A THEMATIC STUDY OF THE CHARACTERIZATION
OF WOMEN IN THREE NOVELS BY GEORGE ELIOT

by

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ABSTRACT

A Thematic Study of the Characterization of Women in Three Novels by George Eliot emphasizes the development of her ability to end her novels in a genuine and consistent manner. This process culminates in her final novel through her extension of a sympathetic appreciation of human error and psychological illusion to a credible conclusion which both convinces the reader and satisfies the demands of plot. Her initial use of artificial endings, such as death and marriage, assures the reader that there will be no extraneous experiences to consider at the close of each novel. In Daniel Deronda, however, George Eliot depicts the future of her heroine as an unknown element in which the only constant is the process of maturation. This novel offers a detailed perspective on human development concluding with the concept of a future in which new awareness will be applied to unspecified events.

Considering the intricacies of the issues of human nature that George Eliot deals with, such as individual illusions, the effects of social pressure, the inescapable consequences of past behavior, and the course of moral growth, the simplicity of her closed and happy endings in the novels previous to Daniel Deronda are aesthetically and emotionally unsatisfying for the reader. This study accounts for the superiority of her final novel by virtue of its faithfulness to the condition of change implied throughout the development of plot and characterization.

Chapters I and II of this thesis deal with Maggie Tulliver's drowning in The Mill on the Floss and Dorothea Brooke's final
marriage in *Middlemarch* as examples of George Eliot's characteristic of completing her novels with a brief and ungratifying account of the heroine after rendering a slow and faithful description of her temperament, her emotional traumas and the consequent moral dilemmas established against the panoramic background of provincial society. Chapter III, however, establishes Gwendolen Harleth's new and disturbing vision of reality and the uncertainty of her future as a conclusion to *Daniel Deronda*. This open-ended structure gratifies the reader's expectation by its consistency with the complexity of the heroine's psychological drama.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

References to the novels are made in the text and the following abbreviations are used for the titles:

DD  Daniel Deronda  
M  Middlemarch  
MF  The Mill on the Floss
INTRODUCTION

The souls by nature pitch'd too high
By suffering plung'd too low.1

The major heroines in George Eliot's fiction are variations on the same basic character. Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Gwendolen Harleth show varying degrees of passion, wistfulness, and caprice. The effects of their loves and the dilemmas related to these emotional experiences portray such characteristics. It is possible to trace George Eliot's development as a writer through her treatment of moral growth in these three heroines and reveal a clear improvement in her ability to characterize women. This trend toward refinement of female character is most apparent in The Mill on the Floss (1860), Middlemarch (1871), and Daniel Deronda (1876).

As George Eliot presents the moral dilemmas of Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Gwendolen Harleth, her perspective on the human condition becomes progressively more realistic. Characterization is perfected by increased exposure of the psychological drama that creates an emotionally mature adult. Maturity signifies each heroine's development of insight into her own small world in relation to the larger universe. Parallel and consequent to this pattern is a decreased tendency for George Eliot to rely upon the convenient denouement of plot and on idealization of character.

In the endings of these novels, George Eliot proceeds from the unrealistic and abrupt drowning of Maggie Tulliver to the fairytale second marriage of Dorothea Brooke to the unresolved dilemma of Gwendolen Harleth. Each heroine is released in some manner through death, but only in The Mill on the Floss does she
meet this experience herself. Whereas death frees Maggie from the burden of her hopeless state, however, it frees Dorothea to remarry, and Gwendolen to begin life anew as an unfettered woman.

Maggie Tulliver's drowning serves abruptly and unconvincingly to eradicate the problems of plot development. Maggie is trapped by her passions and her lack of opportunity to nurture them, but her rapid death in the flood solves the problem too quickly for the reader's emotional adjustment.

Dorothea Brooke's union with Will Ladislaw, on the other hand, gives purpose to her life by offering her a tangible future to which she can devote her energies and ideals. Casaubon's convenient death frees Dorothea to demonstrate her maturity by marrying more compatibly, but only after she voluntarily abandons her inheritance. Thus, she negates the codicil of Casaubon's will which in turn eliminates any hesitation about loyalties to her first commitment. This new relationship releases Dorothea from the wealth that has sheltered her, and appeases her heretofore stifled aspiration and self-sacrificial will. Anticipated by Maggie Tulliver, and fore-shadowing Gwendolen Harleth, Dorothea Brooke has been trapped by provincial values that lead to a woman's self-delusion and unworldly mental preoccupations for such women, but marriage with Ladislaw terminates the frustration of limited choices inherent in such a situation. Dorothea's life is thus "filled with a beneficent activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and marking out for herself!" As Mrs. Moss so aptly claims in *The Mill on the Floss*, "It's a deal easier to do what pleases one's husband, than to be puzzling what else one should do" (MF, 147).
By contrast, Gwendolen Harleth's shattering, but credible finale leaves her to resolve her own dilemma on the strength of her new awareness of reality and the humility she has gained by the example of Deronda's unselfishness and the memory of his friendship. In an early essay, George Eliot suggests that the necessary elements of fiction are "genuine observation, humour, and passion." The latter two criteria abound in all her novels in varying degrees, but the capacity to perceive the basis of human psychology is nowhere more apparent than in her description of Gwendolen Harleth's maturing process. George Eliot proceeds in her fiction from the tendency to analyse in *The Mill on the Floss*, to a combination of narration and omniscient analysis in *Middlemarch*, to the ability to move effortlessly from one to the other in *Daniel Deronda*.

These three novels concern themselves with heroines who have in common the ability to grow through experience and the depth to achieve wisdom by suffering. Each heroine's love relationship exposes her evasion of the truth in matters of love and the subsequent growth of awareness as reality is forced upon her. The search for a vocation, common to Maggie, Dorothea, and Gwendolen, includes a naive concept that there is a single path to happiness. Maggie believes the way lies in renunciation, Dorothea in knowledge, and Gwendolen in will-power. Enlightenment involves acquiring the knowledge that no single idea answers for eternal happiness.

Circumstance is as important as character in forming the direction followed by George Eliot's heroines; social conventions combine with internal pressures to produce the final outcome. Circumstance determines that Maggie begin as an "ugly duckling,"
Dorothea as a wealthy orphan, and Gwendolen as a spoiled beauty. Like George Eliot, each woman is orphaned by at least one parent. Each heroine can thus be responsible for her destiny only insofar as she is aware of all the possibilities of her particular existence and knows herself deeply enough to be a useful guide in her own future. Enlightenment is offered to each through the learning that comes with increased interaction with society, especially in the form of the one man who voices George Eliot's opinion. Philip Wakem provides this voice of wisdom for Maggie Tulliver, Will Ladislaw for Dorothea Brooke, and Daniel Deronda for Gwendolen Harleth.

George Eliot describes the moment of disillusionment that initiates the enlightenment and psychological development in each of her heroines in a letter written in 1848, long before the conception of her novels:

Alas for the fate of poor mortals which condemns them to wake up some fine morning and find all the poetry in which their world was bathed only the evening before, utterly gone! ... This is the state of prostration—the self-abnegation through which the soul must go, and to which perhaps it must again and again return.

Thus, each heroine must rise to a new day which brings with it renewed hardships and sorrows. The manner in which she has deluded herself and the way she finds release from her illusory reality form the basis of each heroine's development.

Gwendolen Harleth resists the instinctive knowledge of morality and goodness by marriage to Grandcourt, and, in so doing, begins a long and painful struggle with her conscience. The solution George Eliot offers in Daniel Deronda is far from the Victorian
ending of *The Mill on the Floss* where the beautiful heroine is finally appreciated in death. *Middlemarch*, where the heroine is ultimately betrothed to a worldly and knowledgeable counterpart, also represents the conventional Victorian novel. But Gwendolen Harleth's story leads to quite another kind of satisfaction. Her final condition anticipates Henry James' characterization of Isabel Archer. In *Daniel Deronda* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, each heroine must learn to live with past mistakes and hope to make the uncertain life to come better by increased awareness. The difference between them is that Isabel Archer continues to be bound by the same evil in terms of her marriage, whereas Gwendolen Harleth's life is freed from all bonds except her conscience. Conscience may be a difficult companion to accommodate, but *Daniel Deronda*, like *The Portrait of a Lady*, offers satisfaction in terms of faithfulness to the human condition of loneliness and the negation of final answers as a solution to an unknown future.
CHAPTER I

A Moral Dilemma: The Mill on the Floss

Maggie Tulliver is the victim of repeated moral dilemmas stimulated by her intensely passionate nature and the provincial society that will not allow her passion to be channelled into healthy forms of activity. She becomes increasingly entangled in the strands of a web composed of her deep moral conscience, her longing to love and be loved, her desire to live up to the extent of her intellectual energies, and the lack of opportunity to bring any of these characteristics to healthy fruition. All of her passions challenge the claustrophobic environment that surrounds her, but the counter-challenge of static society clutters her life with insurmountable frustrations. As George Eliot suggests in Middlemarch, "it always remains true that if we had been greater, circumstance would have been less strong against us" (M, 428). Circumstance proves too strong for Maggie Tulliver's character to find viable soil in which to grow. Thus, the plot is structured in such a way that the reader can find cathartic relief only through the heroine's death.

The Mill on the Floss opens and closes with the narrator's distant perspective on the Floss and a gradual narrowing of focus to "the little girl... at the edge of the water" (MF, 3), and "that brick grave" (MF, 496) which ultimately holds her. The river becomes a metaphor and vehicle for her development, dilemma, and destruction. Water as a metaphor suggests images which emphasize and clarify emotion and the importance of the river metaphor in
The Mill on the Floss cannot be over-emphasized in a discussion of Maggie Tulliver's peculiar characterization. The river metaphor often, but not exclusively, conveys Maggie's feeling for Stephen Guest—the eager passion that drives Maggie forward to a moral crisis and the heavy conscience that brings her back to face her accusers. The chapter which deals with Maggie's actual rendezvous with Stephen bears the caption "Borne Along by the Tide" (MF, 433). The river actually carries Stephen and Maggie physically to bypass Luckreth, their initial destination and Maggie is "borne along by the tide" of her emotions before she becomes conscious of the effect that her behavior will have on those who depend on her loyalties.

Until subliminal consciousness becomes an awareness from which she cannot hide, however, Maggie allows the river to provide a realm of vague fantasy:

Behind all the delicious visions of these last hours, which had flowed over her like a soft stream and made her entirely passive, there was the dim consciousness that the condition was a transient one, and that the morrow must bring back the old life of struggle—that there were thoughts which would presently avenge themselves for this oblivion. But now nothing was distinct to her: she was being lulled to sleep with that soft stream still flowing over her, with those delicious visions melting and fading like the wondrous aerial land of the west. (MF, 445-46)

Finally, in the morning light, reality proves too strong for fantasy. The full knowledge of her deed comes with the sight of Stephen sleeping at dawn and Maggie experiences a "wave of anguish" with the knowledge that they must part (MF, 447). This experience foreshadows the "quiet resolved endurance and effort" that ultimately replace the enticing existence of an "easy floating stream of
Philip Wakem compares Maggie to "a tall Hamadryad" (MF, 308). This wood nymph, who is fated to live and die with the tree she inhabits, parallels Maggie Tulliver who is fated to live and die by the river she has known all her life. The intensity of Maggie's first meaningful separation from Philip is also developed in terms of the river. They experience "one of those dangerous moments when speech is at once sincere and deceptive—when feeling, rising high above its average depth, leaves flood-marks which are never reached again" (MF, 318). This metaphor not only anticipates the fate of their relationship, but also conveys the human tendency to find more precious those occasions that may never occur again.

In a more obvious endeavor to express Maggie Tulliver's fate, George Eliot uses the river to accentuate the unknown and abundant events that, coupled with character, determine her ultimate doom:

Maggie's destiny, then, is at present hidden and we must wait for it to reveal itself like the course of an unmapped river: we only know that the river is full and rapid, and that for all rivers there is the same final home. (MF, 380).

This passage alludes to Maggie Tulliver's vulnerability to the common fate of all men and to the manner of her death. But more significant, in terms of her characterization, are the unconventional aspects of her nature that make her an outsider. Maggie wishes that "her mind could flow into the easy, babbling current" of social gatherings, but, differing as she does from the ladies of St. Ogg's, Maggie's passionate nature makes this "flow" impossible (MF, 411).
In her confusion and abandonment, the memory of Dr. Kenn's compassion creates a direction for Maggie. This incident anticipates a similar effect on Gwendolen Harleth by Daniel Deronda when she realizes the future help she will gain through the remembrance of his guidance. George Eliot allows us to see Maggie Tulliver as the victim of a shipwreck in a clever twist which foreshadows by metaphor the fate from which Dr. Kenn cannot save her:

She felt a childlike instinctive relief from the sense of uneasiness in this exertion, when she saw it was Dr. Kenn's face that was looking at her; that plain, middle-aged face, with a grave, penetrating kindness in it, seeming to tell of a human being who had reached a firm, safe strand, but was looking with helpful pity towards the strugglers still tossed by the waves, had an effect on Maggie at this moment which was afterwards remembered by her as if it had been a promise. (MF, 412)

This imagery of the shipwreck foreshadows Daniel Deronda's vision of Gwendolen Harleth as a "vessel in peril of wreck ... by the inescapable storm!" (from which he must attempt to guide her to safety). 6

Maggie Tulliver's relationship with Dr. Kenn exposes the moral themes that George Eliot wished to convey in The Mill on the Floss. 7

The power of social opinion is stronger than any logic, no matter how sound:

Even with his twenty years' experience as a parish priest, he was aghast at the obstinate continuance of imputations against her in the face of evidence . . . . in attempting to open the ears of women to reason, and their consciences to justice, on behalf of Maggie Tulliver, he suddenly found himself as powerless as he was aware he would have been if he had attempted to influence the shape of bonnets. (MF, 479)

Ironically, it is, of course, the conscience that these social gossipers fancy they may justly voice their opinions on. Thus, George Eliot articulates the negative power of solid tradition in the face of a reality which opposes it. This is the "moral stupidity"
to which she refers so often in her attempts to expose the illogical resistance of society to anything apart from the norm.

The concepts of childhood influence and the tension between inner and outer stresses which determine Maggie Tulliver's character and, consequently, her reactions and dilemmas are summed up when George Eliot uses the river metaphor to describe the powers that affect behavior. Maggie's attempts to follow her true nature culminate in her return to her basic person:

There were things in her stronger than vanity—passion, and affection, and long deep memories of early discipline and effort, of early claims on her love and pity; and the stream of vanity was soon swept along and mingled imperceptibly with that wider current which was at its highest force to-day, under the double urgency of the events and inward impulses brought by the last week. (MF, 413)

Even the mill that runs by the power of the Ripple, a tributary of the Floss, bears a kinship to Maggie Tulliver's emotional nature. The churning perpetuated inside the mill describes the turmoil within Maggie, a power which motivates the fervor of emotions in favor of both her brother Tom and her lover Stephen. Hence, the "resolute din, the unresting motion of the great stones, giving her a dim delicious awe as at the presence of an uncontrollable force," an impetus "for ever pouring, pouring," describes the magnitude of Maggie's most inward life-force and causes her to "feel that the mill was a little world apart from her outside everyday life" (MF, 23). The intensity of her inner life and the restrictions placed upon its expression by opportunity and environment are the forces that mould Maggie's character, and, consequently, her destiny. George Eliot's philosophy suggests that Maggie's
frustration is a natural outcome of the difference between her sterile external life and her romantic inner world, for "the tragedy of our lives is not created entirely within" (MF, 379). The final reality is a combination of the world we experience and the extent to which we are able to cope. It is because of "this contrast between the outward and the inward, that painful collisions" occur (MF, 221).

George Eliot calls Maggie's world a "triple world of Reality, Books, and Waking Dreams" which suggests a girl who is "strangely old for her years in everything except in her want of that prudence and self-command" (MF, 259). This implies a creature of passionate extremes and anticipates the characterization of Gwendolen Harleth whose caprice is the catalyst for her tragic suffering. Tom is as right about Maggie's petulance as are Celia and Mr. Brooke about Dorothea in Middlemarch. When Tom condemns Maggie's friendship with Philip, the inflexible brother mingles astute insight with narrow convention: "'You're always in extremes—you have no judgement and self-command; and yet you think you know best and will not submit to be guided'" (MF, 370). It is characteristic of all George Eliot's heroines discussed in this study that they think they know best until life teaches them their own fallibilities. There is a strange juxtaposition between Tom's awareness of his sister's petulance and his blindness to her strength of character. It is true that Maggie is a girl of irrational extremes, but it is also true that she is one who sees the need of independence in spite of her time and environment. This combination of qualities describes the characters of both Dorothea Brooke and Gwendolen
Harleth and contributes largely to their moral dilemmas.

Since George Eliot equates passion and imagination in her fiction, Tom, although given credit for seeing truths, is tempered by his inability to see any incident in relation to feeling. When Tom scolds Maggie for her fluctuation between "perverse self-denial" and the inability to "resist a thing that you know to be wrong" (MF, 371), the author interrupts to explain his lack of sympathy on the basis of a narrow vision: "There was a terrible cutting truth in Tom's words—that hard rind of truth which is discerned by unimaginative, unsympathetic minds" (MF, 371). But George Eliot's demand that we not only tolerate, but attempt to understand our fellow man is conveyed in her philosophic approach to Tom's greater educational opportunities and his unfair invectives against Maggie:

Tom, like every one of us, was imprisoned within the limits of his own nature, and his education had simply glided over him, leaving a slight deposit of polish: if you are inclined to be severe on his severity, remember that the responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision. (MF, 474)

Maggie Tulliver proves to be a perfect example of this responsibility and its ironic lack of reward, in that she uses her broader vision to forgive her harshest accuser and thus defines the wide limits of her nature.

The Mill on the Floss begins with a view of the sea and the river as they meet in an "impetuous embrace," to which Maggie's brief infatuation with Stephen Guest and her final reunion with Tom form human counterparts (MF, 2). There is no Ogg to offer Maggie the blessedness of a response to the needs of the heart, and the
plot revolves upon the fact that she must attempt to ferry herself to safety. Ultimately, she takes it upon her own shoulders to assume the role of the legendary oarsman who answers to the needs of another without judgment or contemplation. She simply responds to Tom's need of her in the flood and, therefore, to the precedent established in her childhood. This basic emotional reaction to calamity is foreshadowed by her reaction to Tom's wounded foot, the result of his escapade with the borrowed sword. The fact that Tom did not die from his wound stimulates a joy in Maggie's "highly-strung, hungry nature" (MF, 363) that "seemed as if all happiness lay in his being alive" (MF, 170).

The affection exchanged between father and daughter is more equally balanced, but it is of the same nature as that of brother and sister in that its foundation rests in Maggie's formative years. When the extent of her father's immobilizing stroke is revealed to Maggie, she experiences a basic and unsophisticated knowledge of her affections:

> It was a... one of those supreme moments in life when all we have hoped or delighted in, all we can dread or endure, falls away from our regard as insignificant—is lost, like a trivial memory, in that simple primitive love which knits us to the beings who have been nearest to us, in their times of helplessness or of anguish. (MF, 186)

So it is in all of Maggie's great moments--the experience of love she has known in childhood supercedes and obliterates all acquaintances, experiences and aspirations acquired since that time. The story ends with that "simple primitive love" of Tom and Maggie "in an embrace never to be parted." The heroine, in womanhood, responds to her childhood conditioning and the unity of the water imagery
is sustained as the river propels "the brother and sister for whom youth and sorrow had begun together" to their happy tragedy (MF, 180).

Early in the plot Maggie Tulliver ironically foreshadows the essence of her own tragedy. As a child she explains the meaning of a witch's trial pictured in Defoe's *The History of the Devil*:

"It's a dreadful picture, isn't it? But I can't help looking at it. That old woman in the water's a witch--they've put her in to find out whether she's a witch or no, and if she swims she's a witch, and if she's drowned--and killed you know--she's innocent, and not a witch, but only a poor silly old woman. But what good would it do her then, you know, when she was drowned? Only, I suppose, she'd go to heaven and God would make it up to her." (MF, 12)

Maggie's strange fascination for this choice of one negative possibility weighed against another suggests the dramatic irony of which George Eliot became a master by the time she created Gwendolen Harleth's character. True to the tragic ideal, young Maggie sees in the woman's dilemma that she is damned either way. Maggie finds solace, however, in the concept of a heavenly reward, which, ironically, George Eliot's agnostic philosophy will deny to her heroine. Like the drowned woman, Maggie's ultimate triumph over society's unjust condemnation lies in her undeserved death.

One realizes how skeptically George Eliot views the religious devotion of provincial society when she equates it to tradition. For the major populace of St. Ogg's religious duty is performed because custom has regulated its Sunday behavior, rather than because spiritual inspiration deems it so. George Eliot sees their beliefs as being of the pagan sort, that determine their moral standards, and, "though held with strong tenacity, seem to have no standard beyond hereditary custom" (MF, 255). Her ultimate cynicism
creeps through in the description of the Dodson sisters' use of the bible as a press in which to ensure the correct drying of tulips. For George Eliot, however, a sense of duty and purpose can result from religious traditions if they are approached with sincerity and intelligence. This view will later be discussed in relation to Daniel Deronda.

George Eliot denies Maggie Tulliver the balms of both an escape into the blessing of afterlife and the common tendency to blame others for her mishaps. In fact, there is an intense drive for self-denial in Maggie when she allows Tom to treat her with undeserved disdain and even when she denies herself the sensual satisfaction of Stephen. But there is also a radical voice of logic speaking to Maggie which separates her from the mediocrity and creates a part of her character that is antithetical to Tom's conventional rationality. She learns as a child the fallacy of excusing her behavior by reference to others: "Maggie hated blame: she had been blamed all her life, and nothing had come of it but evil tempers" (MF, 192). Ironically, the one person to whom Maggie does not extend this rational generosity is to herself. Just as Tom's tendency to blame others outlines Maggie's nobler nature, his inflexible outlook, devoid of vision, defines Maggie's philosophical leanings. This inflexibility on Tom's part appears as a strength in terms of its directness:

A character at unity with itself—that performs what it intends, subdues every counteracting impulse, and has no visions beyond the distinctly possible—is strong by its very negations. (MF, 293)

In later years, when Tom condemns Maggie and Philip for their
secret meetings and insults Philip on the basis of his deformity, Maggie confronts him with the injustice of his rigid viewpoint. She faces the harsh reality of Tom's deficiencies, a reality so long softened by her affection: "You have not even a vision of feelings by the side of which your shining virtues are mere darkness!" (MF, 328). In supporting Philip, Maggie exposes her new awareness of Tom's fallacies. But the power of her desire to be loved by her brother forever outweighs the knowledge of his undeserving nature. This imbalance in Tom's favor is a virtue for which Maggie is consistently punished.

Structurally, *The Mill on the Floss* prepares the reader for Maggie's decision to risk her life for her brother and the nature of her death by the number of times that Maggie and Tom return to one another and the references to a watery death that accompany the rise of her dilemma. In spite of these numerous indications, however, the author does not establish a sufficient emotional basis for the reader, in that the speed of the denouement seems inappropriate. Plot coincidence, in the sense of a conveniently-timed death for the heroine, just as she settles into a life of soul-sacrificing loneliness, leaves the reader emotionally unsatisfied with the result of her moral dilemma. Stephen, the superficial cause of Maggie's final crisis, is not introduced until the last quarter of the novel. Although we are adequately informed of Maggie's character as a girl, we no sooner become involved in the concept of Maggie as a woman, than she is swept away by the flood. One closes the book with a sense of having been deprived of the knowledge of Maggie in the framework of a woman's existence. We
must wait for *Middlemarch* to explore this concept.

Although the reader is not prepared for Maggie Tulliver's death in the emotional sense, the drowning is, paradoxically, foreshadowed in a series of prophesies. These prophetic scenes begin with the frettings of Mrs. Tulliver, who complains that "wandering 'up an' down by the water, like a wild thing: she'll tumble in some day" (*MF*, 7). A dream experienced by Philip wherein "he fancied Maggie slipping down a glistening, green, slimy channel of a waterfall," while "he was looking on helpless" suggests not only his thwarted attempt to shield her from great suffering, but his inability to save her from her final watery grave (*MF*, 404). Maggie's own dream, of course, supports a death by drowning when it indicates Tom's demise in this manner and her own inclination toward him. This use of dreams in George Eliot's fiction appears again in *Daniel Deronda* when Grandcourt's death mask haunts Gwendolen Harleth's diseased conscience as she fearfully acknowledges her desire to be rid of him.

Close attention to the structure of the book supports Maggie's return to Tom. *The Mill on the Floss* is divided into seven parts in which Maggie and Tom are always brought together after temporary psychological and physical separations. George Eliot alternates between sending the brother and sister on their own separate ways and bringing them together again, each time with added knowledge and sorrow. They grow further away from the Garden of Eden experienced in childhood and closer to the knowledge of sorrow acquired with maturity. Thus, Maggie with her dynamic emotions confined by a static society, grows progressively closer to a dilemma that cannot be alleviated other than by death.
In Book One, "Boy and Girl," George Eliot states her philosophy on childhood and conveys the determining power of this time of life in relation to the future. Change, no matter how great, cannot erase the impact of the first impressionable years: "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" (MF, 35).

In Book Two, George Eliot deals with the first meaningful and time-consuming separation between the brother and sister. In "School-Time" they are separated by the convention of formal male education as preferable to female learning, regardless of aptitude or inclination. But their father's misfortune and subsequent illness bring them together again in an awareness now tinged with worldly care. George Eliot expresses this sentiment in the metaphorical language of Eden:

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 for ever closed behind them. (MF, 180)

"The Downfall" of Book Three exposes the psychological barrier between Maggie and Tom. The brother's penchant for revengeful justice strikes a harsh note in Maggie's forgiving and sorrowful heart. When Mr. Tulliver commands Tom's promise of vengeance on the Wakem family, Maggie's larger soul separates her from her family's narrow views. Tom's promise is motivated by a personal grievance based on pride and material welfare. Maggie objects to this pact, solemnized by the fact that it is written in their family Bible. In this time of crisis, her noble nature stands out against
the family and anticipates the months of loneliness she will experience.

Book Four separates Maggie totally from her brother and the entire Dodson and Tulliver mode of existence. Maggie enters "The Valley of Humiliation," a self-inflicted penance, while the rest of her family suffers from the humiliation of social degradation and financial disaster. But "Wheat and Tares" brings the two children together again in a reconciliation that foreshadows the story's end. Philip speaks for Maggie when he says of himself; "I think of too many things--sow all sorts of seeds, and get no great harvest from any one of them" (MF, 308-09). This is Maggie's weed of sorrow, the complexity of her yearnings that remain unfulfilled by virtue of her passionate nature and the surroundings in which it must try to bear fruit. In her father's death, as in all the major dilemmas of her life, she returns to her beginning and clings to Tom for meaning: "'Tom, forgive me--let us always love each other,' and they clung and wept together" (MF, 340).

Maggie and Stephen's infatuation is "The Great Temptation" of Book Six to which they partially succumb, confirming Tom's suspicions of Maggie's lack of willpower and trustworthiness. Although Tom will reject her, Maggie ironically thinks in positive terms of her family on her return to St. Ogg's:

Home--where her mother and brother were--Philip--Lucy--the scene of her very cares and trials--was the haven towards which her mind tended--the sanctuary where sacred relics lay--where she would be rescued from more falling. (MF, 455)

Maggie does not realize the extent to which she has severed herself from home by her socially questionable behavior and her own
defeated morale.

It is apparent, then, that Maggie Tulliver is fated by the nature of her priorities in love and the narrowness of her environment to return to her family in spite of her certain unhappiness there. Not only does George Eliot suggest this by reference to the importance of childhood and the inability of Maggie's superior qualities to ensure her a fulfilling commitment elsewhere, but by structurally bringing Maggie back to the nest each time she strays. It is not surprising, in view of the structure of this novel, that Maggie's dream comes true in the sense that she finds the essence of her childhood with Tom recaptured in their drowning. Thus, she grasps again "the clue to life . . . which once in the far-off years of her young need had clutched so strongly" (MF, 447). She renounces her own life in favor of a momentary reconciliation with her meaningful past. So it is in the Seventh and last Book, "The Final Rescue." Tom and Maggie are buried under an epitaph that alludes to the irony in her futile attempt to regain the lost days of innocence. Their tomb is inscribed with David's lament for Saul and Jonathan who fought throughout life, but died together. Like Maggie and Tom "in their death they were not divided" (MF, 496).

Regardless of George Eliot's inability, at the time of writing The Mill on the Floss, to deal with the question of endurance in terms of the heroine's unhappy future, the novel excels in its characterization of the heroine as a child. The memory of childhood remained vital and pleasant to the author throughout her life and is reflected most poignantly in the character of Maggie Tulliver.
Nine years after the publication of *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot expressed her feelings in a poem entitled "Brother and Sister," and this title is used as the heading to the fourth chapter of Book Six of the novel:

> But were another childhood-world my share,  
> I would be born a little sister there.⁹

The author dips into her own past life with her brother Isaac to construct the most successful part of the novel, the early intimacy of Tom and Maggie and the disintegration of their bond. The nature of this fictional relationship closely parallels the childhood joy George Eliot shared with her brother Isaac—"Those hours were seed to all my after good"—and his rejection of her affection when she moved against conventional form to live with George Lewes.¹⁰

The gradual estrangement of the impetuous Maggie Tulliver and her inflexible brother gains dramatic momentum in the evolution from the freedom of childhood innocence to the restrictions of adult bias. This estrangement is a dilemma which Maggie strives to mend until her final moment of success in their mutual death clasp.

George Eliot describes the imagined infinity of childhood days in the expeditions of Tom and Maggie:

> They trotted along and sat down together with no thought that life would ever change much for them; they would only get bigger and not go to school, and it would always be like the holidays; they would always live together and be fond of each other. (MF, 34)

But life changes when they leave the garden of their childhood for the "thorny wilderness" of adult society (MF, 180). They return only once before their deaths to the Lethe-like atmosphere of their earlier existence when their father is taken ill.
Defending themselves against the outrage of calamity, "the two children forgot everything else in the sense that they had one father and one sorrow" (MF, 192).

Experiences increase and the means of coping with them begin to establish response patterns which define character. Thus, Tom's sanctimonious view of himself secures him the peace of mind that in all things he would have behaved as he had done, while Maggie's impetuous nature destines her to be "always wishing she had done something different" (MF, 46). These characteristics allow Tom to act while Maggie is still deep in contemplation. George Eliot proposes that the thinker suffers far more than the man of action:

While Maggie's life-struggles had lain almost entirely within her own soul, one shadowy army fighting another, and the slain shadows forever rising again, Tom was engaged in a dustier, noisier warfare, grappling with more substantial obstacles, and gaining more definite conquests. (MF, 291)

When Maggie does act, she acts impulsively and is condemned to suffer for it. It is, therefore, far easier for Tom to know his duty and act upon it. His perspective on life and experiences therein prompt him to a severe judgment of Maggie, especially when she returns from her ill-fated rendezvous with Stephen. Tom cannot see the injustice of his standpoint because he refuses to acknowledge the part that Maggie's peculiar emotional make-up plays in determining her fate. There is only a superficial truth in Tom's ironic argument that "I have had feelings to struggle with; but I conquered them. I have had a harder life than you have had; but I have found my comfort in doing my duty" (MF, 460). Ironically, it is not within Tom's scope of understanding to realize that Maggie's life is in fact harder by virtue of her emotional depth. Thus, her feelings
create a far greater struggle than Tom could possibly imagine. Maggie, with her wider perspective on the reality around her, is unable to define her duty with the same instant response as her brother. Tom's rigidity and his receptiveness to social doctrines enable him to determine his duty easily, while Maggie's philosophical mind convinces her that conventions provide no reality on which to base her feelings.

George Eliot establishes the characteristic strength of emotional impulse early in her heroine to express Maggie's liability to be exposed to dilemma. When Maggie Tulliver cuts off her hair, she does so not only to avenge her inflictors, but also to punish herself. Subsequently, she feels more self-conscious than ever about her ungainly appearance. She is condemned to a perceptive flexibility of nature that does not allow the adamant, self-righteous hindsight of her brother:

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. (MF, 58)

She does mature, however, from the instant response to the contemplated acceptance of her lot. This development is apparent in her attempt to convince Stephen that they must renounce their affection for one another: "'I see one thing quite clearly—that I must not, cannot seek my own happiness by sacrificing others. Love is natural; but surely pity and faithfulness and memory are natural too'" (MF, 426). Maggie, then, must have all her emotions satisfied in order to be at peace with herself. Her love cannot survive if it must do so in the company of guilt.
Maggie Tulliver, therefore, no longer feels motivated by impulse, but inclines toward rational duty based on recognition of true feeling. She differs from Tom in that her duty is toward her heart-felt longings rather than toward conventional form. Maggie, in spite of her affair with Stephen, rejects his proposal of a future together. As with her impetuous behavior in the past, she regrets that she did not contemplate the consequences before committing the deed: "'If I could wake back again into the time before yesterday, I would choose to be true to my calmer affections, and live without the joy of love'" (MF, 452). This remorse is a significant anticipation of the mental state into which Gwendolen Harleth will be driven by her passionate impetuosity. The motivation, which is the desire for love in The Mill on the Floss, becomes the greed for power in Daniel Deronda, but Gwendolen, too, has the "impulse . . . to say what she afterwards wished to retract" (DD, 493).

There is a strange paradox in Maggie Tulliver's renunciation of Stephen Guest's belief that the emotions they experience are the best possible. Maggie has always been the one to follow her feelings and contemplate them later. In fact, it was Tom's tendency to take advantage of this characteristic in their childhood that made him look so ignoble and insensitive next to his spontaneous and loving sister. But now, when Maggie has found someone willing to ride the crest of her emotions, she ironically renounces the opportunity. The chance to experience infatuation is turned down in favor of a duty to past commitments. This indicates Maggie's process of maturity as she sees her fantasy change to a reality and denies the risk to her moral conscience that is involved. As Maggie
grows from plainness to beauty, she realizes that "faithfulness and constancy mean something else besides doing what is easiest and pleasantest to ourselves" (MF, 451). Her new wisdom shines through in this rejection of the superficial extreme in response to a deeper value.

This change shows that Maggie Tulliver is finally growing to know her own nature and understand the direction she must choose if she wishes to find peace of mind. She knows that a selfish love would deny the very essence of her nobler self: "She might as well hope to enjoy walking by maiming her feet, as hope to enjoy an existence in which she set out by maiming the faith and sympathy that were the best organs in her soul" (MF, 435). It is in her final moment that Maggie Tulliver realizes that to do what is natural is to return to those she loved first and, therefore, best. As the flood rises, and a life-and-death struggle ensues, the author tells us that in this type of situation "the artificial vesture of our life is gone, and we are all one with each other in primitive mortal needs." Maggie feels only "an undefined sense of reconcilement with her brother," but this most closely fulfills her need to do what is right according to her basic feelings:

Vaguely, Maggie felt this—in the strong resurgent love towards her brother that swept away all the later impressions of hard, cruel offence and misunderstanding, and left only the deep, underlying, unshakable memories of early union. (MF, 492)

Maggie Tulliver's ultimate return to St. Ogg's is motivated both by a gravitation toward the known and by the maturity of acceptance. It had not occurred to her, as it had to Stephen, that she would suffer social rejection for her brief excursion. In
her decision to return, "love and deep pity and remorseful anguish left no room for that" (MF, 455). Ironically, when Stephen suggests that Maggie sees "nothing as it really is," the truth of Maggie's loneliness and rejection is that she often is the only one who can see past the artifice of convention (MF, 454). Awareness that she must face the scorn of town gossip does not change her direction. This knowledge simply increases her manifold sufferings. She refuses to escape her condemnation and the reality of her mistake by rushing off "with that impatience of painful emotion which makes one of the differences between youth and maiden, man and woman" (MF, 241).

Essentially, Maggie Tulliver seals off any alternate paths to a renewed life by her own expectations. She is left with two choices—death or death-in-life. Hence, her drowning is the only solution:

Life stretched out before her as one act of penitence, and all she craved, as she dwelt on her future lot, was something to guarantee her from more falling . . . (MF, 467).

Maggie has no hope for the peace she craves except in death. She has repeatedly expressed a fear of her remaining days being those of the "lonely wanderer" (MF, 471). Therefore, when George Eliot limits Maggie's alternatives and leaves her in a society that offers "no home, no help for the erring," one cannot but foresee death as Maggie's only escape from the certainty of the loss of spirit. (MF, 487).

Once the "Golden Gates are passed," static intolerance replaces Tom's youthful pride, and unrelenting asceticism camouflages Maggie's unstable emotions (MF, 174). Maggie Tulliver believes that extreme renunciation of all pleasure will be the key to a more peaceful
existence. This is a characteristic developed to a lesser extent in Dorothea Brooke. Maggie is slow to discover what Philip Wakem attempts to teach her—suppression does not mean cure. The problem of finding a place for her deep emotions in the shallow and unsympathetic society around her simply remains a firm yearning beneath an artificial facade. Asceticism is Maggie's second stage of development, following her childhood, and it leads her directly into another dilemma by the fact that she does not own up to the reality of her emotional needs.

The philosophic tenderness which enables Maggie Tulliver to see past her brother's prejudices against Philip and to realize that her friend "couldn't choose his father," separates Maggie from the provincial society of which Tom is such an upstanding member (MF, 166). In fact, her manner of conceiving reality separates her from social acceptance almost entirely. This philosophic flexibility grates too severely on the patterned lives of her associates, especially the Dodsons whose "pride lay in the utter frustration of all desire to tax them with a breach of traditional duty or propriety" (MF, 257). Maggie taxes them by the very manner of her existence which requires too great an expanse of understanding and sympathy to meet with a positive response. Once again Maggie is an outsider, condemned to face the dilemmas of her girlhood, as of her childhood, alone, but with greater consciousness of the frustrating loneliness involved.

The security of childhood innocence and expectation is perhaps the most precious and vital state. This is the known comfort toward which George Eliot directs Maggie Tulliver when she has reached an impasse. Once Maggie's subconscious forces itself upon
her in the form of a dream during her boat ride with Stephen, her
focus of consciousness turns steadily in the direction of her brother,
the center of her childhood paradise, and away from her suitor.
Essentially, George Eliot has Maggie Tulliver return to the peculiar
solace of her yesteryears because of the author's Wordsworthian
philosophy that "there is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in
those scenes where we were born" (MF, 142). Maggie's fear, as the
family loses its material possessions, that the "end of our lives
will have nothing in it like the beginning", takes an ironic twist
in that it foreshadows her alienation from Tom, but adds pathos to
their momentary and final reunion (MF, 225). Maggie Tulliver
attains a sense of the scene in which she was born in her brother's
poignant cry of "Magsie!" (MF, 494).

The Wordsworthian element in George Eliot's philosophy appears
when she describes childhood as not only the time of greatest
affinity for earthly beauties, but also as providing the impetus
for future awareness and appreciation of nature. George Eliot
suggests that an essence remains in our adult years that enables us
to enjoy once again the pleasures of those things brought to light
as a child:

We could never have loved the earth so well if we had
had no childhood in it—if it were not the earth where
the same flowers come up again every spring that we used
to gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lissipg to
ourselves on the grass—the same hips and haws on the
autumn hedgerows—the same red-breasts that we used to
call 'God's birds' because they did no harm to the pre­
cious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony
where everything is known, and loved because it is
known? (MF, 35)

This philosophy emphasizes the importance of Maggie Tulliver's
early years and their significance for all her decisions as an adult.

The time during which a child delights in the misconception that his world comprises an entire perspective on the universe stimulates an element of trust and subsequent love. It is important to the understanding of Gwendolen Harleth's character that "this blessed persistence in which affection can take root had been wanting in Gwendolen's life." George Eliot believed that "some spot of a native land" where one could "get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth as a sweet habit of the blood" was necessary for the future development of emotions (DD, 50).

Childhood is significant for Maggie in that it is her only period of happiness and it is equally significant for Gwendolen in that her deficiency leaves her unable to love.

The ability to love with abandonment, however, is often lost with the "gift of sorrow," that greater knowledge of human nature, an awareness toward which the adult mind gravitates and for which it ultimately sacrifices so much. The time of simple values forms a foundation for belief in the importance and largeness of those basic beauties that sustain creative abilities and allow the imagination to flow freely. It serves as a touchstone for Maggie Tulliver during the cares of adulthood:

These familiar flowers, these well-remembered bird-notes, this sky with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields, with a sort of personality given to it by the capricious hedgerows—such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the deep-bladed grass today might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the
It is to this touchstone that Maggie refers when she explains her love for Tom to Philip. Potency of feeling depends upon its chronology. Whoever receives Maggie Tulliver's love first, receives her greatest love throughout life, because the years of her childhood are the most important in terms of lasting impressions. Unfortunately for the heroine's sense of self, the recipient is a brother whose understanding of her passionate nature and of her need for the reciprocation of her love is small indeed. Maggie tells Philip that "the first thing I ever remember in my life is standing with Tom by the side of the Floss, while he held my hand: everything before that is dark to me" (MF, 290). Tom maintains the position of priority in Maggie's affection by the simple fact that he was her first companion, and, therefore, the initial object of her love.

Maggie Tulliver uses the same pattern to describe her affection for Philip to Lucy. Here again chronology plays the most important role to determine precedence: "[Philip] loved me first. No one else could be quite what he is to me. But I can't divide myself from my brother for my life" (MF, 415). The basis of Maggie Tulliver's affection for Philip Wakem resembles Mary Garth's for Fred Vincy in *Middlemarch*. The man who loves first is not to be forgotten in the added attention of other lovers in later years. Maggie explains this sentiment to Stephen in an attempt to convey her reasons for being unable to reciprocate and submit to his love:

"There are memories, and affections, and longing after perfect goodness, that have such a strong hold on me;
they would never quit me for long; they would come and be pain to me—repentance" (MF, 452).

This is the lesson that Gwendolen Harleth learns only after considerable suffering. Rejection of former ties for Maggie Tulliver would make the punishment greater than the reward.

Thus Maggie's nature places her in an ironic dilemma. She cannot return to the joys of childhood because she is no longer innocent of Tom's fallible nature and the childish exuberance needed to sustain her is therefore lacking. But, paradoxically, she cannot move forward to a new love because the buried days of innocence remain large in her present reality and there is no one great enough in her adult life to overcome the power of past happiness. Thus, George Eliot ironically develops a heroine who longs for "perfect goodness" and places her in an environment where this longing can neither be changed nor fulfilled.

Before Maggie's melodramatic infatuation with Stephen Guest, *The Mill on the Floss* conveys that element of reality for which George Eliot is noted when she draws largely from her own life as a source of inspiration. This is the most autobiographical of George Eliot's novels, but all of her fictional characters whose emotional make-up paralleled the author's are more credible than those inspired by pure intellect or history, such as Romola, Felix Holt, and Daniel Deronda. When the author separates her writing from her own experience, either immediate or vicarious, in order to write an historical novel or one which serves the purpose of reform, she cannot sustain the reader's interest. This is not to deny, of course, the vast intellect and expanse of research George Eliot devoted to
all her writing in order to convey the experience of her own life within a larger perspective, but her talent lies in the expression of human nature as she sees and feels it, rather than simply an idealized version of a better world.

George Eliot believes that development of character necessitates living without "opium." There should, in other words, be no escapes in terms of fantasy, blame, or self-delusion. One must face one's deeds directly and be acutely aware in each action of the motivation and of the effect on others. A letter written by the author in 1860 proposes that "the 'highest calling and election' is to do without opium, and live through our pain with a conscious, clear-eyed endurance." This doctrine forms a basis for the life of each heroine discussed in this study.

A basic cause for the misdirected lives of Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Gwendolen Harleth is that each suffers from her own blindness. Maggie tries to escape through fantasy and asceticism until she meets Stephen Guest. Dorothea's short-sightedness, so often referred to in *Middlemarch*, refers to both her eyesight and to her manner of warping reality to fit into her various schemes until she learns from her mistakes. Gwendolen suffers from an inflated idea of her own importance, an awareness of which is the very consciousness Deronda leads her to. Maturity, then rests in that state where there are no escapes from the real issues and each segment of life is faced in the full knowledge of its causes and consequences. George Eliot makes clear that each heroine must outlive the addiction to whatever opium feeds her ego in a personal world too conveniently small to answer to the problems of an adult
reality.

One of Maggie Tulliver's crucial flaws in the process of adapting to human relationships is that her emotions do not allow her to face reality with a "clear-eyed endurance" until after the firm establishment of her tragic dilemma. Literature feeds her romantic nature with notions of tenderness and love between family and friends. Hence, Maggie's love for books is linked with her need for fantasy. Contrasted to her world of literature is a real world in which "people behaved the best to those they did not pretend to love, and that did not belong to them," a contrast beyond Maggie's understanding (MF, 221). For one so inclined toward sympathy and utterly responsive to affection, the world outside her books is one of darkness. Literature serves to nourish Maggie's "passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad" and this escape through reading sustains her endeavor to "link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life, and give her soul a sense of home in it"—a home she eventually seeks even to the neglect of her self-respect and physical safety (MF, 221).

Maggie's initial escape is to "fancy it was all different" by refashioning her little world into just what she would like it to be" (MF, 42). Her most frequent fantasy, as an awkward and rejected child, is to simulate Lucy:

Maggie always looked at Lucy with delight. She was fond of fancying a world where the people never got any larger than children of their own age, and she made the queen of it just like Lucy, with a little crown on her head and a little sceptre in her hand . . . only the queen was Maggie herself in Lucy's form. (MF, 54)

This wish gains dramatic irony with the development of the plot as
Maggie usurps Lucy's position in Stephen's heart. But Maggie early intuits the power of her petulant nature over Lucy's trusting and passive character. It is this knowledge that accounts for the strenuous guilt toward her friend in later years. As a child, the frustration of not being acceptable to her family and being momentarily eclipsed in the eyes of Tom causes her to inflict an injury on Lucy by pushing her into the mud; otherwise, "she could never be cross with pretty little Lucy, any more than she could be cruel to a little white mouse" (MF, 91). Lucy is simply the victim of circumstance in the "passions at war in Maggie" that could find no appropriate object on which to vent themselves (MF, 93).

The difference between Maggie Tulliver's worlds of fantasy and reality appear in the paradox of her behavior. This girl, whose thoughts George Eliot describes as "the oddest mixture of clear-eyed acumen and blind dreams" (MF, 103), responds to her mother's disapproval of her behavior and appearance by cutting off her locks and appearing "like a small Medusa with her snakes cropped" (MF, 90). This girl with the spell-binding eyes hopes to make her crucifiers sorry, but she also desires to punish herself for not fulfilling the conventional standards her mother could sanction. It is enough that her feminine graces are lacking, but Maggie is completely thwarted when her behavior is criticized as well: "She didn't want to look pretty—that was out of the question—she only wanted people to think her a clever little girl, and not find fault with her" (MF, 57). But this is not to be. The same insensitivity that allows her brother to vent his impression that with her shorn locks she looks like the village idiot, and moves her mother to beg
her blatantly not to "look so ugly," will permit society to treat
her as a misfit and an outcast *(MF, 78)*. Such is the way with those
unfortunate victims of provincial society that do not conform to
the opinions of their neighbors. The philosophy that George Eliot
uses to describe Lydgate in *Middlemarch* also describes Maggie in
St. Ogg's:

> For surely all must admit that a man may be puffed and
belauded, envied, ridiculed counted upon as a tool and
fallen in love with . . . and yet remain virtually
unknown—known merely as a cluster of signs for his
neighbours' false suppositions. *(M, 105)*

Maggie Tulliver's deep thoughtfulness renders her unable to pattern
her behavior after the conventions of her time and environment.
This keeps her from maintaining a position of respect and acceptance
even after belligerent awkwardness has grown into statuesque beauty.

The entirety of Maggie's tragic flaw in the eyes of her
contemporaries is suggested early in the plot by her disgust with
the tedious pastime of patchwork. Her perspective, independent of
a society that assumes women prefer gossip to reading, enables her
to see the futility in "tearing things to pieces to sew 'em
together again" *(MF, 8)*. This characteristic free thinking will enable
her to see the fallacy in Tom's enmity for Philip and the error in
Stephen's petulant persuasion. Maggie knows that she and Stephen
cannot forget their previous commitments in favor of present pleasures
because her moral conscience has had much practise as a child in
the attempt to erase lesser deeds of a mischievous nature. Maggie
Tulliver's lack of conventionality will separate her not only from
the company of men, but also from the circle of female society.
Loneliness becomes the companion of honesty:
Poor Maggie! She was so unused to society that she could take nothing as a matter of course, and had never in her life spoken from the lips merely, so that she must necessarily appear absurd to more experienced ladies, from the excessive feeling she was apt to throw into very trivial incidents. (MF, 356)

George Eliot ironically suggests that affectation is a trait to be valued if one wishes to succeed in the society of provincial England.

George Eliot explains Maggie Tulliver's attraction to the immature emotions of the selfish and shallow Stephen Guest in terms of the impression he makes on a woman who craves adoration. Stephen's selfishness glazes every plea to Maggie when she renounces their relationship. And his shallowness is made evident in relation to Lucy when George Eliot philosophizes on the characteristic of certain men to hide their secret titillations from their betrothed ones and to belittle the objects of their infatuations. Stephen, unlike Maggie, is too conventional to seek companionship (apart from a brief distraction) outside that which would fit peacefully into his own conceit and the mores of St. Ogg's society. He fully intends to fulfil society's expectations of him:

Generally, Stephen admitted, he was not fond of women who had any peculiarity of character—but here the peculiarity seemed really of a superior kind; and provided one is not obliged to marry such women, why, they certainly make a variety in social intercourse. (MF, 360)

The irony of Stephen's pompous assertions evolves as Maggie produces a greater "variety" in his life than he is able to handle.

Maggie Tulliver, however, is taken in by the charm of Stephen's "graceful manner" and the fact that he is stronger than she is in ways that neither Tom nor Philip is. She is superior to Tom in her gentle loving nature and superior to Philip in sheer physical
advantage. Stephen, therefore, brings a new pleasure to Maggie when he offers a masculine protectiveness unknown to a girl who has become accustomed to feeling her awkward largeness, especially when it is stressed by the presence of her petite cousin:

There is something strangely winning to most women in that offer of the firm arm: the help is not wanted physically at the moment, but the sense of help—the presence of strength that is outside them and yet theirs—meets a continual want of the imagination. (MF, 385)

And Maggie's imagination is always willing to charge her world with stimulation. Maggie Tulliver, like George Eliot, allows her emotions to exhaust her. Thus, when Stephen commands her, there are moments when Maggie obeys because "there was an unspeakable charm in being told what to do, and having everything decided for her" (MF, 443).

George Eliot has adequately prepared the reader, through Maggie Tulliver's love for Tom, that her greatest need is to love and be loved in spite of the deficiencies in depth or intellect on the part of the loved one. The author's clearest exposition of Maggie's ceaseless yearning for a fuller existence suggests a vulnerability to which she juxtaposes the entrance of Stephen into the heroine's life:

She found joyless days of distasteful occupation harder and harder—she found the image of the intense and varied life she yearned for, and despaired of, becoming more and more importunate. The sound of the opening door roused her . . . . (MF, 353)

The opening door brings Stephen into Maggie's reality. It is hardly surprising that this debonair male whom she comes to know through the magic of music, a characteristic accompaniment of love in George
Eliot's fiction, ultimately leaves the Garden of Eden that he thinks he securely enjoys with Lucy, to slither into the heart of Maggie and stimulate her expulsion from society.

Maggie Tulliver is also suffering from the loss of Philip's friendship as a result of her brother's ban on their secret meetings: "She felt lonely, cut off from Philip—the only person who had ever seemed to love her devotedly, as she had always longed to be loved" (MF, 361). There is a void within Maggie, a void once filled by her childhood relationship with Tom and later by her youthful friendship with Philip. Appropriate to the dramatic development of her affair with Stephen, this void is at its greatest depth upon his entrance.

But a major problem arises when George Eliot fails to convey a sense of the relationship between Stephen and Maggie. When Stephen asks, "Have you forgotten what it was to be together?" it is hard to recall when Maggie did feel something substantial (MF, 488). The development of their relationship does not allow the reader to share a solid sense of their emotions. George Eliot seems unable to convey other than a vague sense of their sexual attraction and the power of this force to override greater duty for the moment. Ironically, vagueness to George Eliot was one of the cardinal artistic failures, but this inability or unwillingness to bring sensual passion into a clear focus is characteristic of all the relationships developed in her novels.12 Maggie's capacity for sensual delight is clearest in her pleasure at the fragrance of the roses: "'I am quite wicked with roses—I like to gather them and smell them till they have no scent left'" (MF, 418). Portrayed in Maggie Tulliver's
words are both the extremist and sensual qualities of her nature. This combination amidst the conventional behavior of her neighbors assures an irreconcilable difference.

Maggie Tulliver's escape into fantasy and her desire for knowledge are strong needs, but they are superseded by and connected to the desire to commit her emotions to an object of love. When Tom is angry with Maggie over the death of his rabbits, she does not understand why he cannot forgive and love her as she would him. She makes a passionate resolution to starve herself while hiding behind the tub in order to make Tom sorry and to punish herself for displeasing him. Her resolve lasts only minutes, however, because "the need of being loved, the strongest need in poor Maggie's nature, began to wrestle with her pride, and soon threw it" (MF, 31). This combination of pride and the longing for love in her excessively passionate temperament stimulates one moral dilemma after another in her life until, finally, love conquers pride and she is swept into her brother's arms. The strength of this need for love will expose itself in various forms throughout her development, always to the detriment of Maggie's final happiness. She never masters the desire to be accepted by her kin and it rules her life as it determines her death.

The persuasive power of love is the greatest force of motivation for all George Eliot's heroines. It creates a spirit of purpose and renewed faith in life for Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke and Gwendolen Harleth. For Maggie, however, the rejuvenation is always destroyed by forces beyond her control, usually the nature of the person she loves or the fact that her family ties preclude
her affection for others. This "wonderful subduer, this need of love--as peremptory as that other hunger by which Nature forces us to submit to the yoke, and change the face of the world" is one that George Eliot knew well from her own life experience (MF, 32). For Maggie, this "yoke" of love results in frustration, confusion, and finally, death.

Maggie Tulliver's lack of passion for Philip is determined by his physical deformity and the fact that pity and passion cannot dwell in the same breast. This concept is referred to again in Middlemarch when Ladislaw feels relief in the knowledge that Dorothea Brooke's tenderness for Casaubon is inspired by pity. Philip's deformity enhances Maggie's all-too-ready sympathies, and the mutual sensitivity they share satisfies a yearning for honest communication. She pities his deformity while she appreciates his character; pity makes her invulnerable to passion, and appreciation stimulates her moral growth. This mutual sympathy creates a friendship from "metal that will mix," but only insofar as the pettiness of their environment will allow (MF, 174). They share an awareness of the deficiency that keeps each from attaining his dream and a desire to be lifted, as Philip says, "above the dead level of provincial existence" (MF, 309).

Philip Wakem brings Maggie Tulliver's character into clearer perspective. Early in their friendship he is aware that her eyes depict a temperament "full of unsatisfied intelligence, and unsatisfied, beseeching affection" (MF, 167). In The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot exposes the sensitivity of each character by his ability to appreciate the peculiar beauty of Maggie's eyes.
They are praised by her father and Stephen and even Bob Jakin, who tells his mother of the girl who had "such uncommon eyes, they looked somehow as they made him feel nohow" (MF, 227). Her eyes clearly represent the nature of her beauty in the depth of passion reflected there. Maggie's eyes affect everyone who truly cares for her, but Philip sees those qualities George Eliot has carefully made known to the reader.

Philip Wakem's profound knowledge and acceptance of Maggie allow her to drop her restraining facade of discipline. This sharing, without the misunderstanding Maggie encounters with Tom, leads to a trust that becomes a strength. Maggie's willpower increases in Philip's presence because the power of his sincerity allows the goodness of her nature to free itself with confidence: "She had always additional strength of resistance when Philip was present, just as we can restrain our speech better in a spot that we feel to be hallowed" (MF, 437). Thus, Philip's wisdom becomes another touchstone for Maggie.

Philip makes Maggie aware of the deficiencies in her penchant for the ascetic. He attempts to convince her that "it is not right to sacrifice everything to other people's unreasonable feelings." He condemns her behavior as that of a fanatic who deludes herself that numbness compensates for unhappiness:

"You are shutting yourself up in a narrow self-delusive fanaticism, which is only a way of escaping pain by starving into dullness all the highest powers of your nature . . . you are not resigned: you are only trying to stupefy yourself." (MF, 309)

But Maggie Tulliver is too isolated by inexperience to understand
the truth of Philip's objective perspective on her manner of coping with emotional dilemmas. The "highest powers" of her character are the ones to which Maggie refers when she explains to Stephen why she must renounce him in favor of a nobler duty. Like Ladislaw, Philip sees the fulfilment of happiness as a virtue. He knows that Maggie "can never carry on this self-torture" (MF, 311).

Maggie's outburst of emotion toward Stephen is foreshadowed in Philip's warning. He recognizes the danger in her passiveness. Rather than calm Maggie's traumatic, inner world, this passivity will simply suppress her passions until they can no longer be contained within. Philip persuades Maggie that "there is no such escape possible except by perverting or mutilating one's nature" (MF, 390).

The wall Maggie Tulliver has erected against chaos only serves to hold back her flood of emotions until some chance incident, such as her infatuation with Stephen, destroys her defenses. Maggie's inability to take courage and to develop her emotional outlets according to time and opportunity simply create an accumulation of feeling that overpowers her in a moment of confusion. Philip warns Maggie of the fallacy in her method:

> It is mere cowardice to seek safety in negations. No character becomes strong in that way. 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." (MF, 311)

His warning goes unheeded, however, and he prophesies Maggie's abandonment of her theories in a moment of rapture. She has not yet reached that level of development that will enable her to see that suppression of emotions is simply a delay in reaction.
Maggie Tulliver is certainly aware, however, of the strength of her passions and the consequent complexity of her nature. She limits herself to a simplistic style of life because she believes that without arbitrary restrictions, her existence will once again become embroiled in trauma. Ironically, she does not realize that the pastoral days of childhood that she attempts to restore by this simple life cannot be reached by attempting to bring life's experiences to a standstill. Even the clandestine meetings with Philip in the Red Deeps prove to be a rift in her rigid attempts to reach an emotional plateau. And, as the name of the meeting place indicates, its mention soon brings a blush of fear in the company of her family:

She was losing the simplicity and clearness of her life by admitting a ground of concealment, and that, by forsaking the simple rule of renunciation, she was throwing herself under the seductive guidance of illimitable wants. (MF, 307)

Maggie knows unconsciously that her monomaniacal life of denial is a mere artifice which protects her from acknowledging reality.

This subliminal level of awareness appears in Maggie's choice of expressions. She refers to her yearnings as selfishness because she feels it would be ignoble to recognize that her desires are beyond her family, a product of her greater emotional depth and acute sensitivity. When these longings for fulfilment surface they expose her frustration and guilt. Maggie's defense of asceticism unwittingly betrays her error:

It has made me restless: it 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. I think what you call being
benumbed was better—better for me—for then my selfish desires were benumbed. (MF, 316)

Maggie's use of the word "benumbed" emphasizes the fact that her asceticism is simply an opiate for the pain of facing reality. Her future development, like that of each of George Eliot's heroines, depends on her ability to do without the aid of psychological escapes.

Philip Wakem unintentionally becomes Maggie Tulliver's "guardian angel" (MF, 291), a prelude to the guidance Will Ladislaw offers Dorothea Brooke and the advice Daniel Deronda, the "severe angel," gives Gwendolen Harleth (DD, 839). These three counsellors assist each protegé to acknowledge the personal ego involved in her actions and the negative aspects of her ideals and aspirations. Philip reminds Maggie, in his endeavor to enlighten her, of the potential displayed in her exuberant youth:

> Your were so full of life when you were a child: I thought you would be a brilliant woman—all wit and bright imagination. And it flashes out of your face still, until you draw that veil of dull quiescence over it. (MF, 311)

But there is no place in Maggie's claustrophobic environment for her vitality to flourish and this deficiency on the part of society establishes a mood of inevitable tragedy in the novel. The clash of her passionate energy and a static society creates a note of fatality which unifies the story.

The primary causes of Maggie's all-consuming program of self-denial, as a response to her inability to appropriately utilize her intellectual and emotional energies, are the harsh realities of her early life. This dilemma is expressed again in Middlemarch
when, for Dorothea Brooke, "the world, it seemed was turning ugly and hateful, and there was no place for her trustfulness" (M, 460). Maggie Tulliver's reactions are based on her initial lack of feminine beauty, her family's narrow perspective that categorizes her as undesirable, and the abundant sensitivity and superior intelligence that cause her to suffer for being a woman. Asceticism, based on the readings of Thomas à Kempis, is the "opium" that succeeds her childhood fantasies. The Tulliver tragedy, and the consequent loneliness of living with a family that is pre-occupied with its despair, creates a martyr in Maggie. She feels a sense of guilt even in the pleasure of her walks in the lush fertility of the Red Deeps. This renunciation in the face of luxury and the psychological need for deprivation anticipates Dorothea Brooke, who questions herself about the joy of horseback riding.

Ultimately, in Maggie Tulliver's development, her mother's rejection, her father's tragedy and Tom's pre-occupation with the family's financial problems create a loneliness that makes her vulnerable to Stephen. The desire to live a fuller and more meaningful life anticipates Dorothea Brooke and Gwendolen Harleth. Dorothea turns to Casaubon as a vehicle by which to realize her dream of acquiring greater knowledge. Gwendolen turns to Grandcourt as a means to free herself from the yoke of poverty. Maggie turns to Thomas à Kempis to calm her longing for companionship. Each woman considers her idea to be the sole key to happiness. As Dorothea looks to knowledge and Gwendolen looks to money, Maggie looks to religious asceticism for peace of mind:
Then her brain would be busy with wild romance of a flight from home in search of something less sordid and dreary: she would go to some great man--Sir Walter Scott, perhaps--and tell him how wretched and how clever she was, and he would surely do something for her. (MF, 270)

The great man to whom she goes is Thomas à Kempis and his doctrine of denial.

Maggie Tulliver's early tendency toward martyrdom ironically foreshadows her ultimate sacrifice of Stephen in response to the realities, rather than imagined conjectures. Until this time, her ascetic behavior is simply another form of egoism—a desire for a prestigious place in life's drama. The nature of this aspiration anticipates Gwendolen Harleth's desire to be the central actress on the world's stage. But George Eliot proposes in Middlemarch, the extent to which the individual's desires are in the nature of self-seeking does not render them insincere, "for the egoism which enters into our theories does not affect their sincerity, rather, the more our egoism is satisfied, the more robust our belief" (M, 382). Martyrdom is easy, then, especially for the disciplined extremist, compared with the endeavor to face an inglorious reality:

That is the path we all like when we set out on our abandonment of egoism—the path of martyrdom and endurance, where the palm—branches grow, rather than the steep highway of tolerance, just allowance and self-blame, where there are no leafy honors to be gathered and worn. (MF, 275)

Maggie's conversations convey a sense of the extreme to which she carries her martyrdom. When Philip attempts to open her mind to the narrowness of a view that excludes art and knowledge, she defends herself on the ground that she must enjoy nothing "because I should
want too much. I must wait—this life will not last long" (MF, 289). Ironically, she is correct in her dramatic pronouncement.

Asceticism does, however, add a superficial peacefulness to Maggie Tulliver and this shows in her countenance: "That new inward life of hers, notwithstanding some volcanic upheavings of imprisoned passions, yet shone out of her face with a tender soft light that mingled itself as added loveliness . . . ." (MF, 276). But this is tinged with a "sense of uneasiness in looking at her—a sense of opposing elements, of which a fierce collision is imminent" (MF, 282). Under the calm exterior lies the same fiery girl that beat her wooden fetish in the attic as a child. She is simply learning to hide her inner turmoil by confining herself to certain moral teachings which consume her energy in sheer willpower. Thomas à Kempis teaches that "blessed are those ears which hearken not unto the voice which soundeth outwardly, but unto the Truth, which teacheth inwardly" (MF, 272). This, ironically, is the very voice to which Maggie listens in her most crucial moment. Active denial replaces theory when Stephen Guest replaces Thomas à Kempis. But, as George Eliot believed that reward was to be found only in human fellowship, Maggie is denied once again.

The voices of the Dodson clan unabashedly offer the opinion that to be a female of merit in St. Ogg's society, one must be equipped with the conventional graces. Maggie is compared to a frisky dog in order to convey the notion of her unkempt hair and unguarded emotion. Neither, of course, is appropriate in a society that basés its values of femininity on a standard for which Lucy, petite, passive, and fair, is the epitome. Maggie reacts to early
discipline by "shaking the water from her black locks as she ran, like a Skye terrier escaped from his bath" (MF, 22). The dog metaphor emphasizes Maggie's protective impulses and her desire to offer obedient and faithful devotion:

There were few sounds that roused Maggie when she was dreaming over her book, but Tom's name served as well as the shrillest whistle: in an instant she was on the watch, with gleaming eyes, like a Skye terrier suspecting mischief, or at all events determined to fly at anyone who threatened it towards Tom. (MF, 11)

Mrs. Tulliver denies responsibility for Maggie's temperamental behavior and equates her with one fit for Bedlam:

"That niver run i' my family, thank God, no more nor a brown skin as makes her look like a mulâter. I don't like to fly in the face of Providence, but it seems hard as I should have but one gell, an' her so comical!" (MF, 8)

George Eliot demurs against Mrs. Tulliver's harsh invective in her philosophical outlook toward the mother's own peculiar idea of beauty. The author suggests an analogy between the "milk and mildness" of the accepted form and the children of Raphael's early Madonnas:

I have often wondered whether those early Madonnas of Raphael; with their blond faces and somewhat stupid expression, kept their placidity undisturbed when their strong-limbed boys got a little too old to do without clothing. I think they must have been given to feeble remonstrance, getting more and more peevish as it became more and more ineffectual. (MF, 9)

Condemnations of vacuous and selfish beauty and of the harsh lot allocated to women denied these superficial assets frequent George Eliot's novels. A dialogue, with ironic overtones, is exchanged between Maggie and Philip when she expresses her contempt for and annoyance with the literary convention of the blond heroine:
"I foresaw that that light-complexioned girl would win away all the love from Corinne and make her miserable. I'm determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness." (MF, 314)

An ironic twist occurs when Maggie, the dark-complexioned woman, triumphs in Stephen's heart over the fair darling of St. Ogg's society. In terms of happiness, however, the plots have a parallel outcomes.

The experiences of Maggie Tulliver's youth and Mary Garth's employment reflect George Eliot's opinion of social discrimination against plainness, whereas Rosamond Vincy and Gwendolen Harleth exhibit prime support for the favors bestowed on beauty. The author conveys her bias by beautifying Maggie, rewarding Mary, scorning Rosamond and deepening Gwendolen, as each, in her turn, contradicts the prejudices of society. The dull-colored dresses and simple hairdos of Maggie and Dorothea serve to enhance their spiritual beauty. Lucy's exclamation to Maggie, "I can't think what witchery it is in you, Maggie, that makes you look best in shabby clothes" (MF, 351), anticipates George Eliot's introduction of Dorothea as a girl who "had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress" (M, 5). These passages scorn superficial adornment, an art at which Rosamond and Gwendolen are masters.

Tom Tulliver's common good looks are compared to Maggie's peculiarly unrefined features which "Nature seemed to have moulded and coloured with a most decided intention" (MF, 27). Maggie exposes the fallacy of society's preconceived notions when she, who "looked twice as dark as usual when she was by the side of Lucy," unwittingly wields the power of the femme fatale over
her helpless friend (MF, 54). Like Rosamond Vincy, Maggie Tulliver exposes George Eliot's philosophy that appearance does not always reflect the character housed within:

But that same Nature has the deep cunning which hides itself under the appearance of openness, so that simple people think they can see through her quite well, and all the while she is secretly preparing a refutation of their confident prophesies. (MF, 27)

When Maggie's beauty begins to establish itself, Mr. Tulliver expresses his sorrow that "she isn't made o' commoner stuff—she'll be thrown away, I doubt: there'll be nobody to marry her as is fit for her" (MF, 276). Although he refers to their poverty and position, his unwitting truth indicates that Maggie, because of her superior qualities, is unfit for St. Ogg's. The heroine feels too deeply and has too great a power of intellect to succumb to the conventions of provincial society.

The lack of opportunities for plain women in society is further aggravated by a preference for male employment. The dilemma George Eliot faced in her pre-Lewes days, as she attempted to find room for her abilities in a male-oriented environment, is reflected in Maggie's denial of intellectual nourishment and Tom's useless formal education. As children, Tom establishes the precedent of power born with maleness:

"I've got a great deal more money than you, because I'm a boy. I always have half-sovereigns and sovereigns for my Christmas box because I shall be a man, and you will only have five shilling pieces, because you're only a girl." (MF, 29)

Maggie's intelligence is considered a detriment, rather than an advantage, and the notion that women should not be too clever does much to make itself a truth. It causes Mr. Tulliver a good deal of
confusion in his mixture of pride and shame regarding his daughter's intellect:

"She understands what one's talking about so as never was. And you should hear her read—straight off, as if she knewed it all before-hand. And allays at her book! But it's bad—it's bad . . . a woman's no business wi' being so clever; it'll turn to trouble, I doubt . . . she'll read the books and understand 'em better nor half the folks as are growed up." (MF, 12)

Even while recognizing Maggie's abilities, her father makes clear that there is no place for a woman in the world of extended education and crafty business.

Maggie Tulliver's determination to be independent leaves her only one means of survival, to acquire a teaching situation in a school or to become a governess. George Eliot implies that this role is not necessarily a satisfying one. Maggie tells Philip that she wishes to make herself "a world outside" of the one devoted to loving, "as men do" (MF, 390). She feels that affection will not bring her happiness. Even Tom's love for Maggie is of the condescending and domineering variety in that "he was very fond of his sister, and meant always to take care of her, make her his housekeeper, and punish her when she did wrong" (MF, 33-34).

Convention, however, precludes Maggie's fulfilment through a career. In spite of this difficulty, she renounces any occasion to rest upon the support of others. "'I must get my own bread,'" is her response to the charity of duty-bound, but unsympathetic relatives on her return to St. Ogg's (MF, 475).

Maggie would have profited far more than her brother, had convention been different, from the expense of time and money devoted to his learning. She turns to reading to allay the loneliness of
empty hours without Tom and to satisfy her intellectual curiosity:

And so the poor child, with her soul's hunger and her illusions of self-flattery, began to nibble at this thick-rinded fruit of the tree of knowledge... For a week or two she went on resolutely enough, though with an occasional sinking of heart, as if she had set out towards the Promised Land alone, and found it a thirsty, trackless, uncertain journey. (MF, 269)

Whereas Tom is expected to attend school, Maggie is denied the need for intellectual guidance and encouragement.

Mr. Tulliver indicates the general concensus of the men when he "felt very much as if the air had been cleared of obtrusive flies now the women were out of the room" (MF, 67). But in his antagonism, Tulliver is foiled by his own cautious plans. His carefully conceived stratagem to marry Mrs. Tulliver "'cause she was a bit weak, like; for I wasn't a-goin' to be told the rights o'things by my own fireside"' miscarry when heredity allows her a role in their offspring (MF, 14):

"It seems a bit of a pity... the lad should take after the mother's side instead o'the little wench. That's the worst on't wi'the crossing o'breeds: you can never justly calculate what'll come on't." (MF, 7)

Tulliver, however, recognizes Maggie's potential even while he deplores it. This redeeming quality shines through in his generosity toward his sister and his passionate love for his daughter. Like Tom, he can only show his affections by condescension and glibly admits that he would "'never want to quarrel with any woman if she kept her place""(MF, 66).

Wakem supports Tulliver's viewpoint when he and Philip discuss the boy's love for Maggie. Philip defends his affection on the basis that the family quarrel has no bearing on Maggie's honor or her worth
as an individual. But Wakem reveals the conventional outlook when he argues that "we don't ask what a woman does—we ask whom she belongs to" (MF, 403). To the nineteenth century man, a woman is simply a decoration to be shuffled about according to whim, whether it be from the husband, the brother, or the father.

The basic similarity between Maggie and Mr. Tulliver stimulates the father's intense sympathy for his daughter. They are alike in that their passions exceed their powers of discipline. Tulliver's erratic vehemence is revealed when he beats Wakem; similarly, Maggie beats her Fetish. But there is an important difference which will direct Maggie's path away from her father's. She is of a flexible and forgiving nature which means to punish itself, as well as the object of its fury, but her anger soon dissipates in the chaos of accompanying emotions. Both father and daughter react against frustration, but Maggie's reaction is devoid of that element of vengeance that is so clearly a part of Tulliver's character. She is swept into forgiveness by the catharsis of her emotional outbursts, "sobbing all the while with a passion that expelled every other form of consciousness—even the memory of the grievance that had caused it" (MF, 22-23). The extravagance of her emotions is quelled by a self-denial to which she devotes herself with equally irrational zest.

The war between the quieting powers of awareness and the activating power of impetuosity impel Maggie Tulliver to act in extremes. She is calmed by a knowledge of her own tenuous position in relation to those she loves, but at the same time excited by
emotions that crave a response. This dichotomy prevents her from acquiring the calm she desires, "for poor little Maggie had at once the timidity of an active imagination, and the daring that comes from overmastering impulse" (MF, 98). The breadth to which Maggie must extend her self-denial in order to govern her behavior, reveals the extent of turmoil erupting beneath the surface.

Ego as a motivating force is central to each heroine. In Middlemarch George Eliot defines the ego as the inner light which determines that all paths lead toward the self as the center of existence in the viewer's narrow perspective:

Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. (M, 194-95)

Thus, the egoist determines that she shall be the central actress on the world's stage.

Even in Maggie Tulliver's humbleness, ego is apparent as an impetus to action. Like Dorothea Brooke's self-denial, Maggie's asceticism is a type of "opium" to feed her troubled ego. Renunciation is colored by pride and Maggie "often lost the spirit of humility by being excessive in the outward act" (MF, 275). George Eliot applies this motive of ego support to the self-denial Mrs. Glegg undergoes when circumstances move against her wishes: "People who seem to enjoy their ill temper have a way of keeping it in fine condition by inflicting privations on themselves" (MF, 114).
And Maggie Tulliver's privations are tinged with the Dodson flavor of self-righteousness. We first notice Maggie's ego when she runs off to join the gypsies. She believes they "would gladly receive her, and pay her much respect on account of her superior knowledge" (MF, 96). Ego, in Maggie, is bound up with an awareness that she has an admirable intellect. This is one aspect of her character for which she has gained praise. She couples this ability with the former "Lucy fantasy" and hints to the gypsies that she would be "a very good queen, and kind to everybody" (MF, 101).

In her own society, Maggie is a victim of the same malady from which George Eliot suffered. In the author's journal, as a comment on the hinderance to her writing efforts, she describes the "indolence and despondency that comes from too egoistic a dread of failure." This suggests the type of fear that also hinders Gwendolen Harleth. Ego rules many characters in George Eliot's fictional world, even such staunch traditionalists as the Dodsons:

A conspicuous quantity in the Dodson character was its genuineness: its vices and virtues alike were phases of proud, honest egoism, which had a hearty dislike to whatever made against its own credit and interest and would be frankly hard of speech to inconvenient 'kin', but would never forsake or ignore them—would not let them want bread, but only require them to eat it with bitter herbs. (MF, 257)

But this desire to maintain the ego by maintaining a proper facade, is the very force which motivates Mrs. Glegg in The Mill on the Floss, like Mrs. Bulstrode in Middlemarch, to stand by her kind when the world is casting stones. The power of convention turns in Maggie's favor when her mother and Mrs. Glegg stand behind her as an act of duty. Tradition, however, becomes a negative force when Maggie is seen as the fallen woman to those who have never experienced passion.
Society categorizes her morals and offers no shelter for the unconventional in its blanket opinion.

Philip Wakem alone recognizes the power of ego as a detrimental motivating force. Hence, when he feels a sense of jealousy after observing Stephen and Maggie together, he determines not to "trust himself to see her, till he had assured himself that he could act from pure anxiety for her, and not from egoistic irritation" (MF, 438). As Philip does not feed Maggie's pride and as his view of their relationship is realistic he creates a quality of sacredness in her feeling:

> The fact that in him the appeal was more strongly to her pity and womanly devotedness than to her vanity or other egoistic excitable of her nature, seemed to make a sort of sacred place . . . . (MF, 388)

Philip's control of his ego enables him to appreciate Maggie even while her encounter with Stephen implies a rejection of his own love. He exposes his faith and insight when he writes to Maggie to exonerate her upon her return to St. Ogg's:

> "I believe then, as I believe now, that the strong attraction which drew you together proceeded only from one side of your characters, and belonged to that partial, divided action of our nature which makes half the tragedy of the human lot." (MF, 477)

Philip Wakem expresses George Eliot's wisdom in relation to the complexity of human nature and her compassion for human error in view of this complexity. The author's sympathy is explicitly shown in her awareness of the fact that one error, no matter how great, does not define an entire character. This concept is further emphasized in Middlemarch by the characters of Lydgate and Bulstrode.

As the "unifying principle" of The Mill on the Floss and its
"centre of consciousness," Maggie Tulliver represents the idea of misdirected energy. This concept will be extended, though in different terms, in the characters of Dorothea Brooke and Gwendolen Harleth. There is no room for the ideals and aspirations of a zealous young woman in a male-dominated society ruled by mediocre goals. The plot does not allow Maggie Tulliver to outgrow and overcome these restrictions. Dorothea Brooke, however, converts to accommodate her energies to the duties of a happy marriage. But one can perhaps hope that Gwendolen Harleth, equipped with a knowledge of her own deficiencies, will learn to surpass the stabilizing social force of mediocrity. Gwendolen learns to accept herself; Dorothea learns to adapt herself; but "poor Maggie," as George Eliot so often calls her, is given neither the capacity to cope nor the time to grow. Maggie Tulliver remains a victim of her own wistful yearning and the sensual strength that sustain her moral dilemmas and cause Philip to wonder why her "dark eyes remind him of the stories about princesses being turned into animals" (MF, 167).
CHAPTER II

The Importance of the Unhistoric Act: *Middlemarch*

Central to the characterization of women in George Eliot's fiction is her belief that the everyday deeds of the common man are crucial to the destiny of mankind in general. The author does not wish to concern herself with the momentous occasions of the universally heroic figure, or to make life appear more glorious than reality suggests. Rather, her goal is "the faithful representing of the commonplace things:"

It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence, which has been the fate of so many more among my fellow-mortals than a life of pomp or of absolute indigence, of tragic suffering or of world-stirring actions.15

The unrecorded behavior of the forgotten individual, therefore, plays an important role in the destinies of those whose lives are touched upon. The death of Molly Cass in *Silas Marner* clearly expresses the author's theme of the power of the unhistoric act and its effect on all the seemingly unconcerned members of society:

The unwept death which, to the general lot, seemed as trivial as the summer-shed leaf, was charged with the force of destiny to certain lives... shaping their joys and sorrows even to the end.16

Each character suffers according to his own sensibilities and some, like Rosamond Vincy in *Middlemarch*, suffer very little due to their obtuse natures which serve as buffers between selfishness and compassion.

The social impact of individual suffering and happiness is the essence of Dorothea Brooke's story, the heroine of *Middlemarch*. George Eliot's belief that "each individual must find the better part of
happiness in helping another" is the foundation of Dorothea Brooke's search for a meaningful existence.¹⁷

The commonplace nature of tragedy does not lessen its pain or its importance for those involved either directly or vicariously. As suggested by U. C. Knoepflmacher, George Eliot "adapts her tragic vision to the acceptance of the rhythm of ordinary life:^¹⁸

That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity. (M, 144)

Dorothea Brooke's gradual emergence from this "stupidity," which dims her vision and misdirects her feelings, forms her development.

The basis of this chapter, then, will be to discuss the evolution of Dorothea Brooke's character in order to convey the dilemma of an idealistic and ambitious woman in the nineteenth century. There are many indications that Dorothea Brooke is simply an extension of Maggie Tulliver with emphasis placed on different aspects of character and opportunity in order to portray yet another view of the woman confined to the mediocrity of "the unreformed provincial mind" (M, 449). Mediocrity is suggested in the title which implies a convention in which people cling to the 'middle-of-the-road' and refuse to venture toward unknown or unaccepted pathways. Often this is done by habit under the delusion of morality or individualism.

While wistfulness is a quality of Maggie Tulliver's temperament that is almost obscured by her passionate nature, it is a most specific aspect of Dorothea Brooke's character. Her passion, unlike Maggie's,
is subdued by a genteel upbringing. Dorothea is a study of all-pervasive wistfulness—the girl who yearns for a crusade to which she can attach herself and procure a meaningful existence apart from the paths commonly followed by her contemporaries. Passion is not lacking, however, in this ardent heroine. The author assures us that if Dorothea "ever attained perfect meekness, it would not be for lack of inward fire" (M, 10).

Like Maggie Tulliver's choices, Dorothea Brooke's decisions in life are limited as to a career by her sex and in marital options by the social hierarchy. Both heroines are confined by customs which ignore intellectual capabilities. In 1869 George Eliot wrote that "a more thorough education will tend to do away with the odious vulgarity of our notions about functions and employment." The cause and effect of these vulgar notions are primary concerns in the three novels discussed in this study. The static mentality that composed the author's own struggle for intellectual recognition displays itself behind the various facades of the three major heroines.

Unfortunately, even those more learned and worldly than the average Middlemarch citizen have their biases against female opinion. Lydgate appreciates Dorothea as a "good creature," but one who tends to be "a little too earnest." She does, in fact, form her own thoughts with serious intent and Lydgate, unused to this quality in women, finds it annoying:

"It is troublesome to talk to such women. They are always wanting reasons, yet they are too ignorant to understand the merits of any question, and usually fall back on their moral sense to settle things after their own taste." (M, 69)

Ironically, this "earnest creature" is to be the only faithful friend Lydgate has when reason is demanded to overcome social bias against
Dorothea's unconventional "moral bias" prompts her to answer painful gossip with the response that she "never called anything by the same name that all the people about me did" (M, 392). Women of Dorothea Brooke's generation are "too ignorant" simply because such biases as those in Lydgate's mind preclude educational opportunities. When Dorothea attempts to alter this condition for herself, she is accused of not looking "at things from a proper feminine angle" (M, 70). Lydgate, the author of these thoughts, finds someone to marry who has been trained as the paradigm of femininity.

Rosamond Vincy has been educated in a narrow sphere of affectation and ostentatious adornment. Mrs. Lemon's school has taught its favorite student to be unable to view life beyond the "scent of rose-leaves" (M, 216). Cultivated idleness requires that form rather than content be the mark of success or failure in any given deed. This "pattern-card of finishing-school" is the prime circumstance of Lydgate's failure (M, 468). Marriage, with "its demand for self-suppression and tolerance" requires a flexibility foreign to the development of Rosamond Vincy's character (M, 552). Thus, Lydgate marries "care, not help," and his awareness of this mistake and the failures subsequent to it evoke pathos by comparison to his dreams (M, 554).

This flaw in Lydgate's character allows him to regard superficial manners as preferable to breadth of intellect and depth of emotion in a woman and forces his reality to change drastically from the one intended.

Rosamond Vincy is a foil to Dorothea Brooke. While Dorothea marries to serve her suffering fellowmen, Rosamond marries to avoid vulgar humanity. There is irony in Rosamond's choice of a doctor whose
profession defines him as a man available to the elite and vulgar alike. But she will change even this aspect of Lydgate's career as she directs him toward the assurance of her own creature comforts. Whereas Dorothea eventually considers her financial assets a burden, Rosamond marries to ensure herself of financial security. Whereas Dorothea considers Casaubon's imagined wisdom as the promise of future enlightenment for herself, Rosamond considers only Lydgate's professional standing, per se, in the light of established security:

In Rosamond's romance it was not necessary to imagine much about the inward life of the hero, or of his serious business in the world: of course, he had a profession and was clever, as well as sufficiently handsome; but the piquant fact about Lydgate was his good birth, which distinguished him from all Middlemarch admirers, and presented marriage as a prospect of rising in rank and getting a little nearer to that celestial condition on earth in which she would have nothing to do with vulgar people, and perhaps at last associate with relatives quite equal to the county people who looked down on Middlemarchers. (M, 123)

Soul does not concern Rosamond. She dwells on "good birth" and its advantages. Ironically, her awe of Lydgate's relatives leads to both the miscarriage of her child and the lessening of her husband's respect and trust.

Both Dorothea Brooke and Rosamond Vincy are beautiful, but the latter lacks the heroine's inner nobility. Rosamond's beauty lies in those outward gestures that, added to her petite and superficial flawlessness, compose a girl who is more interesting to look at than to know. Strength is found only in Rosamond's stubborn attachment to appearances, a strength based on weakness of character. She does not grow with experience, but simply clings more self-righteously to her original selfish demands. In an early essay, George Eliot disputes
the masculine viewpoint that women who are capable of intelligent opinions are a hindrance to their mates by "always pulling in one way when her husband wants to go in another." She describes Rosamond when she expresses the view that "surely, so far as obstinacy is concerned, your unreasoning animal is the most unmanageable of creatures."20

Dorothea Brooke's growing sensitivity toward the needs of others and their inner battles, even in opposition to herself, is the very factor that ultimately gives her heroic stature in the small community of the novel. It is through Dorothea that even Rosamond experiences her one occasion of generosity. The latter escapes Ladislaw's wrath by swallowing the pride of vanity for a brief moment and, this girl who "liked to excite jealousy," confesses that Ladislaw's attraction is not directed toward herself (M, 199). Admittedly there is considerable protective selfishness involved in Rosamond's confession; nevertheless, this simple admission of error is more than she will ever afford Lydgate.

Mary Garth contrasts with Dorothea Brooke by the former's lack of illusions and the latter's unfeasible notions. Mary most closely resembles the author's concept of an ideal woman. Like George Eliot's characteristic as a writer, Mary's "reigning virtue" is her "honesty and truth-telling fairness." In contrast with Rosamond who "acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own" (M, 87), or Dorothea whose unrealistic viewpoint makes her "alive to anything that gave her an opportunity for active sympathy" whether it is worthy or not (M, 151), Mary "neither tried to create illusions, nor indulged in them for her own behoof" (M, 84). The marked beauty of Rosamond and Dorothea contrasts with Mary's commonness, a face one could see on "the crowded street tomorrow" (M, 298). Mary must then be known to be loved and this suggests a
much lower possibility of disillusionment on the part of her admirer. Had Mary faltered under illusions similar to those of either Dorothea or Rosamond, a regeneration of Fred Vincy's character would never have occurred. Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke and Gwendolyn Harleth have in common with the strong-minded Mary Garth her "severe notions of what people should be" (M, 421). But her notions are not crippled by the illusions characteristic of the former three.

Dorothea Brooke's elitist birthright precludes close association with other than the landed gentry and this severely limits her romantic affiliations. The accompanying wealth also restricts her activities in terms of the menial chores that occupy many women. For Dorothea "the yearning to give relief" preoccupied her focus "and made her own ease tasteless" (M, 557). Conditioned by wealth and a limited social experience, and feeling strongly the need for responsible activities, Dorothea is particularly vulnerable to the dry and pompous Reverend Casaubon:

The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent: and with such a nature, struggling in the bands of narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency. (M, 21)

An awareness of far-reaching possibilities and a knowledge of life outside the meager sphere of one's own confines is essential to individual decisions in George Eliot's fiction. Each major character must learn the inevitable flaw in hasty decisions based on a narrow personal dogma. Those whom we initially choose to ignore are often as beneficially effective in later years as those to whom we attach
ourselves are harmful:

Any one watching keenly the stealthy convergence of human lots, sees a slow preparation of effects from one life on another, which tells like a calculated irony on the indifference or the frozen stare with which we look at our unintroduced neighbour. Destiny stands by sarcastic with our dramatis personae folded in her hand. (M, 70)

The ironical truth of George Eliot's aside is expressed in the relationships of Lydgate with Dorothea Brooke and Gwendolen Harleth with Daniel Deronda. Destiny overrides Lydgate's intention to ignore Dorothea and anticipates Gwendolen's plan "to notice Deronda as little as possible" (DD, 375).

"Near-sighted" is a significant physical description of Dorothea Brooke which metaphorically describes her general insight. Her own admission that "I am rather short-sighted" will become an attribute of mental as well as physical character (M, 22). The paradox of Dorothea's early life is that she marries to devote her energies to the betterment of those less fortunate than herself, and this marriage, ironically, becomes, as Ladislaw remarks, "the most horrible of virgin sacrifices" (M, 264). Dorothea speaks a greater truth to Chettam than she is aware when anger prompts her to contradict his flattery regarding the powers of her discrimination; she suggests that "the right conclusion is there all the same, though I am unable to see it" (M, 23). The major "process and unfolding" of Dorothea's character is her eventual ability to "see" and guide herself toward the "right conclusion."

Lack of insight allows Dorothea Brooke to see in Casaubon those characteristics which are part of her dream rather than aspects of his person: "Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague
labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought" (M, 17).
The relevance of Dorothea's error is anticipated in Adam Bede's concept of Hetty Sorrel and foreshadows Gwendolen Harleth's misconception of Daniel Deronda's affection. Suffering is the inevitable consequence of the application of a personal need to the conception of another's character in order to furnish one's own desires rather than recognize and accept the reality at hand.

Dorothea Brooke's nature is not a shallow or selfish one, however, and she often exaggerates the positive qualities in those around her. She suggests this characteristic in her comment to Lydgate that "people are almost always better than their neighbours think they are" (M, 537). For George Eliot, these misconceptions are the inevitable result of an ardent, but naive generosity: "To love because you falsely imagine goodness . . . belongs to the finest natures." This sentiment quoted from a letter written by George Eliot shortly before the publication of Middlemarch, applies to the adoration in which Dorothea's misconception will hold Casaubon's abilities.

While the heroine mourns the frustrating confinement of her provincial existence, her life has, in fact, an extensive meaning in terms of the destiny of others. Dorothea's goodness, generosity and devotion benefit others enormously except where they are blinded by their own fears and pettiness:

The effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; 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. (M, 613)

The "unhistoric acts" of Dorothea Brooke's "hidden life" will often
be countered by the negative reactions of provincial mentality and personal insecurities. But for those able to appreciate kindness, her deeds increase both the recipient's mental and physical ease.

U. C. Knoepflmacher suggests that the "intricate form" of *Middlemarch* enables the author to expose the conflicting impulses characteristic of human nature: "By balancing reason and yearning, she could expose human vanity while at the same time sustaining the power of great illusions."22 This concept may be easily followed in the development of Bulstrode and Lydgate, as well as Dorothea. George Eliot allows us to see behind the heroine's egoistic ideals and yet realize their nobility and the intense motivation incurred by her ardent and moral decisiveness.

Each relationship in *Middlemarch* serves to define character by contrast and parallel. Even those who never meet are substantiated for the reader by their fictional counterparts in the intricate delineation of Middlemarch society. Dorothea and Mrs. Bulstrode, although two seemingly different types, maintain the same selfless devotion and symbolic gestures. They define one another by parallel characteristics in their "unreproaching fellowship" for undeserving husbands in the face of grief and both women express their determination by dress (M, 549). Rosamond emphasizes the nobility of these acts by her relationship with Lydgate. She is the "foresaking which still sits at the same board and lies on the same couch with the foresaken soul, withering it the more by unloving proximity" (M, 550). Dorothea's idealistic vision of life exposes Celia's comfortable perch and Rosamond's narrow viewpoint:
[Dorothea] felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining. (M, 578)

Closely connected to this technique of delineation by comparison, is the idea that individuals relate to and affect one another in the same manner as each strand of a web relates to and affects the whole. The metaphor of the web expresses the effect and continuity of each act, either in thought or deed, by each participant, on himself or others, in any given environment. George Eliot concentrates this universal theme on the confines of Middlemarch society:

I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe. (M, 105)

The web is used most effectively in the novel to expose the slow, but steady process of environmental pressure on psychological development. Emotions such as love, suspicion and jealousy, which finally culminate in effective deeds, are prompted by the gradual effect of environment and character in collision. These combinations are "constantly at their weaving work" to determine the outcome of each life (M, 307). Such is the case in romantic inclinations which are often the threads of preconceived notions that weave an illusive picture of the loved one rather than attending to reality: "The web itself is made of spontaneous beliefs and indefinable joys, yearnings of one life toward another, visions of completeness, indefinite trust" (M, 253).

Deeds, therefore, not only affect others, but they turn inward to create habits of behavior and thought patterns which in turn combine with new circumstances to determine the future.
We please our fancy with ideal webs
Of innovation, but our life meanwhile
Is in the loom, where busy passion plies
The shuttle to and fro, and gives our deeds
The accustomed pattern. (DD, 278)

This chapter heading from Daniel Deronda suggests that fantasies and habits are often the motivations which propel individuals when they imagine they are determining their own futures by an independent mental effort.

Experience tempers Dorothea Brooke's fantasies until she is able to acknowledge in her own behavior and goals that a single life is the function of character as applied to opportunity within the limited sphere afforded to each individual. Early in her life, Mr. Brooke attempted to modify the idealistic notions of his niece with the simple truth that "Life isn't cast in a mold—not cut out by rule and line" (M, 30). But the "rule and line" define Dorothea's rigid notions and she does not realize the need to modify them. Reality will be forced upon her by a series of disappointments until she realizes and admits to Ladislaw that notions, in fact, do not shape the future:

"Sorrow comes in so many ways. Two years ago I had no notion of that—I mean of the unexpected way in which trouble comes, and ties our hands, and makes us silent when we long to speak. I used to despise women a little for not shaping their lives more, and doing better things." (M, 397)

Dorothea learns the power of outer forces over inner longings and the effect is a humbling one and anticipates the humiliation of Gwendolen Harleth. Experiences, therefore, bring increased compassion and understanding with them.

If, as George Eliot suggests, "in all failures, the beginning is certainly the half of the whole," Dorothea Brooke must suffer enormously before a mature insight replaces blind idealism (M, 222).
The mellowing of her haughty contempt for any misconceptions of her notions is shown by her response to Celia's simplistic conversation. Gentle wisdom speaks in contrast to the former Dorothea when, after suffering, she replies to Celia's enquiries about her relationship with Ladislaw that "You would have to feel with me, else you would never know" (M, 602).

In a chapter of *Middlemarch* that discusses the concept of destiny as a result of the combination of character and environment, George Eliot alludes to the combined effect of individual responsibility and social influence in its caption:

1st Gent. Our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves.
2nd Gent. Ay, truly: but I think it is the world
That brings the iron. (M, 25)

Dorothea Brooke forges her own trap with Casaubon, but this mistake is the unhappy result of a world that has no place for high ideals and intense dreams, especially if they are instigated by a woman's mind.

Tradition and human weakness, therefore, determine the heroine's future as much as her theoretical aims and idealistic goals. The journey on which each individual sets out often has little resemblance to the path he eventually follows:

Each of those Shining Ones has to walk on earth among neighbours who perhaps thought much more of his gait and his garments than of anything which was to give him a title of everlasting fame: each of them had his little local personal history sprinkled with small temptations and sordid cares, which made the retarding friction of his course towards final companionship with the immortals. (M, 109)

The steady climb to maturity, then, is often slowed by barriers toward which one has unwittingly directed oneself. Although the author's philosophical aside refers directly to Lydgate, it may also
be applied to each of the heroine's. *Middlemarch* conveys the idea that it is the universal destiny of mankind in general to be restricted by the very nature of human weaknesses in response to environmental pressure. Each man is burdened alike by the destiny he partially determines for himself. Lydgate is similar to Dorothea in that he initially plans "to do good work for Middlemarch, and great work for the world!", but he must acquire considerable self-knowledge through failure and sorrow before his goals are shattered and his future determined (*M*, 110).

This paper deals with George Eliot's sense of the need for a realistic balance between an awareness of our own habits and our own limitations which determine the extent to which our deeds will be effective. She conveys her theme of the vast importance attached to the seemingly small, but effectual deed by tracing Dorothea Brooke's development. Dorothea matures from a romantic dreamer in search of a universal cause to the tempered woman with feasible goals. She grows, through disillusionment, to realize her limitations. The promise of a better life is based on serving those with whom she can daily concern herself. Dorothea's visit to Lydgate's home in the midst of their troubles is just such service. The future lives of Lydgate, Rosamond and Ladislaw are enormously effected by Dorothea's simple, but courageous, gesture:

> It is given to us sometimes even in our everyday life to witness the saving influence of a noble nature, the divine efficacy of rescue that may lie in a self-subduing act of fellowship. (*M*, 588)

Life itself is the great teacher and Dorothea Brooke's experiences remain narrow while she unwittingly confines her "best soul in prison"
by marriage to a pedantic bookworm whose uninvolved life has created a limited awareness of his fellowman and a narrow perspective on his work (M, 313). This severely hinders the development of his compassion and stifles the communication which would ensure relevance and meaning for his labors. Casaubon's mechanical book work may be compared to Silas Marner's hoarding of gold. It is a dehumanized state of existence which functions by reflex rather than inspiration—a process which knows no further goal than labor for its own sake. But Dorothea sees this marriage as a voyage to enlightenment and the enlargement of a purpose compatible with her grandiose schemes:

"There would be nothing trivial about our lives. Everyday-things with use would mean the greatest things. It would be like marrying Pascal. I should learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it by," (M, 21)

Through Dorothea's disillusionment in marriage and the light of awareness that dawns as a result of affiliation with Ladislaw, she learns of her misplaced hopes and finds peace in lesser dreams of higher quality, higher because they are more realistic. Hence, her new goals are attainable and functional in a world that is darkened by the human pettiness, insecurity and greed that are not part of our heroine's initial awareness:

Here and there a cygnet is reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond, and never finds the living stream in fellowship with its own oary-footed kind. Here and there is born a St. Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering on some long-recognisable deed. (M, 4)

Dorothea does not, therefore, find happiness as a girl within her immediate confines. She must allow Ladislaw, the outsider, to permanently lure her away from the stalemate of life at Lowick Manor in order that she may find new meaning in possible service.
Dorothea Brooke's development is traced through her dreams of a life akin to sainthood, a marriage designed to increase her knowledge and activate her dreams, the exposure of her naivete, and her growth to a new awareness. The web of lies that Dorothea encountered in her first marriage which consisted of theory for theory's sake and labor in order to evade reality is exchanged for a second marriage based on mutual passion and compatibility. Casaubon, whom Mrs. Cadwallader refers to as "a dried bladder for dried peas to rattle in," is thus replaced by the youthful Ladislaw (M, 43). Few fears are hidden in this new marriage and a clear knowledge of each other's weaknesses establishes a situation where the chance of disappointments is radically decreased. Like Maggie Tulliver in her relationship with Philip Wakem, Dorothea Brooke defies her family in order to be with Ladislaw, the one man who recognizes her weaknesses as well as her nobility. And recognition leads to acceptance.

The Prelude to Middlemarch establishes Dorothea's character and briefly traces her growth by comparing her to St. Theresa. This historical saint seeks martyrdom in a world she knows nothing about with an energy inspired by childish concepts and undaunted by the wisdom acquired with disappointment:

Theresa's passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life: what were many-volumed romances of chivalry and the social conquests of a brilliant girl to her? Her flame quickly burned up that light fuel; and, fed from within, soared after some illimitable satisfaction, some object which would never justify weariness, which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self. (M, 3)

This description, of course, foreshadows the innocent exuberance that inspires the heroine of Middlemarch. The author immediately establishes
the fact that although Dorothea Brooke is considered to be intelligent, her common sense as a girl is not abundant. Dorothea "was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense" (M, 5).

Dorothea Brooke's opportunities for education, like Maggie Tulliver's, are limited by the conventional attitude toward a woman's role in society. Hence we are introduced to the heroine as a young and beautiful girl, of slightly less than twenty years, who has been educated "on plans at once narrow and promiscuous" (M, 6). This restriction, coupled with her penchant for extremes, establishes the ease with which she will funnel her romantic intentions. Dorothea aims for one basic form of activity to which she can devote herself to the oblivion of all else—a relationship with Casaubon and the schemes which pervade that devotion.

Dorothea Brooke is impressed by those she considers more learned than herself and by the consequent opportunity this affords her by association. It is, therefore, fitting to the development of her character that she should become enraptured with Casaubon and assume that he would be a means by which she could avoid the mediocrity of life in provincial England: "Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage" (M, 7). The heroine wishes to marry only for the betterment of herself in terms of her opportunity "to help someone who did great works, so that his burthen might be lighter" (M, 266). In turn he would help her to grow knowledgeable and enhance the means by which she can serve a useful existence. Ironically, Dorothea increases "his burthen" and Casaubon imprisons her by his own deficiencies.
In George Eliot's fictional world the populace of a provincial environment scorns the young woman who thinks too deeply and questions established conventions. Appropriate partners in terms of age, career and financial position are deemed desirable. When Dorothea chooses a second husband closer to her own age, she is then criticized for her haste and Ladislaw's poverty. As George Eliot ironically reminds the reader, "Nobody would have said anything if she had married a young fellow because he was rich" (M, 599).

The male partner is esteemed to be the power behind a relationship and anything done to support or hinder this notion is lauded or condemned accordingly. As Squire Cass suggests in Silas Marner, "A woman has no call for [a will of her own], if she's got a proper man for her husband." Dorothea attempts to assert her will by marrying a man who she feels will open the channels to greater learning.

In doing so, she must reject Sir James Chettam, who is approved by society as an admirable suitor. Unlike her sister, Celia, Dorothea chooses to marry for reasons that are not included in the concepts of the general populace. Consequently, no one but the victim herself is shocked at the failure of her marriage:

Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them. (M, 7)

According to this biting description of the provincial standard, Dorothea, like Maggie of St. Ogg's, does not measure up to the Middlemarch norm. These antagonistic contentions on the part of society will have their effect on Dorothea Brooke, as they do on both Maggie Tulliver and Gwendolen Harleth, "for there is no creature whose
inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it" (M, 612).

Dorothea Brooke has not married for self-satisfaction and personal comfort, so it is not surprising to her neighbors that she finds herself greatly dissatisfied and discomforted. The expectations of social gossip are ultimately fulfilled more completely than those exchanging it ever become aware:

Perhaps no person then living—certainly none in the neighborhood of Tipton—would have had a sympathetic understanding for the dreams of a girl whose notions about marriage took their colour entirely from an exalted enthusiasm about the ends of life, an enthusiasm which was lit chiefly by its own fire, and included neither the niceties of the trousseau, the pattern of plate, nor even the honours and sweet joys of the blooming matron. (M, 20)

The lives of Maggie, Dorothea and Gwendolen show that popularity and individuality are not often concomitant, especially in a woman.

Dorothea's eagerness to involve herself with Casaubon displays itself long before she has even encountered him, just as Rosamond's insistence that she would "not marry any Middlemarch young man" (M, 73) because "a stranger was absolutely necessary to [her] social romance" (M, 88) prepares for the entrance of Lydgate. Casaubon fills the void in Dorothea's search and becomes the demi-god of knowledge:

Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. (M, 6)

The "quarter where she had not sought it" ironically foreshadows her marriage with Casaubon, a relationship which she rashly supposes will give her idealism a path to actuality. Instead she finds herself in
the position of a woman who must martyr herself in sympathy toward
the pathetic man whose "smile like pale wintry sunshine" symbolizes
his deficient emotions (M, 19).

Ironically Dorothea Brooke learns more than either she or her
husband intended. Her wisdom, rather than academic knowledge, is
greatly increased by her disillusionment. The girl who tells her
uncle that "we have no right to come forward and urge wider change
for good, until we have tried to alter the evils which lie under our
own hands," intends her comment for Mr. Brooke's tenants, but her
words apply to herself and "the evils" with which she must contend
are those of a mistaken marriage (M, 285). Dorothea, in fact, does
not satisfy either her own goals or those of her husband. As she increases
her awareness of Casaubon, she learns of the possibility of mistaken
intentions and unwitting misrepresentations. Suffering in the form
of guilt is incurred upon both those who disappoint and those who are
disappointed.

As Casaubon becomes aware of Dorothea Brooke's growing sense of
his inability to justify his work, his acute sensitivity to failure
manifests itself in a sudden terror which renders his wife even more
useless to him than she had feared:

This cruel outward accuser was there in the shape of a
wife—nay, of a young bride, who, instead of observing
his abundant pen-scratches and amplitude of paper with
the uncritical awe of an elegant-minded canary bird, seemed
to present herself as a spy watching everything with a
malign power of inference. (M, 149)

Dorothea, in other words, plays on Casaubon's conscience which is
beset by the futility of his work. Where Dorothea has judged Casaubon
too highly, he judges her too severely. These judgments speak for
themselves to define the personalities involved. Failure is ultimately put into clear perspective for both Dorothea and Casaubon. She unwittingly forces her husband to look at his wasted life and, at the same time, she must acknowledge her own misrepresentation of his character.

Ironically, Casaubon has married to fulfill needs which do not encourage a questioning mind on the part of his spouse. He intends to exploit her "ardent self-sacrificing affection" for purposes akin to those of a personal secretary (M, 37). Dorothea has married in order "to live continually in the light of a mind she could reverence" and protect herself from the routine monotony of Middlemarch society (M, 32). This latter aim anticipates Gwendolen Harleth's reason for marrying Grandcourt. The truth of Dorothea and Casaubon's incompatibility is initially hidden by the heroine's penchant for seeing whatever is necessary to maintain her notions: "Dorothea's faith supplied all that Mr. Casaubon's words seem to leave unsaid: what believer sees a disturbing omission or infelicity?" (M, 37).

In contrast with Dorothea's generosity, Casaubon wonders if his betrothed lacks certain feminine attributes which might account for the lack of masculine passion on his part: "It has once or twice crossed his mind that possibly there was some deficiency in Dorothea to account for the moderation of his abandonment" (M, 47). Like Herbert Spencer excusing himself for his lack of involvement with George Eliot, Casaubon looks for the cause of his impotence everywhere but in himself.24 Dorothea, true to her modest nature, does nothing to contradict this viewpoint. Rosamond Vincy is a foil to Dorothea in that she, like Casaubon, wonders at the deficiencies in her mate and is cruel enough to imply "that she had been deluded with a false
vision of happiness in marrying him" (M, 483). The "narrow swamp" that Lydgate believes he must "pass in a long journey" becomes the marriage itself (M, 479). Both these relationships expose George Eliot's belief that one individual cannot achieve healthy spontaneity and depth of companionship if the other is not capable of flexibility and growth in compassion and sensibility.

Dorothea and Casaubon gradually stifle each other with the quiet resentment that results from their antithetical schemes. The static nature of their relationship finally obliterates Dorothea's tendency to fill up "all the blanks with unmanifested perfections, interpreting him as she interpreted the works of Providence, and accounting for seeming discords by her own deafness to the higher harmonies" (M, 55). Insight into Casaubon's nature gives his wife renewed faith in her own worth. She clearly does not wish to sacrifice herself to anything less than a better life than the one she knew previous to her marriage.

Dorothea Brooke, like Maggie Tulliver and Gwendolen Harleth, shows signs of egoism early in the novel. Her intention to renounce the sensual delight of horseback riding and shun the temptation to feed vanity by adorning herself with her mother's jewels supports Celia's astute observation that Dorothea "likes giving up" (M, 13). When the accused objects that this would mean "self-indulgence, not self-mortification" she speaks an ironic truth. Dorothea's self-conception is deformed by her near-sighted manner of viewing herself in relation to life. A desire to give up the conventional pleasures motivates her rejection of youth and exuberance in Sir James Chettam for age and supposed wisdom in Casaubon. Similar to Rosamond Vincy
in her fallacious choice of Lydgate as food for her narrow appetite, Dorothea Brooke chooses the man she compares to Locke because she superimposes her desires onto his person. Not only is Casaubon reported to be learned, he is concerned with a great religious endeavor and Dorothea desires a "husband who is a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it" (M, 8). In other words, Casaubon appears a most promising mate to a girl with strong religious feelings and great intellectual aspirations.

The author compares Dorothea and Celia to Don Quixote and Sancho. Dorothea sees according to her dreams and, by contrast to Celia, one is made aware of both the beauty and the foolishness of their conceptions: "[Celia] had an indirect mode of making her negative wisdom tell upon Dorothea, and calling her down from her rhapsodic mood by reminding her that people were staring, not listening." (M, 24). Dorothea misconstrues reality as she adorns Casaubon with all the embellishment of her near-sighted generosity:

Signs are small measurable things, but interpretations are illimitable, and in girls of sweet, ardent nature, every sign is apt to conjure up wonder, hope, belief, vast as a sky, and coloured by a diffused thimbleful of matter in the shape of knowledge. (M, 18)

Dorothea uses every "sign" available to enhance Casaubon's sterile nature with the worthiness of a sage. When he admits that he feeds "too much on inward sources" and "lives too much with the dead," she is only able to conceive of ways to save his eyestrain by her own services (M, 13). His warnings go unheeded even when he tells her that his interests lie with the "dwellings of ancient Egyptians" rather than the cottages she wishes to plan for the community (M, 24). Dorothea is blind to the obvious fact that they are diametrically
opposed in that she wishes to devote herself to future generations, while he interests himself in probing the long lost past.

While Dorothea perceives a great soul in Casaubon's face, as Don Quixote would have done, Celia sees only two whites moles with unsightly hairs on them in the manner of Sancho. When Celia notes that Casaubon communicates very little, Dorothea considers there is a lack of outside stimuli to which he can respond. She fashions "a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint" (M, 18). Celia, with her usual even temper and simple manner, continually attempts to bring Dorothea to a more reasonable viewpoint: "You always see what nobody else sees; it is impossible to satisfy you; yet you never see what is quite plain" (M, 27). But Dorothea is adamant. She has found a corner to which she can attach her Theresa-like energies in the course of imagined goodness and she refuses to see other than that which a saint would desire.

As Dorothea Brooke's environment does not offer opportunities for her to fulfill her theories, she imagines an opportunity through marriage. Any jarring of these notions with hints that she may be misleading herself is attended by haughty scorn:

[Celia] had reflected that Dodo would perhaps not make a husband happy who had not her way of looking at things; and stifled in the depths of her heart was the feeling that her sister was too religious for family comfort. Notions and scruples were like spilt needles, making one afraid of treading, or sitting down, or even eating. (M, 15)

Dorothea does not in fact make her husband happy and, as a consequence, she makes herself unhappy as well. The discomfort Dorothea causes is, ironically, due to the lack of understanding she affords the very fellowmen she dreams of aiding. She pricks their consciences with a supercilious attitude toward the common ambitions to which most
people aspire. Essentially, Dorothea must learn the lesson that George Eliot shares with the reader through the former's characterization—the beauty and importance of the simple reality before us in the process of our daily lives.

The author expresses her love of simplicity in her first novel, *Adam Bede*:

> There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities: I want a great deal of those feelings for my everyday fellow-men, especially for the few in the foreground of the great multitude. . . . Neither are picturesque lazzaroni or romantic criminals half so frequent as your common labourer, who gets his own bread and eats it vulgarly but creditably with his own pocket knife.

Dorothea has yet to learn the variety of human natures or the value of this variety. Like Casaubon's filing system, she has her mental notes "in pigeon holes partly," where she maintains her rigid notions (M, 14). There is no simple way for her to acquire the necessary wisdom to expand her outlook:

> Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. (M, 612)

Dorothea Brooke's tendency to "young and noble impulse" takes on the form of a strong will. Wanting her own way in life describes both Dorothea Brooke and Gwendolen Harleth. Their differences lie in the fact that the former is a gentle and idealistic woman while the latter is an aggressive and spoiled one. The inclination to martyrdom is, therefore, lacking in the heroine of *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen's self-seeking motives and wilful manner appear more closely aligned to the self-indulgence which Dorothea denies.
In many ways Dorothea Brooke foreshadows the modern woman, as do Maggie Tulliver and Gwendolen Harleth. Although the heroine of *Middlemarch* is not successful in completely liberating herself and a second marriage follows close upon the first, she will come to this latter act by a certain independence. Initially she dreams of improving her own mind rather than simply performing as a helpmate in her husband's climb to success: "She had not reached that point of renunciation at which she would have been satisfied with having a wise husband: she wished, poor child, to be wise herself" (*M*, 47). Naturally, Dorothea is disappointed by the lack of independent and meaningful involvement required of her as mistress of Lowick Manor:

She felt some disappointment, of which she was yet ashamed, that there was nothing for her to do in Lowick; and in the next few minutes her mind had glanced over the possibility, which she would have preferred, of finding that her home would be in a parish which had a larger share of the world's misery, so that she might have had more active duties in it. (*M*, 57)

Dorothea Brooke, like Maggie Tulliver, simply needs a feasible goal on which to focus her energies. A wife with ample wealth and few demands upon her time is not called upon to make her mark by self-sacrifice and the vast consumption of useful knowledge, and is, therefore, unsuited to be a latter-day St. Theresa. Ironically, the luxury of ease is the very situation she thought to avoid by marriage to Casaubon. Thus, disillusionment asserts itself in Dorothea as "the clear heights where she expected to walk in full communion... become difficult to see even in her imagination." The expanse toward which she gravitates turns out to be an enclosure where she has even less than before because she is denied the youthful hopefulness of freedom by marriage. Hence, "the delicious repose of the soul" that
she dreamed of is "shaken into uneasy effort and alarmed with dim presentiment" (M, 202).

Dorothea suffers from both the lack of simple emotional exchanges and "the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty" of having the luxury to guarantee boredom (M, 202):

Excessive rumination and self-questioning is perhaps a morbid habit inevitable to a mind of much moral sensibility when shut out from its due share of outward activity and of practical claims on its affections—inevitable to a noble-hearted, childless woman, when her lot is narrow.26

Dorothea Brooke's disillusionment begins within the first weeks of her marriage. Unwittingly burdened by all her dreams of what marriage will bring her, she grows progressively more discontent. A sense of vague futility and loneliness begins to replace the vitality incurred by cherished hopes of fulfillment. Initially she looks to herself for the deficiency:

Dorothea had no distinctly shapen grievance that she could state even to herself; and in the midst of her confused thought and passion, the mental act that was struggling forth into clearness was a self-accusing cry that her feeling of desolation was the fault of her own spiritual poverty. (M, 143)

It is in the revelation of Dorothea Brooke's mistake in seeking a life-giving purpose in Casaubon's futile labors that George Eliot explores her heroine's intense psychological development. Dorothea's reasons for marrying Casaubon are established by her self-conditioning and by the external pressures of society. Her goals will now be defined by the combination of her intelligence, the long hours she spends without inspiration, and the yearning to begin the "new duties" she had anticipated with adult life. A fresh pattern of awareness begins to form itself on her honeymoon in Rome which sets the stage
The gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism, fed on meagre Protestant histories and on art chiefly of the hand-screen sort; a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principles, fusing her actions into their mould, and whose quick emotions gave the most abstract things the quality of a pleasure or a pain; a girl who had lately become a wife, and from the enthusiastic acceptance of untried duty found herself plunged in tumultuous preoccupation with her personal lot. (M, 143)

The "quick emotions" characteristic of Dorothea and responsible for many of the dilemmas of "her personal lot" parallel the rashness basic to both Gwendolen and Maggie's behavior.

Dorothea Brooke suffers from the very fear George Eliot expressed in 1841, thirty-one years before the publication of Middlemarch:

"How terrible it must be to find one's self tied to a being whose limitations you see, and must know were such as to prevent your ever being understood!"27 Marriage has closed the door of retreat and her choices are limited to those within a relationship composed of hidden and conflicting notions in which "she was as blind to his inward troubles as he to hers" (M, 148). Dorothea has, as Ladislaw suggests, been "buried alive" by her own consuming notions.

Dorothea's mental state is in "an interval when the very force of her nature heightened its confusion" (M, 144). This unsuspicuous girl who must now concentrate on the present rather than glory in fantasies of tomorrow, wonders at the "forlorn weariness" before her (M, 146):

Having once embarked on your marital voyage, it is impossible not to be aware that you make no way and that the sea is not within sight—that, in fact, you are in an enclosed basin. (M, 145)
The metaphor of stagnant water which describes the state of Dorothea's marriage with Casaubon contrasts with her earlier images. In her initial infatuation with the idea of marrying Casaubon Dorothea compares his feelings and experiences with her own as a "lake compared with my little pool!" (M, 18).

The author extends the water metaphor to reveal Casaubon's deficiencies which, in sharp contrast to Dorothea's generosity, he secretly blames on her:

He determined to abandon himself to the stream of feeling, and perhaps was surprised to find what an exceedingly shallow rill it was. As in droughty regions baptism by immersion could only be performed symbolically, so Mr. Casaubon found that sprinkling was the utmost approach to a plunge which his stream could afford him; and he concluded that the poets had much exaggerated the force of masculine passion. (M, 46)

Dorothea must wait to find the poetry of life with Ladislaw. She must first outgrow the narrow-viewed and erroneous penchant for placing Casaubon above his station in life. This husband who "had become indifferent to sunlight" (M, 147) may then be replaced by a lover who seems to "shake out light" (M, 155) when he tosses his head.

Thus, the reader is not surprised that "the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhere" (M, 145). The dim labyrinths, by which George Eliot often describes Casaubon and his work, connect to Ladislaw's reference to Dorothea as a vulnerable woman who "has been brought up in some of those horrible notions that choose the sweetest women to devour—like Minotaurs" (M, 163).

Suspicion and pride assume precedence in Casaubon's nature and an impenetrable barrier gradually enforces the distance between
husband and wife. Guilt prompts Casaubon to turn inward when the insurmountable problem of Dorothea's passionate nature is put before him:

All through his life Casaubon had been trying not to admit even to himself the inward sores of self-doubt and jealousy, And on the most delicate of all personal subjects, the habit of proud reticence told doubly. (M, 277)

Thus, Dorothea's gestures of affection are met with a stiff politeness that indicates Casaubon's opinion of these "manifestations as rather crude and startling" (M, 147):

It is in these acts called trivialities that the seeds of joy are for ever wasted, until men and women look round with haggard faces at the devastation their own waste has made, and say, the earth bears no harvest of sweetness—calling their denial knowledge. (M, 312)

Dorothea proves a constant contrast to the norm in her insistence that each of these "trivialities" be cared for with a maximum of devotion. In her attention to detail and her refusal to live by affectations, she moves gradually away from her preconceived notions about Casaubon and toward the reality of making life less painful for those who are able to benefit by her small, but important comforts. It is in her "unhistoric acts" that Dorothea Brooke plants her "seeds of joy" for others and consequently reaps a meaningful life for herself.

The dawn of Dorothea's disillusionment marks the beginning of her inability to fill the void left by Casaubon's lack of passion. His words are no longer supplemented by her dreams as were the lines of his marriage proposal. Anger and repulsion begin to display themselves where anticipation and fascination had reigned:

She was humiliated to find herself a mere victim of feeling, as if she could know nothing except through that medium:
all her strength was scattered in fits of agitation, of struggle, of despondency, and then again in visions of more complete renunciation, transforming all hard conditions into duty. (M, 147)

Duty is the form behind which she hides the unrelenting frustration of idle days and stifled emotions.

Thus, Dorothea restrains the opinions she formerly voiced to Celia and lives in the superficial harmony and underlying antagonism of her "perpetual struggle of energy with fear" (M, 285). She survives in the restrictive quarters of Lowick Manor by stifling all feeling. This transfer of girlish jubilance to suppressed politeness is paralleled in Maggie Tulliver's relationship with her brother Tom and anticipates the marriage of Gwendolen Harleth to Grandcourt. The change that results from a suppression of the will and a lack of mutual understanding is translated into the facade of harmony in which two individuals in close proximity conduct themselves "in every respect like members of a highly civilized society:"

We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older. We keep apart when we have quarrelled, express ourselves in well-bred phrases, and in this way preserve a dignified alienation, showing much firmness on one side, and swallowing much grief on the other. (MF, 33)

"Dignified alienation" defines the marital course followed by Dorothea and Casaubon. Loneliness, for both, is the consequence. Perhaps this loneliness is even greater for Casaubon because of his suspicious nature; as George Eliot suggests, "what is more lonely than distrust?" (M, 322).

Dorothea Brooke's frustration causes her to react with a passivity similar to that of Thomas Hardy's Tess. The heroine responds to Ladislaw's complaint about her "dreadful imprisonment" with the defeated
energy of a girl who expresses "no longings." She turns her dreams for active goodness into a theology of beneficent thoughts:

"By desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower." (M, 287)

Dorothea puts life aside because she cannot change it. Defeatism drains the spirit of effort. Ladislaw's attraction for her and his subsequent bestowal of attention will be slow to convey the wisdom that it is not necessary to submit when submission is distasteful. Contrary to Dorothea's theory, Ladislaw's theology is "to love what is good and beautiful when I see it" (M, 287). This reference to that which is worthy of appreciation, applies to Dorothea as well.

As Dorothea Brooke slips unconsciously "into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty toward her husband," Ladislaw's claim on her subconscious increases: "The mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air" (M, 265). Ladislaw is described in the figurative language of light. Juxtaposed to this is Casaubon's affiliation with darkness. These metaphors express an imagery which supports Dorothea Brooke's development as she evolves from shades of naive confusion to the brightness of an enlightened reality.

True to the development of her unselfish nature, Dorothea realizes that Casaubon is the more severely trapped of the two: She was no longer struggling against the perception of facts but adjusting herself to their clearest perception; and now when she looked steadily at her husband's failure, still more at his possible consciousness of failure, she seemed to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness. (M, 267)
Dorothea Brooke's insight broadens with her penetration of Casaubon's fears. Her dream to grow knowledgeable in his companionship changes to a desire to bring comfort by affiliation. The meaningless nature of his task grows more obvious with the loss of health and time. Dorothea's knowledge of his failure and the pressure of his illness increase both Casaubon's pettiness and his wife's generosity. Pettiness breeds itself on Casaubon's imagined suspicions about Dorothea's judgment of him and Ladislaw's intentions towards his wife if he should die. Generosity shows itself in Dorothea's solicitous anticipations of her husband's every need.

When Dorothea's strength is "no longer all converted into resolute submission," she can turn her thoughts back to a clearer perspective of her past and forward to an outgoing response to the community of Middlemarch (M, 391). The incident which stimulates her psychological freedom from Casaubon's "dead hand" is "the imbittering discovery that in her past union there had lurked the hidden alienation of secrecy and suspicion"—the discovery that Casaubon had suspected Ladislaw of ambitious and devious thoughts in relation to herself. Not only have her dreams of marriage been shattered by experience, but the extent of the alienation involved was more severe than she had ever supposed:

The living, suffering man was no longer before her to awaken her pity: there remained only the retrospect of painful subjection to a husband whose thoughts had been lower than she had believed, whose exorbitant claims for himself had even blinded his scrupulous care for his own character, and made him defeat his own pride by shocking men of ordinary honour. (M, 362)

In contrast with Casaubon's petty nature which prevented him from experiencing pleasure and his inability to see the foolishness
in his own trite thoughts with regard to Dorothea, "Ladislaw's sense of the ludicrous lit up his features very agreeably: it was the pure enjoyment of comicality, and had no mixture of sneering and self-exaltation" (M, 59). With the decease and dishonor of Casaubon, Ladislaw assumes a larger role in Dorothea's mental activity. She experiences "a sudden strange yearning of heart towards Will Ladislaw" (M, 360). But her mind is innocent of Ladislaw's love by the modest nature of her character:

She did not know then that it was Love who had come, . . . She only felt that there was something irrevocably amiss and lost in her lot, and her thoughts about the future were the more readily shaped into resolve. Ardent souls, ready to construct their coming lives are apt to commit themselves to the fulfilment of their own visions. (M, 399)

Dorothea's vision does not include an exchange of love with Ladislaw. Therefore, she unwittingly refuses to see the reality taking shape before her. Ironically, it is Casaubon, in the codicil of his will, who suggests to Dorothea the idea of Ladislaw as a potential lover.

It has been apparent since George Eliot's introduction of Ladislaw in terms of his art, youth, and beauty that she determines his worldly nature a fitting one for Dorothea's edification. Anticipated by Philip Wakem and foreshadowing Daniel Deronda, Will Ladislaw becomes the novel's voice of wisdom. Ladislaw's argument to Dorothea is strongly reminiscent of Philip's admonition of Maggie in the Red Deeps—a stand against pointless self-sacrifice. Ladislaw also points to Daniel Deronda's attempt to incur "forward-looking thoughts" in Gwendolen Harleth's despair.

When Dorothea admits her inability to enjoy anything that "most people are shut out from", Ladislaw argues that "the best piety is
to enjoy:"

I call that the fanaticism of sympathy... If you carried it out you ought to be miserable in your own goodness, and turn evil that you might have enjoyment over others... And enjoyment radiates... I suspect that you have some false belief in the virtues of misery, and want to make your life a martyrdom. \(M, 163\)

Martyrdom as an end in itself has been dealt with in the chapter on Maggie Tulliver. George Eliot, however, combines wisdom and romance in Ladislaw so that Dorothea has a more extensive psychological development and future opportunity incorporated in this relationship than Maggie could possibly have with Philip. Dorothea begins to undergo a metamorphosis. New knowledge creates a new perspective which in turn allows her consciousness to adapt a new form. Petulance has been subdued by experience and wisdom gains precedence with retrospective contemplation: "Her world was in a state of convulsive change; the only thing she could say distinctly to herself was that she must wait and think anew" \(M, 359-60\). Aware of the struggle which preceded her appreciation of life's bitter realities and her own misrepresentations, Dorothea turns inward.

As Ladislaw's unselfish and expansive feelings for Dorothea contrast with Casaubon's frightened and static responses to her presence, the former provides a new perspective appropriate to her desire to rejuvenate her life. The cousins emphasize each other's emotions by their differences, especially in relation to the heroine:

Our good depends on the quality and breadth of our emotion; and to Will, a creature who cared little for what are called the solid things of life and greatly for its subtler influences, to have within him such a feeling as he had towards Dorothea, was like the inheritance of a fortune. \(M, 344\)
Contrary to Ladislaw, Casaubon is blind to the nuances of Dorothea's inner nature and incapable of experiencing the innocence of joy in another's beauty.

With Casaubon's death, Dorothea conjures up new means of dealing with old notions. Although her experiences have matured her considerably, she responds flippantly to Celia's question of a second marriage: "It is no more to me than if you talked of women going fox-hunting: whether it is admirable in them or not, I shall not follow them" (M, 400). Ironically, Dorothea not only remarries but does so in far less than the conventional time normally allotted to mourning.

George Eliot's philosophical aside about wisdom suggests that Dorothea, in her disillusionment with Casaubon and her subliminal romantic affiliation with Ladislaw, will reach the awareness of a second chance—the hope beyond each disappointment:

We are told that the oldest inhabitants in Peru do not cease to be agitated by the earthquakes, but they probably see beyond each shock, and reflect that there are plenty more to come. (M, 399)

Dorothea Brooke anticipates Gwendolen Harleth in that she will learn to see beyond the first shock of disillusionment as an eventual part of her maturing process. Her thoughts find a new and worthy goal in the form of her relationship with Ladislaw—a new goal before which she can tremble in delight and anticipation. It is, therefore, not George Eliot's idea of maturity for one to reach the state of bored acceptance and hard will characterized by Grandcourt in Daniel Deronda. But it is necessary for the further stability of one's emotions, especially to an individual as sensitive as Dorothea, that one learn to modify today's experience with yesterday's knowledge.
The model of mature wisdom and innocent exuberance is portrayed in the character of Caleb Garth. Ironically, the struggle depicted in his life contains none of the boredom and disillusionment in Dorothea's. The life of a working-class man offers Caleb the opportunity to apply his moral bent to the realities of his work and his family: "To do a good day's work and to do it well . . . was the chief part of his own happiness" (M, 407). The difference between the sex and wealth of Garth and Dorothea offers the former a significant advantage by which to replace theories with useful activity.

George Eliot has drawn in her heroine a woman whose basic emotional need is to feel significant by her usefulness to others and placed her in the elitist class of provincial England where her self-sacrificial will cannot easily be fed. Dorothea has no alternative but to turn again to the thought of a communal development for peasants, once discussed with both Chettam and Casaubon in the glorious days of enthusiastic naivete. Significantly, the author informs us that Ladislaw was "given to ramble about among the poor people" (M, 339). Dorothea's new dream is "to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make a little colony, where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well." More important, perhaps, is her plan to "know every one of the people and be their friend" (M, 401). This indicates both her loneliness and the tedium of her luxurious life which prompts her to tell Ladislaw that he is the "happier of us two . . . to have nothing" (M, 397).

Ladislaw's appropriateness as Dorothea's lover is established by his ability to appreciate her as a separate individual rather than an entity to sustain his own ego. Freedom is the natural
consequence of this unselfish devotion—food for Dorothea's starved affections and liberty from the forced suppression of Casaubon's meagre sentiments which had been of a condescending order:

It is another or rather a fuller sort of companionship that poor Dorothea was hungering for, and the hunger had grown from the perpetual effort demanded by her married life. She was always trying to be what her husband wished, and never able to repose on his delight in what she was. The thing that she liked, that she spontaneously cared to have, seemed to be always excluded from her life; for if it was only granted and not shared by her husband it might as well have been denied. (M, 348)

Ladislaw, in contrast, has the capacity to love Dorothea for what she is rather than what she can do for him. She is, therefore, freed to be herself rather than strapped to the ordeal of attempting to make herself suitable in a situation which precludes the possibility of success by the basic natures of the people involved. George Eliot establishes Ladislaw as Dorothea's salvation in the plot of Middlemarch. Marriage, however, does not totally redeem the heroine. By hastily marrying Dorothea to Ladislaw, George Eliot shows no indication that Dorothea's development enables her to grow and mature as an unattached individual. Gwendolen Harleth is the only heroine who approaches this stage of the truly independent woman.

The fact that Dorothea and Ladislaw share many of the same characteristics prepares the reader for their marriage. He matches, for example, her forthright character and spontaneity: "It was Will's nature that the first spark it threw out was a direct answer of the question and challenge of the consequences" (M, 445). Their natures find a kinship in the mutual desire to avoid anything dishonorable no matter how profitable or easily excused. Ladislaw is separated in this respect from both Bulstrode and Lydgate. His ability to remain
clear, even from temptation, proves itself in the lure of Bulstrode's bribery. And again a parallel is seen in Dorothea and Ladislaw's mutually unpretentious regard for their material welfares. Ladislaw's unselfish thoughts are devoid of ambition in terms of Dorothea's inheritance and he is rewarded by the wealth of Dorothea's love:

He knew nothing of Dorothea's private fortune, and being little used to reflect on such matters, took it for granted that according to Mr. Casaubon's arrangement marriage to him, Will Ladislaw, would mean that she consented to be penniless. That was not what he could wish for even in his secret heart, or even if she had been ready to meet such hard contrast for his sake. (M, 458)

These similarities point to the compatibility of Dorothea and Ladislaw and foreshadow their ability to enhance each other's growth and self-knowledge. The psychological atmosphere to which Dorothea Brooke was confined explodes into renewed hopefulness as hesitant and suppressed emotions are exchanged and expressed in their "first sense of loving and being loved:"

It was as if some hard icy pressure had melted, and her consciousness had room to expand: her past was come back to her with larger interpretation. (M, 465)

Thus, joy brings the confidence to reflect with a broad inner vision. Dorothea is able to see clearly that which has previously been shaded by egoistic dreams and subsequent fear.

The expanse of Dorothea Brooke's new understanding initiates a breadth of hopefulness where depression had previously confined her. Confinement is primary to George Eliot's development of her heroine's characteristics and it has a wide range of connotations related to
psychological, physical and spiritual suppression. Maggie's confinement to St. Ogg's mediocrity in *The Mill on the Floss* expands in *Middlemarch* to Dorothea Brooke's physical and psychological confinement in marriage with Casaubon and, finally, in *Daniel Deronda* confinement exposes the fear which pervades Gwendolen when her space is not defined by the comfort of walls and people.

Those in Middlemarch society who disagree with Dorothea's choice of Ladislaw as the object of her desire to give "wifely help" to a husband in "the thick of a struggle" are chastised by the author. George Eliot reminds her reader that although onlookers are quick to disapprove they are not so rapid to find an alternative:

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

(M, 611)

Sarcasm defines the verbal irony of this final statement written on behalf of the female left to her own devices in a provincial society. The community severely condemns any attempt to widen a woman's horizon. Marriage is a plot device appropriate to Dorothea Brooke's loving nature, but in *Daniel Deronda* George Eliot leaves the heroine's future an open question.

Dorothea, for whom "no life would have been possibly .... which was not filled with emotion," has found a positive, if limited, channel in which the stream of her emotions can flow freely (M, 610). She thus finds what Maggie sought in vain—a responsive object to worship. Dorothea fulfills the expectations established in the Prelude—she establishes a compromise between the life she originally
aspired to and the life that conditions permit:

With dim lights and tangled circumstance they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggles seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness; for these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul. (M, 3)

With little guidance Dorothea has acquired through suffering the insight denied in her first infatuation.

If "every limit is a beginning as well as an ending" as George Eliot suggests in her Finale, then the limits imposed by the conflict of Dorothea Brooke's ardent nature and society's stringent barriers begins her life anew in the role of wife and mother. (M, 607). Her freedom seems a greater one to both Dorothea and the reader by the travail of her journey with Casaubon: "Some set out, like Crusaders of old, with a glorious equipment of hope and enthusiasm and get broken by the way . . ." (M, 608). Dorothea does not become hopelessly broken in the sense that Lydgate does, but then George Eliot removes the responsibility of Dorothea's initial error through death and offers her a second chance. Lydgate, after his mistaken infatuation with Laura, is unable to use his past mistake to his own future advantage. Dorothea's psychological growth is enormous and, although she devotes her intelligence and energy to the assistance of another rather than centering on herself (as Gwendolen will be left to do), she at least chooses a partner with whom she can continue to grow. Dorothea enters her second marriage with a realistic view of her mate, rather than the illusions foisted upon Casaubon.

The process of human change is complex and slow, but in Middlemarch George Eliot has successfully portrayed the essence of human development, its motivations, and its restrictions. The people of Middlemarch society
change according to a complex interweaving of character with character and character with environment. The outcome often veers far from the original goal of the dreamer as expressed in each of the heroine's destinies: "Nothing in the world more subtle than the process of their gradual change" (M, 107). Through outer influences and the subsequent inner changes, Dorothea no longer sees strictly by her idealism, and seems finally to understand Celia's suggestion that her elder sister "always wanted things that wouldn't be." The "strange-coloured lamps by which Dodo habitually saw" are tempered with a reflective knowledge gained in despair (M, 600).

This redemptive power of suffering is a major theme in George Eliot's fiction and will be the focus of the next chapter on the development of Gwendolen Harleth. The strength of love and its beneficial healing power have much to do with this redemption and Dorothea gains through Ladislaw the love denied to Maggie:

A human being in this aged nation of ours is a very wonderful whole, the slow creation of long interchanging influences; and the charm is a result of two such wholes, the one loving and the one loved. (M, 300)

Dorothea Brooke, then, has been saved from life with Casaubon by his death and from loneliness and widowhood by Ladislaw. Her place in society is established in the conventional and meaningful existence of a wife and a mother. Marriage provides Dorothea with a focal point for her emotional energies and an opportunity, through Ladislaw's career, to assist in political reform. Without this second marriage, her tragic mistake in marrying Casaubon would have left the reader to hope for an altruistic death for Dorothea, similar to that of Maggie Tulliver. The heroine of Middlemarch would have been left
within the bounds of provincial society to apply Ladislaw's lessons regarding the futility of submission and the false ideals of youth. This points to Gwendolen Harleth whose future is more optimistic by virtue of her aggressive nature which one may assume will reassert itself in a more positive manner with the return of her health.

Dorothea Brooke's penchant for viewing mankind as better than it is often stimulates the growth of the best soul in the object of her generosity. In this generosity lies "one of the great powers of her womanhood." Dorothea looks with pity, rather than suspicion or condescension at the mistakes of her neighbors. Hence, she gives cause for renewed hope and the belief in a self that is a consequence of this hope:

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 belief about us; and our sins become that worst kind of sacrilege which tears down the invisible altar of trust. (M, 565)

Faith, then, often motivates the behavior befitting it. In this context, Dorothea Brooke's "unhistoric acts" are of the nature that fertilize high ideals and motivate men to deeds which make their pasts and futures more acceptable and promising. The individual deed acted out by man according to his greatest potential takes on a universal significance in the light of its far-reaching possibilities.

The development of Dorothea Brooke's character has shown the diffusive effect of individual behavior. Deeds, like the ripples from a passing ship, stretch far from their source and disturb, for better or worse, any object that may be touched along the way. In Dorothea's case, this effect is one of moral goodness:

The presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we
begin to see things again in their larger, quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be judged in the wholeness of our character. (M, 558)

For each person that Dorothea reassures, there are others affected by the recipient's turn of mind. So, ironically, Dorothea succeeds more truly than she realizes in her initial saintly goal to give effectively of her energy on behalf of her fellowman. Life is given purpose and unity by "her usual tendency to over-estimate the good in others" (M, 585). Dorothea Brooke's "unhistoric acts" signify the well-being and hopefulness of all those who are fortunate enough to come within the sphere of her fellowship.

George Eliot raises the question in Daniel Deronda as to the importance of girls and "their blind visions" in the "midst of that mighty drama" of life. The answer is suggested by the characterization of her heroines. The exchange and sustenance of loving fellowship that these women offer is purpose enough:

They are the Yea and Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affection. (DD, 160)

At the end of each novel discussed in this study, the message of George Eliot's philosophical aside is conveyed. Maggie Tulliver was, Dorothea Brooke is and Gwendolen Harleth will be just such a vessel for the growth and transmission of tender devotion "and in this way lift the average of earthly joy." 29
CHAPTER III

The Redemptive Power of Suffering: Daniel Deronda

Passion, wistfulness and caprice are the distinguishing major characteristics that define the three ardent heroines discussed in this thesis. As Chapter I notes, Maggie Tulliver's most prevalent trait is the passion that motivates her actions and directs her fate. In Chapter II, wistfulness superficially softens Dorothea Brooke's passionate search for a better life and mollifies her capricious impatience with those who do not comprehend her ideals and creates a genteel nature conducive to her kindness and generosity. Gwendolen Harleth, the spoiled and egocentric heroine of Daniel Deronda, is characterized by haughty petulance, ruler of her thoughts, speech and action.

Caprice is so much a part of Gwendolen Harleth's nature that even she senses the need to be free from the risk this imposes upon her decisions. The danger in this deficiency of discipline is articulated in her attempt to take the preliminaries of betrothal seriously when she "would willingly have had weights hung on her own caprice" (DD, 176). Gwendolen's growth includes an increase in her consciousness of "the risks that lay within herself" as a result of her characteristic tendency to whimsically resist the wishes of family and friends, simply because they are products of other minds than her own (DD, 179).

The reader is introduced to Gwendolen Harleth as a gambler. In George Eliot's opinion, gamblers were "stupid monomaniacs" toward whom the author felt a strong antipathy. The moral
rejection of gamblers is anticipated in *Middlemarch* through Lydgate who is "watching [gambling] as if it had been a disease" (M, 489). In a letter to her publisher, John Blackwood, at the time of writing *Middlemarch*, George Eliot described her experiences in the gaming hall:

> The saddest thing to be witnessed is the play of a young lady, who is only twenty-six, and is completely in the grasp of this money making demon. It made me cry to see her young fresh face among the hags and brutally stupid men around her.31

In view of George Eliot's belief, Gwendolen's introduction as a gambler suggests her need for redemption and her long struggle to attain it. Deronda, like the author, stands disdainfully apart as he watches this scene of "dull, gas poisoned absorption," until such time as he can serve as Gwendolen's redeemer (DD, 37).

The introduction of *Daniel Deronda* establishes a drama in which the self-centered heroine gambles both at the roulette tables and with her future happiness. Gwendolen Harleth places her financial stakes at the gambling table with a flippancy that foreshadows the manner in which she will hazard her moral conscience in a marriage for future security. Both risks result in a loss.

The concept of gambling is basic to both the heroine's character and to the theme of the novel. Chance requires a certain disregard of responsibility for one's past and future. This disregard requires a nature that thinks of itself as an all-important entity upon which the gods are smiling:

> How could [Gwendolen] believe in sorrow? If it attacked her, she felt the force to crush it, to defy it, or to run away from it, as she had done already. Anything seemed more possible than that she could go on bearing miseries, great or small. (DD, 47)
Thus, Gwendolen Harleth's nature is one that relies on supremacy of the will, an ironical belief in the light of her marriage to Grandcourt.

The disregard for her deceased father's jewels establishes, early in the novel, the heroine's characteristic self-seeking concern. However, this egoism is tinged with a vulnerability which shows itself in Gwendolen's susceptibility to Deronda's observation of her at the gaming table, a vulnerability which is to be both the key to her undoing and her redemption:

It belonged to the nature of their relationship that she should be truthful, for his power over her had begun in the raising of a self-discontent which could be satisfied only by genuine change. (DD, 737)

Gwendolen Harleth grows to realize the detriments of gambling and how she has used this as a means, at the cost of other people's happiness, to procure her own satisfaction. She admits that she has "thrust out others—I have made my gain out of their loss—tried to make it—tried" (DD, 506). This reference to the specific occasion of Gwendolen's betrayal of Lydia Glasher and her children unites the motif of gambling with the theme. Grief and remorse as the rewards of gambling convey the moral philosophy in George Eliot's ethic.

Daniel Deronda's initial impression of Gwendolen Harleth which leads "him to redeem Gwendolen's necklace for her" and stimulates a "fascination of her womanhood" anticipates his role as a type of patron-saint (DD, 370). Deronda speaks for the author when he relates his feelings to Gwendolen in regard to a preoccupation with gambling:
"It is a besoting kind of taste, likely to turn into a disease. And, besides, there is something revolting to me in raking a heap of money together, and internally chuckling over it, when others are feeling the loss of it." (DD, 383)

Gambling, then, feeds from the selfish aspect of a man's nature and by so doing finds a route into the self-centered character of Gwendolen Harleth. She defends her pastime as a relief from boredom, but Deronda again speaks for George Eliot when he says that "what we call the dullness of things is often a disease in ourselves" (DD, 464). Until the root of this disease is cured, Gwendolen will continue to find her reality a boring one. Contemplation and remorse in her marriage create a new awareness in which Gwendolen acknowledges that life "was all a part of that new gambling in which losing was not simply a minus but a terrible plus that had never entered into her reckoning" (DD, 659). Thus the opening scene of the novel establishes the basis of her means of advance toward despair.

The cycle of Gwendolen's loss and gain of the family jewels anticipates her rejection and acceptance of Grandcourt's diamonds. Although Gwendolen rejects her husband's gift with "enraged resistance" she is forced to wear the diamonds, just as she has been forced to renew the ownership of her father's jewels. Each incident marks the defeat of a capricious response to a situation in which the flippant aspect of Gwendolen's nature has motivated the crisis.

The theme of gambling is emphasized by the motif of the theatre. Theatrics pervade Daniel Deronda and are accentuated by the minor roles of the youthful Mirah Lapodith and the aging Alcharisa. The
unusual character of Deronda's mother has been anticipated in "Armgart," a poem George Eliot wrote in 1870 to discuss the concept of marriage versus a stage career and the effects of each on a woman's future. Alcharisa, in turn, anticipates Gwendolen's future life in the sense of mellowing her dogma with age and experience. The mother tells her son that "what I have been trying to do for fifteen years is to have some understanding of those who differ from myself" (DD, 692). This reflects Deronda's present mental state and Gwendolen's future one. The aging singer speaks for the author's own life and the three heroines central to this thesis when she laments the bondage of a woman endowed with intelligence and restricted in society by virtue of her sex:

"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" (DD, 694).

The implication is, of course, the one most keenly suffered by Maggie Tulliver—a stifling of female advancement without regard for intellect. As Dorothea Brooke discovers with Casaubon, Alcharisa knows that "when a woman's will is as strong as the man's who wants to govern her, half her strength must be in concealment" (DD, 695).

Gwendolen must also bear this pressure of concealment in spite of Grandcourt's superior strength of will.

The figurative language of the theatre expresses Gwendolen's affectations in her shallow reaction to daily life. Her role as Hermione in the pantomime (Ch. 6) suggests a love for artifice. When Herr Klesmer dispels Gwendolen's illusions of talent, he does so through the metaphor of the theatre: "'I must clear your mind of these notions, which have no more resemblance to reality than a
a pantomime" (DD, 301). Mirah Lapodith's distaste for the "very hard and unloving" praise of the theatre is a foil to Gwendolen Harleth's illusions about the life of an entertainer (DD, 253). As Gwendolen grows in conscious awareness, her self-concept as the central actress in the great universal drama is transformed into a realization of the minor part she really plays. These repetitive images and metaphors of the theatre support a theme of illusion and reality that is basic to the novel.

Gwendolen's nature as "the spoiled child" prompts her to view any personal set-backs as due to the circumstantial hindrance of an environment that cannot expand to encompass her abilities. In terms of provincial society, Gwendolen is right. But, paradoxically, her pompous viewpoint maintains the narrowness of her mental perspective:

"Her ideal was to be daring in speech and reckless in braving dangers, both moral and physical; and though her practice fell far behind her ideal, this shortcoming seemed to be due to the pettiness of circumstances, the narrow theatre which life offers to a girl of twenty, who cannot conceive herself as anything else than a lady, or as in any position which would lack the tribute of respect. (DD, 94)"

As Deronda will suggest to Gwendolen, she must turn her vision outward upon the world in order to find a release from the idea that she "can alter nothing—it is no use," the concept that maintains her boredom and despair once her wilfulness has been subdued (DD, 672):

"Life would be worth more to you: some real knowledge would give you an interest in the world beyond the small drama of personal desires. It is the curse of your life ... that all passion is spent in that narrow round, for want of ideas and sympathy to make a larger home for it." (DD, 507)
The education of Gwendolen's emotions and intellect is the task George Eliot assigns to Deronda.

The fact that Gwendolen Harleth avoids her responsibility towards her fellowman is crucial to every major issue that leads to her misconceptions and maladjustment. The unnecessary cruelty she inflicts on Rex Gascoigne, the interest she excites in Henleigh Grandcourt, the anger she arouses in Herr Klesmer and, of course, the initial awakening of Daniel Deronda's protective and rather disdainful interest, are aspects of her life which result from a flamboyant disregard for others. Gwendolen Harleth is ruled in her entire existence, up to her marriage with Grandcourt, by the flippant selfishness of her nature.

After marriage, Gwendolen Harleth considers her despair to be the major tragedy. Thus, whether in happiness or despair, her delusions of self-importance are those of a selfish opportunist. It will take more than one calamity to subdue a self-image of epic proportions. In a letter to a friend written in 1854, George Eliot, in describing herself, unwittingly outlines the plot of Gwendolen's character development in Daniel Deronda, long before the novel was conceived in the author's conscious mind:

When we are young we think our troubles a mighty business—that the world is spread out expressly as a stage for the particular drama of our lives, and that we have a right to rant and foam at the mouth if we are crossed. . . . But we begin at last to understand that these things are important only to our own consciousness, which is but as a globule of dew on a rose-leaf, that at mid-day there will be no trace of.  

Gwendolen Harleth will suffer much before the "mighty business" of her personal drama is subdued by a proper perspective.
In her narrow scope of vision, Gwendolen Harleth assumes that she is the pivotal point of the small universe of her knowledge. Any discomforts she encounters are blamed on the thoughtlessness of others. Her misfortunes, financial or romantic, are estimated as a purposeful neglect by her fellowman to sufficiently consider her well-being: "Her troubles had in her opinion all been caused by other people's disagreeable or wicked conduct" (DD, 317). This disregard for her own moral responsibility establishes the flaw that will lead to Gwendolen's grief and disillusionment. It is emphasized in her response to her mother's news that their property has been lost. Gwendolen shows no comprehension of the similarity between the gamble involved in real estate and the one that she has enjoyed at the gaming tables. She charges that "'everything has gone against'" her and that "'people have come near . . . only to blight me'" (DD, 274). The use of "everything" suggests the egoism which motivates her concept and prepares for the struggle that will ensue before Gwendolen can admit that "'it is because I was always wicked that I am miserable now'" (DD, 825). This path from egocentric consciousness to an appreciation of the universal plight of man is the basis of Gwendolen Harleth's moral struggle.

The transformation within the heroine of Daniel Deronda is not a rapid or simple one. George Eliot carefully traces Gwendolen's mental development in all its pomposity, confusion and misdirected notions to convey a realistic development of her character from a spoiled and selfish girl to a woman with an awareness apart from her own wilful existence. The ultimate realization that her will
does not determine her future or gain the respect of her peers, transforms her exuberance into misery:

Poor Gwendolen was conscious of an uneasy, transforming process—all the old nature shaken to its depths, its hopes spoiled, its pleasures perturbed, but still showing wholeness and strength in the will to reassert itself. After every new shock of humiliation she tried to adjust herself and seize her old supports... that would make her indifferent to her miseries. (DD, 477)

The new experience of unhappiness infiltrates Gwendolen's being to create a certain compassion for those outside the sphere of her own personal welfare. Thus suffering and awareness combine to form a new vision that will eventually be suffused with sympathy and understanding: "For pain must enter into its glorified life of memory before it can turn into compassion" (M, 571).

*Daniel Deronda* closes at the moment when Gwendolen Harleth's potential for selflessness begins to show signs of becoming a reality. She is not only conscious of the larger life in which she plays a meaningful, but minor role, but she accepts this as her future. The motif of harvest that pervades the novel relates to the theme of reaping what one has sown. We cannot escape our pasts according to George Eliot's moral philosophy, expressed in a chapter heading of *Middlemarch*:

Our deeds still travel with us from afar
And what we have been makes us what we are. (M, 515)

Thus, the girl who thinks only of herself must suffer alone. And the seed of suffering planted in Gwendolen by Deronda becomes the fruit of redemption as we see in the final Book, appropriately entitled "Fruit and Seed."

In Gwendolen's first romantic encounter, Rex Gascoigne's belief in her goodness anticipates its final flowering. The author
philosophizes on the difficult route encountered by the seed of goodness on its precarious journey to the light:

Goodness is large, often a prospective word, like harvest, which at one stage when we talk of it lies all underground, with an indeterminate future: is the germ prospering in the darkness?

The seed of remorse brings forth the fruit of redemption. Gwendolen develops her potential for moral growth through the help of Deronda. The goodness that has been submerged under the heroine's caprice and confusion finds its way to fruition through Deronda's enlightenment:

"She had a root of conscience in her, and the process of purgatory had begun for her on the green earth: she knew she had been wrong." (DD, 733)

As Deronda suggests, Gwendolen "will find [her] life growing like a plant," once she has learned to face her mistakes and look outside of herself (DD, 839). This process of wearing the yoke of her own wrong-doing destroys "the spoiled child" forever and brings to life the blossom of maturity.

Gwendolen Harleth must learn something of the philosophy expressed in Dorothea Brooke's concept of existence—"What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult for other?" (M, 537). The little "unhistoric acts" of Dorothea Brooke's life are the very ones Deronda suggests for Gwendolen when he advises her to use her misery as a learning process so as to "be among the best of women, such as make others glad that they were born" (DD, 840).

This concept sharply contrasts Gwendolen's cry of anguish over the despairing void in her affections: "'I shall never love anybody. I can't love people. I hate them'" (DD, 115). Deronda,
with a social conscience similar to that of Dorothea Brooke's, establishes a precedent for Gwendolen to follow in his value judgments and the fact that "to make a little difference for the better was what he was not contented to live without . . ." (DD, 413). But initially it is Grandcourt who appears to break through Gwendolen's cold caprice. Her own narrow perspective fails to recognize that the unemotional demeanor that makes Grandcourt appear less "ridiculous" than other men, is, in fact, a moral vacuum rather than a superior strength of character.

Gwendolen Harleth learns through the compassion afforded her by Deronda, but he is also the "severe angel" who issues knowledgeable platitudes of moral wisdom (DD, 839). Deronda's honest advice that Gwendolen abandon her selfish ignorance subdues her resistance and causes her self-assertion to subside:

"Look on other lives besides your own. See what their troubles are, and how they are borne. Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires. Try to care for what is best in thought and action—something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot." (DD, 501-02)

Their relationship parallels those of Philip Wakem to Maggie Tulliver and Will Ladislaw to Dorothea Brooke in that Deronda assists Gwendolen to widen her horizon from its personal perspective.

It may appear on superficial reading that Gwendolen Harleth represents an extension of Hetty Sorrel or Rosamond Vincy, who, like Gwendolen, is referred to as a "sylph," rather than a reflection of Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke. However, where Gwendolen is simply spoiled, but capable of growth, Hetty and Rosamond have natures too completely shallow to be redeemed. These self-centered women are incapable of learning through their sufferings and are
consequently unwilling to accept any responsibilities for the sorrows thatbefall them. In contrast, Maggie Tulliver's character, shrouded by her youth and inexperience, displays a potential for maturity in her capacity to recognize the fallacy of Stephen Guest's romantic pleas, and her own responsibility to others. The subsequent emotional growth has little chance to augment a new dimension of character by the structure of the plot and the consequent brevity of her life. Dorothea Brooke's naivety allows her idealism to flourish beyond credibility and her illusions to survive in the midst of obvious refutation. But Dorothea's capacity to grow to new levels of awareness implies a depth that shows itself in relation to her understanding of Casaubon's suffering.

This depth of character, typical of George Eliot's major heroines, is characteristic of Gwendolen Harleth. It is, in fact, the reason for her vulnerability, her growth of conscience and her subsequent ability to be redeemed by experience. But many psychological delusions must be unravelled before Gwendolen's concept of reality can attain a level of understanding that is conducive to growth.

Disillusionment confuses Gwendolen's notions of personal importance and leaves her suffused with guilt. Through Deronda she is faced with a new vision that forces her to see that her own well-being is not the source of nourishment or defeat of the universe. Deronda transports Gwendolen into a different reality where she sees her own role as significant only insofar as she makes herself felt. His advice to her in relation to Grandcourt's money, bequeathed upon his death, may be applied, in essence, to all of Gwendolen's
future actions. Deronda suggests that she let her "remorse tell only on the use that you will make of your monetary independence" (DD, 838). Importance, then, is a matter of earning one's entrance into the consciousness of other persons.

The initial shock to Gwendolen Harleth's system by the revelation of her foolish sense of importance is like that of a displaced person whose position in life has been usurped by new conditions. This idea is discussed in Silas Marner:

Even people whose lives have been made various by learning, sometimes find it hard to keep a fast hold on their habitual views of life . . . where their mother earth shows another lap, and human life has other forms than those on which their souls have been nourished.  

This reference to Silas Marner's physical removal from Lantern Yard and his spiritual decline, may also be applied to Gwendolen's psychological departure from the accustomed self-centered world and the psychological defeat that accompanies this change. Just as this transposition marks a new beginning for Silas, it is the alteration that shifts Gwendolen into another and larger reality.

Until Deronda focuses Gwendolen's awareness on a heritage and future that has no reference to her existence, Gwendolen's concept of the universe is one of which she is center. Even her initial suffering is suffused with self-importance as when she demands that Deronda tell her what to do. There is an assumption evident in this request that indicates her belief that his consciousness is in her present moment rather than his own. But once the force of reality has shattered Gwendolen's illusion, she reacts in the opposite direction by being overcome with a sense of total insignificance.
Gwendolen Harleth's conception of her own insignificance has the effect of contracting her being in her own mind's eye. The author has anticipated Gwendolen's insecurity in the heroine's reaction to the absence of people from whom she can gain admiration and the opportunity to reject their advances:

Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself. (DD, 95)

This inability to react on her own terms, apart from other people, suggests a shallowness of character and an absence of self-knowledge in Gwendolen's nature. She must act in resistance to, and, less often, in agreement with something outside of her own essence. Her distinction, therefore, is gauged by her importance to other people, which she foolishly assumes to be immeasurable.

As a result of her disillusionment, the central actress shrinks to a minute background character with no significant role in the world's drama: "The world seemed getting larger round poor Gwendolen, and she more solitary and helpless in the midst" (DD, 875). Gwendolen Harleth is brought to terms with her own reality as Deronda's future plans unfold to the exclusion of herself. Thus, "the larger destinies of mankind . . . enter like an earthquake" into her consciousness (DD, 875). That George Eliot believed this reaction to the experience of shock to be a normal step in the process of maturation is evidenced by a letter she wrote in 1848, as a young woman:

I feel a sort of madness growing upon me—just the opposite of the delirium which makes people fancy that their bodies are filling the room. It seems to me as if I were shrinking into that mathematical abstraction, a point. 35
Gwendolen's newly acquired vision affords no reference to her existence except insofar as she wishes to extend her interests in a new direction. As this knowledge enlightens her imagination, the new and larger reality precludes an immature exaggeration of her own importance. Egoism is demolished to the point that Gwendolen is able to regret the imposition of her grief on Deronda's consciousness:

"I only thought of myself and I made you grieve. It hurts me now to think of your grief. You must not grieve any more for me. It is better—it shall be better with me because I have known you." (DD, 882)

George Eliot describes the theme of redemption through suffering when Deronda explains to Gwendolen the greater dimensions acquired by persons who have gained awareness through their painful experiences:

"Those who would be comparatively uninteresting beforehand may become worthier of sympathy when they do something that awakens in them a keen remorse. Lives are enlarged in different ways. I daresay some would never get their eyes opened if it were not for a violent shock from the consequences of their own actions. And when they are suffering in that way one must care for them more than for the comfortably self-satisfied." (DD, 494)

Deronda not only anticipates Gwendolen's redemption in these words, but also the role he will play as her altruistic benefactor. He suggests that she renew her life by concentrating on others until self-respect and appersonal goal develop as a result. She proves herself worthy of his sympathetic concern by her final congratulatory wish for his happiness and her sorrow in having ladened him with the burden of her grief and expectations.

The credibility of Gwendolen Harleth's characterization is increased by the complex nature of her redemption. The heroine's suffering does not readily surface with the onset of disillusionment.
Psychologically, Gwendolen hides behind her fears and guilt until disaster and hysteria break open the doors to conscious suffering. Subsequently, her purpose in life is transferred from self-indulgence to a small, but promising universal concern.

Confusion and anguish create a more human, and, therefore, more interesting woman in the person of Gwendolen, the wife and widow, rather than Gwendolen, the coquette:

Mrs. Grandcourt was handsomer than Gwendolen Harleth: her grace and expression were informed by a greater variety of inward experience, giving new play to the facial muscles, new attitudes in movement and repose; her whole person and air had a nameless something which often makes a woman more interesting after marriage than before, less confident that all things are according to her opinion, and yet with less of deer-like shyness—more fully a human being. (DD, 741)

Gwendolen Harleth, like Dorothea Brooke, grows wiser through the sufferings incurred by a tragic marriage—a marriage brought on by the bride's false reasoning. Pain withers Gwendolen's pomposity until she reaches a depth that expresses itself on her countenance. This change from "the spoiled child" to the thoughtful woman is the essence of Gwendolen Harleth's metamorphosis.

The beginnings of Gwendolen's change of character are evidenced in the respect she shows Deronda and her desire to gain his approval of her as a person, not simply as an attractive female. This new perspective on her position in relation to a man is acquired by the growth of her conscience and the struggle toward self-awareness:

There was not the faintest touch of coquetry in the attitude of her mind towards him: he was unique to her among men, because he had impressed her as being not her admirer but her superior: in some mysterious way he was becoming a part of her conscience . . . . (DD, 468)

Gwendolen's faltering attempts to reach out to this man for help
without a loss of dignity betray her fear and insecurity. She alternates between the desire to satiate her curiosity in regard to Deronda's opinions and the wish to remain aloof. These fluctuations determined that at one moment she "seemed to invite sympathy by childlike indiscretion, at another to repel it by proud concealment" (DD, 471).

Gwendolen Harleth shoulders the burden of pride. This major component of her character renders her useless in the face of Grandcourt's insults. Pride also makes Gwendolen's desire to be vulnerable to Deronda difficult because "what she would least like to incur was the making a fool of herself and being compromised" (DD, 503). Grandcourt reminds his wife of her duty to save face. His threats suggest the same vulnerability to male supremacy which victimize Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke. Grandcourt demands Gwendolen's unquestioning obedience: "'What do you know about the world? You have married me, and must be guided by my opinions'' (DD, 655). After all, what does Gwendolen know about the world when it will not allow her to become knowledgeable after the same manner as men? Gwendolen has ironically married Grandcourt to save her dignity. After their relationship is sealed by marriage, her pride is taxed in its attempts to avoid appearing ridiculous: "Gwendolen would not have liked to be an object of disgust to this husband whom she hated: she liked all the disgust to be on her side" (DD, 664). Pride rules even Gwendolen's passionate hatred and the process of humbling this wilful spirit is concurrent with the growth of her social conscience.
George Eliot uses a typical device to free Gwendolen Harleth from her imprisonment. As Maggie Tulliver is released from her cul de sac by drowning, Gwendolen is freed from bondage and ennui by Grandcourt's drowning. The heroine of Daniel Deronda gains the same freedom to choose a new life by the convenient plot denouement that procures Dorothea Brooke's release from the fetters of marriage by the death of her husband. The hysteria that Dorothea experiences as a result of her guilt upon Casaubon's death, anticipates the breakdown of Gwendolen's facade when Grandcourt's accident occurs. Gwendolen's death-wish foreshadows both Grandcourt's demise and the guilt his wife must bear as a result of the haunting memory of her wish fulfilled in his face as it emerges from the water:

What release but death? Not her own death .... It seemed more likely that Grandcourt should die:--and yet not likely. The power of tyranny in him seemed a power of living in the presence of any wish that he should die. (DD, 668-69)

But her desire comes to fruition and with it new guilts to burden her already ladened conscience. The fact that Deronda's face will eventually replace Grandcourt's death mask as a consequence of the disintegration of her guilt through confession is foreshadowed in Alcharisa's joy at the replacement of her father's reproaching countenance by her son's redemptive visit.

Gwendolen Harleth's desperate desire to cling to someone in her insecurity makes her mould Deronda "into a priest" (DD, 485). Deronda, in turn, is educated by her reverence. The suprême test of his ability to serve Gwendolen is in the fulfilment of his duty to chance the destruction of her admiration by a courageous truth about his future:
Strangely her figure entered into the pictures of his present and future, strangely (and now it seemed sadly) their two lots had come in contact, hers narrowly personal, his charged with far-reaching sensibilities, perhaps with durable purposes, which were hardly more present to her than the reasons why men migrate are present to the birds that come as usual for the crumbs and find them no more. (DD, 684)

It is to Deronda that the task of shattering Gwendolen's illusions falls and she is both grieved and enlightened by the knowledge that he will remain with her in essence only.

The open-ended structure of Daniel Deronda leaves the edified heroine with a new freedom and endless possibilities. The character of Gwendolen Harleth indicates a strong movement by George Eliot away from the Victorian precedent of neatly formed endings. Daniel Deronda suggests a step toward the modern novel in its depiction of the flexible processes of life. There is thematic significance in the "unfinished" form of the novel in that it implies a new beginning for a heroine once confined by the narrowness of her own vision. Gwendolen Harleth's development through her association with Deronda and Grandcourt conveys a perspective of the complex interweavings that form human relationships. Similar to Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke's romantic affiliations, Gwendolen Harleth's lovelife does not move in a simple or straight-forward manner. George Eliot exposes the intertwining of Gwendolen's past, her pride, her ideals, her intelligence and the conventions which create and destroy the illusions that motivate her emotions and behavior.

This chapter focuses on the characterization of Gwendolen Harleth as she grows from a proud and petulant girl to a humble
and beautiful woman. Her growth traces the self-indulgent and illusory escape from financial disaster and personal humiliation, the marriage to a man who has already proven himself unworthy of love, the guilt and pretense incurred by their relationship, and the final shattering revelation of her freedom and insignificance. Gwendolen's maturing process maintains credibility by the careful depiction of her psychological transition from suppression to hysteria to repentance. The consequence of remorse is Gwendolen's new capacity to place her feeling outside of her personal milieu and thus be redeemed through the education of sorrow.

The denouement of Daniel Deronda conveys an optimism fore-shadowed by the author's typical sympathy toward her heroine's flaws. George Eliot excuses Gwendolen's selfish demands as the natural result of being trained to command attention by the narrowness of her environment. This part of Gwendolen still exists even in the grief that had "changed the aspect of the world for her." It appears in her demands on Deronda:

She identified him with the struggling regenerative process in her which had begun with his action. Is it any wonder that she saw her own necessity reflected in his feeling? She was in that state of unconscious reliance and expectation which is a common experience with us when we are preoccupied with our own trouble or our own purpose. (DD, 841)

By recognizing Gwendolen's experience as a common one, George Eliot gains the reader's sympathy and belief in her regeneration. Reformation is probable for all those whose natures allow for the possibility of change by the depth of their characters:

Perhaps some who have afterwards made themselves a willing fence before the breast of another, and have carried their own heart-wound in heroic silence—some who have
made their latter deeds great, nevertheless began with this angry amazement at their own smart, and on the mere denial of their fantastic desires raged as if under the sting of wasps which reduced the universe for them to an unjust infliction of pain. (DD, 334)

This existential philosophy anticipates the development of a rich human nature on the part of those capable of growth. In the transformation lies the redemption of Gwendolen Harleth through the knowledge of suffering. The psychological growth of the heroine of *Daniel Deronda* from all-consuming self-gratification to disappointment and shock to a fragment of universal awareness is the foundation of hope upon which rests the promise of expansion.

Gwendolen Harleth's egoism is emphasized by the novel's structure. The heroine of *Daniel Deronda* is juxtaposed with the hero in order to contrast the rigid and selfish ego of the former with the flexible and altruistic nature of the latter. These opposing traits bring the two characters together as Gwendolen's all-consuming selfishness appeals to Deronda's philosophical altruism. A dual plot serves to place both characterizations in relief. Where he is interested in the destiny of an entire race, she is obsessed by her own small future; where his nature is concerned with the values maintained by society and their effects upon men, her nature is devoid of moral contemplation and perturbed only by those aspects of society that touch upon her personal well-being; where he is interested in the idealistic conditions of a nation, she is devoted to the improvement of her own position in society. The dual plots unite at the beginning and end of the novel in the sense that Deronda's influence will carry Gwendolen into a new future and Gwendolen's suffering will extend Deronda's capacity for
disinterested compassion. He is both a foil to her self-centered nature and an example for her to follow after her redemption:

Persons attracted him . . . in proportion to the possibility of his defending them, rescuing them, telling upon their lives with some sort of redeeming influence . . . . (DD, 369)

Thus Gwendolen's characterization establishes her as an appropriate focus for Deronda's altruistic energy and an inappropriate mate in the career that he is about to pursue. Consequently, their final parting is a credible realization of their opposing developments. With the knowledge of Deronda's future intentions, Gwendolen is alleviated from the unhealthy burden of self-delusions. The realization that Deronda's consciousness is occupied by a political and social dream that is enormous compared to her small imaginings, destroys Gwendolen's illusion of her significance in the context of his reality:

She did not imagine him otherwise than always within her reach, her supreme need of him blinding her to the separateness of his life, the whole scene of which she filled with his relation to her—no unique preoccupation of Gwendolen's, for we are all apt to fall into this passionate egoism of imagination . . . . (DD, 867)

From the staggering blow of new knowledge, the self-centered expectations she maintains of Deronda are transformed into a self-less understanding of the sorrow she has caused him.

Deronda's character determines that his assistance to Gwendolen be based purely on disinterested compassion:

It was not Deronda's disposition to escape from ugly scenes: he was more inclined to sit through them and take care of the fellow least able to take care of himself. (DD, 219)

This reference to Deronda's attitude toward Hans Meyrick, his colleague at school, anticipates the protagonist's treatment of
Mirah Lapodith and Gwendolen Harleth in later years. Gwendolen learns through Deronda's coaxing and his example that she must make her way on a larger stage with the added strength of a more realistic awareness. The extent of Deronda's disinterested generosity is emphasized for Gwendolen by the knowledge that he is about to marry Mirah. The revelation of the extent of Deronda's philanthropy penetrates the egocentric guilt and despair that compose Gwendolen's suffering and initiates a moral change paramount to her redemption.

The author raises her reader's curiosity by opening the first chapter with a question that informs us of Gwendolen Harleth's mysterious attracting powers, her penchant for temptation and the energy with which she indulges her whims. The heroine's "dynamic quality" and her sylph-like postures suggest a capricious nature that revels in the flamboyant display of her person (DD, 35):

She walked on with her usual floating movement, every line in her figure and drapery falling in gentle curves attractive to all eyes except those which discerned in them too close a resemblance to the serpent, and objected to the revival of serpent-worship. (DD, 47)

Gwendolen's initial description establishes her as an appropriate subject for Grandcourt's malevolence and for Deronda's assistance. Those subject to the temptations of evil are the only appropriate victims of Gwendolen's superficial charms. Therefore, just as Casaubon's appearance serves simply to fill the void that Dorothea Brooke creates by her aspirations, Grandcourt will enter as the "reptile" that fits the mould pre-established by Gwendolen's value structure.

Gwendolen Harleth's head-strong behavior has been anticipated
in the actions of Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke. As discussed in Chapter One, Maggie swings drastically from one position to another in order to feed her defiant tendencies and to maintain her sense of significance. Dorothea's petulance displays itself when she latches onto her ideals and refuses to yield even in the light of common-sense promptings from her family. Gwendolen's extremism displays itself in response to the shadow that Deronda spreads over her luck at the roulette table. His "gaze seemed to have acted as an evil eye" and she responds with frivolous bravado:

She was in that mood of defiance in which the mind loses sight of any end beyond the satisfaction of enraged resistance; and with the puerile stupidity of a dominant impulse includes luck among its objects of defiance. Since she was not winning strikingly, the next best thing was to lose strikingly. (DD, 39)

This impetuous gesture results in the loss of her father's jewels. But, more importantly, it establishes the basis of Gwendolen's relationship with Deronda when he initiates the return of the jewels--the redeemed and the redeemer. Thus begins Deronda's affiliation with Gwendolen and her impulsiveness. The cure rests in her final acknowledgement of his advice that remorseful contemplation would increase her ability to practice forethought:

"'Take your fear as a safeguard. It is like the quickness of hearing. It may make consequences passionately present to you'" (DD, 738). Once Gwendolen has turned to face her fear in all its implications, she is prepared to enter a more promising future. George Eliot implies that Rex Gascoigne, the early rejected suitor, has also turned his suffering into a "safeguard" and the reader is left to wonder if he may be afforded a second chance to share in
Gwendolen's life now that their personalities have undergone much renovation.

Initially Gwendolen is described by images of the snake. This reference unites her with temptation and establishes the Eden-like drama which will yield suffering and knowledge for the tempted:

"She has got herself up as a sort of serpent now, all green and silver, and winds her neck about a little more than usual." (DD, 40)

Grandcourt, depicted by reptilian imagery, becomes the appropriate partner in her evil wilfulness. The man in whom "of all inward movements those of generosity were least likely to occur" renders a parallel to Gwendolen's selfish nature and a contrast to Deronda's altruistic one (DD, 326). This similarity between Grandcourt and Gwendolen establishes the credibility of their relationship.

The author emphasizes Deronda's compassionate nature by his behavior toward Mirah Lapodith. He is of a nature which generally tends toward goodness as its daily routine: "Some deeds seem little more than interjections which give vent to the long passion of life" (DD, 267). This philosophy may also be applied to Gwendolen's behavior. In her ardent search for a more meaningful reality, she unwittingly forces herself into an empty existence. This makes a truth of her statement that "my life is my own affair," and an irony of her interpretation (DD, 277).

Similar to Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke, Gwendolen Harleth is "as clever as possible" (DD, 41) and she intends to "conquer circumstance by her exceptional cleverness" (DD, 69). But, like the heroines before her, she has little common sense to enhance this intelligence and small opportunity to educate it.
A fruitful life gained through worldly experiences and the accompanying enlightenment, must be acquired at the cost of enormous despair.

The three heroines are a result of their narrow provincial knowledge as this combines with their peculiar characters to create harmful illusions. Convention directs their fates and, as in Gwendolen's life, feeds and starves their dreams:

She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on satin shoes. Here is a restraint which nature and society have provided on the pursuit of striking adventure; so that a soul burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and ready to take all existence as fuel, is nevertheless held a captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms and does nothing in particular. (DD, 83)

Gwendolen Harleth's spoiled and haughty expectations confront a society that initially supports and finally destroys her self-image as the sole center of life's drama.

As a result of the fact that Gwendolen seldom meets anyone she considers a peer and that she is confined by financial circumstances to Offendene, she is "always bored" (DD, 42). In a reflection of this confinement in terms of a woman's destiny, Gwendolen compares women to flowers and men to gardeners endowed with the powers of change:

We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about plants: they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous. (DD, 171)

Ironically, as she speaks to Grandcourt, Gwendolen unwittingly remarks on the very poison that pervades his system as well as
The fact that Deronda "looked bored" with socializing and that Grandcourt's vacuous nature precludes his being interested in anything, titillates Gwendolen's attraction to these men (DD, 42). She feels they reflect her sense of superiority by their seeming disdain for common pastimes. The "irony and contempt" with which Gwendolen erroneously labels Deronda's return of her jewels, becomes a reality in the form of Grandcourt's attitude toward Gwendolen's life in general (DD, 49).

Typical of all George Eliot's characterizations, Gwendolen is not solely to blame for her supercilious attitude toward others and her shallow approach to life. As Farebrother suggests in Middlemarch, the character, like the body, may suffer from improper care: "'Character is not cut in marble—it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do'" (M, 538). Gwendolen's character is "diseased" by her narrow provincial environment, the extreme coddling afforded her by an indulgent mother and complaisant sisters, and the power of her personal charisma:

[Gwendolen's] potent charm, added to the fact that she was the eldest daughter, towards whom her mamma had always been in an apologetic state of mind for the evils brought on by a step-father, may seem so full a reason for Gwendolen's domestic empire, that to look for any other would be to ask the reason of daylight when the sun is shining. (DD, 71)

Gwendolen's idea that she deserves a good life simply by her existence is a natural result of the evolution of expectations founded upon superfluous attentions:

The implicit confidence that her destiny must be one of luxurious ease, where any trouble that occurred would be well clad and provided for, had been stronger in her own mind than in her mamma's, being fed there by her youthful
blood and that sense of superior claims which made a large part of her consciousness. (DD, 44)

Gwendolen's concept of self, then, is established at the outset of the novel as one that feeds on flattery and self-indulgence. Her characteristic impulse to fervently resist discomfort, coupled with her delusions of superiority, supply Gwendolen with an almost impenetrable social dignity. She thinks and behaves under the controlling force of a wilful and dangerous snobbishness, which will not allow her to admit to pain. Suppression shows itself in her reaction to Deronda's initial generosity, where it is stimulated by the fact that she judges his motives according to her own condescending attitude:

Gwendolen with a passionate movement thrust necklace, cambric, scrap of paper and all into her necessaire, pressed her handkerchief against her face, and after pausing a minute or two to summon back her proud self-control, went to join her friends. (DD, 49)

Gwendolen desires above all to avoid the implications associated with emotions or poverty.

In order to avoid being forced to behave according to someone else's desires, as would be the case if she became a governess, Gwendolen marries Grandcourt. She strives, by marriage, to attain the freedom that she believes his money and position will afford her:

Gwendolen wished to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself, with a spouse by her side who would fold his arms and give her his countenance without looking ridiculous. (DD, 173)

This wilful pride not only burdens her conscience to the breaking point in relation to Lydia Glasher, but it is matched and overpowered by the supreme will of her tyrannical mate. Grandcourt is too cruel to look "ridiculous" and he will "fold his arms" to defy
her until, ironically, it is Gwendolen who struggles to keep from "looking ridiculous."

Beneath Gwendolen Harleth's cool facade, then, lies the same components of emotional intensity and uneducated intelligence that motivate Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke in their drives to escape the humdrum of provincial life. These three heroines are equally guilty of egotistical pride that inclines them toward a dream of great personal achievement. But Gwendolen's malcontent is tinged with a selfishness foreign to Maggie and Dorothea:

It is possible to have a strong self-love without any self-satisfaction, rather with a self-discontent which is the more intense because one's own little core of egoistic sensibility is a supreme care; but Gwendolen knew nothing of such inward strife. She had a naive delight in her fortunate self, which any but the harshest saintliness will have some indulgence for in a girl who had every day seen a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking glass. (DD, 47)

This habit of self-indulgence displays itself most blatantly in reference to Gwendolen's disregard for her mother. The daughter's changing attitude toward maternal tenderness marks the growth of Gwendolen's conscience. Initially, she refuses her mother any inconvenient favors and tries to accommodate her tinges of conscience with "caresses which cost her no effort" (DD, 53). Gwendolen's moral struggle and the blossoming of her sympathies display themselves in the contrast between her initial behavior at home and the development of an awareness of the keen need for her mother's tenderness which stimulates a belated appreciation by the daughter for the mother. The author tells us that "Gwendolen's early nature was not remorseless" but, in stark contrast to Maggie Tulliver, "she liked to make her penances easy" (DD, 53).
The motifs of strangulation and death heighten the tone of disaster that pervades Gwendolen Harleth's story. This feeling of terror increases the dramatic tension which anticipates Gwendolen's admission that she is "afraid of everything . . . afraid of getting wicked" (DD, 672). Gwendolen's potential for goodness is shown in her fear that the evil side of her nature will win out. Her fear becomes a reality when she confesses to have seen "my wish outside me" when she jumps into the water and away from her wickedness rather than toward her drowning husband (DD, 761).

The youth who "strangled her sister's canary-bird in a final fit of exasperation at its shrill singing which had again and again jarringly interrupted her own will" (DD, 53) will mature into a superstitious young lady who imagines Grandcourt's hands about her neck in "retributive calamity": "That white hand of his . . . was capable, she fancied, of clinging round her neck and threatening to throttle her . . . ." (DD, 481). These "fantasies moved within her like ghosts" and the wish that Grandcourt should die becomes confused with a terrible regard for her own safety:

The thought of his dying would not subsist: it turned as with a dream-change into the terror that she should die with his throttling fingers on her neck avenging that thought. (DD, 669)

The panel which exposes "the picture of an upturned dead face, from which an obscure figure seemed to be fleeing with outstretched arms" anticipates both Grandcourt's resurfacing in the fearful moments of his drowning and Gwendolen's return to her mother's comfort (DD, 56).

The destruction of her sister's bird meets its Nemesis when
Herr Klesmer, jarred by Gwendolen's pompous insults to the art of music, strangles her innocent ambition to be a singer. Klesmer's initial appraisal of Gwendolen's talent defines her character as well as her voice:

"There is a sort of self-satisfied folly about every phrase of such melody: no cries of deep, mysterious passion--no conflict--no sense of the universal. It makes men small when they listen to it!" (DD, 79)

This marks the beginning of a process of humiliation for the heroine. Previous to Klesmer, "no one had disputed her power or her general superiority" (DD, 70). But to Herr Klesmer, "woman was dear to him, but music was dearer" (DD, 79). Thus, Gwendolen's false confidence proves an insulting irritation that leads the virtuoso to expose her irrational plan. It is not that Gwendolen should lower herself to sing on the stage as she has determined, but that she could not attain the heights necessary to rise to the level of an accredited musician. But Gwendolen's vulnerability to criticism and her ability to appreciate Klesmer's talent, in spite of his blatant rejection of her musical offering, indicates a potential for growth in the glimmerings of a better self.

Gwendolen Harleth is a study of wilful determination. Her marriage to Grandcourt is a matching of her will and his, and the temporary, but promising defeat of Gwendolen by her husband's superior ability to approach life as a game. This failure shows a greater humanity behind Gwendolen's facade than Grandcourt's. Like Dorothea Brooke, Gwendolen Harleth has certain definite ideas about marriage that will ultimately be destroyed as her illusions are shattered. The heroine of Daniel Deronda assumes that the power
of her will is invulnerable to interference or defeat:

"I will not put up with [marriage] if it is not a happy state. I am determined to be happy—at least not to go on muddling away my life as other people do, being and doing nothing remarkable. I have made up my mind not to let other people interfere with me as they have done." (DD, 58)

Gwendolen assumes that marriage will fulfill certain aspirations and this notion will be modified only through extreme psychological stress. Gwendolen firmly believed that "marriage was social promotion" (DD, 68) and, ironically, the "bitter herbs" (DD, 69) she is willing to accept with this otherwise beneficial state, will ultimately far outweigh the pleasures gained.

Although Gwendolen Harleth's wish for a more "ardent sense of living" parallels the emotional desires of Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke, the superficial motivation differs. Gwendolen desires ostentatious power and flamboyant admiration:

This delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead. For such passions dwell in feminine breasts also. In Gwendolen's, however, they dwelt among strictly feminine furniture, and had no disturbing reference to the advancement of learning or the balance of the constitution; her knowledge being such as with no sort of standing-room or length of lever could have been expected to move the world. She meant to do what was pleasant to herself in a striking manner; or rather, whatever she could do so as to strike others with admiration and get in that reflected way a more ardent sense of living, seemed pleasant to her fancy. (DD, 69)

These vainglorious ambitions delude Gwendolen's image of her place in the universe and prompt her mistaken choice of Grandcourt as a man she can control. Their disastrous union is largely the result of a bride who assumes most creatures to be "worth less than herself" and feels she is capable of making "the very best of the chances that life offered her" (DD, 69). Ironically,
Grandcourt will play the same game with these assumptions as he does with all aspects of life which confront him—he will match his will against another's determination.

As the author shows through Gwendolen's development, intelligence is not conducive to the attainment of happiness unless it is coupled with temperate emotional wisdom. Gwendolen's growing maturity and despair are coupled with increased contemplation until "day after day the same pattern of thinking was repeated" (DD, 666). This reflection will turn her "fear into a safeguard" as Deronda has advised. Temperance is initially kept at bay by Gwendolen's bloated self-image and the consequent expectations this arouses. Her expectations are fed by her "inborn energy of egoistic desire" and supported by "her power of inspiring fear" in others (DD, 71-72). But, at the same time, her own peculiar fears allow glimpses of the unstable foundation on which her cool confidence rests:

What she unwillingly recognized, and would have been glad for others to be aware of, was that liability of her to fits of spiritual dread . . . . Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself. (DD, 94-95)

Thus, Gwendolen intuits a reality outside of her own, but she does not own up to this knowledge because it will lessen the significance she needs to sustain her self-image.

Gwendolen often appears strong in resistance to the very feedback she paradoxically requires to sustain her ego. Such is the case in her relationship with Rex Gascoigne. Gwendolen enjoys his devotion until it stimulates a situation for which she must take certain responsibility. She, however, simply wishes her
friendship with Rex "to fill up the time of his stay at Pennicote, and to avoid explanation which would bring it to an untimely end" (DD, 101). Thus Rex is convenient as long as he is simply a means to an end—the fulfillment of her personal pleasure, but an inconvenience to be avoided when his admiration requires a response.

One of the major appeals to Gwendolen in Grandcourt's manner of courting her is his indifference to physical communication. Therefore, while Gwendolen does not love Grandcourt, she ironically feels "there is less to dislike about him than most men" (DD, 175). Except for his superficial gestures, Grandcourt maintains the distance that Gwendolen requires for her neurotic dislike of being personally imposed upon:

She objected, with a sort of physical repulsion, to being directly made love to. With all her imaginative delight in being adored, there was a certain fierceness of maidenhood in her. (DD, 101-102)

Responding to gestures of affection is a form of giving and Gwendolen's selfish desire for adoration precludes the normal response. Thus Rex is rebuffed for attempting to bring his emotional desires to fruition: "The perception that poor Rex wanted to be tender made her curl up and harden like a sea-anemone at the touch of a finger" (DD, 113). And Grandcourt is accepted because of his lack of tenderness which allows Gwendolen to escape the distasteful chore of responding.

Gwendolen interprets Grandcourt's emotional void and lack of vitality as proud self-control, rather than cynicism or indifference. She, like Dorothea Brooke, reads into her prospective husband's comments and behavior whatever is necessary to supply her personal
needs:

It was not possible for a human aspect to be freer from grimace or solicitous wriggings; also it was perhaps not possible for a breathing man wide awake to look less animated. (DD, 145).

It is just these "solicitous wriggings" on the part of her usual admirers that makes Gwendolen assume an attitude of condescension. Grandcourt's lack of animation encourages Gwendolen's mistaken idea that she can assert her will:

"Poor Gwendolen had no awe of unmanageable forces in the state of matrimony, but regarded it as altogether a matter of management, in which she would know how to act." (DD, 359)

As anticipated by Dorothea, Gwendolen sees marriage according to predetermined notions. Grandcourt is to be her savior from the tedium of confinement and poverty. Where Dorothea planned to follow Casaubon, basking in the glory of his learned mind, Gwendolen plans to lead Grandcourt, sharing in the pleasures of his position:

Gwendolen had no sense that these men were dark enigmas to her, or that she needed any help in drawing conclusions about them--Mr. Grandcourt at least. The chief question was how far his character and ways might answer her wishes; and unless she were satisfied about that, she had said to herself that she would not accept his offer. (DD, 159)

Satisfaction of Gwendolen's material desires is granted at the expense of her moral ease. She ironically conjectures that "a man of extremely calm, cold manners might be less disagreeable as a husband than other men, and not likely to interfere with his wife's preferences" (DD, 147). Grandcourt, of course, will interfere wherever Gwendolen's wishes intrude upon his own. The very desires that would give her peace of mind in their fulfilment culminate with a clashing of wills and Gwendolen's denial. Thus,
she will grow to the knowledge that "what he required was that she should be as fully aware as she would have been of a locked hand-cuff, that her inclination was helpless to decide anything in contradiction with his resolve" (DD, 645). Freedom, her only reason for marriage, has therefore been denied in one revelation. And the consequent breaking of Gwendolen's will exposes her fortunate vulnerability to suffering and change. This development is the substance of the dramatic psychology incorporated in the heroine's characterization.

Grandcourt's overpowering of Gwendolen's wilful nature has been anticipated at the moment of their betrothal:

At that moment his strongest wish was to be completely master of this creature . . . . And she—ah, piteous equality in the need to dominate!—she was overcome like the thirsty one who is drawn towards the seeming water in the desert, overcome by the suffused sense that here in this man's homage to her lay the rescue from helpless subjection to an oppressive lot. (DD, 346)

Unwittingly, Gwendolen has betrayed the weakness that will give Grandcourt all the power—a dependence on his support in order to relieve her of confinement to a tedious future. Grandcourt's sensibility to Gwendolen's "inward resistance" is magnified by him, "but that did not lessen his satisfaction in the mastery of it" (DD, 616).

The "dread of wrong doing" that hovers beneath the surface of Gwendolen's behavior exposes the conventional aspect of her character that she had consciously denied (DD, 342). This dread is crucial to the development of her moral and social conscience:

Whatever was accepted as consistent with being a lady she had no scruple about; but from the dim region of what was called disgraceful, wrong, guilty, she shrank
with mingled pride and terror; and even apart from shame, her feeling would have made her place any deliberate injury of another in the region of guilt. (DD, 342)

Gwendolen suffers unknowingly from the pressures of convention which the author implies in all her works to be the inescapable fortune of man. The guilt stimulated by her betrayal of Lydia Glasher will inspire Gwendolen's first desire to reach out in penitence for the affectionate approval of another human being. Her bewildered groping toward Deronda and away from Grandcourt establishes Gwendolen's need to rid herself of evil in order to experience a new kind of liberty—a release from guilt.

Grandcourt's moral vacuum is a foil to Gwendolen's troubled conscience which hints at her ability to grow. Both begin their relationship as a type of game—a matching of wills. Grandcourt calculates just how much attentiveness is necessary to succeed over Gwendolen's caprice and he, therefore, "would not make his offer in any way that could place him definitely in a position of being rejected" (DD, 169). She punishes his reticence by matching it, as an expression of her power. But for Grandcourt the game of asserting his "peremptory will" continues long after Gwendolen is suffocating in a very real despair (DD, 162). Her spirited and wilful pride is broken by his sneering self-assurance and a "grace of bearing [which] has long been moulded on the experience of boredom" (DD, 394):

She had been brought to accept him in spite of everything—brought to kneel down like a horse under training for the arena, though she might have an objection to it all the while. On the whole, Grandcourt got more pleasure out of this notion than he could have done out of winning a girl of whom he was sure that she had a strong inclination for him personally. (DD, 365)
To Gwendolen "there was the reassuring thought that marriage would be the gate into a larger freedom" (DD, 183). The step into matrimony, however, proves to be yet another fetter. Gwendolen's exaggerated confidence in making the move exposes her mistaken concept as to the extent of her own personal control. The heroine's approach to marriage is reminiscent of her approach to a singing career:

If she chose to take this husband, she would have him know that she was not going to renounce her freedom, or according to her favourite formula, "not going to do as other women did." (DD, 168)

Gwendolen, in fact, does worse than the average woman who at least experiences the inclination to love her mate, no matter how temporarily. Gwendolen, like Maggie and Dorothea before her, wishes to be different in terms of greater freedom and fulfilment. She, like her predecessors, will suffer in the struggle to surpass her contemporaries.

In the process of her climb to power, Gwendolen betrays the promise to Lydia Glasher that she will not marry Grandcourt. Gwendolen's shock over the discovery that Grandcourt is the father of Mrs. Glasher's four children is overwhelmed by the heroine's desire to avoid "living in the midst of hardships, ugliness, and humiliation" (DD, 270). Her betrayal of Lydia is anticipated by the selfish rationalization in the heroine's reaction to this knowledge:

It is one thing to hate stolen goods, and another thing to hate them the more because their being stolen hinders us from making use of them. Gwendolen had begun to be angry with Grandcourt for being what had hindered her from marrying him, angry with him as the cause of her present dreary lot. (DD, 270)
There is no trace of disappointed love in Gwendolen, but rather a resentment that her plan to maintain social graces through marriage is inconveniently disrupted. The core of her disgruntlement, however, parallels that which frustrated Maggie and Dorothea—a desire to rise above "her present dreary lot."

The cruelty and the inevitable retribution for a broken promise is significant in Daniel Deronda. The concept of broken faith, familiar to George Eliot's fiction, is emphasized in the relationship between Mirah Lapidoth and her father. With the revelation of Grandcourt's previous alliance with Lydia Glasher and her mother's loss of property, Gwendolen feels her first "close threats of humiliation." But she views these changes with her typical illusions of self-importance:

> For the first time the conditions of this world seemed to her like a hurrying roaring crowd in which she had got astray, no more cared for and protected than a myriad of other girls, in spite of its being a peculiar hardship for her. (DD, 278)

These new conditions temporarily motivate Gwendolen's drive to succeed without the help of marriage. Her concept of herself as a singer results from a desire to escape the task of a governess and the yoke of marriage:

> The inmost fold of her questioning now, was whether she need take a husband at all—whether she could not achieve substantiality for herself and know gratified ambition without bondage. (DD, 295)

Gwendolen's choice of diction establishes the false premise on which her marriage is ultimately decided—"bondage" in exchange for power. The desire for "command and luxury," symbolized by the beautiful horses Grandcourt displays as a background to his proposal, render a "delightful contrast with the ugliness of poverty and humiliation at which she had lately been looking close" (DD, 349).
Money, which Gwendolen ironically assumes will buy her freedom, obliterates the concept of affection. She is motivated to consent to her tragic mistake by the image of future poverty, both mental and material: "Gwendolen, lately used to the social successes of a handsome girl . . . saw the life before her as an entrance into penitentiary" (DD, 315). Gwendolen's youthful concept denies the power of good over evil. But George Eliot suggests in each of her characterizations that evil is doomed by its suffocating narrowness and such self-destructing aspects as pride.

Circumstance directs the heroine's fate as much as her own character. The untasteful situation in which Gwendolen finds herself leaves her no other choice, as an intelligent, but self-centered individual, than to accept Grandcourt's offer:

She could not let him go: that negative was a clutch. She seemed to herself to be, after all, only drifted towards the tremendous decision:--but drifting depends on something besides the currents, when the sails have been set beforehand. (DD, 348)

Parallel to Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke, Gwendolen Harleth is motivated to change by an image of "the former dreariness" of her situation (DD, 346). There is a double entendre in the author's selection of "Gwendolen Gets Her Choice" as a title for Book Four which deals with the heroine's marriage. Gwendolen chooses to accept Grandcourt, but the choice is based on more than his superficial charms and her present poverty. It is "her" choice in the sense that Gwendolen's past environment and habitual responses have conditioned her for a move that will alleviate her own discomfort regardless of the suffering it may incur for others.
But marriage and the betrayal of Lydia test the strength of Gwendolen Harleth's conscience. It proves greater than she had expected. The heroine's struggle begins when her conscience overpowers her confidence:

The brilliant position she had longed for, the imagined freedom she would create for herself in marriage, the deliverance from the dull insignificance of her girlhood—all were immediately before her; and yet they had come to her in hunger like food with the taint of a sacrilege upon it, which she must snatch with terror. In the darkness and loneliness of her little bed, her more resistant self would not act against the first onslaught of dread after her irrevocable decision. (DP, 356)

Lydia Glasher looms large in Gwendolen's mind and the images of this abandoned woman with her four children "kept repeating themselves in her imagination like the clinging memory of a disgrace" (DD, 356). These first twinges of remorse prepare the stage for her battle against the voice of a waking conscience. That the battle is lost is a credit to Gwendolen's moral strength and a beginning to the "painful letting in of light" (DD, 508).

Gwendolen tries to rationalize Lydia's inevitable neglect apart from Grandcourt's new romance by the argument that "he could have married her if he had liked; but he did not like" (DD, 358). And she feels annoyed that Mrs. Davilow unwittingly removes herself as a convenient object of blame by asking her daughter not "to marry only for my sake:"

[Gwendolen] was irritated at this attempt to take away a motive. Perhaps the deeper cause of her irritation was the consciousness that she was not going to marry for her mamma's sake—that she was drawn towards the marriage in ways against which stronger reasons than her mother's renunciation were yet not strong enough to hinder her. (DD, 357)
The betrayal of Lydia carves a wound in Gwendolen's conscience that grows deeper with reflection. Thus, the betrothed girl who rejoices in imagining her role in marriage as "the heroine of an admired play without the pains of art" (DD, 404) evolves to the fettered woman who "screamed again and again with hysterical violence" (DD, 407) in the realization that her guilt cannot be denied. The consequent confessions of guilt to Deronda, though cautious at first, initiate "that openness which is the sweet fresh air of our moral life" (DD, 445).

Slow maturity from narrow egoism to shackled despair and finally to solemn awareness is compared to "a sick dream" and the eventual relief from its aura by the dawn of a new day. The consequent knowledge of a greater perspective in the broader reality of Gwendolen's awakened senses renders the pain of night insignificant:

Suddenly from out the grey sombre morning there came a stream of sunshine, wrapping her in warmth and light where she sat in stony stillness. She moved gently and looked round her—there was a world outside the bad dream, and the dream proved nothing; she rose, stretching her arms upward and clasping her hands with her habitual attitude when she was seeking relief from oppressive feeling, and walked about the room in this flood of sunbeams. (DD, 650)

These sunbeams anticipate the light of awareness that will reveal a world that was darkened to Gwendolen's imagination before her redemption.

There remains for Gwendolen the heavy burden of acknowledging to Deronda her guilt in murdering Grandcourt by the nature of her refusal to respond to her husband's pleas for help. She feels, as well, that her wish for his death has brought about the accident. Therefore, the "cold iron touch" of hatred has escaped her control
and become the reality that she feared it would (DD, 746). These admissions to Deronda, her "terrible-browed angel" (DD, 737), and the obvious remorse at her own fallibility are necessary steps in the direction of healing her conscience:

Deronda could not utter one word to diminish that sacred aversion to her worst self—that thorn-pressure which must come with the crowning of the sorrowful Better, suffering because of the Worse. (DD, 762)

The hysteria experienced by Gwendolen in response to her guilt over Grandcourt's death, is foreshadowed by Dorothea's hysterical outburst over Casaubon's death. Both heroines ironically fold under the burden of guilt as they are released from the pressure of marriage.

Through Gwendolen Harleth's characterization, the reader is reminded of George Eliot's belief that religious tradition has a stabilizing force in society and serves to train people in the concepts of duty and fellowship. Gwendolen's lack of religious affiliations is juxtaposed with the religious fervor of Mordecai and its effect upon Deronda's sense of purpose and future: "Mrs. Grandcourt . . . was, so far as pastoral care and religious fellowship were concerned, in as complete a solitude as a man in a lighthouse" (DD, 667). This loneliness is exposed in Gwendolen's grief when she senses her diminished proportions and grows aware of her insignificance. Religion is a means to both duty and a sense of history through its traditions. Duty gives purpose to the life of an individual, and, as Deronda suggests, "other duties will spring from it" (DD, 839). A knowledge of traditions, on the other hand, is concomitant with an awareness that each person is simply
part of a greater whole. Gwendolen's needs are exactly these—a sense of purpose and a sense of place.

Gwendolen Harleth's characterization, then, moves from excessive confidence and dogmatic egoism into a state of guilt-ridden confusion and fearful self-questioning: "Her confidence in herself and her destiny had turned into remorse and dread; she trusted neither herself nor her future" (DD, 484). Gwendolen, who was once too quick to answer for her future and the power she assumed there, becomes passive in the presence of Grandcourt's will. Her lack of self-faith develops into suppressed anguish until suffering gains her a wider sympathy through an enlarged vision of others and a diminished vision of self:

This contrast was seen in the year's experience which had turned the brilliant, self-confident Gwendolen Harleth . . . into the crushed penitent impelled to confess her unworthiness where it would have been her happiness to beheld worthy. (DD, 771)

Dogmatic poise and enormous egoism are replaced by bewildered emotions and sense of worthlessness. The consequent passivity and anguish create the reflective despair necessary to her learning process.

Gwendolen breaks through her shell of naive and disproportionate self-concern, in which she assumes the role of a "princess in exile" and, like Dorothea Brooke, learns to enjoy her "own middling-ness" (DD, 491). As anticipated by Ladislaw's belief that happiness is contagious, Gwendolen's achievement is rendered in accordance with Deronda's advice: "'Excellence encourages one about life generally; it shows the spiritual wealth of the world'" (DD, 491). Deronda focuses on "thinking himself imaginatively into the
experience of others" and performing each task in life with a sense of its singular importance (DD, 570).

The shock of Deronda's impending departure brings with it the realization that he is not simply another part of Gwendolen's private tragedy. Deronda is a consciousness separate from her own and one of which she is a part only insofar as his generosity and her deservedness allow. It is not enough that Gwendolen change her concept of marriage and morality; she must also learn of the extended world apart from her own small drama. Gwendolen Harleth's concept of reality widens when she begins to ask herself the question that George Eliot has asked of the reader in anticipation of Gwendolen's change:

Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant? (DD, 159)

Gwendolen Harleth matures from her initial state of wilful egoism through the humbling experience which equips her with moral insight and to a new acceptance of herself in the context of a vast universe. George Eliot renders her heroine's flawed nature with typical compassion:

Surely a young creature is pitiable who has the labyrinth of life before her and no clue—to whom distrust in herself and her good fortune has come as a sudden shock, like a rent across the path she was treading carelessly. (DD, 317)

In the final image of Gwendolen alone with her memory of grief and her expanded consciousness, George Eliot conveys a deep sense of reality.

The intensity of Gwendolen Harleth's psychological development
is expressed through the intricacies that form the network of her relationships and the creation of her social conscience. Each of George Eliot's heroines benefits from the redemptive powers of suffering in terms of a matured consciousness. The importance of this concept to the author is shown by the fact that she also included it in one of her most famous poems, "Self and Life:"

Half man's truth must hidden be
If unlit by Sorrow's eye.
I by sorrow wrought in thee
Willing pain of ministry.

Thus, as Life suggests to Self, for those with the potential to learn by experience, suffering is a route to greater self-knowledge. Gwendolen Harleth's psychological growth is the most complex and captivating of George Eliot's heroines. Her moral struggle captures a vision of the individual life that has a basic truth in its depth and its complexity.

* * * * *

The study of theme clarifies the treatment of characterization in the novels discussed. George Eliot suggests the dilemma of confined passions, the importance of seemingly insignificant deeds and the redemptive powers of suffering in the fictional worlds of Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke and Gwendolen Harleth. The emphasis on passion, wistfulness and caprice varies with each heroine, but the basic ingredients of theme and character remain constant.

The major difference in these novels is the structure of the endings. In *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot releases her heroine from the moral dilemma created by incompatibility between
character and environment through her death. *Middlemarch* suggests an answer to this dilemma in the opportunities provided by the good fortune of a happy and productive marriage. In *Daniel Deronda*, however, George Eliot portrays a redeemed, but sorrowful heroine. Thus, the final pages of the book are not a conclusive end to Gwendolen Harleth's future life. This open-ended novel terminates as Gwendolen begins a life renewed by the influence of remorse and its ability to affect personal insight and compassionate understanding.

George Eliot's final novel, therefore, concludes on a note of optimism in terms of the theme that suffering benefits those able to learn by experience. The theme of redemption through suffering is expressed by the subtle and intricate characterization of Gwendolen Harleth as her capricious nature is tempered with the wisdom of sorrow. Unlike the plots of *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch*, George Eliot leaves the heroine of *Daniel Deronda* with the major portion of her life before her. The depth and intensity of the psychological drama unfolded in this final work refutes the necessity of a decisive ending.
FOOTNOTES


2 George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Boston: The Riverside Press, 1956), p. 610. All further references to this novel will be made in the text.


11 Cross, p. 330.


17 Cross, p. 625.


19 Cross, p. 422.

20 Pinney, p. 203.

21 Cross, p. 467.

22 Knoepflmacher, p. 169.


24 Haight, p. 117.


27 Cross, p. 58.


30 Cross, p. 493.

31 Ibid., p. 494.


33 Cross, p. 167.


35 Cross, p. 103.

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