"

I always thought I was deficient in dramatic power, both of construction and dialogue. . . . My 'introductory chapter' was pure description though there were good materials in it for dramatic presentation. It happened to be among the papers I had with me in Germany, and one evening at Berlin, something led me to read it to George. He was struck with it as a bit of concrete description, and it suggested to him the possibility of my being able to write a novel, though he distrusted -indeed disbelieved in, my possession of any dramatic power. (See *Letters* 2: 406 10)

Shortly afterwards, having found the necessary "dramatic power," she wrote "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton."

There are a number of Shakespearean allusions in *Scenes of Clerical Life* which indicate that she turned to him from the very beginning of her creative writing career as a model for fusing drama with poetry. She identifies or contrasts so many of her characters with Shakespeare's because, to paraphrase Lewes, these associations serve as "dramatic agents," giving sharper focus to her characters while at the same time developing or enhancing the poetic qualities of her realistically drawn stories. The effects of those associations vary and become more potent, subtle and suggestive as her art matured. In chapter 2, I will demonstrate that Amos Barton is simply contrasted with Macbeth and Hotspur in order that we may not lose sight of his redeeming qualities. In chapter 7, however, I will show that Dorothea is identified with Isabella so that we appreciate more clearly not only that she has matured from a well-meaning though somewhat self-righteous girl into a tolerant, sympathetic woman, but also that *Middlemarch*, like *Measure for Measure*, is largely "about" the need for personal courage, moral integrity and the forgiveness of sins. Eliot's mature allusions to Shakespeare deliberately link her works to a literary

tradition she valued for its ability to dramatise important issues of universal concern.

However, not all her attempts at fusing drama with poetry worked. In my discussion of *Romola* I will argue that she had the nature of Othello's tragedy in mind when creating her heroine, but that in giving *Romola* a latent nobility, one that is demonstrated as the story progresses, she only succeeded in making *Romola* stand apart from the rest of the story.

Romola failed, I think, much as *The Spanish Gypsy* failed, because Eliot was still experimenting with dramatic structures. In *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* she was concerned with presenting people and events realistically life in all its "coarse apathy." Beginning with *The Mill on the Floss*, she supplemented this treatment of character and place with an exploration of the tragic consequences entailed in the classic conflict between the will of the individual and the will of society. And by the time she wrote *Silas Marner* and *Romola*, she was, I believe, consciously trying to do even more: employ Shakespearean methods of dramatic presentation, involving contrasts between major and minor characters, main plot and sub-plot.

It is interesting to note that eight months after finishing *Romola* she actually considered writing a play for the actress Helen Faucit. On February 8, 1864, the Leweses saw Kate Bateman in *Leah the Forsaken*, and in his Journal Lewes wrote,

While wondering at the badness of the piece and the success it has with the playgoing public, I thought of writing one for Helen Faucit and amused myself with sketching a plot. The idea laid hold of me, and during a sleepless night, I made out the skeleton of the whole five acts. In the morning I suggested to Polly that she should do the piece. She rather liked the suggestion, and when I had written out the barest possible outline of my plot, I read it to her. She thought the subject a good one, and one that she could work out. So I wrote to Helen Faucit to arrange a meet-

ing next Sunday that I might learn from her, before Polly begins, whether she is prepared to return to the stage if a good play were ready for her.⁵⁴

Faucit liked the idea and in March the Leweses travelled to Glasgow, where she was acting, to discuss their proposed play. However, the idea was dropped by both Eliot and Faucit. Perhaps there was a disagreement over how the play would be performed. Eliot admired Faucit (see *Letters* 4: 140 43), but she agreed with Lewes when, a year later, he criticised her delivery of certain lines. (It was Faucit's performance in *As You Like It* that prompted him to say, "A great writer, who sat near me during the performance, asked, with something of triumph, whether this did not satisfy me that it was a great mistake ever to see one of SHAKSPEARE'S plays acted.") But the actual reason for dropping the idea of the play is not known.⁵⁵ Nor is anything known for certain about Lewes's plot. His pencil sketch of a three act play called *Savella* was inked over by Eliot and survives, but it is unclear if this was the one intended for Faucit.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the idea of writing a drama stayed with her, and *The Spanish Gypsy* was begun as a stage play. As she told Blackwood in March 1867, when the time came for it to be published, "I conceived the plot, and wrote nearly the whole as a drama in 1864" (*Letters* 4: 354 55).

Much of her research for *The Spanish Gypsy* involved a study of the stage and a re-reading and careful analyses of numerous dramatists. Old favourites like Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were read again--as was Shakespeare. But work on the play progressed so slowly, and she worried so much over her ability to produce something worthwhile, that on February 21, 1865, Lewes took it away from her.⁵⁷ She did not work on it again until

after *Felix Holt* was finished, and then she changed the play into a poem-cum-closet drama.

There are, I think, two related reasons why *The Spanish Gypsy* gave Eliot so much trouble. The first has to do with Fedalma's tragedy and the second with the way her tragedy is presented. The story does not altogether meet Eliot's own definition of what constitutes a good tragedy. In her "Notes on *The Spanish Gypsy*," she wrote:

A good tragic subject must represent a possible, sufficiently probable, not a common, action; and to be really tragic, it must represent irreparable collision between the individual and the general (in differing degrees of generality). It is the individual with whom we sympathize, and the general of which we recognize the irresistible power. . . .

. . . [What is it that makes Othello a great tragic subject? A story simply of a jealous husband is elevated into a most pathetic tragedy by the hereditary conditions of Othello's lot, which gives him a subjective ground for distrust. . . .]⁵⁹

The subject of *The Spanish Gypsy* is sufficiently uncommon, but it is not "sufficiently probable." Silva's story is, I think, "elevated into a most pathetic tragedy" because he is forced to choose between his love for Fedalma and Spain, and that leads to great suffering. However, the "hereditary conditions" that Fedalma is seen to respond to are, for me at least, not believable. Her story is, to partially quote Lewes, an "in congruous mixture of reality with fiction." She has no "subjective ground" for giving up her personal happiness nor for leading the Zíncali. Zarca convinces her to forsake her Spanish past, including her impending marriage to Silva, because of the enmity that exists between the two peoples and because

you were born to reign,
'Tis a compulsion of a higher sort,
Whose fetters are the net invisible
That holds all life together. Royal deeds
May make long destinies for multitudes,
And you are called to them. You belong

Not to the petty round of circumstance
That makes a woman's lot, but to your tribe. . . .⁶⁰

But, since the age of three, she has been fettered to the Spanish "net invisible," and her decision to join the Gypsies is therefore difficult to accept. Eppie and Esther remain true to their adopted parents not because they recognise that their real parents are weak or guilty of neglect but because they cling to the love that has nurtured them. In *Silas Marner* and *Felix Holt*, Eliot stayed within the bounds of probability; in *The Spanish Gypsy* she did not.

Eliot tries to prepare us for Fedalma's future lot in life, but these attempts are cerebral, not dramatic, in nature. The "hereditary conditions of Othello's lot, which gives him subjective ground for distrust," as Eliot put it, are both believable and dramatically presented. We are made aware of them not just by listening to what he and others say but also by watching and listening to how he interacts with others. As Lewes said, there are aspects of Othello's character that Shakespeare the poet delineates and Shakespeare the dramatist turns into "dramatic agents in the development of his story." In *The Spanish Gypsy* that dramatic tension is missing. Karen B. Mann rightly says that Eliot characters "seem more intent on affecting the audience by means of their speech than upon affecting one another."⁶¹ Thus, when Fedalma mentions her short but curious encounter with the father she has not seen for fifteen years--"The minute brief stretched measureless, dream-filled / By a dilated new-fraught consciousness"--she is not so much addressing Silva as us when she muses that

"[Zarca's look] found me there--
Seemed to have travelled far to find me there
And grasp me--claim this festal life of mine
As heritage of sorrow, chill my blood
With the cold iron of some unknown bonds."⁶²

Similarly, the brief sub plot, involving Juan and Pepita, serves no purpose except to give us a metaphysical rationale for Fedalma's having to forsake her personal happiness. When Pepita wants to know whether or not he loves her, she gets this bewildering reply:

"Juan is not a living man by himself
His life is breathed in him by other men,
And they speak out of him. He is their voice
Juan's own life he gave once quite away. . . .
We old, old poets, if we kept our hearts,
Should hardly know them from another man's.
They shrink to make room for the many more
We keep within us. . . ." ²

Thus, although it is suggested that Fedalma was never a true Spaniard but a Zíncale at heart, the impression is that Fedalma is not so much a living person as a disembodied voice or an aggregate of history called on to fulfil the demands of an alien past. She is one of Eliot's extraordinary characters: the other one is her Florentine heroine, and it is significant that the writing of *Romola* also gave Eliot a lot of trouble. I do not think that her difficulties with these works had to do with the foreign settings and remote pasts, but rather with the tragic and/or heroic conceptions of these women and the difficulties necessarily involved in portraying them.

Nevertheless, *The Spanish Gypsy* points to the keen interest in tragic vision and dramatic structure that Eliot portrayed and developed with great success in *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. In those novels she turned increasingly to Shakespeare's examples of tragedy and comedy, using a number of his plays and poems to do some of the work for her. Her most notable measure was the introduction of chapter epigraphs, and, as I will argue in my later chapters, they form an integral part of her design.

Eliot was not the first to use Shakespearean epigraphs: Sir Walter Scott, whom she greatly admired,⁴ used two hundred and two in the Waver-

ley Novels.¹⁶ Scott was also steeped in Shakespeare, and throughout the nineteenth century and beyond he too was often compared with Shakespeare.¹⁷ Critics indicate that he resorted to Shakespeare much more frequently than Eliot ever did, but they do not agree about the effects that this had on his work. Wilmon Brewer says that Shakespeare crops up on "at least nine hundred and eighty-one" occasions and that he served as a "model in at least half . . . [of Scott's] longer narrative poems, in his dramas, and above all in his Waverley Novels."¹⁸ Arthur Melville Clark writes, ". . . *Henry IV* continued to be perhaps his favourite play, certainly his favourite among Shakespeare's histories. I would even suggest that its lacing of history with fiction provided the general model for the Waverley Novels."¹⁹ However, R. K. Gordon does not quite agree. In "Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and Some Scenes in the Waverley Novels," he compares scenes involving characters like Hotspur and Falstaff with eight of the Waverley Novels and says that in *Old Mortality*

Scott owes a good deal to Shakespeare . . . in structure and ordering, and something, too, in phrasing. But Scott does not lose his independence. . . . When Scott really cares about what he is doing . . . he is no man's servitor, not even Shakespeare's.²⁰

In "Scott and Shakespeare's Tragedies," Gordon shows that Scott sometimes compares the suffering of tragic heroes like Lear with the suffering of his ordinary characters and says,

Of course, Scott never dreamed that his scenes were on a level with those he so light-heartedly summons to our remembrance. If he had taken his own work more seriously, he would not have incurred such risks. He turns our thoughts to Shakespeare partly no doubt because he hopes Shakespeare may prop him up and strengthen his scene, but also, I fancy, merely because he delighted in remembering the plays he knew so well. The resemblance between his scene and Shakespeare's is sometimes of the slightest, but enough to set Scott's memory at work.²¹

A more recent and comprehensive study, *The Language of Walter Scott: A Study of his Scottish and Period Language*, by Graham Tulloch, corroborates Gordon's assertion that Scott liked to quote Shakespeare and others more for the sake of it than anything else. Tulloch demonstrates Scott's love and enormous knowledge of renaissance and medieval works, and says:

He seems to have found often that a line or phrase of Shakespeare or some other author was in his mind to express his thoughts before any expression of his own was formulated; he thought naturally in quotations. In the latest edition of the *Journal* (W. E. K. Anderson ed., Oxford, 1972) under the index heading 'Shakespeare: his plays quoted' there are 148 entries. In the novels quotations short and long constantly mingle with Scott's own words. . . .

Scott quotes more often probably than any English novelist of equal stature. Clearly a not insignificant part of his thought-processes was quite naturally carried on in the words of others. This more than anything may explain why quotations form a quite important part of the dialogue of his characters in certain of his novels. What was natural to himself he carried over to his created characters. At the same time this habit could be made to serve his special ends with regard to period language. In a perfectly natural way characters are able to quote sizeable passages from the works of their supposed contemporaries.⁷¹

In his introduction to *Chronicles of the Canongate* (1827), Scott himself explains that he began making up his own epigraphs because, "I found it too troublesome to turn to the collection of the British poets to discover apposite mottoes. . . ." ⁷² It is not altogether clear what may be inferred from that. His comment could mean that his epigraphs, including his borrowed ones, were afterthoughts, that he was not necessarily conscious of another's work while writing his own stories. Perhaps he borrowed epigraphs because his thoughts coincided with--but were not directly influenced by--another writer's. On the other hand, there may have been times when he knew precisely where to look for epigraphs once he became fully aware that he had been imitating, say, Shakespeare. Eliot also

made up epigraphs when she could not find something appropriate elsewhere, and she also added epigraphs to her finished manuscripts. But, as I will show in chapters 6 to 8, her Shakespearean ones were selected prior to or during the writing of the last three novels. And that clearly indicates that she saw the parallels between her work and Shakespeare's while she was still busy writing.

Throughout the thesis, I will show that Eliot's Shakespearean borrowings enhance and develop her art, and that as they become more frequent they help control the delicate interplay between her major and minor characters, plots and sub-plots, as well as themes. In the later novels especially, it is often the case that the control, if not the interplay itself, is achieved by Eliot's characters, plots and themes being linked to Shakespeare's--through the use of subtle, increasingly complex combinations of epigraphs, references and allusions.

Chapter 2 identifies and comments on the allusions and references to Shakespeare's plays in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, which, although few in number and apparently inconsequential, do in fact help Eliot in making her ordinary people worthy of our interest. They make us think, perhaps more than we might otherwise be inclined to do, about "low life." Eliot's humble folk are not heroic in the traditional sense: they are often petty, mean, intolerant or unrealistic in outlook, and, in any case, they do not change the course of history. But their trials and tribulations are real and felt--like our own--and not altogether unlike those of conventional heroes. Thus, Amos Barton is mentioned in the same breath as are Macbeth and Hotspur, not because he resembles them in heroic stature but because he, too, in his own small way, is a complex individual charged with ideas, beliefs and

feelings that are often chaotic and irrational, yet deeply held. The Shakespearean allusions in "Janet's Repentance" are of a different kind. They help us to discriminate between the ways people practise religion and religiosity. When Dempster attacks Mr. Tryan, he refers to two of Shakespeare's plays. His allusions may be seen as clever ways in which to ridicule Mr. Tryan, and to some extent they are. However, they cut both ways: close examinations of the contexts in which his borrowings appear help to foreground Mr. Tryan's virtues--which cause Janet to repent.

Chapter 3 continues to examine Eliot's use of Shakespearean allusions to depict "low life," "ordinary heroes" and differing attitudes to religion. However, unlike the previous chapter, this one also tries to demonstrate that one of *Adam Bede's* unifying principles, its moral vision, is loosely based on *As You Like It*. Echoes of this play are first heard in *Scenes* and continue to be heard throughout the novels. In *Adam Bede* they are of considerable importance. It would be an exaggeration to say that the novel is structured on the play, yet there are striking parallels between Hayslope and the Forest of Arden, and allusions are made to "working-day" and "golden" worlds, suggesting that Eliot was certainly thinking about this play. Comparing the two works leads, I think, to a realization that seemingly disparate people--Adam and Arthur, Arthur and Hetty, Mr. Irwine and Dinah--have shared characteristics. Eliot's characters loosely resemble Shakespeare's, insofar as they, too, are forced to recognise that their powers of moral discrimination are in need of revision if they are to overcome Hayslope's great trial brought on by Hetty's disgrace, and return to normal life.

Chapter 4 explores Eliot's growing interest in Shakespearean concepts of tragedy. Based on a reference to *Hamlet*, which is itself based on Eliot's reading of Goethe's reading of the play, the chapter argues that the story of Shakespeare's hero contains tragic themes also found in Maggie Tulliver's story. My point is not to suggest how closely the two characters resemble each other: both are, of course, very different. However, I hope that the links I establish lead to an understanding of why, despite Maggie's humble background and ordinary nature, she should be seen as a tragic figure in Eliot's sense. By considering other Shakespearean allusions, the chapter will show how she comes by the "hereditary conditions" that contribute to her tragedy.

Chapter 5 again considers Eliot's use of Shakespearean tragedy where *Romola* is concerned, but also looks at the different ways she began fusing romance elements in what are, on the whole, realistic stories. Both *Romola* and *Silas Marner* seem to me to demonstrate Eliot's continuing interest in dramatic portrayals of characters and events and even the beginnings of the type of dramatic structuring found in the last three novels. Allusions in the novels, notebooks and letters show Eliot's delight in Shakespeare's minor characters and her interest in the way he handles crowd scenes, thereby pointing to her indebtedness where her treatment of similar characters and scenes is concerned. The section on *Romola* argues that the failure of this novel does not lie in the realistic portrayal of Florence, but rather in the treatment of the heroine. As in *The Spanish Gypsy*, a number of romance elements are injected into the novel--dreams, premonitions, evidence of *Romola*'s unique disposition, all designed to prepare us for her future heroic behaviour. However, the romance elements

are never integrated into the novel's realism. The section on *Silas Marner*, on the other hand, will argue that this novel succeeds where *Romola* fails because the romance elements blend very well with the realism.

Chapter 6 discusses the different functions of the Shakespearean epigraphs introduced for the first time in *Felix Holt*, along with other Shakespearean material found in the novel and notebooks, and then considers how everything is used to build a dramatic structure. That structure creates a number of significant parallels between society and individuals. Just as the English and Roman History plays (referred to in *Felix Holt*) often depict large, public issues by way of individual characters, so the novel subordinates or personalises political events just before the 1832 Reform Bill by means of Felix, Esther, Rufus Lyon, Harold and Mrs. Transome. References or allusions to various Shakespearean characters imbue Eliot's "ordinary heroes" with certain attitudes or dispositions. However, instead of simply identifying one of her characters with one of Shakespeare's, she selects the personality traits of different characters and attributes these to an individual, thereby portraying that person's complex, sometimes self-contradictory nature. Since her characters mirror political events, she also demonstrates exactly why it is necessary to approach times of upheaval with caution. The word "Radical" describes individuals and the times; the Shakespearean structure and borrowings help to show that for Eliot it had a number of meanings during the 1830's.

Chapter 7 focuses on the central themes of self-knowledge and vocation in *Middlemarch*, which extend to all the main characters and are superbly developed with the help of Shakespeare's comedies, tragi-comedies and romances. It will also point to the novel's synthesis of many Shakes-

Shakespearean ideas and techniques already identified in earlier discussions. In so doing, the chapter should demonstrate just how much Eliot had come to rely on and appropriate Shakespeare's art by the time she wrote this novel. Writing about her early novels, Knoepfelmacher says that "her reliance on Shakespeare's tragedies and romances, although unnoted by previous critics of her novels, are areas essential to a full appreciation of her philosophic art."⁷³ His observation applies even more to the later novels: *Middlemarch's* numerous epigraphs, allusions and references, and the variety of extracts and comments in notebooks, show that by the mid 1860's she habitually turned to his art when creating her own.

Chapter 8 argues against seeing *Daniel Deronda* as a flawed novel, its back broken by two dissimilar stories: instead it tries to show that the novel's unity can be found in thematic comparisons involving characters and plots. The Shakespearean material in the novel helps to make those comparisons by defining characters and by drawing attention to the ways in which they resemble or differ from each other. The resemblances and differences between the English and the Jewish people are measured by the failure of the one and ability of the other to "hear with eyes." The chapter will show that "hearing with eyes" was one of Eliot's favourite Shakespearean expressions and that it meant having visions, seeing with one's imagination. Initially, Gwendolen's imagination allows her to see only nightmare visions; Grandcourt has no imagination; but Deronda, Mirah and, above all, Mordecai are capable of seeing what is worth striving for. In this way, and through the use of other Shakespearean allusions, the thematic comparisons are made, giving the novel its unity.

Chapter 2
Scenes of Clerical Life: Ordinary Heroes

On the surface of it, *Scenes of Clerical Life* is not a promising work for discussing Shakespeare. In her "Commonplace Book," Eliot made entries from 1855 to 1876, but none relate to *Scenes*.¹ In "Janet's Repentance," she alludes briefly to *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*²; in "The Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton" to *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, and *1 Henry IV*³; and in "Mr Gilfil's Love-Story," she makes only a passing reference to Juliet and Desdemona. Nevertheless, although the allusions and references are few in number and may seem insignificant, I shall try to demonstrate that they are important to Eliot's overall design.

When Lewes sent the manuscript of "Amos Barton" to John Blackwood in November 1856, he wrote:

This is what I am commissioned to say to you about the proposed series. It will consist of tales and sketches illustrative of the actual life of our country clergy about a quarter of a century ago; but solely in its *human* and *not at all* in its *theological* aspect; the object being to do what has never yet been done in our literature, for we have had abundant religious stories polemical and doctrinal, but since the "Vicar [of Wakefield]" and Miss Austen, no stories representing the clergy like any other class with the humours, sorrows, and troubles of other men. He begged me particularly to add that--as the specimen sent will sufficiently prove--the tone throughout will be sympathetic and not at all antagonistic. (*Letters* 2: 269) (Lewes's emphasis)

In other words, *Scenes* conforms to Eliot's understanding of the artist's duty, as outlined in the essay on Riehl. The artist should make his reader feel for realistically--not heroically nor sentimentally--portrayed characters. And that is essentially what Eliot says she is trying to do in "Amos Barton":

my only merit must lie in the truth with which I represent to you the humble experience of ordinary fellow-mortals. I wish to stir

your sympathy with commonplace troubles--to win your tears for real sorrow: sorrow such as may live next door to you--such as walks neither in rags nor in velvet, but in very ordinary decent apparel. (56).

The Shakespearean allusions and references assist Eliot in those aims. Some help to define her characters, events and situations by inviting comparisons that lead us to see ordinary people in a new or brighter light. Hence they add to the realistic portrayals of characters. Others cause us to focus on "commonplace troubles," and so contribute to her general plea for viewing her characters sympathetically. At the heart of Eliot's humanist religion is her insistence on sympathy for others; each story is designed to bring that about. The Shakespearean allusions come into play here by helping us to avoid kneejerk assessments of people and situations, thus paving the way towards a sympathetic understanding of others.

Scenes is primarily concerned with the nature of religious teaching and the comfort it brings, and in "Janet's Repentance," Eliot discourages Kaulbach-like, *Germanesque* evaluations of Evangelicalism. As Thomas Noble says, the story is an attempt to "set down clearly, with neither bitterness nor sentimentality, her mature feelings about the discarded religion of her youth."⁵ For that reason, it is perhaps best to begin with that story.

"Janet's Repentance" should be compared with her essay, "Evangelical Teaching: Dr. Cumming," which had been published in 1855 in *The Westminster Review*. In the essay, she attacked not only Dr. Cumming but all Evangelicals responsible for uncharitable and distorted teachings of Christianity:

Pleasant to the clerical flesh . . . is the arrival of Sunday! Somewhat at a disadvantage during the week, in the presence of working day interests and lay splendours, on Sunday the preacher becomes the cynosure of a thousand eyes, and predominates at once over the Amphitryon with whom he dines, and the most captious member of his church or vestry."

Since Eliot was an agnostic when she wrote the essay, it can be read as a final repudiation of her own Evangelical fervour. However, she recognized that religion was of fundamental importance to many people, and the essay should be seen as a criticism of those preachers who not only failed to give their congregations any spiritual comfort, but also taught doctrines which discouraged sympathy for human failings. Her reference to "working-day interests" recalls *As You Like It* and her conviction that the concomitant "golden world" can only be achieved through the practice of right moral conduct. Thus, her use of Shakespeare's phrase in the essay is designed to draw attention to the moral divide which she felt existed between the Christian ideal and the deplorable teaching of some Evangelicals.

In "Janet's Repentance," Eliot makes us aware of the good that Evangelicalism can do, without endorsing its religious doctrines. She compares its efficacy with the charges of hypocrisy brought against it by Dempster and his followers. Put another way, she examines Dempster's "working-day interests" with the "golden world" that Mr. Tryan is trying to create.

When Mr. Tryan arrives in Milby, the community is split into two religious camps, and at first Eliot leaves us in some doubt as to where our sympathies should lie. As soon as we learn about the "distinguished triad," representing "the intellect, morality, and wealth of Milby" (207) and led by the loud-mouthed Dempster, we know enough to avoid

siding with the anti-Tryanite camp. But if Mr. Crewe's flock is insincere, having suddenly rallied round him, convinced that he "was the model of a parish priest, and his sermons the soundest and most edifying that had ever remained unheard by a church-going population" (207), the other camp is also suspect. The vanity that has inspired Miss Pratt to produce "Six Stanzas, addressed to the Rev. Edgar Tryan, printed on glazed paper with a neat border, and beginning, 'Forward, young wrestler for the truth!'" (211) speaks for itself, and Mrs. Linnet is probably not the only one with an overly keen, albeit limited, interest in Evangelicalism:

Mrs Linnet had become a reader of religious books since Mr Tryan's advent. . . . On taking up the biography of a celebrated preacher, she immediately turned to the end to see what disease he died of; and if his legs swelled, as her own occasionally did, she felt a stronger interest in ascertaining any earlier facts in the history of the dropsical divine- whether he had ever fallen off a stage coach, whether he had married more than one wife, and, in general, any adventures or repartees recorded of him previous to the epoch of his conversion. (212)

Thus, by way of mild irony, Eliot indicates that neither High nor Low Church should be judged by its followers, even though there are people like Mrs. Crewe and Mr. Jerome who put their different faiths into practice. Instead she wants us to pay particular attention to the way religion is applied in the community. Only then is it seen that Mr. Tryan's Evangelicalism is preferable to Mr. Crewe's "avarice in comfort," or the earlier "lax and indifferent kind" of Dissent found in the "Independent chapel, known as Salem. . ." (201).

Janet begins to repent her attitude towards Mr. Tryan when she overhears his words of comfort to the dying Sally Martin, because "There was none of the self-satisfied unction of the teacher, quoting, or exhorting, or expounding, for the benefit of the hearer, but a simple

appeal for help, a confession of weakness" (265). And his later confession to her about Lucy, prompted by her confession about her marital problems, brings about her full repentance and conversion to his faith. The narrator says, "The Tale of the Divine Pity was never yet believed from the lips that were not felt to be moved by human pity" (288), and since Mr. Tryan has also suffered he is capable of "human pity" and sympathy. His love for Janet as a fellow-creature makes her religious conversion possible. When she confesses her temptation to drink the brandy found in her husband's bureau, we read:

The act of confiding in human sympathy, the consciousness that a fellow-being was listening to her with patient pity, prepared her soul for that stronger leap by which faith grasps the idea of the Divine sympathy. (321)

Thus, it is Mr. Tryan's ability to mix Evangelicalism with humanism that we are asked to consider. In *"Scenes of Clerical Life: The Diagram and the Picture,"* Derek and Sybil Oldfield argue that Eliot learned this humanist philosophy from Feuerbach and her own Evangelical experience. From Feuerbach, they say, she learned that "Love is the recognition of our human brotherhood," that there is a necessary relationship between sympathy and suffering, and that we are "insignificant parts of a wonderful whole."⁷ It is true that Eliot closely follows Feuerbach's teachings in implying that religious impulses are founded on our essential humanity. Feuerbach's influence, for example, is felt in the following:

The blessed work of helping the world forward, happily does not wait to be done by perfect men. . . . The real heroes, of God's making, are quite different: they have their natural heritage of love and conscience which they drew in with their mother's milk; they know one or two of those deep spiritual truths which are only to be won by long wrestling with their own sins and their own sorrows; they have earned faith and strength so far as they have

done genuine work: but the rest is dry barren theory, blank prejudice, vague hearsay. (256 57)

Nevertheless, important aspects of the story are also suggested in Dempster's Shakespearean allusions, and therefore it is not quite true to say that Feuerbach's philosophy "dominates" the intellectual substructure of *Scenes*.³ Eliot told Sara Hennell, "With the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree. . ." (*Letters* 2: 153), but she would not have wanted them to be the only creed for a "sympathetic" study of religious people--especially when Feuerbach says that all immortality is an idle dream.

When Dempster holds forth against Evangelicals in the bar of the Red Lion, he accuses them of sedition, hypocrisy, and ambition (194). Lodge points out that to accuse Mr. Tryan of Jesuitical tendencies "is a rather wild insult addressed to a Protestant clergyman," even if it is proverbial.³ But as a lawyer, Dempster would know that an *argumentum ad hominem* can be very effective. He cleverly likens Mr. Tryan to Shakespeare's Malvolio when he says of Evangelicals, "ginger isn't hot in their mouths." Despite what we may think about Malvolio's treatment in the "dark house," he deserves the ridicule he gets from Maria, Sir Toby Belch, Fabian, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and the Clown because he is an ambitious hypocrite. Maria says of him, "Marry sir, sometimes he is a kind of Puritan" (*Twelfth Night* II.iii.140), and she is right, because as soon as it suits him he turns "heathen, a very renegado" (III.ii.67) by presenting himself in cross-gartered yellow stockings. The brandy and-water loving Dempster tries to act like the fun-loving Sir Toby and plays the sort of trick on Mr. Tryan--the incident with the play bill--that Sir Toby and his friends play on Malvolio.

To a large extent, the ridiculing of Shakespeare's Malvolio is genuinely funny, but commentators who are uneasy about the "dark-house" episode have a valid point. Maria's letter is justified because it exposes his vanity and presumptuousness; the "dark house" is not because it amounts to a gratuitous attack on his religious beliefs and sanity. Malvolio is unfairly victimised when the Clown (as Sir Topas the curate) cries that he can see the "hyperbolical fiend," and that it is to be hoped that the heavens will restore Malvolio's wits (see IV.ii.21-132). The latter's religious inconsistency does not warrant an attack on religion itself. Hence, when Malvolio stalks off with "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you!," Olivia rightly says, "He hath been most notoriously abus'd" (V.i.377-78). At this point, I think, Shakespeare wants us to realize that the joke against Malvolio has gone too far: if we have laughed heartily during the "dark house" scene, then that says something about our prejudices, and, like most of the characters in the play, we need to discover who we are and what we really think.''

To laugh at Malvolio is one thing; to laugh at religion another, and Eliot wants us to make the same distinction in "Janet's Repentance." Dempster is right in saying that some Evangelicals are "sly; smooth-faced, drawling, hypocritical fellows, who pretend ginger isn't hot in their mouths." But not all Evangelicals are hypocrites, and Mr. Tryan is certainly not one. Dempster's remark, therefore, reveals more about him than about the clergyman. In this way, Eliot combats our possible hostility towards Evangelicalism, or, if not hostility, our willingness to ridicule it. Her concern with the human tendency to demean other people's every act of generosity by assuming that others have hidden

dove--one of your honey-mouthed hypocrites'" (236). Bottom is told by his fellow actors that if he plays the part of the lion and roars too loudly, he will frighten the women in the audience, and that will result in the actors being hanged. He replies:

I grant you, friends, if you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us. But I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you and 'twere any nightingale.

(I.ii.74-78)

But just as Dempster ridicules himself in suggesting that Mr. Tryan resembles Malvolio, because, if the analogy holds, Dempster resembles a completely besotted Sir Toby--with none of that reveller's wit--so here too he casts himself in another unflattering part. For immediately after the remark, he roars as gently as any sucking dove to his mother to accompany him into the lush garden, where attention is drawn to "his heavy long-limbed steps" (236). It is tempting to see a parallel between this picture and the play's forest scene in which the spellbound Titania dotes on Bottom with his long ass's ears. If anyone is an ass it is Dempster, who enjoys more adulation from his wife and mother than Mr. Tryan can lay claim to.

But there is more to the allusion. Oberon's "love-juice" is used to "make or man or woman dote / Upon the next live creature that it sees" (II.i.171-72), and that is how Titania comes to "love" Bottom, who seems to her to be like a sucking dove and more. Harold Brooks says that the love-juice episode is meant to make us realize that "the eyes, traditional initiators of love, are liable to see false under its irrational power," and that only when seeing is coupled with reason can love be possible.¹³ Bottom, even in his metamorphoses, never loses his

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But just as Dempster ridicules himself in suggesting that Mr. Tryan resembles Malvolio, because, if the analogy holds, Dempster resembles a completely besotted Sir Toby--with none of that reveller's wit--so here too he casts himself in another unflattering part. For immediately after the remark, he roars as gently as any sucking dove to his mother to accompany him into the lush garden, where attention is drawn to "his heavy long-limbed steps" (236). It is tempting to see a parallel between this picture and the play's forest scene in which the spellbound Titania dotes on Bottom with his long ass's ears. If anyone is an ass it is Dempster, who enjoys more adulation from his wife and mother than Mr. Tryan can lay claim to.

But there is more to the allusion. Oberon's "love-juice" is used to "make or man or woman dote / Upon the next live creature that it sees" (II.i.171-72), and that is how Titania comes to "love" Bottom, who seems to her to be like a sucking dove and more. Harold Brooks says that the love-juice episode is meant to make us realize that "the eyes, traditional initiators of love, are liable to see false under its irrational power," and that only when seeing is coupled with reason can love be possible.¹³ Bottom, even in his metamorphoses, never loses his

sight or reason. He is one of the most constant people in the play, and therefore he is much more than a mere laughing-stock. All in all, his vanity and malapropisms are minor, even endearing, faults, because there is nothing false about him. Moreover, as Brooks says:

He makes one of the most sensible speeches in the play, epitomizing half its critique of love: "To say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays. The more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not make them friends." [III.i.138-41]'⁴

Thus, there is more irony than Dempster realizes when he intimates that Mr. Tryan is like Bottom. We are told that according to some, the curate's "intellectual culture was too limited," and that he also makes mistakes: "identifying Christianity with a too narrow doctrinal system," seeking "God's work too exclusively in antagonism to the world, the flesh, and the devil." But for all that, Mr. Tryan has a "true knowledge of our fellow-man . . . [and a] love that sees in all forms of human thought and work, the life and death struggles of separate human beings" (257).

Eliot's reply to Blackwood, who had said, "Dempster is rather too barefaced a brute," and had asked, "When are you going to give us a really good active working clergyman, neither absurdly evangelical nor absurdly High Church?" (*Letters* 2: 344-45), best sums up the story:

The collision in the drama is not at all between "bigotted churchmanship" and evangelicalism, but between irreligion and religion [Eliot's emphasis]. Religion in this case happens to be represented by evangelicalism. . . . I thought that I had made it apparent in my sketch of Milby feelings on the advent of Mr. Tryan that the conflict lay between immorality and morality -irreligion and religion. Mr. Tryan will carry the reader's sympathy. It is through him that Janet is brought to repentance. Dempster's vices have their natural evolution in deeper and deeper moral deterioration (though not without softening touches) and death from intemperance. Everything is softened from the fact, so far as art is permitted to soften and yet remain essentially true. . . . (*Letters* 2: 347)

"Everything is softened" with Dempster's moral deterioration and death because religion triumphs over irreligion. Mr. Tryan also dies prematurely, but his "memorial" (334), Janet, lives on to a ripe old age. We expect her to pass on the legacy of "human feeling" to her adopted family. In the words of the play that Dempster liked to quote from, Eliot cautiously looks forward to when the "golden time comes" (*Twelfth Night* V.i.381).

Amos Barton's intellectual culture is even more limited than Mr. Tryan's. From the beginning, we learn that no-one except Milly thinks highly of the curate, because he is foolish, vain, and insensitive. He is gullible enough to believe in the zealous working man who supposedly wrote a book against dissenting preachers, and he entertains half-baked, polemical religious notions:

He preached Low-Church doctrine---as evangelical as anything to be heard in the Independent Chapel; and he made a High-Church assertion of ecclesiastical powers and functions. Clearly, the Dissenters would feel that 'the parson' was too many for them. Nothing like a man who combines shrewdness with energy. The wisdom of the serpent, Mr. Barton considered, was one of his strong points. (18)

But wisdom is precisely what he lacks. Otherwise he would not have risked his wife's health with another pregnancy, tolerated the long, arduous visit of the Countess Czerlaski, or been so indifferent to the concerns and traditions of the community. He stops his congregation from singing "the wedding psalm," because it does not meet with his confused ideas of what is right and proper.

In contrast to Amos stands his meek, saint-like wife, Milly. She is everything that Amos is not, and thus serves to further underscore his deficiencies. "But," says the narrator, "I, for one, do not grudge Amos

Barton his sweet wife" (19). Most people would prefer Milly to have a husband who "wins golden opinions from all sorts of men" (20), but not the narrator. The suggestion is that those who win "golden opinions" do not need someone like Milly--not as much as Amos does because they are already privileged in some way. However, I think that there is more to it than that: there is also the suggestion that when all things are considered, Amos is as deserving as any favoured man, if not more so. Macbeth talks of "golden opinions" immediately after his soliloquy on the inexpediency of murder. He tells his wife that they "will proceed no further in this business [of killing Duncan]" because the rewards and "golden opinions" he has received should be enjoyed, "Not cast aside so soon" (I.vii.31-34). Macbeth was once a favoured man, and yet he proved himself to be anything but deserving. Amos has many faults, but at least he can lay claim to the moral integrity that some men notably lack. Neither is he like the Countess Czerlaski, whose insufferable selfishness drives even Milly to despair. Thus, Eliot asks us to discover the good qualities in Amos that lie beneath the surface appearances. Her plea for tolerance and understanding is reinforced when Amos is compared with his so-called betters:

let that successful, well shaped, discreet and able gentleman put up with something less than the best in the matrimonial department I venture to say, Mrs Barton's nature would never have grown half so angelic if she had married the man you would perhaps have had in your eye for her--a man with sufficient income and abundant personal éelat. (20)

Another deliberate attempt to cast Amos in a favourable light is seen in the narrator's allusion to *1 Henry IV*. We are told that Amos belongs to that large proportion of men "whose conversation is more or less bald and disjointed" (42), which echoes Hotspur's remark about the king's

envoy who talked about "guns, and drums, and wounds." Asked why he did not co-operate with the envoy sent to claim his prisoners, Hotspur says, "I did deny no prisoners"; "This bald unjointed chat of his, my lord, / I answer'd indirectly" (I.iii.29, 55, 64-65). In other words, the failure to release his prisoners sprung from a misunderstanding caused by the envoy's peculiarities of speech. But that is not true. Hotspur made the prisoners' release conditional on Mortimer's ransom. His attempt to blame the "popinjay" for his failure to act is a red herring designed to divert attention from his deliberate disobedience. Men like Shakespeare's envoy and Eliot's Amos Barton may be stupid and irritating, but at least they do not lie or engage in treasonous activities.

Macbeth's callousness and Hotspur's duplicity are alluded to in order to promote sympathy for "a man whose virtues were not heroic . . . [but] who had no undetected crime within his breast. . ." (41). We are being asked to reflect on whether or not we have been prejudiced in our judgment of Amos. Have we, like most people in Shepperton, dismissed him as a silly Evangelical preacher, even disliked him for his religion? If so, we resemble him more than we think. Evangelicalism is not the cause of his faults, but a lack of sympathy is.

At least eighty percent of the male population is just like Amos, says the narrator:

these commonplace people--many of them bear a conscience, and have felt the sublime prompting to do the painful right; they have their unspoken sorrows, and their sacred joys; their hearts have perhaps gone out towards their first-born, and they have mourned over the irreclaimable dead. Nay, is there not a pathos in their very insignificance--in our comparison of their dim and narrow existence with the glorious possibilities of that human nature which they share?

Depend upon it, you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and pathos, the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out

through dull grey eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones. (42)

Amos is seen to have a "conscience" when Milly dies, when he throws himself on her grave with "'Milly, Milly, dost thou hear me? I didn't love thee enough--I wasn't tender enough to thee but I think of it all now'" (71). Her death awakens him to his faults: "now he re lived all their life together, with that terrible keenness of memory and imagination which bereavement gives, and he felt as if his very love needed a pardon for its poverty and selfishness" (68). We "gain unspeakably" from this just as we gain from watching any tragedy.

It is, therefore, only mildly ironic that Eliot's description of Amos's despair should resemble Macbeth's "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" soliloquy (V.v.19ff)--when he too has lost a wife--in its use of bleak imagery and repetition of words:

The burial was over, and Amos turned with his children to re-enter the house--the house where, an hour ago, Milly's dear body lay, where the windows were half-darkened, and sorrow seemed to have a hallowed precinct for itself, shut out from the world. But now she was gone; the broad snow-reflected daylight was in all the rooms; the Vicarage again seemed part of the common working day world, and Amos, for the first time felt that he was alone--that day after day, month after month, year after year, would have to be lived through without Milly's love. Spring would come, and she would not be there; summer, and she would not be there; and he would never have her again with him by the fireside in the long evenings. The seasons all seemed irksome to his thoughts; and how dreary the sunshiny days that would be sure to come! (67)

Whereas Macbeth regards the remnants of his life in the murky light of his degradation, Amos views his in the glaring light of the "working day world." He has lost his "golden world" forever and is therefore condemned to reflect on the meaninglessness of his future; and this stirs our sympathy.

In "Mr Gilfil's Love Story," the narrator again invites us to look at "the poetry and the pathos, the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull grey eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones" ("Amos Barton" 42). We are told that Mr Gilfil's vice of sipping gin-and-water does not "exclude a vast amount of antecedent romance. . . ."

Alas, alas! we poor mortals are often little better than wood-ashes--there is small sign of sap, and the leafy freshness, and the bursting buds that were once there; but wherever we see wood ashes, we know that all that early fullness of life must have been. I, at least, hardly ever look at a bent old man, or a wizened old woman, but I see also, with my mind's eye, that Past of which they are a shrunken remnant, and the unfinished romance of rosy cheeks and bright eyes seems sometimes of feeble interest and significance, compared with that drama of hope and love which has long ago reached its catastrophe, and left the poor soul, like a dim and dusty stage, with all its sweet garden-scenes and fair perspectives overturned and thrust out of sight. (82-83)

However, in "Mr Gilfil's Love Story" we may well wonder who the narrator wants us to look at.

In January 1858, Samuel Lucas reviewed the story for *The Times* and said that he preferred it to the others because the "artificial elements of the story are . . . kept within bounds" of probability.¹⁵ Today one is likely to hear the opposite: it is the weakest story precisely because it has too many artificial elements which are beyond the bounds of probability. For instance, Thomas Noble argues that Cheverel Manor "remains a painted backdrop," despite the "meticulously detailed representation." He also discerns narrative failures: Wybrow is depicted as a conventional romantic hero, and Caterina is described "with the stock vocabulary of sentimentality."¹⁶ There is truth in his criticism, but I think that he underestimates what Eliot tries to do with Caterina. It is unlikely that the author of "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" would have

forgotten her criticism of "conventional" characters and "stock vocabulary" when it came to her own writing. The problem with "Mr Gilfil's Love Story," I think, is that Caterina's love story eclipses Mr. Gilfil's. Her pain and disillusionment from slighted love, her murderous intentions towards Wybrow, and her subsequent nervous break down and eventual death, rack the silently grieving Mr. Gilfil, and constitute his "drama of hope and love which has long ago reached its catastrophe." But Caterina's story is more engrossing than Mr. Gilfil's and therefore demands virtually all our attention.

From the very first, we are asked to sympathise with and pity "poor Caterina," as she is habitually called. She is not only small and frail, but also a foreigner and an orphan. Cheverel Manor becomes her home, but the Cheverels never "had any idea of adopting her as their daughter, and giving her their own rank in life" (104). Instead they treat her like a favourite pet, as indicated by her various nicknames.' Only the servants regard her as one of the family. Since she is neither a servant nor a legitimate family member, her position in the household becomes more ambiguous as she gets older. As a child of uncertain status she is indulged; as a woman of uncertain status she is rejected.

However, we are also encouraged to admire her, because she does not allow her antecedents, which prevent Wybrow from any serious intentions towards her, to interfere with her great passion for him. And in that sense she is not unlike the Shakespearean heroines whom, as I pointed out in the introduction, Eliot admired because they "almost always *make love*, in opposition to the conventional notion of what is fitting for women." Hence we read:

It is very likely that to her dying day Caterina thought the earth stood still, and that the sun and stars moved round it; but so, for

the matter of that, did Helen, and Dido, and Desdemona, and Juliet; whence I hope you will not think my Caterina less worthy to be a heroine on that account. The truth is, that, with one exception, her only talent lay in loving; and there, it is probable, the most astronomical of women could not have surpassed her. (110)

Dido, Helen, Desdemona and Juliet are exceptional women because they were passionately and tragically devoted to the men they loved. Hence, since Caterina's "talent" for loving is unsurpassed, she is also exceptional.

The comment that Dido, Helen, Desdemona and Juliet shared Caterina's primitive cosmological ideas, and the mildly ironic suggestion that this has not prevented them from being considered worthy heroines, indicates that Eliot was amused at the way many of her contemporaries revered and cried over these women--especially Shakespeare's. In *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical, and Historical* (1832), Mrs. Anna Jameson spoke for many when she said of Desdemona, "all that can render misery heart-breaking is assembled round Desdemona. . . . [T]he injured and defenceless innocence of Desdemona so wrings the soul, 'that all for pity we could die.'" And she had this to say about Juliet:

There is in [Juliet's character] an intensity of passion, a singleness of purpose, an entireness, a completeness of effect, which we feel as a whole; and to attempt to analyse the impression thus conveyed at once to soul and sense, is as if while hanging over a half-blown rose. . . .¹⁸

However, although Eliot is amused by these attitudes, she is very serious about pointing out that if respect, admiration, sympathy and pity is felt for the suffering heroines of classical literature,¹⁹ the same, if not more, should be felt for her heroine. Caterina is also brave in the face of great suffering; and, in many ways, her experience

Caterina's "intensity of passion" is clearly seen when her other "talent" is described:

And her singing--the one thing in which she ceased to be passive, and became prominent lost none of its energy. She herself sometimes wondered how it was that, whether she felt sad or angry, crushed with the sense of Anthony's indifference, or burning with impatience under Miss Assher's attentions, it was always a relief to her to sing. Those full deep notes she sent forth seemed to be lifting the pain from her heart -seemed to be carrying away the madness from her brain. (141)

Her intense response to music is designed to demonstrate her depth and complexity of character. Music is a vehicle by which she escapes the confines of her limited existence and asserts her individuality. It is not a sexual metaphor here as it is in *The Mill on the Floss*, but George Levine's comment about the significance of music in Maggie Tulliver's life also applies to Caterina:

One of the things . . . which attracts Maggie to Stephen is his singing, and Maggie is deeply susceptible to music. Feuerbach argues strongly for the power of music: "What would man be without feeling?" he asks. "It is the musical power in man. But what would man be without music? Just as man has a musical faculty and feels an inward necessity to breathe out his feelings in song; so, by a like necessity, he, in religious sighs and tears, streams forth the nature of feeling as an objective, divine nature."--

As we will see, the Princess Halm-Eberstein, in *Daniel Deronda*, used her singing career as a tragic means of escape. But even in "Mr Gilfil's Love Story," Caterina's singing is used to point to her passionate nature, which in turn helps to account for her attempted murder of Wybrow.

The dagger incident ensures that the story is really about Caterina rather than Mr Gilfil. By the time she sets off to kill Wybrow, in whose character are seen the embryos of Arthur Donnithorne and Grandcourt, Mr. Gilfil is barely hovering on the periphery of things.

Blackwood was the first of a number of critics to object to the idea of Caterina bearing a dagger. He told Lewes:

I have grave doubts about the dagger, beautifully as the impossibility of her using it is indicated. I daresay George Eliot will kick furiously at the base idea of altering a syllable at this point, but I am pretty sure that his dear little heroine would be more sure of universal sympathy if she only dreamed or felt as if she could stab the cur to the heart and I think it would be more consistent with her character than the active step of getting hold of the lethal weapon. (*Letters* 2: 308)

Eliot's answer to Blackwood reveals how carefully the scene was planned: "it would be the death of my story to substitute a dream for a real scene. Dreams usually play an important part in fiction, but rarely, I think, in actual life" (*Letters* 2: 309). To be fair, Blackwood meant that Caterina should have had a "passing dream or thought in the mind," as he explained in a later letter (2: 334). But by now he also saw that the scene was necessary. After all, it had been prepared for. Early in the story we are told that even as a child Caterina showed "gleams of fierce resistance to any discipline that had a harsh or unloving aspect. For the only thing in which Caterina showed any precocity was a certain ingenuity in vindictiveness" (109). Over the years, within the workings of her complex nature of which we have been made aware, her childish "precocity" has been developed into something far more dangerous; and it manifests itself in the face of long suffering. But as Eliot wrote, when defending the dagger scene:

So many of us have reason to know that criminal impulses may be felt by a nature which is nevertheless guarded by its entire constitution from the commission of crime, that I can't help hoping my Caterina will not forfeit the sympathy of all my readers. (*Letters* 2: 309)

The scene is also important because it gives Mr. Gilfil a chance to get back into the story, as it were, thereby allowing him to demonstrate

one of the true functions of religion: consolation. His words of comfort to the distraught Caterina are without any doctrinal content much like his religious duties, which he performs "with undeviating attention to brevity and dispatch" (77) yet his understanding and sympathy for her human failings soothe her. His efforts to nurse her back to health return him to the centre of things: his quiet wisdom and love for Caterina contrast with her earlier impetuosity and passion for Wybrow. But with her death, the story's interest dies. The epilogue, with its movement in time that is meant to remind us of Mr. Gilfil's "knots and ruggedness of poor human nature" (186), is really a way of ending Caterina's story, just as the first chapter was a way of introducing it.

There are some weaknesses in *Scenes*, which are characteristic of an early attempt at fiction. I have largely ignored these because they have been identified elsewhere and because to a reader "uncontaminated by literary prejudices," as Noble puts it (quoting Dr. Johnson), the stories have real merit. They give us, he says,

an intimate acquaintance with people who are worth knowing, and the pleasures of entering a world which refreshes us with its differences from our own. A few of the major characters Milly Barton, old Mr Gilfil, Janet and almost all the back ground figures give us that sense of extending our own identities which is one of the prime pleasures of reading. It is not so much that we learn from these people; rather, as in life, we simply enjoy a companionship with them.⁴¹

I agree, only I think that we do learn from them. It is precisely because these characters are so ordinary that it is easy to recognize, and perhaps identify with, their human failings. We also learn from them because each "scene of clerical life" urges us to see that it is necessary to replace contentious dogma with feelings of compassion,

tolerance, and understanding Eliot's doctrine of meliorism is more fully developed in the novels that follow, but its germs are already found in the reference to *As You Like It*. Amos Barton's earlier lack of sympathy leaves him suffering in the "working day world," but Mr. Gilfil and Mr. Tryan help to create "golden worlds" of fellowship and so lessen some of the pain which everyone experiences to one degree or another.

The "moral effect of the stories" that Eliot spoke of to Blackwood (*Letters* 2: 362) is produced, in part, with the help of seemingly straightforward Shakespearean allusions and references. A subtle and complex web of meaning is discovered when their original contexts are compared with the passages in which they appear or when they are otherwise analysed. They help to make the point that there is more to Eliot's characters than meets the eye, that her stories contain the force of life amid what appears to be the sound and fury of insignificance.

Chapter 3 Thematic Parallels: *Adam Bede* and *As You Like It*

In *Local Habitations*, Henry Auster writes of Eliot:

Beginning with *Scenes of Clerical Life* with scrupulously accurate representations of actual places recalled from her early youth, she moved to an imaginative and emblematic use of physical environment in *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*. In these novels the descriptions, while concrete and realistic, are imbued with symbolic significance and play a part in the moral and narrative structure.¹

I agree, and in this chapter I will try to show that the locations in *Adam Bede* are given symbolic significance through Eliot's reliance on verbal echoes from *As You Like It*. In Shakespeare's play, the "golden world" of Arden stands in contrast to the "working day world" of Duke Frederick's court. The same is true in *Adam Bede*. Eliot uses Shakespearean adjectives to describe the "worlds" that her characters live in. Hence, we are encouraged to contrast the "golden world" of Hayslope and Loamshire with the "working day world" of Stonyshire and beyond, or the "golden world" that Hetty and Arthur escape to with the "working-day world" consequences entailed (for them and their community). By thus assuming symbolic significance, the locations form part of the novel's moral structure insofar as they point to the causes and effects of personal or social adversity or happiness themes that Shakespeare explores in *As You Like It*.

However, before discussing the similarities between *Adam Bede* and *As You Like It*, it is worth considering Eliot's response to W. H. Riehl's studies of peasant life, because that leads to a better appreciation of the characters who inhabit the "golden" or "working day" worlds of *Adam Bede*.

For the most part, Eliot's characters are like the *Bauernthum* that Riehl describes in his *Die Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* and *Land und Leute* books reviewed by Eliot in "The History of German Life: Riehl" (July 1856). To understand what the *Bauernthum* is like, Eliot said it was necessary to recall English farmers of fifty years ago. The essay on Riehl was published a year and a half before the novel was begun, and thus the German farmers in question date back to the turn of the nineteenth century, which is also the time of the action in *Adam Bede*.

In her review, Eliot notes that Riehl has the following to say about peasants: they have distinctive physiques, dialects, phraseology, proverbs, songs, attitudes to religion and education; they are agricultural people with "traditional modes of treating their domestic animals"; they are guided by old customs and traditions, "which gradually disappear under the friction of cultivated circles"; they have the "smallest possible faith in theoretic knowledge"; they sometimes maintain feuds with other villages (although they may modify the way in which the feud is expressed); they have great "piety towards the old tumble-down house," but none towards "venerable ruins" of castles or mansions; and, they know only of traditions that have immediacy, while remaining unaware of their country's history. Finally, they have a firm "foundation of . . . independence--namely . . . capability of a settled existence." "*Custom with [them] holds the place of sentiment, of theory, and in many cases of affection*" (Eliot's emphasis).³

It is not difficult to see that the characteristics of peasants noted in the essay on Riehl are reflected in *Adam Bede*. Adam's distinctive physique is described as indicating a mixture of Saxon and Celtic blood⁴; all the locals speak the Loamshire dialect; Mrs. Poyser's

phraseology especially is a source of constant delight; proverbs and songs have their places in Hayslope; while attitudes towards education and, more important, religion are decidedly unsophisticated. Mr. and Mrs. Poyser discuss their short-horned cows while walking to church, giving us an indication of the way they treat their domestic animals; their dairy is lovingly described as a place where the traditional methods of making butter and cheese go on undisturbed and without threat of change; and, Adam "looked at the rough men painfully holding pen or pencil with their cramped hands, or humbly labouring through their reading lesson" (278), which says something about the community's limited use for theoretical knowledge. Although there is no feud between Hayslope and Stoniton or Snowfield, all places beyond the village are viewed with instinctive distrust by most Hayslopians, who never, or rarely, go beyond the confines of their parish. And the "piety towards the old tumble-down house," which Riehl speaks of, is seen in the respect everyone has for the Hall Farm, which stands on the ruins of an old, forgotten Hall:

The history of the house is plain now. It was once the residence of a country squire, whose family, probably dwindled down to a mere spinsterhood, got merged in the more territorial name of Donni thorne. It was once the Hall; it is now the Hall Farm. . . . The life at the Hall has changed its focus, and no longer radiates from the parlour, but from the kitchen and the farmyard. (116)

Eliot considered that, despite its many traditions, the England of her day had all but lost its "vital connection with the past," and that it could only be recalled "by an effort of memory and reflection." *Adam Bede* tries to re establish that connection with the past in precisely those two ways. For instance, although very little seems to happen in the first three books of the novel, first hand impressions are given of

Hayslope and its people. The narrator introduces us to Mr. Irwine's house and family, and the Hall Farm, as if we are there; we are frequently invited to "have a look" for ourselves at people and objects. The effect of this mode of narration is to encourage verification through participation. Once we have looked for ourselves, as it were, it becomes increasingly difficult for Eliot to introduce anything which we would not expect, or could not accept. Thus the technique adds to the sense of reality already created by the emphasis on remembered detail and historical accuracy.

If the novel's sense of reality depends on the accuracy of Eliot's "effort of memory," its moral drama relies on her "effort of reflection" --on her moral interpretation of the past, which retrospect makes possible. In *George Eliot and Blackmail*, Alexander Welsh talks about her use of "pastoral distancing," and argues that her early fiction is pastoral

not because of the setting in itself, but because of the contrast between sophisticated and simple points of view that is built into the narrative. Only *Adam Bede*, in fact, has a strictly bucolic setting, but each of the early fictions employs a device of pastoral distancing.

Elsewhere he writes that "the implied distance between the actions represented and the greater sophistication of the narrator and readers," is what matters in a "pastoral" novel.¹¹ Why? Because our greater sophistication allows us to see beneath the surface of past events and so make informed moral judgments about them.

The symbolic significance of *Adam Bede's* locations, created with the help of *As You Like It*, also allows us to make moral judgments about the various characters, and it is this aspect of the novel that I now want to consider.

There are no Shakespearean epigraphs in *Adam Bede*,⁷ and neither John Paterson nor Stephen Gill, editors of the Riverside edition (1968) and the Penguin English Library edition (1980) respectively, nor Joseph Wiesenfarth, who lists all the pertinent extracts from Eliot's "Common-place Book" in his "George Eliot's Notes for *Adam Bede*," say anything about Shakespeare. Nevertheless, comparisons of *Adam Bede* to Shakespeare have been made. For instance, F. R. Leavis says that Eliot resembles him in the "product of a creative writer's art," that she creates, not just copies, the rich "cultivated art of speech that made the English language that made Shakespeare possible."⁸

More pertinent to my discussion are the comments of Maurice Hussey. In his "Structure and Imagery in 'Adam Bede,'" he compares Eliot's pattern of time and symbolic use of seasons with certain passages from *The Winter's Tale* and suggests that if we were told more about Stonyshire, we "might be justified in pressing a Shakespearean parallel of Sicilia and Bohemia, for Hayslope's limitations are exactly those of Bohemia." Martin Poyser, he says, is like Leontes or Lear, because he "disclaims propinquity . . . [and] ignores his responsibility as relative and master" where Hetty is concerned.⁹

Much of what Hussey says about the two locales is suggestive, but I find Auster's observations more significant. The reader, he says, carries away "the sense of the intangible influences that the [Loamshire] landscape suggests":

It is in Stonyshire that the trial takes place, it is here that both Hetty and Adam fully recognize and accept the burden of past delusions, and it is also here, in the cooler, crisper, clearer atmosphere, that Dinah at last acknowledges her need for Adam (and Loamshire) and that they are united.¹⁰

These observations can be expanded on: I think that there is a Forest-of-Arden like atmosphere in Loamshire that contrasts with the harsher, more dangerous, Court-like atmosphere of Stonyshire and beyond.

As You Like It was one of Eliot's favourite plays, and, as I indicated in my introduction, she was fond of using certain key words and expressions from the play in letters and essays in order to express certain moral concepts. It is significant therefore to find those words and expressions in the text of *Adam Bede*. Eliot first uses Shakespeare's adjective, "working-day," in chapter 27, "A Crisis," just before Adam sees Arthur Donnithorne kissing Hetty in the Grove:

He hurried across the Chase, stalking along the narrow paths between the fern, with Gyp at his heels, not lingering to watch the magnificent changes of the light--hardly once thinking of it--yet feeling its presence in a certain calm happy awe which mingled itself with his busy working-day thoughts. How could he help feeling it? The very deer felt it, and were more timid. (340-1)

Later, in chapter 50, "In the Cottage," when Adam's altered state of mind is described, she uses it again, in connection with another echo from *As You Like It*.

His work, as you know, had always been part of his religion, and from very early days he saw clearly that good carpentry was God's will--was that form of God's will that most immediately concerned him. But now there was no margin of dreams for him beyond this daylight reality, no holiday-time in the working-day world, no moment in the distance when duty would take off her iron glove and breastplate and clasp him gently to rest. (532)

The phrase "holiday-time" is heard when Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede, tells Orlando, "Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday / humour and like enough to consent" (IV.1.65-66), and Celia, in answer to Rosalind's, "O how full of / briers is this working day world!" says, "They are but burs, cousin, thrown upon thee in / holiday foolery. . ."

(I.iii.11-4). Elsewhere, the narrator also comments on Adam's, Arthur's, and Hetty's "golden worlds."

In the first extract I have quoted, Adam is described happily blending a "golden world," dominated by Hetty, with his "working-day world"; and in the second, he is grieving over Hetty. However, during "this second autumn of his sorrow" (532), after finding real happiness with Dinah, he regains his "golden world." Thus, as in Shakespeare's play, the quest for happiness in a balanced world, neither cynical nor sentimental, is an important theme in the novel.

Then there are parallels of location. Arden is populated by real people, and yet it is a curious place, strangely eclectic and therefore somewhat other-worldly. Hayslope is real and concrete, but it too has a dreamlike atmosphere about it. The locales resemble each other in being pastoral retreats, pockets of quietude and beauty surrounded by ugly, threatening worlds. They are charming places boasting happy and unsophisticated natives in harmony with the land and its traditions. In both play and novel, people, individually and collectively, enjoy relatively carefree lives, but they are also made to deal with the "working day worlds" that lie beyond. Novel and play examine the complex relationship of these two "worlds" in individuals and communities and imply the need for a harmonious blending of the two.

Riehl's scientific analysis of the *Bauernthum* led him to conclude that the geography and climate of a region to a large extent determine the cultural, spiritual, and social developments of its people. Among those who live self-sufficient or remote lives there is "a sense of rank," which is not found in regions where the "original races are fused together."¹¹ The true peasant is unconcerned with his country's

constitutional government because the idea is beyond his conception. "His only notion of representation is that of representation of ranks--of classes; his only notion of a deputy is one who takes care, not of the national welfare, but of the interests of his own order." He finds no need for written laws; traditions are his living law.¹²

Such a sense of rank is fundamental to Hayslope's way of life. Learning that Adam is to become steward, Arthur instructs him to "dine upstairs with the large tenants" (304), who squabble among themselves about the presidency and vice-presidency of the dinner. When Arthur walks in, everyone respectfully stands up, and politely listens to his agricultural theories:

He was only a captain in the Loamshire Militia, but to the Hayslope tenants he was more intensely a captain than all the young gentlemen of the same rank in his majesty's regulars--he outshone them as the planet Jupiter outshines the Milky Way. (105)

It is precisely Arthur's social importance that makes his sin so serious: his disregard for rank makes what would otherwise be only an indiscretion a disruptive force in the community.

Arthur is a member of the "Aristocratic Proletariat," to use Riehl's term, as translated by Eliot; he is typical of those noblemen's sons who are "usually obliged to remain without any vocation," and who always remain dilettantes.¹³ As the "invisible worm" in the rose that is Hayslope, he takes after his mother's family (108) and at best bears "the more territorial name of Donnithorne." His preference for flamboyant clothes also suggests how much he is out of tune with his community: "I will not be so much of a tailor as to trouble your imagination with the differences of costume, and insist on [his] striped waistcoat, long-tailed coat, and low top-boots" (105). The reference to

his striped waistcoat is particularly damning: both Arthur and *The Winter's Tale* are alluded to when Adam, with unconscious irony, tells Hetty that pink roses "have got a finer sort o' green leaves, [and] are prettier than the striped uns. . . . [T]hose striped uns have no smell" (268). Here is an example of Eliot's quiet irony and subtle handling of her subject: Adam's rejection of striped roses, which bloom at the same time as Arthur takes up with Hetty--in late summer-early autumn--is not unlike Perdita's rejection of "streak'd gillivors." She tells Polixenes:

Sir, the year growing ancient,
Not yet on summer's death nor the birth
Of trembling winter, the fairest flowers o' th' season
Are our carnations and streak'd gillivors,
Which some call nature's bastards; of that kind
Our rustic garden's barren; and I care not
To get slips of them.

(IV.iv.79-85)

Thus without being told to do so, we are constantly encouraged to reflect on Arthur's "illegitimacy," and, perhaps, his capacity to beget bastards.

A second allusion to Arthur's dress and looks (at the birthday dinner) reinforces the idea that he is one of "nature's bastards":

Mr. Irwine got up to speak, and all the faces in the room were turned towards him. The superior refinement of his face was much more striking than that of Arthur's when seen in the comparison with the people round them. Arthur's was a much commoner British face, and the splendour of his new-fashioned clothes was more akin to the young farmer's taste in costume than Mr. Irwine's powder and the well-brushed but well-worn black, which seemed to be his chosen suit for great occasions; for he had the mysterious secret of never wearing a new-looking coat. (312)

Significantly, Arthur's nearest relations are his Aunt Lydia and his grandfather, from whom he will inherit the estate. The lack of a father and mother in his life further illustrates the discontinuity that he represents in the slow evolution of Hayslope's life.

Hetty has no parents either; her nearest relations are the Poyzers (cf. 128), and like Arthur, she is notable for her striking, yet somehow insubstantial, physical appearance: "Hetty's was a springtide beauty; it was the beauty of young frisking things, round-limbed, gambolling, circumventing you by a false air of innocence" (128). She resembles Hebe (146), the Goddess of Youth who waited on the gods,¹⁴ and is "quite uneducated--a simple farmer's girl, to whom a gentleman with a white hand was dazzling as an Olympian God" (145). Both she and Arthur are sensual creatures who prefer to live in dreams and pay only cursory attention to what is expected of them. To Hetty, work is an irritant; to Arthur, it is something you plan for others (cf. 147).

But although Hetty and Arthur escape reality for false "golden worlds," others must share the blame for the disgrace that befalls the community. Mr. Irwine and Dinah, for example, are guilty of complacency and short-sightedness.

In *Theophrastus Such*, Eliot recalls a rector who always saw to it that his parishoners paid him tithes. Such care is not usually expected from the clergy, but, Eliot says, "A Christian pastor who did not mind about his money was not an ideal prevalent among the rural minds of that central England, and might have seemed to introduce a dangerous laxity of supposition about Christian laymen who happened to be creditors."¹⁵ Mr. Irwine is not interested in tithes, and he has many excellent qualities. But he resembles this colleague inasmuch as they both show an imbalance between worldliness and spirituality--tending towards the former. They live up to a public image of what is expected of rectors, which has merits but also serious limitations. When told about Dinah's preaching, Mr. Irwine tells his parish clerk and sexton, "We must 'live

and let live,' Joshua, in religion as well as in other things. You go on doing your duty" (103). This advice is sound with regard to religion, but his willingness to "live and let live in other things" betrays complacency and presages his "fastidiousness" about intruding on another man's secrets" (453). As the community's spiritual advisor, he fails in not warning Arthur to stop his dalliance with Hetty. Eventually, he counsels Adam to do his duty to God and man (456), but by then it is too late for him to exert any influence he may have had on Hetty and Arthur.

Meanwhile, Dinah thinks that preaching alone will solve everything. Having finally affected Hetty as she affected Bessy during the sermon on the Green, she wrongly assumes that she has a convert:

Dinah had never seen Hetty affected in this way before, and, with her usual benignant hopefulness, she trusted it was the stirring of a divine impulse. She kissed the sobbing thing, and began to cry with her grateful joy. But Hetty was simply in that excitable state of mind in which there is no calculating what turn the feelings may take from one moment to another, and for the first time she became irritated under Dinah's caress. (206)

It is true that Mr. Irwine preaches the Gospel, and that Dinah works very hard. But he "harmonised [badly] with sound theories of clerical office, [and] . . . somehow harmonised extremely well with that peaceful landscape" (113), while she takes a martyr's pleasure in the hard life of Snowfield--a place best described by Mrs. Poyser as "'that bare heap o' stones as the very crows fly over an' won't stop at'" (518). In Eliot's "Commonplace Book" there is an extract from a letter written by Jenny Keith to John Wesley, which probably helped her with her characterization of Dinah:

"I know not," [says Jenny Keith], "how to agree to the not working. I am still unwilling, to take anything from any body. I work out of choice, having never yet learned how a woman can be idle & innocent. I have had as blessed times in my soul sitting at work as

I ever had in my life; especially in the night-time, when I see nothing but the light of a candle & heaven in my soul, I think myself one of the happiest creatures below the skies. I do not complain that God has not made me some fine thing, to be set up & gazed at; but I can heartily bless him that he has made me just what I am, a creature capable of the enjoyment of himself. If I go to the window & look out, I see the moon & stars: I meditate awhile on the silence of the night, consider the world as a beautiful structure, & the work of an almighty hand; then I sit down to work again, & think myself one of the happiest beings in it."

Southey's *Life of Wesley*¹⁶

The passage reminds me of the scene describing Dinah at her bedroom window on the evening before her return to Snowfield. Reflecting on the relationship she has established with the people of Hayslope, and how they have learned to depend on her, the narrator adds:

the pressure of this thought soon became too strong for her to enjoy the unresponding stillness of the moonlit fields. She closed her eyes, that she might feel more intensely the pressure of a Love and Sympathy deeper and more tender than was breathed from earth to sky. That was often Dinah's mode of praying in solitude. Simple to close her eyes, and to feel herself enclosed by the Divine Presence; then gradually her fears, yearning anxieties for others, melted away like ice-crystals in a warm ocean. (202)

On the one hand, she behaves selflessly, but, on the other, she is selfless to a fault. Quoting from the novel, Creeger writes:

Selfless is a word used frequently in describing her, but selfless means not only something different from selfish; it means also lacking in self. To lack this sense of human identity is to become something either less or more than human--a clod, perhaps, or a divinity. Talking of herself to Mr. Irwine, she says:

"I'm too much given to sit still and keep by myself; it seems as if I could sit all day long with the thought of God overflowing my soul--as the pebbles lie bathed in the Willow Brook. For thoughts are so great--aren't they, sir? They seem to lie upon us like a deep flood; and it's my besetment to forget where I am and everything about me, and lose myself in thoughts that I could give no account of, for I could neither make a beginning nor ending of them in words." [135]

Such a state represents a complete withdrawal from life, and withdrawal (or retreat) is characteristic of Dinah.¹⁷

Given Eliot's strong interest in *As You Like It* and the similarities between the play and novel that I have already mentioned, I think that she saw an ironic parallel between Dinah's reference to the pebbles in

the Willow Brook and Duke Senior's comment to Amiens:

And this our life from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything

(II.i.15-17)

The Duke's reflections help him to "translate the stubbornness of fortune / Into so quiet and so sweet a style" (II.i.19-20), as Amiens puts it; in other words, they reconcile him to the "working day world." Dinah's, on the other hand, indicate her excessive interest in the spiritual, as opposed to real, world.

Put in Shakespearean terms, Mr. Irwine is too much interested in the "working day world" of Hayslope, and Dinah in the "golden world" of her spiritual reveries. Until they learn to balance these two "worlds," they remain unfulfilled like the "melancholy" Jaques, who, reflecting on his travels and state of exile, cannot yet reconcile the beauty of Arden with the world beyond. He tells Rosalind, "my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness," to which Rosalind, who has learned to deal with life's hardships, replies: "I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's. Then to have seen much and to have nothing is to have such eyes and poor hands" (IV.i.17-23).

When she meets Mr. Irwine at the Hall Farm, Dinah tells him:

"But I've noticed, that in these villages where the people lead a quiet life among green pastures and the still waters, tilling the ground and tending the cattle, there's a strange deadness to the Word, as different as can be from the great towns, like Leeds, where I once went to visit a holy woman who preaches there. It's wonderful how rich is the harvest of souls up those high-walled streets, where ye seem to walk as in a prison-yard, and the ear is deafened with the sounds of worldly toil. I think maybe it is because the promise is sweeter when this life is so dark and dreary, and the soul gets more hungry when the body is ill at ease." (137)

Other names for Hayslope's "strange deadness" are "complacency" and "intolerance" attitudes not restricted to religious beliefs. Of Hetty's feelings about "the parish," the narrator says:

You can perhaps hardly understand the effect of that word ["parish"] on a mind like Hetty's, brought up among people who were somewhat hard in their feelings even towards poverty, who lived among the fields, and had little pity for want and rags as a hard inevitable fate such as they sometimes seem in cities, but held them a mark of idleness and vice --and it was idleness and vice that brought burthens on the parish. (424)

Implicit in these extracts is the suggestion that the Hayslopians' complacent attitudes and intolerance towards suffering are the result of having lived too well. Their "golden world," therefore, needs to be tempered by harder experiences of life; and that is particularly true of Adam.

In some ways Adam is an unsatisfactory character. From the first description in the workshop, where it is made evident that he is not like other men, it is difficult to come to grips with his nature. Somehow he stands too far apart from Hayslope. Dinah, who is more accustomed to sensing "Divine love" as she walks over hills (135), is immediately affected by him (162), and the narrator explains: "Adam, you perceive, was by no means a marvellous man, nor, properly speaking, a genius, yet I will not pretend that his was an ordinary character among workmen. . ." (258). Such attempts to capture the complexity of his nature unwittingly contribute to a blurring of his character. There is something of the Byronic hero in his air of brooding intensity and individuality, and he resembles Carlyle's "natural Aristocrat"¹⁰ as well as Ruskin's simple artisan who is dedicated to, and finds simple reward in, work.

Nevertheless, he should be seen as representing everything that is good and bad in Hayslope. He is honest, reliable, forthright yet respectful, and dedicated to family, friends, and work. Yet he is also intolerant: "he had too little fellow feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences"; and, as the narrator asks, "Without this fellow-feeling, how are we to get enough patience and charity towards our stumbling, falling companions in the long and changeful journey?" (255). What Adam must learn is what most of Eliot's characters eventually learn, and what the characters in *As You Like It* learn: wisdom, which often comes as a result of suffering. "All passion becomes strength when it has an outlet from the narrow limits of our personal lot in the labour of our right arm, the cunning of our right hand, or the still, creative activity of our thought" (257), says the narrator. Once Adam experiences sorrow and understands the need for "fellow feeling," he finds "an outlet from the narrow limits of [his] personal lot" by joining the "wider limits" of humanity; and in this way he finds strength to overcome sorrow.

In the beginning, however, Adam's only "passion" is work, something not very different from Arthur's "passion" for bringing about changes on the estate. In fact, there is a striking similarity between the two men. Arthur dismisses the *Lyrical Ballads* as "luddling stuff" (109) and only knows Mr. Irwine's *Aeschylus* "by sight" (213), while Adam "might have had many more books from Bartle Massey, but he had no time for reading 'the common print,' as Lisbeth called it, so busy as he was with figures in all the leisure moments which he did not fill up with extra carpentry" (258). Neither is inclined to reflect on anything beyond immediate

interests, and, when they do, they tend to delude themselves. The way Arthur flirts with Hetty, and the way Adam at one time thinks about her are described with ironic references to "golden ages," indicating that both men have much to learn about life in the real world.

It was a pity they [Arthur and Hetty] were not in that golden age of childhood when they would have stood face to face, eyeing each other with timid liking, then given each other a little butterfly kiss, and toddled off to play together. (175-6)

[Adam thought] How she will dote on her children! She is almost a child herself, and the little pink round things will hang about her like florets round the central flower; and the husband will look on, smiling benignly, able, whenever he chooses, to withdraw into the sanctuary of his wisdom, towards which his sweet wife will look reverently, and never lift the curtain. It is a marriage such as they made in the golden age, when the men were all wise and majestic, and the women all lovely and loving. (198)

The description of Adam blending his "golden world" with his "working day world" as he walks towards the Arden like Grove, where he will see Arthur and Hetty kissing, is also ironic. For all his industry and craftsmanship, he has yet to make contact with the "working-day world," although he has begun to feel some of its "briers" since his father's death. The trauma of events to come, however, teaches him, as it does others, the extent of his failings, and makes him a wiser man.

However, *Adam Bede* does not only describe how the social ecology of Hayslope is threatened, it also offers a deep understanding of what holds it together. In his *Autobiography*, John Stuart Mill wrote,

When the philosophic minds of the world can no longer believe its religions, a transitional period of weak convictions, paralysed intellects & growing laxity of principle commences, which can never cease but when a renovation has been effected in the basis of belief, leading to the evolution of another faith whether religious or not, which they can believe. Therefore I hold that all thinking or writing, which does not directly tend towards this renovation, is at present of very little value beyond the moment. ' '

Similarly, Eliot recognized that communities need something to believe in, and that once that belief has ossified, or is broken, a period of spiritual floundering is inevitable. Referring to England, she wrote,

many of us can remember country districts in which the great mass of the people were christianised by illiterate Methodist and Independent ministers; while the influence of the parish clergyman among the poor did not extend much beyond a few old women in scarlet cloaks, and a few exceptional church going labourers. "

In *Adam Bede* we see a community experiencing a "crisis of faith" brought on by Mr. Irwine's brand of religion, which is deficient in spiritual content, and Dinah's, which disapproves of all material possessions, including land, which are fundamental to the community. Arthur deals the death blow, as it were, when he betrays everyone by ignoring his responsibility to uphold the sense of rank upon which Hayslope is structured.

The period of disillusionment that follows Hetty's disgrace is beautifully described in chapter 40, "The Bitter Waters Spread":

Before ten o'clock on Thursday morning the home at the Hall Farm was a house of mourning for a misfortune felt to be worse than death. The sense of family dishonour was too keen even in the kind hearted Martin Poyser the younger to leave room for any compassion towards Hetty. He and his father were simple-minded farmers, proud of their untarnished character, proud that they came of a family which had held up its head and paid its way as far back as its name was in the parish register; and Hetty had brought disgrace on them all--disgrace that could never be wiped out. (459)

But if her disgrace could never be wiped out, neither could the community. As Eliot said, quoting Riehl, "What has grown up historically can only die out historically, by the gradual operation of necessary laws."²¹ The severe attitudes do not last. As the narrator says, "Deep, unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state. . . . Doubtless a great anguish may do the

work of years, and we may come out from that baptism of fire with a soul full of new awe and new pity" (471-2)

Nevertheless, a number of critics have found fault with Eliot's treatment of Hetty.²² It is interesting to note that those who object to Hetty's "rejection" do so for the same sorts of reasons as those who object to Falstaff's in *2 Henry IV*. It is argued that the rejections are unfair, because both Shakespeare and Eliot are inconsistent in their treatment of characters or themes. In Falstaff's case, A. C. Bradley says that if we have enjoyed him, his rejection is hard to take, and when "the Chief Justice returns and sends him to prison, we stare in astonishment." He goes on: "Falstaff's dismissal to the Fleet, and his subsequent death prove beyond doubt that his rejection was meant by Shakespeare to be taken as a catastrophe which not even his humour could enable him to surmount." The only plausible explanation for the rejection is that Shakespeare "overshot his mark": "He created so extraordinary a being and fixed him so firmly on his intellectual throne, that when he sought to dethrone him he could not."²³

E. M. W. Tillyard thinks otherwise:

Those who cannot stomach the rejection of Falstaff assume that in some way the Prince acted dishonestly, that he made a friend of Falstaff, thus deceiving him, that he got all he could out of him and then repudiated the debt. They are wrong. The Prince is aloof and Olympian from the start and never treats Falstaff any better than his dog with whom he condescends once in a way to have a game. It is not the Prince who deceives, it is Falstaff who deceives himself by wishful thinking.²⁴

Tillyard is right when he says that Falstaff deceives himself, but not because Hal has been aloof and Olympian from the start.²⁵ Falstaff unwittingly pinpoints the reasons for his "rejection" when he reflects on Shallow's familiarity with his servants: "let men take heed of their

company" (see V.i.61-75). Hal, taking heed of his, and wanting to avoid the Falstaffian "disease," takes Falstaff's own advice.

It may be argued that, even though Falstaff's rejection is necessary, it is still surprising and shocking. But such a reaction, I think, betrays a misreading of the play. The real hero is not King Henry, Hal, or Falstaff, but England. As A. R. Humphreys says, the theme of the play is the state of England.²⁶ There is enough lawlessness in the country without Falstaff adding to it.²⁷ England needs King Henry's, and eventually Hal's firm leadership to ensure peace and quiet. Falstaff, through his own actions, disqualifies himself from Hal's company, and his rejection, compared with England's welfare, is relatively unimportant.

Much the same can be said about Hetty's rejection. I have tried to show that the main issue in *Adam Bede* is the state of Hayslope's community and that Hetty is an anomaly to its way of life. Just as Falstaff is made to leave Hal, she is made to leave Hayslope. Her death, given the nature of the punishment and the fact that there is no indication that she ever learns from her troubles, is both believable and in keeping with the novel's theme of redemption.

Eliot's ending in *Adam Bede* is not unlike Shakespeare's in *As You Like It*. Hymen marries those who have learned to balance their "working-day worlds" with the "golden world" of Arden. To them he says, "Then is there mirth in heaven, / When earthly things made even / Atone together" (V.iv.107-9). Thereafter, we learn that Duke Frederick has suddenly, and rather fortuitously, "put on a religious life, / And thrown into neglect the pompous court" (V.iv. 180-1), thereby allowing Duke Senior to leave his exile. Yet Shakespeare's resolution is not altogether contrived. A

central theme throughout the play is that our better qualities, given half a chance, will overcome our ignoble natures or conduct; Duke Frederick's determination to give back the crown is in keeping with that idea. As soon as he comes into contact with the "golden world" of Arden, he goes off to atone for his sins. The same is true in *Adam Bede*. Arthur's fate resembles Duke Frederick's insofar as he is also forced to expiate his sins by leaving his home. Meanwhile, the marriage of Dinah and Adam is an example of how the "uses of adversity" can be "sweet." For as the narrator says,

Tender and deep as his love for Hetty had been--so deep that the roots of it would never be torn away--his love for Dinah was better and more precious to him; for it was the outgrowth of that fuller life which had come to him from his acquaintance with deep sorrow. (574)

The novels which follow *Adam Bede* experiment with different styles and interests. As Knoepfelmacher and George Levine say:

The religious enthusiast who became an agnostic, the translator who became an editor and essayist, the essayist who became a novelist, the experimental novelist who would not repeat herself, the anti-novelist who turned to poetry and to the Theophrastan character sketch--all these and many other selves (historian, linguist, scientist, etc.) went into the making of "George Eliot."¹⁴

Nevertheless, her appreciation of *As You Like It* never changed. In subsequent chapters I will draw attention to what, at first glance, may appear to be casual allusions to the play, but which are anything but casual. The thematic parallels that I have just explored are also folded into the texts of the later, more complex novels.

Georg Gervinus, in *Shakespeare*, makes the following comment about Jaques' function in the play:

This character is exclusively Shakespeare's own creation and addition. He demonstrates anew the poet's duality, of which we have

found many examples and with which we are familiar. Shakespeare does not echo the facile tradition of pastoral poets who extol the still-life of Nature as being in itself a school of wisdom and contentment. By contrasting Jaques with the Duke, he shows that those who wish to get enjoyment and benefit from this life must have a predisposition for moderation and self-control, enabling them to neutralise adversity and do without external success."

Eliot's marking of this passage suggests that she agreed with Gervinus' understanding of Shakespeare's cautiously optimistic world view. Like Shakespeare, she went on to create a gallery of characters who struggle to find meaningful lives and demonstrate anew the need to balance communal and individual interests. Once they learn this lesson, they usually find happiness, for, as *Adam Bede's* narrator says,

It would be a poor result of all our anguish and our wrestling, if we won nothing but our old selves at the end of it if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-confident blame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of that Unknown towards which we have sent forth irrepressible cries in our loneliness. Let us rather be thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form, as forces do, and passing from pain into sympathy: the one poor word which includes all our best insight and our best love. (531)

Chapter 4
Tragic Vision in *The Mill on the Floss*

There are tragic elements in *Scenes*, *Adam Bede*, *Silas Marner*, *Romola*, *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch*, and *Daniel Deronda*; and yet these novels end on optimistic notes. Their main characters are variously taught to recognize their own relative insignificance in the scheme of things, and to rely on the healing power of love; they usually discover happiness, despite hardships which have to be endured. But this is not so in *The Mill on the Floss*: at different times, the principal characters, Maggie and Tom, learn similar lessons, but they die in the process of discovery. Like their counterparts in the other novels, Maggie and Tom have to deal with circumstances that are largely, though unwittingly, created for them by their society. However, they do not survive their moments of self-renunciation. Because people like Tom have been thoroughly indoctrinated in St. Ogg's absurdities and cannot see that individuals have compelling needs of their own, Maggie is denied the opportunity to balance the duties she owes to herself with those she owes to others. And only when it is too late does Tom recognize his egoism. In *The Mill*, Eliot suggests that some things in life can never be overcome, that under some circumstances death is the only solution. For although the drowning of Tom and Maggie is accidental, it can be argued that they must die because, in their different ways, they are helpless victims of prejudices and allegiances from which they can never otherwise escape.

This unrelieved, sombre exploration of life distinguishes *The Mill* and makes it Eliot's most tragic novel. In *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*, Jeannette King says that *The Mill* "repeats the conflict that

[Eliot] sees in *Antigone*--'an antagonism between valid claims.'" Insofar as this conflict is impossible to solve, "The form of the novel is consequently moulded by the tragic vision," which, with the exception of *The Spanish Gypsy*, is unique in her work. The childhood section of *The Mill* brings out the idea of hereditary guilt, which ensures that Mr. Tulliver's conflict with Wakem is passed on to the next generation and that his need for revenge is not allowed to die a natural death: "The revenge theme which dominates Greek and Jacobean tragedy here gives dramatic force to George Eliot's law of consequences." The novel adopts the cyclical patterns of classical tragedy, which lend themselves to the idea of history repeating itself. In this way, says King, Eliot elevates the individual's life to a universal life: she raises "the private sorrow to the level of tragedy." Maggie's story is significantly compared with the legend of St. Ogg's, and so her story "becomes itself a symbol for all time: the accidents of time and place are finally irrelevant to the real tragedy."¹

I agree with much of what King says, and in this chapter I want to pursue her point that *The Mill* repeats the conflict of Greek and Jacobean drama. A single reference to *Hamlet* suggests that there is a subtle distinction between the tragedies of Maggie and *Antigone*. At a point between the lengthy account of her childhood and adolescence, and the climax to which everything has been pointing, the narrator observes:

But you have known Maggie a long while, and need to be told, not her characteristics, but her history, which is hardly to be predicted even from the completest knowledge of characteristics. For the tragedy of our lives is not created entirely from within. 'Character'--says Novalis, in one of his questionable aphorisms--'character is destiny.' But not the whole of our destiny. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, was speculative and irresolute, and we have a great tragedy in consequence. But if his father had lived to a good old age, and his uncle had died an early death, we can conceive Hamlet's having married Ophelia and got through life with a

reputation of sanity notwithstanding many soliloquies, and some moody sarcasms towards the fair daughter of Polonius, to say nothing of the frankest incivility to his father in law.

Eliot's point is that Maggie's tragedy is closer to Hamlet's because both characters find themselves having to deal with circumstances or events over which they have little or no control. For them, character and environment are destiny: they are caught up in the conflicting demands of the two. But unlike Antigone, who is similarly affected, they begin by internalizing their problems. Their dilemmas are not simply the result of being out of step with their societies, but in being out of step with themselves. Much of their suffering comes from their initial reluctance to ignore the implications of acting one way or the other.

In Sophocles' play, it is left to the audience to see that the conflict between Antigone and Creon cannot be resolved. After he punishes Antigone for her disobedience, Creon expresses his sorrow; but for the most part there is never any doubt in the minds of either of the protagonists that the other was wrong and that, however regrettable, their actions were morally justified. With Hamlet and Maggie the problem runs deeper. For them, the question of who is right or wrong becomes less and less clear and is in any case subsumed in the wider consideration of knowing what to do. At first, Hamlet is largely "speculative and irresolute," while Maggie wrestles with her conscience; in the end, both make up their minds to do what is right, only to die dramatically amid chaotic circumstances. These "resolutions" are unsatisfactory because they avoid answering the questions that have been raised. What would have happened to them if they had not died so suddenly? Would they have been able to settle down with people who looked upon them with distrust? Would they have been able to change their societies? On the other hand,

it is difficult to see how Shakespeare and Eliot could have solved the insoluble. And that, I think, is the point: there are no satisfactory solutions to the problems facing Maggie and Hamlet. Moreover, the interest lies more in their crises of self-identity than anything else. They begin to waver in wanting to act against authority because they are torn between a loyalty to the past that has helped to create them, and a need to break with the past that involves a direct threat to their sense of self. The suffering entailed by that becomes a large part of their tragedy.

Eliot's reference, then, to Hamlet's hypothetical destiny is not just a throw-away observation. Other Shakespearean allusions also indicate that she had Shakespeare in mind while writing *The Mill*. An 1860 review of the novel includes the following comment:

[the novel reproduces] the old grand element of interest which the Greek drama possessed, the effect of circumstances upon man; but you have, in addition, that analysis of the inner mind, of which *Hamlet* stands in literature the greatest example.

The reviewer is prompted to mention *Hamlet* because Eliot does; the idea is not developed. However, this chapter will try to develop it. After considering Eliot's personal response to Shakespeare's play, I hope to show that the stories of Hamlet and Maggie share the same tragic vision.

The sort of speculation that Eliot's narrator engages in concerning Hamlet's life under different circumstances is also found in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*. Meister, in fact, makes a detailed study of Hamlet's nature before the old king's murder and the chain of events that follow. Eliot referred to *Hamlet* and *Wilhelm Meister* in a letter dated 30 July 1861 (*Letters* 3: 441-42), but she

would have been aware of Meister's comments before she wrote *The Mill* because in 1855, five years earlier, Lewes published *The Life and Works of Goethe*.

"The criticism on *Hamlet*, which Wilhelm makes," said Lewes, "still remains the best criticism we have on that wonderful play," and, since Eliot agreed with him, I suggest that if we want to discover Eliot's personal response to *Hamlet*, we should turn to Goethe's novel."

Meister first discusses the play when he stages it and decides to take on the title role. But since Goethe makes it clear that Meister is his Hamlet (we therefore hear Hamlet talking about *Hamlet*, as it were), everything that Meister says has to be weighed very carefully. For instance, during the rehearsals, he tells the other actors about the difficulty he has had in coming to grips with his part and then explains how he solved the problem. In Thomas Carlyle's translation of the novel, we read:

"I set about investigating every trace of Hamlet's character, as it had shown itself before his father's death: I endeavoured to distinguish what in it was independent of this mournful event; independent of the terrible events that followed; and what most probably the young man would have been, had no such thing occurred."

He thereby concludes that Hamlet was at one time a promising fellow in whom "Ambition and the love of rule are not the passions that inspire him." Unlike *the Mill's* narrator who thinks that Hamlet was always introspective, moody and uncivil, Meister believes he

"was calm in his temper, artless in his conduct. . . . He possessed more mirth of humour than of heart; he was a good companion, pliant, courteous, discreet, and able to forget and forgive an injury; yet never able to unite himself with those who overstept the limits of the right, the good, and the becoming."

The different conclusions that Meister and Eliot's narrator come to regarding Hamlet's essential nature can be accounted for by remembering

that whereas Meister is, at this stage of his Apprenticeship and Travels, naïve, self-obsessed, and undiscerning, Eliot's narrator is worldly-wise and therefore not about to overlook Hamlet's (and Meister's) faults. Meister does not see them because, as Goethe's Hamlet, he is not yet ready to see the same faults in his own nature and conduct.

Goethe's novel can be read, at least in part, as a retelling of Hamlet's story.⁶ Two of Meister's theatrical friends are called Horatio and Laertes, the mysterious Ghost from his production resembles his own father and returns to him after he has left the company,⁷ and Meister is later told that he played Hamlet successfully because his "form . . . disposition and the temper of the moment suited"--not because he was a good actor able to project himself into the part.¹⁰ Thus, since Goethe all but tells us that Meister is his Hamlet, it is possible to say that Meister's moral development mirrors Hamlet's.

Identifying the stages in Meister's moral development is not difficult: here too we are all but told when and why a phase begins or ends. His Apprenticeship begins when, after mistakenly believing himself to be wronged by Mariana, he abruptly breaks with the past and overconfidently sets off to make the world his own rather than find his place in it. Always ready to savour a new experience, he drifts from one place to another and is never shy to give strong opinions on any subject whatsoever. Gradually, however, after becoming entangled in various situations and intrigues, he begins to suspect that he may not have all the answers to all the questions after all. And, when he finally sees that he has been participating in a design not of his own making, when his confidence in his own powers of discrimination is shaken, he is told

that his Apprenticeship is over. At this point, the Ghost from the earlier production returns to express confidence in his ability to become a wiser person.¹¹

Together with other "Renunciants," he is, again mysteriously, forced to Travel in order to learn "Reverence" and "Wisdom." After many encounters with all sorts of people, and after much reflection on what they tell him, Meister succeeds in his task. His story ends when Lenardo, a fellow Traveller, summarizes what all the Renunciants have learned:

Let a man learn . . . to figure himself as without permanent external relation; let him seek consistency and sequence not in circumstances but in himself; there will he find it; there let him cherish and nourish it. He who devotes himself to the most needful will in all cases advance his purpose with greatest certainty; others again, aiming at the higher, the more delicate, require greater prudence even in the choice of their path. But let a man be attempting or treating what he will, he is not, as an individual, sufficient for himself; and to an honest mind, society remains the highest want.¹²

From Meister's story it is possible to say a number of things about Goethe's understanding of Shakespeare's play. When Meister, as part of his analysis of the character, suggests that Hamlet is "Not reflective or sorrowful by nature. . . ," Goethe is being ironic. Meister is right when he says that "reflection and sorrow have become for him [Hamlet] a heavy obligation" by the time the audience first sees him; that his father's death has caused him to remember "His past condition . . . as a vanished dream"; and, that Gertrude's marriage to Claudius has made him feel "completely bent and orphaned; and no happiness of life can repay what he has lost."¹³ But because he is guilty of the same sin, Meister overlooks Hamlet's self-righteousness-- the result of his reflective and sorrowful nature. Hamlet's grief and embarrassment are of course under-

standable. But even before there is any suspicion of foul play, he has already condemned Claudius, his mother, and the Danish state generally.

Similarly, Meister's own shortcomings suggests that he is only partially right in his account of Hamlet's response to the Ghost:

"And when the ghost has vanished, who is it that stands before us? A young hero panting for vengeance? A prince by birth, rejoicing to be called to punish the usurper of his crown? No! trouble and astonishment take hold of the solitary young man; he grows bitter against smiling villains, swears that he will not forget the spirit, and concludes with the significant ejaculation:

The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!

"In these words, I imagine, will be found the key to Hamlet's whole procedure. To me it is clear that Shakspeare [sic] meant, in the present case, to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it. In this view the whole piece seems to me to be composed. There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom, the roots expand, the jar is shivered.

"A lovely, pure, noble and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear and must not cast away. All duties are holy for him; the present is too hard. Impossibilities have been required of him; not in themselves impossibilities, but such for him. He winds, and turns, and torments himself; he advances and recoils; is ever put in mind, ever puts himself in mind; at last does all but lose his purpose from his thoughts; yet still without recovering his peace of mind."

Goethe would no doubt say that although it is very reasonable for Hamlet to be troubled and astonished by what the Ghost says and demands, and although Shakespeare does "represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it," Meister has not seen that Hamlet contributes to his tragedy by not being able to focus on what is required of him. Shakespeare's Hamlet finds himself in a dreadful predicament, but he exaggerates somewhat when he says, "The time is out of joint; O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right." The

Ghost asks him to right a particular wrong and warns him not concern himself with anything else:

If thou has nature in thee, bear it not,
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But howsoever thou pursuest this act,
Taint not thy mind nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To prick and sting her.

[my emphasis] (I.v 81-88)

Hamlet promptly ignores this advice. As Lewes wrote in a review of the play, after seeing the Ghost,

His sorrowing nature has been suddenly ploughed to its depths by a horror so great as to make him recoil every moment from the belief in its reality. The shock, if it has not destroyed his sanity, has certainly *unsettled* him. Nothing can be plainer than this. Every line speaks it. (Lewes's emphasis)¹⁶

It is precisely because he does allow the Ghost's words to taint his mind that Hamlet is unable to move against Claudius in a forthright manner. In a poisoned state of mind, he is very quick to insult Polonius, reject Ophelia, and contrive against his mother, but the Ghost has to come a second time "to whet [his] almost blunted purpose" (III.iv.111).

I suggest that Goethe saw this point in the play, Act I, scene v, as marking the beginning of Hamlet's Apprenticeship--a period during which he must learn some humility. Meister's Apprenticeship ends when his contact with the theatre and various other incidents have given him insight into the great scheme of things and have caused him to see that he has been over-hasty in judging others; Hamlet's ends when his encounters with the players and Fortinbras' captain, for instance, shame him into seeing the extent to which he has been self-obsessed and therefore ineffectual in carrying out the Ghost's demands. When he says,

Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
 Looking before and after, gave us not

That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd. . . ,

(IV.iv.36-39)

he is about to embark for England, or, as I think Goethe would say, to set off on his Travels. The reference to God in the above lines suggests that he is now ready to learn Reverence, Renunciation, and Wisdom. And that is apparently what happens: later he tells Horatio, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will--" (V.ii.10-11), and he talks of a "special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (V.ii.215-16). At this stage, having learned self-renunciatic, he is finally prepared to act against Claudius on the grounds that he is fulfilling a social obligation (cf. V.ii.63-70), instead of satisfying a dubious, personal vendetta. Thus, Goethe now sees Hamlet as a Renunciant who has at last grasped that "he is not, as an individual, sufficient for himself; and [that] to an honest mind, society remains the highest want."

Goethe invokes Hamlet because Meister resembles him in having to learn his duties and obligations towards society before judging or criticizing it. And since Eliot alludes to both *Hamlet* and *Wilhelm Meister*, she can be seen to make the same point about Maggie. However, unlike Goethe, who ends his novel once the moral lessons have been learned, Eliot also explores something else. Goethe's interest in *Hamlet* is essentially restricted to an analysis of character, and, although Eliot shares this interest, she does not ignore the fact that Hamlet's self-renunciation does not save him from a tragic end. Like Shakespeare, she is also interested in exploring how circumstances shape destiny, regardless of the moral lessons learned.

Maggie's fate is similar to Hamlet's insofar as she must also discover self-renunciation before knowing how to resolve her conflict with a society notable for its perverse will. Perhaps Hamlet's tragic example helped her here: among the books which Philip Wakem gave her was "a pocket Shakespeare" (441). Her escapade with Stephen Guest, comparable to Hamlet's climactic sea voyage, puts an end to her speculation. And yet, despite her resolution to do her duty to Philip and Lucy, a final catastrophe still awaits her.

Having done what Tom would want her to do, Maggie is still condemned. Dr. Kenn's difficulty in trying to decide what is best for Maggie, after her rejection of Stephen Guest and her decision to stay in St. Ogg's, is not unlike Eliot's when she has to find a way of ending the novel. Dr. Kenn thinks that Maggie should, perhaps, marry Stephen.

On the other hand, he entered with all the comprehension of a man who had known spiritual conflict and lived through years of devoted service to his fellow-men, into that state of Maggie's heart and conscience which made this consent to the marriage a desecration to her: her conscience must not be tampered with: the principle on which she had acted was a safer guide than any balancing of consequences. His experience told him that intervention was too dubious a responsibility to be lightly incurred: the possible issue either of an endeavour to restore the former relations with Lucy and Philip, or of counselling submission to this irruption of a new feeling was hidden in a darkness all the more impenetrable because each immediate step was clogged with evil. (437)

Like Hamlet, Maggie reaches a point where circumstances are against her. Her problem is that justice conflicts with expediency. Dr. Kenn is one of a few who come to her defence, but even he is made to forego justice, albeit reluctantly, in the interest of expediency. When rumours begin to spread about him and Maggie marrying, he has to give up helping her for the sake of his own credibility in his congregation. Thus, having placed her heroine in a hopeless position, Eliot engineers Maggie's death.

But that is not to say that Eliot lost complete control of her story. Maggie's suffering and the insolubility of her situation are precisely what the novel deals with and leads up to. Although Eliot agreed with critics who said that the flood scene could have been better prepared for, it was part of her earliest plans." She told D'Albert-Durade:

My love of childhood scenes made me linger over them; so that I could not develop as fully as I wished the concluding "Book" in which the tragedy occurs, and *which I had looked forward to with much attention and premeditation from the beginning.* (Letters 3: 374) (My emphasis)

Likewise, she agreed with Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton's comments, which were included in a letter to Blackwood: she told her publisher, who had shown her the letter:

On two points I recognize the justice of his criticism. First, that Maggie is made to appear too passive in the scene of quarrel in the Red Deeps. If my book were still in MS, I should--now that the defect is suggested to me--alter, or rather expand that scene. Secondly, that the tragedy is not adequately prepared. This is a defect which I felt even while writing the third volume, and have felt ever since the MS. left me. The "*epische Breite*" into which I was beguiled by love of my subject in the two first volumes, caused a want of proportionate fullness in the treatment of the third, which I shall always regret. (Letter 3: 317-18)

However, she responded with great conviction to Bulwer-Lytton's point that

It may be quite natural that [Maggie] should take that liking to [Stephen], but it is a position at variance with all that had before been Heroic about her. The *indulgence* of such a sentiment for the affianced of a friend under whose roof she was, was a treachery and a meanness according to the Ethics of Art, and nothing can afterwards lift the character into the same hold on us. The refusal to marry Stephen fails to do so."

Her reply indicates that she knew exactly what she was doing:

The other chief point of criticism--Maggie's position towards Stephen--is too vital a part of my whole conception and purpose for me to be converted to the condemnation of it. If I am wrong there--if I did not really know what my heroine would feel and do under the circumstances in which I deliberately placed her, I ought not to have written this book at all, but quite a different book, if any. If the ethics of art do not admit the truthful presentation of

a character essentially noble but liable to great error error that is anguish to its own nobleness then, it seems to me, the ethics of art are too narrow, and must be widened to correspond with a widening psychology (*Letters* 3: 317 18)

Thus, she agreed that there are some flaws in *The Mill*, but not that they extend to the conception of Maggie's tragedy. She saw the tragedy to lie in Maggie's anguish and death. It is interesting to note that the novel, which Lewes said to Blackwood was "a companion to *Adam Bede*; but . . . of an imaginative philosophical kind, quite new and piquant" (*Letters* 3: 55), was given the following provisional titles: *Maggie*, *Sister Maggie*, *St. Ogg's on the Floss*, *The Tulliver Family*, and *The House of Tulliver, or Life on the Floss*.¹¹ These titles indicate that Maggie's ultimate fate was always thought of in terms of her conflict with the world in which she finds herself and the river that ultimately drowns her. Eliot herself said that the characters of her story "are on a lower level generally [than *Adam Bede's*], and the environment less romantic" (*Letters* 3: 133), but that "there is more thought and profounder veracity in '*The Mill*' than in '*Adam*'. . . ." (*Letters* 3: 374). That is true: as Auster has said, the novel is

quite clearly devoid of the pastoral atmosphere that contributes so much substance and color to *Adam Bede*. . . . On the other hand, the thrust of individual needs and demands is much more urgent in *The Mill*. . . .¹²

As in *Hamlet*, events are ordered for the protagonist to test personal love for the past against the unjust, unsympathetic, and illegitimate claims of the people whom she identifies with the past. The realistic and detailed portrayal of her childhood is designed to bring out the awful paradox of her position.

As a child, Maggie is very much like the sister who recalls her childhood in Eliot's sonnet sequence, "Brother and Sister" (1869). These

sonnets and *The Mill* contain similar (autobiographical) elements: the sister doting on the brother, the childhood images, the first-hand experience of nature, the proximity of gypsies, a fishing adventure, and the final separation when the brother and sister go to school. Important to both works are the themes of childhood innocence, its loss and its legacy. In Sonnet IX, for example, the sister describes her brother's growing sense of responsibility and sensitivity towards her:

Thus boyish Will the nobler mastery learned
Where inward vision over impulse reigns,
Widening its life with separate life discerned,
A like unlike, a Self that self restrains.

His years with others must the sweeter be
For those brief days he spent in loving me.

(9-14)

Not until the very last moment of his life does Tom Tulliver realize that his years have been made sweeter because he once loved Maggie, whereas she always feels that he is inseparable from her life. Moreover, she learns the same lesson as the brother in the sonnets. Tom, on the other hand, is encouraged to learn different values--a point to which I will return.

Maggie's "Will" also acknowledges a "nobler mastery," and her "inward vision" widens her perception of life, thereby awakening her to a sense of duty and fellowship. In Sonnet X, the sister explains how the awareness of pain in others affected her

My airy-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

(11-14)

The sonnets suggest that as the brother and sister grew older they learned to suppress their childish impulses and focus on adult responsi-

bilities. And since their childhood days were happy, they were nurtured in circumstances which allowed them to become sympathetic towards others.

This view of how life unfolds is consistent with the view expressed in "O May I Join the Choir Invisible," where Eliot talks of the "widening retrospect that breeds despair." For the "widening" process that the sister speaks of in Sonnet IX has two effects: it awakens the child to a sense of responsibility as well as a sense of loss. At the moment of "inward vision," pure childhood, and therefore pure happiness, is gone for ever. Future happiness will always be accompanied by a sense of regret. Hence, in the last poem, Sonnet XI, we read:

School parted us; we never found again
That childish world where our two spirits mingled
Like scents from varying roses that remain
One sweetness, nor can evermore be singled.
Yet the twin habit of that early time
Lingered for long about the heart and tongue:
We had been natives of one happy clime,
And its dear accent to our utterance clung.
Till the dire years whose awful name is Change
Had grasped our souls still yearning in divorce,
And pitiless shaped them in two forms that range
Two elements which sever their life's course. (1-12)

The sonnet ends with the somewhat sentimental sounding couplet, "But were another childhood-world my share, / I would be born a little sister there." Yet given the sister's strong sense of indebtedness to the past, the wish is understandable and consistent with what has gone before. Implicit throughout the sonnets is the idea that the past maintains its authority over the brother and sister, since it gives them a sense of belonging and continuity. Without the past they would be lost, helplessly "ranging" in separate "elements." And this is essentially the lesson which Maggie learns and articulates to Stephen Guest. When he

suggests that they can break their resolutions not to see each other, because "natural law surmounts every other," Maggie counters with, "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment" (475).

The importance of the past is immediately made clear in *The Mill*. The novel begins with the narrator dreaming about childhood, having promised to tell the story of the Tullivers. As Auster says,

The scene as a whole does not so much set the atmosphere as it evokes a mood--a mood in both the narrator and reader. It is hardly necessary to the action of the novel; it is static and, since the relation of the narrator to the little girl and to the scene remains unexplained, since the narrator's presence there is never located in the time scheme, it may be said to be timeless.²¹

The mood evoked in this scene is one of deep affection for the past, and it is continually reinforced. For instance, in chapter 5, we read:

Life did change for Tom and Maggie, and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives. We could never have loved the earth so well if we had no childhood in it. . . . What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known, and loved because it is known? . . . Our delight in the sunshine on the deep-bladed grass today might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far off years which still live in us and transform our perception into love. (41-42)

This is why Eliot says that people can only be really understood when their history as well as their characteristics are known: both factors contribute to human development. In fact the two are interrelated, for the characteristics of Maggie's family are part of her history and leave their impressions on her. The information, therefore, that Maggie is more like a Tulliver than a Dodson, and that her father has a "naturally . . . active Hotspur temperament" (353), is of far-reaching significance. She inherits that temperament from her father and is encouraged to develop it by the example he sets her.

The comparison between Mr. Tulliver and Hotspur is particularly apt. In *1 Henry IV*, Worcester's incisive criticism of Hotspur could apply equally to Eliot's character: "he apprehends a world of figures here, / But not the form of what he should attend" (I.iii.207-208). Worcester's observation is in response to yet another of his nephew's outbursts - this one having to do with plucking "bright honour from the pale fac'd moon." Like Hotspur, Mr. Tulliver is quick to take offence and unable to curb his anger when his will is opposed, preferring confrontations to solutions. In fact, his resemblance to Hotspur even extends to arguments about rivers. In the play, the plan to divide England into three parts following the expected defeat of Henry IV does not suit Hotspur. He tells Glendower that he will have the river Trent "damn'd up" so that "It shall not wind with such a deep indent, / To rob me of so rich a bottom here" (cf. III.1.92-101). Similarly, Mr. Tulliver objects to the dam that will interfere with the flow of his river. Hotspur and Mr. Tulliver are also alike in displaying a misguided sense of honour. When Glendower says that he "shall have the Trent turn'd," Hotspur replies

I do not care, I'll give thrice so much land
To any well-deserving friend:
But in the way of bargain, mark ye me,
I'll cavil on the ninth part of a hair.

(III.1.130-34)

Likewise Mr. Tulliver: he refuses to be reasonable in his negotiations because he will not deal with "rats, weevils, and lawyers [notably Wakem, who] were created by Old Harry" (15). He goes "lawing" on the slightest pretext and unwisely pays back Aunt Glegg's loan in a fit of temper. On the other hand, he refuses to call in his loan to the Mosses. Like Hotspur, he is a fundamentally generous man, preferring to worsen his own position rather than be a bad brother.

These Hotspur characteristics are passed on to Mr. Tulliver's children. Maggie displays them in her childish impetuosity: where Mr. Tulliver neglects his family's well-being by pursuing his own inclinations, goes to law at every opportunity, and strikes Wakem, Maggie neglects Tom's rabbits, literally runs away to the gypsies, and drives nails into her doll's head. Yet underneath it all she is, like her father (and Hotspur), an affectionate creature. However, the difference between her and her father is that she tries to outgrow these characteristics. Mr. Tulliver never learns from his mistakes, as his repeated outbursts of irrational hatred for Wakem demonstrate. But Maggie *does* learn. Every time she is humiliated she reflects on her mistakes. After the incident where she wilfully cuts her hair, for instance, the narrator says:

She could see clearly enough, now that the thing was done, that it was very foolish and that she should have to hear and think more about her hair than ever, for Maggie rushed to her deeds with passionate impulse and then saw not only their consequences but what would have happened if they had not been done with all the detail and exaggerated circumstance of an active imagination. (65)

However, although Maggie changes, her Hotspur characteristics do not leave her altogether. As she matures, they are modified and manifest themselves differently, causing her to suffer when they conflict with the demands or expectations of others. Genetic inheritance and her father's example have induced in her powerful feelings that will haunt her and that she will struggle against until she dies.

Tom resembles the "slowish" Dodsons (12), but he too inherits elements of the Tulliver or Hotspur temperament. As a boy, he rarely made Maggie's type of mistake, says the narrator, but when he did

he espoused it, and stood by it: he "didn't mind." If he broke the lash of his father's gig-whip by lashing the gate, he couldn't help it--the whip shouldn't have got caught in the hinge. If Tom

Tulliver whipped a gate, he was convinced, not that the whipping of gates by all boys was a justifiable act, but that he, Tom Tulliver, was justifiable in whipping that particular gate, and he wasn't going to be sorry. (65)

His natural obduracy is closer to the Tulliver than to the Dodson variety. Prevarication and the refusal to own up to mistakes are central traits of Hotspur's character (cf. the haughty and evasive explanation to Henry IV beginning "My liege, I did deny no prisoners" [I.iii.28ff]). Tom's "wonderful instinctive discernment of what would turn to his advantage or disadvantage" is in keeping with Dodson aptitudes. But his "more wilful and inflexible" nature (65) is reminiscent of Hotspur, who also thinks that he is a law unto himself. Despite appearances to the contrary, he is in many ways quite unlike the Dodsons, for whom obedience, compliance and conformity are paramount considerations.

Like his father, Tom lacks Maggie's "active imagination" and so never learns from his mistakes. His lack of insight into anything abstract is amusingly indicated in the account of his academic struggles at Mr. Stelling's school, to which he is sent on the advice of Mr. Riley. While Mr. Tulliver rubs his knees and cogitates on Riley's views on educational matters, the narrator says: "Riley . . . was not impatient. Why should he be? Even Hotspur, one would think, must have been patient in his slippers on a warm hearth, taking copious snuff, and sipping gratuitous brandy-and-water" (15). The allusion reflects the irony of Riley's complacent and rash advice on something he knows nothing about. All he knows about schools is that they exist. But it also draws attention to the ways in which Tom's circumstances shape his character and destiny. By accepting half-baked advice, the Hotspur like father causes Tom to be subjected to something for which he is eminently

unsuitable; then the father's Hotspur-like behaviour results in bankruptcy, and Tom returns home more confused than when he set out. Confusion turns into disillusion, and so Tom determines to meet the future with as little help as possible from other people.

As Maggie and Tom leave Mr. Stelling's school for the last time, the narrator says:

They had gone forth together into their new life of sorrow, and they would never more see the sunshine undimmed by remembered cares. They had entered the thorny wilderness, and the golden gates of their childhood had forever closed behind them. (191)

The references to "thorny wilderness" and "golden gates" bring to the reader's mind the familiar allusions to *As You Like It*. The suggestion is that Tom and Maggie must somehow learn to replace the innocent world of childhood with some other good, in order to deal with the "briers" of the imminent "working-day world." But all they bring into this new world are aspects of their father's temperament, which Maggie, during excruciating periods of boredom, tries to subdue, and which Tom, under pressure of financial circumstances, is forced to amalgamate with the Dodsons' brand of narrow-mindedness. If, as the narrator says, "Mr. Tulliver had a destiny as well as Oedipus, and in this case he might plead, like Oedipus, that his deed was inflicted on him rather than committed by him" (130), then the same applies to his children.

But however arbitrary Fate may be, and however insurmountable it may appear, it is not altogether responsible for the ensuing tragedies.²² Mr. Tulliver courts disaster by exercising his Hotspur temper; Tom reverses things by applying a more cautious approach to business. The modification of his Hotspur temperament, made possible because "the true Dodson was partly latent in [him]" (44), allows him to retrieve the

mill. Unfortunately for him, however, developing Dodson characteristics does not ensure the retrieval of a "golden world." Like Maggie, he never quite loses his father's characteristics.

The Dodsons are to the Tullivers what Falstaff is to Hotspur: egoists who, in a number of ways, remain complete opposites. Where Hotspur's cry is, "Doomsday is near; die all, die merrily" (IV.i.134), Falstaff's is, "The better part of valour is discretion" (V.iv.119). Hotspur is brave, daring and generous; Falstaff is cowardly, cautious and selfish. Similarly, where Mr. Tulliver is always ready to throw caution to the wind in order to achieve some doubtful end, the Dodsons are sedentary consolidators, sceptical about abstract notions. Mr. Tulliver is generous to a fault, the Dodsons err on the other side, preferring to hand out advice rather than money.

The families do have some virtues. At one point the narrator explains that "these emmetlike Dodsons and Tullivers" have a strong sense of tradition:

Their theory of life had its core of soundness, as all theories must have on which decent and prosperous families have been reared and have flourished, but it had the very slightest tincture of theology. . . . The religion of the Dodsons consisted in revering whatever was customary and respectable; it was necessary to be baptized, else one could not be buried in the churchyard, and to take the sacrament before death as a security against more dimly understood perils. . . .

The same sort of traditional belief ran in the Tulliver veins, but it was carried in richer blood, having elements of generous imprudence, warm affection, and hot tempered rashness. (273-74)

However, their religion is rooted in a "semi pagan" tradition (364), allowing for unchristian-like conduct. They demand obedience to the collective will and pay little regard to individual happiness, even though this is essential to a harmonious life. Their absolutism, Eliot suggests, threatens the very bonds of family and community life. If the

normally generous Mr. Tulliver "considered that church was one thing and common-sense another and he wanted nobody to tell *him* what common-sense was" (275) (Eliot's emphasis), it is not surprising that most people in the area of St. Ogg's are deficient in compassion, and that the Gleggs, Pullets, and Deans are guided only by considerations of common-sense when buying Mrs. Tulliver's household goods, or when considering the loss of the mill generally. It is significant that Philip and Bob Jakin, who are social outcasts, and Dr. Kenn, who was not reared in St. Ogg's, are among the few people capable of compassion.

Such is the social climate of the "working-day world" that Tom and Maggie inherit. The despair they feel at their father's bankruptcy, and everything it entails, is virtually unrelieved by anyone's generosity or compassion. Only Bob Jakin appears with small tokens of sympathy: books and magazines for Maggie. Their inherited Hotspur temperaments are, for the most part, left to be modified and reinforced by the insensitivity, if not the brutality, of the "working-day world." Tom is torn between feelings of loyalty and disgust towards his father and is now actively encouraged to believe that others need him more than he needs them. Thus, he becomes haughtier and more intolerant of failure than ever before. Because he is forced to devote long hours competing in the "common-sense" world of St. Ogg's, he has neither the time nor opportunity to question the prejudices that are daily confirmed by others; nor is he inclined to do so. The result is that he becomes even more absolute and authoritarian in his thinking. He lacks his sister's "active imagination"; consequently, instead of being humbled, he gradually learns to outshine all the other egoists. The more imperious he becomes, the more he is respected in the community. Meanwhile, Maggie is

also thrown upon her own resources. But since she is expected to wait dutifully for a husband and is naturally denied the opportunity --which at least Tom enjoys--of finding welcome relief away from the mill, her life grinds on interminably, causing her to spend most of her time reflecting on the hopelessness of her situation. The gulf between brother and sister widens as time goes on.

A physical parting of ways between Maggie and Tom occurred when Tom went to school, but Philip Wakem's presence there also started the spiritual parting which follows their father's bankruptcy. The son of the hated lawyer turned out to be quite different from what was expected. Philip's intelligence and sensitivity (his concern for Tom's injured foot, for instance), forced Maggie into a reappraisal of his nature. She made friends with the son of her father's enemy, while Tom only used him to keep himself amused while he convalesced, just as he had always used Maggie when bored. More important, however, Philip's kindness and wider knowledge of things confirmed in Maggie feelings and desires which she had harboured but had been discouraged from showing and pursuing. Even at this early stage in their relationship, he encouraged her in what becomes her search for some sort of meaning in her life.

At first, Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* helps Maggie to cope with her growing despondency. While reading the book

It flashed through her like the suddenly apprehended solution of a problem, that all the miseries of her young life had come from fixing her heart on her own pleasures as if that were the central necessity of the universe; and for the first time she saw the possibility of shifting the position from which she looked at the gratification of her own desires, of taking her stand out of her self and looking at her own life as an insignificant part of a divinely guided whole. (290)

Her Christian "solution" suggests that she has entered the road of self-renunciation: but she still has much to learn. *The Imitation of Christ*

helped her through years of loneliness . . . [it gave her a faith] without the aid of established authorities and appointed guides, for they were not at hand and her need was pressing,

but we are also told:

From what you know of her, you will not be surprised that she threw some exaggeration and wilfulness, some pride and impetuosity, even into her self renunciation; her own life was still a drama for her in which she demanded of herself that her part should be played with intensity. And so it came to pass that she often lost the spirit of humility by being excessive in the outward act; she often strove after too high a flight, and came down with her poor little half-fledged wings dabbled in the mud. (292)

Her self-renunciation still borders on vanity and impulsiveness, since she is only beginning to learn to subdue her Hotspur temperament.

When Philip re enters her life in the Red Deeps, which is a sort of Forest of Arden for Maggie a sanctuary in which she thrives when away from the oppressive "working-day world" of the mill--he introduces her to a wide range of reading. By showing her that "poetry and art and knowledge are sacred and pure" (306-307), he gradually encourages her to reject her exaggerated asceticism. But although the books he brings give her pleasure, she is still inclined to lose the "spirit of humility." Hence, a year of reading and talking about literature,²³ she tells him, "'has made me think a great deal about the world; and I have impatient thoughts again--I get weary of my home --and then it cuts me to the heart afterwards, that I should ever have felt weary of my father and mother'" (335).

Philip's love for Maggie is characterised by the self-renunciation that she still has to learn. Like her, he says,

"I think of too many things--sow all sorts of seeds, and get no great harvest from any one of them. I'm cursed with susceptibility in every direction, and effective faculty in none. I care for

painting and music; I care for classic literature, and mediæval literature, and modern literature: I flutter all ways, and fly none."

Only some faculty or passion, he explains, "'that could lift me above the dead level of provincial existence'" would "'make life worth the purchase-money of pain to me'" (327). His love for Maggie is such a passion, for we are told:

His longing to see Maggie, and make an element in her life, had in it some of that savage impulse to snatch an offered joy, which springs from a life in which the mental and bodily constitution have made pain predominate. (330)

She cannot love him, except as a brother, and so he is very painfully forced to resign himself to a love that is never reciprocated. His physical deformity resulted from an illness and can be seen as a symbol for all deformed circumstances; hence, he demonstrates that the ability to love selflessly is essential for overcoming great unhappiness. When pain, instead of pride and impetuosity, does predominate in Maggie's life, she learns that lesson.

Philip's "savage impulse" for her is not unlike what she feels for Stephen Guest. In the Red Deeps, where Maggie only played at self renunciation, Philip warned her, "You will be thrown into the world some day, and then every rational satisfaction of your nature that you deny now, will assault you like a savage appetite" (329). The identical phrases draw attention to Eliot's point that people are subject to instinctual feelings of a primordial nature which ought to be acknowledged by the individual--in this case Maggie--and by the society in which they live. For if these feelings are ignored, the seeds are sown for yet more "'antagonism between valid claims.'" As Philip told Maggie:

"it is not right to sacrifice everything to other people's unreasonable feelings. I would give up a great deal for my father; but I would not give up a friendship or or an attachment of any

sort, in obedience to any wish of his that I didn't recognize as right." (302)

Eliot's response to Bulwer-Lytton's criticism therefore takes on a specific meaning: "the ethics of art are too narrow, and must be widened to correspond with a widening psychology," because there is nothing improbable about someone like Maggie falling in love with someone like Stephen Guest. To wonder whether or not Stephen is worthy enough is to miss the point.⁴⁴ The feelings she has for him do not spring from choice: they are beyond her control. And her refusal to marry Stephen is precisely what makes her heroic, since it involves a struggle against what is, as it were, pre-determined for her.

The strong sexual attraction between Maggie and Stephen is immediately felt in the scenes involving music.⁴⁵ Vying for Maggie's attention, the two lovers, Philip and Stephen, use singing as part of an elaborate mating ritual. When Philip sings, the narrator says,

It was not quite unintentional that Philip had wandered into this song, which might be an indirect expression to Maggie of what he could not prevail on himself to say to her directly. Her ears had been open to what he was saying, and when he began to sing, she understood the plaintive passion of the music. (417)

As it happens only Stephen's singing succeeds in arousing Maggie:

Lucy, always proud of what Stephen did, went towards the piano with laughing, admiring looks at him; and Maggie, in spite of her resistance to the spirit of the song and to the singer, was taken hold of and shaken by the invisible influence--was borne along by a wave too strong for her. (418)

Stephen's sexual overtures irresistibly awaken the "savage appetites" within Maggie. Her response to his singing recalls the "terrible cutting truth in Tom's words": "'At one time you take pleasure in a sort of perverse self-denial, and at another you have not resolution to resist a thing that you know to be wrong'" (393). This is the point where Maggie

reaches a crisis in her search for self discovery begun years ago. Circumstances, loyalties to others, and strong desires converge and make her horribly uncertain about who she is and what she should be doing. The conflict that her mind is subjected to causes her to drift down the river with Stephen in a state of moral inertia. However, just as Hamlet returns from his sea voyage determined to confront Claudius, so Maggie puts an end to speculation and comes back resolved to do her duty towards Lucy and Philip. Yet in both cases, what they are now resolved to do is of little consequence: other circumstances, also beyond their control, remain against them.

Like Ogg son of Beorl, who ferried the Blessed Virgin across the Floss without questioning and wrangling "with the heart's need, but [was] smitten with pity, and [did] straightway relieve the same" (116-17), Maggie shows real renunciation the painful sort described earlier by Philip as "the willing endurance of a pain that is not allayed, that you don't expect to be allayed" (328). She simply tells Stephen, "I cannot take a good for myself that has been wrung out of their [Lucy's and Philip's] misery" (478). In so doing she gives the lie to John of Gaunt's advice to Bolingbroke to make the best of a bad situation. I am prompted to make the comparison because at the bazaar Stephen echoes Gaunt's banished son who, in response to his father's words, "There's no virtue like necessity" (I.iii.278), says, "O, who can hold a fire in his hand / By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?" (I.iii.294-95).¹⁴ Bolingbroke means that he cannot leave his beloved England pretending that he has done so of his own volition. Reality cannot always be ignored, imagination cannot always fool the intellect. Stephen's quip about Maggie's knitting, therefore, betrays more irony than may be suspected:

"Oh no [he says] they must be intended for imaginative persons, who can chill themselves on this warm day by thinking of the frosty Caucasus. Stern reason is my forte, you know. (431)

His arguments for running away with Maggie hinge on his absolute subjection to the dictates of passion; "stern reason" is the one thing he lacks. But not Maggie: she applies it to their situation and suffers terribly as a result.

Like Bolingbroke, who as Henry IV is Hotspur's opposite and becomes increasingly aware of the need for duty, Maggie learns the virtue of "stern reason" and the danger of pure passion, and so fights her Hotspur tendencies. She aspires to become a member of that fraternity that Eliot refers to in "O May I Join the Choir Invisible." Her "Rebellious flesh" --a phrase from the poem with its own echoes from *Hamlet*--"is quick dissolved" through renunciation. For when we achieve that, the poet says, "we inherit that sweet purity / For which we struggled, failed, and agonised / With widening retrospect that bred despair" (15-17). This knowledge constitutes Maggie's "golden world." But since this world is indivisible from the "working-day world," it offers her limited consolation. Right up until the moment of her death she continues to suffer, as her response to Stephen's letter indicates (cf. 514).

When Hamlet returns from his sea voyage, he walks into a trap and is thereby prevented from proving himself "most royal," which, as Fortinbras suggests, he began to show signs of doing (cf. V.ii.402-403). His tragedy, then, reaches its climax at a point when his noble sense of duty exposes him to death.

Similar circumstances apply to Maggie: an act of God prevents her from proving her painfully acquired nobility to all but a handful of people. Since she finds it necessary to return to St. Ogg's and is in-

instinctively drawn to save Tom, the flood that destroys the town also kills her. The flood is a realistic event, not without the problems already discussed, but it is also a symbolic finale to Eliot's criticism of a society that will not accept its own insignificance in the great scheme of things nor its tyrannical disregard for individual rights and desires. Much of it deserves to be swept away; the rest symbolically cleaned.

Only when Tom is facing death does he begin to appreciate his sister's "most royal" nature. The intensity of his last moments with her humbles him and makes him see that he also needs the past to sustain him in times of great trial or peril. It is therefore appropriate that he calls her by the name he was once wont to use, "Magsie!" (520), and that they drown in a childish embrace from which they are never divided.

In "*The Mill on the Floss*," Barbara Hardy says that the flood turns a "psychological novel" into a "Providential novel":

[Eliot] gives Maggie rewards and triumphs after all. . . . The novel has been about living without fantasy and opiate, and ends with a combination of several strong fantasies. There is the fantasy of death, the fantasy of reconciliation, and the fantasy of being finally righted and understood [by Tom].

Consequently, Hardy says, it is a "novel whose merits and flaws show how art can tell difficult truths and consoling lies." There is some truth in this. The ending contains both Eliot's anger at the way the *status quo* has to be destroyed before changes can come about and her affirmation of the love between brother and sister. Nevertheless, if Maggie receives triumphs and rewards, she does so for a very short time and pays dearly for them. It is, I think, more accurate to say that, like Hamlet, she is vindicated to some extent when her death causes a recon

ciliation in others, which promises a better future. Her own story, however, is overwhelmingly that of a "star cross'd" life, in which she struggled to find meaning and was continually denied the circumstances and opportunities for finding peace and happiness.

W. J. Harvey said that the universality which Eliot attains in her novels is unlike Shakespeare's, "in which we are compelled to acknowledge that life, wrought to such a pitch and lived with such intensity, *could* be like this. . . ." ²⁹ Since the characters in *The Mill* are not heroic in the traditional sense, it is true that they live their lives at a lower "pitch" and "intensity." Nevertheless, the "universality" which Eliot attains is no less valid or authentic and her tragic vision is in fact very Shakespearean. For we are compelled to acknowledge that life, shaped by Maggie's circumstances and lived with her determination, *could* be like this.

Chapter 5
Silas Marner and *Romola*: Experiments in Romance and Realism

During a visit to Florence in May-June 1860, Lewes suggested to Eliot that she write "an historical romance" with the Dominican monk, Girolamo Savonarola, as its subject.¹ She readily accepted the idea and, on August 28th, told Blackwood that she would write the novel after completing what became *Silas Marner*: "the plan I should like to carry out is this: to publish my next English novel when my Italian one is advanced enough for us to begin its publication a few months afterwards in *Maga*" (*Letters* 3: 339-40). However, whereas she completed *Silas Marner* very quickly - it was published on April 2nd, 1861 - she agonized over *Romola* until July 1863, when it first appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*. Thus, since there is a close chronological connection between the two novels, her observations about Shakespeare that were also made at about this time are relevant to both.

The comments examine the prerequisites of artistic imagination and the execution of art, and are therefore of particular interest when considering her attempts in these stories to integrate romance elements with a realistic portrayal of character. By offering clues to what she had in mind, they serve as a useful guide when evaluating the success of *Silas Marner* and the failure of *Romola*. It is generally agreed that the happy blend of structure, characterization, and apt language turned in the former is painfully absent in the latter.

To D'Albert-Durade, who had indicated that he was having trouble translating *The Mill on the Floss* into French because of the colloquial language, Eliot replied,

But would it be inadmissible to represent in French, at least in some degree, those "intermédiaires entre le style commun et le style élégant" to which you refer? It seems to me that I have discerned such shades very strikingly rendered in Balzac, and occasionally in George Sand. Balzac, I think, dares to be thoroughly colloquial, in spite of French straight lacing. Even in English this daring is far from being general. The writers who dare to be thoroughly familiar are Shakspeare [sic], Fielding, Scott (where he is expressing the popular life with which he is familiar), and indeed every other writer of fiction of the first class. Even in his loftiest tragedies in Hamlet, for example Shakspeare is intensely colloquial. One hears the very accent of living men. (*Letters* 3: 374-4)

The letter is dated January 29, 1861, and her comment about the need for the accents of living men is in keeping with her earlier thoughts on realism. In the essay on Riehl, she said, "Art is the nearest thing to life . . . a mode of amplifying experience," and the artist has a sacred duty not to falsify the "life of the people." Instead, characters should be represented in all their "coarse apathy" and "suspicious selfishness." But while emphasizing the need for the familiar and the colloquial, even in the "loftiest tragedies," Eliot found that such an approach was not always appropriate when representing heroic or noble characters. And this awareness, I think, caused her great difficulties with *Romola*.

In 1875 Lewes published *On Acting and the Art of Acting*, a book which Eliot told Alexander Main includes "some interesting little Retrospects of Actors" (*Letters* 6: 146-7). One of those retrospects, on Charles Albert Fechter, was written in November 1861. Eliot usually went with Lewes to see the performances of the actors discussed in *On Acting*, and in Fechter's case we know that she agreed wholeheartedly with Lewes's evaluations of his stage craft. Lewes liked Fechter's Hamlet but not his Othello. The Hamlet was fine, he said, because the conception of the part was clever. Fechter "characterised the nature of [Hamlet]"; he had

the right "personality" for the part, the "physical qualities of voice and person," even though he lacked the tragic quality of the character, "the physiological qualities demanded by tragedy, which cannot be represented except by a certain animal power" (Lewes's emphasis).

Fechter was able to play Hamlet more or less successfully, said Lewes, because the tragic scenes punctuate the action instead of standing in contrast to it, as they do in *Othello*. As *Othello* progresses, we see a noble person transfigured into a tragic one, which is not the case in *Hamlet*, where an unsettled mind ends up as a tragic figure. But, Lewes said, Fechter did not have the right "personality," the ability to portray "naturally" a noble and tragic character. Thus, his *Othello* was among the worst he had ever seen.

Naturalism is defined by Lewes as "the reproduction of those details which characterise the nature of the thing represented," and realism "means truth, not vulgarity":

Truth of the higher as of the lower forms: truth of passion, and truth of manners. The nature of Macbeth is not the nature of an Othello; the speech of Achilles is not the speech of Thersites. . . . But artists and critics often overlook this obvious fact. Actors are especially prone to overlook it, and, in trying to be *natural*, sink into the *familiar*; though that is as unnatural as if they were to attempt to heighten the reality of the Apollo by flinging a paletot over his naked shoulders. It is this error into which Fechter falls in *Othello*; he vulgarises the part in the attempt to make it natural. Instead of the heroic, grave, impassioned Moor, he represents an excitable creole of our own day.²

Lewes's disappointment at Fechter's inability to express or represent *Othello*'s tragedy through "physiological qualities," "the force of animal passion" which has to do not with the intellect but with psychologically accountable emotions, was shared by Eliot. To John Blackwood she wrote:

Mr. Lewes has finished his article on Hamlet and Othello, and will despatch it tomorrow. It is really important that there should be some truthful writing about Fechter's Othello. I think the performance positively injurious to the half-cultivated people who make up the mass of his audiences. That a tragedy like that, should produce a series of small titters in its moments of highest pathos, is an outrage on Shakespeare and demoralizing to the titterers. I could perceive that most of the elegantly dressed people around me were totally unacquainted with the play and were being introduced to Shakespeare by Fechter. They were in a state of utter obfuscation. (*Letters* 8: 292-3)

And she told Sara Hennell:

We went to see Fechter's Othello the other night. It is lamentably bad. He has not the weight and passion enough for deep tragedy, and to my feeling, the play is so degraded by his representation that it is positively demoralizing--as indeed all tragedy must be when it fails to move pity and terror. In this case, it seems to move only titters among the smart and vulgar people who always make the bulk of a theatre audience. Of course newspapers don't tell the truth about the matter. (*Letters* 3: 466-7)

Important points are made in the critiques of Fechter's performances. A character is accurately portrayed when he or she demonstrates appropriate emotions. Hence, some noble or heroic characters cannot be represented through a familiar or colloquial approach; for them "weight and passion," or a noble comportment, are necessary. It is the actor's job to use his "animal power," as Lewes put it, to remind the audience of those characteristics--even when the character's nobility is in decline. And this is especially true when the hero's tragic scenes stand in opposition to the rest of the action. Fechter got away with Hamlet because, according to the Leweses, his limited skills were not terribly noticeable in a play where the tragic scenes emphasize the main action. But the same lack of skills was immediately evident in *Othello* where the hero's tragic scenes stand in contrast to the rest of the play.

This analysis of *Othello* may have helped Eliot in her portrayal of Romola. A similar method for reproducing intrinsic nobility is necessary

in her case, for she also stands in contrast to the rest of the action. Like Othello, she is meant to be seen as inherently noble, a breed apart from the Florentines. Hugh Witmeyer points out that Eliot had certain religious paintings in mind when she conceived the character; she visualized and therefore "painted" Romola as a kind of saint. Witmeyer argues that to ennoble characters by basing them on Christian exemplars "violates neither George Eliot's atheism nor her conception of realism," and he is right. A saint is as legitimate a subject for the artist as anything else. Nevertheless, the concept of realism is broadened here, insofar as an attempt is made to portray someone who borders on the imaginary or unreal. Consequently, there has to be a heightening of artistic power, more artistic freedom to manipulate the language and plot, in order to make the character believable.

By Eliot's own criteria, Romola has to behave and speak differently from most people, and everything else must somehow imply her nobility. But whereas Othello's nobility is already established when the play opens, Romola must prove hers through a heroic struggle. Eliot tried to do this, in part, with some of the novel's Shakespearean allusions: there are references to *Hamlet*, *King John*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Twelfth Night*, and possibly *Othello*.⁴ Some of these invite us to see certain character traits in people like Tito and Savonarola, and, since Romola learns to reject both men, the allusions encourage us to see how different she is. But the enormous problem of reproducing latent nobility in a character who is a representative of "great, great facts . . . [that struggle] to find a voice" (*Letters* 4: 96-7) is not so easily solved; Eliot had to make an idea live and

breathe as *Romola*. And I think that she went about that by blending realism with romance.

In *The Language that makes George Eliot's Fiction*, Karen B. Mann argues that Eliot's "use of drama to define life's structures" probably has a "literary source" in Shakespeare. She talks about the ways in which "scenes, actions, performers, and especially audiences in [Eliot's] novels" contribute to a fuller understanding of life:

Shakespeare had exploited the physical reality of the actor on the stage who was nevertheless but the shadow of a man playing a part in order to explore the degree to which dreams and reality--and the play on its audience implicate each other. Eliot achieves much the same end through blatantly metaphoric language, through an intrusive narrator who is of interest in his own right (because of his intelligence rather than his apostrophes), and through allusions that place characters in both the real world and the world of art: she makes her reader comprehend by means of the interplay, rather than the opposition, between reality and illusion."

Mann's point about the interplay between reality and illusion is worth dwelling on when considering *Silas Marner* and *Romola*. When the theme of religious humanism, which runs through both novels, is convincing, it is so because there is a believable interaction of the real world and the world of romance. But whereas in *Silas Marner* there is a happy mixture of the two because we always believe in the familiar and colloquial characters, in *Romola* the interaction of the two worlds becomes irrelevant when the heroine, who has always struggled to be convincing, ceases to be a character and becomes--or returns to the state of--a noble idea. The fault lies in *Romola's* unconvincing character: something which is all the more noticeable because she stands in opposition or contrast to the rest of the action.

Eliot was aware of this problem with *Romola*, and the novel's elaborate structure and excessive emphasis on Florentine details are indicative of her attempt to have some of the familiar and colloquial life of Florence rub off on her heroine. As early as January 1851, in an article for the *Westminster Review*, Eliot argued that a detailed knowledge of the past has an "important practical bearing on the present" since it helps us to avoid making old mistakes:

Now, though the teaching of positive truth is the grand means of expelling error, the process will be very much quickened if the negative argument serves as its pioneer; it, by a survey of the past, it can be shown how each age and race has had a faith and a symbolism suited to its need and its stage of development, and that for succeeding ages to dream of retaining the spirit along with the forms of the past, is as futile as the embalming of the dead body in the hope that it may one day be resumed by the living soul.

Later in life, she placed even more emphasis on the lessons of history. By definition the past is something complete, and so knowledge of it is more useful for gaining insight into people's behaviour than the necessarily imperfect knowledge of the unfolding present. When history is accurately investigated, without preconceived notions of what might have been, people and events can be fully and accurately exposed, since we know the outcome of things. However, in "Historic Imagination," which was written sometime between the writing of *Middlemarch* and *Theophrastus Such*, she says that a "veracious imagination," which is necessary in bringing history alive, also "requires freedom from the vulgar coercion of conventional plot." Without that freedom,

we fall into ridiculously inconsistent estimates of actual movements, condemning in the present what we belaud in the past, and pronouncing impossible processes that have been repeated again and again in the historical preparation of the very system under which we live. A false kind of idealisation dulls our perception of the meaning in words when they relate to past events which have had a glorious issue: for lack of comparison no warning image rises to check scorn of the very phrases which in other associations are consecrated. . . .

I want brief, severely conscientious reproductions, in their concrete incident, of pregnant movements in the past."

In other words, although Eliot always considered that fiction should never be falsified, she came to see the necessity for an artistic freedom, a provision to go beyond what can be verified, so that the reader could feel, and not just learn, the lessons of history. That is why virtually all of her fiction is more or less historical insofar as emphasis is usually placed on the concrete reality in which the action takes place, and why she made increasing use of "blatantly metaphoric language," as Mann says, as well as various "unrealistic" coincidences of one sort or another. Eliot saw that romance elements and realism were necessary in order to give life to her stories.

In *Romola*, she goes to enormous lengths to recreate an accurate picture of fifteenth century Florence and introduces things like Dino's dream of Romola's impending misery and Savonarola's prophecies about Florence's fate; and, in *Silas Marner*, she provides a similarly accurate picture of early nineteenth-century England, together with various coincidences like those surrounding Silas's fits. But whereas fate is felt in *Silas Marner* as an impersonal operation, because it is carefully woven into the story a point I shall come back to later--in *Romola* it is felt as an active agent introduced to make us sympathetic towards a character who is held in reserve as Florence's Madonna. Hence, the romance elements in *Romola* are at odds with the novel's realism.

That is not to say that Romola is completely removed from Florentine life before she assumes her Madonna role. Sympathetic readers of the novel, like Laurence Poston, have shown that the Renaissance setting is important to Eliot's overall theme, that it is not simply a narrative

framework. Poston argues that although the fates of the imaginary characters are emphasized throughout, while the historically accurate parts of the novel, at best, remain implicit, the "destiny [of the fictional characters] is prepared for by judicious use of the historical setting." He draws attention to the "chorus" of characters who provide "different views on Florentine affairs." Some are for the Mediceans, others for Savonarola, while the Compagnacci are against both: "The chorus thus becomes a device for linking Tito to the Florentine setting." Characters like Nello the barber and Piero di Cosimo offer "two different ways of assessing human nature": the former is unable to see anything wrong with Tito, the latter intuitively grasps that Tito is potentially false. Thus, says Poston: "It is symptomatic of Florence's blindness to her own interests that only a few people see what Tito really is. . . . Perceptive commentators are few indeed." Men like Bardo, Bernardo, and Savonarola also help to shape Romola's response to life by creating a tension between the "rational and spiritual aspects" of Renaissance life:

Despite her fear that the only alternative to religious fanaticism is a devious Medicean administration, Romola breaks with Savonarola because by doing so she justifies her traditional ties and affections. Bernardo's loyalty to a political ideal is matched by Romola's fidelity to the only meaningful familial bond she has known. She is the spiritual daughter of the man who says, "I enter into no plots, but I never forsake my colours." [536]"

Poston is right about the importance of the Renaissance setting. From the beginning, we are urged to take careful notice of Florence and its people. The Proem serves to warn us that just as the Florentine Spirit has some difficulty recognizing the nineteenth-century city, we will have difficulty with the Renaissance city. But for all the physical changes, says the narrator, people's spiritual lives have not changed.

We are asked to look at the Spirit "clothed in his habit as he lived" (44), words which echo Hamlet's directive to his mother to look at "My father, in his habit as he liv'd!" (III.iv.136-7). The suggestion is that we should listen carefully to the voice of the past and, like Hamlet, eventually make up our minds about the moral implications thrown up by the circumstances which affect Romola. A similar point is made in *The Mill on the Floss* when the narrator quotes Novalis's "questionable aphorism- 'Character is destiny,'" and goes on to say that Hamlet's tragedy is due to his circumstances as well as his character (cf. *The Mill on the Floss* 401 2).

There are striking similarities between Maggie Tulliver and Romola. Both women embark on voyages of discovery: Maggie runs away to the gypsies and drifts down the river with Stephen; Romola twice runs from Tito and on the second occasion sails to the plague-ridden village. In each case they return to their homes wiser and resigned to their unhappy lives. Where Maggie is influenced by Thomas à Kempis's mysticism, Romola is influenced by Savonarola's. Finally, just as Maggie intuitively makes the ultimate sacrifice for Tom, Romola spontaneously devotes herself to the suffering villagers, and then to Tessa and Tito's illegitimate children.

But there is an important difference in the treatment of the two characters: where Maggie is familiarly and colloquially drawn and dies achieving a heroic stature, Romola is formally if not emblematically drawn from the beginning to allow her to become the Madonna figure at the end. Where Maggie is often irascible, Romola suffers in silence or speaks in "a voice that was like a low, prayerful cry. . ." (436). Even when she is animated we have to be told, "Romola was getting eager

again" (573), because her language is carefully measured and calculated to create the effect of an inherent nobility. As a result, she struggles to exist as a character.

This brings us back to Eliot's letter to D'Albert Durade and how the question of familiarity and colloquialism is applied to the Florentine setting as a whole. In May 1861, while they were once again in Florence, collecting background information for *Romola*, Lewes wrote to Blackwood:

She is "drinking in" Florence, and as far as the old life can be restored she will, I am certain, restore it, it only from that wonderful intuition with which genius throws itself into all forms of life. As I often tell her most of the scenes and characters of her books are quite as *historical* to her direct personal experience, as the 15th century of Florence; and she knows infinitely more about Savonarola than she knew of Silas, besides having deep personal sympathies with the old reforming priest which she had not with the miser. Why is it that Shakspeare [sic] makes us believe in his Romans? Certainly not from any of those "solid acquirements" which would have made him a valuable contributor to Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography, and earned the respect of the "Saturday Review" (*Letters* 3: 420-1)

The reference to Shakespeare's Roman plays is interesting. *Romola's* narrator, amused by the Florentines' excitability, alludes to *Julius Caesar* when commenting on Charles the Eighth of France:

there was a very widely spread conviction that the advent of the French king and his army into Italy was one of those events at which marble statues might well be believed to perspire, phantasmal fiery warriors to fight in the air, and quadrupeds to bring forth monstrous births---that it did not belong to the usual order of Providence, but was in a peculiar sense the work of God. (269)

Similar omens and portents connected with Caesar's murder are found in Shakespeare's play (cf. I.iii.3-32 and II.ii.13-26).²⁴ Thus, it appears that when Eliot asked herself how she could vivify Florentine history and distinguish one type of character from another, she turned to Shakespeare's Roman history plays for guidance. Both writers bring people and events to life by dramatizing the misguided nobility or

naivety of some people of the past, the selfish and callous political plotting and scheming of others, and the superstitious, arbitrary, or capricious natures of mobs.¹⁰ As Shakespeare does in *Julius Caesar* or *Coriolanus*, Eliot depicts people engaged in heated discussions in streets and public places, and, through the sense of urgency and immediacy thus created, gives firsthand impressions of historical events. In the chapter on *Felix Holt*, I will argue that allusions to *Coriolanus* and *Titus Andronicus* serve similar dramatic functions. Lewes's comment about Shakespeare's Romans tends to confirm that these plays served Eliot as models for creating certain effects.

However, in answer to Lewes's question, "Why is it that Shakespeare makes us believe in his Romans?" the answer is because they speak like living men. And this, critics have argued, is one of the problems with *Romola*: we never hear the accents of living men; no one ever spoke like most of the characters in the novel; or, as George Levine says, "what [Eliot] knew and what she felt and could dramatize were different things."¹¹

I agree that the language we hear is often tortuous. For instance, the following comment from Nello to Macchiavelli contains little useful information, and even if it did it shows how a dramatic moment may be choked by a gratuitous barrage of names:

Have you heard the news Domenico Cennini, here, has been telling us?--that Pagolantonio Soderini has given Ser Piero da Bibbiena a box on the ear for setting on Piero de' Medici to interfere with the marriage between young Tommaso Soderini and Fiammetta Strozzi, and is to be sent ambassador to Venice as a punishment? (222)

The three "Quarries" for *Romola* also say something about Eliot's obsession with details. There are entries about Florence's superstitions, history, localities, costumes, prices, salaries, coinage, societies,

people, politics, customs, churches, academic traditions, appointments, and so on. Shakespeare is often careless with anachronisms--especially in the Roman plays--yet, ironically, he avoids the deadening effect which Eliot's concern with accuracy sometimes helps to create.

Too much information is frequently packed into the language. But it is important to realize that the Florentine accents and patterns of language are probably accurate. In the "Quarry," kept in the Bodleian Library, she lists various Italian expressions under the title "Dante-sque phrases." The only English line reads, "My visage was painted with fear"--an expression alluding to *Macbeth* (cf. III.iv.60-61)--which brings to mind the incident where Tito first sees Baldassarre and which inspires Piero di Cosimo to paint the picture of Sinon deceiving Priam (246-47).¹² Another indication of the care that went into *Romola's* language is found in a letter which Blackwood wrote to his wife, after hearing Eliot talk on the subject:

Her great difficulty seems to be that she, as she describes it, hears her characters talking, and there is a weight upon her mind as if Savonarola and friends ought to be speaking Italian instead of English. Her description of how she realised her characters was very marvellous. I never heard anything so good as her distinction between what is called the real and the imaginative. It amounted to this, That you could not have the former without the latter and greater quality. Any real observation of life and character must be limited, and the imagination must fill in and give life to the picture. 'Silas Marner' sprang from her childish recollection of a man with a stoop and expression of face that led her to think that he was an alien from his fellows. The dialect of Lisbeth in 'Adam Bede' arose from her occasionally hearing her father when with his brothers revert to the dialect of his native district, Derbyshire. She could not tell how the feeling and knowledge came to her, but when Lisbeth was speaking she felt it was a real language which she heard. (*Letters* 3: 427)

Again, too much of "the imaginative" went into the characterization of *Romola*, but that should not blind us to the merits which also exist. There is a contrast, for example, between the familiar and colloquial

representations of every day life and the nobility of people like Bernardo, Savonarola, and Romola. As Eliot wrote to Alexander Main:

I am touched by the sympathy you express with a book which was an intense occupation of my feelings as well as thought for three years before it was completed in print. The general ignorance of old Florentine literature, and the false conceptions of Italy bred by idle travelling (with the sort of culture which combines Shakespeare and the musical glasses), have caused many parts of *Romola* to be entirely misunderstood - the scene of the Quack doctor and the monkey, for example, which is a specimen, not of humour as I relish it, but of the practical joking which was the amusement of the gravest old Florentines, and without which no conception of them would be historical. The whole piquancy of the scene in question was intended to lie in the antithesis between the puerility which stood for wit and humour in the old Republic, and the majesty of its front in graver matters. (*Letters* 5: 174-75)

A similar misunderstanding occurs when we fail to compare the unfamiliar patterns of colloquial speech with the more formal ways in which the nobler characters express themselves.

Although there are some legitimate objections to the realistic treatment of fifteenth-century Florence, these do not constitute the novel's main weakness. Instead, I think, it is found in the unnatural way in which *Romola's* nobility is represented. Not only is her speech diagrammatic but so are her relationships with other people. Virtually everything she does has high symbolic relevance. She acts like a stereotype instead of a psychologically motivated individual. The story of Tito and *Romola* is ingeniously woven into the fabric of Florentine life, but for all that the novel is essentially concerned with the comparison of two actions in which Savonarola is the common denominator. The quest for Florence's political and social stability runs parallel to the quest for *Romola's* marital and spiritual stability; as the narrator says, the one affects the other:

Since that Easter [when Tito and *Romola* were married] a great change had come over the prospects of Florence; and as in the tree that bears a myriad of blossoms, each single bud with its fruit is

dependent on the primary circulation of the sap, so the fortunes of Tito and Romola were dependent on certain grand political and social conditions which made an epoch in the history of Italy. (268)

The essential weakness of Romola's portrayal is fully exposed at the point when she outgrows Savonarola's personal influence just as Florence, significantly, outgrows his public influence. History tells us what happened to the city: it deteriorated politically and socially, and this is dramatically--albeit improbably--demonstrated by Tito's death at the hands of Baldassarre. In Romola's case, however, it leads to her final confrontation with Savonarola where she rejects God's kingdom because Savonarola lacks mercy, justice and faithfulness to his teaching (578). This in turn leads to the great climax, which Carole Robinson says, in "*Romola: A Reading of the Novel*," has a twentieth century ring to it:

Romola's voyage [to the plague ridden village] is an existentialist leap, that crisis of the existentialist drama which comes when at the brink of the "abyss of freedom" man plunges into the darkness seeking some form of commitment. The scene is absurd; but perhaps the "absurd" is appropriate in a novel which makes so near an approach to a representation of modern anxiety.

Robinson thinks that Eliot's "solution" of absolute renunciation "seems peculiarly evasive," because she makes Romola the only authority in whom to believe. This in turn, she says, results in an "overemphasis upon Romola's 'keen fellow-feeling' which the character in her actual relationships is unable to demonstrate," since in her own way Romola was as "detached" from her society as Tito was from his.' By way of defence, it can be argued that if Romola was "detached" and then learned to demonstrate keen fellow-feelings, this development was necessary in order to distinguish her from ordinary Florentine people and to show her working towards and achieving her Feuerbachian "solution." Alternative

ly, as M. C. Bradbrook has suggested, since *Romola* can be read as "an idealising of the women's cause, not only in the character of its heroine but in the claims for feminist culture implicit in writing of the book itself," Romola's voyage can be understood as a symbolic expression of her desire to subvert the oppressive influence and power of men.¹⁴ In other words, I do not find Romola's story unconvincing, nor her actions inherently absurd.

Nevertheless, the artistic portrayal is unconvincing because, despite the efforts to root Romola in the life of Florence, she is developed into an emblem of nobility. We see her offering practical alternatives to the questionable values of other people, and yet it becomes increasingly difficult to think of her as a person. First, as a pagan example of filial affection she is compared with her Christian brother, Dino; next, she is both the pathetic Ariadne to Tito's Bacchus and the thwarted Antigone to Creon-like Florence; and, finally, she is the priestess of a new religion which challenges Savonarola's Catholicism. All but the last comparison serve to show the stages in her spiritual development which qualify her to compete, as it were, with the great priest. We are to understand that she embodies the best of the pagan and Christian worlds and that this has given her a unique moral authority with which to act. But since Savonarola's mysticism and devotion to God are never fully explored, she must be seen to perform her own acts of secular mysticism, to show that she succeeds where Savonarola fails. Eventually, she transcends Savonarola--while losing her status as a credible human being.

In 1863 Richard Simpson, a Liberal Catholic, accused Eliot of cleverly promoting her unorthodox religious beliefs by cloaking them in the

pseudo religious "garb of self sacrifice, renunciation, and universal charity." He objected to what he saw as Eliot's "dishonest" attempt to undermine people's faith in God. But, he went on to say, the subtlety of Eliot's method, in fact, promotes a belief in God rather than Feuerbachian Love:

There is a limit beyond which this process [of undermining Christianity] defeats itself; the philosopher grows too cunning to be understood, and the disguise is more wholesome than the well concealed purpose is deleterious."¹¹

Simpson's objection to Eliot's supposed dishonesty tends to weaken his second point. She does not obscure her unorthodox religious views; but she does defeat herself in her characterization of Romola. The process of elevating the heroine to the ranks of secular sainthood is so successful that even the Epilogue shows her only partially inhabiting the real world. As Levine says, Romola is surrounded by "an intensity of crisis and unrelievedness of thematic relevance that she emerges not so much a complicated human being as a romantic heroine."¹² Ultimately, the novel fails because Eliot gives Romola an accentuated nobility and heroism that gradually removes her from the interplay of realism and romance. It is ironic that if Fechter's Othello was too familiar and colloquial and therefore unheroic, Eliot's Romola is too heroic and noble and therefore unrealistic.

It is also ironic that *Silas Marner*, with only one direct reference to *King John*,¹³ is more Shakespearean than *Romola*, with its half a dozen or more allusions. Critics have thought it so ever since the novel first appeared. The Rainbow scene, in particular, has been singled out for its Shakespearean humour, strength of feelings, and supposed antecedents. In

a review attributed to John Morley, the author briefly compared Eliot's characters and humour with Shakespeare's, and, when discussing chapter 6, said:

It is a kind of unpermissible audacity in England to say that anything is as good as Shakespeare [sic], and we will not therefore say that this public house scene is worthy of the hand that drew Falstaff and Poins; but we may safely say that, however much less in degree, the humour of George Eliot in such passages is of the same kind as that displayed in the comic passages of Shakespeare's historical plays

Similarly, Richard Garnett, in his introduction to the novel, wrote:

Like Shakespeare, George Eliot possesses the faculty of depicting the emotions of a multitude by the ejaculation of individuals, and the mobs of [*Julius Caesar*] and [*Coriolanus*] hardly represent the feelings of their order with more truth and vividness than the talk at Raveloe. The Rainbow mirrors the public opinion of Raveloe.

Lastly, K M Lobb referred to the Rainbow scene as a traditional "rural conversation piece," and argued that "This tradition began, perhaps, in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* [Part III] in the orchard scene where Justice Shallow asks his neighbour Justice Silence: 'How a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford fair?' [III.ii.37-38]- and goes on to join Sir John Falstaff in conversation. . . ."

Early critics did not analyse in any detail why the Rainbow scene, for example, is Shakespearean; instead, as Knoepfelmacher says, they simply

pointed to the Shakespearean atmosphere of her early stories and exulted in the fact that she [Eliot] was born only thirty miles from the Bard's native village. . . . [T]hey detected, or thought that they detected, an even wider range of resemblances; they compared the quality of George Eliot's non-Dickensian type of characterization, humor, and feeling for landscape with its counterpart in the work of Shakespeare. More vaguely, they saw an analogy between the two writers in their common concern with human illusion and their shared "breadth of sympathy". . . ."

Yet these critics were right in detecting Shakespearean qualities. In letters written between 1840 and 1878, Lewes and Eliot made at least six

allusions to the two parts of *Henry IV*, showing how much they appreciated Shakespeare's characterization and sense of humour. In a letter to Cara Bray, dated 15 April [1872], Eliot mentions the possibility of removing to the country for a break, and says, "This warm weather has brought out the advertisements, however, and we shall probably soon be 'accommodated,' which, as Justice Shallow says, is a good phrase" (*Letters* 5: 266). "Sir, pardon: a soldier is better accommodated than with a wife," says Bardolph to Shallow, and Shallow, uncertain as to the meaning of the vogue word, says:

"It is well said, in faith, sir, and it is well said indeed, too. 'Better accommodated'! It is good, yea indeed is it; good phrases are surely, and ever were, very commendable. 'Accommodated' it comes of 'accommodo'; very good, a good phrase" (*Henry IV* III.ii.65-71).²⁰

These lines also form the motto to chapter 60 in *Middlemarch* and demonstrate, I think, how readily Eliot entered into the spirit of Shakespeare's gentle satire of rather silly country bumpkins.

Shakespeare mocks Shallow for his awe of sophisticated city dwellers like Falstaff and his entourage, while at the same time allowing him many redeeming qualities. Shallow may be too familiar with his servants, as Falstaff says (V.i 57-82), but at least there is real affection and respect for him among the rustics. The same cannot be said of Falstaff, who tries to be too familiar with Hal. Similarly, Falstaff may be right when he says that Shallow is a slave to "this vice of lying!" (III.ii. 297-8). But then Shallow's vice is harmless compared with Falstaff's many vices. He is a minor, amusing, idiosyncratic character, who punctuates the main action of the play. As Tillyard says, his

crass simplicity, his dense unawareness of how trite is his moralizing and how steep the descent from it, is the most exquisite comedy. And yet Shakespeare uses . . . [Shallow] to express the way he sees life. . . . Shakespeare did indeed see life as a ridiculous

but fascinating blend; a blend in the present scene [III.iii] of men dying and bullocks sold in the busy market; while, for the pattern of the play, Shallow speaks his words just after Henry IV has been brought to the point of death: it is in this context that he speaks generally of death and then turns to Stamford Fair, reminding us that it is still flourishing.²¹

Eliot portrays her rustics in similar ways for similar effects. She clearly enjoys the muddled thinking of Raveloe's locals. The narrator's mixed tone of mock seriousness and quiet indulgence is matched by delicate descriptions of characters and their mannerisms which combine to paint a Shakespearean picture. As with Shallow's scenes, there is a serious intention behind the Rainbow scene. David Carroll says:

The whole question of opposing claims [by Silas and Godfrey on Eppie] has been given preliminary definition in the extraordinary sixth chapter of the novel, in the conversation taking place in the kitchen of the Rainbow as the robbed Silas sought help at the nadir of his fortunes. . . . [C]ritics have universally praised the chapter for its humour and realism without being aware of its relationship to the central meaning. It is, in fact, a comprehensive rehearsal of the important themes in the novel, and, as such, it provides a context for the final debate [between Silas, Eppie, Godfrey, and Nancy].²²

The apparently pointless squabble between the butcher and the farrier about the red Durham cow, for instance, serves a purpose: it is just the sort of thing to animate the locals and to remind us of their deep sense of belonging to a community. Similarly, Mr. Macey's oft repeated account of how the Lammeters came to the district reminds the listeners of the past in which they share, while indicating to us why the social ecology of Raveloe is so stable. The "Lunnon tailor," Mr. Cliff, tried to bend the land to his will and failed; old Mr. Lammeter adapted himself to its limitations and thrived. More important, Mr. Macey's story reminds us of Silas Marner's own failure to adjust himself to the rhythms of Raveloe's life, which Silas is about to demonstrate once more by coming into the Tavern for the first time in fifteen years.

Just as Shakespeare uses Shallow's colloquial speech to make profound comments on life in an oblique way, so Eliot uses Mr. Snell. Each time tempers flare at the Rainbow, the landlord moderates, placates, and restores the peace, as when the altercation over Dowlas's brave indifference to ghosts threatens to get out of hand:

'Ay, but there's this in it, Dowlas,' said the landlord, speaking in a tone of much candour and tolerance. 'There's folks, i' my opinion, they can't see ghos'es, not if they stood as plain as a pike-staff before 'em. And there's reason i' that. For there's my wife, now, can't smell, not if she'd the strongest o' cheese under her nose. I never see'd a ghost myself; but then I says to myself, "Very like I haven't got the smell for 'em." I mean, putting a ghost for a smell, or else contrairiways. And so, I'm for holding with both sides; for, as I say, the truth lies between 'em. And if Dowlas was to go and stand night through, I'd back him; and if any body said as Cliff's Holiday was certain sure for all that, I'd back *him* too. For the smell's what I go by.' (105)''

Mr. Snell cuts an amusing figure as Raveloe's King Solomon, but despite his inarticulateness, he touches on an important tenet with which Eliot is concerned: the need for tolerance in order to secure harmony. As individuals we are all potentially betrayed, as it were, by our limited powers of perception, and the only refuge from constant antagonism is in common ground, in the shared values of community life and an identification with the past that provides the much needed sense of continuity.

In her "Notes on *The Spanish Gypsy*," Eliot writes that a tragic figure is someone who "must give way to the general [will]," and that the tragedy itself is "the struggle involved . . . [resulting] often in the entirely calamitous issue in spite of a grand submission." But, she goes on, the tragic figure does not find the calm of submission through "rational reflection" alone:

Happily, we are not left to that. Love, pity, constituting sympathy, and generous joy with regard to the lot of our fellowmen comes in - has been since the beginning - enormously enhanced by

wider vision of results, by an imagination actively interested in the lot of mankind generally; and these feelings become piety: i.e., loving, willing submission and heroic Promethean effort towards high possibilities, which may result from our individual life.

There is really no moral "sanction" but this inward impulse. The will of God is the same thing as the will of other men, compelling us to work and avoid what they have seen to be harmful to social existence. Disjoined from any perceived good, the divine will [the "inward impulse"] is simply so much as we have ascertained of the facts of existence which compel obedience at our peril. Any other notion comes from the supposition of arbitrary revelation. . . .⁴

This explains why Mr. Snell is prepared to see both sides of an argument, and why Eliot gives so much prominence to the Rainbow scene and the homely Christmas Dance at the Red House. If we ignore "inward impulses," we do nothing to counteract the impersonal laws of nature which threaten our lives.

But Mr. Snell is less Feuerbachian than Shakespearean: despite his spontaneous wisdom, he is as superstitious as the next man. Eliot's rustics function in the novel, as Shakespeare's do in *2 Henry IV*. The latter are also simple, amusing folk, but, more important, they represent the kind of people whose natures do not fall into revolt since gold is not their object (Cf. IV.v.64-66). In Shakespeare's play, the quest for the golden crown leads to political instability; in Eliot's novel the quest for a pile of gold leads to Silas's unstable mind.

The novel's structure and moral are also Shakespearean. David Carroll, in an endnote to "Reversing the Oracles of Religion," draws attention to a striking parallel between *Silas Marner* and *The Winter's Tale*. He points out that Eppie's biblical name, Hepzibah, refers to Isaiah 62:4 and that "This quotation from Isaiah ('Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken') brings to mind a similarly abandoned and significantly named child, Perdita." He also notes a number of common details in the novel and play: both have themes of regeneration; Eppie and Perdita are

abandoned in winter following the breakdown of their parents' marriages; they are "miraculously rescued by rustic characters and brought up in a frugal, pastoral world"; and their moments of rescue are a "foretaste of regeneration to follow," coinciding with "moments of death of Antigonus and Molly Farren." Silas confuses Eppie's golden hair for his stolen gold; Perdita's discovery by the Shepherd prompts the Clown to say, "You're a made old man; if sins of your youth are forgiven you, you're well to live.--Gold, all gold! (cf. *Winter's Tale* III.iii.112-21). Thus, Carroll concludes:

In the centre of each work, after the discovery of the child, there occurs a gap of sixteen years, we are reintroduced to the heroines in the pastoral setting--Perdita as Flora of the spring feast, and Eppie intent on planning the garden for Silas's cottage (ch. 16) as they are each seeking ways of marrying their lovers, Florizel and Aaron. Finally, of course, reconciliation and regeneration are achieved by the influence of this second generation upon the first, and achieved in each case by means of natural 'miracles'.²⁵

Carroll's article is more concerned with Feuerbachian parallels than anything else,²⁶ and what he says about *Silas Marner* and *The Winter's Tale* does not prove the play's direct influence on Eliot. Moreover, the parallels he notes should be considered in conjunction with other critics' suggestions that Eliot may have been thinking about Wordsworth, Dickens, a fairy tale, or even a Polish writer, Kraszewski, while "writing a story which came across [her] other plans by a sudden inspiration" (*Letters* 3: 371-2).²⁷

Wordsworth is often seen as the most likely influence on the story because the novel's epigraph is taken from "Michael" and because Eliot herself wrote to Blackwood, "I should not have believed that any one would have been interested in it but myself (since William Wordsworth is dead). . . ." (*Letters* 3: 382-83). She greatly admired Wordsworth, and

there are strong parallels in the ways they depict rustic life. I think that Thomas Pinney's comment about Eliot's pastoral novels can also be applied to much of Wordsworth's poetry:

No novelist before George Eliot shows his characters so deeply attached to places, and to particular ways of life, so intimately linked by association to a familiar world that the preservation of the relation, whether in memory or in fact, becomes a condition of life itself.²⁸

However, I also think that there are important differences between the two. For example, in Book 9 of "The Excursion," Wordsworth talks of an "active Principle" in Nature, which somehow links and conditions people to their familiar world; but, as I mentioned in my introduction, although Eliot acknowledges the existence of "skyey influences," she considers them to have a much more limited effect on people's lives. Also, while Wordsworth laments the passing away of "glory from the earth" and sees life as only the next best thing to sporting on the shores of "that immortal sea," from whence we come "trailing clouds of glory" (cf. "Intimations Ode"), Eliot views life as something much more promising--despite our frequent "widening retrospects that breed despair." In other words, she moderates her romance with a realism in a way that Wordsworth does not: her rustics have a dramatic presence which his usually lack. I agree with Q. D. Leavis when she says of *Silas Marner*, "As for the Wordsworthian part of the enterprise, what follows seems to me a more plausible and particularized demonstration of Wordsworth's tenets than anything the poet ever wrote himself."²⁹

The difference between Eliot and Wordsworth, and her closer affinity with Shakespeare, can be usefully explored by referring to Robert Hancock Dunham's "Wordsworthian Themes and Attitudes in George Eliot's Novels." In his unpublished dissertation, he argues that all the Roman-

tic poets "saw the child's mode of experience as a very simple kind of analogue for their attempts to participate habitually in the vital processes of the natural world," but, he goes on:

The hint of theological significance [which Eliot] attached to the child . . . should not be taken as an easy, off handed literary comparison. . . . [Romantic poets and] nineteenth century writers often used the child's vision not as mere analogy, but as having a literal correspondence with the unfallen vision of one in a state of grace. George Eliot is no exception: in fact, like many artists of her century when theological doctrine proved unable to bear the scrutiny of the time, she seems to rely upon the immediate experience of children as proof of the accessibility of true innocence The passage from *Silas Marner*, in which a child is substituted for white winged angels [cf. 190-91], confirms that George Eliot intends us to understand that the golden gates to the "bright land" can be re-entered.³⁰

Dunham offers a very interesting argument and much of what he says I find convincing. However, Eliot looks to the present and the future even when she looks to the past- and therefore I feel that the idea of Silas "re-entering" a state of childhood innocence blurs the fact that he and Eppie create a "brighter land" which is enjoyed on different levels and gathers in strength through years of patience and trust. It is true that Eppie's simple delights in things around her help to re-introduce Silas to the "vital processes of the natural world" and that he is virtually consumed by her presence. He tells Aaron, "when Eppie's talking o' things, I see nothing but what she's a saying" (197). But she only re-awakens him to things in heaven and earth which he stopped dreaming about when he came under the influence of Lantern Yard's narrow philosophy. These pleasures continued to exist and only remained dormant in Silas during his fifteen years of self imposed exile; therefore, I think it misleading to say that they belong to the peculiar domain of children.

Silas's rekindled pleasures differ from Eppie's innocent delights because they are accompanied by a sense of regret which she has yet to experience:

Sitting on the banks in this way, Silas began to look for the once familiar herbs again; and as the leaves, with their unchanged outline and markings, lay on his palm, there was a sense of crowding remembrances from which he turned away timidly, taking refuge in Eppie's little world, that lay lightly on his enfeebled spirit. (185)

But his spirit is strengthened from the continuous forging of his bond with Eppie. He tells her, "things *will* change, whether we like it or no; things won't go on for a long while just as they are and no difference" (210), and that should tell us that instead of returning to a "bright land," both Eppie and Silas have to work constantly at keeping it in sight. However, as Eliot cleverly conveys in the amusing account of a wiser Silas smoking his "medicinal appliance," Promethean efforts of submission are worth the peace entailed.

The treatment of lost and re-kindled love in *Silas Marner* is, as Carroll suggests, very similar to that in *The Winter's Tale*. Other works may also have inspired Eliot, but, given her previous interest in this particular play and her close analyses of Shakespearean characters, plots and themes at the time of writing this novel, I am inclined to agree with Carroll about the "significant similarities of detail."

Both novel and play show that a series of uncontrollable events are put into operation once people upset the moral order of their lives, but that the dangers posed by nature's indifference can be either avoided or made bearable through the agency of human love. Leontes' jealousy results in the unexpected deaths of Mamillius and Antigonus as well as the strange "death" of Hermione. Yet Antigonus' kindness, the Bohemian

rustics' generosity, and Florizel's love, variously help Perdita to survive, flourish, and be restored to her rightful position in life. Similarly, the deep abiding love between Eppie and Silas more than compensates for the far-reaching damage done by William Dane's treachery, Dunstan Cass's theft, and Godfrey Cass's betrayal of his daughter. Both works demonstrate that love is "an art / Which does mend nature change it rather" (IV.iv 95-6).

Perdita's humble upbringing has taught her to understand that, despite Polixenes's philosophical quibbling, "carnations and streak'd gillyvors" do not belong in a "rustic garden;" and therein she shows the sort of temperance, propriety, and nobility which her father must learn before he can be reunited with his family. By shutting himself away for sixteen years with his grief (cf. IV.i.17-9), Leontes also comes to accept and value the limitations of his life. And soon afterwards, the play is resolved through a series of coincidences, disguises, and improbable events. However, although Shakespeare's characters are not realistic--after all, Bohemia is not a real place--their motivations are always plausible. Even the happy ending is clouded by the knowledge that Mamillius and Antigonus are lost forever and that the wasted years can never be made up. There is an emphasis on suffering and sadness which ensures that the play's fantastic elements, while facilitating the denouement, are integrated in a believable treatment of characters who demonstrate how love's art mends nature.

Silas Marner also combines realism and romance. In their own ways, Godfrey and Silas must learn to love before they can appreciate life as it is given to them. Eliot is careful to sketch in their respective backgrounds in order to explain why they failed to learn this vital

lesson before Eppie's arrival; and thus we learn that Silas was misled by the teachings of Lantern Yard and Godfrey by his irresponsible up-bringing at the hands of Squire Cass.

Lantern Yard's "ascetic, self righteous and emotionally repressive" religion² trained Silas to shun the world beyond his community of the elect. After his expulsion from the church, this tendency to avoid the world hardens and results in years of isolation. But gradually, through the examples of human kindness, Dolly Winthrop's chaotic amalgam of religious iconography and common-sense notions, and Eppie's mysterious arrival, he is taught to place his faith in "Them above." Dolly's theology compares favourably with Lantern Yard's because it acknowledges the relative insignificance of the self within a larger order which is only imperfectly understood; and Silas's quiet acceptance of this deep truth makes it possible for him to love.

Similarly, Godfrey is encouraged by his father's example to substitute selfish speculation for right moral conduct. The references to the Napoleonic War and its effect on prices, and the mild sarcasm of "that glorious war-time which was felt to be a peculiar favour of Providence towards the landed interest" (71), point to Eliot's concern over rural gentry like Squire Cass. Political expediency, self-interest, and short-term profits weaken the time-honoured tradition of looking after tenants and result in the dereliction of the Raveloe estate. Given the Casses' disregard for tradition, reminiscent of Arthur Donnithorne, it is not surprising that Godfrey secretly marries Molly and that he relies on Chance to see him through. Instead of "trustening" he runs away from his "fellow creatures," as Dolly puts it, and this leads to his betrayal of Molly and Eppie. However, his marriage to Nancy and his

concern over the estate help him to face up to his duties and the mistakes of the past. The coincidence of Dunstan's skeleton being recovered at a time when he is trying to improve the estate humbles him, like Silas, into the acceptance of his own insignificance in the scheme of things.

Auster usefully points out that, "In *Silas Marner* the dominant characteristics of the country are grossness, laxness, and dullness of mind and spirit." His analysis is well substantiated by examples—although it is also possible to identify positive attributes of mind and spirit. However, I do not quite agree with him when he says that in this novel, "The question of local roots counts for much less . . . than in the early ones. . . ." True, Eliot "has moved since she waxed lyrical over the Poyser household and delighted in the largely happy life of Loamshire," but that development is partly due to the fact that there is, as Q. D. Leavis has shown, a political side to this novel which is not found in *Adam Bede*.³² Raveloe lacks Hayslope's Forest of Arden quality because, as Eliot told Blackwood, "I became inclined to a more realistic treatment" for a story which came "first of all, quite suddenly, as a sort of legendary tale, suggested by my recollection of having once, in early childhood, seen a linen-weaver with a bag on his back. . . ." (*Letters* 3: 382-83). It is a mark of her artistic development that the realism in *Silas Marner* goes beyond a faithful description of isolated provincial life to an examination of history's forces acting upon it. Local roots are just as important as before, but they are no longer the only concern. The realism in *Silas Marner* is grittier than before, and this change is also reflected in Eliot's interest in Shakespeare. Instead of *As You Like It*, she turns to *2 Henry IV* for her model

of rustic life. That is not to say that the former ceased to be important to her; instead the latter is better suited to her purposes: it also portrays an isolated community which is no longer immune from the political world which lies beyond.

Woven into this realistic treatment of early nineteenth-century life and psychological motivation are the various coincidences of plot, such as Silas's epoch-making fits. Q. D. Leavis writes that the

constant play of ironical social criticism, and the general reflections about human nature, are what prevent the artifices (such as the elaborate parallels between Silas's and Godfrey's histories and the providential arrangements of the fits, little golden-haired girls, and so on) from being felt as artificial by the reader, for they never obtrude as such: far from being incited to work out the pattern, our attention is always being directed elsewhere. Yet without dwelling on these things we do get as we read a sense that these complexities of reference are further illustrations of those laws that, as the novel is concerned to demonstrate, so mysteriously exist.³³

But laws do not mysteriously exist: people mysteriously ignore them--often with devastating results. Silas perversely attempts to shun the duties that he necessarily owes to the people around him, and that causes him to waste fifteen years in sullen behaviour. However, during the years of his "insect-like existence into which his nature had shrunk," he instinctively seeks continuity and companionship through things like weaving and helping the ailing Sally Oates (66-67). An unexpected event then helps to nourish and strengthen these meagre signs of his humanity, and he once again finds a full and happy life. He is very fortunate indeed, for if the nature of his earlier mistake had precluded the possibility of an almost complete return to happiness, Eppie's sudden arrival would not have had the same effect on him. Godfrey Cass's story demonstrates the point. Like Silas, he has also wilfully ignored many of his duties and responsibilities and has only

demonstrated his essential human qualities here and there. However, the moment of his spiritual rehabilitation coincides with the realization that some mistakes can never be adequately compensated for, let alone corrected. The enormous happiness that Silas derives from Eppie all but makes up for his years of self-induced loneliness; but even Godfrey's happy marriage to Nancy is tainted by the irreversible loss of his daughter. There is little sadness in Dunstan's death because he warrants little sympathy to begin with, but Godfrey's story is profoundly sad because his sin of moral cowardice lays a spiritual waste to his life from which he only partially recovers.

Silas's fits, I think, are meant to demonstrate not that there are mysterious laws which shape his life, but simply that undue importance is often attached to things imperfectly understood. Q. D. Leavis thinks that even though the fits "are worked into the pattern of an impartial operation of the laws of life," the "device of catalepsy" is unsatisfactory

since it is not . . . a product of his misfortunes but the cause of them, posited for the plotting--after which Silas ceases to have any fits on stage. The fits were needed to make William's treachery and theft possible and to give the villagers an excuse for their superstitious horror of a man whose 'soul was loose from his body and going out and in like a bird out of its nest'. . . . And lastly, the catalepsy is necessary to get Eppie into the cottage without Silas knowing, so that she *seems* to him initially to be of supernatural origin.³⁴

But the fits are neither a product nor a cause of his misfortunes: they facilitate the plotting but they also highlight certain human characteristics. Dunstan Cass and William Dane use the fits as opportunities for exploitation; Silas ascribes a "spiritual significance" to them (56); and, the villagers see them in a superstitious light. It is therefore significant that they cease to be seen "on stage" beyond a certain

point. They continue to plague him, for Eppie is "always on the watch lest one of her father's strange attacks should come on" (240); but after love's art mends nature, the fits are no longer important. Like the fantastic elements in *The Winter's Tale*, the artifices in *Silas Marner* facilitate the plotting and are fully integrated in the treatment of plausibly motivated characters.

In the scenes dealing with Godfrey's determination to win Eppie back, Eliot again drives home the point that self-inflicted tragic consequences entail periods of expiation from which only a partial recovery is possible. When Godfrey confesses to Nancy, he says that he has been humbled by God's will, and yet he remains unprepared, as the narrator tells us, "to enter with lively appreciation into other people's feelings counteracting his virtuous resolves" (230). This, more than anything else, is what makes Eppie "cleave" to Silas. It is not simply love for him but an instinctive "repulsion towards the offered lot and the newly-revealed father" (232) that helps to make up her mind. Put another way, she recoils from the offer of a life with Godfrey and Nancy for the same sorts of reasons that Perdita rejects the idea of carnations and gillyvors in a rustic's garden: such things may be grand, but they are wholly alien to the simple yet deeply rooted experiences of peasant life. The rejection finally puts an end to Godfrey's arrogance and presumption, but the lesson is learned too late for him to win Eppie's love. As Eliot said, the tragedy of our lives is that our struggles frequently result "in the entirely calamitous issue in spite of a grand submission."

However, Godfrey's grief is less severe than it might have been because he has forged a bond of real love and affection with Nancy,

similar to the one between Eppie and Silas; and therefore his expiation is tempered by consolation:

At last Godfrey turned his head towards [Nancy], and their eyes met, dwelling in that meeting without any movement on either side. That quiet mutual gazing of a trusting husband and wife is like the first movement of rest or refuge from a great weariness or a great danger--not to be interfered with by speech or action which would distract the sensations from the fresh enjoyment of repose. (235)

Hence the novel's happy ending. As in the *The Winter's Tale*, the older people learn what the rustics have always sensed and what the younger people intuitively grasp: love's art can mend or change nature, provided that the limitations of one's life are not just accepted but valued.

While writing *Silas Marner*, Eliot wrote to Blackwood,

I don't wonder at your finding my story, as far as you have read it, rather sombre. . . . But I hope you will not find it at all a sad story, as a whole, since it sets--or is intended to set--in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations. The Nemesis is a very mild one. I have felt all through as if the story would have lent itself best to metrical rather than prose fiction, especially in all that relates to the psychology of Silas; except that, under that treatment, there could not be an equal play of humour. (*Letters* 3: 382-3)

That, I think, is a good overall description of the novel. The idyllic happiness which Silas, Eppie, Aaron, and Dolly find outweighs the regret which Godfrey and Nancy learn to live with; and there is a good deal of warm-hearted humour in the sharply defined, realistically portrayed characters. Idiosyncracies, often brought out by the very accents of living men, punctuate and smooth out, as it were, the sometimes adventurous action of the novel.

But whereas everything in *Silas Marner* combines to set in a strong light those "remedial influences" which Eliot mentions, this is not the case in *Romola*. There the light of "remedial influences" has its source

in the contrast between the heroic and the familiar and, unfortunately, Romola's heroic portrayal fails to convince. The respective success and failure of these novels, then, is largely due to Eliot's experiments with the integration of romance elements and realistic characterization; and it is a measure of her growing interest in Shakespeare's work that she turned to him, among others, to see how the experiments should be conducted.

Chapter 6
Dramatic Structure in *Felix Holt, The Radical*

Part of Eliot's artistic experimentation in *Romola* involved the use of chapter-epigraphs, or mottoes as she called them. Andrew Sanders explains that she "originally intended to head each chapter with a quotation, or with a series of quotations, drawn from Latin and Italian authors." In the novel's manuscript there are mottoes to chapters one, two, four and five with spaces left at the beginning of the Proem and chapters three, six, seven, eight, and nine. But thereafter she discontinued the experiment. As Sanders says, the reason for not including the mottoes probably had to do with the difficulties they posed for the *Cornhill Magazine* and because Eliot "considered it wise not to impose a further burden of erudition on already hard-working readers." Sanders explains that only the first two quotations of the first motto, accredited to Machiavelli and Filelfo, were re-used in chapters one and seventeen respectively.¹ But although she abandoned the motto experiment in *Romola*, the fact that she was able to incorporate some mottoes into her text suggests that she saw them as functional parts of the story.

She resumed the experiment with mottoes in *Felix Holt*, a work which Blackwood immediately and perceptively described as something quite different from an ordinary novel and more like "a series of panoramas where human beings speak and act before us" (*Letters* 4: 243). That strong dramatic quality in *Felix Holt* can, I think, be usefully examined by analysing the fourteen (out of a total of fifty-four) mottoes taken from Shakespeare. In the earlier novels, where allusions to his work are

buried in the text, characters and themes are subtly, often indirectly, imbued with Shakespearean characteristics. But the high profile given to the Shakespearean mottoes in *Felix Holt* points to a new development: an interest in dramatic structuring. Most of the mottoes invite us to make direct comparisons between the dramatic scenes of his plays and her chapters; hence we are encouraged to see the novel's action like a spectator watching a play. After the somewhat discursive Introduction to *Felix Holt*, which powerfully evokes a bygone era poised on the threshold of Reform, we are presented with the hurly-burly of the times and asked to draw our own conclusions about people and events by concentrating on various dramatic and ironical parallels of character and plot that the Shakespearean mottoes suggest. *Felix Holt* is essentially a novel of contrasts, less concerned with the issues explored in earlier works--the nature of individual lives (*Scenes*), slowly evolving communities (*Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*), and heroic struggles (*The Mill* and *Romola*)--than with trying to understand the complex nature of society as a whole. It is therefore much more like *Middlemarch*.

Writing about Shakespeare's History plays, Peter Alexander says:

It was not Shakespeare's business in his Histories to instruct his countrymen in the forms an ideal commonwealth should take; but he has been fairly described as "an almost unrivalled observer of political behaviour." The political and social instruction he offers is not in the forms but in the spirit of human conduct In his Histories Shakespeare traces the fortunes of his country from the dark days that followed Richard [III]'s irresponsible wilfulness to the happier times of his own age when he saw his country entering on what he felt was a great future. It was a story that for all its discouragements left him with hope.²

Something like this can be said about Eliot and *Felix Holt*. She is not concerned with the details of Reform, but she is a shrewd observer of political behaviour, and the instruction she offers touches the spirit

of human conduct. Writing in 1865-1866, she takes a brief look at the period of English social history "under the low grey sky"³ of the impending 1832 Reform Bill and examines "the dark days" of what she considered to have been political irresponsibility and wilfulness. But she also looks forward to the happier times of her own age when England was expected to enter an even more promising future once the Second Reform Bill of 1867 was carried. Her choice of mottoes suggests that she was not only conscious of Shakespearean parallels but that she wanted to identify some of her characters with his. It is no accident that Harold Transome is compared with Richard II, Felix with Henry IV and Coriolanus, and Esther with Henry V.

Felix Holt was begun, according to Eliot's Journal, on March 29th, 1865, but Fred C. Thomson has suggested that it probably was not until the following May or June that she had the "political" novel in mind. Up until then, he argues, Eliot was still immersed in Greek drama and was probably thinking of an "economic" novel with the Transome plot at its centre:

Because the political atmosphere of February and March was not highly charged with Reform, and because domestic politics had previously held a subordinate position in her interests, it seems unlikely that she should spontaneously undertake to write a political novel. On the other hand, the likelihood is greater that in view of her recent experiments in *The Spanish Gypsy* her imagination should still be running in the channel of tragic drama, and that the Transome portion of the novel, stripped of its political accidents, should have occurred to her.

Thomson goes on to say that from May onwards entries in the "Quarry" for *Felix Holt* show a shift from economic concerns to the politics of 1832:

The inference is that probably in May, George Eliot may have seen that a political setting, perhaps with Felix as the moral centre, would afford an excellent means of bringing into credible conjunction the socially disparate Transome and Holt-Lyon groups, and would also give her private tragic theme a public scope.⁴

I will argue that the mottoes are integrally related to the chapters in which they appear; and therefore, since a number of them, including some of the Shakespearean ones, were not entered until later, it would seem that Eliot was still shaping her novel as late as May 17th, 1866, when, as she recorded in her Journal, she "Did nothing but write mottoes to [the] proofs." However, this is an area fraught with difficulties, for as Higdon says:

With rare exceptions, it is virtually impossible to say at what point George Eliot selected or wrote the epigraphs [to all her novels]. She did not include them in the finished drafts of the novel until her manuscripts were completed, but this certainly does not prove that they had not been selected earlier. She did not write the epigraph to 'The Lifted Veil' until seven years after its publication (28 February 1873, *Letters*, 5: 380); however, *Quarry for Middlemarch* . . . contains epigraphs clearly selected and written before the chapters. The purposeful distortion of some of the quotations and the appearance of allusions to the epigraphs within the chapters further suggest that many were selected prior to or during the composition of the particular chapters they preface.⁶

That Eliot herself saw *Felix Holt* as a drama is further suggested in a letter written to Barbara Bodichon when she was completing Volume 2: "I am finishing a book, which has been growing slowly, like a sickly child, because of my own ailments; but now I am better in the later acts of it. I can't move till it is done" (*Letters* 4: 236-7). As Haight says, the use of the word "acts" is interesting since "she had been reading Aristotle's *Poetics* and Aeschylus and Sophocles, and as [Thomson] has shown, the original conception of *Felix Holt* was probably the tragedy of Mrs. Transome rather than the political plot."⁶ Haight refers to Thomson's "The Genesis of *Felix Holt*" and "*Felix Holt* and Classical Tragedy." In the latter article, Thomson concentrates on the Transome plot and traces a structure of Greek tragedy in the story of Mrs. Transome and Harold. He writes: "In *Felix Holt*, as often in the Greek

drama, the plot and outcome of the action hinge upon events outside the boundaries of the story itself." But he adds: "If George Eliot was deliberately trying to adapt the functions and techniques of Greek drama to her novel, it must be conceded that she fell short of her aim. The total impression left by *Felix Holt* is rather of Elizabethan luxuriance, with an injection too, one fears, of grand opera."

Thomson's evaluation of the novel, that it falls short of a classically styled drama, is convincingly countered by Florence Sandler in "The Unity of *Felix Holt*." She argues that Esther should be seen as the central character who learns to see through Harold's shallowness, to respect Felix's modified Radicalism, and to choose between her "parents," Rufus and Mrs. Transome, by opting for the moral vision of her "father." Thus, Sandler concludes, the novel does fit the pattern of a classical drama. However, she too sees it as having more of an Elizabethan style than anything else:

Ultimately the unity of the novel is of the Shakespearean kind, where thematic and imagistic continuities run between plot and subplot, between tragic characters and comic ones, and where scenes of high drama among the principal characters may be offset by scenes in the tap room where lowly folk can comment on the issues in their own style.⁸

Sandler does not elaborate. But this is precisely my point of departure in this chapter: I think that there is not just a close affinity between Eliot's and Shakespeare's understanding of the interconnectedness of individual and public life, but that *Felix Holt* is carefully structured along the lines of a Shakespearean play to give a unified expression to that understanding. The pattern of the structure is greatly enhanced by our appreciation of the Shakespearean mottoes and allusions in the text; they guide our perceptions of characters and

incidents. But perhaps more important, the structuring also provides the novel with a moral weight or resonance which it would otherwise struggle to find. Eliot once told Alexander Main:

As to quotations, please--please be very moderate, whether they come from Shakespeare or any other servant of the Muses. A quotation often makes a fine summit to a climax, especially when it comes from some elder author, or from the Bible, so that there is a certain remoteness in the English as if it came from long departed prophets who lived as citizens of the ages that were future to them and had our thoughts before we were born. But I hate a style speckled with quotations. (*Letters* 5: 404)

However, she went on to say that we should acknowledge our indebtedness "when the consciousness is very full of a particular writer's mode of thought." That she was conscious of Shakespeare's mode of thought when writing *Felix Holt* is readily apparent from the quotations, but that she used those thoughts to give a moral authority to her concerns and a unity to her art is less obvious and requires examination.

A failure to take the whole of *Felix Holt* into consideration can result in a lopsided reading,⁹ and I am aware of that danger in making a case for the Shakespearean mottoes and allusions. However, the nature of Eliot's mottoes is such that, while they stand separate from the text, they are at once part of it, and therefore it is difficult to say anything about them without commenting on the novel itself. Moreover, the large proportion of Shakespearean mottoes and allusions is itself an indication of how important his plays were to her overall conception of the novel.

All of Eliot's mottoes are subtle modifiers to our understanding of the chapters. Higdon has shown that she uses a variety of them for different effects. There are mottoes for the purposes of "structural

allusion, abstraction, ironic refraction, and metaphoric evaluation," and, he goes on, mottoes with which "to describe characters, to present a character's unconscious thoughts, and to argue for realistic presentation, [though] these epigraphs are few in number." By "structural allusion" Higdon means that a motto is used to compare, say, a theme of some work with the one in her chapter, or to indicate the genesis of a character. In mottoes of "abstraction," he says, Eliot refers to an allegorical figure to make an abstraction concrete: "[she] fused the modes and would argue that realism does not limit the author's vision to a literal recording but instead frees this vision by enabling the author to ground abstract concerns firmly and concretely in the particulars of life." Mottoes of "ironic refraction" are those where she "employs discrepancies to create irony," as in Chapter 6 of *Felix Holt* where the motto forces a comparison between Rufus Lyon and Marlowe's Tamburlaine. Finally, a metaphorical epigraph is one where a sketch of something or someone is fleshed out in the chapter. Thus, Higdon says, Eliot

had a consistent aesthetic purpose in using epigraphs. Her realism was created from observation, but not only from observation of life around her. Literature influenced the creation of her scenes, her characters, and her actions. It provided patterns for the realism The frequent quotations used to create ironies, stress abstract content, evaluate metaphorically, and maintain an authorial stance suggest relationships between epigraph and chapter and between epigraph and novel.¹⁰

The Shakespearean mottoes in *Felix Holt* fall under the headings of structural allusion (Chapters 9, 13, 26, 27, 30, 36, 40), ironic refraction (Chapters 23, 24, 28), abstraction (Chapters 27, 33), and metaphor (Chapters 8, 26). However, some mottoes serve more than one function: structural allusion mottoes are often ironic and can also be metaphoric (cf. chapter 26). Nevertheless, Higdon's classification is

very useful, and, by analyzing each type in turn, it is possible to see how Eliot goes about her dramatic construction.

The structural allusion mottoes help to define the novel's main themes and indicate that Eliot wanted her characters to be seen as belonging to a historical process. The mottoes compare the present with the past, and thus *Felix Holt* is concerned with more than just the politics of the 1830s. However, that does not mean, as some critics suggest, that Eliot fudges the issues of the day by failing to provide specific planks for a political platform, other than to urge caution. I think that Arnold Kettle is mistaken when he argues that the treatment of Felix's Radicalism "is so theoretical and idealistic" that it "becomes *in the end* a serious flaw." He says that Felix is meant to be seen as a "'moral force' man" but adds that even here Felix is outside the mainstream of political activity. There were men like him in the Chart-ist movement, he says, but they advocated Parliamentary action. Felix does not, and,

By depriving him of faith in both parliamentary action and the creation of a popular, revolutionary "mass movement", George Eliot ensures that Felix by the end of the book is not only an ineffectual Radical, but a deficient hero.

Kettle sees Felix as Jerome Thale does in *The Novels of George Eliot*: a "mouthpiece for [Eliot's] own ideas." In time, Thale says, Eliot would have seen "Felix as somewhat ludicrous":

she would have seen that his integrity is the most dubious thing about him; and she would not always have given him the last word. She is too much content with Felix as a moral force to see his shortcomings in the immediate context.''

In answer to such criticism, I will demonstrate that the Shakespearean mottoes of structural allusion referring to Felix are accompanied by heavy irony, indicating that Eliot is perfectly aware of Felix's faults.

The novel's concern with wide-ranging issues of human conduct is seen in the double motto to Chapter 9:

"A woman, naturally born to fears."--*King John* [II.ii.15].

"Methinks
Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
Is coming towards me; and my inward soul
With nothing trembles."--*King Richard II* [II.ii.9-12]. (100)

The line from *King John* is spoken by Constance upon hearing of the intended marriage between Lewis and Blanche, which, if it goes through, means that her son, Arthur, will be outmanoeuvred in his bid for the English throne; here it refers to Mrs. Transome, who asks Jermyn not to quarrel with Harold. Jermyn coldly replies that he will gladly avoid any unpleasantness, provided that Harold does not try to outmanoeuvre him. The one line thus immediately introduces the idea of the political and moral expediency which characterizes much of the action and it foreshadows the novel's denouement. Mrs. Transome is identified with the ambitious Constance concerned about her son's welfare, Harold with the thwarted Arthur, and Jermyn with the cold, calculating politicians in Shakespeare's play.

In Chapter 44, the narrator describes Esther with another line taken from *King John*: she is "'a fair divided excellence, whose fulness of perfection' must be in marriage" (360). The line is spoken by Hubert at Angiers when Philip of France and John of England are about to launch a joint attack on the town. To save face all round, Hubert comes up with the political compromise for Lewis to marry Blanche, an idea made palatable by saying that Lewis:

. . . is the half part of a blessed man,
Left to be finished by such as she;
And she a fair divided excellence,

Whose fulness of perfection lies in him.

(*King John* II.i.437-45)

Eliot's irony is that at this late stage in her development Esther rejects the shallow life at Transome Court--including Harold--and instead chooses Felix. Love conquers expediency and it is Felix who needs to be "finished by such as she"--a point I shall return to .

But lest we become too preoccupied with the likeness between Mrs. Transome and Constance as well as the parallel between Harold and the betrayed Arthur, Eliot adds a second quotation from *Richard II*. The second motto to chapter 9 comprises lines spoken by Isabel as she anxiously thinks about Richard's disastrous Irish Campaign, and they are appropriate to Mrs. Transome's worries about Harold's ill-fated Radical candidacy. So by association, Harold is also identified as the proud, autocratic Richard who throws all caution to the wind, and Mrs. Transome's portrayal is somewhat softened by her likeness to one of the few attractive characters in *Richard II*. The "fears" and "unborn sorrow" alluded to in the mottoes also refer to Mrs. Transome's private shame and her disillusionment with a son whose arrogance and indifference to others is reminiscent of her own past; and thus the mottoes introduce and link the private and public issues with which the novel is concerned.

The parallel between Harold and Richard II was already hinted at in Chapter 8 where the narrator says that "he had an angry contempt for men with coronets on their coaches, but too small a share of brains to see when they had better make a virtue of necessity" (98). There is a good deal of irony here. Harold likes to think of himself as a John of Gaunt who waxes lyrical about England (cf. II.i.31ff) and suggests to

Bolingbroke that he look upon his banishment by Richard as a virtuous necessity (I.ii.278). However, although Harold, like Bolingbroke, spent time abroad, he did so from choice; it was not necessary for him to leave England simply because his brother Durfey was still alive and stood to inherit the estate. And, judging from the narrator's emphasis on his financial success and contemptuous attitude towards his foreign wife, he made a virtue of expediency rather than necessity. Moreover, as far as Harold is concerned, making a virtue of necessity is for others--notably his mother--to contemplate.

The first motto to Chapter 36 reads:

Are these things then necessities?
Then let us meet them like necessities.

SHAKESPEARE: [III] *Henry IV* [III.i.92-93].

The lines are spoken by Henry IV as he recalls that Richard's incompetence "so bow'd the state / That I and greatness were compell'd to kiss" (III.i.73-4). Also, the lines quoted refer to the neglected Mrs. Transome who is suddenly asked by Harold to control the damage done to the family's claim on the estate once Esther's right to Transome Court is revealed by Christian. "'O,' said Mrs. Transome, with low-toned bitterness, 'I must put up with all things as they are determined for me'" (294). There is double irony here. On the one hand, Mrs. Transome, like Henry IV, complains about having to deal with a situation that she has helped to create. Henry is more honest than she when he says, "God knows . . . / By what by-paths and indirect crook'd ways / I met this crown" (IV.v.183-85). Similarly, Mrs. Transome also has a lot to answer for. But on the other hand, although Christian and Johnson work independently of Jermyn to bring Esther's inheritance to light, it is Jermyn who holds the necessary documents and evidence to further her

case; and since Harold has gone out of his way to ruin Jermyn, Harold, like Richard, contributes to his own downfall. Eventually, he too learns the true meaning of making a virtue of necessity when, rather like Bolingbroke at the hands of Richard, he leaves England in disgrace having lost old Mr. Transome and gained Jermyn as a father, and having been effectively stripped of his estate and social position.

The second motto to chapter 36 reads:

See now the virtue living in a word!
 Hobson will think of swearing it was noon
 When he saw Dobson at the May-day fair,
 To prove poor Dobson did not rob the mail.
 'Tis neighbourly to save a neighbour's neck:
 What harm in lying when you mean no harm?
 But say 'tis perjury, then Hobson quakes--
 He'll none of perjury.

Thus words embalm
 The conscience of mankind; and Roman laws
 Bring still a conscience to poor Hobson's aid.

The order of the two mottoes suggests that this one applies to Harold, and so Eliot reinforces the idea that expediency causes him to make a virtue of necessity. Like Hobson in the unasccribed motto (probably Eliot's), Harold will do the right thing to avoid getting himself caught up in the "Roman laws" which may well rule in favour of Esther's claim. In Shakespeare's plays, the tragic theme of necessity is explored in the reigns of two kings; in *Felix Holt* it is traced in two generations of Transomes, in the Bycliffes and the Transomes, and even in the Trounsems and the Transomes. The novel's complex legal plot, or rather its complex presentation, lends itself to the intricate ways in which the tragic themes are exposed and the disparate plots united.

References to *The Tempest's* Caliban are also used by Eliot to make ironic comments on individuals and to unify an important theme in separate plots. We are told that Harold contemptuously dismissed his

brother Durfey as "this Caliban in miniature" (97), and in Chapter 27 Felix is heard to refer to the same Shakespearean character when thinking of the workmen who Rufus believes need to be freed "from the stifled life of political nullity, and . . . [brought] into what Milton calls 'the liberal air,' wherein alone can be wrought the final triumphs of the Spirit."

"With all my heart" [said Felix]. "But while Caliban is Caliban, though you multiply him by a million, he'll worship every Trinculo that carries a bottle. I forget, though--you don't read Shakespeare, Mr Lyon."

"I am bound to confess that I have so far looked into a volume of Esther's as to conceive your meaning; but the fantasies therein were so little to be reconciled with a steady contemplation of that divine economy which is hidden from sense and revealed to faith, that I forbore the reading, as likely to perturb my ministrations." (226-227)

Rufus's dismissal of Shakespeare's "fantasies" is indicative of his inability to see beyond religious dogma and idealism, and anticipates an important theme in *Daniel Deronda*. In my discussion of that novel, I will draw attention to Eliot's detailed exploration of what various characters learn from Shakespeare and how that affects their conduct. Shakespeare's vision of life, his largeness of mind, Eliot implies, is too important to be ignored; hence it is significant that the volume which Rufus has only dipped into belongs to Esther. She has read Shakespeare and has learned from him.

Felix's reading of Shakespeare is also selective. His remark about Caliban betrays a dismissive, if not contemptuous, attitude towards his fellowmen that goes hand in hand with his concern for their welfare. At this stage, his Radicalism is much closer to Harold's than he would like to think. As Barbara Hardy says in discussing this novel, Radicalism "is

a term used with caution, irony, an invisible question mark and re-definition."¹²

Eliot's approval and disapproval of Felix are best seen in the *Coriolanus* mottoes which apply to him. The motto which prefaces Chapter 27 shows her disapproval of his intolerance--something overlooked by those critics who see Felix as Eliot's spokesman:

Custom calls me to't:--
What custom wills, in all things should we do't?
The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
And mountainous error be too highly heaped
For truth to over-peer.--*Coriolanus* [II.iii.116-20]

In the scene from which these lines are taken, *Coriolanus* sardonically muses on the value of a custom which requires him to stand in a "wolvish toge" pleading for the "needless vouches" of despised citizens even though the Senate has already elected him Consul. He believes that this tradition of seeking approval from the rabble is not only a waste of time but an affront to his sense of honour. So it is; but if he wants to be Consul, he must learn to humour the people, and as the play makes clear, it is his absolute refusal to bend his will to the demands of others that brings about his tragedy. In the novel, Felix tells Esther, "I would never choose to withdraw myself from the labour and common burthen of the world; but I do choose to withdraw myself from the push and the scramble for money and position" (221). As with *Coriolanus*, the hero's intention is at once noble and inappropriate to what he wants to achieve; it amounts to an egotistic suppression of egoism. He also tells Esther: "'It is just because I'm a very ambitious fellow, with very hungry passions, wanting a great deal to satisfy me, that I have chosen to give up what people call worldly good'" (222).

There is an absurd contradiction in Felix's Radicalism. He deliberately avoids direct participation in the political process by not being in a position to vote--choosing to stay poor means that he denies himself the vote--and yet he dearly wants to take an active role in the distribution of power. Not voting may not disqualify him from having a casual interest in politics, but it does preclude him from becoming a political leader. The irony of Felix's ambivalence is cleverly hinted at through his earnest quest to encourage workers like the Sproxton colliers to remain apolitical; and, after the riot, he too realizes that it is both silly and impossible to maintain a position of detached involvement.

Nevertheless, the message of his Radicalism is difficult to fault. The chapter in which we hear his address to the crowd in Treby Magna is prefaced with another motto taken from *Coriolanus*, and this one tells us what Eliot admires in Felix:

His nature is too noble for the world:
 He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
 Or Jove for his power to thunder. His heart's his mouth:
 What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;
 And, being angry, doth forget that ever
 He heard the name of death.--*Coriolanus* [III.i.253-258]

In Shakespeare's play, these lines are spoken by Menenius about Coriolanus, who has just infuriated the Tribunes with his autocratic analysis of where the seat of power lies and why there should be no question of sharing it with the undeserving multitude. Throughout the scene, Coriolanus is urged by Menenius and others to moderate his tongue and to seek a diplomatic solution; but he will not or cannot control himself, and his antagonism towards the people results in an open revolt leading directly to his banishment. However, as Shakespeare makes clear,

Coriolanus's low opinion of the people is not without foundation: the mood of the fickle crowd is easily swayed and they are quickly incited to riot by the jealous Tribunes who oppose Coriolanus's rule. These things demonstrate a need for firm leadership. Hence, Menenius's comment is more than a lament: it also describes the sort of person who can do something about Rome's political instability.

In comparison, Felix's address on nomination day is quiet and reasoned, and designed to avoid the trouble which he sees brewing. He warns that "There's a power to do mischief" (249), anticipating the motto to Chapter 33, "Mischief, thou art afoot," which is taken from *Julius Caesar* (III.ii.262) (263). The riot makes the abstract figure of Mischief a concrete reality, as does the riot in *Julius Caesar*, and so what Felix has to say makes a lot of sense. The gist of his address is that it is pointless to consider the details of the political mechanism until the political objectives are known. The first thing to do is to create the right atmosphere for Reform:

"I'll tell you what's the greatest power under heaven," said Felix, "and that is public opinion--the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong, what is honourable and what is shameful. That's the steam that is to work the engines. How can political freedom make us better, any more than a religion we don't believe in, if people laugh and wink when they see men abuse and defile it?" (250)

The point is sound enough and Eliot evidently thought so too, for she more or less repeated it in her essay, "Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt."¹³ Thus, given the reality of the political dirty tricks in the Treby Magna campaign and of Felix's own shortcomings, it is not difficult to see that the portrayal of Felix, like that of Harold, is full of irony. He is far "too noble for the world"--to the point of recklessness, which his foolhardy role in the riot demonstrates.

However, just as Harold's proud, Richard II-like nature is modified by his identification with Arthur, who is a hapless victim of treachery, so Felix's Coriolanus-like excesses are tempered by his being compared to Henry IV, a king who had earlier contributed to the instability and chaos of Richard II's reign and, after seeing what he had helped to unleash, tried (unsuccessfully) to unite England's warring factions. Felix's impatient and abrupt manner is understandable: he is frustrated by people's wrongdoing and petty concerns. Because he is "too noble for the world," he refuses to peddle his father's spurious medicine and is furious that the chance of real Reform is wasted in political intrigue. But like Harold, he must reconcile ambition with reality. Both do so through contact with Esther. They learn as much from her as she from them.

Felix tutors Esther in much the same way as the king, in *2 Henry IV*, upbraids the errant and indolent Hal to face up to his princely responsibilities. And like Henry, Felix succeeds in making an impression. Chapter 26, in which Rufus tells Esther about her mother, has the following motto:

Consideration like an angel came
And whipped the offending Adam out her;
Leaving her body as a paradise
To envelop and contain celestial spirits.

Shakespeare: *Henry V* [I.i.28-31] (215)

Eliot has substituted "her" for Shakespeare's "him" and "his," and it is clear that we are meant to see a parallel between Esther's moral growth and Hal's. The lines of the motto are spoken by the Archbishop of Canterbury as he comments on Hal's transformation from a playboy prince to a noble king who has succeeded, where his father failed, in restoring

harmony among the English warring factions. Canterbury goes on to say that this change in Henry is all the more remarkable since in the past

. . . his addiction was to courses vain;
His companies unletter'd, rude, and shallow;
His hours fill'd up with riots, banquets, sports;
And never noted in him any study,
Any retirement, any sequestration
From open haunts and popularity.

(I.1.54-59)

Esther's limited sphere of activities has denied her the possibility of matching Hal's prodigious sowing of wild oats, but the various references to Byron's poems, for instance, indicate that she has vicariously filled up her hours with riots, banquets, and sports. Where Hal long ignored the duties of a prince, Esther ignored those of a minister's daughter.

It can be argued that the Archbishop is not altogether convinced of Henry's conversion because he seems more surprised by the suddenness of it than anything else. This in turn raises the question of whether or not Henry is posturing as a religious convert for political reasons. It would suit the Church if the king has been made "a sudden scholar" (I.1.32), because it could then expect to be exonerated from the bill that threatens to "drink deep" (cf. I.1.1-20) into its coffers. Similarly, Henry's conversion may be a pretence designed to get the Church's support for the (already planned?) invasion of France. Is Canterbury expressing doubt or simply recalling what has happened; is Henry posturing or has he really converted?

John A. Walter, the Arden editor of *Henry V*, notes that the word "consideration," has a deeper, religious meaning than might be assumed: "It is evident that the word was associated with intense spiritual contemplation, and self-examination, and not with merely thought and

reflection." It is unclear whether or not Shakespeare was aware of some or all of the religious works in which the implications of the word are examined,

But the linking of significant words "consideration", "angel", "paradise", "celestial spirits", indicates that Shakespeare was undoubtedly thinking of repentance and conversion in the religious sense.

Walter also argues that Shakespeare significantly alters the order of events found in Hall and Holinshed, thereby encouraging us to see that Henry and the Archbishop are *not* playing political games.¹⁴

But how did Eliot read the passage? I think that she considered Henry's conversion to be genuine. The motto encourages us to compare Henry's conversion, the result of listening to and learning from his father, with Esther's, the result of listening to and learning from Felix. It is perhaps odd that the "offending" Felix should "whip the offending Adam out" of Esther, but she is impressed by him, does change her ways, and eventually succeeds in what Felix wanted to do but failed to achieve: uniting people (Felix with herself, Mrs. Transome with Harold). The same is true in Shakespeare's plays: the "offending" Henry IV began the process of "consideration" that gradually "whipped the offending Adam out" of Hal; Henry V did change his ways and brought about what his father wanted but never saw: a united England.

More than anything else, Esther is filled with "consideration" for Rufus when he is forced, by the news of Esther's inheritance, to disclose that he is not her real father:

Mr Lyon regarded his narrative as a confession--as a revelation to this beloved child of his miserable weakness and error. But to her it seemed a revelation of another sort: her mind seemed suddenly enlarged by a vision of passion and struggle, of delight and renunciation, in the lot of beings who had hitherto been a dull enigma to her. . . . Perhaps this knowledge would have been less powerful within her, but for the mental preparation that had come

during the last two months from her acquaintance with Felix Holt, which had taught her to doubt the infallibility of her own standard, and raised a presentiment of moral depths that were hidden from her. (216)

To emphasize that her "celestial spirits" differ from those which "envelop" her step-father, the narrator adds the following comment when Rufus says that our best feelings are those devoted to the Divine Will: "Esther did not speak; her father's words did not fit on to the impressions wrought in her by what he had told her" (217). Humanism, not Christianity, is what she responds to. Her "consideration" may be glossed as "sympathy." As David Carroll says, the religion Eliot promotes is simply right moral conduct.¹⁵

With another motto from *Richard II*, Eliot carefully qualifies her attitude towards Rufus. She has serious reservations about the exponent of Christian dogmatism but is wholly sympathetic to the man who struggles with his conscience. The chapter in which Rufus receives the notebook and chain found by Felix is prefaced with

"Give sorrow leave awhile, to tutor me
To this submission."--*Richard II* [IV.1.166-67]

It is interesting to note that the motto establishing a connection between Harold and Richard is identified as lines belonging to "*King Richard II*" (my emphasis), whereas here Eliot writes "*Richard II*." The omission may have been an oversight, but I think that that is unlikely. The lines referring to Rufus are spoken by Richard during the deposition scene; Isabel's come at a time when her husband is still king. In other words, Eliot distinguishes between Richard the king and Richard the man.¹⁶ She identifies Harold with the autocratic ruler who assumes that his power is given by divine right, and Rufus with the man stripped of his egoism. The similarity between Rufus and Harold is seen in the moral

myopia which each expresses differently. In Richard's deposition scene Shakespeare begins the king's moral rehabilitation by registering the enormity of events in the man. He makes Richard worthy of sympathy despite his previous conduct. The autocrat who once said

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an anointed king;
The breath of wordly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the lord

(III.ii.54-7)

is pitied as the man "Doubly divorc'd" (V.i.71) from his wife and throne. Similarly, in comparing Rufus with Richard, Eliot pities the man who must tell Esther that he is not her father, and so avoids having to endorse the Dissenting minister who construes everything in accordance with his particular faith. Hence the double-edged irony in Rufus's failure to read Shakespeare: in not reading Shakespeare Rufus has missed an opportunity to broaden his understanding of the secular world.

Felix's tutoring of Esther and the quiet influence she exerts over him--both along humanistic lines--is best seen in Chapter 27, which has one motto from *Coriolanus* and another from Shakespeare's 23rd Sonnet. In the chapter, Felix once again lectures Esther in his most abrupt manner. All the ills of the world are felt by him with an intensity which at once impresses and alienates her. He hates the idea of pursuing "'what people call worldly good,'" adding,

"The other thing that's got into my mind like a splinter . . . is the life of the miserable--the spawning life of vice and hunger. I'll never be one of the sleek dogs. The old Catholics are right, with their higher rule and their lower. Some are called to subject themselves to a harder discipline, and renounce things voluntarily which are lawful for others. It is the old word--'necessity is laid upon me.'" (222)

His motives are honourable, but he exaggerates when he says that "necessity" is laid upon him. Necessity does not force him to be poor

any more than it forces Harold to be rich. "To hear with eyes is part of love's rare wit," reads the first motto, and that is what Felix has yet to learn.

The Sonnet from which the motto is taken is worth quoting in full because it suggests how Felix should be understood while also hinting at Esther's softening influence:

As an unperfect actor on the stage
 Who with his fear is put besides his part,
 Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
 So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
 The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
 And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
 O'ercharg'd with burden of mine own love's might.
 O, let my looks be then the eloquence
 And dumb presages of my speaking breast;
 Who plead for love, and look for recompense,
 More than that tongue that more hath more express'd.
 O, learn to read what silent love hath writ!
 To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

Sonnet 23

On the one hand, Felix is both the frightened "unperfect actor," the "fierce thing replete with too much rage" who "decays" in his "own love's strength," and the lover who "forget[s] to say / The perfect ceremony of love's rite" to the woman he is lecturing. For as he outlines his philosophy to Esther, he awkwardly pleads his love. On the other hand, Esther, ennobled by his moral example and by the story of Rufus and Annette, eloquently pleads for love's "dumb presages"; the only "voice" open to women in a world dominated by men. Nevertheless, it is a subversive voice--a point I will come back to--which is clearly heard in the courtroom scene when Esther feels compelled to speak on Felix's behalf, and later when she comforts Mrs. Transome and brings mother and son together.

Eliot demonstrates that selfish or exclusive theories of happiness have no practical value. Once Felix and Esther see this for themselves they unite their "fair divided excellences" in marriage--a moral which also applies to the rest of the novel. The motto to Chapter 40 reads:

"She's beautiful; and therefore to be wooed;
She is a woman; therefore to be won."--[1] *Henry VI*
[V.iii.77-79]. (317)

The lines are spoken by Suffolk about Margaret and suggest a parallel with Esther being wooed at Transome Court. In Shakespeare's scene, Suffolk is Margaret's captor and contemplates keeping her for himself instead of handing her over to Henry. Thus the motto indicates that Esther is wooed by Harold in the same way as Suffolk woos Margaret. But Andrew Cairncross makes the following remarks regarding Shakespeare's scene:

It is no accident that, as one captured French 'enchantress' [Joan La Pucelle] is led off prisoner, another, her direct successor, is led on, 'prisoner'.

The scene is a deliberate and immediate threat to Henry's contract with the Earl of Armagnac's daughter (V.i), and will both illustrate the weakness of Henry and create new intestine divisions among the nobles.¹⁷

Similarly, Esther replaces Mrs. Transome as the mistress at Transome Court, and through his selfish conduct Harold is bent on repeating the sort of mistake made by his mother and Jermyn. Only Esther's right moral conduct breaks the cycle of corruption, not to mention the male presumption which both lies behind the lines of the motto and characterizes Harold's attitude towards women. The suggestion is that if she had stayed, she and Harold would have sowed the seeds for "new intestine divisions" among themselves and others.

The remaining Shakespearean mottoes and allusions enrich the novel's themes and emphasize its dramatic unity. Eliot's favourite Shakespearean

motif is found in the Introduction when the narrator makes an ironic reference to *As You Like It*. After an account of the growing discontent among the ordinary people of the midland districts, we read:

Yet there were the grey steeples too, and the churchyards, with their grassy mounds and venerable headstones, sleeping in the sunlight; there were broad fields and homesteads, and fine old woods covering a rising ground, or stretching far by the roadside, allowing only peeps at the park and mansion which they shut in from the working-day world. (8)

The reference to the "working-day world" suggests that the mansions are Forest of Arden-like retreats where good people sport in the "golden world" of innocence. The irony is apparent when it is remembered that although Transome Court is secluded, it really resembles Duke Frederick's oppressive Court. The allusion is cleverly used to give a general impression of the growing fragmentation which characterizes the period, while at the same time anticipating specific dramatic events. The usurping Harold, like Frederick, will be humbled and shamed into leaving his Court; and Esther, who like Rosalind is the rightful heir, will seek her Orlando elsewhere.

The metaphorical motto, "'Rumour doth double like voice and echo.' SHAKESPEARE" [sic] (93), offers another clue to the novel's unifying dramatic structure. It is fleshed out in Chapter 8 where we learn that the people of Treby Magna estimate Harold's fortune at around £500,000, when in fact it is no more than £150,000--and then it is mostly tied up in mortgages and the running expenses of the estate (93-94). The motto is taken from a passage in *2 Henry IV* (cf. III.i.97) where Warwick tells Henry that the rumour of fifty thousand rebels marching against them is probably untrue. He is right: the rebellion is only half as strong. For their part, the rebels must decide whether to proceed against Henry or

wait until their numbers increase. Bardolph urges caution by saying that they should not let "Conjecture, expectation, and surmise" lead them in "a theme so bloody-fac'd as this" (I.iii.18-24). After all, he says,

When we mean to build,
We first survey the plot, then draw the model,
And when we see the figure of the house,
Then must we rate the cost of the erection,
Which if we find outweighs ability,
What do we then but draw anew the model
In fewer offices, or at least desist
To build at all? Much more, in this great work--
Which is almost to pluck a kingdom down
And set another up--should we survey
The plot of situation and the model,
Consent upon a sure foundation,
Question surveyors, know our own estate,
How able such a work to undergo,
To weigh against his opposite; or else
We fortify in paper and in figures,
Using the names of men instead of men,
Like one that draws the model of an house
Beyond his power to build it, who, half-through,
Gives o'er, and leaves his part-created cost
A naked subject to the weeping clouds,
And waste for churlish winter's tyranny.

(I.iii.41-63)

But Bardolph is overruled and the rebellion ends in predictable failure. I have quoted the passage in full because it closely resembles both in kind and in its use of an analogy--the advice which Felix gives to the crowd who, like Shakespeare's anarchic rebels, are too easily persuaded "to pluck a kingdom down." The motto helps us to see that Eliot is structuring her novel like a play. There is a connection between the minor and major characters insofar as the amusing rumours about Harold's fortune are an ironic comment on the serious political rumourmongering that results in "Mischief." Both allusion and structure are Shakespearean: minor characters like Mr. Scales and Mr. Sircome function in the subplot of Treby Magna's everyday life to create comic relief, irony, and to ensure thematic continuity.

The three Shakespearean mottoes of ironic refraction come from comic subplots and refer to similar scenes in *Felix Holt*. The motto to Chapter 23 reads: "'I will not excuse you; you shall not be excused; excuses shall not be admitted; there's no excuse shall serve; you shall not be excused.'"--[2] *Henry IV*," recalling Justice Shallow's extreme hospitality towards Falstaff (cf. V.1.4-6). In the novel, the lines refer to Rufus's letter to Philip Debarry in which he asks for a theological debate between himself and the Rector. Philip believes that he is in duty bound to further the minister's request and, since the Rector at first refuses to comply, the motto is a playful allusion to Rufus's insistent manner and Philip's predicament.

But there is more to it than that. In Shakespeare's scene, Shallow's tolerance towards his argumentative servant leads Falstaff to observe that "they flock together in consent, like so many wild geese" (V.1.67-8). The observation is highly ironic, since the same criticism applies to Falstaff's own familiarity with Hal. Shakespeare links an amusing incident in the subplot to the main plot in order to illustrate a moral lesson: too much familiarity can breed contempt. In *Felix Holt*, the theological debate is a subplot used to a similar end: it parallels the main plot of the political debate and underlines the need for caution.

Like Shallow, Rufus means well enough and has much to recommend him, but his single minded pursuit of the debate indicates just how blind he is to wider issues. As the Rector tells Philip, if he were to debate with Rufus, "it would be said that I was beaten hollow, and that now the question had been cleared up at Treby Magna, the Church had not a sound leg to stand on" (200). In other words, instead of bringing people

closer together, the debate would probably lead them further apart. The Rector is not always so astute, but he wisely observes:

There's no end to the mischief [my emphasis] done by these busy prating men. They make the ignorant multitude the judges of the largest questions, both political and religious, till we shall soon have no institution left that is not on a level with the comprehension of a huckster or a drayman. There can be nothing more retrograde--losing all the results of civilization, all the lessons of Providence--letting the windlass run down after men have been turning at it painfully for generations. If the instructed are not to judge for the uninstructed, why, let us set Dick Stubbs to make our almanacs, and have a President of the Royal Society elected by universal suffrage. (199)

In the event, the unfortunate curate, Mr. Sherlock, is chosen to deal with Rufus, and Eliot continues her playful treatment of the subplot by prefacing Chapter 24 with the motto, "If he come not, the play is marred--*Midsummer Night's Dream*" (203). The line is spoken by Flute (cf. IV.1.1.5) about Bottom who, having been "transported" as Starveling puts it, is late for the play. When Bottom is released from Oberon's spell, he wants to report his experience in a ballad "called 'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no bottom" (IV.1.214-5). The problem is that his visions fade away almost immediately. Similarly, Mr. Sherlock struggles with his religious "visions" until fear of a bottomless debate transports him out of town. The outcome of the debate is both funny and in keeping with the criticism of Rufus's "steady contemplation of that divine economy", for as Bottom says:

Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was--there is no man can tell what. Methought I was--and methought I had--but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was.

(IV.1. 205-212)

The last of the three mottoes of ironic refraction prefaces Chapter 28. Although it does not substantially contribute to an understanding of

the text, it does suggest the extent to which Eliot strove for a dramatic presentation of events:

Titus. But what says Jupiter, I ask thee?

Clown Alas, sir, I know not Jupiter:

I never drank with him in all my life.

Titus Andronicus [IV iii.82-4].

In Shakespeare's play, the Clown is introduced at a point when Titus is either feigning madness or is indeed mad. Titus tells his followers to fire their arrows at the gods, then mistakes the Clown for Jupiter's messenger and uses him to send a knife wrapped in an oration to the Emperor. Having fulfilled his function, the Clown is promptly killed off. In the novel, the motto adds to the sense of humour in the meeting between Christian and Tommy Trounsem: Christian has a tendency to visit the mortals of Treby Magna with a god-like air of condescension, and so Tommy can claim to have drunk with Jupiter. The "Quarry" for *Felix Holt* shows that Eliot had been reading *Titus Andronicus*,¹⁴ and she probably decided on the motto because she saw Tommy, like the Clown, as a humorous dramatic vehicle for plot development. Once he is no longer required to fulfil his role in the legal entailment, he is "killed off."

Thus the Shakespearean mottoes and allusions contribute to an understanding of the novel's dramatic structure, while also reminding the reader that any instance of life is part of a historical continuum. Social, political, and moral questions cannot be separated; for Eliot, they are part of life's fabric, and she referred to Shakespeare's work because she saw that he thought so too. The plays she selected, *Richard II*, *1 and 2 Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Titus Andronicus*, examine the validity of established political authorities

and the causes of rebellions or uprisings in terms of individuals who are variously motivated. Peter Ure argues that *Richard II* is, more than anything else, concerned with the way in which the fallen king deals with his loss of power. The political details, he says, are quickly dealt with insofar as Bolingbroke returns to England effectively in control. Instead, Shakespeare "placed the emphasis on Richard's nature and behaviour, and gave his play the order and unity of biography."¹⁹ Something similar can be said of *Coriolanus*. In Plutarch's "The Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus," Shakespeare's source, it is the Senate which pleads with Coriolanus to appease the plebeians. But in the play this is portrayed in domestic scenes which involve his mother and wife.²⁰

Public issues are similarly subordinated or personalized in *Felix Holt*. The interest in Harold is not in the least bit diminished when he loses to Philip Debarry; in fact the election result hardly seems to matter. Similarly, Felix's Radicalism is shown to be as much a product of his personality as the political climate of the 1830s. The real interest lies in the personal relationships that influence events. Harold's political and social ambitions are directly affected by his illegitimacy, thus bringing Mrs. Transome and Esther into the picture. Similarly, Felix's political and moral aspirations are influenced by the way he has been brought up by his mother and what he subsequently learns from Esther. In other words, although Eliot depicts women as occupying subordinate roles in society and men enjoying the prominent positions, she explores how women can and do challenge the *status quo*. There is a "woman's text"²¹ in *Felix Holt* that quietly subverts the Reform debate--which excludes women--and that text is an essential part of the dramatic presentation.

Mrs. Transome is punished for her sins, but she is also treated sympathetically. As I have shown, she is identified with Shakespeare's ambitious Constance and his much more attractive Isabel. Both are long-suffering women whose fates are in large measure determined for them by unscrupulous or indifferent men. Using another Shakespearean analogy, Jane Miller points out that, despite Mrs. Transome's "hollow superiorities and the narrowness of her emotional resources," she is a tragic figure:

The tragedy of *this* mother is grander in its scope than her own contained and explosive feelings. It is the tragedy of people who are blind, as King Lear is blind, to the basis and the motives of the allegiance and love shown to them: people who misunderstand the limitations and the arbitrariness of their power. The poignancy of Mrs. Transome's position is that she does not enjoy the ardent, if disabling, reciprocity of feeling between mother and son. . . . Her arrogance makes it impossible for her to ask for his love.

Miller goes on to say:

Her sufferings issue from anger and pride, from the 'imperiousness' which characterises all her social relations and which was even intrinsic to her adulterous transgression. Her nemesis is not only the consequence of her transgression and her incestuous love [for Harold]; it lurked for her always in the quality of her contempt, transmitted to her son and returning to her as retribution.²²

To a large extent, Mrs. Transome is blind and imperious because she has not been allowed the sort of independence that Harold and Felix take for granted and that Jermyn, her adulterous partner, has always enjoyed. Harold treats her with the sort of amused tolerance or impatience which Felix sometimes betrays towards his own mother. Yet Necessity, which Jermyn and Harold do not face until much later, has always so bowed her state that she and greatness were compelled to miss. Consequently, there is in her sex what Gilbert and Gubar call the Revenging Angel.²³ However, retribution is eventually applied to Harold and Jermyn; hence the subversion of patriarchy.

That is one aspect of the "woman's text"; the other centres on Esther. Referring to her courtroom appearance and the passage beginning, "When a woman feels purely and nobly" (375ff), Jennifer Uglow says that here Eliot is concerned to show

the notion of women as a relative sex whose lot is made by the love they choose, in marked contrast to the stress on independence in *Romola* and *The Spanish Gypsy*. The passage above is "radical" in the sense of claiming a vital role for an innate femininity, but it is alarmingly conservative (and regressive in the body of Eliot's work) in associating this influence solely with marriage and domesticity. In *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* she moves away from such direct statements towards a more provisional, more finely qualified stance. . . .²⁴

But Dorothea opts for the same things when she marries Ladislaw, *Romola* eventually settles down to looking after Tessa and the children, and Gwendolen wants nothing more than a quiet life with Deronda after her ordeal with Grandcourt. Moreover, as Carroll says, "Esther's choice is not merely a personal choice of Felix but also a social commitment to the working-class." Choosing him means that she becomes "the woman who can make 'a man's passion for her rush in one current with all the great aims of his life [as Felix puts it]'" (cf. 223).²⁵ It is worth adding that since there is reason to think that the marriage will succeed, she will have a hand in those "great aims."

Nevertheless, says Carroll, their marriage is an anticlimax. The emphasis on Esther's story unbalances the novel since she now occupies centre stage:

The titular hero waits passively in prison for the regeneration of Esther to be completed so that his divided life can be unified. Poised between the contrasting worlds of the novel, she is given the final task of evaluation, and it is an anticlimax to realize at the end that as a reward for her rejection of the world of Transome Court she is allowed to marry Felix, who has throughout been insulated from its corroding gentility.²⁶

I agree that from a dramatic point of view Felix is left "off stage" for far too long. But an ending without their marriage would have been a greater flaw. This time I find Uglow's analysis more persuasive:

The emotional radicalism of *Felix Holt* thus finds its central expression in the suppression of egotism through an intense relationship with another person. It makes the Victorian ideology of feminine submissiveness a basis for a genderless ideal of a harmonious society, in contrast to the theory-bound, individualistic "male" ethic at the base of many superficially different approaches to life--Harold's materialism, Felix's cultural exclusiveness, Jermy's law or Lyon's Calvinism.²⁷

It seems to me that their marriage is an important step towards that "genderless ideal." As I have indicated, Esther is identified as a female Henry V, capable of "hearing with eyes" and teaching Felix to do the same; hence, there is hope that they will achieve a harmonious union. There is an allusion to *King Lear* when the narrator says, "Esther had that excellent thing in woman, a soft voice with a clear fluent utterance" (62)--something which Lear only recognizes in Cordelia when it is too late: "Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman" (V.iii.271-72). But unlike Lear, Felix still has time to learn from Esther's qualities. The impression left to us is that they will

live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and . . . talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;
And take upon [them] the mystery of things,
As if [they] were God's spies. . . .

(V.iii.11-17)

And this is another subversion of patriarchy, for Eliot suggests that just as Felix's political Radicalism had to be redefined to accommodate Esther's softening influence, their marriage will be based on a radical, or equal footing between the partners.

Gilbert and Gubar refer to the various mottoes in Eliot's novels, which are usually taken from male writers, and say that it is "as if Eliot were obsessively stating her credentials" in order to be taken seriously as a woman writer. But they go on to say that she often debunks their male chauvinistic assumptions through clever mottoes of her own. Hence, many of the mottoes taken from men can be seen as at once complying with and rebelling against male authorities.²⁰ Gilbert and Gubar's arguments are very subtle and often persuasive. Nevertheless, I do not think that Eliot resorts to Shakespearean extracts in *Felix Holt* in order to debunk his male assumptions. Rather, they show her emulating his ideas and art. Not only does she share his sense of humour and irony but also his political vision. The "woman's text" is Eliot's alone, but even this is partly achieved by relying on his work. Instead of a foil, he is an example to her when she defines her characters, provides continuity through the use of internal thematic echoes, and links disparate plots of people's private and public lives into a complex, unified, dramatic presentation of human conduct. His understanding of life is used to complement her own--an understanding that Jermyn and Harold are significantly content to dismiss as "a subordinate subject" (281).

Chapter 7
Middlemarch: Eliot's Most Shakespearean Novel

In *George Eliot's Mythmaking*, Joseph Wiesenfarth suggests that *Middlemarch* is about the need for people to discover a new kind of heroism:

The Prelude proclaims it as such. It has too frequently been thought a somber novel with a somber vision because it announces at the beginning that the era of epos has passed and that heroism on a grand scale is no longer possible. One must learn the new kind--the kind that history opens to men and women who can grasp it. That is the heroism of a Caleb Garth, a Will Ladislaw, and a Dorothea Brooke. A heroism characterized by personal integrity, fellow-feeling, and a sense of one's place in history.'

I agree. A new kind of heroism requires an awareness of the social conditions which call it forth, and the growth of that awareness is what *Middlemarch* explores. To some extent, so do *Romola* and *Felix Holt*. I think that Wiesenfarth is right when he says that the difference between the early and later novels is that "from *Romola* onward [Eliot] is interested in the individual in his world, conceived of as a polity in the state of change."² However, *Middlemarch* differs from its two predecessors in that there is an even greater concentration on human psychology than before. Political and religious issues, like the ones found in *Felix Holt* and *Romola*, are virtually subsumed in the exploration of individual *Middlemarch* lives. As Edith Simcox wrote in one of the best critiques of the novel:

Middlemarch marks an epoch in the history of fiction in so far as its incidents are taken from the inner life, as the action is developed by the direct influence of mind on mind and character on character, as the material circumstances of the outer world are made subordinate and necessary to the artistic presentation of a definite passage of mental experience, but chiefly as giving a background of perfect realistic truth to a profoundly imaginative psychological study.³

It is certainly a realistic novel. Eliot's notebooks, like the *Quarry for Middlemarch*, show that she went to her usual trouble to get the historical details right.⁴ But not all the "material circumstances of the outer world" provide "a background of perfect realistic truth." For one thing, almost everyone in the novel is related in one way or another. Raffles is Joshua Rigg's step-father; Rigg is Peter Featherstone's illegitimate son; Featherstone is distantly related to the Garths and the Vincys; the ties between the Garths and the Vincys are strengthened when Fred and Mary marry; Rosamond Vincy marries Lydgate; Mr. Vincy is Mrs. Bulstrode's brother; Mr. Bulstrode is Ladislav's step-grandfather; Ladislav marries Dorothea when his second cousin, Casaubon, dies; and, Dorothea's sister Celia marries Sir James Chettam. Of the more important characters, only Mr. Farebrother and the Cadwalladers are unrelated to this extended family. Consequently, besides the contrast between major and minor people and incidents, the dramatic structure of *Middlemarch* also hinges on the comparisons between major plots and characters. Through the analyses of individual lives and the complex linking of relationships, Eliot examines the legal and moral responsibilities which people owe each other; she deliberately sets the stage with a "mysterious mixture" of men and women--not just would-be Theresas, like Dorothea--

who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion.⁵

Extracts from and references to Shakespeare's work are found throughout this portrayal of "Provincial Life," both in the text and the notebooks that shed light on the novel's composition.⁶ The various moral and

aesthetic patterns and concerns of the earlier works are combined to make it Eliot's most Shakespearean novel.⁷ Comparisons are made with his characters to emphasize the importance of ordinary Middlemarchers; *As You Like It* is invoked to draw comparisons between "golden" and "working-day" worlds; and the novel's dramatic structure and plots are often enhanced by allusions to, and mottoes from, Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. It is sometimes difficult to know when the Shakespearean entries in the notebooks were made, since Eliot frequently copied lines already recorded in other notebooks.⁸ Nevertheless, I shall attempt a sorting out because they are helpful when discussing the matters that preoccupied her.

Much of *Middlemarch's* Shakespearean content is familiar. For instance, there is the theme of necessity. It turns out that actual or potential tragedies arise when necessity catches up with irresponsible conduct. In *Felix Holt*, the motto to chapter 36, "Are these things then necessities? / Then let us meet them like necessities. / SHAKESPEARE: [III] *Henry IV* [III.i.92-93]," refers to Mrs. Transome who, like Henry IV, is suddenly forced to live with the awful consequences of events and circumstances that she has helped to create. This is also the case for some Middlemarchers: they too must pay for their disastrous behaviour. Dorothea makes a terrible mistake in marrying Casaubon, and this is eventually brought home to her. Stunned by the codicil to her husband's will, she thinks "only of bowing to a sad necessity which divided her from Will" (530). Dorothea is of course much abused by Casaubon, and, luckily for her, she eventually finds real happiness with Will. But others are less fortunate. When Bulstrode's culpability is exposed, all he can do is entreat Ladislav's "patience with one who is already bowing

by inward trial" (609). I shall have more to say on this important theme later on.

Middlemarch's rich vein of humour is also Shakespearean. As in *Silas Marner*, most of the minor characters are very funny, and it is evident from the motto to chapter 60 that Eliot had Shakespeare in mind while creating Mr. Borthrop Trumbull. The motto reads, "'Good phrases are surely, and ever were, very commendable.'--*Justice Shallow*" [cf. *2 Henry IV* III.ii.73], and recalls Shallow's respect for vogue-words, like Bardolph's "accommodated." Trumbull also has a deep reverence for the English language. Like Shallow, this "amateur of superior phrases" (303) not only brings comic relief but adds to the novel's depth and range. Together with other minor individuals, he makes up the world's "huge whispering gallery" (402), which, as I will show, is used to comment on the main stories.

Eliot's greatest indebtedness to Shakespeare, however, is seen in her handling of the themes of self-knowledge and vocation. Dorothea's story, for instance, is told with direct and indirect allusions to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Henry VIII*, *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, *Othello*, *Henry V* and *Measure for Measure*. Each reference comments on Dorothea's various relationships with people and, more important, on the stages of her subsequent growth in self-awareness. It is especially significant that she is identified with heroines from Shakespeare's comedies, tragicomedies, and romances. Northrop Frye has shown that the central characters in these plays are usually put into situations designed to encourage some form of self-discovery.⁹ Elsewhere, Frye also observes that the whole of *Measure for Measure*, for instance, looks forward to Isabella's appeal to the Duke to

forgive Angelo: 'The primary end and aim of everything the Duke is doing is to get that speech [V.1.441-52] out of her. . . ." Why? Because it

expresses the genuine kind of love, the charity which is the supreme virtue, that Isabella had dimly in mind when she wanted to be a nun. Isabella herself, perhaps, could not always live on the level of nobility that that speech represents, but there has been a moment in which her essential self spoke; and such moments may become foci around which all the rest of one's life may revolve.'¹⁰

Such climaxes are found in *Middlemarch*. The novel's most poignant moments involve people who are genuinely, albeit momentarily, moved to help others--such as in the scene where Dorothea waits in the dark for Casaubon and is rewarded with her husband's "kind quiet melancholy" (419); or at the meeting between Dorothea and Rosamond where they "[clasp] each other as if they had been in a shipwreck" (786). These are moments when people's "loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering in some long-recognizable deed" (4)--but moments nevertheless when the "essential self" is revealed, making it possible for people to discover a new kind of heroism with which to face life.

However, since Dorothea's story is also about her search for a vocation in life the Shakespearean allusions add to our appreciation of her quest--why and how she is hindered, fails, or succeeds--and they contribute to Eliot's critique of personal and social attitudes which emerge by way of the self-discovery theme--attitudes which need to be abandoned or radically modified.

This is also true of other characters. The need for self-awareness and the ability to find and pursue a meaningful or honest career are not peculiar to Dorothea. They apply to most of the major characters; and once again, Shakespeare's plays are used to make those points. Only the

Garths fail to fit the pattern, but, as I will show, they are exemplars and their story is told with a direct allusion to *As You Like It*. An analysis of the Shakespearean references in the text and notebooks of *Middlemarch*, which help Eliot with her theme of self-discovery and all that is entailed in her characters' search for a vocation, will be the focus of this chapter. In the process, I hope to demonstrate that there is a synthesis of the motifs and affinities explored in the previous works, making *Middlemarch* indeed her most Shakespearean novel.

Almost all the main characters in *Middlemarch* have misguided or selfish tendencies which they must acknowledge in themselves before they can become happy, tendencies which are either self-induced or acquired through social conditioning. In *Adam Bede*, Eliot invokes *As You Like It* to show that such tendencies can be unlearned once a balance is struck between the "golden" and "working-day" worlds of Hayslope. However, in *Middlemarch* only the Garth household resembles a Forest-of-Arden-like retreat, and so we are encouraged to see the Garth household as a moral centre, a point of reference against which the other stories are measured.

In *George Eliot: Middlemarch*, David Daiches says that the Garths are an important part of the novel's moral pattern. They

are the only major characters in *Middlemarch* (apart from the ineducable Rosamond) who are not educated by experience; they do not change. This is because they are already in possession of the moral education that matters by the time the novel opens. . . . [The Garth family establishes the criteria to which most other actions are referred.]

By their example, they demonstrate that most people's ideas of "golden worlds" should be adjusted, if not completely redefined, to meet life's

realities. We are told that Mrs. Garth "had that rare sense which discerns what is unalterable, and submits to it without murmuring" (238). This sense, which is shared by Mary and Mr. Garth, ensures their happiness in a world of frequent, and often unavoidable, hardships. Of Mrs. Garth, the narrator says: "In her present matronly age at least, [she] never committed herself by over-hasty speech; having, as she said, borne the yoke in her youth, and learned self-control" (238). This is an important lesson which other characters have to learn for themselves.

Some types of adversity are, of course, avoidable--like the kind Fred brings upon the Garths when he is unable to clear his debt and they have to pay it for him. But even in these circumstances, the Garths rely on their "rare sense" to see them through. The motto to chapter 24, in which Fred confesses his irresponsible conduct, reads,

"The offender's sorrow brings but small relief
To him who wears the strong offence's cross."

--SHAKESPEARE: *Sonnets* [34],

and suggests, as Mary does more directly, that Fred's apology is of very little comfort. The first twelve lines of Sonnet 34 rebuke the fair youth for having caused the poet pain, even though the youth has tried to apologize for his errant behaviour. However, since the Garths recognize, as does the poet of the Sonnets, that "All men make faults" (Sonnet 35), and since they do not overlook Fred's good qualities and sincere apology, they forgive him. And this is another important lesson which other Middlemarchers have to learn.

Thus, since the Garths occupy the novel's moral centre, Mr. Garth's warning to Mary about Fred applies to each of the "Three Love Problems": "Young folks may get fond of each other before they know what life is, and they think it all holiday if they can only get together; but it soon

turns into working-day, my dear" (252-53). His comment refers specifically to Fred's lack of vocation. At this time, Fred still leads an indolent existence, occasionally worrying about his

unsuccessful efforts to imagine what he was to do, with his father on one side expecting him straightway to enter the Church, with Mary on the other threatening to forsake him if he did enter it, and with the working-day world showing no eager need whatever of a young gentleman without capital and generally unskilled. (543)

But Mr. Garth's comment can also be taken to refer to Fred's lack of self-awareness: it is precisely because Fred acts the part of a young gentleman of fortune that he comes to believe that the world owes him a living. The other two love problems, involving Lydgate and Rosamond, Dorothea and Casaubon, also suggest that Eliot considers the need for self-discovery and vocation to be inseparable parts of, and essential to, happiness. Although Lydgate has a medical practice, he has great difficulties in coming to terms with the real world. His "spots of commonness," the result of "personal pride and unreflecting egoism" (147, 340), and Rosamond's unyielding determination to live with luxuries they cannot afford, lead them further and further away from the "golden world" of happiness. When they eventually stare the "working-day world" in the face, Rosamond says, "'What can I do, Tertius?,'" and suggests that they borrow more money (580). Only then does Lydgate begin

to imagine how two creatures who loved each other, and had a stock of thoughts in common, might laugh over their shabby furniture, and their calculations how far they could afford butter and eggs. But the glimpse of that poetry seemed as far off from him as the carelessness of the golden age; in poor Rosamond's mind there was not room enough for luxuries to look small in. (689)

Likewise Dorothea and Casaubon. Their vocations, his research and her plans for the working classes, are flawed because self-delusion has made them largely ignorant of their subjects. Where Casaubon is ill equipped

and unwilling to consult the German scholarship which would have told him that his work is redundant, Dorothea thinks that she has all the answers when she draws up the plans for her model cottages.

The effects of the self-delusion from which the Casaubons suffer are usefully explored by considering an incident during their honeymoon. Unlike the Garths, Dorothea and Casaubon find it difficult to forgive offences. When Dorothea apologises for speaking hastily, Casaubon says:

"My dear Dorothea--'who with repentance is not satisfied, is not of heaven nor earth:'--you do not think me worthy to be banished by that severe sentence," said Mr Casaubon, exerting himself to make a strong statement, and also to smile faintly. (204)

Besides the lameness of his joke, his choice of quotation is very significant. It comes from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (V.iv.79-80) and is part of Valentine's acceptance of an apology that the unscrupulous Proteus offers for his treachery and deceit. Like many critics of the play, Eliot was troubled by this scene. As early as 1855 she commented: "That play disgusted me more than ever in the final scene where Valentine on Proteus's mere begging pardon when he has no longer any hope of gaining his ends, says: 'All that was mine in Silvia I give thee'!--Silvia standing by."¹² In other words, Eliot saw Valentine's easy forgiveness of Proteus as betraying a demeaning attitude towards women. And Casaubon's allusion is, therefore, bitterly ironic: it suggests that, far from forgiving Dorothea, he is contemptuous of her.

Casaubon's attitude towards Dorothea stems from his low opinion of women generally. Dorothea is not living up to what he has been taught to expect from a wife: deference and absolute obedience. Only a few months into the marriage, he is impatient to find that things are not as they are supposed to be. In this way, by dwelling on their disappointments,

Eliot points her finger at the social masquerade that society condones and encourages.

Before marrying, Dorothea should have considered the possibility of having children, but this is something that she completely ignores. In an ironic reference to *Othello*, however, Eliot makes children an issue by delicately hinting at the question of sex. Sir James Chettam remains disturbed by their marriage, "since with the perversity of a Desdemona she had not affected a proposed match that was clearly suitable and according to nature. . . ." (66). Sir James is not really concerned with what sort of marriage Dorothea will have: he is simply smarting at having been turned down by her. He would never tell Mr. Brooke that "an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe" (I.i.88-89), as Iago tells Brabantio. Yet, as I will show, fathering children seems to be Casaubon's only reason for marrying. But the strong sexual attraction that Desdemona feels for Othello--Desdemona talks about subduing her heart, "Even to the utmost pleasure of my lord," and looks forward to "The rites for which I love him" (I.iii.248-59)--is altogether missing in Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon. She is only interested in becoming his scribe. Lydgate and Rosamond are sexually attracted to each other, but the narrator's observation about them applies equally to Dorothea and Casaubon:

Between him and her indeed there was that total missing of each other's mental track, which is too evidently possible even between persons who are continually thinking of each other. (572)

The Folger notebook has two excerpts from *Henry VIII* which suggest other causes of marital tensions rooted in lack of sympathy and self-awareness. The first reads:

A loss of her
That, like a jewel, has hung twenty years

About his neck, yet never lost her lustre;
 Of her that loves him with that excellence
 That angels love good men with; even of her
 That when the greatest stroke of fortune falls
 Will bless the King.

[II.ii.30-36]

This is Norfolk's evaluation of Katherine, whose name is dragged through the mud by Wolsey as part of a plan to have Henry divorce her. Just before he comments on the queen's constancy, Norfolk says that Wolsey "dives into the king's soul, and there scatters / Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience, / Fears and despairs. . ." (II.ii. 26-28). The second excerpt reads, "'Come pat betwixt too early & too late.' Henry VIII [II.iii.84],"¹³ and belongs to the Old Lady who waits on Anne Bullen. Anne is not yet married to Henry when she is made Marchioness of Pembroke and given a "thousand pound a year, annual support" (II.iii.63-65). This munificence bestowed on one so young prompts the Old Lady to say:

I have been begging sixteen years in court
 (Am yet a courtier beggarly) nor could
 Come pat betwixt too early and too late
 For any suit of pounds: and you (O fate!)
 A very fresh fish here (fie, fie, fie upon
 This compell'd fortune) have your mouth fill'd up
 Before you open it.

(II.iii.82-88)

Both excerpts express disillusionment at the apparently whimsical way in which merit is bestowed or denied. Katherine's twenty years of devotion to Henry count for nothing; Anne's recent arrival is richly rewarded. Such disillusionment is similar to Casaubon's. The motto to chapter 43, also taken from *Henry VIII*, though not recorded in the notebooks, suggests that Eliot had this play in mind when thinking about the Casaubon, Dorothea, and Ladislaw triangle. The motto reads:

"How much, methinks, I could despise this man,
Were I not bound in charity against it!"

--SHAKESPEARE [sic]: *Henry VIII* [III.ii.297-98]

Wolsey, who utters these sardonic lines, is thinking of Surrey, who has just accused him, quite rightly, of various sins and crimes against the state. But he *does* despise Surrey, precisely because he is incapable of charity. In the novel, the motto refers to Casaubon and his intense dislike of Will. Casaubon is wracked with seething anger at the thought of Ladislaw, of all people, one day replacing him as Dorothea's husband.

Casaubon's behaviour towards Dorothea is completely unjustified. But it is understandable. Like Shakespeare's Old Lady, he has spent years working for some form of recognition, only to realize that he too cannot "Come pat betwixt too early & too late," that he will die before finishing his "Key to All Mythologies." Worse still, the "very fresh fish" he has married not only shows her impatience with his life's work but is inclined towards the hated Ladislaw, thereby reminding him of his failures as a scholar and a husband.¹⁴ Hence, "He [too] dives into [his] soul, and there scatters / Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience, / Fears and despairs, and all these for his marriage." The result is the codicil to his will forbidding Dorothea to remarry. Given society's bias towards the husband of a marriage, this desperate and perverse attempt to control Dorothea from beyond the grave is only disapproved of, never challenged.

After suffering numerous indignities, Dorothea is also quickly disillusioned. She too has been encouraged to expect certain things: helping her husband with his work and more freedom with which to pursue her own grandiose schemes. Instead, she encounters what amounts to Casaubon's tyranny. Dorothea's naïvete and Casaubon's sexual expectat-

ions are again suggested in an allusion to *The Winter's Tale*. Mr. Brooke soon accepts the idea of their union and, as he warms to the idea, says:

"And you would like to see the church, you know. . . . It is a droll little church. And the village. It all lies in a nut-shell. By the way, it will suit you, Dorothea; for the cottages are like a row of alms-houses--little gardens, gillyflowers, that sort of thing." (74)

He unwittingly recalls Perdita who does not allow "gillyvors"--"natures bastards"--to sully her rustic garden. She tells Polixenes:

I'll not put
The dibble in earth to set one slip of them;
No more than, were I painted, I would wish
This youth should say 'twere well, and only therefore
Desire to breed by me.

(cf. IV.iv.79-103)

Perdita respects both the supremacy of nature and her place in its design, but Dorothea sees herself as an artist freed by marriage to redesign the world in her image. Like Casaubon who, in return for "handsome settlements" bestowed on the "blooming young lady," expects to breed a "copy of himself" (272), Dorothea sees marriage as a means to something else, and is ill-prepared to deal with it as an end.

The tragedy of their inevitable conflict is at one point reinforced with an allusion to *Macbeth*. When Dorothea angrily responds to Casaubon's accusation that she has encouraged Ladislav's proposed visit to them, the narrator says:

. . . Mr Casaubon seemed to be stupidly undiscerning and odiously unjust. Pity, that "new-born babe" which was by-and-by to rule many a storm within her, did not "stride the blast" on this occasion. (276)

Macbeth realizes that if he goes through with his plan to murder Duncan:

Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye.

(I.vii.21-24)

The allusion suggests that a mutual lack of pity has contributed to their disharmony: Casaubon is unjust and Dorothea too quick to take offence. Casaubon does not in the least resemble Duncan in bearing his "faculties" meekly, nor do his virtues "plead like angels" (cf. I.vii. 17-19). Instead, he is cruel and vindictive in making Dorothea the target of his anger that is really directed at Ladislaw. But in this instance he is as much sinned against as sinning. Dorothea's myopia is not limited to poor eyesight: she is unable to see that he is, to some extent, justified in wishing to avoid what he refers to as Ladislaw's "desultory vivacity" (275). Each reacts angrily because each is bewildered by the failure of the marriage to live up to expectations.

Dorothea's marital hardships cause her to go through painful periods of self-discovery. Much later, we are told that she muses again on "all the troubles of all the people on the face of the earth," making Celia "a little uneasy at this Hamlet-like raving" (765). But now, significantly, she has no more compensatory schemes for people: instead she is quietly sympathetic. Having felt the inexorable force of nature through "the mysterious incorporeal might of her [own] anguish" (774-75), she has learned to curb her anger by taking pity on human failings or hardships. The anguish she experienced during her time with Casaubon brought its own compensations: it taught her to become aware of the suffering of others and, more constructively, it forced her to reevaluate herself and to formulate better reasons for entering into an intimate relationship.

These three forms of progress may be demonstrated by pursuing the analogy between *Middlemarch* and *Henry VIII*. When Wolsey is finally outmanoeuvred, he takes a "long farewell to all [his] greatness" and ruminates on "the state of man." He realizes that all earthly things are

transitory and opens his heart anew, thereby learning "A peace above all earthly dignities, / A still and quiet conscience." Only his servant, Cromwell, attends him in his last moments on stage, and Wolsey takes comfort in the idea that he

that once trod the ways of glory,
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour
Found thee [Cromwell] a way (out of his wrack) to rise in,
A sure and safe one, though thy master mis'd it.
(cf. II.ii.351ff)

Then he gives Cromwell the following hard-earned advice:

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition,
By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,
The image of his maker, hope to win by it?
Love thyself last, cherish those hearts that hate thee;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not;
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's
Thy God's and truth's: then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr.

(III.ii.440-49)

Casaubon does not speak like this to Dorothea; but he also believes he is following "the ways of glory"; and she finds a "sure and safe" way "out of his wrack" when she rejects his injunctions concerning his notebooks and renounces her legacy in order to marry Ladislav. Like Wolsey, Casaubon does not become a "blessed martyr" himself, but his pitiful life leaves a lasting impression on Dorothea. As in the scene with Wolsey and Cromwell, there is real pathos in the meeting between husband and wife on the darkened stairway, after Lydgate has explained that the outcome of Casaubon's heart disease is difficult to predict. Like Wolsey, Casaubon knows that he will soon die, and the narrator says that when death is perceived to be imminent there is a moment of heightened awareness, even though

In such an hour the mind does not change its lifelong bias, but carries it onward in imagination to the other side of death, gazing

backward--perhaps with the divine calm of beneficence, perhaps with the petty anxieties of self-assertion. (415)

Thus, Casaubon recoils at first from Dorothea's pity: "his passionate longings, poor man, clung low and mistlike in very shady places." But the moment of heightened awareness makes even him "feel the truth of a commonplace, which is . . . different from . . . knowing it," and so, after more reflection, he is momentarily, but genuinely, moved by his wife's concern for him--just as Wolsey is by Cromwell's. Where Wolsey resorts to the Christian teaching that he has thus far studiously ignored, Casaubon shows Dorothea the kind of affection that he has never before shown her.

It is a moment of true fellowship, in which Dorothea and Casaubon see their essential selves, both in themselves and each other. But since Casaubon is unable to suppress his egoism for long, their happiness is short-lived. The scene is doubly poignant because their tenderness underscores the hopelessness of their marriage. It takes something as shocking as Casaubon's imminent death to jolt him into showing his love. The moment of affection makes Dorothea so happy that she fails to see its painful significance. It is in such marked contrast to what has gone before and what follows, that she only realizes later that they should never have married in the first place, that they have lived together for all the wrong reasons. She then refuses to comply with Casaubon's demands to continue his fruitless work and defies her family to marry Ladislav. Her self-awareness brings home her own failings and limitations as well as the social pressures and conditioning which either allowed or encouraged her to make mistakes.

In the language of the *As You Like It* motif, Dorothea works towards balancing her "working-day" and "golden" worlds by redefining the latter. Before her first marriage, it never really occurs to her that she may encounter the "briers" of the "working-day world." She only constructs "golden worlds" that are little more than dangerous figments of her imagination. Considering how clever Casaubon must be, she muses: "And his feelings too, his whole experience--what a lake compared with my little pool!" (24). Her words recall Dinah's in *Adam Bede*. Dinah tells Mr. Irwine that she is most content when reflecting on thoughts of God which overflow her soul--"as pebbles lie bathed in the Willow Brook"--and that her "deep flood" of thoughts has no "beginning nor ending of them in words" (*Adam Bede* 135). Dinah too must redefine her "golden world" before finding lasting happiness with Adam. Dorothea finds hers with Ladislav, whom Mrs. Cadwallader facetiously refers to as "Mr Orlando Ladislav" (615). If Ladislav is Orlando, Dorothea is Rosalind; and like Shakespeare's heroine, or like Esther in *Felix Holt*, she leaves her oppressive Court for a Forest of Arden-like life with Ladislav, where social and sexual distinctions are part of a harmonious whole.

Ladislav is not every critic's conception of an ideal partner for Dorothea, but he is Eliot's. For one thing, as Daiches says, he functions as a sexually vibrant person. It is not necessary to approve of him, only to recognize what he represents.¹⁵ His potent sensuality is stressed by his being contrasted with Casaubon, especially when the narrator says,

Will Ladislav's smile was delightful, unless you were angry with him beforehand: it was a gush of inward light illuminating the transparent skin as well as the eyes, and playing about every curve

and line as if some Ariel were touching them with a new charm, and banishing for ever the traces of moodiness. (199)

The allusion to Ariel complements the novel's *As You Like It* motif. In both *The Tempest* and *As You Like It*, Shakespeare shows that the representatives of traditional power must bow to a will greater than their own. Just as we expect Rosalind and Orlando, Ferdinand and Miranda to return to the real world having learned the moral lessons of the Forest of Arden and Prospero's Island, so we expect a similar outcome for Dorothea and Ladislav when they leave Middlemarch. Since Ladislav, like Ferdinand, has received Ariel's charm (cf. I.ii.377-410), Dorothea is identified with Miranda, and they can look forward to a "brave new world" of love, mutual attraction, and understanding. Marriage may not be a lofty vocation for Dorothea, but the need to find a "brave new world" is typical of Eliot's teaching and forms part of her implicit, subversive criticism of society. The roles that men and women are expected to play need to be redefined.

A major consequence of Dorothea's self-awareness is that she gradually learns to adopt Mrs. Garth's way of dealing with adversity. When the latter hears that her husband has foolishly put his name to Fred's bill, we read: "There was an evident change in Mrs Garth's face, but it was like a change below the surface of water which remains smooth" (243). Mrs. Garth is simply not interested in recriminations. As the narrator says: "Like the eccentric woman she was, she was at present absorbed in considering what was to be done, and did not fancy that the end could be better achieved by bitter remarks or explosions" (244).

Dorothea demonstrates a similar awareness of what needs to be done when she visits Rosamond a second time on Lydgate's behalf, despite the

anguish caused her by finding Rosamond and Ladislav together. The chapter in which these events are described is prefaced with a structural allusion motto:

"And thus thy fall hath left a kind of blot,
To mark the full-fraught man and best induced
With some suspicion."

--Henry V [II.ii.138-40]. (759)

The motto directly refers to and captures the gist of Dorothea's bitter disappointment in Ladislav. In the play, the lines form part of Henry's condemnation of three noblemen who have conspired against him. Scroop's treachery, he says, is especially hard to swallow, since he bore "the key of all my counsels, /. . . [knew] the very bottom of my soul" (II. ii.96-97). In the novel, Dorothea is similarly affected by what she thinks is Ladislav's betrayal of her trust, which for her is also like "Another fall of man" (II.ii.141). We are told that

There are natures in which, if they love us, we are conscious of having a sort of baptism and consecration: they bind us over to rectitude and purity by their pure belief about us; and our sins become that worst kind of sacrilege which tears down the invisible altar of trust. "If you are not good, none is good"--those little words may give a terrific meaning to responsibility, may hold a vitriolic intensity for remorse. (761)

But the motto suggests much more. Henry V inspired England to find greatness beyond the political turmoil that had plagued Richard II and Henry IV; Dorothea inspires Ladislav, Lydgate and even Rosamond to see that life need not be narrow and petty. Ladislav, for instance, knows that if Dorothea were to become his wife, he would be willing and therefore able to stop his dalliance with various vocations--a dalliance that Casaubon finds so irritating, since he is expected to sponsor it, and that Mr. Brooke takes to an extreme with his vapid interest in all things. She would make him complete by giving his life a purpose and

meaning that it otherwise lacks. (Hence the structural allusion motto to chapter 82: "'My grief lies onward and my joy behind' / --SHAKESPEARE: [sic] *Sonnets* [50] (789), which expresses Ladislav's desire to return to Middlemarch in order to see Dorothea again.)

Like Esther in *Felix Holt*, Dorothea is deliberately identified with the genuinely reformed Henry V because she too has been humbled and has learned from her mistakes. She is also able to distinguish between self-interest and what needs to be done. Henry tells the three traitors, "Touching our person seek we no revenge; / But we our kingdom's safety must so tender / . . . that to her laws / We do deliver you" (II.iii.174-77); and after his great victory in France, we are told by the Chorus that he remains "free from vainness and self-glorious pride" (V.20). For her part, Dorothea forces herself to see Rosamond again on Lydgate's behalf, and, while most Middlemarchers rejoice at Bulstrode's disgrace and loss of authority, she quietly continues the sponsorship of Lydgate's medical research. The extent to which Dorothea and Henry V influence events does of course differ. But they resemble each other in displaying the same awareness of life's complexity and interconnectedness and, above all, in performing the duties entailed by feelings of fellowship.

In the "Quarry" for *Felix Holt* and again in the Berg Notebook, Eliot copied the following lines from *Richard II*: "I count myself in nothing else so happy / As in a soul remembering my good friends [II.iii.46-47]"; "I live with bread like you, feel want, taste grief, / Need friends [III.ii.175-76]".¹⁶ The former lines are spoken by Bolingbroke upon his return from exile, the latter by Richard during the deposition scene. It is not quite clear what Eliot may have had in mind here. On

the one hand, the lines are ironic. Neither man has much choice but to remember his "good friends," and, since some of Bolingbroke's friends become his enemies and Richard has never until this moment paid much attention to friendship, their sincerity may be questioned. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of the lines in the notebooks suggests that Eliot deliberately read them out of context, as comments lending themselves to the theme of human interdependence. For it is true that when people are stripped of worldly power--as Bolingbroke and Richard are when they utter these lines--they are vulnerable and need the good will of others not only for their physical survival but also because without human fellowship the idea of the self begins to lose all meaning.

In *Middlemarch* this recognition comes in time or too late for some; for others, if it comes at all, it is short-lived. In Rosamond, as in Casaubon, it is short-lived. On only two occasions do we see her essential self: when Lydgate proposes marriage and when Dorothea visits her. For the rest, she is seen to be incapable of considering the needs of others. Her impression on both Lydgate and the reader is mainly one of infuriating indifference towards the thoughts and feelings of those around her. But as in the case of Casaubon, Eliot treats her sympathetically: she suggests that Rosamond is as much a product of society as she is personally responsible for her behaviour.

Arguably the worst thing Rosamond does is to go riding when she is asked not to because a fall might prematurely induce the birth of her child. Her subsequent miscarriage is therefore a direct result of her extraordinary vanity. The chapter in which these events are described is prefaced with a motto from Shakespeare's Sonnet 93. The poem is worth quoting in full because it captures not only Lydgate's growing despair

at his marriage, but also Rosamond's background which has contributed to her selfishness:

So shall I live, supposing thou art true,
Like a deceived husband; so love's face
May still seem love to me, though alter'd new--
Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place.
*For there can live no hatred in thine eye,
Therefore in that I cannot know thy change:
In mine's looks the false heart's history
Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange;
But Heaven in thy creation did decree
That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell;
Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be,
Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness tell.*
How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show!¹⁷

(The italics indicate Eliot's motto [566]). There is double irony here. On the one hand, the motto refers to the complete absence of love and sweetness beneath Rosamond's beautiful and passive exterior. But on the other hand, it accurately describes what Lydgate expected from marriage: a beautiful wife with whom to while away the hours when not engaged in the more serious business of work.

Rosamond has always been taught to adopt social banalities, and, if she is now insufferable, society is largely to blame. In chapter 11, the narrator gives an amusing description of her mastery of life's finer points, "even to extras, such as getting in and out of a carriage." But along with the humour, there is severe criticism of the way Rosamond has always been encouraged to perfect her shallowness:

We cannot help the way in which people speak of us, and probably if Mrs Lemon [Rosamond's schoolteacher] had undertaken to describe Juliet and Imogen, these heroines would not have seemed poetical. The first vision of Rosamond would have been enough with most judges to dispel any prejudice excited by Mrs Lemon's praise. (94)

One is more keenly aware of the irony when one remembers that many Victorians tended to idolize Shakespeare's heroines because they were

supposed to have the beauty and social graces that Rosamond is noted for. Mrs. Jameson, for instance, had this to say about Imogen:

Others of Shakspeare's [sic] characters are, as dramatic and poetical conceptions, more striking, more brilliant, more powerful; but of all his women, considered as individuals rather than as heroines, Imogen is the most perfect. . . . In her we have all the fervour of youthful tenderness, all the romance of youthful fancy, all the enchantment of ideal grace,--the bloom of beauty, the brightness of intellect, and the dignity of rank, taking a peculiar hue from the conjugal character which is shed over all, like a consecration and a holy charm.¹⁸

As the comparison between Rosamond, Imogen and Juliet suggests, Eliot was highly critical of the fact that the cult surrounding Shakespeare's heroines tended to overlook the reasons why someone like Imogen is forced to demonstrate her virtue. Imogen is horribly abused by her father, step-mother, Cloten and even her husband, Posthumus, who allows Iachimo to test her fidelity. Dorothea is also compared with Imogen, and this time, despite the note of humour, Eliot indicates why these women ought to be admired. Commenting on Dorothea's unfashionable dress, the narrator says:

Yet if she had entered before a still audience as Imogen or Cato's daughter, the dress might have seemed right enough; the grace and dignity were in her limbs and neck; and about her simple parted hair and candid eyes the large poke which was then in the fate of women, seemed no more odd as a head-dress than the gold trencher we call a halo. (242)

Like Imogen, Dorothea is admired for her "grace and dignity" in the face of her trials and tribulations.

It appears that Eliot had *Cymbeline* in mind for a direct comment on the marriages of Dorothea, Rosamond, or Mrs. Bulstrode (she too is described as putting on a plain dress [740]). The second volume of the *Pfortzheimer Holographs* contains two extracts from the play. In his notes to the first, Baker writes: "Again lines referring to woman's

anguish. It is not without interest that GE doesn't note Imogen's other lines to Pisanio." He goes on to quote both Eliot's extract and the omitted lines:

O,
 Men's vows are women's traitors! *All good
 seeming,
 By thy revolt, O husband, shall be thought
 Put on for villany; not born where't
 grows,
 But worn a bait for ladies. . . .* [sic]
 True honest men being heard, like false Aeneas,
 Were, in his time, thought false; and
*Sinon's weeping
 Did scandal many a holy tear, took pity
 From most true wretchedness.*

[Cf. *Cymbeline* III.iv.54-62]¹⁹

(The italics indicate Eliot's extract). I suspect that Eliot tried to pare the passage down to something she could use when describing some of the novel's marriages, but that she abandoned the idea because it would have suggested that, like Imogen, the women were always beyond reproach. Dorothea and Mrs. Bulstrode resemble Imogen in their dignified response to suffering, but their moral growth is either a gradual process or a sudden departure from previous conduct, and Rosamond never approaches Imogen's stature. However, Lydgate, Casaubon and Bulstrode are all insensitive towards their wives, and, since the *Cymbeline* extract refers to Posthumus and the way he has radically misconceived the nature of marriage, Eliot may have considered it for an ironic comparison. It is worth noting here that the reference to Dorothea's Imogen-like appearance in a plain dress may have been inspired by another line from the same scene: "Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion" (III.iv.52).

Thus, if Rosamond is selfish and insensitive, if she cannot see beyond the false image of herself, society must share in the blame. It denies her worthwhile objectives in life by only preparing her for a

marriage in which she will be a gracious ornament and a decidedly inferior partner. Consequently, Lydgate should not be altogether surprised when she fails to understand that she is misusing her limited power by spending money on creature comforts: that is exactly what she has been trained to do.

Peter Featherstone is another example of someone encouraged to abuse his power. Like Casaubon, he is identified with a Shakespeare cardinal, and the comparison draws attention not just to his nature but also the circumstances which give rise to that nature. The motto to chapter 33 reads:

"Close up his eyes and draw the curtain close;
And let us all to meditation."

--2 Henry VI [III.iii.32-33] (306)

These are Henry's words after Cardinal Beaufort poisons himself when his role in a treasonous plot is discovered. Beaufort's last moments are characterized by a complete absence of religious feelings. He is terrified of dying and, in return for a prolonged life, offers Death, whom he sees in his delirium, all his riches if only he may be spared. One of the bystanders, Warwick, says, "So bad a death argues a monstrous life." But although Henry has every reason to be satisfied with Beaufort's demise, he is moved by his suffering and prays for his soul, adding, "Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all" (III.iii.30). Thus Act 3 ends, marking a turning point in the Henry VI cycle: one rebellion is over and another, led by the Duke of York, is about to begin.

In *Middlemarch*, the motto heads the last chapter of Book III, "Waiting for Death," and specifically refers to Featherstone's last moments, which are also without signs of remorse: "Old Featherstone himself was not in the least anxious about his soul, and he had declined

to see Mr Tucker on the subject" (308). He is only interested in continuing his perverse influence on the living. Like Beaufort, he is an obvious example of a sinful life.

The line which Eliot omitted in her motto, "Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all," however, best sums up how these events should be considered. In the play, Warwick condemns Beaufort for treason when he has already hatched his own "private plot" with York (II.ii.59). In other words, things are not so cut and dried as they appear, and it is necessary to "meditate" before passing judgment. The same applies to Featherstone. He is a miserable creature, but his family's sycophantic behaviour has goaded him into meanness. He knows that they are not there to mourn his loss but to gloat over what they hope to gain. We should therefore "meditate" not only on Featherstone's moral failings, but also the conditions which helped to shape them.

The wonderfully comic chapter 32, in which the Featherstone clan gathers like a pack of vultures, dining on Peter's food and waiting for richer pickings, has this motto: "'They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk.' / --SHAKESPEARE [sic]: [*The Tempest* [II.i. 279]" (296). That is what Antonio says to Sebastian when they consider killing Alonso and Gonzalo and gauge the probable reactions of the other men. Antonio is sure that the others will simply follow their lead. Being without honour, conscience, or a sense of moral obligation himself, he believes that most people are selfish, evil, and crafty. In *Middlemarch*, Mrs. Waule, Solomon, and others demonstrate that Antonio is right when he says that there are people who will "tell the clock to any business that / . . . befits the hour" (II.i.284-85).

But in both *The Tempest* and *Middlemarch* the selfish do not succeed. They try to reduce life to a hideous show but remain ineffectual: contrary to their egoistic assumptions, they do not control events. Since the Featherstones, including Peter, alienate themselves from each other as well as from decent people, none of their wishes are fulfilled. Either Fred or Joshua Rigg stands to inherit the estate, and, when Mary Garth refuses to meddle with the wills, even Featherstone's last demands are ignored. The allusions to *2 Henry VI* and *The Tempest* are, incidentally, good examples of the way Eliot cross-references Shakespearean motifs, thereby giving a unity to separate plots. Since Featherstone and Casaubon are identified with two of Shakespeare's corrupt cardinals, we may infer that Mary and Dorothea pave the way towards a "brave new world" by standing firm against the wills, legal and otherwise, of the old, dying order.

The "Interesting Extracts" notebook has unused lines from *Troilus and Cressida* that also examine the conditions prompting individuals into the sorts of delusions and conflicts portrayed in *Middlemarch*. The lines are spoken by Hector after he has heard Paris and Troilus say that Helen should not be returned to the Greeks because that would dishonour the Trojans. The war, they say, should be continued regardless of costs, because once a decision to fight has been taken it should not be reneged on. During the scene, Cassandra comes on stage to say that if Helen is not returned to the Greeks, Troy will be destroyed. Yet the prophecy shakes neither Paris nor Troilus: honour is at stake here, they say. At this point Hector speaks the lines which Eliot jotted in her notebook:

"Paris & Troilus, you have both said well:
And on the cause & question now in hand
Have glozed--but superficially; not much

Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought
 Unfit to hear moral philosophy.' Tr. & Cr. II.2."
 [Troilus and Cressida II.ii.164-68]²⁰

Hector goes on to say that their argument has little to do with right and wrong, and that all the moral laws of nature demand Helen's return to Menelaus. Surprisingly, however, he concludes that keeping Helen is indeed a measure of Troy's dignity and agrees to go on fighting.

The scene illustrates the strange, convoluted ways in which people sometimes reach bizarre decisions. In this case even the most admirable of characters can agree to do something which he knows is immoral, because--and this appears to be the reason--it would not be advisable to do the right thing. Obviously it would not be wrong for Troy to return Helen: it would be the honourable thing to do. But if the Trojans were to do so, they might be ridiculed or charged with cowardice, and fear of this prevents them from doing what is right. Self-esteem forces the Trojans into "superficial glozing"---with dire consequences. Troy's honour is given as the reason for continuing the war, but the real motivating force is the city's collective and self-destructive ego.

"Superficial glozing" and self-destructive egos feature prominently in *Middlemarch*, especially where Lydgate is concerned. He is not unlike Shakespeare's Hector in that his inflated sense of self-importance prevents him from fulfilling his potential to do good. The motto to chapter 26 is also taken from *Troilus and Cressida*, and this time it definitely refers to him:

"He beats me and I rail at him: O worthy satisfaction! would it were otherwise--that I could beat him while he railed at me."--
Troilus and Cressida [II.iii.3-4]. (253)²¹

This vituperation comes from Thersites, "a deformed and scurrilous Greek," and is aimed at his master, Ajax, one of the play's more clown-

ish Greek heroes. Thersites rails at the readiness with which the Greeks delude themselves with games of honour, instead of getting on with the war. And in the soliloquy from which the lines are taken he makes the following supplication:

O thou great thunder-darter of
Olympus, forget that thou art Jove the king of
gods; and Mercury, lose all the serpentine craft of
thy caduceus, if ye take not that little little less
than little wit from them that they have; which
short-armed ignorance itself knows is so abundant
scarce. . . .

(II.iii.10-16)

The caduceus is the symbol of both Mercury and the medical profession; and so it is probable that Eliot's motto refers to the conflict between Lydgate and his fellow medical practitioners. Whether it refers to Lydgate's impatience with Dr. Wrench et al., or to their cynicism at his new-fangled ways is not clear. Other extracts in *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 2, "I have a woman's longing-- / An appetite that I am sick withal / To see great Hector in his weeds of peace" [III.iii.236-38], and "'Thou hast no more brains in thy head than I have in my elbows" [II.i.45-46],²² suggest that Eliot probably meant the motto as an amusing comment on the other doctors' anger at Lydgate's iconoclasm. Like Thersites, who quite understandably prays for a role reversal with Ajax, Dr. Wrench wishes Lydgate to the devil. Moreover, the motto is prophetic of Lydgate's being "beaten" when he takes Raffles on as his patient.

However, Lydgate lacks moderation in his attitude to Middlemarch's traditional quackery. In chapter 26, he is called on to treat Fred Vincy, who is "in the pink-skinned stage of typhoid fever" (255), a condition earlier diagnosed by Dr. Wrench as "a slight derangement" (254). Although Lydgate is justifiably provoked by Dr. Wrench's incompe-

tence, he shares Thersites's fault of being far too contemptuous of others. He is right to help Fred, but wrong to dismiss so casually his immediate realization that Dr. Wrench will be offended by what he will construe as wilful interference. Fred's treatment is a matter of urgency, but not a reason for ignoring professional courtesy. In reaching his decision to ignore Dr. Wrench, Lydgate exercises his over-sized ego with his customary "superficial glozing."

It is interesting to note that the *Troilus and Cressida* motto to chapter 26 was originally intended for chapter 31,²³ where Lydgate reaffirms his determination never to marry and then promptly becomes engaged to Rosamond. We are told that Rosamond could not help but cry when they met, and that this "moment of naturalness was the crystallizing feather-touch: it shook flirtation into love" (294). We are also told that when she cried, "she was as natural as she had ever been when she was five years old" (294)--a time before the cultivation of her social artifice at Mrs. Lemon's school. Her natural behaviour is understandable: for her, this is a moment of hopelessness. Lydgate seemed her best chance for marrying someone more eligible than the usual Middlemarch suitor,²⁴ and now it looks as if she will fail. All her charms have been to no avail, and she is momentarily reduced to her essential self. There is only one other time when she is capable of naturalness: when she is once again dependent on the feelings of a man towards her. Still smarting from Ladislav's utter rejection, she is moved to tell Dorothea of Ladislav's true feelings.

Lydgate's reaction to her tears, however, is due to mere impetuosity. He resembles Shakespeare's Hector in doing a sudden about-face over Rosamond. Like the Casaubons', their marriage is based less on feelings

towards each other than feelings about themselves. Since Rosamond can only subjugate her ego in fits and starts and Lydgate has yet to learn how, despite his earlier experience with the French actress Laure, their relationship is doomed from the start.

Other extracts from Shakespeare point to Eliot's interest in extending the tragic themes of egoism, self-aggrandisement, and indiscriminating behaviour, to the plots involving Bulstrode. The *Quarry for "Middlemarch"* has one extract from *2 Henry IV* and one from *King John*:

"Thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks; never a man's thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine."

Shakspeare (sic) [2] Henry IV (?) [II.ii.52-55]

How oft the sight of means to do the deeds
Makes ill deeds done!

King John [IV.ii.219-20]²⁵

The lines from *2 Henry IV* are spoken by Hal to Poins when the latter says that if Hal were to show grief and concern over his father's illness, he would agree with most people in thinking Hal "a most princely hypocrite," "because you have been so lewd, and so much engrafted to Falstaff" (II.ii.58-59). Hal's lines, then, show that he appreciates Poins's honesty. But they also suggest that Poins's response is typically shallow, since Hal does care about his father. However, most people would agree with Poins; they would not bother to discriminate between what is and is not obvious--just as Poins does not realize that, when he condemns Hal for associating with Falstaff, he condemns himself: he has been similarly "engrafted." The lines are not used in the novel, but perhaps Eliot considered them for an authorial comment on the manner in which most Middlemarchers immediately condemn Lydgate and Bulstrode when Raffles dies. As it turns out, Bulstrode bears considerable responsibility for Raffles's death, but the town does not know the exact

circumstances. It would in any case applaud the use of brandy in the treatment of delirium tremens, since it has little faith in Lydgate's revolutionary ideas.

The lines from *King John* are spoken by the king as he tries to blame Hubert for Arthur's supposed death. Afraid of telling John that he spared the young prince, Hubert allows the king to believe that Arthur is dead and reminds John of his specific instructions to kill the boy. John then makes the ridiculous reply that if only Hubert had not been there to make him think of doing away with Arthur, he would not have given the order. Actually, Eliot misquoted the lines. They should read: "How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds / Make deeds ill done," and E. A. J. Honigmann, the Arden editor of the play, glosses them as meaning that John is really sorry because the business of doing away with Arthur has been "unskillfully performed."²⁶ Thus, since John is also worried about his nobles, who are now literally up in arms about Arthur's fate, the lines are doubly ironic. John pretends to have been misunderstood by Hubert, but he is really impatient with his inefficiency.

Anna Theresa Kitchell, in her transcription of the *Quarry*, notes that these lines "might have served at the head of chapter 70, but were rejected in favor of some which voice one of George Eliot's deepest beliefs, in the force of inner character."²⁷ I think that she is right, because Eliot's own motto deliberately avoids Shakespeare's irony. In chapter 70, Bulstrode makes his decision to give Raffles the lethal dose of brandy, but, despite all his faults, he is not as ruthless or crude as John in making immoral decisions or assuming a false public demeanour. As the narrator says:

There may be coarse hypocrites, who consciously affect beliefs and emotions for the sake of gulling the world, but Bulstrode was not

one of them. He was simply a man whose desires had been stronger than his theoretic beliefs, and who had gradually explained the gratification of his desires into satisfactory agreement with those beliefs. If this be hypocrisy, it is a process which shows itself occasionally in us all. . . . (606)

Eliot's actual motto to chapter 70 reads: "Our deeds still travel with us from afar, / And what we have been makes us what we are" (691), and this more accurately accounts for Bulstrode's behaviour. He has never been thwarted by anyone, and the motto lends itself to the idea of a tragic unfolding of events. The past catches up with him because his egoism betrays him. The difference between King John and Bulstrode is that whereas John always knew that he abused his power, Bulstrode taught himself to forget. His subsequent confusion and helplessness at the realization that he is not righteous and one of the elect makes him a much sadder figure than John. On the morning of Raffles's death, as the narrator says, he "had not yet unravelled in his thought the confused promptings of the last four-and-twenty hours" (698). Nevertheless, like John, Bulstrode becomes his own helpless victim when he gives the order that will kill Raffles. The consequences of his self-justification force him to experience what Dorothea has also felt: "the mysterious incorporeal might of . . . anguish," which leads to self-awareness. His belated and partial offer of money to Ladislav is turned down, reminding him of his dishonest past, and the precious image of himself is finally shattered when he is all but forced to leave Middlemarch in disgrace. He is left to find yet another vocation in life, not to mention new grounds on which to re-build relationships with his wife and family.

Besides being used to expose Bulstrode's essential self, Raffles functions in the novel as a dramatic linchpin. Until his arrival, the "stealthy convergence of human lots" (93) has involved comparisons of

parallel themes in separate plots. The stories have overlapped to some extent, but for the most part they have been dealt with in isolation. A gallery of minor Middlemarchers has also been glimpsed--Fred's horsey friends, Peter Featherstone's and Mr. Farebrother's families, local tradespeople, and so on--but it is not until Raffles's fortuitous visit to Stone Court that the novel shifts its focus to embrace the whole community. It is at this point that the human lots finally converge.

Raffles sets off a chain reaction: not only does he prod the "frog-faced" Joshua Rigg into action, he affects Bulstrode, through Bulstrode Ladislaw and Lydgate, through these two Rosamond and Dorothea, and eventually the rest of Middlemarch. These far-reaching effects are heralded with the following motto:

"By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day."

--*Twelfth Night* [V.i.398-99] (402).

The lines are part of the Clown's song at the end of the play and refer directly to Raffles, who "swaggers in" on Rigg. When he "wived" Rigg's mother, he was fond of bullying his step-son.²⁸ But now that times have changed, he finds that he needs money from this "most unengaging kickable boy" (451). The second stanza of the Clown's song can also be seen as an amusing comment on the reversed situations of Raffles and Rigg: "But when I came to man's estate . . . / 'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate. . ." (V.i.393-95). However, the motto is, I think, more significant than that. Since Raffles is directly, or indirectly, responsible for so much of the action in the latter stages of *Middlemarch*, the Clown's song can be seen as a moral comment on anyone who has been guilty of excessive pride. The Clown's song insists that people's lives--already made difficult by "The wind and the rain," "For the rain

it raineth every day"--are made harder by human folly. Although in a much less gregarious manner than Raffles, Bulstrode has also "swaggered" through life, "wiving" first Ladislav's grandmother and then Mrs. Bulstrode, and he has always been impervious to the "wind and the rain." The same could be said about others, before their moments of self-awareness.

An echo of the Clown's song is heard in *King Lear*, where the Fool offers advice to a king who has just railed against nature itself:

*He that has a little tiny wit,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
Though the rain it raineth every day.*

(III.ii.74-77)

Twelfth Night and *King Lear* are alike only insofar as they explore human behaviour in all its complexity and establish that tolerance and understanding come with self-knowledge. That is also true of *Middlemarch*, although its humour aligns it more with *Twelfth Night* than *King Lear*. In the last stanza of his song, the Clown no longer comments on specific incidents of folly but draws the play to a close with a final reminder that the world has existed longer than the individual:

*A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.*

(*Twelfth Night* V.i.404-407)

Similarly, Eliot's *Finale* touches briefly on what happened to some of the characters whom we have come to know, but ends on a philosophic note: "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" (825).

Among those "unhistoric acts" are Dorothea's attitude towards Lydgate and Mrs. Bulstrode's towards her husband. They show compassion for these men when the rest of the town is ready to vilify them or is embarrassed into silence. The chapter in which the two men's culpabilities are assessed in the Green Dragon and the Tankard has the following motto:

Clown. . . . 'Twas in the Bunch of Grapes, where, indeed.
you have a delight to sit, have you not?

Froth. I have so; because it is an open room, and good for winter.

Clown. Why, very well then: I hope here be truths.

--*Measure for Measure* [II.i.127-32] (703)

The Clown's lines are in fact Pompey's, spoken when he stands before Escalus accused of being a bawd and a pimp. His defence amounts to a long-winded evasion of the charges, in the course of which he introduces Froth--"A foolish Gentleman"--as his alibi. Although amusing, the scene parallels the serious plight of Claudio, who, moments before, has also been arrested but condemned to death for similar offences against the state. The "truths," that Pompey refers to can be summarized as follows: if Escalus punishes him for sinful behaviour, he will have to punish most of Vienna; and if he does that, in ten years' time there will be no one left to punish (cf. II.i.227-40). In view of these "truths," and because Escalus has a natural sense of mercy, Pompey is let off. As Escalus told Angelo when the latter sentenced Claudio: "Well, heaven forgive him; and forgive us all, / Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall" (II.i.37-38).

In the novel, the Pompey motto introduces a scene belonging to the subplot of minor Middlemarchers. The scene compares with the main action in much the same way as Shakespeare's subplots do. The "truths" arrived at by Bambridge, Hawley, Mrs. Dollop, and others are based on pure

speculation concerning the circumstances of Raffles's death. For them, rumour becomes fact, just as it does for the rabble in *Felix Holt*. Eliot's minor characters are as silly as the *habitués* of Shakespeare's Bunch of Grapes, and she portrays them with a similar sense of humour. But as in *Measure for Measure*, they serve a serious purpose in commenting on the sanitation meeting where Bulstrode is made to resign from his public duties. In the play, Escalus shows mercy; in the novel, the educated people follow the lead of the town's Froths. No one shows any compassion. Lydgate ushers Bulstrode out of the room but is angry at feeling obliged to do so. Mr. Farebrother maintains an embarrassed silence and even suspects Lydgate of ulterior motives for bothering with a man already judged to be guilty.

Significantly, it is Dorothea who listens to the evidence and defends Lydgate against the charge brought against him. Like Escalus, and later Isabella, she demonstrates compassion and mercy. Put another way, she has become as "eccentric" as Mrs. Garth. Mrs. Bulstrode adopts a similar line when she forgives her husband his sins and determines to stand by him. As she prepares to leave her room, where she has been struggling with her "mained consciousness," the narrator says:

When she had resolved to go down, she prepared herself by some little acts which might seem mere folly to a hard onlooker; they were her way of expressing to all spectators visible or invisible that she had begun a new life in which she embraced humiliation. She took off all her ornaments and put on a plain black gown, and instead of wearing her much-adorned cap and large bows of hair, she brushed her hair down and put on a plain bonnet-cap, which made her look suddenly like an early Methodist. (740)

Her symbolic renunciation of ornaments is reminiscent of the comic scene in which Dorothea tries to do the same by giving all but a few of her mother's jewels to Celia (13-14). However, the emphasis on Mrs.

Bulstrode's plain dress indicates that she has become more like the wiser, Imogen-like Dorothea, who also prefers modest clothes, and less like Rosamond, whose outfits "no dressmaker could look at without emotion" (cf. 424-25).

The theme of self-denial for the good of others extends to the plot of Fred, Mary, and Mr. Farebrother. Another structural allusion motto from *Measure for Measure* contains lines spoken by Angelo in answer to Escalus's plea for mercy on Claudio's behalf:

"'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall."
--*Measure for Measure* [II.1.17-18] (656).

Asked whether or not he has ever sinned, Angelo replies:

When I that censure him do so offend,
Let mine own judgement pattern out my death,
And nothing come in partial. Sir, he must die.
(II.1.29-31)

Angelo's high-mindedness is heavy with irony, for within hours he demands sexual favours from Isabella in return for her brother's life. In chapter 66, the motto applies to Lydgate's sudden bout of gambling at the Green Dragon, something he has always despised as a weakness in others, and to Fred's threatened return to former ways, something he is warned against by Mr. Farebrother. Shakespeare and Eliot explore the reasons behind the pathetic ease with which people often fail in their noble resolves. To some extent, we are "Servile to all the skyey influences," as Duke Vincentio tells Claudio (III.1.9). But *Measure for Measure* and *Middlemarch* demonstrate that necessity is often self-imposed through a lack of self-awareness. Angelo, Lydgate, Fred (and Bulstrode, to whom the motto could equally apply), succumb to their respective

temptations precisely because they believe themselves to be impervious to "skyey influences."²⁹

Like Angelo, Bulstrode and Lydgate have been guilty of ethical absolutism founded on blind egoism. When that has been brought home to them, they are punished, though not absolutely. The play and novel are about the need for mercy, understanding, sympathy and tolerance, and so their punishments are made to fit their crimes or sins. They are punished and corrected by being made to expiate their wrongdoing in the light of self-awareness. Fred is luckiest. He has been guided by the Garths, by Mary in particular, and when he sees his own weakness mirrored in Lydgate, he avoids a moral relapse. Mr. Farebrother's willingness to sacrifice his own love for Mary in order to further another's happiness moves him deeply and teaches him to mend his ways once and for all. Like Godfrey Cass in *Silas Marner*, Fred substitutes his reliance on Chance with something more stable: Caleb Garth's faith in work. Unlike Godfrey, however, Fred saves himself before he does permanent damage to his future.

Ever since the early reviews, a number of critics have agreed with Henry James's verdict that *Middlemarch* is "a treasure-house of detail, but . . . an indifferent whole," or that Dorothea's failure to realize her potential without marriage is disappointing, especially since Will Ladislaw is a weak and ill conceived character.³⁰ I disagree: the Shakespearean allusions help Eliot to read a little in "nature's infinite book of secrecy,"³¹ into human nature, and contribute to the novel's unity which centres on the idea of people unavoidably participating in something larger than themselves. Through her characters' stories, Eliot

demonstrates the need for self-awareness, because, "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" (825).

As for the criticism deploring Dorothea's marriage to Ladislaw, I think it overlooks Eliot's optimism about a future time when women may be able to succeed in their own right. She does not deny the possibility, but she does deny that such a time is at hand; she does not fail to imagine a world in which women are free to succeed, instead she suggests that such a world is not possible without a radical re-thinking of ourselves as individuals and the duties we owe each other. Gillian Beer says that the later novels explore

the condition of women, apparently at ease, living privileged lives, and yet atrophied by their condition of slavery. Mrs Transome, Mrs Glasher and Gwendolen all share this imagery. In *Middlemarch* Rosamond Vincy is a woman entrapped so completely that she is hardly aware of it, so smoothly does her compliance fit. And that "type of woman" most traps men into mutual delusion. . . .³²

I agree. Among other things, *Middlemarch* exposes the "mutual delusion" resulting from a lack of self-awareness and society's willingness to condone shallowness. Implicit is Eliot's argument that the vicious circle should be broken.

In *Particularities: Readings in George Eliot*, Barbara Hardy writes: "Like Dorothea, George Eliot did not always see what could be done about social injustice and inequality, and her novels do not provide ideal, or even idealistic, social solutions."³³ In one sense that is true: given the social climate of *Middlemarch*, any ideal or idealistic solution for Dorothea would have been false. What great potential is there for some-

one restricted by narrow social expectations and a limited education?

However, there is double irony in the narrator's observation,

Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into a life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done. . . . (822)

This is a direct comment on most people's blind acceptance of the notion that women must marry sooner or later, since any alternative is unimaginable. But it also draws attention to their failure to see that a mutually acceptable and harmonious marriage is both possible and desirable. Dorothea and Ladislav will be happy or unhappy, depending on how they approach their marriage. It does not necessarily follow that Dorothea limits herself or makes another mistake by choosing to remarry. "Her finely-touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible" (825), says the narrator, alluding once more to *Measure for Measure*. Duke Vincentio tells Angelo:

. . . for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd
But to fine issues. . . .

(I.i.33-36)

Thus, the suggestion is that Dorothea is touched by "fine issues" when, among other things, she is "absorbed" into Ladislav's life and bears his children. As I have already said, this marriage is a step towards a "brave new world" of sexual and social equality; and, in that sense, Dorothea does reach her potential.

It is interesting that Eliot should end *Middlemarch* with a final allusion to *Measure for Measure*, a play not referred to in previous novels but here used heavily. *Measure for Measure* is notable for containing and resolving a number of ideas and conflicts which, in other

plays, are left unanswered or end in tragedy. Isabella's problem of knowing where her duties lie, Angelo's autocratic approach to justice, and Duke Vincentio's willingness to let others assume the throne are themes contained in tragedies like *Hamlet*, *Richard II*, *Julius Caesar*, and *King Lear*. Yet *Measure for Measure* ends on an optimistic note, despite the difficulties or complications leading to situations where happiness would seem to be impossible. Angelo is a most loathsome character and is fully deserving of punishment; yet he is not only forgiven by Isabella, the Duke and Mariana, he is welcomed back into the fold. When Vincentio offers Mariana a "better husband," she goes down on her knees and begs the Duke to let her have the one man she could be expected to despise above all others: "O my dear lord, / I crave no other, nor no better man" (V.i.423-24). Her wish is eventually granted because the Duke is swayed by a plea for mercy. Isabella reinforces the idea that it is better to accept extenuating or mitigating circumstances than to condemn people for their mistakes, failings, or weaknesses. Having been led to think that Claudio was executed in order to satisfy one of Vienna's laws, she says to Vincentio on Angelo's behalf:

Most bounteous sir:

Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd
 As if my brother liv'd. I partly think
 A due sincerity govern'd his deeds
 Till he did look on me. Since it is so,
 Let him not die. My brother had but justice,
 In that he did the thing for which he died:
 For Angelo,
 His act did not o'ertake his bad intent,
 And must be buried but as an intent
 That perish'd by the way. Thoughts are no subjects;
 Intents, but merely thoughts.

(V.i.441-52)

Her plea for mercy, her desire to salvage and procure another's happiness, characterizes the prevailing sentiment in *Measure for*

Measure--and *Middlemarch*. As I indicated in chapter 4, *The Mill* is Eliot's only novel where the principal characters are not allowed to survive the difficulties to which they are exposed: Tom and Maggie Tulliver are eventually overwhelmed by the circumstances of their lives. But in all the other novels, deserving people are usually given opportunities to redeem themselves and to find some kind of happiness. If *Measure for Measure* is unique in Shakespeare's canon for resolving issues raised in other plays, it is fitting that it should be alluded to in a novel which synthesizes the Shakespearean ideas and techniques found in the other novels. For not only does the play serve Eliot to demonstrate that social injustice and inequality can be tackled once people work towards a common good, it also helps her to fuse the various Shakespearean borrowings that enrich our understanding of her characters and plots and contribute to an optimistic vision of a "brave new world."

Chapter 8
Daniel Deronda: Hearing with Eyes

In *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel*, U. C. Knoepfelmacher comments on Eliot's use of dramatic technique in *Daniel Deronda* and says that the alternation between the novel's English and Jewish plots "resembles in intent, though by no means in execution, the counterpointing of the double plot in a Shakespearean drama."¹ In his "*Daniel Deronda* and William Shakespeare," he goes into more detail. There he says that Eliot's mind "frequently ran on channels quite similar to those followed by England's foremost dramatist," and that in this "the most consciously 'Shakespearean' of all her novels," Eliot tries to recover

"poetry and romance" from the "events of every day life". . . . It is not at all improbable that George Eliot may have conceived of the novel as a *Tempest* of sorts, a creation in which the reality of the ideal is seen to surmount "the pressure of that hard unaccommodating Actual". . . . If so, she failed considerably: rather than a reproduction of Shakespeare's interweaving of romance and realism, her fusion of the novel's "ideal" and "actual" halves results in an awkward amalgam. In *Daniel Deronda* the real obtrudes on the visionary. . . . In *The Tempest* the chimerical and the actual become one and the same. Shakespeare's exiles forsake an imaginary island in order to return to reality. . . . Deronda and Mirah, on the other hand, must escape from the all-too-real actuality of a darkened England in order to take refuge in the hopefulness of new horizons. And even so their exalted "prophetic consciousness" is--despite the messianic visions of Moredecai--simply a solid Victorian missionary goal.²

It is not my intention to say that Eliot succeeded in writing "a *Tempest* of sorts," but I will try to show that Eliot's reliance on Shakespeare adds considerably to an appreciation of *Daniel Deronda*'s characters and overall unity. I agree with Knoepfelmacher that *Deronda* oscillates "uneasily between the ideal and the real," but not because the novel is an "awkward amalgam" of two halves. Shakespearean refer-

ences pertaining to *Deronda* suggest, I think, that his oscillation is part of his character development. My reading of the novel hinges on the idea that the Jewish story is not riddled with "vaporous idealism," as Jerome Thale says, nor inspired by Eliot's "self-indulgence," as Leavis claims.³ And thus it is best to begin there.

Recent scholarship has convincingly shown that the Jewish parts are based on sound research and not wishful thinking. In *George Eliot and Judaism*, William Baker demonstrates that strong historical forces in the nineteenth century fuelled an extensive Zionist movement whose aim was to colonize Palestine, and that Eliot made it her business to be familiar with these issues. He refers to her detailed reading in Jewish history and mysticism, and suggests how this course of study inspired her in the portrayal of most of the Jewish and even some of the English characters in *Daniel Deronda*. For instance, the Kabbalistic doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul from the dying body to the new and stronger one--a real belief for Jews concerned with the continuity of their race--lies behind Mordecai's dependence on Deronda. Among other sources of inspiration to her was Jehuda Halevi, a Spanish Jew and mystic poet, whose *Kuzari*, Baker says, is the probable source for the Rabbi-teacher role which Mordecai adopts towards Deronda. In *Kuzari*, a Rabbi's words and visions influence the hero to convert his tribe. Other prototypes for the various Jewish characters are identified, and even Gwendolen, with her visions and dreams, can be seen, says Baker, as a character in the mould of Deronda. She too needs a mentor or confessor in whom she can believe and from whom she can draw strength.⁴

Evidence of Eliot's research into Judaism is found in the Pfortzheimer notebooks, which Baker has transcribed. In his introduction to Vol. 1--Ms 707, he draws attention to her letter to Joseph Frank Payne in which she writes that she is "more and more timid--with less daring to adopt [in her own work] any formula which does not get itself clothed . . . in some human figure and individual experience" (*Letters* 6: 216-17). Baker takes that to refer, rightly I think, to Mordecai and his mysticism.⁶ The comment suggests that above all else she intended Mordecai to be a real person, who thought and spoke like a real Jew of his time. Critics sometimes object to him because he seems so unreal. The same sort of criticism is sometimes found in discussions about *Romola*. We are told that the real Florentines never sounded like Eliot's. But to say that presupposes knowledge of how they did sound, and, if such evidence exists, is it likely that Eliot missed it during her laborious research? I suspect that more often than not uncomfortable feelings towards her Florentines, or Jews, stem from the reader's unfamiliarity with these subjects. It is significant that critics who also happen to be Jews have usually been struck by Eliot's accuracy in the portrayal of their people.⁶

Other objections to the Jewish elements are based on what can only be described as offensive attitudes towards the Jews,⁷ or what, in my opinion, are misconceptions of what Eliot had to say about their religion. The former objections are best ignored, but the latter deserve comment. In a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Eliot spelled out why she decided to place so much emphasis on the Jews:

But precisely because I felt that the usual attitude of Christians towards Jews is--I hardly know whether to say more impious or more stupid when viewed in the light of their professed principles, I therefore felt urged to treat Jews with such sympathy and under-

standing as my nature and knowledge could attain to. Moreover, not only towards the Jews, but towards all oriental peoples with whom we English come in contact, a spirit of arrogance and contemptuous dictatorialness is observable which has become a national disgrace to us. There is nothing I should care more to do, if it were possible, than to rouse the imagination of men and women to a vision of human claims in those races of their fellow-men who most differ from them in customs and beliefs. But towards the Hebrews we western people who have been reared in Christianity, have a peculiar debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment. Can anything be more disgusting than to hear people called "educated" making small jokes about eating ham, and showing themselves empty of any real knowledge as to the relation of their own social and religious life to the history of the people they think themselves witty in insulting? They hardly know that Christ was a Jew. And I find men educated at Rugby supposing that Christ spoke Greek. To my feeling, this deadness to the history which has prepared half our world for us, this inability to find interest in any form of life that is not clad in the same coat-tails and flounces as our own lies very close to the worst kind of irreligion. The best that can be said of it is, that it is a sign of the intellectual narrowness--in plain English, the stupidity, which is still the average mark of our culture.

Yes, I expected more aversion than I have found. But I was happily independent in material things and felt no temptation to accommodate my writing to any standard except that of trying to do my best in what seemed to me most needful to be done, and I sum up with the writer of the Book of Maccabees--'if I have done well, and as befits the subject, it is what I desired, but if I have done ill, it is what I could attain unto.' (*Letters* 6: 301-302)

The letter is worth quoting at length because it is sometimes cited as proof positive of Eliot's unfortunate didacticism and determination to champion the Jews at the expense of realism.⁶ The second paragraph is understood to mean that she felt secure enough at this time to abandon her former views on art. But is that a fair interpretation? The letter as a whole strikes me as a straightforward and forceful denunciation of racial prejudice and suggests that she felt secure enough not to stoop to bigotry.

Moreover, the good qualities of Eliot's Jews are not exaggerated. In his recent introduction to *The World's Classics* edition of the novel, Graham Handley makes an important observation about the most idealistic

Jew of them all, Mordecai, and so provides a useful codicil, as it were, to Eliot's letter:

Mordecai's ideals are noble, fanatical, limited; he is subject to feelings, responses, and situations which have the pathos of deprivation and the inadequacy of a rooted bias. He is not an artistic or human failure; the critical error is to read him as self-consciously embodying his author's views and unqualified sympathy. He embodies simply what George Eliot intended he should--a realistic Jew of mystical obsessiveness born out of his time and turned back upon himself and his visions until the fortuitous advent of Deronda. The open ending of *Daniel Deronda* does not suggest unreservedly that Mordecai is right or that his visions are anything but personal. What it does suggest is that he believes that his ideas will be fulfilled and that because of this he has found tranquillity.⁹

However, even if it is allowed that Eliot does portray the Jews accurately and that she does not exaggerate the importance of their religion, a problem still remains for some critics: the Jewish characters tend to be non-dramatic. Baker, for instance, concedes that from a literary point of view most of the Jews are not as believable as their English counterparts. Deronda is too indistinct and passive to be perfectly realized, and others are weakened because they are imbued with allegorical significance--like Deronda's mother, "living on with no hope or close companionship, punished for her individuality and breach of faith."¹⁰

A detailed examination of the Shakespearean content in *Daniel Deronda*, however, reveals a unifying theme which, with the help of the Shakespearean mottoes and allusions, sharply defines the novel's characters. Eliot refers to Shakespeare in order to portray people who already have, need to have, or are incapable of having faith in something. The novel is about the need to believe in a higher good than the self, because faith will save people from the sort of nightmare visions which plague Gwendolen, the anguish suffered by the Princess

Halm-Eberstein, or the deadly inertia which characterizes Grandcourt and stupifies most of his society. The contribution of the Shakespearean mottoes and allusions to the unifying ideas help to suggest that reality is not created for us but by us--through the power of the imagination--and that it is necessary to invoke this faculty in order to avoid a terrifying emptiness. To some extent, these ideas are found in all the novels, since Eliot always insists that happiness depends on right moral conduct. But they are treated on a much larger scale than before, through the comparison of the English and Jewish people, and given a new emphasis insofar as each major character is, in isolation, a study of these ideas.

Henry James was among the first to grasp, although imperfectly I think, Eliot's interest in the inevitable dislocation of a society that has no imagination because it has no faith. In his amusing "*Daniel Deronda: A Conversation*," three characters discuss the novel: Theodora, who is not critical enough, Pulcheria, who jeers at just about everything, and Constantius, who is more balanced in his judgment and therefore representative of James's own views.

Constantius is generally sympathetic towards Eliot and appreciates her skillful characterization--especially of Gwendolen. But he is very critical of the novel's heavy emphasis on philosophical ideas, because he thinks that they detract from the artistic whole. The epigraphs are pretentious, the moralizing is overt, and "the very diffuseness of the book is a want of tact." He puts these failures down to Eliot's readiness to respond to "external pressures." Since her readers are without faith (in Christianity or anything else), they see things in a detached

sort of way. Views of life, rather than life itself, interest them, he says, and Eliot uses her artistic talents to meet their demands. Hence she is too much concerned with ideas and not enough with art. This is a point of logic for James: if life is not experienced directly, because its essence is lost through a lack of faith, then what remains is something once removed from reality. And any portrayal of that does not constitute art, since it is not an imitation of life; in fact, it amounts to a misuse of artistic talents. In becoming philosophical, he says, she "has given a chill to her genius." Had her times been without doubts, he implies, she would have been a great artist.¹¹

James is right in suggesting that most of the English characters in the novel have relegated themselves to an absurd existentialist role through their lack of faith, but he is wrong in assuming that Eliot was not aware of that phenomenon, or that the phenomenon itself is not a legitimate subject for art. The English characters for the most part prefer to play at living. They do little besides attending functions or play-acting: a scene from *The Winter's Tale* here (chapter 6), "an extemporised 'As you like it'" there (188).¹² Most of the Jewish characters, however, are concerned with their immediate existence. The novel's ultimate irony is that, although the English have firm roots in their country, they lack the sense of cohesion which the homeless Jews enjoy.

The Jews are superior to the English only insofar as they have not lost the ability to "hear with eyes"--something which forms the basis of a unifying theme in *Daniel Deronda*. The Pfortzheimer notebook, Vol. 1--Ms 707, indicates Eliot's strong interest in this saving faculty. She cites John Pike Hullah's *The History of Modern Music, A Course of*

Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institute of Great Britain (1862), which refers to Guido Aretino, an eleventh-century Benedictine monk, who taught his pupils to "hear with the eye" (Eliot's emphasis). His musical selections and method, she notes, resulted in an "absolutely timeless" music, a "plain song," which "extorts a kind of respect" whenever it is heard.¹³ Hearing with eyes is also referred to in *Felix Holt* and *Middlemarch*. The last line of Shakespeare's Sonnet 23 reads, "To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit," and, as I pointed out in chapters 6 and 7, it is used to comment on Esther's softening influence on Felix and Mrs. Vincy's feelings towards the ailing Fred.

Eliot's interest in hearing with eyes, I think, provides us with insight into her moral vision. Guido and Shakespeare gave her a metaphor with which to describe our ability to have very real and direct feelings of love, respect, sympathy, understanding, and tolerance, on which a code of ethics can be based. Why these feelings arise remains a mystery, but experience shows that they are often triggered by music and poetry. Eliot saw that the significance of these moments lies in the fact that they are not necessarily related to acts of faith, although they may also be prompted by religious beliefs. More important, however, such feelings furnished her with the necessary empirical evidence, as it were, to reach the inductive conclusion that right moral conduct is possible. In other words, Shakespeare and Guido contributed to her rationalistic code of ethics which does not throw out the baby with the metaphysical bath water.

Most of the characters in Eliot's novels are "unperfect actors on the stage" (cf. Sonnet 23, l. 1). There are rare exceptions, like the Garths in *Middlemarch* for example, but most experience some sort of "despair"

as they reflect on their lives with a "widening retrospect" (cf. "O May I Join the Choir Invisible"). Sometimes they are even tragic. Eliot usually portrays people who, if they do not hear with eyes, inflict pain and suffering on themselves and others. Yet she always portrays the majority of them as either learning to use, or already having, this extraordinary, verifiable faculty, while those who fail to learn usually suffer death or some form of ostracism. Not surprisingly, the line from Sonnet 23 appears in the Berg Notebook, the Commonplace Notebook, and the "Quarry" for *Romola* and *The Spanish Gypsy*.¹⁴ Throughout her novels, Eliot stresses the difficulties involved in the struggle towards right moral conduct, but insofar as she believes in its attainability, she remains optimistic about the future.

In *Daniel Deronda*, that optimism is clearly seen in the open-ended conclusion where, as Barbara Hardy has said, Gwendolen is left perched on the brink of "discovery and vision," and Deronda "poised on the the edge of a future which is deliberately left 'vague and grand.'" ¹⁵ References to Shakespeare and his work are central to understanding these actual and metaphorical voyages of discovery. More specifically, the mottoes and allusions suggest variations on the hearing with eyes theme. Some are used to show that everyone has the potential ability to hear with eyes, and others that the faculty is sometimes misused or ignored. Moreover, by commenting on the psychological make-up of characters, they establish the criteria for thematic comparisons between the different plots, thereby contributing to the novel's unity.

Three references to how Shakespeare is read are useful in outlining my argument. Gwendolen, Mirah, and Deronda have each read his work, and their different responses provide a far-reaching commentary on their

thoughts and behaviour. Early on, we are told of Gwendolen's impressions. She laughs at Mrs. Arrowpoint's literary ambitions, saying,

"Being acquainted with authors must give a peculiar understanding of their books: one would be able to tell then which parts were funny and which serious. I am sure I often laugh in the wrong place." Here Gwendolen herself became aware of danger, and added quickly, "In Shakespeare, you know, and other great writers that we can never see. But I always want to know more than there is in the books." (39-40)

Gwendolen's mocking is forgiveable: Mrs. Arrowpoint's desire to write a book based on her own romantic visions of Tasso's early life is somewhat ridiculous. It is the sort of book which Eliot herself poked fun at in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists." However, there is double irony in Gwendolen's admission that she does not understand someone like Shakespeare and that she always wants to know more than there is in books. In saying this, she resembles Rufus Lyon in *Felix Holt*, who says that although he has read Shakespeare he has never found him conducive to his religious thoughts. By admitting her failure to appreciate literature, Gwendolen betrays the same blinkered state. But in wanting to see more than there is in books, she demonstrates a desire to learn which will, in time, open new vistas to her.

Hard on the heels of the comment is another reference to Shakespeare, which isolates Gwendolen's particular deficiency:

"Imagination is often truer than fact," said Gwendolen, decisively, though she could no more have explained these glib words than if they had been Coptic or Etruscan. "I shall be so glad to learn all about Tasso--and his madness especially. I suppose poets are always a little mad."

"To be sure [said Mrs. Arrowpoint]--'the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' . . ."

"But [the poet's madness] was not always found out, was it?" said Gwendolen, innocently. "I suppose some of them rolled their eyes in private. Mad people are often very cunning." (40-41)

Mrs. Arrowpoint quotes from Theseus's lines, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (V.1), which describe how the imagination affects different people. It causes the madman to see devils, the lover to see beauty, and the poet to bring "forth / The forms of things unknown" and to turn "them to shapes, and [give] to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name" (V.1.14-17). Theseus explains that the imagination is shaped by the mind's disposition:

if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or, in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear!

(V.1.19-22)

To this, Hippolyta says that the four lovers, who have just spent the night in the woods, claim to have seen the same things, which suggests that their "[stories] of the night" are more than "fancy's images, / And [grow] to something of great constancy" (V.1.23-27). In other words, their stories seem real because of the powerful way in which events have been imagined. Shakespeare seems to imply that our belief in reality is not always determined by verifiable facts; it can also be shaped by the strength with which we imagine something to be the case. This peculiar power of the imagination is later endorsed by Theseus when he defends the play put on by Bottom and his friends. In response to Hippolyta's evaluation, "This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard," Theseus says: "The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no more, if imagination amend them. . . . If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men" (V.1.207-12).

The point of the allusion in *Daniel Deronda* is that Eliot is also endorsing the power of the imagination. The whole Jewish religion, for instance, may be just a story, but it can and does "[grow] to something

of great constancy" for some people, bringing them great comfort. As the narrator suggests, Gwendolen does not realize how right she is when she says "'Imagination is often truer than fact.'" For her, poets--if she understands them at all--are like madman and their visions mere frenzies. It is characteristic for her to say so. Given her neurotic tendencies, she imagines only the worst sorts of things. Beauty and goodness lie beyond her range of experience and so she dismisses them. Eliot suggests, as does Shakespeare, that we are all capable of imagining, but that our visions reflect our dispositions. If, like Gwendolen, we feel ourselves trapped in a world of limited possibilities, our visions will correspond to feelings of pessimism or even despair. But that does not disprove the existence of goodness and beauty.

Two ironic allusions to *Othello* indicate how Gwendolen's limited appreciation of Shakespeare translates itself in her thoughts and behaviour.¹⁶ Speaking of Mr. Middleton, a rather dull clergyman and one of her admirers, she concedes that he may be clever, "in a dark-lantern sort of way,"

"But he *is* a stick. If he had to say 'Perdition catch my soul, but I do love her,' he would say it in just the same tone as, 'Here endeth the second lesson'. . . . Perdition catch my soul if I love *him*." (49)

Othello's line hints at Gwendolen's flaws. Seeds of doubt take root in *Othello*'s mind at the moment when Iago observes Cassio moving away from Desdemona and says, "Ha, I like not that" (III.iii.35). Desdemona stands condemned by the time *Othello* declares, "Excellent wretch, perdition catch my soul, / But I do love thee, and when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again" (III.iii.91-93). These lines are, in fact, a desperate

protest against the overwhelming anguish which he is beginning to experience. Gwendolen understands them as a straightforward declaration of love. She does not see that these lines are deeply ironic because she is quick to ignore her own readiness to believe in only the worst suspicions and her own obsession with fidelity.

These tendencies clear the way for her potentially tragic situation. The parallel with *Othello* is continued when the narrator comments on how she responds to what her mother tells her about Deronda's parents:

An image which had immediately arisen in Gwendolen's mind was that of the unknown mother--no doubt a dark-eyed woman---probably sad. Hardly any face could be less like Deronda's than that represented as Sir Hugo's in a crayon portrait at Diplo. A dark-eyed beautiful woman, no longer young, had become "stuff o' the conscience" to Gwendolen. (306)

The "very stuff of conscience" prevented Iago from killing Roderigo for slandering Othello (cf. I.ii.1-5). Or so he says. The reference in *Daniel Deronda* is equally ironic because, like Iago, Gwendolen goes on to show that she is prepared to suppress her conscience whenever it suits her. The bedroom scene with her mother, in which she asks whether men generally have children before they are married (306), recalls the one in *Othello*, where Desdemona and Emilia talk about whether women ever betray their husbands. When Emilia says that there are indeed women who are unfaithful, but that "it is their husbands' fault," Desdemona answers, "God me such usage send, / Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend" (IV.iii.60-104). In other words, Desdemona's faith in the goodness of women is not shaken by bad examples. Gwendolen, however, is obsessed by the thought of Grandcourt's children by Lydia Glasher and Deronda's supposed illegitimacy. For her, marrying Grandcourt is in fact a question of "[picking] bad from bad." As the narrator says:

It was characteristic that, with all her debating, she was never troubled by the question whether the indefensibility of her marriage did not include the fact that she had accepted Grandcourt solely as the man whom it was convenient for her to marry, not in the least as one to whom she would be binding herself in duty. (307)

Deronda's overly fine appreciation of Shakespeare stands at the other extreme of Gwendolen's limited impressions. The privileged but detached way in which he has been brought up by the amiable, yet ineffectual, Sir Hugo has left him without any clear sense of belonging. Consequently, as a youngster, he was far too ready to hear with eyes and so transport himself into the world of fiction:

He had not lived with other boys, and his mind showed the same blending of child's ignorance with surprising knowledge which is oftener seen in bright girls. Having read Shakespeare as well as a great deal of history, he could have talked with the wisdom of a bookish child about men who were born out of wedlock and were held unfortunate in consequence, being under disadvantages which required them to be a sort of heroes if they were to work themselves up to an equal standing with their legally born brothers. But he had never brought such knowledge into any association with his own lot, which had been too easy for him ever to think about it--until this moment [when he thinks that he might be illegitimate]. . . . (151-52)

His reading of Shakespeare and others prompted his imagination to such an extent that he was in danger of ignoring the real world. If at first Gwendolen was unable to dissociate herself from her lot, he was unable to associate himself with it. He spends more time and energy worrying about Hans Meyrick's education, for instance, than about his own. And that Eliot does not altogether admire his idealistic tendencies is seen in the ironic parallel between him and Mrs. Arrowpoint: he too enjoyed making up stories of people's early lives, "just to fill up the blanks before they became famous" (153).

Immediately before he meets Mordecai, Deronda is still searching for some kind of anchorage to save him from his excessive idealism. It is

symbolically portrayed in his rowing towards Blackfriars Bridge where Mordecai, as fate will have it, is awaiting him. Similarly, Eliot describes Gwendolen's severe disillusionment while she is compelled to drift around the Mediterranean with Grandcourt. Deronda finds roots through his contact with Mirah and Mordecai. In their different ways, they show him how to combine a sense of purpose with a life that is set in a particular time and place. In other words, they teach him how to use his natural ability to hear with eyes in a constructive way. And through Deronda, they extend a similar lesson to Gwendolen. This is what Eliot meant when she wrote to Beecher Stowe, "But towards the Hebrews we western people . . . have a peculiar debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment." The Jewish faith links Mordecai and Mirah to a historical continuum which enriches their lives, and that, more than the doctrine itself, is what makes their religion valuable. The coexistence of hope and resignation frees them from the limitations which stifle Gwendolen and saves them from the aimlessness which threatens Deronda.

This well-balanced approach to life is reflected in Mirah's perceptive reading of Shakespeare. She has also had to contend with the brutality of a male-dominated society. Unlike Gwendolen, who has been pampered by a doting mother, Mirah has been subjected to a sleazy life with Lapidoth. Yet despite her greater hardships, she tells Mrs. Meyrick,

Even at first when I understood nothing, I shrank away 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. (196)

Literature has acted like an antidote to her unhappy experiences. It has widened her understanding of life by teaching her that good and evil coexist, that a faith in goodness does allow one to rise above life's miseries. Her suicide attempt is not just prompted by despair: she believes that she will find ultimate consolation in her faith (205-206). In contrast, Gwendolen tries to gamble her way out of her far less severe predicament by marrying Grandcourt: she snatches at an opportunity which she thinks will make the best of a bad lot.

Eliot's point is that it is useless to dwell on the question of whether life is fair or unfair. We should understand that it is, by and large, hard and difficult for most people. The immediate question ought to be how does one improve one's life? And this is answered by maintaining a state of "peaceful melancholy," by listening with eyes to the good things in life:

There is a way of looking at our life daily as an escape, and taking the quiet return of morn and evening--still more the star-like out-glowing of some pure fellow-feeling, some generous impulse breaking our inward darkness--as a salvation that reconciles us to hardship. Those who have a self-knowledge prompting such self-accusation as Hamlet's, can understand this habitual feeling of rescue. (740)

An extract from *Hamlet* in the Pfortzheimer Notebook, Volume III-711, identifies the sort of self-accusation that Eliot had in mind:

"I myself am indifferent honest but
yet I could accuse me of such things
that it were better my mother had not
borne me. I am proud, revengeful,
ambitious; with more offences at my
back than I have thoughts to put them
in, imagination to give them shape
or time to act them in? [sic]--What should
such a fellow [sic] as I do, crawling
between heaven & earth?"¹⁷

[Cf. III.1.122-29]

In Shakespeare's play, these lines occur in the "nunnery scene," immed-

ately after Hamlet asks Ophelia, "Why, wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" (III.1.121). Hamlet's point to Ophelia is that even an other-wise moderate, right-minded ("indifferent honest") man like himself has many faults which may easily lead him to commit the most dreadful sins. It is therefore necessary for Ophelia to remove herself to a nunnery where she may protect herself, especially her chastity.

Part of the irony in the exchange between Hamlet and Ophelia is that, although he is right about his faults, at this point in the play he is neither moderate nor right-minded. His extreme pessimism--"We are arrant knaves all, believe none of us" (III.1.129-30)--is due to his complete loss of faith in anything good and decent. It is only later, when he acknowledges the existence of providence, that he may be said to be properly self-aware. Mirah's faith is equal to any of Hamlet's earlier questions dealing with life's hardships, including the one which asks "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, / Or to take arms against a sea of troubles / And by opposing end them" (III.1.57-60). Gwendolen's self-absorption, on the other hand, only ensures Hamlet-like feelings of "crawling between heaven and earth." For like his, her obsession with her predicament necessarily means that she is guilty of pride, ambition, and a revengeful nature. She can only rescue herself from the path of tragedy, which her "offences" set her on, when she finds something to believe in and engages in genuine self-accusation.

The potentially tragic consequences of Gwendolen's story are initially suggested in a reference to *Macbeth*. Was it, asks the narrator, because of her charm that she always played the role of a "princess in exile"? Not exactly. Other, far less charming people, notably un-

scrupulous men in a household of weak women, have also wielded Gwendolen's power. Her formidable influence is, in fact, rooted in her failure to keep the "inborn energy of egoistic desire" in check. She may have been encouraged to use that energy, but she remains culpable:

For Macbeth's rhetoric about the impossibility of being many opposite things in the same moment, referred to the clumsy necessities of action and not to the subtler possibilities of feeling. We cannot speak a loyal word and be meanly silent, we cannot kill and not kill in the same moment; but a moment is room wide enough for the loyal and mean desire, for the outlash of a murderous thought and the sharp backward stroke of repentance. (35-36)

This is Macbeth's explanation for killing Duncan's chamberlains:

Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate and furious,
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:
Th'expedition of my violent love
Outrun the pauser, reason. . .

Who could refrain,
That had a heart to love, and in that heart
Courage, to make's love known?

(II.iii.106-16)

It is rhetoric indeed: plausible and totally insincere. More than anything else, his words aptly describe his singleminded love of self that prompted Duncan's murder.

As Hardy says of the use of this passage from Shakespeare's play in Eliot's novel, "The specific reference to ambivalent feeling and the context of murder are both relevant."¹⁸ For although Gwendolen oozes charm, she harbours selfish, even murderous, thoughts. On two climactic occasions she is made to realize that there is a difference between juggling opposing thoughts and reaching a decision: she out-runs reason when she marries Grandcourt but she pauses to think before throwing him a rope while he is drowning. In each case there are extenuating circumstances, but these do not altogether excuse her from responsibility.

The motto to chapter 5, which immediately follows the *Macbeth* reference, drives the point home:

"Her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak."

--*Much Ado About Nothing* [III.1.52-54]. (37)

In the play, Beatrice is alone in the arbour and is pointedly, though indirectly, informed by Hero and Ursula that her sharp tongue has inhibited Benedick from wooing her. As soon as Beatrice hears this, she says, "Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much? / Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu! / No glory lives behind the back of such" (III.1.108-10). In the novel, Gwendolen, to whom the motto applies, asks Klesmer to evaluate her singing, since she entertains ideas of going on the stage. She resembles Beatrice insofar as she values her abilities so highly that consulting Klesmer is for her only a formality. She differs from Beatrice, however, because she proudly ignores Klesmer when he all but tells her that her voice is not good enough for a professional career. At that moment, she is said to experience the feeling of "a sinking heart at the sudden width of horizon opened round her small musical performance" (43), and that feeling is intensified when Klesmer, seeing that Gwendolen has not really listened to him, is forced to become abrupt in his assessment of her voice. Much later, when Deronda announces his impending marriage to Mirah, the narrator says, "The world seemed getting larger round poor Gwendolen, and she more solitary and helpless in the midst" (747). But at this early stage in her moral development she is incapable of hearing with eyes and content to exercise her limited wit at the Arrowpoints.

The motto casting Gwendolen in the role of Beatrice is ironic in more ways than one. *Much Ado About Nothing* is an appropriate shorthand for characterizing the smugness of the novel's English society. Shakespeare's Claudio, Don Pedro, and Leonato are very easily deceived by Don John when he accuses Hero of infidelity, and their complacency is the result of their sense of well-being. Messina's self-satisfaction, the result of wealth and independence, has brought about a critical laxity which suits Don John's dark purposes. As A. R. Humphries says, the comic tone prevails, and so it is easy to over-emphasize the destructive element represented by Don John and the complacency of the good characters. But, "while the contagion lasts it is devastating. . . ."19

This is precisely Eliot's point in *Daniel Deronda*. Gwendolen is quite right to paraphrase *Much Ado About Nothing* when she says of her society, "There seems to be a little of everything and not much of anything" (44). Her insensitivity towards Shakespeare and the arts in general is not peculiar to her; the ignorance that she flaunts when she asks Klesmer to help her become an artist has been learned from and encouraged by the people around her. Young Clintock, a classical scholar, believes that four cantos written on the merits of croquet are worthy of Pope, and he genuinely prefers Gwendolen's amateurish music to Klesmer's "tip-top playing" (43-44). Mr. Bult's dismissal of Klesmer as a Slav of the "fermenting sort," a "mere musician," someone "hardly regarded in the light of a serious human being who ought to have the vote. . ." (223-24), is representative of how most English people evaluate artists. Their prejudices spring from their general lack of imagination.

It is, therefore, not altogether surprising that Gwendolen misjudges everything--poetry, her own singing ability--and, most important, Grand-

court's Don John-like nature. Most of the novel's English characters misjudge the world around them. Nevertheless, she has enough insight into the stupidity of her society to want to escape from it. She marries Grandcourt because she sees his wealth as a means of absolving herself from all responsibility towards others. And therein lies her potential tragedy: she comes close to paying the same price that Grandcourt eventually pays for his extraordinary selfishness.

The motto to chapter 12, is ironically intended and hints at what for Eliot constitutes Grandcourt's greatest sin:

"O gentlemen, the time of life is short;
To spend that shortness basely were too long,
If life did ride upon a dial's point,
Still ending at the arrival of an hour."

--SHAKESPEARE [sic]: [1] *Henry IV*, [V.ii.81-84],²⁰

The lines are spoken by Hotspur as the rebels prepare for the battle of Shrewsbury. Having dismissed Hal's offer to settle things in single combat, he urges war. In *Daniel Deronda*, the lines refer to Grandcourt's deliberate avoidance of any action. In this chapter, he is seen with Lush in one of his more complacent moods: although determined to marry Gwendolen and not to pursue Catherine Arrowpoint, he is in no hurry to make his intentions known. Instead, he prefers to abuse Lush and torment his dogs. As the motto suggests, his indolence, which often translates itself into brutality, is far worse than Hotspur's rashness. Hotspur has been deceived by his fellow rebels and, although he is casual about the prospect of dying, he is at least ready to act for something he believes in. In contrast, Grandcourt is simply frittering his life away.

Grandcourt's absolute refusal to hear with eyes ensures his eventual downfall. Since he is never seen struggling with his conscience, it is difficult to be sympathetic towards him; and yet he is one of the two

tragic figures against whom Gwendolen's moral progress is measured. (The other is Deronda's mother--the other "princess in exile"--and I will come back to her later.) Eliot likens Grandcourt to Macbeth, whom Gwendolen has already begun to emulate. For Grandcourt, life is one great bore; for Macbeth, at the height of his despair, it is "a walking shadow . . . a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (V.v.24-28). Sir Hugo greets Grandcourt's death with, "nothing in his life became him like the leaving it" (783)--cf. *Macbeth*, I.iv.7-8--lines which anticipate how the next Thane of Cawdor will be eulogized. Like Shakespeare's exhausted king, Grandcourt is all but played out. As with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, there was a time when Grandcourt felt a passion for Mrs. Glasher, but these feelings are "now as dead as the music of a cracked flute" (312). His cultural indoctrination has taught him that indifference is a virtue, his wealth has left him free to perfect his moral inertia, and he has, therefore, achieved a state of meaninglessness. Only while his will is unopposed does he exercise his terrible power: "in general, there was nothing he hated more than to be forced into anything like violence even in words: his will must impose itself without trouble" (321). As Handley says:

It is too easy to see Grandcourt as the tyrant who is completely in command; he is not, he only thinks he is. His indolent casualness and his inherent *ennui* find him unequal to ordinary human demands Grandcourt [is ultimately] defeated where he would have most wished to succeed. He who lived for nobody but himself [fails] to contaminate the wife who corrupted herself for him, but who [comes] through the fire of temptation scarred yet whole.²¹

It is worthwhile noting here that other lines from *Macbeth* are used as figures of speech to remind us of various themes. When Mr. Gascoigne tries to impress on Gwendolen the seriousness of Rex's fall from Primrose, the narrator says that "he wished to make assurance doubly sure"

(69). Macbeth says, "But yet I'll make assurance doubly sure," even though he is told by the second Apparition that "none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth." He will do so, he says, "That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies, / And sleep in spite of thunder--" (cf. IV.i.80-86). Gwendolen also deceives herself into thinking that she is beyond reproach and that her "pale-hearted fear . . . lies." Much later, as Mrs Davilow reads the telegram announcing Grandcourt's death, her daughters' faces are said to be "'painted with fear'" (659). (The expression is also used in *Romola* to describe Tito's guilty face.) While Macbeth cowers before Banquo's ghost, Lady Macbeth says: "This is the very painting of your fear: / This is the very air-drawn dagger" (III.iv.60-61). Thus the figures of speech remind us of Gwendolen's potential tragedy, Grandcourt's evil genius, and the theme of the imagination shaped by fear.

Eliot suggests that if life is to have any meaning, it is not only morally desirable but necessary for people to hear with eyes. Mordecai demonstrates the point. As the complete opposite to Grandcourt, he is poor and physically weak, yet his influence on Deronda survives his death. That does not mean that he is without faults: he does not have the instinctive kind of generosity that Mirah shows towards Lapidoth, and he is unreasonable in expecting young Jacob Cohen to carry his Jewish torch. But on balance his generosity outweighs the severity of his dogmatism. He has "a poet's yearning" (448) for the visions that "are the creators and feeders of the world" (464).

Such visions are not difficult to invoke; instead, they are frequently spontaneous and require a deliberate effort to be ignored. After Gwendolen has agreed to marry Grandcourt, we read:

While she lay on her pillow with wide-open eyes, "looking on darkness the blind do see," she was appalled by the idea that she was going to do what she had once started away from with repugnance. . . . But here had come a moment when something like a new consciousness was awaked. (285)

Shakespeare's Sonnet 27, to which this passage alludes, describes the poet's involuntary imagination and the effect it has on him. Despite the fact that he travels away from home, he cannot avoid the image of his affection. Even when he is tired, he finds himself "Looking on darkness which the blind do see," and so discerns the image as clearly as a "jewel hung in ghastly night, / [Making] black night beauteous and her old face new." His subsequent feelings of unrest are directly proportional to the clarity with which he visualizes the joy that is denied him. The allusion is appropriate to Gwendolen: her sudden anguish is induced by her momentary awareness of how wrong it is for her to marry Grandcourt. But more important, the allusion suggests that people are capable of strong, spontaneous visions of what is right or good--that they can hear with eyes.

Gwendolen tries to suppress such visions because they run counter to her egoistic desires, while Deronda lets them run riot. Mordecai, however, uses his, which are shaped by his faith and concern for the Jews, to see into the future. When Deronda says to him, "'We must not lose sight of the fact that the outward event has not always been a fulfillment of the firmest faith,'" Mordecai answers:

"'You would remind me that I may be under an illusion--that the history of our people's trust has been full of illusion. I face it all. . . . *So it might be with my trust, if you would make it an illusion.* . . .'" (Eliot's emphasis) (468).

In other words, much of what we rely on in life is illusion made credible by faith, and Mordecai's convictions are no different. It matters

little whether or not Mordecai can be proven to be right; the point is that for him faith makes abstract ideas, like trust and friendship, "something of great constancy."

However, even religious beliefs have their limitations. Mirah's faith is unequal to the anguish which she experiences when she dwells on her unrequited love for Deronda:

As for Mirah her dear head lay on its pillow that night with its former suspicions thrown out of shape but still present, like an ugly story which has been discredited but not therefore dissipated. All that she was certain of about Deronda seemed to prove that he had no such fetters upon him as she had been allowing herself to believe in. His whole manner as well as his words implied that there were no hidden bonds remaining to have any effect in determining his future. But notwithstanding this plainly reasonable inference, uneasiness still clung about Mirah's heart. Deronda was not to blame, but he had an importance for Mrs Grandcourt which must give her some hold on him. And the thought of any close confidence between them stirred the little biting snake that had long lain curled and harmless in Mirah's gentle bosom. (701)

The passage offers an interesting example of the subtle way in which Shakespearean mottoes and allusions are used to extend the hearing with eyes theme to the various plots. The English and Jewish stories are linked through the thematic parallel between Mirah's brooding and Gwendolen's "Looking on darkness"; the reference to "the little biting snake," besides referring to Mirah's jealousy, echoes an earlier allusion to *Antony and Cleopatra*; and that, in turn, ties into the story of Deronda's mother, who is also compared with Cleopatra.

Because Mirah rediscovers her tranquility when Deronda saves her from drowning, it is easy to overlook her potential for pain and suffering. She has a generosity of mind and spirit and a capacity for faith which ennobles her, but she is gnawed by jealousy when her faith in Deronda weakens:

The uneasiness she had felt before had been comparatively vague But her feeling was no longer vague: the cause of her pain

--the image of Mrs Grandcourt by Deronda's side drawing him farther and farther into the distance, was as definite as pincers on her flesh. In the Psyche-mould of Mirah's frame there rested a fervid quality of emotion sometimes rashly supposed to require the bulk of a Cleopatra; her impressions had the thoroughness and tenacity that give to the first selection of passionate feeling the character of a lifelong faithfulness. And now a selection had declared itself, which gave love a cruel heart of jealousy. . . . [N]ow her repugnance concentrated itself on Mrs Grandcourt, of whom she involuntarily conceived more evil than she knew. (682)

The reference to "the bulk of a Cleopatra" recalls the motto to chapter 53, which reads: "'My desolation does begin to make / A better life.' / --SHAKESPEARE [sic]: *Antony and Cleopatra* [V.ii.1-2]" (614). These lines are spoken by the queen as she scorns Fortune and contemplates suicide. When Antony dies, she sees herself as one of Fortune's knaves and so finds death attractive (V.ii.1-7). In the novel, the lines refer to the Princess who, like Shakespeare's queen, chose to do her duty to herself, at the expense of others, and also became one of Fortune's knaves when her singing career ended. In keeping with the theme of the power of the imagination, Eliot suggests that Mirah and the Princess each have "the bulk of a Cleopatra," the same capacity to despair at their unhappy situations. However, only the Princess's despair is irreversible, and that makes her the novel's other, most complete tragic figure along with Grandcourt.

Deronda's mother illustrates Klesmer's point to Gwendolen about the price the artist has to pay for his or her excellence. The Princess had the required talent and, more important, the will to dedicate herself totally to her art. That necessarily meant giving up everything else--including her family and faith. She achieved artistic perfection but at an enormous cost. Gillian Beer is right, I think, when she says that Eliot's treatment of music is often "associated with women's desire for

freedom."²² Like Gwendolen, the Princess wanted to escape from a male-dominated society, and she succeeded in finding independence through her music. But within the larger context of the novel's concern with moral visions that can alleviate the plight of both men and women, music, like Judaism, serves as another ideal to which people can approximate. However understandable it was for the Princess to want to escape from her father's impositions based on a Jewish faith that she did not share, it is clear that she erred on the side of fanaticism. For unlike Klesmer or Mirah, who are also talented but moderate their musical aspirations by associating with Catherine Arrowpoint and Deronda respectively,²³ the Princess pursued an exclusive vision of sublimity which, in the long run, was too narrow, too ephemeral to live by. Even if she was more gifted than Klesmer or Mirah and therefore more justified in dedicating herself to music, in choosing to act as she did, she spent her life on a transitory glory: the opposite extreme of Grandcourt's deliberate lethargy.

The Princess despairs, now that her voice is gone, because she has nothing with which to replace her self-centred career. While she believed in her greatness, she tells Deronda, she would argue that she had a perfect right to follow her inclinations.

"But I can maintain nothing now. No faith is strong within me. My father may have God on his side. This man's words were like lion's teeth upon me. My father's threats eat into me with my pain. If I tell everything--if I deliver up everything--what else can be demanded of me? I cannot make myself love the people I have never loved--is it not enough that I lost the life I did love?" (595)

Even the children of her second marriage bring her little or no comfort:

"But you love your other children, and they love you?" said Deronda, anxiously.

"Oh yes," she answered, as to a question about a matter of course, while she folded her arms again. "But," . . . she added in a deeper tone, . . . "I am not a loving woman. That is the truth.

It is a talent to love--I lacked it. Others have loved me--and I have acted their love. I know very well what love makes of men and women--it is subjection. It takes another for a larger self, enclosing this one,"--she pointed to her own bosom. "I was never willingly subject to any man. Men have been subject to me." (620-21)

Her particular tragedy is seen in her inability to do her duty to herself and others, for in ignoring the latter she eventually failed in both. For a few years she was happy, she says, but now she appears to Deronda "like a dreamed visitant from some region of departed mortals" (621)--an apt description also of Gwendolen's nightmare visions and Grandcourt's state of living death.

In "Notes on *The Spanish Gypsy*," Eliot says that a tragic figure is someone who "must give way to the general [will]"; that the tragedy itself is "the struggle involved . . . [resulting] often in the entirely calamitous issue in spite of a grand submission"; and, that submission is only possible by means of an "inward impulse" which springs from "an imagination actively interested in the lot of mankind generally. . . ." Grandcourt and the Princess ignore these impulses, which are heard with eyes, and never willingly submit to the general will. Consequently, they are destroyed by it in different ways.

Deronda learns from his mother's story, and that is why he is so receptive to the news of his Jewishness. By aligning himself to the Judaic will, he gives his natural idealism an objective which may, or may not, be realised. All that can be said about his desire to establish a Jewish homeland is that his quest avoids the conflict that his mother exposed herself to: therefore, it has a chance of success. He willingly accepts his new responsibilities because he will be drawn into closer

contact with Mirah, but also because he sees the impossibility of avoiding the inevitable. As he tells his mother:

We are set in the midst of difficulties. I see no other way to get any clearness than by being truthful--not by keeping back facts which may--which should carry obligation within them--which should make the only guidance towards duty. No wonder if such facts come to reveal themselves in spite of concealments. The effects prepared by generations are likely to triumph over a contrivance which would bend them all to the satisfaction of self. Your will was strong, but my grandfather's trust which you accepted and did not fulfil--what you call his yoke--is the expression of something stronger, with deeper, farther-spreading roots, knit into the foundations of sacredness for all men. (617-18)

His new obligations do not embitter him because he is the reverse of "Faulconbridge and Edmund of Gloster, whose coarse ambition for personal success is inflamed by a defiance of accidental advantages" (437). Like *Deronda*, Faulconbridge and Edmund are also of uncertain parentage. But whereas they are determined to undermine or usurp their legitimate brothers (cf. *King John* I.i.180ff and *King Lear* I.i.1ff respectively), *Deronda* joins his Jewish brothers in a common endeavour. The motto to chapter 59 reads:

"I count myself in nothing else so happy
As in a soul remembering my good friends."
--SHAKESPEARE [*Richard II*, II.iii.46-47] (663)²⁴.

Other lines from *Richard II* are also recorded in the "Quarry" for *Felix Holt* and the *Berg Notebook*, and, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Eliot seems to have deliberately read them out of context. She ignored the fact that Bolingbroke, in this instance, had no choice but to greet the English nobles like this and that some of these friends became his enemies. Instead, she read them as a wiser Bolingbroke might have spoken them following the political upheaval of his own reign. Here they refer to *Deronda's* forgiving attitude and tolerance towards Sir Hugo, who has deceived him by withholding the information of his Jewish birth, and thus

emphasize his indebtedness to the past. Despite his new understanding of himself and the resentment he feels towards Sir Hugo, he does not lose sight of the fact that he has benefitted from his life with the Mallingers. He tells Mordecai, "'I think our duty is faithful tradition where we can attain it. . . . Don't ask me to deny my spiritual parentage, when I am finding the clue to my life in the recognition of my natural parentage'" (699). In saying this, he even surpasses his mentor's ability to hear with eyes and demonstrates why he is so unlike Shakespeare's Faulconbridge and Edmund.

Gwendolen is saved from tragedy because, unlike the Princess and Grandcourt, she learns to bow to the general will before it is too late. The multiple references to *The Winter's Tale* are useful in tracing the steps of her moral development. She and Rex choose Shakespeare's play for their tableau because she hopes to flatter herself (53ff). More than anything, she wants to appear as a Greek heroine, and so Rex suggests that she appear as Briseis, Achilles' concubine. At first Gwendolen agrees, because she feels that she too is manipulated by arrogant men. But then she rejects the idea, perhaps because she knows that Briseis did not escape the whims of Agamemnon and Achilles. At this point, Gwendolen sees herself as a victim unwilling to acquiesce.

Shakespeare's much-wronged heroine is eventually chosen, no doubt, because Gwendolen mistakenly thinks that Hermione triumphs over Leontes. She ignores the fact that it took sixteen years of misery before Hermione could come to life again, and that the scene they have chosen is, above all else, one of reconciliation. Moreover, since they are bent on "an imitation of acting" (53), the whole idea is even more absurdly selective. It is also deeply ironic to recall Hermione's words at her

trial, "To me can life be no commodity" (III.ii.93), because, at this stage, Gwendolen is ready to be expedient, to gamble or sell her life in return for personal convenience and advantage.

The sudden appearance of the dead face and the fleeing figure during the tableau is an ironic parallel to the news in the play of Mamillius' death (III.ii.142-45). The incidents have similar effects: Gwendolen is reduced to hysterics and Hermione "dies." But whereas Hermione's "death" is attributed to her love for others, Gwendolen's hysteria springs from a fear rooted in selfishness. The scene in the picture anticipates Grandcourt's dying face and Gwendolen's "fleeing" from him when she delays in trying to rescue him; and it demonstrates how, while she is still in her selective frame of mind, she can only see the ugliness of life.

The motto which prefixes the chapter describing her wedding day is also taken from *The Winter's Tale*:

"A wild dedication of yourselves
To unpath'd waters, undream'd shores."
--SHAKESPEARE [IV.iv.568-69] (325)

The lines are part of Camillo's speech to Florizel and Perdita on the need to avoid becoming "the slaves of chance" (IV.iv.541). He suggests that they go to Leontes' court because they will find safety there. It is, he says,

A course more promising
Than a wild dedication of yourselves
To unpath'd waters, undream'd shores; most certain
To miseries enough: no hope to help you,
But as you shake off one, to take another:
Nothing so certain as your anchors, who
Do their best office if they can but stay you
Where you'll be loath to be. Besides, you know
Prosperity's the very bond of love,
Whose fresh complexion and whose heart together
Affliction alters.

Perdita answers this with, "One of these is true: / I think affliction may subdue the cheek, / But not take in the mind" (IV.iv.566-78). In other words, she understands that she does not have to sell her soul in order to prosper, and she is praised for her wisdom.

In *Daniel Deronda*, the motto is ironic. Instead of Hermione, Gwendolen now plays Perdita--without having her generous nature. The motto also serves as a structural allusion: in the play, the happiness of the shearing feast is marred by the threats of Polixenes and Autolycus; in the novel, the wedding day turns sour when Gwendolen reads Lydia Glasher's letter. Similarly, Perdita's concern that she is not suited to Florizel's rank is mirrored in Gwendolen's tendency to skate over the same issue with regard to Grandcourt.

Now that the comparison between play and novel is firmly established, we can better appreciate its full significance. During Gwendolen's interview with Klesmer, which, luckily for her, comes "pat betwixt too early and too late" (219)--cf. *Henry VIII*, II.iii.84--she reminds him of her role as Hermione. However, it is brought home to her that art is not about imitating artists: Klesmer tells her that "there is no honour in donning the life as a livery" (236). Similarly, with the help of *Deronda*, she learns that there is no honour in donning the life of riches. Honour is found through self-renunciation: Hermione can only come to life when, after much suffering, Leontes' faith is awakened (V.iii.94-95).²⁵ When this happens, the reconciliation occurs allowing the play to end on a note of optimism. Similarly, the woman who misrepresented Hermione, because she was more like Leontes in her self-obsession, expiates her sins, and awakens her faith in a higher good once she has learned to hear with eyes.

Thus, the Shakespearean mottoes, references, and allusions help to define characters and to give the novel a thematic unity. But as Knoepfelmacher says, since *The Merchant of Venice* also contains a strong Jewish theme, "Her omissions are perhaps equally notable. In a book teeming with spatial allusions to Jewish figures of fact and fiction the character of Shylock is tactfully avoided."²⁶ It probably was a tactful omission. Had she mentioned Shylock, she would have drawn attention away from the hearing with eyes theme, a faculty that transcends religious and national boundaries, and run the risk of being seen to write the sort of novel about Jews that she was anxious to avoid. *Daniel Deronda* is about searching for new beginnings and finding common ground. The novel's practising Jews personify those ideas.

Like her other novels, *Daniel Deronda* is both radical and conservative in its judgment: it evaluates the present and the future in terms of the past. It tries to expose the genesis of problems, hoping to give a better appreciation of what is worth changing and salvaging. For Eliot, these amount to the same thing: attitudes affecting right moral conduct need changing or salvaging, depending on their value or effect. In this respect, she is radical. However, in stressing that people must accept their duties to others through self-renunciation, she is conservative.

Some critics find this an irritating contradiction, since it is usually women who are forced to accept the stupid or unfair impositions of male domination, while the *status quo* remains more or less intact. The Princess is a good case in point. She is arguably the most talented person in *Daniel Deronda*, if not Eliot's canon, and yet she becomes an outcast when she exercises her gifts. Her radical alternative to

patriarchy has effectively broken her, and, as a shadow of her former self, she is compelled to fulfill the very demands that she sought to oppose. Where her story is concerned, it almost seems as if Eliot had ambivalent feelings towards her own teaching. Deronda, who is sympathetic enough to understand most suffering, is forcefully told by his mother, "You are not a woman. You may try--but 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" (588). However, as Gilbert and Gubar point out, it is precisely the tragic consequences of rage--in this case, female rage--which frightened and moved Eliot to counsel self-renunciation.⁴⁷ It is true that the Princess finds it impossible to renounce her anger. Like Grandcourt, she has become incapable of hearing with eyes. But where Deronda, Mirah, Mordecai, and even Gwendolen, are concerned, hearing with eyes makes them imaginatively sympathetic towards their fellow human beings, and that sustains them, offering hope for a better future.

Eliot did not resign herself to the wrong done, for instance, to Gwendolen or the Princess by unsympathetic men. Among other things, *Daniel Deronda* addresses itself to the plight of women by emphasizing the male chauvinism of the English, and even the Jews. It is significant that, although Deronda learns from Mordecai, he needs Mirah's companionship to make his life complete. If he resembles anyone, it is Mrs. Meyrick and her daughters, who exhibit a compassion for Jews which few men are capable of. (Hans is also drawn to Mirah, but not by the type of spontaneous concern which first stirs within Deronda and only later turns into love.) With notable exceptions on both sides, men are viewed more critically than women--because they abuse their power.

But in the final analysis, the novel is less concerned with apportioning blame than with showing how a failure to imagine a better world contributes to life's imperfections. The intolerant or patronizing behaviour of men, for instance, is balanced by the extreme reactions of some women. What the novel shows is that conflicts have a way of assuming destructive momenta, which threaten everyone. Eliot told Beecher Stowe that anti-Semitism is a national disgrace, meaning that it has existed for such a long time as to become part of the culture. Prejudices that have evolved over long periods, often shrouded in mystery, do not disappear overnight nor lend themselves to easy solutions. Their momenta have to run their courses before substantial changes are possible. Hence, Eliot does not portray people setting off on radical missions, or, if she does, as in *Daniel Deronda*, she avoids commenting on their probable outcome. She does not describe what has yet to occur--a measure of her continued emphasis on the need for realism in art. But, as her appreciation and use of Shakespeare suggests, she insists that hearing with eyes is possible and that it is a first and necessary step towards a new beginning.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

In chapter 1, I referred to one of Eliot's letters to Maria Lewis in which she talked about writers of fiction. Among those worth reading, she said,

Shakespeare has a higher claim . . . on our attention but we have need of as nice a power of distillation as a bee to suck nothing but honey from his pages. However as in life we must be exposed to malign influences from intercourse with others if we would reap the advantages designed for us by making us social beings, so in books. (*Letters* 1: 21-24)

It is amusing to recall this early, somewhat grudging respect for the author of whom she eventually took so much notice in her own fiction. He did indeed command her attention, and in this conclusion I want to summarize briefly and in general terms what she distilled from his work and eventually used on her own pages.

Once she shed her religious fervour, which coloured her reference to "malign influences," Shakespeare helped her to write about a world not dreamed of in her Evangelical philosophy, but one she continued to analyze in and through art. He contributed to that analysis by showing her that there is often a necessary, complex and interconnected relationship between human behaviour and the events that shape people's lives. In demonstrating this, his art became a substitute for her lost Christian faith: it gave her insight into some of the mysteries of life, without necessarily resorting to first causes. Perhaps more important, she saw that it could touch people's better natures, thereby encouraging them to become responsible social beings.

With good reason, she is often remembered for her extraordinary, rational intellect. However, it is interesting to note that while she

translated David Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, she kept a statue and engraving of Christ in her study because, as the Brays reported, "she was Strauss-sick--it made her ill dissecting the beautiful story of the crucifixion, and only the sight of her Christ-image and picture made her endure it."¹ The anecdote illustrates, I think, that reverence for, and an emotional response to, art--in this case pictorial art--were as much a part of her as her dispassionate, intellectual nature. John Paterson is right when he says:

Like Keats, in short, George Eliot celebrated the principle of negative capability: the ability to live without the luxury of absolute conviction as to the truth of life and nature. She in fact responded to the increasingly modern perception that ambiguity was the first principle of that life and nature.²

All her novels examine the ambiguities of life and nature, and they usually indicate that people and/or societies are ultimately responsible for the way things turn out. Thus, since Shakespeare's art features in those investigations, it can be said that he was one of many artists who helped her to fill the gap left by her loss of religious faith.

The value of art, the fact that art can contribute to an understanding of the world, was one thing she distilled from his pages. The rest has to do with particularities, how he went about his work. She once wrote: "Artistic power seems to me to resemble dramatic power--to be an intuitive perception of the varied states of which the human mind is susceptible with ability to give out anew in intensified expression."³ And elsewhere, she made a special note of a comment on Shakespeare's dramatic power:

Nothing is easier than to imagine--that is, to recall--a light-hearted or touching tale; it is done every day by the nurse wanting to entertain her child, the scoundrel trying to exonerate himself before his judges, the tippler wishing to amuse his friends. Genius consists of having a better understanding, a deeper insight, and shedding more light on something that everyone knows superficially

or half comprehends. One of Shakespeare's special characteristics is his supreme indifference as to his subject. It is all the same to him: the master craftsman can make use of anything. At random he takes a stone, a piece of wood, a block of granite or marble. It matters little to him that someone before him has made an old king, disinherited by his daughters, act and speak on stage: it is a fact like any other, worth no more and no less. Shakespeare will discover all the tears and strength in the heart of that old man.

Nowadays people pursue invention that lacks true originality: the latter is to be found in the artist, not the material he uses. All great men have had their material handed down to them by tradition, the people, the common heritage of ideas and customs. They have received them in their raw state; then they have melted, transformed and immortalised them. They have made a god out of a milestone, a statue out of a tree-trunk; like that Spanish painter, imprisoned by the Moors, who, having no marble to shape and no madonna to worship, took a log from his hearth and made it into the Holy Virgin.⁴

What she also learned from Shakespeare, and what she eventually used on her own pages, then, was not so much his material as his better understanding of, and deeper insight into, people and events. She considered that art's power lay in the re-working of inherited material, and she therefore readily compared, say, Esther Lyon and Dorothea Brooke with Henry V. Her interest was in discovering and portraying the character traits which people often share--despite their differing circumstances or positions in life. In this way, she was able to point to life's continuities and historical processes, thereby indicating how people should conduct themselves in a world that often seems difficult, if not incomprehensible.

Her novels focus on the trials and tribulations of people who, for the most part, are very ordinary. Like Shakespeare, she was unconcerned about whether or not a subject was suitable enough; her "true originality" is found in her ability to engage our imaginative sympathy. *Scenes* is a good case in point. There she calls to mind--but deliberately distances her characters from--people like Macbeth, Hotspur, Desdemona,

Juliet, Bottom, and Malvolio. Eliot works within an artistic tradition but shows her characters as they really are, and makes us sympathetic towards them. In this case, the negative association, to coin a phrase, brings home the idea that it is absurd for us to reserve our liveliest interest for the heroic, or otherwise extraordinary, people of this world.

All her Shakespearean allusions and references encourage us to reflect in detail on her creations and the issues with which she is concerned. Throughout the novels, the reader is asked to recall Shakespeare's texts and to apply them to Eliot's; in the later ones, references are even made to the success or failure of some of her characters to distill Shakespeare's honey for themselves (Rufus and Esther Lyon, Felix Holt, Gwendolen, Mirah and Deronda, are all said to have read him). The change in tactic indicates Eliot's increasing, sophisticated reliance on Shakespeare as an artistic and moral barometer with which to comment on and dramatize her subjects. But it is in her adaptation of his dramatic techniques and methods that her close affinity with his artistic and world vision is found. I hope that I have shown how her use of allusions and mottoes, her experiments with tragic vision, realism, romance, and dramatic structures, and her "hearing with eyes" theme are closely linked to his work, and how they give her work moral resonances and artistic coherence.

It is worth making the point that her novels do have artistic coherence, for it is only in the last thirty or forty years that the majority of critics have stopped dismissing them as mildly interesting studies in realism but artistic failures. As Barbara Hardy says, prior to the mid-nineteen-fifties, the "technical and aesthetic criticism of George Eliot

had been very much less in evidence than, say, in the criticism of Dickens or Henry James or Conrad." Since that time many critics have tried to reverse that tendency, but, Hardy goes on, "Her art is at once too realistically humane and too intellectually analytic to make it good material for the creative activity of interpretative critics, whether their interests are psychological, philosophical, or technical."⁵ I too have found her art realistically humane and intellectually analytic. But through my "technical" approach--tracing her own reading of Shakespeare --I have also discovered patterns and continuities in great art. And that is why, like Shakespeare, she has a higher claim on our attention: there is also a good deal of honey in her pages.

Chapter 1

¹ Goroon S. Haight, ed., *The George Eliot Letters*, 7 vols, [1-7] (London: Oxford UP, 1954-56), and 2 vols. [8-9] (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978), 3: 123-24n. All further references to these editions will be cited as *Letters* in the text.

² Alexander Innes Shand, "Contemporary Literature: IV, Novelists," *Blackwood's Magazine* 75 (1879): 322-44.

³ Frequent comparisons between Eliot and Shakespeare are found in Alexander Main's letters to Eliot from July 1871 until September 1876, which are kept in the National Library of Scotland (Ms.942. Bound: Dec 1943). See also his preface to *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse: Selected from the Works of George Eliot*, 8th ed. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1884) ix.

In an effort to overcome Eliot's extreme diffidence, Lewes encouraged Main's long letters of praise. At various times Main told her that she ranked with Shakespeare, Burns, Scott, Shelley, Wordsworth, and Tennyson. Generally, Shakespeare was better, but when it came to *Daniel Deronda*, he said that she had even surpassed him. Despite the unvarying tone of adoration--John Blackwood referred to him as "the gusher"--Eliot gave this reply to his "Give me Shakespeare, and George Eliot, and Robert Burns":

Though your praise is to be measured by your own enthusiasm rather than by merit--by your own fulness rather than mine--there is always this satisfaction for me less alarming due to my vanity,

namely that what you quote and emphasize is almost always what I most felt and believed in when I wrote it. (*Letters* 6: 49)

⁴ "The Author of Adam Bede and Nathaniel Hawthorne," *The North British Review* 65 (1860): 165-85.

⁵ P. Bayne, "Shakespeare and George Eliot," *Blackwood's Magazine* 133 (1883): 529-38.

⁶ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, "Daniel Deronda and William Shakespeare," *VN* 1st ser. 19 (1961): 27-28.

⁷ In "George Eliot and the Art of the Epigraph," *NCF* 2nd ser. (1970): 127-51, David Leon Higdon notes that of the two hundred and fifty-five epigraphs found in the novels, one hundred and twenty-nine are drawn from various writers. Of those, Shakespeare provided the most with thirty-one next to Wordsworth's nine.

⁸ Knoepfelmacher, *George Eliot's Early Novels* (Berkeley: The U of California P, 1968) 12ff; Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot* (1959; London: The Athlone P, 1963) 215ff; David Carroll, "Reversing the Oracles of Religion," *George Eliot: "The Mill on the Floss" and "Silas Marner"*, ed. R. P. Draper (1977; London: Macmillan, 1982) 215-16. In chapter 5, I will discuss Carroll's article in more detail.

⁹ William Baker, introduction, *Some George Eliot Notebooks: An Edition of the Carl H. Pfortzheimer Library's George Eliot Holograph Notebooks, MSS 707, 708, 709, 710, 711*, 4 vols. (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1976-1985) 4: ix.

¹⁰ See George C. D. Odell, *Shakespeare--From Betterton to Irving*, 2 vols. (1920; London: Constable, 1963); Kenneth McClellan, *Whatever Happened to Shakespeare?* (London: Vision P, 1978); Louis Marder, *His Exits and his Entrances: The Story of Shakespeare's Reputation* (London:

John Murray, 1964); L. L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution: Criticism and Performance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977); Aron Y. Stavisky, *Shakespeare and the Victorians: Roots of Modern Criticism* (Norman, Oklahoma; U of Oklahoma P, 1969); F. E. Halliday, *The Cult of Shakespeare* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1957); Robert Witbeck Babcock, *The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry 1766-1799: A Study in English Criticism of the Late Eighteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1931); Herbert M. Scheuller, ed., *The Persistence of Shakespeare Idolatry: Essays in Honor of Robert W. Babcock* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1964); Russel Jackson, "Before the Shakespeare Revolution: Development in the Study of Nineteenth-Century Shakespearian Production," *Shakespeare Survey* 35 (1982): 1-12 (this is a bibliographical overview in a volume of *Shakespeare Survey* dedicated to "Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century").

¹¹ Augustus Ralli, ed., *A History of Shakespearean Criticism*, vol. 1 (1932; New York: The Humanities P, 1965). Among the French critics listed by Ralli, Eliot read Saint-Marc Girardin; but she also read M. Charles Philareté's *études sur W. Shakspeare* [sic], *Marie Stuart et L'arétin: Le Drame, les Mœurs et la Religion au XVI^e Siècle* (1851), which Ralli omits (I will refer to it again in my conclusion). Among the German critics writing on Shakespeare during her lifetime, she read Gervinus (I will also refer to him again). However, Ralli does not include any of Lewes's criticism, and that was very important to her. (I discuss his criticism both in this introduction and in subsequent chapters.)

¹² Marder 45.

¹³ For a similar comment, see *Letters* 2: 301-302.

¹⁴ Cited in *Letters* 4: 186n.

¹⁵ I mention Warden because he refers to Eliot. But my point, that it is very difficult to say anything about the Shakespearean cultural context without extensive qualifications, can be made with other commentators. Styan says that "by the middle of the [19th] century," Colley Cibber's *Richard III* was finally replaced with Shakespeare's (12). But was it? Odell notes that even Samuel Phelps, an actor-manager who tried hard to restore Shakespeare's plays and who did put on the latter's version in 1845, returned to Cibber's in 1861-62--because it was judged a better play for actors (2: 268, 271). Stavisky argues that Coleridge's criticism on Shakespeare was largely ignored during the 19th century: partly because it was disorganised; partly because Carlyle and Dallas had dismissed it, saying that Goethe and other German critics had already done this sort of work; and partly because Coleridge's distinction between Fancy and Imagination was simply not understood (118-19). That raises the question of whether or not Coleridge plagiarised the writings of Goethe, Schlegel *et al.*--another topic for lengthy debate. In any case, Alfred Harbage writes, "From the time of Lamb, Hazlitt and De Quincey until the time of Bradley Shakespeare criticism was dominated by Schlegel and Coleridge. . ." (Terence Hawkes, ed., introduction, *Coleridge on Shakespeare: A Selection of the Essays Notes and Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge on the Poems and Plays of Shakespeare*, by S. T. Coleridge [1959; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969] 28). Other critics take a different line, arguing that it is a mistake to think that the Shakespeare Revival began with Coleridge, Hazlitt and Lamb. They suggest that much of what English, and even German, Romantic critics had to say about

Shakespeare was anticipated by 18th-century English writers: Farmer, Morgann and Malone (see Thomas Middleton Raysor, ed., introduction, *Shakespearean Criticism* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 2 vols. [1930; London: Dent, 1974] 1: xvi-xxi; and Babcock 226). These debates are enormously wide-ranging, and for that reason alone they are beyond the scope of this thesis.

¹⁶ Roland Barthes, "Theory of the Text," *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston, London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) 36-39.

¹⁷ Claudia Hoffer Gosselin, "Voices of the Past in Claude Simon's *La Bataille de Pharsale*," *Intertextuality: New Perspectives in Criticism*, eds. Jeanine Parisier Plottel and Hanna Charney (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1978) 2: 24-26.

. . . [A] writer always [operates] within an already constituted literary system and [is] thus never completely "original" . . . [and a text is] no longer a purely passive reflection of pre-existent thought but an active, generative mechanism in its own right. The writer is seen as always producing his text within the framework of the texts that have preceded his and that he is always "realizing, transforming or transgressing."

¹⁸ If we accepted every interpretation of a text we would have to read with a straight face the introduction to Maurice Charney's "Shakespeare's *Ha*: Paralinguistic Hermeneutics":

One of the most rewarding aspects of Free Shakespeare (both as adjective and verb) is that it sanctions our own free association. Thought is free, and by its murmurous promptings we can discover hidden felicities in Shakespeare's text. One path leads to secret proper names. . . . [There is] Hamlet's secret accomplice, Pat, in the prayer scene--"Now might I do it pat". . . [or the] rather shadowy and disreputable person in *King Lear*: that glib and oily Art. His intrusive presence makes it easier to understand the petulant Cordelia, who, even with her father in a towering rage, can still insist on her own needs: "I want that glib and oily Art" (*Intertextuality* 35-36)

¹⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare and the Exorcists," *After Strange Texts: The Role of the Theory in the Study of Literature*, eds. Gregory S. Jay and David L. Miller (n.p.: U of Alabama P, 1985) 101-103. Greenblatt is far from disregarding modern critical theory, but he writes,

. . . the most important effect of contemporary theory upon the practice of literary criticism, and certainly upon my practice, is to subvert the tendency to think of aesthetic representation as ultimately autonomous, separable from its cultural context and hence divorced from the social, ideological, and material matrix in which all art is produced and consumed.

²⁰ William Ray, *Literary Meaning: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984) 212.

²¹ Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (Oxford: The Clarendon P, 1968) 13.

²² Noel Perrin, *Dr. Bowdler's Legacy: A History of Expurgated Books in England and America* (1969; London: Macmillan, 1970) 61-63, 81-83.

²³ John Clark Pratt and Victor A. Neufeldt, *George Eliot's MIDDLEMARCH Notebooks: A Transcription* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979) 157.

²⁴ George Henry Lewes, "Shakspeare [sic] and his Editors," *The Westminster Review* 43 (1845): 40-77. Marder (131) also cites this article and goes on to say that four years later Lewes, "then twenty-seven, wrote . . . of the Boswell-Malone edition":

We can nowhere point to such an accumulated mass of industry, which is at the same time such a mass of rubbish. It is impossible to conceive a greater amount of stupidity, drivelling, pedantry, senseless learning, collected into one work. Note upon note, blunder upon blunder, conjecture upon conjecture, drivel upon drivel: without order, without method, wearisome, tantalizing, and profitless.

²⁵ John W. Cross, *George Eliot: A Biography*, 3 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon P, 1968) 1: 266. The comment on Schlegel was probably inspired by her reading of Georg G. Gervinus's *Shakespeare*, 4 vols., Leipzig,

1848-50. See my "Short Note," *The George Eliot and George Henry Lewes Newsletter* 10 (1987): 10.

²⁶ Cross 1: 266, 269.

²⁷ Cross 3: 70-72, 259, 303.

²⁸ Haight, *Biography* 146. Shakespeare was certainly in Eliot's mind later on when she expressed her deep love and affection for Lewes. When she gave him the manuscript of *Daniel Deronda*, she included an extract from sonnet 29 in the dedication (Cross 3: 214). Immediately after his death in November 1878, she copied out long passages from various poets into a Diary which begins with the line "Here I and sorrow sit" [cf. *King John* II.ii.73: ". . . here I and sorrows sit"]. A week later she copied out the following passage from *King John*:

Kneeling before this ruin of sweet life,
And breathing to his breathless excellence
The incense of a vow, a holy vow,
Never to taste the pleasures of the world,
Never to be infected with delight,
Nor conversant with ease and idleness,
Till--

[IV.iii.65-71]

(See Haight, *Biography* 516-17.)

²⁹ Haight, *Biography* 146; Joseph Wiesenfarth, *George Eliot: A Writer's Notebook 1854-1879 and Uncollected Writings* (Charlottesville, Virginia: U of Virginia P, 1981) xviii-xix, 253-55.

³⁰ J. M. Nosworthy, ed., introduction, *Cymbeline*, by William Shakespeare (1955; London: Methuen, 1980) xli-xlii. Russel Jackson writes:

In an age of general enthusiasm for Shakespeare's heroines as examples of womanhood at its finest, the heroines of the three 'mature comedies', Rosalind, Beatrice and Viola, were outclassed only by Imogen--and that principally because she suffered more than they. ("Perfect Types of Womanhood": Rosalind, Beatrice and Viola in Victorian Criticism and Performance," *Shakespeare Survey* 32 (1979): 15-26.

I will return to this form of Victorian idolatry in chapters 2 and 7.

³¹ "Alexander Main to GE," Abroath, 14 September 1871, Ms. 942.

³² Gillian Beer, *George Eliot* (Brighton: Harvester P, 1986) 187-89.

³³ J. H. P. Pafford, ed., *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare (1966; London and New York: Methuen, 1982) 93n.

³⁴ Knoepfelmacher, *Early Novels* 96-97.

³⁵ Thomas Pinney, *Essays of George Eliot* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963) 301-302. See also the chapter "Workaday Worlds," in Suzanne Graver's *George Eliot and Community* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984) 80-149.

³⁶ "Humorous," *A Shakespeare Glossary*, 1980 ed.

³⁷ George Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1879) 262. An interesting discussion of this work is found in Robert Stange's "The Voices of the Essayist," *George Eliot*, 1880-1980, *NCF* 3rd ser. 35 (1980): 312-30.

³⁸ Gordon S. Haight, ed., *Selections from George Eliot's Letters* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1985) 7n.

³⁹ Eliot's interest in art while she was still an evangelical is discussed by Elizabeth Jay. She argues that Eliot always emphasised the need for realism in art. Contrary to the popular belief that evangelicals avoided reading literature because they considered it time ill spent, Jay says that they saw nothing wrong with fiction, provided it depicted real life and not false ideals or idols:

The evangelicals were far from undervaluing the power of literary examples of moral goodness, but if they were to provide a useful incentive or guide to the Christian life, the situations and people they described must be realistically presented so as to prove imitable. Once a man of Evangelical background, aware of the efficacy of practical Evangelical literature, had become convinced of the positive values of the imagination, it was natural to just-

ify the use of fiction in the terms of the old Evangelical arguments. It is in their desire to defend realism on moral rather than aesthetic grounds that one can detect the affinity, the common heritage, of Ruskin, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, and George Eliot. (*The Religion of the Heart: Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* [Oxford: The Clarendon P, 1979] 209-20)

⁴⁰ George Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life: Riehl," *Works of George Eliot: Impressions of Theophrastus Such, and Leaves from a Note-Book* (London: William Blackwood, 1901) 10: 360-61.

⁴¹ Haight, *Biography* 201.

⁴² Besides "Shakspeare and his Editors" and the review of *As You Like It*, already mentioned above, see "The Drama: Authors and Managers," *The Westminster Review* 37 (1842): 71-97; "The Past and Present State of Dramatic Art and Literature, Addressed to Authors and Managers," *The Edinburgh Review* 158 (1843): 382-401; "The Rise and Fall of European Drama," *The Foreign Quarterly Review* 70 (1845): 290-334; "Shakespeare's Critics: English and Foreign," *The Edinburgh Review* 181 (1849): 39-77; "Fechter in Hamlet and Othello," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 90 (1861): 744-54; "Shakspeare [sic] in France," *The Cornhill Magazine* 11 (1865): 33-51; *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (1875; New York: Grove P Books and Evergreen Books, n.d.). See also John Hill Hopkin, "George Henry Lewes's Contributions to the National Magazine and Monthly Critic, and to the Foreign Monthly Review and Continental Literary Journal," *The George Eliot and George Henry Lews Newsletter* 11 (1987): 1-7.

An indication of Lewes's reputation as a Shakespeare critic is seen in a letter he wrote to Barbara Bodichon on February 27, 1878:

On Sunday our new acquaintance [Neville] Moritz the Hungarian tragedian gave us a scene from Othello--(I read Iago) and last Monday evening he went through the part with us alone, to see whether we approved of his conception and execution. He is a very interesting fellow as you may imagine from this explanation at the end of our long rehearsal--'Oh I feel I know so little--but in 10

years I shall be able to play Othello'--He is to give a performance on Saturday morning at Queen's--I hope it will be a success. (Letters 9: 218-19)

Nothing further is mentioned by Lewes or Eliot about this actor, who must have known of Lewes's writings or been advised to seek him out. The letter also gives a glimpse of how seriously the Leweses took their Shakespeare and how much attention they paid to dramatic portrayals.

⁴³ Lewes, *On Acting* 84.

⁴⁴ Baker, *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 3: 57, 202.

⁴⁵ On the dates of Eliot's entries, see *Pfortzheimer Holographs* 1: 27-28 and 4: preface iii.

⁴⁶ Lewes, *On Acting* 84, 94.

⁴⁷ Lewes's reaction to "Shakspeare ein Mythos" was partly due to his horror of the Baconian theories that were being aired at this time. Miss Delia Salter Bacon had just written "William Shakespeare and His Plays: An Enquiry Concerning Them" and "Was Lord Bacon the Author of Shakespeare's Plays?" Lewes described the former as that "insane tirade in Putman's Monthly Magazine [7 (January 1856)]1," and attacked the latter in an article [*Leader*, 13 September 1856, 880] (Letters 8: 162-63n). For discussions on the various controversies surrounding Shakespeare and his 19th century critics (e.g. Collier, Furnivall, Swinburne), see *Marder* 117ff.

⁴⁸ Lewes, "The Drama" 43-62. For a more recent, general discussion of Shakespeare in Germany, see Hermann J. Weigand's "Shakespeare in German Criticism," *The Persistence of Shakespeare Idolatry* 105-33.

⁴⁹ Lewes, "Shakespeare's Critics" 43-62.

⁵⁰ Lewes, "Shakespeare's Critics" 63-65.

⁵¹ Lewes, "Shakespeare's Critics" 43.

⁵² Lewes, "The Drama" 80.

⁵³ Lewes, "The Rise and Fall" 45.

⁵⁴ Lewes, "Shakspeare in France" 45.

⁵⁵ George Henry Lewes, Journal, 8 February 1864. Cited in Haight, *Biography* 374.

⁵⁶ Haight writes:

. . . [Theodore] Martin [Helen Faucit's husband] says: 'The plan of the drama was discussed between them [Eliot and Faucit], with the result, that the idea was dropped by George Eliot, in accordance with my wife's opinion. The subject, I believe, was made use of afterwards in *The Spanish Gypsy*. But of this, as what passed between the two ladies was confidential, and I cannot speak with certainty.' *Helena Faucit* (2nd ed. 1900), p. 265. [See Haight's *Biography* 375]

⁵⁷ Haight, *Biography* 375.

⁵⁸ Haight, *Biography* 378-79.

⁵⁹ Cross 3: 30-35.

⁶⁰ George Eliot, *The Spanish Gypsy, The Works of George Eliot*, Standard ed. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, n.d.) 156.

⁶¹ Karen B. Mann, *The Language that Makes George Eliot* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1983).

⁶² *Gypsy* 71, 96-97.

⁶³ *Gypsy* 126.

⁶⁴ Eliot was an avid reader of Scott's works. She told Maria Congreve that it was his writing that had turned her away from Christian orthodoxy. However, as Haight points out, her loss of faith was probably caused by many factors (*Biography* 39). For an interesting discussion on Eliot's loss of faith (and interesting discussions on much else) see the

first three chapters of Ruby V. Redinger's *George Eliot: The Emergent Self* (London: The Bodley Head, 1975).

⁶⁵ Graham Tulloch, *The Language of Walter Scott: A Study of his Scottish and Period Language* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1980) 18-24. For a general discussion on Scott's epigraphs, see Tom B. Haber, "The Chapter-Tags in the Waverley Novels," *PMLA* 45 (1930): 1140-49.

⁶⁶ For accounts of Scott's reading of Shakespeare, see Edgar Johnson, *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown, Volume I 1771-1821* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970); Arthur Melville Clark, *Sir Walter Scott: The Formative Years* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1969); Wilmon Brewer, *Shakespeare's Influence on Scott* (Boston: The Cornhill Publishing Co., 1925); John Buchan, *Sir Walter Scott* (London: Cassell, 1932); and W. M. Parker, "Scott's Knowledge of Shakespeare," *QR* 290 (1952): 341-54. For an account of how Scott was compared with Shakespeare, see John G. Hayden, ed., introduction, *Scott: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) 1-23.

⁶⁷ Brewer 441-62.

⁶⁸ Clark 56-58. Sir Herbert Grierson agrees: "It was from *Henry IV* and *Henry V* that he learned the art of combining historical characters and scenes with scenes and characters of low life and comedy--Falstaff, Ancient Pistol, Bardolph, the Hostess, etc." ("History and the Novel" [1940], *Sir Walter Scott Lectures 1940-1948* [Edinburgh: At the UP, 1950] 39.) For other Shakespearean contrasts, see also David Daiches, "Scott's Achievement As a Novelist" and Walter Bagehot, "The Waverley Novels," *Scott's Mind and Art*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969) 21-52; 132-66.

⁶⁹ R. K. Gordon, "Shakespeare's *Henry IV* and Some Scenes in the *Waverley Novels*," *MLR* 37 (1942): 304-16.

⁷⁰ R. K. Gordon, "Scott and Shakespeare's Tragedies," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd ser. 39 (1945): 111-17. For a similar assessment see David Murison, "The Two Languages in Scott," *Scott's Mind and Art* 206-29.

⁷¹ Tulloch 98, 102.

⁷² Cited in Haber, "The Chapter-Tags" 1141.

⁷³ Knoepfelmacher, *Early Novels* 12.

Endnotes

Chapter 2

¹ Joseph Wiesenfarth, "George Eliot's Notes for *Adam Bede*," *NCF*, 32 (1977): 127-65.

² These allusions are identified in George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, ed. David Lodge (1973; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 251, 298; George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, ed. Thomas A. Noble (Oxford: The Clarendon P, 1985), 194, 236. All quotations from *Scenes* are taken from the Clarendon edition.

³ I am indebted to Knoepfelmacher's *George Eliot's Early Novels* (57 and footnote) for the allusion to *1 Henry IV*.

⁴ Thomas Pinney, *Essays* 161.

⁵ Noble, *Eliot's Scenes* 158.

⁶ Thomas Pinney, *Essays* 161.

⁷ Derek and Sybil Oldfield, "*Scenes of Clerical Life: The Diagram and the Picture*," *Critical Essays on George Eliot*, ed. Barbara Hardy (1970; London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) 5-9.

⁸ Derek and Sybil Oldfield 17.

⁹ Lodge, *Scenes* 422n. In Eliot's "Commonplace Notebook" (Entry 58) (Yale, Eliot/IV,6) there is an excerpt from Southey's *Life of Wesley* which reads:

Calumnies about Wesley. 'He had hanged himself & been cut down just in time;--he had been fined for selling gin;--he was not the real John Wesley, for everybody knew that J. Wesley was dead. Some said he was a Quaker, others an anabaptist: a more sapient censor pronounced him a Presbyterian Papist. It was commonly reported that he was a papist, if not a Jesuit; that he kept Popish priests in his house. . . .'

In *George Eliot: A Writer's Notebook 1854-1879 and Uncollected Writings* (Charlottesville, Virginia: U of Virginia P, 1981) 155, Joseph Wiesenfarth shows that entry 43 "overlaps . . . the last pages of "Janet's Repentance" (concluded 9 October 1857) and *Adam Bede* (begun 22 October 1857)." However, although she wrote entry 58 after the completion of *Scenes*, it is possible that she had it in mind while writing "Janet's Repentance."

¹⁰ Eliot explained that the play-bill was based on fact, as was most of the story: "In the real persecution, a play-bill of an equally insulting kind was printed and circulated and thought the finest joke imaginable" (*Letters* 2: 361-2). Nevertheless, what Lewes told Bracebridge about Eliot's characters also applies to her plots: they "are creations out of combinations of varied experience . . . the materials in each case being of course suggested, but only suggested, not given, as in biography or portrait painting" (Lewes's emphasis) (*Letters* 3: 158-60).

¹¹ It is interesting to note that in 1857 *Twelfth Night* was produced in London, with Samuel Phelps playing Malvolio. The Arden Shakespeare editors cite Henry Morley's *The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851-1866* (1891) 139-40, for the following:

[Phelps] emphasized the steward's "self-love" by regarding the world through eyes "very nearly covered with their heavy lids"; his thoughts were turned inward. "Walled up in his own temple of flesh, he is his own adorer". . . .

[He] played the [dark house] scene somewhat phlegmatically, "sustained by his self-content, and by the honest certainty that he had been notoriously abused". . . . [He delivered his last line] with an "expression of undented pride." (J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik, eds., introduction, *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare [1975; London and New York: Methuen, 1981], xci, xcvi-xcvi).

I have not been able to find out whether the Leweses saw this production, but in view of their playgoing habits at the time it is likely that they did.

¹² Eliot, *Theophrastus Such* 180-1. The reference to "insane patients whose system, all out of joint, finds matter for screaming laughter" itself contains a Shakespearean echo. Hamlet says: "The time is out of joint, O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right" (I.v.196-7).

¹³ Harold F. Brooks, ed., introduction, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare (London and New York: Methuen, 1979) xcii-xciii.

¹⁴ Brooks cxiv-cxv.

¹⁵ Samuel Lucas, rev. of *Scenes of Clerical Life*, by George Eliot, *The Times*, *A Century of George Eliot Criticism*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (London: Methuen, 1966) 1-2. Cf. also Knoepfelmacher, *V. N.* 31 (1967): 15-19, who also prefers "Mr Gilfil's Love Story," and Henry Auster, *Local Habitations: Regionalism in the Early Novels of George Eliot* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1970) 81, who finds "Amos Barton" the better story.

¹⁶ Cf. Noble, *Eliot's Scenes* 122-46.

¹⁷ Cf. Barbara Hardy's chapter, "Pathetic Images," in *The Novels of George Eliot*, especially 202-204.

¹⁸ Mrs. [Anna] Jameson, *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical, and Historical*, 2 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1832) 2: 31; 1: 90. This sentimental way of looking at Shakespeare's women persisted throughout the Victorian period. In his four reviews of *Characteristics* (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 33 [1833]: 124-42, 143-69, 391-418, 539-60), John Wilson had nothing but praise for Jameson's book. Besides *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1844-45), Mary Cowden-Clarke wrote "Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend" (*The Girl's Own Paper* 8 [1866]: 562-64), in which she said that for girls about to become women, Shakespeare's pages are filled with

warning, guidance, kindest monition, and wisest counsel. Through his feminine portraits she may see, as in a faithful glass, vivid

pictures of what she has to evitate, or what she has to imitate, in order to become a worthy and admirable woman. (562)

See also Helena Faucit (Lady Martin), *On Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters: Ophelia, Portia, Desdemona, Juliet, Imogen, Rosalind, Beatrice*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh, London: William Blackwood, 1888). The book recalls her approach to playing these parts during her acting career, but the writing is often more lyrical than critical.

¹⁹ Many nineteenth-century admirers of Shakespeare's heroines were deeply affected by the way they bear their suffering with dignity. Writing about *Othello*, Faucit emphasized that Desdemona so loves her husband that she prays for him, even when he is strangling and smothering her. When talking about Juliet, she said, "the devotion of Juliet's nature . . . [soon develops] into the heroic constancy which carries her, alone and unsupported, through a trial more fearful than death itself" (*Shakespeare's Female Characters* 80, 127). Edward Dowden, in a discussion on *Romeo and Juliet* ("Shakspeare's [sic] Portraiture of Women," *The Contemporary Review* 47 [April 1885]: 517-35), drew attention to the same point. Mary Cowden-Clarke pointed out that Shakespeare's women are more constant and less credulous than his men; they never lose their tempers; instead they suffer in silence and are quick to forgive ("Shakespeare as the Girl's Friend" 562).

²⁰ "Intelligence and Deception: *The Mill on the Floss*," *George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. George R. Crueger (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970) 115.

²¹ Noble, *Eliot's Scenes* 189.

Endnotes

Chapter 3

¹ Henry Auster, *Local Habitations* 54-56. For other discussions on Eliot's "imaginative and emblematic use of the physical environment," see W. J. Harvey, "The Treatment of Time in *Adam Bede*," *A Century of George Eliot Criticism* 298-306, and John Paterson, ed., introduction, *Adam Bede* by George Eliot (1859; Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) v-xxxiii.

² Eliot, "Riehl" 363.

³ Eliot, "Riehl" 363-70.

⁴ Stephen Gill ed., *Adam Bede* by George Eliot (1859; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). All quotations from the novel are taken from this edition, with page numbers given in the text.

⁵ Eliot, "Riehl" 383.

⁶ Alexander Welsh, *George Eliot and Blackmail* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1985) 133, 159. See Michael Squires's, *The Pastoral Novel: Studies in George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and D. H. Lawrence* (Charlottesville, Virginia: UP of Virginia, 1975) 83, for a discussion on "narrative distance" in the pastoral novel.

⁷ *Adam Bede's* epigraph is taken from "The Churchyard Among the Mountains," of Wordsworth's "The Excursion," Book VI.

⁸ F. R. Leavis, foreword, *Adam Bede* by George Eliot (1859; New York: Signet, 1981) xi-xii.

⁹ Maurice Hussey, "Structure and Imagery in 'Adam Bede'," *NCF* 10 (1955-56): 122. George R. Creeger makes a similar point about Stonyshire

and Loamshire. He argues that both places are ambiguously described: one is barren and the other lush, but whereas the barren place has spiritual comfort in the form of Dinah and Methodism, the other has Mr. Irwine, Martin Poyser, and Hetty, who have hard hearts ("An Interpretation of *Adam Bede*," *George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays* 86ff).

¹⁰ Auster, *Local Habitations* 104-105.

¹¹ Eliot, "Riehl" 386-89.

¹² Eliot, "Riehl" 379-80.

¹³ Eliot, "Riehl" 394-95.

¹⁴ Gill, *Adam Bede* 599n.

¹⁵ Eliot, *Theophrastus Such* 38.

¹⁶ Joseph Wiesenfarth, "George Eliot's Notes for *Adam Bede*," *NCF* 32 (1977): 131-2. In his notes (151), he says of entry 50:

Southey's Life of Wesley, Robert Southey, *The Life of Wesley; and Rise and Progress of Methodism*, ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey, with notes by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and remarks by Alexander Knox, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1846) II, 376-77n. Dinah Morris echoes the sentiments of Jenny Keith's letters when she says: "I am poor, like you: I have to get my living with my hands; but no lord nor lady can be so happy as me, if they haven't got the love of God in their souls. . . ." [p. 76]

Alicia Carroll, in "Tried by Earthly Fires: Hetty Wesley, Hetty Sorrel, and *Adam Bede*," *NCL* 2nd ser. 44 (1989): 218-24, says that John Wesley had a sister named Hetty, who may well have been the source for Hetty Sorrel. Hetty Wesley was also seduced and "left pregnant by an insincere admirer, [and] she too was ostracized and condemned to a life from community and family" (219).

¹⁷ Creeger, "An Interpretation" 104-105.

¹⁸ The narrator tells us:

Yet such men as he are reared here and there in every generation of our peasant artisans--with an inheritance of affections

nurtured by a simple family life of common need and common industry, and an inheritance of faculties trained in skilful courageous labour; they make their way upward, rarely as geniuses, most commonly as painstaking honest men, with the skill and conscience to do well the tasks that lie before them. (258)

Similarly, Carlyle's "natural Aristocrat," is one of the "unclassed Aristocracy by nature . . . supreme in faculty, in wisdom, human talent, nobleness and courage, [and] 'who [derives his] patent of nobility direct from Almighty God'" ("Shooting Niagara: And After?" *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 2nd ed. (London: Chapman & Hall, 1888) 7: 217-18.

¹⁹ Jack Stillinger, ed., *The Early Draft of John Stuart Mill's Autobiography* (Urbana, Illinois: U of Illinois P, 1961) 177.

²⁰ Eliot, "Riehl" 376.

²¹ Eliot, "Riehl" 381.

²² Ian Gregor and Brian Nicholas, in *The Moral and the Story* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), consider Hetty's fall to be "a graphic detail like Brueghel's Icarus . . . , [and that] the necessity invoked here is not a philosophical one, but an artistic one, a fidelity to convention." Eliot's following of the "convention," they say, means that Hetty is treated in an off-handed way: "Hetty is simply a fatally attractive focal point for the emotions of Arthur and Adam, [and] someone for Dinah to 'rescue' dramatically" (see 24-29). Henry James, in "The Novels of George Eliot," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 18 (1866): 479-92, *A Century of George Eliot Criticism*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (London: Methuen, 1966), considered Hetty to be the central character, "by virtue of her great misfortune." Adam's marriage to Dinah, he said, was a fault --the subject for a new story--it should not have been included here (47).

²³ A. C. Bradley, "The Rejection of Falstaff," *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan, 1909) 251, 252-53, 258-59.

²⁴ E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961) 271-72.

²⁵ Tillyard, like Bradley, sees the play as a mere sequel to 1 *Henry IV*, and has in mind the more sardonic Hal of the earlier play. Referring to R. A. Law's *Structural Unity in the Two Parts of "Henry IV"*, where it is maintained that "Part Two is a new structure," Tillyard says, "I think so decidedly the other way. . ." (264).

²⁶ A. R. Humphreys, ed., introduction, *The Second Part of King Henry IV* by William Shakespeare (London and New York: Methuen, 1980) 11.

²⁷ Falstaff's lawlessness is seen in act 2, scene 1, where he ignores the Chief Justice as long as possible; in the tavern scene, where he is very volatile; and in the "pricking" scene at Shallow's house, where he plans to take unfair advantage of his host (see III.ii. 323-26).

²⁸ U. C. Knoepfelmacher and George Levine, eds., foreword, *George Eliot, 1880-1980*, *NCF* 3rd ser. 35 (1980): 254.

²⁹ Translation by K. M. van den Broek. Eliot pencilled a vertical line in the right-hand margin next to the lines that I have italicized:

Dieser Charakter ist ganz *Shakespeare's Eigenthum und Zusatz*. Er deckt die *Zweiseitigkeit des Dichters*, die uns aus vielen Beispielen geläufig ist, an einem neuen auf. *Shakespeare spricht nicht die triviale Ueberlieferung der Schäferdichter nach, die das Stilleben der Natur an sich für eine Schule der Weisheit und Zufriedenheit anpreisen. Er zeigt in dem Gegensatze dieses Jacques [sic] zu dem Herzoge, daß die Menschen, die aus diesem Leben Genuß und Vortheil ziehen wollen, in sich eine Anlage tragen müssen, mäßig zu sein und sich selbst in der Gewalt zu haben, um das Unglück entwaffnen, das äußere Glück entbehren zu können.* (3: 35)

Endnotes

Chapter 4

¹ Jeannette King, *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Henry James* (1978; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) 78-84.

² George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (1860; Oxford: The Clarendon P, 1980) 401-402. All quotations from the novel are taken from this edition, with subsequent page numbers given in the text.

³ Anon., rev. of *The Mill on the Floss*, by George Eliot, *Spectator* 7 April 1860: 330-31, *The Critical Heritage*, 112.

⁴ G. H. Lewes, *The Life & Works of Goethe with Sketches of his Age and Contemporaries*, 1864 ed. (London: J. M. Dent & Co., n.d.) 415. I quote from the revised, 1864 edition because the period of Lewes's revision overlaps the period when *The Mill* was written. Eliot referred to Meister's criticism in a letter to Sara Hennell, dated 30 July 1861:

We had a treat the other night which I wish you could have shared with us: we saw Fechter in Hamlet. His conception of the part is very nearly that indicated by the critical observations in Wilhelm Meister [sic], and the result is deeply interesting--the naturalness and sensibility of the Wesen overcoming in most cases the defective intonation. . . . (*Letters* 3: 441-42)

I shall comment on Fechter again in chapter 6.

⁵ [Johann Wolfgang von] Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*, trans. Thomas Carlyle, 3 vols. (1824; London: Chapman & Hall, 1888) 1: 190. I use this translation for ease of reference. For a list of some of the books and papers by Goethe owned by the Leweses, see William Baker, in *The Libraries of George Eliot and George Henry Lewes*

(*English Literary Studies*, University of Victoria, 1981) 73 (catalogue entries 340-47).

⁶ *Wilhelm Meister* 1: 215.

⁷ *Wilhelm Meister* 1: 191.

⁸ In *The Life of Goethe*, Lewes gives an outline of what I go on to develop: "*Wilhelm Meister* is not a moral story, that is to say not a story written with the express purpose of illustrating some obvious maxim." Nevertheless, a "deep and healthy moral meaning lies in it, pulses through it, speaking in many tones to him who hath ears to hear it." The whole novel demonstrates

the influence of life upon Wilhelm in moulding and modifying his character, raising it from impulse to the subordination of reason, from dreaming self-indulgence to practical duty, from self-culture to sympathy. . . .

Very artfully is *Hamlet* made as it were part of the novel; . . . [the play's introduction into novel has been praised] not only because it illustrates the affinity between *Hamlet* and Wilhelm, both of whom are reflective, vacillating characters, but because *Hamlet* is further allied to Wilhelm in making the Play a touchstone, whereby to detect the truth, and determine his own actions. (414-15.)

⁹ *Wilhelm Meister* 2: 37, 187.

¹⁰ *Wilhelm Meister* 2: 235. In *The Life of Goethe*, Lewes argues that this was not Goethe's original intention. Instead of suggesting that *Meister* was unfit for the stage, Goethe meant to show him as having

a true inborn tendency, a talent which ripens through practice. With the performance of *Hamlet* the apogee is reached; and [but] here ends the first plan. . . . After a lapse of ten years he resumes the novel; and having in that period lived through the experience of a false tendency--having seen the vanity of cultivating an imperfect talent--he alters [Lewes's emphasis] the plan of his novel, makes it symbolical of the erroneous striving of youth towards culture; invents the cumbrous machinery of a Mysterious Family, whose watchful love has guided all his [Meister's] steps, and who have encouraged him in error that they might lead him through error unto truth. (408)

Hence, in the final analysis, Goethe did intend us to see how ironic it was for Meister to play Hamlet, since the hero was, at one time, more like Hamlet than he realized.

Lewes's point about Goethe's original intention helps to explain his somewhat misleading comment that Meister's criticism "still remains the best criticism we have on that wonderful play" (cf. n. 4 above). Given Goethe's final intention, it is more accurate to say that much of Meister's criticism is valuable not because of what he says but because of what can be inferred from it. In other words, "the best criticism" is Goethe's. Eliot's disagreement with Meister's conclusion regarding Hamlet's essential nature suggests that she saw Goethe's irony.

¹¹ *Wilhelm Meister* 2: 187-89.

¹² *Wilhelm Meister* 3: 205.

¹³ *Wilhelm Meister* 1: 215.

¹⁴ *Wilhelm Meister* 1: 216.

¹⁵ Lewes, "Fechter" 746. In chapter 6, I refer to this review in greater detail.

¹⁶ Haight has shown that as early as January 1859, when she was still writing the first volume, Eliot did some research on floods at the British Museum. See introduction, *The Mill* (Riverside edition, 1961), *A Century of George Eliot Criticism* 339.

¹⁷ Bulwer-Lytton's letter is found in *The Critical Heritage* 120-22.

¹⁸ Blackwood suggested the final title, which Eliot gladly accepted, even though, as she told him, the mill is not on the Floss but on a tributary. Cf. Haight, *Biography* 319.

¹⁹ Auster, *Local Habitations* 142.

²⁰ George Eliot, "O May I Join the Choir Invisible," "The Poems of George Eliot: A Critical Edition With Introduction and Notes," ed. Cynthia Ann Secor, diss., Cornell U, 1969, 142-46. The poem was first published in *Legend of Jubal and Other Poems* (1874).

²¹ Auster, *Local Habitations* 171-72.

²² For an opposite view, cf. Knoepfmacher, *The Early Novels of George Eliot* 180-81.

²³ As I will argue in chapters 6 and 8, Eliot was fond of suggesting that people could acquire wisdom from reading fiction, especially Shakespeare's work.

²⁴ Leslie Stephen remained unimpressed by Eliot's reply to Bulwer-Lytton's criticism and is representative of a number of critics who, at best, think that Stephen Guest is unsuitable for Maggie, and, at worst, an ill conceived character:

We can understand [Maggie's] sympathy with Philip Wakem . . . we could have understood it if she had fallen in love with the excellent vicar of St. Ogg's . . . and we might even have forgiven her if, after being a little overpowered by the dandified Stephen, she had shown some power of perceiving what a very poor animal he was. The affair jars upon us, because it is not a development of her previous aspirations, but suddenly throws a fresh and unpleasant light upon her character. No one will say that the catastrophe is impossible . . . but neither, I think, can any one say that it was inevitable, or could have been expected, given the circumstances and the characters. The truth is, I think, different. George Eliot did not herself understand what a mere hairdresser's block she was describing in Mr. Stephen Guest. He is another instance of her incapacity for portraying the opposite sex. (Cf. *George Eliot: The Mill on the Floss and Silas Marner*, ed. R. P. Draper [1977; London: Macmillan, 1982] 85-86.)

²⁵ Some Victorian critics were troubled by the sexual tension between Maggie and Stephen (see Dinah Mulock, rev. of *The Mill on the Floss*, by George Eliot, *Macmillan's Magazine* 3 [1861]: 441-18, *The Critical Heritage* 156-59; Anon., rev. of *The Mill on the Floss*, by George

Eliot, *Westminster Review* 74 [1860]: 24-32, *The Critical Heritage* 140-41; Anon., rev. of *The Mill on the Floss*, by George Eliot, *Saturday Review* 14 April 1860. *George Eliot: The Mill on the Floss and Silas Marner* 56). But as A. S. Byatt says, Stephen Guest belongs to that group of Eliot's male characters who "have a direct, instinctive, powerful sexual presence, and in matters of sex they are driven to know what they desire and to develop love from desire" (introduction, *The Mill on the Floss*, by George Eliot [1860; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985] 27).

²⁶ Byatt identifies this allusion in the Penguin edition (684n).

²⁷ See my "The Choir Invisible: Paul, Hamlet, George Eliot," *The George Eliot George Henry Newsletter* 11 (September 1987): 7-10, where I trace allusions to *Hamlet* and St. Paul's letters in "Choir Invisible."

²⁸ Barbara Hardy, "The Mill on the Floss," *Critical Essays on George Eliot* 53ff. For other discussions on the novel's flaws, cf. rev. of *The Mill on the Floss*, by George Eliot, *The Guardian* 25 April 1860: 377-78, *The Critical Heritage* 129-30; Ian Adam, "The Ambivalence of *The Mill on the Floss*," *George Eliot: A Centenary Tribute* 130-35; R. H. Lee, "The Unity of *The Mill on the Floss*," *George Eliot: The Mill on the Floss and Silas Marner* 140-59; George Levine, "Intelligence as Deception: *The Mill on the Floss*," *George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays* 107-23; and Graham Martin, "The Mill on the Floss and the Unreliable Narrator," *George Eliot: Centenary Essays and an Unpublished Fragment*, ed. Anne Smith (London: Vision Press Ltd., 1980) 36-54.

²⁹ W. J. Harvey, *The Art of George Eliot* 151.

Endnotes

Chapter 5

¹ GHL Journal, 21 May 1860. Cited in Haight, *Biography* 326.

² Lewes, "Fechter" 745. Cf. also Eliot's letter of 30 July 1861 to Sophia Hennell in which she praises Fechter's Hamlet.

³ Hugh Witmeyer, *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* (New York and London: Yale UP, 1979) 75-77.

⁴ "The Spirit is clothed in his habit as he lived (44) (cf. *Hamlet* III.iv.136-7); "'Florence is the best market in Italy for such commodities as yours'" (74) (cf. *King John* II.i.561-98); "a Tedesco in a state of vinous loquacity" (82) (cf. *The Merchant of Venice* I.ii.80-86); "[Tito] meant to win golden opinions by meritorious exertion" (170) (cf. *Macbeth* I.vii.32-34); "statues might well be believed to perspire, phantasmal fiery warriors to fight in the air, and quadrapeds to bring forth monstrous births" (269) (cf. *Julius Caesar* I.iii.3-32 and II.ii.13-26); "'ginger is hot in the mouth'" (383) (cf. *Twelfth Night* II.iii.113-17); and, "there had been a gradual swarming of the people at every coign of vantage or disadvantage" (619) (cf. *Macbeth* I.vi.7). In *Notes on "Romola"* 5th ed. (Auckland, N. Z.: Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd., 1921), P. S. Smallfield sees an allusion to *Othello* in the Proem: "Most potent, grave and reverend signors" (I.iii.76). I cannot find it, unless he has the "Eight," the "Ten," the "Priori or Signori," and the "Gonfaloniere" in mind.

Page numbers refer to Andrew Sanders, ed., *Romola* by George Eliot (1863; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), from which edition all quotations

are taken. Sanders notes two allusions: the ones to *Twelfth Night* (383) and *Macbeth* (619).

⁵ Karen B. Mann, *The Language that makes George Eliot's Fiction* (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins UP, 1983) 135-6.

⁶ George Eliot, "[The Progress of the Intellect]," *Westminster Review* 54 (1851): 353-368, *Essays* 28-9; George Eliot, "Historical Imagination," *Leaves from a Note-Book*, *Essays* 437. Cf. also Eliot's "Westward Ho! and Constance Herbert" and "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," *Essays* 123-36, 300-24, where she makes similar comments about the need for accurate portrayals of the past.

⁷ In *A Writer's Notebook* xv, Wiesenfarth argues that Eliot did some research for all her novels and some of the poetry.

⁸ Laurence Poston III, "Setting and Theme in *Romola*," *NCF* 20 (1965-66): 356-66. R. H. Hutton was the first to point out that the novel is concerned with the tension between the spiritual and rational life of Renaissance Florence (cf. rev. of *Romola*, by George Eliot, *The Spectator* (18 July 1863), *George Eliot and her Readers*, eds. John Holstrom and Laurence Lerner (London: The Bodley Head, 1966) 56-64.

⁹ I am indebted to Smallfield's *Notes* 78, 125, for the allusions to *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

¹⁰ For a discussion of Eliot's treatment of mobs, cf. Joseph Butwin, "The Pacification of the Crowd: From 'Janet's Repentance' to *Felix Holt*," *NCF* 3rd ser. 35 (1980): 349-70.

¹¹ George Levine, "'Romola' as Fable," *Critical Essays on George Eliot*, 79-80.

¹² George Eliot, Notebook "Quarry" for *Romola* and *The Spanish Gypsy*, ms., Don.g.8., Bodleian Library, Oxford, 26-27. The expression is

used again in *Daniel Deronda* (cf. Clarendon ed. 659). The other two notebooks are "Florentine Notes," ms., 40768, British Library; and "Quarry for *Romola*," ms., Parrish Collection, Princeton University Library.

¹³ Carole Robinson, "*Romola*: A Reading of the Novel," *Critics on George Eliot*, ed. William Baker (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973) 102-3.

¹⁴ Cf. M. C. Bradbrook, *Women and Literature 1779-1982: The Collected Papers of Muriel Bradbrook Volume 2* (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester P, 1982) 53-64. Bradbrook thinks that *Romola* was modelled on Barbara Bodichon and Tito on John Chapman, and that Tito's deception of *Romola* and Tessa was inspired by Chapman's demeaning sexual overtures towards women--including Eliot and Bodichon. Hence, the novel "marked some kind of inner gestation that enabled the writer to move on to greater things. . . . This work was necessary to the author, and belongs to her biography" (61). Cf. also Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1979), who argue that women writers like Eliot can be seen to "project what seems to be the energy of their own despair into passionate, even melodramatic characters who act out the subversive impulses every woman inevitably feels when she contemplates the 'deep-rooted' evils of patriarchy" (77).

¹⁵ Richard Simpson, "George Eliot's Novels," *Home and Foreign Review* 3 (1863): 522-49, *The Critical Heritage*, 249.

¹⁶ Levine, "'*Romola*' as Fable," 84-5. That the ending is unsatisfactory and that the novel as a whole is more philosophical than dramatic has always been noticed (cf. the section on *Romola* in *The Critical*

Heritage. Cf. also Avrom Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP, 1971) 155ff.

¹⁷ The allusion, noted by F. E. Bevan in *Silas Marner*, by George Eliot (1861; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1912) 210n, is to *King John* III. 111.93-97:

[Silas] filled up the blank with grief. As he sat weaving, he every now and then moaned low, like one in pain . . . he leaned his elbows on his knees, and clasped his head with his hands, and moaned very low. . . ." [130-31]

¹⁸ John Morley (?), rev. of *Silas Marner*, by George Eliot, *Saturday Review* (13 April 1861), *The Critical Heritage* 172-3; Richard Garnet, introduction, *Silas Marner*, by George Eliot (1861; London: Alexander Moring Ltd., 1905) xv; K. M. Lobb, ed., *Silas Marner*, by George Eliot (1861; London: U of London P, 1957) 202n. Lobb notes that Scott and Hardy drew similar scenes. Cf. also U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *Early Novels*: he compares Silas with Shakespeare's Pericles because, he says, both are passive Job figures "redeemed through the miraculous gift of a daughter" (229).

¹⁹ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *VN* 19 (1961): 127-8.

²⁰ Cf. also *Letters* 1: 35-37, 194-95; 3: 127-28; 7: 52; and, 9: 120-21.

²¹ Cited in A. R. Humphries, ed., *2 Henry IV* 97-98n.

²² David Carroll, "Revealing the Oracles of Religion," *George Eliot: "The Mill on the Floss" and "Silas Marner,"* ed. R. P. Draper (1977; London: Macmillan, 1982) 208-9.

²³ All quotations are taken from Q. D. Leavis, ed., *Silas Marner*, by George Eliot (1861; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

²⁴ Cross, *Life* 3: 30-5.

²⁵ Carroll, "Reversing the Oracles of Religion" 215-6n.

²⁶ In his very fine essay Carroll draws attention to the "juxtaposition of the two stories" of Silas and Godfrey and argues that the religion of love (which each man develops) is akin to Feuerbach's analysis of religion as a form of mediation between man's helplessness and the mysterious ordering of the universe.

²⁷ For Wordsworthian affinities cf. Squires, *The Pastoral Novel* 89; John Purkis, *A Preface to George Eliot* (London: Longman, 1985) 67; F. B. Pinion, *A George Eliot Companion: Literary Achievement and Modern Significance* (London: Macmillan, 1981) 133-4; and, especially Robert Hancock Dunham, "Wordsworthian Themes and Attitudes in George Eliot's Novels," diss., Stanford U., 1971, 176ff. But see also Jerome Thale, introduction, *Silas Marner*, by George Eliot (1861; New York: Holt, 1962) ix-x; Lilian Haddakin, "*Silas Marner*," *Critical Essays on George Eliot* 65-6; and Q. D. Leavis, introduction 27, who argue that Wordsworth's influence can be exaggerated.

The influence of a fairy tale is argued by Joseph Wieserfarth. In *George Eliot's Mythmaking*, he suggests that she patterned the novel on "another well known fairy tale, 'Prince Darling'" (130). See also Terence Dawson, "*Silas Marner*: George Eliot and Mme Le Prince de Beaumont," *The George Eliot Fellowship Review* 19 (1988): 36-38.

In *George Eliot* (1883), Matilda Blind first drew attention to Kraszewski's *Jermola the Potter*. However, this possible influence is now dismissed as unlikely (cf. Pinion, *A George Eliot Companion* 131-32).

Q. D. Leavis suggests that Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) may have been an influence: Dr. Manette's daughter, Lucie, also has golden

hair and helps to kindle her father's "process of being restored to life" (introduction, *Silas Marner* 25-6).

²⁸ Thomas Pinney, "The Authority of the Past in George Eliot's Novels," *NCF* 21 (1966-67): 138.

²⁹ Q. D. Leavis 27.

³⁰ Dunham 195, 198.

³¹ Q. D. Leavis 251. As Leavis writes in her note on "the church assembling in Lantern Yard," "though it is impossible to say exactly what sect Silas's was . . . [t]he evidence available from *Marner* points to the doctrine of the sects deriving from Calvinism" (250-51).

³² Auster, *Local Habitations*, 177, 185, 205. Cf. Q. D. Leavis's introduction to *Silas Marner* for an interesting discussion on Radicalism.

³³ Q. D. Leavis 38.

³⁴ Q. D. Leavis 26.

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Chapter 6

¹ Sanders, appendix B 682-83. See also J. R. Tye, "George Eliot's Unascribed Mottoes," *NCF* 3rd ser. 22 (1967): 237.

² Peter Alexander, ed., introduction, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, by William Shakespeare (1951; London and Glasgow: Collins, 1981) 16.

³ Fred C. Thomson, ed., *Felix Holt, The Radical*, by George Eliot (1866; Oxford: The Clarendon P, 1980) 8. All other page numbers refer to this edition and will be given in the text.

⁴ Thomson, introduction, *Felix Holt* xvii. See also his "The Genesis of *Felix Holt*," *PMLA* 74 (1959): 576-84.

⁵ Thomson, introduction, *Felix Holt* xviii; Higdon, "George Eliot and the Art of the Epigraph" 137n.

⁶ Haight, *Biography* 383. On March 4th, 1861, while writing *Silas Marner*, Eliot made a similar comment to Blackwood: "The M. S. I send to-day brings my story to the 308th page--the end of the fourth act. . . ." Haight notes that p. 308 ended chapter 18 and that there "is no division into acts in the M. S." (*Letters* 3: 385, 385n).

⁷ Fred C. Thomson, "Felix Holt as Classical Tragedy," *Critics on George Eliot: Readings in Literary Criticism*, ed. William Baker (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973) 89-90.

⁸ Florence Sandler, "The Unity of *Felix Holt*," *George Eliot: A Centenary Tribute* 138, 150. E. S. Dallas said that if a man had written *Felix Holt*, he would have named the novel after Esther, since she is the main character (review of *Felix Holt, The Radical*, by George Eliot. *The*

Times 26 June 1866: 6, *Critical Heritage* 263-70). In his introduction, *Felix Holt, The Radical*, by George Eliot (1866; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) 7-65, Peter Coveney also sees Esther as occupying the central role.

⁹ For lopsided critiques due to selective readings of characters or themes, see G. S. Venables, review of *Felix Holt, The Radical*, by George Eliot, *Edinburgh Review* 124 (1866): 435-49, *Critical Heritage* 278-85; Henry James, review of *Felix Holt, The Radical*, by George Eliot, *Nation* 3 (1866): 127-28, *Critical Heritage* 273-77; and Leavis, *The Great Tradition* 65-76.

¹⁰ Higdon, 134-47.

¹¹ Arnold Kettle, "Felix Holt, The Radical," *Critical Essays on George Eliot* 109-112; Jerome Thale, *The Novels of George Eliot* (New York: Columbia UP, 1959) 94-95.

¹² Barbara Hardy, *Particularities: Readings in George Eliot* (London: Peter Owen, 1982) 166.

¹³ The essay was written at Blackwood's request and was published in the January 1868 edition of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Like the novel, the "Address" does not try to give specific political guidance:

I have avoided touching on special questions. The best help towards judging well on these is to approach them in the right temper without vain expectation, and with a resolution which is mixed with temperance. (Pinney, ed., *Essays* 430)

Instead, Eliot urges the workers to discern between those things which they control, moral conduct for example, and things beyond their reach. She urges them to understand that things requiring change often depend on other things which are better left untouched or are beyond anyone's

influence. And so change should always come gradually and quietly, when all the consequences have been weighed.

¹⁴ J. W. Walter, ed., introduction, *King Henry V*, by William Shakespeare (1954; London and New York: Methuen, 1979) xviii-xix.

¹⁵ Carroll, "Felix Holt: Society as Protagonist" 130-31.

¹⁶ In the "Quarry" for *Felix Holt* there are a number of entries concerning Richard II. Eliot quotes a passage from Hallam's *Middle Ages* in which Richard's enormous contempt for his subjects is recorded, and, in addition to the motto to chapter 13, lists the following extracts from Shakespeare's play: "Heavy-gaited toads. Rich II" [iii.ii.15]; "I live with bread like you, feel want, / Taste grief, need friends. Rich II [III.ii.175-76]; "Must I ravel out / My weaved-up follies? *id*" [IV.i.228-89]; "In your lord's scale is nothing but himself / And some few vanities that make him light" [III.iv.85-86] (George Eliot, Notebook "Quarry" for *Felix Holt*, ms. Eliot/IV,10, Yale U Library, ff. 49, 52). Some of these extracts also appear in the Berg notebook, and I will refer to them in the next chapter. Where *Felix Holt* is concerned, I think they show Eliot's interest in the difference between Richard the king and Richard the man.

¹⁷ Andrew S. Cairncross, ed., *1 Henry VI*, by William Shakespeare (1962; London and New York: Methuen, 1980) 114n.

¹⁸ In the "Quarry" for *Felix Holt*, immediately after notes for offences against the Riot Act--which apply to Felix--Eliot notes: "'O cruel irreligious piety' Titus Andron." The line (I.i.130) is spoken by Tamora as her son, Alarbus, is taken away to be sacrificed to appease the "shadows."

¹⁹ Peter Ure, ed., introduction, *King Richard II*, by William Shakespeare (1956; London: Methuen, 1978) lxiiiiff.

²⁰ Philip Brockbank, ed., *Coriolanus*, by William Shakespeare (1976; London and New York: Methuen, 1980) 336, n. 5; 339, n. 3.

²¹ Elaine Showalter uses the phrase in "The Greening of Sister George," *George Eliot, 1880-1980*, NCF 3rd ser. 35 (1980): 306.

²² Jane Miller, *Women Writing About Men* (London: Virago, 1986) 125-27. Miller is right, I think, when she says that Mrs. Transome is the prototype for *Daniel Deronda's* Princess Halm-Eberstein.

²³ Cf. the section on Eliot in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (443-535), where Gilbert and Gubar analyse Eliot's portrayals of women as victims of patriarchal domination. Gilbert and Gubar focus on how this domination fills them with rage and how they are forced into self-renunciation, not because Eliot "believes it to be appropriately feminine, but because she is intensely aware of the destructive potential of female rage" (513).

²⁴ Jennifer Uglow, *George Eliot* (London: Virago, 1987) 190-91.

²⁵ Carroll, "Felix Holt: Society as Protagonist" 139-40.

²⁶ Carroll, "Felix Holt: Society as Protagonist" 139-40.

²⁷ Uglow 187.

²⁸ *The Madwoman in the Attic* 530-31. Where Eliot is concerned, I agree with Marianne Novy who, in "Middlemarch and George Eliot's Female (Re)Vision of Shakespeare"--soon to be published in *JEGP*--writes:

. . . Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar use the woman writer's relation to Milton as a paradigm for her relation to a male-dominated literary tradition. . . . I believe that many women writer' relations to Shakespeare were very different; Shakespeare as a model suggests possibilities for appropriation more than for confrontation. The cultural image of Shakespeare as a writer of negative capability, or wide-ranging sympathy, especially developed during the nineteenth century, has had special appeal for women

writers, who have been more likely to see Milton as a figure they needed to define themselves against.

I am grateful to Professor Novy for sending me a draft of her article.

See also Dianne F. Sadoff, *Monsters of Affection: Dickens, Eliot & Bronte on Fatherhood* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1982) 105ff. Sadoff refers to Gilbert and Gubar's point that women writers debunked male writers and says that their analysis "ignores nineteenth-century female complicity in the metaphor of the pen-as-penis."

For rather than rebel against that metaphor, George Eliot positioned herself within the patriarchal tradition of writing and so assumed to herself the public authority of male authorship, the power to engender implied by the phallogocentric aesthetic. George Eliot's pen name provided her the power of the penis, the power to engender in writing, and so the power of the phallogis, the authority of the male word.

Endnotes

Chapter 7

¹ Wiesenfarth, *Mythmaking* 209.

² Wiesenfarth, *Mythmaking* 235.

³ H. Lawrence [Edith Simcox], rev. of *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, *Academy* 4 (1873): 1-4. *Critical Heritage* 323.

⁴ Cf. Anna Theresa Kitchell, ed., *Quarry for "Middlemarch"* by George Eliot (Berkeley: U of California P, 1950), Supplement to *NCF* 4 (1949-50); George Eliot, Notebook "Interesting Extracts"; c. 1868-70 with additions c. 1879, Folger ms. M.a.14; Pratt and Neufeldt, *George Eliot's MIDDLEMARCH Notebooks: A Transcription*; and, Baker, *Pfortzheimer Holographs* 4 vols.

⁵ George Eliot, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, ed. David Carroll (1871; Oxford: The Clarendon P, 1986) 3. All quotations from the novel are taken from this edition.

⁶ Jerome Beaty's, *Middlemarch from Notebook to Novel: A Study of George Eliot's Creative Method* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1960), shows just how significant the notebooks can be to an understanding of Eliot's work.

⁷ That is what Barbara Hardy calls the novel in her introduction to *Middlemarch: Critical Approaches to the Novel* (London: The Athlone P, 1967) 10. For interesting discussions of Eliot's "Shakespearean imagery," cf. Hilda M. Hulme, "The Language of the Novel: Imagery," *Critical Approaches* 95; and, Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot* 215.

⁹ For a discussion on such difficulties, cf. Baker's prefaces to the *Pfortzheimer Holographs*, vols. 1 and 4.

⁹ Cf. Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakesperean Comedy and Romance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1965) 81-82.

¹⁰ Northrop Frye, *The Myth of Deliverance: Reflections on Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1983) 29-30.

¹¹ David Daiches, *George Eliot: Middlemarch* (London: Edward Arnold, 1963) 57.

¹² George Eliot, *Journal*, 16 Mar. 1855. Cited in Haight, *Biography* 178. This comment suggesting Eliot's impatience with Shakespeare's treatment of women should be compared with other observations indicating her appreciation of how he portrays his heroines. (Cf. George Eliot, "Love in the Drama," *Leader* [25 August 1855], 880-21, *George Eliot: A Writer's Notebook*, ed. Wiesenfarth 253-55.)

¹³ Cf. Pratt and Neufeldt 85, 163.

¹⁴ For a convincing discussion on Casaubon's sexual failure, cf. Hardy, *Particularities* 15-36.

¹⁵ Daiches 14-15 (cf. also 42-43). Hardy, however, argues that there is a lack of sexual tension between Dorothea and Ladislav (cf. *Particularities* 15-36).

¹⁶ Pratt and Neufeldt 224, 274; "Quarry for *Felix Holt*" f. 49.

¹⁷ For a discussion of Eliot's use of the Sonnets in *Middlemarch*, cf. Otice C. Sircy, "'The Fashion of Sentiment': Allusive Technique and the Sonnets of *Middlemarch*," *Studies in Philology* 84 (1987): 219-44. Sircy argues that Eliot disliked most English sonnets, including Shakespeare's, because they are trite, stale and therefore false expressions of love. Hence, in *Middlemarch*, the references to sonnets

and sonneteers are used ironically to ridicule the conventions of wooing women. Cf. also Pratt and Neufeldt (265-66), who make a similar point. Where Shakespeare's Sonnets are concerned, it is true that Eliot found fault with many "'sugared sonnets among private friends'" (cf. endnote 24), as she put it. Yet, she added the following remark to her earlier comments about their weaknesses: "1872. Nevertheless, I love the Sonnets better & better whenever I return to them. They are tunes that for some undefinable reason suit my frame" (cf. Pratt and Neufeldt 209-13).

¹⁸ Mrs. Jameson, *Characteristics of Women* 2: 50-51.

¹⁹ Baker, *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 3: 25, 189. This extract is also recorded in *George Eliot's Blotter*, ed. Daniel Waley (London: The British Library, 1980) 9. The second extract in the *Pfortzheimer Holograph*, lines given by Posthumus's gaoler, express the prevailing sentiment in *Middlemarch*, if not all the novels:

I would we were all of one mind, &
that one mind good; O there were deso-
lation of gaolers & gallowses!

(Cf. V.iv.205-207)

²⁰ "Interesting Extracts" f. 1.

²¹ Cf. *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 2: 27.

²² *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 2: 27, 45. The first of these lines is spoken by Achilles, the second by Thersites.

²³ Carroll, ed. *Middlemarch* 286n.

²⁴ For instance, there is Spilkins, a "young Slender of the neighbourhood, who was reckless with his pocket-money and felt his want of memory for riddles" (593). In a note, Carroll writes: "An obtuse young man in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*" (593n. h). Slender is one of Anne Page's foolish suitors, terrified of approaching her without

the help of his text (cf. I.i.181-83). And then there is Ned Plymdale, who once thought that he had an understanding with Rosamond. Referring to Eliot's use of the phrase "sugared sonnets" (cf. endnote 17 above), Pratt and Neufeldt write:

In chapter 27, Lydgate, commenting to Rosamond on Ned Plymdale's 'Keepsake,' says, "'Do look at this bridegroom coming out of church: did you ever see such a 'sugared invention'--as the Elizabethans used to say?'" (265-66)

In other words, without Lydgate, Rosamond is reduced to accepting Middlemarch bumblers or "sonneteers."

²⁵ Kitchell, *Quarry* 32, 34.

²⁶ Honingmann, ed., *King John* 107n.

²⁷ Kitchell, *Quarry* 41.

²⁸ The Arden editors of *Twelfth Night* gloss "swaggering" as "bullying and blustering" (156n).

²⁹ Eye imagery is used to describe both Angelo and Lydgate: "Me-thinks I see a quickening in his eye" (V.i.493); "That evening he had the peculiar light in the eyes and unusual vivacity which had been once noticed in him by Mr Farebrother" (658); Lydgate "reminds one of an animal with fierce eyes and retractile claws" (661).

³⁰ Henry James, "George Eliot's *Middlemarch*," *Galaxy* (1873): 424-28, Bert G. Hornback, ed., *Middlemarch* by George Eliot (1871; New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1977) 652. Cf. also A. V. Dicey, rev. of *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, by George Eliot, *Nation* 16, *Critical Heritage* 339-52, who says that the novel is defective because "the parts are much more striking than the whole. . ."; and Kerry McSweeney, *Middlemarch* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984) 119-32, who thinks that the novel is too big to have a unity, but that it succeeds

brilliantly in representing the human experience. For discussions which variously fault the treatment of Ladislav and Dorothea, cf. Anon., rev. of *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, by George Eliot, *Saturday Review* 7 Dec. 1872: 733-34, Hornback 645-48; W. J. Harvey, ed., introduction, *Middlemarch* by George Eliot (1871; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 7-22; Lee R. Edwards, "Women, Energy, and *Middlemarch*," Hornback 683-93; Lloyd Fernando, "Special Pleading and Art in *Middlemarch*: The Relations between the Sexes," Hornback 693-700; and, Arnold Kettle, "George Eliot: *Middlemarch*," Patrick Swinson, ed., *George Eliot: Middlemarch* (1972; London: Macmillan, 1983) 147-67.

³¹ This line from *Antony and Cleopatra* (I.ii.9-10) is recorded in the Berg notebook, cf. Pratt and Neufeldt 226, 274. It is one of five extracts from the play, which, together with the extensive comments on and extracts from the Sonnets and other plays, appears to have been selected for its poetic beauty. During the time of writing *Middlemarch*, Eliot worked on "Notes on Form in Art" (1868) and "Versification" (1869), in which she discussed and challenged the accepted rules for poetry (cf. Wiesenfarth, *George Eliot: A Writer's Notebook* 286-90).

³² Gillian Beer, *George Eliot* 169.

³³ Hardy, *Particularities* 167.

Endnotes

Chapter 8

¹ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965) 122.

² U. C. Knoepfelmacher, "Daniel Deronda and William Shakespeare," *VN* 19 (1961):27-28.

³ Jerome Thale, *The Novels of George Eliot* (New York: Columbia UP, 1959) 122-35; F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* 97-103; Knoepfelmacher, *Religious Humanism* 147-48.

⁴ William Baker, *George Eliot and Judaism* (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1975) 117-79. See also Baker's "George Eliot's Readings in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Historians: A Note on the Background of 'Daniel Deronda,'" *VS* 15 (1972) 4: 463-73.

⁵ Baker, introduction, *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 1: 30

⁶ Cf. Haight, *Biography* 486-88; Baker, *Eliot and Judaism* 1-6.

⁷ The *Tablet* "found 'Daniel's acceptance of Judaism as a religion . . . revolting' (4 November 1876, p. 387)." Cited in *George Eliot and Judaism* 3.

⁸ Haight, *Biography* 487. Similarly, Barbara Hardy thinks that "The psychology and style of the Jewish characters . . . is simplified and idealized," (introduction, *Daniel Deronda*, by George Eliot (1876; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) 15.

⁹ Graham Handley, ed., Introduction. *Daniel Deronda*, by George Eliot (1876; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) xvii-xviii.

¹⁰ Baker, *George Eliot and Judaism* 183-234.

¹¹ Henry James, "Daniel Deronda: A Conversation" (1876), *George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. George R. Creeger 161-76.

¹² All quotations are taken from, and page numbers refer to, Graham Handley, ed., *Daniel Deronda*, by George Eliot (1876; Oxford: The Clarendon P, 1984).

¹³ *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 1: 145-48.

¹⁴ Cf. Pratt and Neufeldt 209-13, 265-66; Wiesenfarth, *A Writer's Notebook* 49 (entry 110), 177; and, Bodleian Ms.Don.g.8, f. 20.

¹⁵ Hardy, introduction, *Daniel Deronda* 29. See also Handley, introduction, World's Classic edition of *Daniel Deronda* xvii-xviii.

¹⁶ There are also five extracts from *Othello* in the *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 3: 121-22. The lines refer to Iago's grudging respect for Othello and his urging of Roderigo not to give up on Desdemona, Othello's delight on meeting his wife in Cyprus, and his anguish at her supposed infidelity. (Cf. the Arden edition, I.i.152, I.iii.340-41, II. i.189-93, III.iii.353-60, and IV.ii.48-54, 58-61, respectively.)

¹⁷ *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 3: 33.

¹⁸ Hardy, *Daniel Deronda* 887 n. Handley also comments on the *Macbeth* motto: it is "a subtle underlining of the purgatory awaiting Gwendolen" (introduction, Clarendon edition of *Daniel Deronda* xix).

¹⁹ A. R. Humphries, ed., introduction, *Much Ado About Nothing*, by William Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1981) 53.

²⁰ The motto is also found in *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 3: 254-55.

²¹ Handley, introduction, World's Classic edition of *Daniel Deronda* xxii. In "'Janet's Repentance' and the Myth of the Organic" (*NCF* 3rd ser. 35 [December 1980]: 331-48), David Carroll makes a similar point about Dempster's brutality towards Janet. Carroll argues that Eliot

always sought to demonstrate the "central paradigm" of tyranny: "control by its very excess loses control" and ultimately turns on itself (344).

²² Cf. Gillian Beer, *George Eliot* 202-27, where she discusses the treatment of music and its application to women.

²³ Handley writes: "Where Daniel and Mirah find love within the compatibility of their racial inheritance, Catherine and Klesmer find theirs in the dedication to art and the mutuality of shared interests. It would not be too cryptic to say that Klesmer's Judaism is his music" (Introduction, World's Classic edition of *Daniel Deronda* xxi).

²⁴ The motto is also found in the "Quarry" for *Felix Holt* (Yale, Eliot IV, 10, f. 49) and the Berg Notebook (cf. Pratt and Neufeldt 224, 274).

²⁵ When Hermione comes to life, Leontes says, "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating" (V.iii.110-11). The lines are recorded in *Pfortzheimer Holograph* 3: 71. Handley also stresses the thematic significance of the play: the Hermione tableau is "vital to our understanding of Gwendolen and prophetic of her future experience" (introduction, Clarendon edition of *Daniel Deronda* xix).

²⁶ Knoepfmacher, "*Daniel Deronda* and William Shakespeare" 28.

²⁷ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* 513.

Endnotes

Conclusion

¹ Cited in Haight, *Biography* 58.

² John Paterson, ed., introduction, *Adam Bede* by George Eliot (1859; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) xii.

³ Cited in Paterson xii.

⁴ Translation by K. M. van den Broek. The comment was made by M. Charles Philarète in his *études sur W. Shakspeare (sic), Marie Stuart et L'arétin: Le Drame, les Mœurs et la Religion au XVI^e Siècle* (Paris: Amyot, Rue de la Paix, [1851]). In the copy owned by the Leweses (now in the Dr. Williams's Library, London), there are vertical pencil marks in the right hand margin beside the following paragraphs:

Rien de plus facile que d'imaginer, c'est-à-dire de se rappeler une fable gaie ou attendrissante; c'est ce que font tous les jours une nourrice qui veut amuser son enfant, un fripon qui s'excuse devant ses juges, un buveur qui veut égayer ses amis. Le génie consiste à mieux comprendre, à mieux pénétrer, à environner de plus de lumière ce que chacun sait superficiellement ou comprend à demi. Un des singuliers caractères de Shakspeare, c'est sa souveraine indifférence quant au sujet qu'il doit traiter. Il n'y regarde pas: l'excellent ouvrier sait tirer parti de tout. Il prend au hasard une pierre, un morceau de bois, un bloc de granit, un bloc de marbre. Peu lui importe que son prédécesseur ait fait agir et parler sur la scène un vieux roi déshérité par ses filles; c'est un fait comme un autre, qui ne vaut ni plus ni moins. Shakspeare va trouver tout ce qu'il y a de larmes et de puissance dans l'âme de ce vieillard.

On court après l'invention aujourd'hui que l'originalité intime manque; elle réside dans l'artiste, non dans les matériaux qu'il emploie. A tous les grands hommes c'est la tradition, c'est le peuple, c'est l'héritage commun des idées et des usages qui ont légué les matériaux. Ils les ont reçus tels quels; puis il les ont fondus, transformés, immortalisés. D'une borne ils ont fait un dieu; d'un tronc d'arbre, une statue: comme ce peintre espagnol, prisonnier chez les Maures, et qui n'ayant ni marbre à tailler ni madone à adorer, tira de son être une bûche, et en fit la sainte Vierge. ("Du Théâtre Anglais Avant Shakspeare, et des Dramaturges ses Contemporains.")

⁵ Barbara Hardy, ed., introduction, *Critical Essays* vii-viii.

Appendix

In Appendix I of *The George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Library: An Annotated Catalogue of their Books at Dr. Williams's Library, London* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1977), William Baker lists books sold at Sotheby's on June 17, 1923. Included are the following, given here with their catalogue description and the price they fetched:

Shakespeare (W.) *Works*, edited by C. Knight, 12 vol. illustrations, G.H. LEWES'S COPY, with his signature on each title and numerous comments and critical notes throughout, cloth, uncut (with IV not quite uniform). 1842-4. £20. Maggs.

SHAKESPEARE (W.) MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES HISTORIES AND TRAGEDIES. Published according to the true Original Copies. Unto which is added, Seven Plays, Never before Printed in Folio. . . THE FOURTH EDITION, portrait by Martin Droeshout with verses beneath, title and corners and margins of several leaves repaired, in a few cases slightly affecting the text, some leaves stained and a few soiled, but otherwise a sound and unusually tall copy [14 $\frac{3}{4}$ -14 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 9 in.] morocco, 2 line fillet round sides, inner borders, panelled back with raised bands, by Douglas Cockerell; sold as usual not subject to return. H. Herringman, E. Brewster and R. Bentley, 1865. £58. Sawyer.

Unfortunately, they have not been traced.

J. C. Pratt and V. A. Neufeldt say that Knight's edition was the "most readily available" to the Leweses. However, in "Shakspeare and his Editors" (*The Westminster Review* 43 [1845]: 40-77), Lewes not only critiqued Knight's edition but also J. P. Collier's *Shakespeare, Works*, 8 vols. (1842-44). In *The Libraries of George Eliot and George Henry Lewes* (English Literary Studies: U of Victoria, 1981), Baker writes:

In addition to recording a copy of twelve volumes of Knight (item 824), Mrs. Ouvry [Lewes's granddaughter] lists three other editions of Shakespeare's *Works* available to GE: the nine-volume Cambridge edition edited by W. G. Clark, J. Glover and V. A. Wright, 1863-66, and sold as Foster's item 69; A. Dyce's nine-volume edition, 1864-67; and a five-volume Knight (items 822, 823, 824). There are also copies of *Hamlet*, *King John*, *King Lear*, *King Richard II*, and *The Merchant of Venice*, all specifically Clarendon Press editions (items 826-830); *King John* appeared in this series in 1866). Mrs.

Ouvry also specifically identifies the "Aldine edition" of Shakespeare's "Poems" (item 831), edited by A. Dyce (1866), and an unspecified single-volume *Songs and Sonnets*. (30)

Colley Cibber may also have been referred to: Haight notes that Lewes's comment to Blackwood, "The trip did me great good and I have come back 'my soul in arms and eager for the fray,'" (*Letters* 3: 443) includes a line from Cibber's *Richard III*.

The problem of determining which edition Eliot was using at any one time is further compounded by the realization that she may, on occasion, have quoted from memory. For instance, in Kitchell's *Quarry for "Middlemarch"* an extract has a question mark next to it (32), and in Baker's *Pfortzheimer Holograph* another is wrongly identified (2: 27, 140). The Leweses also owned a copy of Mary Cowden Clarke's *Complete Concordance to Shakespeare* (1845) (cf. Baker, *The Libraries of George Eliot and George Henry Lewes* 30, 62), and that may have been used for a quick reference and quotation. If Eliot and Lewes had a preference for one of the above editions, I have not found evidence for it.

In an effort to standardise Shakespeare's texts, I take Eliot's borrowings at face value and compare them with the readily available and scholarly New Arden Shakespeare for the plays and Peter Alexander's *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* for the sonnets. Whenever Eliot's extracts from the plays are quoted, the New Arden scene and line numbers are added in square brackets. Similarly, I have silently altered Haight's scene and line numbers in the *Letters* to conform to the ones in the New Arden editions.

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