THE CONFLICT
BETWEEN DUTY AND SELF-FULFILLMENT
IN THE NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT

by

Sheenah F.L. Andrews
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1977

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
English

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
July 1980

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NAME: Sheenah Fiona Leslie Andrews

DEGREE: Master of Arts

TITLE OF THESIS: - The Conflict Between Duty and Self-fulfillment in the Novels of George Eliot. -

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Chairperson: Paul Delany

Prof. Mason Harris, (Senior Supervisor)
Associate Professor

Prof. Andrea Lebowitz,
Lecturer

Prof. John Mills,
Associate Professor

Prof. Maggie Benston, (External Examiner)
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Chemistry,
Simon Fraser University

Date Approved: August 5, 1980
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THE CONFLICT BETWEEN DUTY AND SELF-FULFILLMENT

IN THE NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT

Author: ____________________________
(signature)

Sheena F.L. Andrews
(name)

Aug. 11/80
(date)
ABSTRACT

In this thesis I draw various aspects of Eliot scholarship into one theme which I will state as follows: Eliot was caught in a conflict between a belief in duty and a belief in the need for personal self-fulfillment, a conflict which was exaggerated by the rigidity of contemporary philosophical and religious attitudes. Furthermore, I believe that this conflict is of greatest consequence to Eliot's female characters and I will therefore concentrate more of my attention on the heroines of her novels.

In the first chapter of this thesis, "The Glorification of Selflessness and Duty", I concentrate on Eliot's early novels, Scenes of Clerical Life and Adam Bede. By examining the basic philosophy of Eliot's fiction, I establish the basis of the conflict between living for the self and for others. In order to do this I consider the origins of Eliot's attitude towards duty in her reaction against her Evangelical background, and also Ludwig Feuerbach's influence on her work. I then examine Eliot's use of nemesis (the theory of retribution) as it relates to Eliot's belief in self-sacrifice and duty.

Chapter Two, "A Question of Power", deals exclusively with Middlemarch. Central to this chapter are Dorothea's marriages to Casaubon and Will, in relation to the issues of self-sacrifice and personal growth. In her treatment of these issues, Eliot questions for the first time her philosophy of sympathetic duty.
The third chapter, "The Quest for Power", deals with Daniel Deronda. In this book two female characters, Gwendolen and the Princess, are remarkable for their choice of power over the accepted female virtues. It is in this, her final novel, that Eliot attempts to work through to the other side of her perspective on selflessness and duty. But Eliot is finally unable to move fully away from this position as the glorification of Deronda's selflessness shows. The relationship of Eliot's final perspective on the female "role" to her own historical time is dealt with in the conclusion.
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CHAPTER ONE: THE GLORIFICATION OF SELFLESSNESS AND DUTY

In the midst of her religious crisis in 1842, Eliot wrote the following to her friend Francis Watts:

I can just now grasp nothing as truth but the principle that that which is best in ethics is the only means of subjective happiness, that perfect love and purity must be the goal of my race, that only while reaching after them can I feel myself in harmony with the tendencies of creation. . . . It seems to me that the awful anticipations entailed by a reception of all dogmas in the New Testament operate unfavourably on moral beauty by disturbing that spontaneity, that choice of the good for its own sake, that answers my ideal. 1

These goals of "love", "harmony with the tendencies of creation" and the choice of "good for its own sake" were to remain with Eliot for the rest of her life. What did change for Eliot was her belief in the Christian dogma. Eliot no longer believed in the tenets of her faith. She wanted to find her own way to articulate her beliefs rather than accept the authority of the church on the appropriate form that belief should take. Eliot denounced the Christian religion of her upbringing, joining with a significant proportion of Victorians who, in Walter Houghton's words, perceived in "the disintegration of Christian theology" the end of "the discomforts of belief." 2 Like so many others, Eliot did not want to forsake the basic premises of Christianity; rather she desired the destruction of its dogma, so that these premises could be incorporated into daily life. Houghton quotes from one of Eliot's letters:

Her soul, she said, was "liberated from the wretched giant's bed of dogma on which it has been racked and
Eliot's crusade took her first to Strauss and finally to Feuerbach. She was looking for a more secular version of religion, one that insisted on manifesting the basic beliefs of Christianity in man's interaction with his fellow man rather than relegating these beliefs to the church, God and the hereafter. The philosophical support she sought was found in the works of Feuerbach, whose *Essence of Christianity* she translated: "Heaven help us! said the old religions -- the new one, from its very lack of that faith, will teach us all the more to help one another." 4

Feuerbach shifted the emphasis of Christianity away from God and the church and towards man, thereby altering the hierarchical structure that Christian philosophy had hitherto proposed. He perceived in the church, by virtue of its emphasis on Christian theory, a tendency towards the "imaginative". Feuerbach believed that this emphasis on the "imaginative" separated Christian beliefs from the secular world:

> Religion is the dream of the human mind. But even in dreams we do not find ourselves in emptiness or in heaven, but on earth, in the realm of reality; we only see real things in the entrancing splendour of imagination and caprice, instead of in the simple daylight of reality and necessity. Hence I do nothing more to religion--and to speculative philosophy and theology also--than to open its eyes, or rather turn its gaze from the internal towards the external, i.e., I change the object as it is in the imagination into the object as it is in reality. 5

Not only did Feuerbach substantiate Eliot's need to bring "to
life" the Christian concept, but love, as with Eliot, is at the center of his philosophy:

Love is God himself, and apart from it there is no God. Love makes man God and God man. "Love is the true unity of God and man, of spirit and nature..." In the longing of love after the distant object, the abstract idealist involuntarily confirms the truth of sensuousness.

Feuerbach believes love to be "essentially female in its nature." His basis is first that the Son is "the womanly sentiment of God":

God, as the Father, is the generator, the active, the princeple of masculine spontaneity; but the Son is begotten without himself begetting, ... the passive, suffering, receptive being; he receives his existence from the Father. ... The Son is thus the feminine feeling of dependence in the Godhead; the Son implicitly urges upon us the need of a real feminine being.

By equating the son to "the womanly sentiment", Feuerbach states that suffering and receptivity are feminine characteristics. Due to her capacity for suffering a mother personifies "the highest and deepest love":

The father consoles himself for the loss of his son; he has a stoical principle within him. The mother, on the contrary, is inconsolable; she is the sorrowing element, that which cannot be indemnified -- the true in love.

As indicated in the above quotations Feuerbach moves back and forth between the concept of the Holy Trinity and the corporeal mother, father and son. In the course of this movement there is an overlapping of the corporeal family with the Holy Trinity so that the mother comes to stand for all women and her ability to suffer and to love comes to stand for all women's ability to
suffer and love. Most important is his conclusion that, in view of the above, "Love is in and by itself essentially feminine in its nature. The belief in the love of God is the belief in the feminine principle as divine." 9

Eliot agrees with Feuerbach's concept of "the feminine principle as divine". She bears out his belief that love is "essentially feminine" with her own theory that the physiological differences in the male and female create psychological differences in the sexes which can in turn be related to the capacity to love. The first part of this theory, that women are psychologically different from men on the basis of their physiologies, is described in an article entitled "Women in France: Madame de Sablé":

Under every imaginable social condition, she will necessarily have a class of sensations and emotions -- the maternal ones -- which must remain unknown to man; and the fact of her comparative physical weakness, which, however it may have been exaggerated by a vicious civilization, can never be cancelled, introduces a distinctly feminine condition into the wondrous chemistry of the affections and sentiments, which inevitably give rise to distinctive forms and combinations. A certain amount of psychological difference between man and woman necessarily arises out of the difference of sex, and instead of being destined to vanish before a complete development of woman's intellectual and moral nature, will be a permanent source of variety and beauty. 10

But Eliot is not content to leave the female as merely different from man, and in the same article, discussing the passiveness of British women, she turns this difference into a value judgement. Eliot does not believe that "unfavourable external circumstances" have prevented women from achieving recognition in the arts, science and philosophy. Rather, what
she does believe is that women are not involved in these fields to the same extent as men because "the necessary physiological conditions are not present" in women. 11 Eliot's theory is that a woman's physiology affects her psychology, which has interesting results when related to the concept of romantic love.

Eliot connects emotional tenderness with physical weakness and associates both of these characteristics with the female. When Eliot compares these qualities to those in the man, she ends by balancing what she considers the positive and negative attributes of both sexes in the following manner:

As a fact of zoological evolution, woman has the worst share in existence. But for that very reason I would the more contend that in the moral evolution we have "an art which does mend nature." It is the function of love in the largest sense, to mitigate the harshness of all fatalities. 12

The suggestion is that in order to compensate for their physical subordination to men, women have been granted a greater capacity for love. Eliot believes that the suffering, which results from women having had the "worst share in existence", is what increases women's capacity for love.

The acceptance and glorification of suffering is one of the major results of Eliot's honouring the female because of the latter's capacity to love. Suffering comes to signify the pinnacle of loving acceptance and the ability to live for others rather than for the self. One of the possible reasons for Eliot's attraction to this theory is her own early experience with the Evangelical faith. The intense religious preoccupation of Eliot's Evangelical period established a "habit" of self-
denial. Repeatedly in her letters, especially in those to Martha Jackson, Eliot admonishes herself, perceiving any hint of pride or self-interest as a weakness. In this, Eliot understands the Christian doctrine of selflessness as legitimizing her own desire for self-negation. Ruby Redinger suggests that Eliot used Evangelicalism as a "protective shelter against her growing burden of self, without which her talent might well have been permanently damaged rather than merely held in check." 13

Locked into the frustrations of provincial life, an unmarried, educated woman, living with her father, Eliot was able to turn a lack of personal direction and/or responsibility into a moral attribute. Religion granted Eliot a purpose, and within that purpose she was able to rid herself of certain frustrations. Problems with love, whether they be familial or sexual, could now be absorbed in what Redinger refers to as "the mystic experience of losing all sense of self in union with the Absolute." 14 Religion also allowed Eliot to exercise her powerful intellect through the process of analytical introspection. While this introspection resulted in her self-criticism and abnegation, it also established the grounds for the depth of psychological insight in her future novels.

As Eliot shifts from Evangelicalism to Feuerbach, she blurs the boundaries of both, and unconsciously arrives at an interesting compromise. Agreeing with Feuerbach, Eliot uses the idea of female suitability for love to substantiate her own belief that suffering for others is the highest form
of love. The result of this combination of ideologies is the notion, repeated continually in Eliot's work, that to love is to suffer, the greater the suffering the greater the love, and the more feminine the woman. She regarded suffering and sympathy as interrelated; the extent of one's suffering affects one's capacity for sympathy by allowing a greater empathetic understanding.

Eliot turned her belief in this interrelationship into an aesthetic principle, expressed particularly aptly in a letter to Charles Bray in 1859:

If art does not enlarge men's sympathies it does nothing morally.
I have had heart-cutting experience that opinions are a poor cement between human souls; and the only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings, is that those who read them should be better able to imagine and to feel the pains and the joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling erring human creatures. 15

In her fiction Eliot attempts to create realistic situations which, together with her own form of aestheticism, aim at "enlarging men's sympathies". The result is a proposed morality that honours self-sacrifice and suffering.

Eliot's first collection of novelettes, under the heading of Scenes of Clerical Life, attests to the application of her aesthetic theory. The heroines of all three novelettes are vivid and realistic characters and at least two out of three substantiate the glories of self-sacrifice. In "Amos Barton" occurs the first of a long line of suffering female martyrs, Mrs. Amos Barton. The entire story depends, both for its
pathos and its moral, upon the utter selflessness and loving
nature of this woman:

Soothing, unspeakable charm of gentle womanhood! which
supersedes all acquisitions, all accomplishments. . . . You would even perhaps have been rather scandalized if
she descended from the serene dignity of being to the
assiduous unrest of doing. . . . You would not, perhaps,
have anticipated that this bliss would fall to the share
of precisely such a man as Amos Barton. . . . Not at
all. . . . She--the sweet woman--will like it as well;
for her sublime capacity of loving will have all the
more scope; and I venture to say, Mrs. Barton's nature
would never have grown half so angelic if she had
married the man you would have perhaps have had in your
eye for her -- a man with sufficient income and abundant
personal éclat. 16

Eliot exaggerates the loving qualities of Milly so that the
color character becomes larger than life. We are to be drawn towards
Milly and look to her to supply the meaning of the story, and
a perspective on life which this story is attempting to portray.
From this portion of narrative we are given specific informa-
tion regarding the epitome of femininity. A woman is gentle
and loving; irrelevant to the woman are such things as worldly
accomplishments, and, finally, the loving nature of a woman
gains more from being in a negative rather than in a positive
situation, as any disadvantage brings out the best in her.
As the story progresses Milly is the norm against which all
of the other major characters are assessed.

In the first three quarters of the story, Amos appears
self-centered, stupid and unintentionally cruel as he constant-
ly takes advantage of Milly. Milly's illness and subsequent
death shake Amos free from his self-absorption, and his con-
version gives us the moral of the story. Amos becomes a better man in the eyes of his community and a more valued member of his family because he is able to appreciate and return some of Milly's love. Amos's learned capacity to love is the happy ending of the story. In the same manner the Countess's character is most clearly captured through her treatment of Milly. If Amos is selfish, it is only in relation to the two extremes of Milly's selflessness at one end and the Countess's pure selfishness at the other. The fact that the Countess is a female only serves to increase the contrast between herself and Milly and likewise to heighten the passiveness of Amos caught unknowingly between two opposing forces. The fact that Milly befriends the Countess is one more example of her all-encompassing love, for she, unlike Amos, is more aware of the Countess's faults.

Janet, of "Janet's Repentance", is another example of the all-forgiving woman. Her suffering is more intense than Milly's but also she is initially more corrupt. Janet's suffering allows her to experience personal growth and it also enables her to forgive where she once hated:

Robert would get better; this illness might alter him; he would be a long time feeble, needing help, walking with a crutch, perhaps. She would wait on him with such tenderness, such all-forgiving love, that the old harshness and cruelty must melt away for ever under the heart-sunshine she would pour around him. Her bosom heaved at the thought, and delicious tears fell. The Divine Love that had already shone upon her would be with her; she would lift up her soul continually for help.
The reason that Janet is able to make her transformation away from alcohol into loving and forgiving is due to the influence and help of an Evangelical minister, Mr. Tyran. Mr. Tyran could be described as the "essence of Christianity". Though he is a member of the church, his attitude towards religion has more in common with that of Feuerbach, for the basis of Tyran's approach is the need for individuals to love and care for one another. The other important aspect of Tyran is his ability to sympathize through his own sorrow, and it is through his positive interpretation of suffering that Janet comes to see her predicament as a learning experience that can lead her through her own suffering to a new understanding and forgiveness. The narrator states:

The tale of the Divine Pity was never yet believed from lips that were not felt to be moved by human pity. . . . And it is but a living again through our own past in a new form that confession often prompts a response of confession. 18

Both Milly and Janet are examples of Eliot's ideal of the self-sacrificing woman. The best distinction between the two is that while Milly is used as an extreme example of ideal womanhood (of which many more diluted copies will be made in Eliot's writing), Janet is an example of how suffering can enable an individual to achieve a more profound sense of sympathy.

The third novelette in the series, "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story", maintains the theme of self-sacrificing love but in this instance it is a man rather than a woman who exhibits
selflessness. Mr. Gilfil is able to continue to love Tina while she is totally absorbed in another man; he always places Tina's needs before his own, and after Captain Wybrow's death, Gilfil's loyalty is strong enough to keep him by Tina's side until she is able to separate herself from the emotional involvement in Captain Wybrow's memory. Tina is finally able to return Gilfil's love. She marries him and comes "to lean entirely on his love, and to find life sweet for his sake." While it would appear that Gilfil's sacrifices were rewarded with Tina's love, it is a short-lived reward as Tina dies in childbirth leaving Gilfil to his memories.

Those works following Scenes of Clerical Life took up the theme of the self-sacrificing woman, though many of the later examples of self-sacrifice were interpreted as the desire to live for others. Eliot's reflection of this desire in her novels corresponded with society's conception of the woman as wife and mother. As a result of this female stereotype women resigned themselves to the burden of family obligations and experienced career limitations. As a female intellectual and writer Eliot was obviously at odds with her society in that she perceived the capacity of women to work in many different professions. But unlike Eliot, most middle and upper class women of her day found themselves limited when choosing self-fulfilling activities outside the home. A woman looking for a job was often limited to becoming a governess, while religion, though not a job, often became a career. Both these possibilities retained the vision of the woman as one who takes
care of others -- a vision reflecting both the act of loving and of self-sacrifice. The vast majority of Victorian lower and lower-middle class women did work. But the women from the middle and upper classes that Eliot was most concerned with in her fiction were limited due to their class status plus their education, to the two previously mentioned activities. Patricia Meyer Spacks makes the following observations about "taking care" and the type of employment that was encouraged as a result:

It is a way of thinking that, avoiding the social and moral issues implicit in women's self-subordination, recognizes the effective power of apparent humility, suggests that the repressions implicit in self-sacrifice may provide rich sources of energy and fulfillment, and that the choice of "family" or "career", when social conditions make such choice possible for women, may be a choice between different versions of identical experience. 20

Here Spacks emphasizes two different though interrelated points. First she refers to the social emphasis given to what is considered the positive results of woman's self-subordination and secondly she suggests that when employment is possible for a woman it very often reflects the same demands as the role of wife and mother. In relation to the first point Spacks is commenting on such things as the quotation referred to earlier from Eliot's "Women in France" where Eliot states that women have not achieved great successes professionally because "the necessary physiological conditions are not present in her" (rather than because of any "unfavourable external circumstances") yet women do introduce "a distinctly feminine condition". In other words, Spacks is noting that the social causes for women's
self-subordination are ignored while emphasis is placed upon the positive qualities that emerge from what is considered a natural tendency towards self-sacrifice. Spacks' second point logically follows from the glorification of the qualities of self-subordination which tend to lock the woman into the role of the giver. Those jobs which require the same qualities of sacrifice are the ones considered most acceptable for women and are the jobs which women are seen as being most qualified for.

Eliot supports the humility Spacks refers to by emphasizing the glories of self-sacrifice rather than the unhealthy repression of the self that such sacrifice leads to. In her early novels Eliot remains true to the reality of her time by merging family and career as two "different versions of the identical experience."

In creating Dinah, Eliot wedded, in Adam Bede, a woman's need to love and care for others with the need to have a purpose in life. Yet this union is restricted by many factors. Dinah's career as preacher is portrayed as a selfless activity. Rather than perceiving her career as a means of self-fulfillment, Dinah acts for a power greater than herself that she might be used as a vehicle to unite others to the truth she knows to exist in the Divine Spirit. The basis of her religion, like that of Mr. Tyran before her, is helping others. While Dinah's career personifies the concept of the loving woman, she is unable to conceive of loving in a man-woman relationship, as she believes that the latter would inevi-
tably make her less caring for the needs of others. Though Dinan eventually realizes that she may experience both kinds of love, Eliot has her ultimately sacrifice her work as preacher for her new role as mother and wife. This choice is supposedly caused by a change in Methodist rules preventing females from preaching. But what becomes evident is Eliot's unwillingness to have the role of mother and wife challenged in any way by what may be seen as the personal pursuits of the woman.

For Maggie, in The Mill on the Floss, self-sacrifice occurs on both a figurative and a literal level. Though she is cast in the typical career of the day—that of assistant school teacher—Maggie's self-sacrifice is more in relation to her family and her loves than in relation to her career. Maggie is torn between her love for her family and her love for three men, two of whom are forbidden to her by the third. Maggie's earliest love is for her brother Tom; that and the love she feels for her father, causes her to hide her affection for Philip Wakem. Philip is forbidden to her due to a fight between Philip's father and her own; yet, even after her father's death, Maggie's allegiance to Tom prevents her from reestablishing contact with Philip. Maggie's sense of loyalty is further confused by her love for Stephen Guest, her cousin Lucy's fiancé and Philip's best friend. To become Stephen's lover would cause pain and sadness to those she love best. Maggie allows herself to be carried away by her desire for Stephen long enough to hurt Lucy and Philip and to
be denounced by Tom. But she is unable to make a commitment to Stephen. Maggie sacrifices her desire for Stephen and the financial comfort and status such a union would offer, for her love and sense of duty to her family and friends whom she knows would be hurt if she married Stephen. Due to the ambiguities that surround her actions Maggie has saved no one from the pain and she ends by sacrificing what she has left of her reputation by not allowing Stephen to marry her. In an act that finally unites duty and desire, Maggie attempts to save Tom from the flood. By uniting Maggie and Tom in the flood Eliot construes Maggie's final act of sacrifice as a transcendence of all earthly concerns, glorifying love and duty.

Loyalty to family is also important in Romola. Romola is forced to recognize her husband's shortcomings, which are his willful disregard of her father's last wish -- that Bardo's library should be kept together under his own roof. Pride prevents Romola from informing anyone of her husband's actions. Instead she decides to secretly leave her husband and her home. Romola's complete separation is prevented by Savonarola's advice that her place is by her husband, and that regardless of what he has done, she should stay by his side. Romola sacrifices her own needs and desires to remain loyal to a man she no longer respects or loves. By the end of the novel her loyalty to Tito has extended to looking after Tito's mistress and children after his death.

There is an element of realism in Eliot retaining in her
fiction the accepted societal roles for females. Maggie, Dinah, Milly and Janet are well-developed and realistic characters. (Homola is the exception here, first because of her historical period and secondly because of Eliot's tendency to treat her more like a saint than like a woman.) Eliot has enhanced the realism evident in their psychological make-up by giving all of these women social restrictions which would have been realistic in Eliot's day and age. But her attempt at realism often clashes with her philosophy of life. Knoepflmacher, in his book *George Eliot's Early Novels*, comments on this clash:

She wanted to unfold before her readers the temporal activity she believed in; yet she also wanted to assure them—and herself—that man's inescapable subjection to the flux of time did not invalidate a trust in justice, perfectability, and order. This double allegiance drew her, over almost twenty years, to seek fictional modes that could accommodate both the actual and the ideal laws she wanted to portray. Instead of faithfully copying the circumstances of external life, George Eliot arranged reality to make it substantiate her moral values.

The "trust in justice, perfectability, and order" refers, at least in part, to Eliot's belief in nemesis. Nemesis involves retribution -- usually for negative actions. Eliot took this belief and the concept of a moral order that lies at the base of it to explain man's connection to his universe. In *Homola* she supplies the following definition:

His mind was destitute of that dread which has been erroneously decried as if it were nothing higher than a man's animal care for his own skin: that awe of the Divine Nemesis which was felt by religious pagans, and, though it took a more positive form under Christianity,
is still felt by the mass of mankind simply as a vague fear at anything which is called wrong-doing. Such terror of the unseen is so far above mere sensual cowardice that it will annihilate that cowardice; it is the initial recognition of a moral law restraining desire, and checks the hard bold scrutiny of imperfect thought into obligations which can never be proved to have any sanctity in the absence of feeling. 22

Nemesis links man to his environment. The "moral law" of retribution which Eliot establishes for her characters occurs as much internally, that is, as a natural consequence of the characters' own psychological development, as it does externally, as a consequence of the preordained order of the universe.

Though never named, nemesis is already in operation in "Amos Barton", causing the selfish Amos to suffer through the loss of Milly; her death provides the nemesis for his unthinking cruelty. In "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story", Anthony dies after playing with Tina's affections and his death occurs in conjunction with Tina's impassioned desire to kill him -- a coincidence that causes her to reevaluate her murderous intent. In "Janet's Repentance", nemesis is called by name. The occasion is Dempster's firing of his driver. It is an act that occurs out of the same temper that causes Dempster to beat his wife and which results not only in both wife and driver leaving him, but also, as a result of the absence of his driver, in a fatal accident. Having made Dempster fire his driver, Eliot states:

Nemesis is lame, but she is of colossal stature; like the gods; and sometimes, while her sword is not yet unsheathed, she stretches out her huge left arm and
grasps her victim. The mighty hand is invisible, but the victim is Hers under the dire clutch. 23

Along with these external examples of nemesis there are those internal examples which depend upon the previously mentioned psychological development of the individual. The best example of this is given in the following conversation between Arthur and Mr. Irwine:

"But surely you don't think a man who struggles against a temptation, into which he falls at last, as bad as the man who never struggles at all."

"No, my boy, I pity him in proportion to his struggles, for they foreshadow the inward suffering which is the worst form of Nemesis. Consequences are unpitying. Our deeds carry their terrible consequences, quite apart from any fluctuations that went before -- consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves. And it is best to fix our minds on that certainty, instead of considering what may be the elements of excuse for us." 24

Part of Arthur's nemesis is the agony of indecision he goes through before he seduces Hetty. Once he knows of Hetty's trial, Arthur's remorse works as a form of self-induced punishment and as such continues the process of nemesis.

Until Middlemarch there is always a direct correlation between moral cause and effect in Eliot's fiction. Such a philosophical belief aids in the formulation of plot and character development, but Eliot's use of nemesis accords with her belief in a causal world based on the concepts of good and evil. In a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Eliot comments on her feeling that we as individuals are able to judge for ourselves what is bad and good, and that this sense of what is good for mankind should be what constitutes our religion:
I believe that religion too has to be modified -- "developed", according to the dominant phrase -- and that a religion more perfect than any yet prevalent, must express less care for personal consolation, and a more deeply awing sense of responsibility to man, springing from sympathy with that which of all things is most certainly known to us, the difficulty of the human lot. . . . As health, sane human beings we must love and hate -- love what is good for mankind, hate what is evil for mankind. 25

Elliot's belief that there is an instinctual sense in mankind for what is good and evil, corresponds to what Walter Houghton has referred to in *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, as a profound belief in intuition. As he sees it, the Victorian belief in intuition purports that "truth" can be known and that its acquisition is a spiritual rather than a material procedure. 26 Elliot's belief, stated in the previous quotation, that man has an innate sense of right and wrong corresponds to her statement in *Romola* concerning man's "recognition of a moral law." Though she no longer believes in the Christian religion her belief in a "moral law" suggests it. Part of what reminds one of the influence of the Christian religion in Elliot's work is the consequential nature of nemesis. 27 The consequential nature of nemesis forces value judgements on all acts, positive as well as negative. As a result one is either made to atone for negative acts or is rewarded for positive acts. Dempster dies while Janet is saved; Hetty becomes pregnant and Arthur must leave his home while Dinah is able to unite physical and spiritual love and Adam is given Dinah to love in place of Hetty as he overcomes his tendency to self-righteousness.
It is obvious from Eliot's works that a belief in nemesis affects the structure of experience in her novels. Where the problem arises is in what Knoepflmacher refers to as Eliot's tendency to arrange reality "to make it substantiate her moral values." Eliot consistently takes the truth that she sees and believes in and turns it into a strict moral code based upon suffering and understanding love. As stated earlier in the chapter, Eliot believed that to suffer for others is the highest form of love and that one's sympathy results from an understanding achieved through suffering. This code is initially used as a conscious aesthetic device roughly drawn out in her letter to Charles Bray in 1859. Yet one senses that Eliot comes to believe in her own literature, so that the more we read, the more Eliot's imaginative and philosophical beliefs become the reality she perceives and attempts to reconstruct in her writing. The narratorial voice which constantly emerges in Eliot's works is one of the clearest examples of this movement from a moral aesthetic to a perceived reality. For example, in Homola she states:

Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race; and to have once acted nobly seems a reason why we should always act nobly. 28

Eliot lived in a very protected world while she wrote. Lewes refused to let either positive or negative criticisms of Eliot's work reach her, for fear that she would not be able to keep her own sense of equilibrium and inspiration in the face of them. She saw only a few select friends and then most
often in the security of her own home. By stating all of this, I am not denying her knowledge of the chaos and cruelty of society. Rather, I am noting that during her literary career, she was protected from those forces. Eliot's belief in the power of sympathy and sacrifice and her use of nemesis to support this philosophy denies the reality of the very world she is trying to capture in her "realism". Eliot's position on the beauty of self-sacrifice (especially in the case of women) and her "aesthetic" approach to her literature both evidence an attempt to turn away from the world as it is, refusing to deal with its problems. Eliot does create realistic situations in her novels. But having created them, she appears to avoid dealing with the problems resulting from these situations. A major frustration with Eliot's work is the simultaneous creation of a conflict and avoidance of it. Instead, fear of a chaotic and often unintelligible world is disregarded as a strength and a virtue; necessity is redirected away from "reality" and toward the imagination. Eliot creates a world based on a strict morality of right and wrong. This morality attempts to shield us from the unintelligible chaos which appears to exist on the other side of her moral structure.
NOTES


3 Houghton, p. 50.

4 Eliot, Letters, II, 82.


6 Feuerbach, p. 48.

7 Feuerbach, p. 72.

8 Feuerbach, p. 72.

9 Feuerbach, p. 72.


11 Eliot, Essays, p. 56.


14 Redinger, p. 70.

15 Eliot, Letters, III, 111.


18 Eliot, Scenes of Clerical Life, p. 358.
19 Eliot, Scenes of Clerical Life, p. 343.


26 Houghton, pp. 150-51.


28 Eliot, Romola, p. 366.
CHAPTER TWO: THE QUESTION OF POWER

By the time Eliot writes Middlemarch she no longer complacently describes the benefits to be found in living for others. In Middlemarch she tries to reconcile the need to live for others with the drive for self-fulfillment. Throughout much of the novel, Dorothea can be seen as a spokeswoman for Eliot. In the eighth book Dorothea says to Lydgate: "There is no sorrow I have thought more about than that -- to love what is great, and try to reach it, and yet to fail." 

This quotation evinces not only a philosophical ideal but also the importance of success in achieving one's goals. This second chapter will deal with three aspects of the conflict between living for others and living for the self, as they appear in Middlemarch. The first of these aspects is the desire for purpose and success on the part of both Eliot and Dorothea; the second is the confusion over duty, with its relationship to marriage; and the third is the nature of love as it relates to one's awareness of another as a distinct and separate individual.

The extent to which the desire for success motivates Eliot is evident from the following excerpt taken from a letter in which she discusses writing an autobiography: "The only thing I should care much to dwell on would be the absolute despair I suffered from of ever being able to achieve anything. No one could have ever felt greater despair."
In the "Prelude" to *Middlemarch*, Eliot examines the particularly female dimensions of the desire for fame. The contradictions that emerge in the "Prelude" inform both the central character of Dorothea, and the overriding perspective of the author herself.

The "Prelude" uses the figure of Saint Theresa as an example of a woman who has been able to achieve fame through a worthwhile pursuit. Eliot describes Saint Theresa as desiring two different things: fame and social recognition, evident in her demand for "an epic life", and to "reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self."

"The reform of a religious order" allows Saint Theresa to satisfy both these needs.

Eliot goes on to compare Saint Theresa with contemporary women. The comparison reveals that Theresa's yearnings are still evident in Eliot's day but the outlet for these yearnings no longer exists:

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. Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood.

Eliot is aware not only of her own need for social recognition, but also, because of her Evangelical background, of the important part religion plays in her society. Due to her own dramatic conversion from faith to skepticism, she is able to envision the role religion takes in fulfilling a woman's aspirations as well as the double quandary in which the absence
of organized religion places women. Women not only have to find some belief which will operate as a substitute faith but, due to the lack of worthwhile professions open to them, they are also left with a lack of direction in their immediate social lives. Reproducing the concerns of the home, religion allowed women to achieve some social recognition as they pursued their role of loving and caring for others, but with the loss of a "coherent social faith and order", fame or success for women had to be achieved through direct involvement with the material social world. Success in this world is defined according to material values which often contradict the personal values of love and caring.

The problem Eliot raises but does not answer in the "Prelude" is: How does one fulfill "the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self", if not through religion? An answer is given in the body of the novel: through caring for and loving others. But the "Prelude" skirts this possible solution and centers solely on the need for social rather than individual recognition.

Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering in some long-recognisable deed. 5

The "Finale" echoes the earlier cry for recognition:

Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed in the life of another, and be only known as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done. 6
By stating the need for women to have a purpose in the social world, a pursuit that lies outside of themselves and their homes, Eliot is questioning the extent to which the female role of loving wife and mother should be consecrated. But Eliot is still unable to do any more than question this role and its value:

Still, she never repented that she had given up position and fortune to marry Will Ladislaw, and he would have held it the greatest shame as well as sorrow to him if she had repented. They were bound to each other by a love stronger than any impulses which could have marred it.

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

The novel proposes the love of another as a worthy alternative to fame. But the love of another is hard to believe in because it is no longer enough; it has become a worthy second rather than a glorious first choice. Eliot has offered the role of living for another half-heartedly, by including statements like the following:

No life would have been possible to Dorothea which was not filled with emotion, and she had now a life filled also with a beneficent activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and marking out for herself.

Knowing Eliot's own success, her prestige as a scholar even
before she became a novelist, and her constant demands for women to receive proper educations, it is impossible to accept the latter part of the above quotation as it stands. Eliot's knowledge of women's social limitations is expressed in the cynicism of this statement. What Eliot is telling us is that Dorothea has given up, that her acquiescence is not entirely her fault, but also results from social forces larger than herself. But this choice is now seen as an escape. Eliot does not forsake the ideal of caring for others; rather, she transforms it, in the "Finale," through the character of Dorothea, into a pacifier. Caring for others is now presented as conciliating women rather than enlightening them. It is offered to women as their only viable option in "an imperfect social state." By her treatment of Dorothea in the previous quotation, Eliot is encouraging women's involvement in a world where social relations are based on gain and power. But Eliot would have women do this without forsaking the virtues of duty and selflessness.

Success is possible in one of two ways. It may be self-acknowledged, in which case a strong belief and confidence in oneself is required, or it may be achieved through external public acclamation. Eliot feels the need for the latter form of success due to her consistent lack of self-confidence. For example, she writes in her journal:

What moments of despair that life would ever be made precious to me by the consciousness that I lived to some good purpose! It was that sort of despair that sucked away the sap of half the hours which might have
been filled by energetic youthful activity. . . .
and the same demon tries to get hold of me again when
ever an old work is dismissed and a new one is being
meditated. 9

Eliot appears to have little regard for her public, yet
she is dependent upon their acceptance and praise. Her dis-
dain for the public, coupled with her acknowledgement of her
desire for public acclaim is referred to in the following
quotation from a letter to Richard Owen:

One likes to be read by the many, for strong reasons,
impersonal as well as personal, but there is another
sort of encouragement in the sympathy of the few,
which is very much needed as an assurance that one has
not been writing down to the many. 10

Her lack of confidence is manifested in her practice of having
Lewes censor all reviews of her work. Lewes allowed only a
very few reviews to reach her, and he ensured that all these
were positive. About the time she is writing Middlemarch,
Lewes writes the following to Eliot's friend Sara Hennell:

After the publication of Adam Bede Marian felt deeply
the evil influences of talking and allowing others to
talk to her about her writing. We resolved therefore
to exclude everything as far as we could. No one speaks
about her books to her, but me; she sees no criticisms.
The sum total of success is always ascertainable, and
she is not asked to dwell on the details.

Besides this general conviction, there is a special
reason in her case -- it is that excessive diffidence
which prevented her writing at all, for so many years,
and would prevent her now, if I were not beside her to
encourage her. A thousand eulogies would not give her
the slightest confidence, but one objection would in-
crease her doubts. With regard to "Romola" she has
all along resisted writing it on the ground that no one
would be interested in it; but a general sense of its
not being possibly popular would not be half so dispir-
iting to her as the knowledge that any particular reader
did not like it. 11
From both Eliot's and Lewes's letter it would seem that accept-
tance by a chosen elite is all the acknowledgment Eliot
requires, yet her avoidance of all public criticism, good
or bad, reflects the extent to which Eliot wished for a uni-
versal public acclaim. Eliot needs to succeed, yet she invests
others not herself with the power to decide whether or not
she has succeeded. Therefore her sensitivity towards the
opinions of the public indicates the extent to which she
needs their support. She reconciled this contradiction by
placing the entire issue into a philosophical framework.
She writes in her journal:

If it were possible that I should produce better work
than I have done! At least there is a possibility that
I may make greater efforts against indolence and the
despondency that comes from too egotistic a dread of
failure. 12

The desire to "produce better works" is reconciled to the
desire for success and fear of failure by the common denom-
inator of hard work, which in the one instance creates the
work and in the other fights off her obsessive insecurity.
Eliot's philosophical belief in living for others has its
opposite side. She experienced extreme guilt as a young
woman due to her ambitions, which she constantly attempted
to redirect towards a more selfless and spiritual attitude. 13
In letters from her early life her concern for others appears
motivated and directed as much by a sincere caring as by
her own insecurity. There is also some question as to the
extent of Eliot's sincere concern for others, as her following
description of the Leeds townfolk suggests: "But the Leeds work people, we are told, are sadly coarse beer-soaked bodies, with pleasures, mostly of the brutal sort, and the mill-girls 'epicene' creatures that make one shudder." Specific examples, such as this one, are hard to come by in Eliot's work, but it is my own personal impression from reading Eliot that she often patronizes and condescends to the common man rather than exhibiting a sincere caring for him. Her guilt over her ambivalence towards the public, coupled with her need to consider herself worthy, may be seen to inspire her philosophy of selflessness as much as a real interest in others. It is possible to conclude that fear of her own ambition and what she really felt about others motivated a denial of self.

In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea reveals a similar contradiction between a desire for self-fulfillment and a sense of being obligated to live for others. When she first appears in the novel her energies are directed into planning cottages for her uncle's tenants. Celia refers to these plans as a "fad", to which Dorothea responds: "The fad of drawing plans! What was life worth when the whole of one's actions could be withered up into such parched rubbish as that?" This statement does convey the difference between the sisters: Celia responding to what is most obvious in reality and Dorothea to what lies beyond it. It also reveals the extent to which Celia is able to point out the egocentric dimensions of Dorothea's religious ardour. Dorothea is indulging in her plans as much for the egotistical satisfaction they will
give her as for the benefits they will give to the tenants.

Eliot is aware that a lack of credible options for a woman, particularly for one who is intelligent, and passionate, will force these traits to be expressed in unrealistic ways. What is lacking in reality is made up for through the imagination:

Dorothea could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving eternal consequences, with a keen interest in guimp and artificial protrusions of drapery. 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. 16

As has been stated, the misconceptions that Dorothea is initially perceived as holding, are, to a great extent, the result of the discrepancy between her desires and her reality. Dorothea is exceptional only in the degree to which she desires to be fulfilled. It is not enough for her to find a purpose in life, that purpose must have some connection to a truth far greater than herself and her immediate life. This desire turns her towards religion and the pursuit of knowledge, and thereby away from what she conceives of as the petty concerns of womanhood.

Through religion, Dorothea can justify the denial of her feminine and sexual self. The denial of her female self is never a conscious act, but it is inevitable that any sensual desires will be rationalized by, and made to fit into, her
religious framework. When she and Celia divide their mother's jewelery, Dorothea is attracted to the beauty of two particular pieces. The attraction contradicts her aversion to vanity and in order to reconcile her desires to her beliefs, Eliot has Dorothea subliminate her desires into her beliefs. "All the while her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy." 17

While Dorothea's religious fervor helps her to avoid the prevailing stereotype of woman, it also encloses her in a naive idealism. This idealism warps the manner in which she perceives the world around her and, in turn, her perceptions of herself in relation to that world. The irony is that Dorothea's idealism stems from the desire to discover the greatest "truth" in life and yet it is this very idealism which prevents her from perceiving the most obvious truths of her immediate reality. This is most clear in her thoughts on marriage.

Dorothea's desire to marry Casaubon relates to both her frustration with her present existence, and her desire to perform great deeds as much for self-glory as for the benefit of others. She is attracted to Casaubon because he stands for the enlightened individual she would like to become. She believes that there is a key to the real meaning of the universe and that she might gain that knowledge if she chooses the right teacher: 
But it was not entirely out of devotion to her future husband that she wished to know Latin and Greek. Those provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing ground from which all truth could be seen more truly. As it was, she constantly doubted her own conclusions, because she felt her own ignorance: how could she be confident that one-roomed cottages were not for the glory of God, when men who knew the classics appeared to conciliate indifference to the cottages with zeal for the glory? Perhaps even Hebrew might be necessary -- at least the alphabet and a few roots -- in order to arrive at the core of things, and judge soundly on the social duties of the Christian. And 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. 18

Dorothea's naivete is a direct outgrowth of the limitations of her education, a limitation which, in her case, causes her to believe that any knowledge which is relegated solely to the male portion of society, must naturally bring one closer to the truth. Her obvious mistake is to confuse knowledge and power. There is no body of knowledge which will eventually unlock the mysteries of the universe, though there is a body of knowledge which is essential to the achievement of any sort of power in society. Knowledge becomes a symbol of hierarchically structured society rather than the answer to it. Similarly, it is a significant description of the society that obscure and irrelevant learning, such as Casaubon's, is considered more valuable than the welfare of people.

But at this point in time, Dorothea expects Casaubon to reveal to her the mysteries of the universe. This knowledge fails to materialize. It is not so much that Casaubon does not give Dorothea information and factual knowledge, but more that this knowledge does not correspond to Dorothea's
own conception of meaning.

It is in Rome that Dorothea is first disillusioned with her marriage to Casaubon. When she finally gains the courage to analyse her relationship with him, she realizes that not only is she excluded from his world, but her own desire for knowledge is continually thwarted by "a mind in which years full of knowledge seem to have issued in a blank absence of interest or sympathy." 19 Unable to articulate what is wrong, either to herself or to him, Dorothea ends by condemning herself. Aware that Casaubon's work holds no meaningful discovery for herself, she resigns herself to being his help-mate. Dorothea no longer expects any meaningful discovery to emerge from her union with Casaubon but she determinedly attempts to fulfill her role as wife as best she can. Dorothea believes she is inadequate, because she sees herself as a mere victim of emotion, and because the significance of Casaubon's pursuits eludes her. Rather than questioning the reality of her original intention (i.e., to discover the meaning of the universe), she accepts both it and Casaubon's endeavours, and denies the relevance of her immediate feelings:

And by a sad contradiction Dorothea's ideas and resolves seemed like melting ice floating and lost in the warm flood of which they had been but another form. 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. 20
Through meeting Will and the subsequent return of faith in herself, Dorothea begins to realize the importance and the relevance of her own emotions. And it is through her feelings that she comes to realize her connection to her fellow man. Dorothea's intellectual pursuits dissipate in relation to her own disillusionment with her marriage to Casaubon. Once she steps back from the original intellectual concerns that tied her to Casaubon, she realizes that there is nothing apart from duty to take their place. Emotional as well as intellectual communication is missing.

While Dorothea has desired to find a purpose in life, she has assumed that she can only do so through or with the help of a man. Therefore, whatever else this purpose will involve, the prerequisites of marriage, i.e., affection and duty, must first be fulfilled. Dorothea never contemplates that she may be able to live a purposeful life on her own, and when she does attempt to do so after Casaubon's death, she discovers most of her constructive options closed. It is no wonder then that the woman is obsessed with her ability to succeed in the role of dutiful wife. Shortly before Middlemarch was published Eliot wrote the following in a letter:

We women are always in danger of living too exclusively in the affections; and though our affections are perhaps the best gifts we have, we ought also to have our share of the more independent life—some joy in things for their own sake. It is piteous to see the helplessness
of some sweet women when their affections are disappointed--because all their teaching has been, that they can only
delight in study of any kind for the sake of a personal
love. They have never contemplated an independent de-
light in ideas as an experience which they could confess
without being laughed at. Yet surely women need this
sort of defence against passionate affection even more
than men. 21

It would appear that Eliot had written this passage with
Dorothea in mind, so completely does it apply. Dorothea is
in a double bind. She is becoming aware of the intensity
of her emotions for the first time, while realizing that it
is in this strange new territory that she must make her home.
The intellectual pursuits which she once desired have been
determined by society and her husband to be inaccessible.

Casaubon's disregard of what is most important to Doro-
thea might have been less painful to her if there had been a
degree of affection or appreciation in their relationship;
but along with intellectual companionship, affection was
lacking:

If he would have held her hands between his and lis-
tened with the delight of tenderness and understanding
to all the little histories which made up her experi-
ience, and would have given her the same sort of
intimacy in return, so that the past life of each could
be included in their mutual knowledge and affection--
or if she could have fed her affection with those child-
like caresses which are the bent of every sweet woman,
who has begun by showering kisses on the hard pate of
her bald doll, creating a happy soul within that wood-
erness from the wealth of her own love. That was
Dorothea's bent. 22

When it is obvious that Casaubon is unable to respond with
the affection that Dorothea now needs, she is ready to take
on the full responsibility for the caring in the relationship. She is too afraid to confront the fact that there is no communication on any level between them. Dorothea is no longer confident that she knows what is best for herself. She looks for any way to maintain the equanimity of their relationship, so that she can preserve something to hold on to. After their first argument it is Dorothea who, "in her need for some manifestation of feeling ... was ready to exaggerate her own fault," and asks for Casaubon's forgiveness. 23 Dorothea is aware that her marriage is a failure but she cannot leave. In marrying Casaubon she has committed herself to the ideal of love and marriage and not to a person, and it is to this ideal that Dorothea is prepared to martyr herself. Her need for a purpose in life ties her to Casaubon as much as the bond of matrimony, and if she has to deny herself for some one else in order to create a purpose, she is prepared to do this.

Writing again around the time of Middlemarch, this time in a letter to Sara Hennell, Eliot states:

It is one thing to love because you falsely imagine goodness—that belongs to the finest natures—and another to go on loving when you have found out your mistake. But married constancy is a different affair. I have seen a grandly heroic woman who out of her view as to the responsibilities of the married relation condoned everything, took her drunken husband to her home again and again, and at last nursed and watched him into penitence and decency. ... But there may be two opinions even about this sort of endurance i.e., about its ultimate tendency, not about the beauty of nature which prompts it. This is quite distinct from mere animal constancy. It is duty and human pity. 24
While there is no doubt, either in the above quotation or in *Middlemarch*, that Eliot does respect and agree with the principle of self-sacrifice, what is in question is "its ultimate tendency". Through Dorothea's and Lydgate's marriages, Eliot attempts to look at two examples of dutiful love. In the case of Dorothea, marriage to Casaubon starts off as the maintenance of an ideal and an exercise in duty, and ends by forcing Dorothea to come to a greater awareness and understanding of herself. Dorothea goes from a purely imaginative sense of the world to a recognition that each human being exists independently of all others, each perceives the world in his or her own distinctive way. The frustration of her own desires in marriage forces her to reevaluate herself and her beliefs, but most importantly it forces her to perceive others as unique individuals and not as extensions of her own dreams and desires:

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she could devote herself to Mr. Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctiveness which is no longer reflection but feeling -- an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects -- that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference. 25

Dorothea is unable to significantly shape her marriage to Casaubon, due to her general lack of personal awareness at the beginning of the novel. During her marriage she is con-
fused about the discrepancies between her own needs and Casaubon's demands. This confusion, along with her innate compassion, prevents her from leaving Casaubon or striking out against him, even when her own needs are continually frustrated. Instead Dorothea acts out the role of the dutiful wife, concerned more with the fact that she is unable to satisfy Casaubon, than with his inability to give to her. Not until Casaubon, in a fit of despondency concerning his approaching death, spurns the affection that Dorothea offers, does she allow her feelings for herself to emerge:

"What have I done--what am I--that he should treat me so? He never knows what is in my mind--he never cares. What is the use of anything I do? He wishes he had never married me." ... If he had drawn her towards him, she would never have surveyed him--never have said, "Is he worth living for?" but would have felt him simply a part of her own life. Now she said bitterly, "It is his own fault, not mine." In the jar of her whole being, Pity was overthrown. Was it her fault that she had believed in him--had believed in his worthiness? -- And what, exactly, was he? -- She was able enough to estimate him--she who waited on his glance with trembling, and shut her best soul in prison, paying it only hidden visits, that she might be petty enough to please him. In such a crisis as this, some women begin to hate. 26

Dorothea's anger has come too late, for though she is finally able to acknowledge her true feelings she has already established a relationship with Casaubon based on her own compassion and his pain and fear. "The noble habit of the soul" reasserts itself in her, and Dorothea once again submits herself to her ideals. It is at this point that Dorothea becomes the wife described in Eliot's letter to Sara Hennell, who
nurses and watches her husband. But Casaubon does not respond to Dorothea's care with penitence and decency. Instead, he makes a demand on Dorothea which will link her to him, even after he is dead.

Casaubon's final request is that Dorothea will agree, unconditionally, to carry out his wishes after his death. Dorothea suspects that Casaubon desires her to finish the work he has started. Her response reflects her reticence both to involve herself in a work she does not believe in and to place her will unquestionably in the hands of another:

"You refuse?" said Casaubon, with more edge in his tone. "No, I do not yet refuse," said Dorothea, in a clear voice, the need of freedom asserting itself within her; "but it is too solemn--I think it is not right--to make a promise when I am ignorant what it will bind me to. Whatever affection prompted I would do without promising." 27

Such a request is potentially a question of life or death for both. Dorothea fears that a denial would either hasten Casaubon's death through worry and pain, or at the very least, make his extended life a misery to them both. For Dorothea a "yes" means enslavement to a cause that has long ceased to be her own.

Yet, having denied herself for so long, submission comes easier than rebellion. Dorothea is about to answer yes, remaining loyal to her own sense of duty rather than to her own desires.

Neither law nor the world's opinion compelled her to this--only her husband's nature and her own compassion, only the ideal and not the real yoke of marriage. She
saw clearly enough the whole situation, yet she was fettered: she could not smite the stricken soul that entreated hers. If that were weakness, Dorothea was weak. 28

Eliot does not force Dorothea to live with the results of her self-denial; rather Eliot has Casaubon die. But Dorothea's guilt and submissive attitude remain until she learns of the codicil. At this point she perceives their entire relationship from a different perspective. The chasm between what Casaubon aspired to and the reality of his life, more than the actual will itself, revolts Dorothea. She finally realizes that her own self, which she has denied, is worthier than the person she had submitted to:

The grasp had slipped away. Bound by a pledge given from the depths of her pity, she would have been capable of undertaking a toil which her judgement whispered was vain for all uses except that consecration of faithfulness which is a supreme use. But now her judgement, instead of being controlled by duteous devotion, was made active by the embittering discovery that in her past union there had lurked the hidden alienation of secrecy and suspicion. 29

Dorothea entered marriage with the belief that it would unite her ideals and her reality. In fact it destroyed her ideals and changed her concept of reality. Dorothea considered herself the prime mover in her own life before she was married. But by the time of Casaubon's death she has come to feel powerless in relation to forces larger and stronger than herself. Dorothea would have been unable to have stated to Casaubon her desire not to continue his work after his death. Part of Dorothea's predicament emerged from her desire to base
her life on her belief in compassion and love, only to discover that it is these qualities that were being used against her. Casaubon desired control over Dorothea and he used Dorothea's compassion and love to maintain his supremacy. An example of this was his last "request".

Freed by the codicil from any lingering guilt or obligation which might have tied her to Casaubon, Dorothea is able to resume her own life. Dorothea returns to being the strong, self-assured individual she was before her marriage. But it is now with a difference. Dorothea has grown towards a new understanding of herself through her marriage to Casaubon. By acknowledging the differences that separate people into the individuals they are, Dorothea has gained a new sensitivity and perception concerning the world around her.

Spacks writes of the nineteenth century women novelist's portrayal of the contradictory condition of marriage:

19th Century women, if women novelists are to be believed, share a dream of dependency. Gratified, it may give them the opportunity of control; or it may lead to the recognition that it involves some fundamental denial of self. The woman's dependency may bring mastery or misery; her human need for relationship can become for her a source of torment. The torment exists whether or not the need is gratified: these novels reflect woman's difficulty in accepting her condition --but also the ways in which she can exploit to her own purposes the consequences of social oppression, finding freedom and power in the most unlikely situations.

In Middlemarch, woman is shown as controlling and being controlled by marriage. Dorothea is controlled by the demands of her husband, but her own "feminine" ideals of duty and compassion subject her to a total oppression. Rosamond per-
ceives marriage from a perspective of gain and social prestige. She manipulates Lydgate's romantic concepts of womanhood and compassion to ensure her own control over a relationship which she perceives as existing to fulfill her own desires. Both women go into marriage with misconceptions; in both marriages one partner must yield to the other; in both marriages the considerate person yields and is in turn manipulated. Eliot is not supporting the actions of Casaubon or Rosamond, but she is acknowledging the lack of power compassion has in a society based on power and gain. Here for the first time Eliot questions the relevancy and effectiveness of the philosophy she has hitherto accepted without question. It is not that Eliot questions "the nature that prompts it", but again, rather "its ultimate tendency". In the case of Lydgate: "he had almost learned the lesson that he must bend himself to her nature, and that because she came short in her sympathy, he must give more." 31

The position of power that the woman acquires in marriage is related, at least in part, to the manner in which the male perceives her. How the male sees his intended bride or lover depends upon his perception of himself. The woman becomes either the reaffirmation of his own self-image or the substitute for those things he considers lacking in himself. In describing the two major marriages in Middlemarch, Eliot explores the mechanics of idealistic projection and reflection. Both Lydgate and Casaubon possess a very clear image of who and what their wife is, and in both cases this
image is tied directly to the husband's sense of his own identity. Lydgate's initial attraction to Rosamond is based on a concept of beauty with which he desires to furnish his environment. Lydgate's image of a woman is someone in whose presence he can reaffirm his own sense of breeding and class:

Lydgate felt sure that if ever he married, his wife would have that feminine radiance, that distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous, being moulded only for pure and delicate joys. 32

It is not surprising that Rosamond and Lydgate are attracted to one another. Rosamond is attracted to Lydgate as she desires one who will simultaneously grant her prestige and social distinction (as a husband from a good family surely will) and who perceives her in the same light as she perceives herself— as the most prominent graduate from Mrs. Lemon's Finishing School. An important qualification of Lydgate's love for Rosamond is the belief that the classic beauty's refinement extends to her intelligence as well. For Lydgate, the female must epitomize in her physical person all of the characteristics of refined beauty and all the compassion and wisdom of the ages in her character. Physical beauty is considered an exact indication of what lies inside the individual. Because Mary Garth is plain Lydgate disregards her as he thinks it unlikely that anything of greater interest might lie inside her. While with Rosamond
if falling in love had been at all in question, it would have been quite safe with a creature like this Miss Vincy, who had just the kind of intelligence one would desire in a woman—polished, refined, docile, lending itself to finish in all the delicacies of life, and enshrined in a body which expressed this with a force of demonstration that excluded the need for other evidence.

Rosamond is aware that she fulfills the image of her day of what is both desirable and refined. As a result she is totally aware of her value and her power. In her role of the refined coquette Rosamond verifies the values that her society has established for the woman, and uses these same values to ensnare the men who not only help create the values but are susceptible to them as well. In comparing Dorothea to Rosamond, Eliot plays not so much on the way the women perceive each other, but rather on the way the male characters perceive them. In view of the opposing values they stand for the women become "signifiers" for the men. For example, Mr. Chichely makes the following statement about Dorothea:

Yes, but not my style of woman: I like a woman who lays herself out a little more to please us. There should be a little filigree about a woman—something of the coquette. A man likes a sort of challenge. The more of a deadset she makes at you the better.

Chicheley's statement reveals his superficiality, and that of those men who make the same sort of preference on the basis of superficial observation.

The ultimate power that Lydgate grants Rosamond through their marriage is a direct result of his own misconceptions about her personality. These misconceptions have been formul-
ated through his tendency to perceive in Rosamond what he would like to see. Lydgate is unable to conceive that Rosamond might have her own "equivalent center of self". He is also under the illusion that Rosamond's inward soul will reflect her outward beauty. Lydgate's tendency to see Rosamond in a particular way is coupled with Rosamond's belief in the same image of woman. Both of their conceptions of woman are based on appearances rather than on an "internal" reality. By the time Lydgate is aware of his mistakes, Rosamond has already established the basis of control in the relationship:

There was gathering within him an amazed sense of his powerlessness over Rosamond. His superior knowledge and mental force, instead of being, as he had imagined, a shrine to consult on all occasions, was simply set aside on every practical question. He had regarded Rosamond's cleverness as precisely of the receptive kind that became a woman. He was now beginning to find out what that cleverness was--what was the shape into which it had run as into a close network aloof and independent. No one quicker than Rosamond to see causes and effects which lay within the track of her own tastes and interests.

Casaubon perceives Dorothea as Lydgate does Rosamond: in terms of appearances. Due to Rosamond's coquettishness and Dorothea's goodness, the women have very different images. But the reasons for the two men being attracted to the women are very similar. Casaubon makes the following assessment of his relationship to Dorothea:

(Mr. Casaubon was nervously conscious that he was expected to manifest a powerful mind). . . . A wife, a modest young lady, with the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex, is sure to think her husband's mind powerful.
Casaubon desires a woman to make the twilight of his life comfortable; he desires someone who can help with the menial aspects of his work. Most importantly he wants someone who will share his own high opinion of himself and offer reassurance when the outside world is critical. Dorothea, due to her keen desire for knowledge and her leaning towards the spiritual, is a natural choice for Casaubon. Casaubon perceives only those aspects of Dorothea that substantiate his needs:

Mr. Casaubon, too, was the centre of his own world; if he was liable to think that others were providentially made for him, and especially to consider them in the light of their fitness for the author of a "Key to all Mythologies", this trait is not alien to us, and, like the other mendicant hopes of mortals, claims some of our pity. 37

Because of Casaubon's short-sighted appraisal of Dorothea, and his subsequent overlooking of her strength of character and her compassion, he misinterprets many of Dorothea's actions. As a result he is finally unable to trust her or her love.

But there is another form of idealistic love projection in Middlemarch, and it is a little harder to assess Eliot's position towards it. Will's love for Dorothea is dependent upon the same basis of self-projection and desire as the loves of Lydgate and Casaubon. Will is initially attracted to Dorothea's physical beauty, but it is a physical attraction which spreads into an adoration of her whole being. Will imposes upon Dorothea all of the romantic ideals of the age
and by doing so reveres her as one would an idol.

The remote worship of a woman throned out of their reach plays a great part in men's lives, but in most cases the worshipper longs for some queenly recognition, some approving sign by which his soul's sovereign may cheer him without descending from her high place. That was precisely what Will wanted. 38

Will's conception of Dorothea differs from Casaubon's and Lydgate's conception of their loved ones in two ways. First, Will's idealization is based upon what turns out to be a sincere love and an accurate understanding of Dorothea. Secondly, those qualities which Will idealizes in Dorothea are supported by Eliot.

Upon their first meeting in Rome, Will becomes the understanding companion that Dorothea needs during her marriage to Casaubon: "She felt an immense need of someone to speak to, and she had never before seen anyone who seemed so quick and pliable, so likely to understand everything." 39 This facility of Will's is heightened by the fact that his is a special understanding of Dorothea. Both are idealistic by nature, but while Will possesses a knowledge of the world but lacks inspiration, Dorothea has the inspiration but lacks a suitable outlet for it. As their relationship develops Dorothea relies more heavily on Will's understanding while Will seems to discover the purpose of his life within Dorothea's idealism.

Will is drawn to Dorothea's goodness. The qualities of compassion and love that Dorothea uses as a guide for her life are the same qualities that Will first idealizes in
Dorothea and then comes to appreciate as an integral part of her character. Since these are also the qualities that Eliot seems to appreciate in Dorothea it would appear that Eliot supports Will's idolization of Dorothea. Central to this point is Eliot's identification with Dorothea which is verified by Lewes' following statement to Blackwood:

Surely Dorothea is the very cream of lovely womanhood. She is more like her creator than any one else and more so than any other of her creations. Only those who know her (Dodo—or her creator) under all aspects can have any idea of her. 40

But by his act of worshipping Dorothea, Will becomes analogous to Casaubon and Lydgate. He is projecting an image onto the loved one. And like Rosamond and herself in relation to Casaubon Dorothea verifies the projected image by believing in it herself. Part of what Will worships in Dorothea is her belief in "the good and the beautiful". This belief is:

that by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't 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. 41

Dorothea has been constrained from fulfilling her aspirations by the limitations placed upon her sex and by her marriage to Casaubon. As a result her belief in life is far more transcendental than Will's for she has been unable to find the meaning she seeks in her reality. Dorothea has therefore looked to a power beyond her own world in order to retain her innermost beliefs. Yet the extent to which Dorothea
strives to remain true to her own moral code gives Will a grounding and a faith in his own idealism. Will's discovery of Dorothea allows him to synthesize his poetic ideals in a living creature. She is both a model and an inspiration to him. "He was conscious of a generous movement, and of verifying in his own experience that higher love poetry which had charmed his fancy." 42

The problem with Dorothea's philosophy is that it very often leads to her sacrificing herself for others and thereupon being misused. An example of this exists in Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon, where in attempting to remain faithful to her belief she dedicated herself to a life of self-sacrifice. As in the case with Casaubon, Dorothea negated her own needs and desires in order to fulfill her conception of what was right. By admiring that aspect of Dorothea which is based upon her belief in "the good and the beautiful", Will is unconsciously supporting Dorothea's negation of herself. Part of what Dorothea must negate is her sexuality. As model for the "true and the beautiful" she is forced to remain outside of life—out of reach of man and physical, sexual love. Eliot does return Dorothea to the land of the living and to the arms of Will, and up until the "Finale" this union appears a satisfactory fulfillment of Dorothea's needs and desires. The reader is assured of this by the sincerity of Will's love for Dorothea and also by Dorothea's need to give herself to another. But the "Finale" questions the suitability of this union by conveying the sense of Dorothea as the queen
Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done.

The discrepancy in the perception of Will and Dorothea’s marriage occurs because Dorothea substitutes for her desire to create her own "epic life" a desire to love and live for another. Dorothea no longer strives towards her own purpose in life, but assumes Will's. Though Will's purpose in life is very much a result of Dorothea's own strivings, Dorothea allows herself to become the shadowy inspiration to his worldly concerns and no longer desires an active part in them herself. In exchange for giving up her own worldly aspirations, Dorothea is given love and security:

No life would have been possible to Dorothea which was not filled with emotion, and she had now a life filled also with a beneficent activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and marking out for herself.

The bitterness contained in the above statement results from Dorothea's self-betrayal (as well as from the apparently unconscious betrayal of Dorothea on the part of Eliot). Middlemarch describes the process of personal growth which Dorothea experiences through her marriage to Casaubon. Dorothea enters the marriage with the belief that she will gain enlightenment and fulfillment through sacrificing herself to another. Dorothea leaves this marriage with the
realization that there is no such thing as a "key to the universe", and that sacrificing oneself for another does not necessitate fulfillment. The problem in Middlemarch occurs when Dorothea betrays her own growth by duplicating the role she plays in her marriage to Casaubon in her marriage to Will. We are informed that Will and Dorothea have a marriage based on love and understanding. It is this fact that makes their marriage a positive resolution to the novel. But by the Finale their marriage is viewed in respect to Dorothea's sacrifices. By sacrificing herself to Will, so that he may fulfill her aspirations, Dorothea is locked back into a relationship similar in attitude to the one she had with Casaubon. As the narrator, Eliot blames society for Dorothea's fate:

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. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it. 45

But apart from the "Prelude" and "Finale", Eliot avoids taking on major social issues. Instead she has concentrated on the interpersonal relationships between her characters and in Dorothea's particular case, the problem of self-sacrifice versus self-fulfillment.

Eliot's use of society as the major cause of Dorothea's lack of self-fulfillment becomes a scapegoat measure ignoring
the real issue at hand. The real issue is Dorothea's need to sacrifice herself for another and the fact that this need is an integral part of Dorothea's philosophy of the "good and beautiful". Rather than examining how self-sacrifice is the natural outcome for an image of woman that is all-loving and forgiving, Eliot shifts the problem to the limitations of society which will not enable a woman to fulfill herself in the working world. While this is true, it is outside of the immediate concerns of the novel, therefore clouding the real issues discussed.
FOOTNOTES

3 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 3.
4 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 3.
5 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 4.
6 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 611.
7 Eliot, Middlemarch, pp. 610, 613.
8 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 610.
9 Redinger, p. 54.
11 Eliot, Letters, II, 276-77.
14 Eliot, Letters, IV, 476.
15 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 27.
16 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 6.
17 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 10.
18 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 47.
19 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 146.
20 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 147.
22 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 147.
23 Eliot, Middlemarch, pp. 156-57.
30 Spacks, p. 95.
Middlemarch ends with Dorothea having to make a choice between creating a life for herself or living for and with another. Due to Dorothea’s personal needs, love attains a priority over "career" concerns. She appears to have been unable to have had both marriage and career and as a result she was forced to make a choice. In Daniel Deronda personal fulfillment for the female is again seen as a choice between career and marriage. But this time, for two out of the three major female characters, the emphasis is on "career" rather than marriage. In the nineteenth century occupational options for women outside the home were limited, as was appropriate education to prepare women for a broader job market. As has been mentioned in previous chapters, those alternatives that did exist duplicated the demands of motherhood and marriage. A woman was therefore forced to seek a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment only in relation to her capacity to feel love, compassion and duty.

While Eliot refrained from involving herself in the women's movement the one issue she was prepared to speak out about was education. A lack of training prevented Dorothea from fulfilling any of her "plans" outside of marriage, and marriage itself can eventually be viewed by the reader with some skepticism. In Daniel Deronda the lack of education becomes a more crucial issue. Talent is offered in this book as an
alternative to marriage, if a woman does not have an education. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot examines talent through the novel's three main female characters: Gwendolen, Mirah and the Princess. Gwendolen, who has neither education nor talent, is forced by social convention and her own poverty to marry. Mirah has talent and within a particular line of work--theatre--has education. But she spurns her talent and desires the security and warmth of a loving home life. The Princess has talent, money and marriage. She spurns the last and, without any consideration of the second, chooses the first as her only interest. From a triangular base of marriage, education and talent, Eliot investigates the possibilities of living with no interest in love or compassion but rather with the desire for personal power and achievement. Talent operates as an appropriate vehicle for personal desire, since it can accommodate the need for public acclamation along with the need for personal fulfillment.

Mirah exists as the typical Eliot character; she is a woman who lives entirely for others. Yet, even though they stand for the opposing quality of self-fulfillment, Gwendolen and the Princess appear far more vivid and convincing than Mirah does. Gwendolen does not desire marriage, nor does she equate marriage with love or living for others. Rather, marriage exists for Gwendolen as social advancement and financial security at its best, and an intrusion on one's freedom and an entrance into monotony at its worst:
That she was to be married some time or other she would have felt obliged to admit; and that her marriage would not be of a middling kind, such as most girls were contented with, she felt quietly, unargumentatively sure. But her thoughts never dwelt on marriage as the fulfillment of her ambitions; the dramas in which she imagined herself a heroine were not wrought up to that class. To be very much sued or helplessly signed for as a bride was indeed an indispensable and agreeable guarantee of womanly power; but to become a wife and wear all the domestic fetters of that condition, was on the whole a vexatious necessity. Her observation of matrimony had inclined her to think it rather a dreary state, in which a woman could not do what she liked, had more children than were desirable, was consequently dull and became irrevocably immersed in humdrum. Of course marriage was social promotion; she could not look forward to a single life; but promotions have sometimes to be taken with bitter herbs--a peerage will not quite do instead of leadership to the man who meant to lead; and this delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead.

In relation to the characterization of the female that Eliot has established in prior novels, the reader is prepared to react to Gwendolen with impatience and contempt. Her total self-absorption and scheming opportunism place her in the company of Rosamond. But there is another element to Gwendolen that raises her above Rosamond and makes her analagous to Dorothea. This element is Gwendolen's "humanness".

We first meet Gwendolen at a gambling casino. The description of the casino and its inhabitants is intended to convey an "evil" air:

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

This "evil" air is consciously extended to Gwendolen:
Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents? 3

Gwendolen's ambiguous nature is described more and more in this first chapter in terms of serpentine characteristics, indicating a dominance of the evil over the good. But it is finally not aversion but attraction that one feels for Gwendolen. She is a totally vibrant and alive character. Eliot creates depth for her by supplying the reasons for Gwendolen's selfishness as well as documenting her attempt at personal growth. Commenting on Eliot's attraction to this character, Neil Roberts in his book, *George Eliot, Her Beliefs and Her Art*, states that Gwendolen has "possessed the novelist, and thus gained her independence." 4 Further on he claims that Gwendolen is Eliot's last and greatest study in egotism. This statement, however, needs qualification. . . . Rosamond does inspire a kind of horror, as of a creature not quite fully human—a horror of vacancy, of nullity. . . . It remained for George Eliot to portray egotism as a human condition—fully, vigorously and sympathetically human; not an absence but a misdirection of vitality and passion. 5

It is the "vitality and passion" that gives Gwendolen her force of attraction and power; the extent to which Eliot appears to be "possessed" by her marks an interesting development in the author's work. By allowing a major female character to appear simultaneously fascinating and opportun-
istic Eliot is forcing upon herself a confrontation of her beliefs in selflessness with her opposing belief in one's need for self-fulfillment. Gwendolen resembles Eliot's earlier character, Mrs. Transome, but the former achieves a validity that Mrs. Transome never had.

Like Gwendolen, Mrs. Transome is a powerful person caught within a woman's restrictions. Like Gwendolen she inspires respect as well as dislike from those around her. But in the final evaluation she is dissimilar to Gwendolen. We are attracted to Gwendolen, but we are not attracted to Mrs. Transome. Power perverted and repressed in Mrs. Transome becomes bitterness and authoritarianism:

She had begun to live merely in small immediate cares and occupations, and, like all eager minded women who advance in life without any activity of tenderness or any large sympathy, she had contracted small rigid habits of thinking and acting, she had her "ways" which must not be crossed, and had learned to fill up the great void of life with giving small orders to tenants.

The psychology of Mrs. Transome's negativity emerges mainly from her pain of frustrated maternalism. While Mrs. Transome is admired for her strength of character, Eliot undercuts this strength by implying that without the balance of sympathy and tenderness which caring for others develops, woman's strength will become perverse. The result, in this particular instance, is that we perceive Mrs. Transome as pathetic. We do not respect her strength because it is misdirected into authoritarianism, though this misdirection is understandable due to her misfortunes in love. But her misfor-
tunes in love cause both her strength and her weakness to be perceived as pathetic, because no matter what she does she will never be able to gain the love of the two men she most desires:

She was not cruel, and could not enjoy thoroughly what she called the old woman's pleasure of tormenting, but she liked every sign of power her lot had left her. . . . If she had only been more haggard and less majestic, those who had glimpses of her outward life might have said she was a tyrannical, gripping harridan, with a tongue like a razor. No one said exactly that; but they never said anything like the full truth about her, or divined what was hidden under that outward life—a woman's keen sensibility and dread, which lay screened behind all her petty habits and narrow notions, as some quivering thing with eyes and throbbing heart may lie crouched behind withered rubbish.

No matter how powerless or defeated she appears, Gwendolen is never pathetic. Whereas Mrs. Transome hides her emotions because of problems in love, Gwendolen discovers the need for love through the agonies of her marriage to Grandcourt. It is her ability to use a negative situation to grow rather than to close off, that adds to her strength of character.

The most important similarity between Gwendolen and Mrs. Transome is the connection between "will" and sexuality. In both characters Eliot exposes woman's powerlessness by granting the men around them power. Though this is a true reflection of many of the male/female relationships she describes, it is, all the same, a perception that is based on woman's propensity for being victimized emotionally as well as socially due to their accepted stereotyped role. Mrs. Transome's reflections on Esther's fate infer a nine-
teenth century "catch 22":

A woman's love is always freezing into fear. She wants everything, she is secure of nothing. This girl has a fine spirit--plenty of fire and pride and wit. Men like such captives, as they like horses that champ the bit and paw the ground: they feel more triumph in their mastery. What is the use of a woman's will?--if she tries, she doesn't get it, and she ceases to be loved. God was cruel when he made woman.

Gwendolen's contradictions and her particular form of "negative" fascination are described by Eliot as a direct consequence of the economic and social restrictions she experiences as a woman. Gwendolen's choice of occupation is restricted by her education and her social status. Her choice, which is between whether to marry or not to marry, is further limited by her poor economic standing. Money and name do not necessarily go together in her society. Regardless of her financial standing Gwendolen is a young woman brought up to perceive herself as indomitable, due to both her innate sense of her own intelligence and force of character, and, more importantly, due to her physical attractiveness. This latter point is most important in a society where beauty is a tool for barter, a woman's power for advancement lying in her name and her beauty:

For I suppose that the set of the head does not really determine the hunger of the inner self for supremacy: it only makes a difference sometimes as to the way in which the supremacy is held attainable, and a little as to the degree in which it can be attained; especially when the hungry one is a girl, whose passion for doing what is remarkable has an ideal limit in consistency with the highest breeding and perfect freedom from the
sordid need of income. . . . 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 captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms and does nothing particular.

If Dorothea's contradiction is between living for herself or others, Gwendolen's is between fulfilling her own personal sense of ability and purpose or being tied to the necessity of marriage. Gwendolen feels forced into marriage due to economic pressures. But she believes that marriage will deny her self-fulfillment because the role of wife and mother proposed by social convention and morality opposes Gwendolen's conception of self-fulfillment. Gwendolen's image of the confinements of marriage and motherhood are largely the result of her own mother's experience. What is probably most surprising in the face of her mother's poverty and unhappiness after two husbands, is her mother's belief in the institution of marriage. When she speaks of its benefits to Gwendolen it is with the total unquestioning acceptance of what is to her the natural order of the world. In the following conversation Gwendolen states her objections to marriage and her desire to escape from the subjection of another:

"Well, but what is the use of my being charming, if it is to end in my being dull and not minding anything? Is that what marriage always comes to?"
"No, child, certainly not. Marriage is the only happy state for a woman, as I trust you will prove."
"I will not put up with it 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." 10

But while Gwendolen is consistent in not desiring a husband and allows Grandcourt to court her only on the basis of necessity, it is not until she discovers the existence of Lydia and has broken off with Grandcourt that Gwendolen thinks about an alternative to marriage. Having accepted in the past the inevitability of the limits of choice for her future, Gwendolen now out of necessity searches for an alternative; she decides upon the arts:

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. 11

Unfortunately Gwendolen does not possess enough talent to be able to support herself through an artistic career, and as a result of Klesmer's bluntness she is made aware of the harsh realities below the romantic surface of the arts.

Middlemarch starts to raise some serious questions about the necessity and the desirability of marriage, but it undercuts them by having the central character, Dorothea, find her final fulfillment solely in the state of matrimony. In light of this, the marriage of Lydgate and Rosamond is seen as a personal mismatch due to the weakness of the two involved, and not as a result of a fundamental weakness in the state of matrimony. Part of the problem with marriage in the nine-
teenth century is the emphasis given to its economic basis. In *Daniel Deronda*, particularly in the case of Gwendolen, marriage is considered an occupational alternative for the woman who suffers from a lack of suitable education, while the man, in turn, perceives woman as a possession which is acquired through the legality of matrimony. (True, we are given the reverse of this situation in the case of Klesmer and Miss Arrowpoint, but they are portrayed by Eliot as exceptions to the rule.) Even Mrs. Mallinger, while seemingly engaged in a marriage of love, untarnished by monetary concerns, perceives her role of wife and mother as a subservient one, a role in which she is somehow deservedly a victim of cosmic and social forces:

Lady Mallinger felt apologetically about herself as a woman who had produced nothing but daughters in a case where sons were required, and hence regarded the apparent contradictions of the world as probably due to the weaknesses of her own understanding. 10

Gwendolen has chosen her own form of escape via her determination to choose the kind of man who, rather than controlling her, will either let her control him or allow her to go her own way. Her initial choice of Grandcourt is on the basis of his totally unemotional response to life or herself. Such an absence indicates to Gwendolen that his interest will always be somewhat removed and his influence negligible. In a more imaginative moment she even assumes that his coldness will fit him for an adventurous life, thereby helping her to fulfill her own dreams of adventure and
excitement:

(Pause, during which Gwendolen thought 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.)...

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen speculated on the probability that the men of coldest manners were the most adventurous, and felt the strength of her own insight, supposing the question had to be decided.)

Gwendolen’s willfulness is not solely in relation to the opposite sex. It is a central part of her perspective on life. Her own sense of self merges with her identity as an attractive woman, resulting in her desire to control her destiny and to influence every aspect of her life. We first see her willfulness at the gambling tables where Deronda’s disapproving eye is used as an incentive for Gwendolen’s dramatic show:

She controlled herself by the help of an inward defiance, and without other sign of emotion than this lip-paleness turned to her play. . . . She had begun to believe in her luck, others had begun to believe in it: she had visions of being followed by a cortege who would worship her as a goddess of luck and watch her play as a directing augury. Such things had been known of male gamblers; why should not a woman have a like supremacy?  

Jerome Thale, in *The Novels of George Eliot*, points out that Gwendolen’s concern with will power is more complicated than a mere matter of controlling her destiny. It is also related to a strong desire to keep herself at a distance from any emotional demands from others, particularly where love is involved. Gwendolen appears to perceive love relationships as an infringement on her emotional/personal freedom.
The clearest example tying Gwendolen's fear of love and sexuality to her willpower occurs when she is with her cousin. What Gwendolen objects to in this relationship is the feeling of oppression such a "volunteered" love brings, when the feeling is not returned: "She felt passionately averse to this volunteered love." Her aversion is possibly based on her realization that she is forced to involve herself in Rex's emotions even when she feels no connection to them.

What Gwendolen appears to be responding to is the power that the male lover exerts over the beloved, through his declaration of love. As the beloved, the woman is ultimately required to give more than her body. The control that exists as long as a woman is holding back her love from a man is often lost once the suitor considers he has obtained the love he has sought. Courtship becomes a power struggle due to the social and political inequality of men and women. Gwendolen is passionate and she can love, but she desires power and she believes, like Deronda's mother, that to fulfill the yearnings for love is to deny the possibility of power. Therefore, for a man to approach Gwendolen sexually or lovingly is equivalent to an act of violence, for in either instance the self is threatened.

Gwendolen is too well aware of her position as manhunter not to realize that she is up for sale. Acknowledging her position as "commodity" she searches for the man who will demand that she give the least. Her cousin is a threat: his very idolization appears as sincere emotion. As such
it denies her herself in demanding a real love in return. She is afraid of losing all of herself in an emotionally demanding relationship. In contrast to Rex her husband not only offers her status and security but also a relationship wherein she may maintain her emotional self due to his apparent lack of love or desire. He is distant and cold.

Gwendolen perceives that Grandcourt desires her in the same manner she does him: as an attractive decoration. The two can supply one another with the physical environment out of which they can pursue their own interests. In her eyes Grandcourt is

adorably quiet and free from absurdities—he would be a husband to suit with the best appearance a woman could make. But what else was he? He had been everywhere, and seen everything. That was desirable, and especially gratifying as a preamble to his supreme preference for Gwendolen Harleth. He did not appear to enjoy anything much. That was not necessary: and the less he had of particular tastes or desires, the more freedom his wife was likely to have in following hers. Gwendolen conceived that after marriage she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly.

Gwendolen's naivete appears when she is unable to perceive that, similar to herself, Grandcourt is motivated by "will". Furthermore, she does not realize that it is her will and not her beauty which he desires to possess.

The most fascinating aspect of Gwendolen is her sexuality. Through Gwendolen, Eliot has investigated the nature of passion and desire in a woman who is not content to be a passive recipient of love, but who rather attempts to retain her strength and self-assertion in the arms of a man. Many
critics describe Gwendolen as frigid or as a latent homosexual. In contrast, I believe that Gwendolen is a sexually passionate woman. Her problem is that she is forced to live in a society which is bent on denying the existence of passion in women or in making sure that if it does exist, it is destroyed in order to maintain the subservient position of the female. Put another way, Gwendolen's responses to men and sexuality are very possibly healthy responses to an unhealthy situation. Jerome Thale appears for the most part to substantiate this position. He recognizes the connection between Gwendolen's fear of sexuality and her fear of losing her power:

For Gwendolen, as for Grandcourt, there is a parallelism between sexuality and will; or, to put it more exactly, sex is with both of them a metonymy for will. Gwendolen's fierce maidenhood comes from her feeling that lovemaking is not such an overture to the person as a kind of aggression against the will, which offers something that the will cannot handle. She seeks a kind of virginity of the will, in which the will is as inviolable as the body. Her fear of love is the most striking manifestation of such a feeling about the will. But her fear of death ... her fear of being alone, and of course her powerful desire for independence are also a recoil from things which the will cannot handle, which offer a challenge to its sufficiency. Though Gwendolen does not see the connection between fear and sexuality and her general desire for dominance, the two are closely related, and we feel at last that will is at the bottom of Gwendolen's difficulties.

Taking a somewhat different approach, Neil Roberts considers that Gwendolen is suffering from "an abnormality of egoism". He states in *George Eliot: Her Belief and her Art*:

Certainly Gwendolen is sexually abnormal, but this has
nothing to do with homosexuality. It is the abnormality of egoism, an aversion to other people in proportion to their passionate attachment to her, to the claims they implicitly make upon her. 18

I do agree that Gwendolen backs away from people in relation to their emotional demands upon her. I do not see this as an abnormality of egoism, but as earlier stated, I see it as rather a healthy reaction to an unhealthy situation. More importantly I contest Robert's assertion that she is sexually abnormal. Gwendolen is able to love Daniel Deronda emotionally and (if we are to believe her persistence), she could love him sexually. Eliot writes: "She had never before had from any man a sign of tenderness which her own being had needed, and she interpreted its powerful effect on her into a promise of inexhaustible patience and constancy." 19 It appears that Deronda is unique for Gwendolen is two ways. First, he is someone to whom Gwendolen is attracted. She is not, as in the case of Rex and Grandcourt, the disinterested object of someone else's desire. Secondly, Deronda is sensitive to her needs. Daniel poses no threat to her will as he is forcing nothing upon her that she does not already desire.

There is a comparison to be made between Dorothea's and Gwendolen's relationships with the opposite sex. Both enter destructive marriages which serve to enlighten them and which end in personal growth. As a result of their marriages both are drawn to a man who is understanding of their respective natures. The reason that Gwendolen is able to love Deronda is his ability to care for her in a manner that is in accor-
dance with her needs. His understanding of her contrasts with the cold power of Grandcourt or with the emotional demands of Rex, which come out of Rex's own desires and needs, rather than from an understanding and a mutual recognition of Gwendolen's. Deronda acknowledges the sense of self that is so important to Gwendolen, but he does so outside of, and in opposition to, the context of wealth, social security and power that had perverted her "vitality and passion" when she was with Grandcourt. Through Deronda, Eliot does allow Gwendolen a sense of growth and self-acceptance, but in contrast to Dorothea, Gwendolen is forced to achieve this sense outside of the convention of marriage. True, Gwendolen is seen as somewhat unfulfilled but considering what her alternatives are, it appears that Gwendolen is about as fulfilled as she could realistically hope to be given her situation.

_**Daniel Deronda**_ explores the possibilities of women living outside of established roles more than any of Eliot's other novels. But Eliot, by the nature of her own philosophical perspective, is still caught between the female who fulfills her own desires and the female who fulfills the desires of others. Nowhere is this conflict more clearly represented than in the "Jewish portion" of _Daniel Deronda_. Eliot uses this segment of the novel, (through her characterization of Mordecai and the eventual conversion of Deronda), to present an aspect of her moral philosophy of selflessness. This philosophy, and the conflict it immediately establishes in relation to her belief in self-fulfillment, are evident in a
conversation between Mordecai and Mirah concerning the parable of the Jewish maiden and the Gentile King.

As background to this parable, Mirah has just realized, through a process of soul searching, her love for Deronda. Her realization occurs in a way reminiscent of Dorothea and Will: through the inspiration of jealousy. Upon abandoning her typical spirituality to wallow in the secular world of jealousy Mirah feels guilt over both her jealousy and her desire for Deronda. She has moved from the impersonal, philosophical world of her brother and, as he describes it, the faith of her people, into the personal world of hate and desire.

There is no indication given by Eliot that Mordecai intuits the plight of his sister, yet he coincidentally embarks on a celebration of their faith which is followed by the above-mentioned parable. Mordecai’s description of his faith is important. Through it Eliot states her attraction to the Jewish religion. The parable also encapsulates the concept of duty and the Comtian notion of tradition. Mordecai starts with a discussion of the Shemah with its concern with "divine unity":

"The Shemah made our religion the fundamental religion for the whole world; for the divine Unity embraced as its consequence the ultimate unity of mankind... Now, in complete unity a part possesses the whole as the whole possesses every part: and in this way human life is tending toward the image of the Supreme Unity."

Mordecai goes on to state how this unity will allow man to exist at a spiritual level where all material possessiveness
vanishes and man is no longer caught in "the creeping paths of the senses." When Mirah states that she is inadequate to such a vision of the future, Mordecai embellishes on the particular fitness of women for this archetypal love: "And yet," said Mordecai, rather insistently, "women are specially framed for the love which feels possession in renouncing, and is thus a fit image of what I mean." 21 In the parable Mordecai then relates, the Jewish girl is seen as one who is able to sacrifice for the love of another, thus showing that women are particularly capable of loving unselfishly. The parable tells of a Jewish maiden who loved a gentile king so much that

she entered into prison and changed clothes with the woman who was beloved by the king, that she might deliver that woman from death by dying in her stead, and leave the king to be happy in his love which was not for her. 22

Mirah contradicts Mordecai and gives her own interpretation of the story as: "the girl wanted the king when she was dead to know what she had done, and feel that she was better than the other. It was her strong self wanting to conquer, that made her die." 23 When Mordecai suggests that the girl believes the king will never know Mirah responds:

You can make the story so in your mind, Ezra, because you are great, and like to fancy the greatest that could be. But I think it was not really like that. The Jewish girl must have had jealousy in her heart, and she wanted somehow to have the first place in the king's mind. That is what she would die for. 24
The parable and the resulting disagreement between Mordecai and Mirah creates an ambiguity for the reader. Where do Eliot's sympathies lie and what is the purpose of the parable? Mirah argues on behalf of the girl's secular emotions -- jealousy and desire. Mordecai's statement about the Shemah regarding the unity of mankind is similar to Eliot's belief in selflessness. Both state that it is only by overcoming one's personal desires that the philosophy of selflessness or the Shemah is possible. If Mordecai's side is taken the object of the parable would appear to be that we should learn to live for others rather than for ourselves, and in this way we will work towards "the image of the Supreme Unity." But if Mirah's is the voice of Eliot, then human fallibility is seen as part of the experiential process, from which one can grow. Learning and growing through one's fallibility would then be considered more important than martyr-like self-sacrifice. Like Eliot's own struggle between self-fulfillment and self-sacrifice, the discussion between Mirah and Mordecai over the parable is never clarified. The result is that Eliot's support appears ambiguously split between the two.

In an earlier passage in the novel Mordecai specifically refers to the female's suitability for love. It is a peculiar passage for in it Mordecai acknowledges the subservient role a female assumes in his culture while simultaneously extolling her virtues. This duality is reminiscent of Eliot's belief that it is through suffering that a woman's love emerges:
A man is bound to thank God, as we do every Sabbath, that he was not made a woman; but a woman has to thank God that he has made her according to His will. And we all know what He has made her—a child-bearing, tender-hearted thing, the woman of our people.

The problems inherent in Mordecai's description of the "tender-hearted", "child-bearing" Jewish female is personified in the Princess. Though the Princess has only a minor role in the novel, she makes an impact comparable to that of Gwendolen. Her portrayal of the Jewish female is in direct contradiction with the concept of Jewish womanhood that Mordecai describes. It also appears to be in direct contradiction to Eliot's belief, yet Eliot's attraction to the character is evident in the passionate strength of the Princess's words. The Princess has broken through all boundaries and definitions of acceptable womanhood. She does this first by desiring and acquiring power, and second, by totally disregarding the role of the loving female. In addition to both these points she is important because she perceives her struggle for power in direct relation to male domination. As a result of the first point, her desire and acquisition of power, the Princess is the only one of Eliot's female characters to be successful at an occupation that does not involve "looking after" others. The Princess was born with a talent which she developed in secrecy and with determination and which she finally used to acquire success, fame and power. Her own sense of struggle, as well as Eliot's interpretation of the forces the Princess must have had to fight
against, appears in the following quotation: "You are not a
woman: you may try but you can never imagine what it is to
have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the
slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out." 26

What is probably most shocking about the Princess is
her denial of her son and her lack of motherly love and
affection. Yet what ensures the reader's respect, if not
admiration, is her coolly objective logic. The Princess more
than any of Eliot's other characters allows herself to test
the limits of a certain form of experience and belief. She
denies the need to have or give affection:

"I don't mean to speak ill of myself," said the Prin-
cess, with proud impetuosity, "but I had not much
affection to give you. I did not want affection. I
had been stifled with it. I wanted to live out the
life that was in me, and not be hampered with other
lives." 27

True, the Princess is characterized as using her strength to
conquer what appears to be a growing fear, as death approaches,
that her decisions have not been the correct ones. But that
fear is overshadowed by the strength of her convictions and
the sense of new and original possibilities that she generates.
The Princess brings rejuvenating energy as she speaks out for
the need to acknowledge individuality. Through the creation
of her, Eliot concedes that it is not only the attitude
towards women's occupations that must be changed, but the
attitude towards women's supposed emotional make-up. With
passages like the following, Eliot appears to be opposing her
own beliefs in the selfless, loving woman:
Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women felt—or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others. When you reproach me in your heart for sending you away from me, you mean that I ought to say I felt about you as other women say they feel about their children. I did not feel that. I was glad to be freed from you.

The fact that the Princess plays such a minor role in the novel is possibly a result of Eliot’s desire to avoid the confrontation of her belief in selflessness with the need for self-fulfillment that the Princess personifies. Possibly as a balance to the Princess and possibly for the establishment of a dialectical opposition, Mirah is the Princess’s opposite in every respect but one. Mirah undercuts her talent, she clings to her religion, her main interest is her family and loved ones, and she is the epitome of the loving woman. But what the two Jewesses have in common are the domineering fathers from whom they both escape: Mirah by running away, the Princess through marriage.

A different pattern is established when the Princess is compared to Gwendolen. The Princess, like Gwendolen, has no desire for marriage, though unlike Gwendolen she has no apparent economic need. But while the latter only has a fairly ineffectual uncle and a totally submissive mother, the Princess was fathered by a dominating man:

I did not want to marry. I was forced into marrying your father—forced, I mean, by my father’s wishes and commands; and besides, it was my best way of getting some freedom. I could rule my husband, but not my father. I had a right to be free. I had a right to seek my freedom from a bondage that I hated.
Considering the patriarchal structure of Judaism, implied by Mordecai's last quotation, it is understandable that the Princess should be the female character who so clearly perceives the female struggle in terms of male domination. Eliot refuses to deal with this domination directly, creatively balancing it with the Jewish Deronda, who unites "manly" strength with a "woman's" compassion. But the Princess's words, "And when a woman's will is as strong as the man's who wants to govern her, half her strength must be concealment," place the male/female struggle out of the context of interpersonal conflict and into the generalized, impersonal struggle of men and women in Eliot's society.

In relation to their personal attributes Gwendolen and the Princess share everything but talent. It is lack of talent which forces Gwendolen always to perceive her future, (until the end of the novel), in terms of marriage. It is also due to lack of talent that Gwendolen's personal growth is perceived in terms of love. Talent and the possible resulting acquisition of fame might have created the same ego-centered and loveless individual that the Princess has become. But Gwendolen's egotism and preoccupation with will, which characterize her at the beginning of the novel, are tempered by her awareness of her own need for love. The opposite is true for the Princess whose talent mitigates the need for love, turning her further into herself instead.

Though Mirah has much in common with Gwendolen and the Princess, she does not operate in the novel as their counter-
part, since her stature is insignificant when compared to the other two. If Gwendolen and the Princess can be considered three-dimensional characters due to their strength of character and their individuality, Mirah is only two-dimensional. Mirah lacks a fully developed identity; she exists more as a caricature of the loving and vulnerable waif, than as a potential flesh-and-blood woman. Mirah is representative of so many of Eliot's previous loving and self-sacrificing females, yet unlike many of the others (e.g., Dorothea, Janet, and Maggie), Mirah lacks a distinctive personality apart from the characteristic gentleness. It is Deronda who, as a stronger and more dominant extension of Mirah, is used to point to a possible alternative to the concerns of personal power and success that both Gwendolen and the Princess advocate in different ways. Deronda exists as a combination of the Bede brothers, combining the sensitive understanding of Seth with the strength and purpose of Adam. While this thesis is dealing specifically with Eliot's female characters, Deronda will be given some attention as he epitomizes in this novel what the leading female did in all of Eliot's other novels, i.e., the innate wisdom and understanding of love. Eliot's female characters typically meet with problems in attempting to unite their desire for self-fulfillment with their need to live for others. Since these problems directly relate to the female sex, it appears that Eliot is insuring the success of the union of these needs and desires by placing them in a man. Deronda's philosophy of love recalls Feuerbach,
in that Deronda believes it is through our suffering that we gain the capacity to feel for others. Therefore we should perceive our negative experiences not with self-pity, but with openness to what we may learn from each experience. Deronda's philosophy is most clearly apparent in his relationship with Gwendolen. In response to a particularly desperate outpouring of Gwendolen's he states:

I suppose our keen feeling for ourselves might end in giving us a keen feeling for others, if, when we are suffering acutely, we were to consider that others go through the same sharp experience. That is a sort of remorse before commission. 31

By having a male rather than female character presenting her views on selflessness and love, Eliot has, in removing its female emphasis, emphasized love's "humanness". But in the process of doing this she also undercuts the female's need for personal accomplishment. An example of this is found in Deronda's interaction with Gwendolen. Gwendolen's willful egotism is part of what she has to transcend through the course of the novel. Deronda's advice on learning through one's mistakes and caring for others helps Gwendolen "grow". But Gwendolen's strong will and pride are what helped to motivate her beyond the normal role of the female. The final image of Gwendolen in Daniel Deronda is disquieting. She has exchanged her willfulness for an increased sensitivity to others and her resulting personal growth is marked by a loss of character. Gwendolen now appears both vulnerable and weak. The issue is not so much whether or not Gwendolen was better off
Before -- the sense that Gwendolen has in fact grown is proof enough that she has followed the right course -- but rather that Gwendolen's desire to fulfill herself is no longer an issue. The need to live for and with others is substituted for the issue of personal fulfillment.

The validity of the Gwendolen/Deronda relationship is its movement away from all that Grandcourt represents. Grandcourt epitomizes extreme self-centeredness, characterized by his concern with power, his total lack of feeling and his attention to his self-presentation. Gwendolen's initial attraction to Grandcourt is partially based on misinterpretation. But for the most part, it is based on Gwendolen's misunderstanding of herself. Eliot reveals Gwendolen's need for human love and understanding as greater than her need for the security of wealth and status through Gwendolen's awareness that the freedom implied by Grandcourt's wealth is a mirage. True freedom thus is posited as existing in the freedom of choice, in allowing one to fulfill one's real needs. Gwendolen initially sees her needs as opposed to the responsibilities and demands of love but, again through her relationship to Grandcourt, she realizes that her needs demand the love of a compassionate "man", in order to be fulfilled. Mordecai and Deronda epitomize belief in love and fellowship. Yet, the problem compassionate love proposes in respect to Gwendolen, and the position of the female in *Daniel Deronda*, is that due to the lack of viable options open to the woman, duty and compassion are reaffirmed at the expense of any at-
tempts to change the status quo.

By the end of the novel Gwendolen accepts the limitations of her position and redirects what will she has left to the development of her spiritual life. The movement from Gwendolen to Deronda is completed by Gwendolen's letter to Deronda on his wedding. Her letter marks her removal from the physical action in the novel and the redirection of her attention from her physical to spiritual reality: "I may live to be one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born ... if it ever comes true, it will be because you helped me." 32

Her letter also marks the removal of Deronda from England to his "homeland". Zionism gives Deronda a "father", a "homeland", and most importantly a purpose which validates his removal from England. To have forced Deronda to find in England the answer to his dissatisfaction with his life would have meant creating in England an equally satisfying answer to his spiritual search. But any such answer based in England would appear as obvious escapism from immediate social problems: those problems Eliot is unable to face -- those problems personified by Gwendolen's plight. Due to the fact that Eliot never develops a clear image of the life that Deronda is going to, Deronda's removal from England appears equally unrealistic. But on the surface, by leaving England Deronda has been able to unite his need to live for others with his own desire for personal fulfillment. The same union is not
feasible for Gwendolen and might not have been feasible for Deronda had he stayed in England. Gwendolen, as Dorothea before her, is unable to unite personal desire and a need to live for others because of the limitations imposed upon their sex. All of Eliot's heroines are forced to make a choice and it is a choice that appears justified in the face of their social situation. Women are shown to be inappropriately educated, dependent for the most part upon marriage for financial stability and those options they do have for personal fulfillment are limited. The most available option is marriage and it traditionally requires the woman to be self-sacrificing and dutiful. These qualities are therefore the most appropriate ones to desire for one's personal fulfillment -- if one happens to be a woman. Dorothea and Gwendolen desire something more or at least something outside of the boundaries of the traditional role of the woman and its subsequent emotional demands of love and sympathy. The Princess does achieve something else but it made clear that she has done so at the expense of her capacity to love or to be loved. Yet Daniel Deronda achieves both his emotional needs and his personal desires. He is also a man. The apparent limitations for women do not exist for him. His ability to unite what up to now have been conflicting aspirations in Eliot's fiction, proves that she did consider a union of these aspirations possible. His ability to unite previously conflicting values also points to the fact that she considered the main problem to be the social role of the female. But the fact that the
problem relates to the roles of the sexes and not to the incompatibility between self-fulfillment and living for others is a problem she alludes to but never deals with. Instead Eliot places her emphasis on the need to live for others, and not on the social limitations which make this a practically impossible union for women. By so doing she emphasizes that the need to live for others will lead to personal fulfillment, which, in turn, reaffirms the traditional role of the woman. The result, as mentioned earlier, is that her philosophy acts as a deterrent to any attempt to change the status quo.

Eliot rationalizes away the need for social change through her belief in the emphasis on the spiritual rather than the social life of man. This emphasis is comparable to Feuerbach's, as Marx was to point out. Marx criticizes Feuerbach's beliefs in the following rather lengthy, but pertinent, excerpt from *The German Ideology*:

Certainly Feuerbach has a great advantage over the "pure" materialists in that he realizes how man too is an "object of the senses". But apart from the fact that he only conceives him as an "object of the senses", not as "sensuous activity", because he still remains in the realm of theory and conceives of men not in their given social connection, not under their existing conditions of life, which have made them what they are, he never arrives at the really existing active men, but stops at the abstraction "man", and gets no further than recognizing "the true, individual, corporeal man", emotionally, i.e., he knows no other "human relationships" "of man to man" than love and friendship and even then idealized. He gives no criticism of the present conditions of life. Thus he never manages to conceive the sensuous world as the total living sensuous activity of the individuals composing it; and therefore when, for example, he sees instead of healthy men a crowd of scrofulous, overworked and consumptive starvelings, he is compelled to take refuge in the "higher perception" and in the ideal
"compensation in the species", and thus to relapse into idealism at the very point where the communist materialist sees the necessity, and at the same time the condition, of a transformation both of industry and of the social structure. 33

Like Feuerbach, Eliot avoids the social problems by retreating into "higher perception", for instance when she has Deronda leave England in an equation of his need for a moral purpose with his desire for a homeland.

Though Eliot recognizes faults in the political systems around her, she is unable to offer any constructive alternative forms of action in their stead. Her way out remains her amorphous belief in an inherent order of good and evil which lies at the base of the world.
CONCLUSION

There are two different criticisms which can be made of Eliot's attitude towards women. The first arises out of the criticism Marx levelled at Feuerbach, and has to do with Eliot's tendency to see women as creatures of love and duty. The second is a positive criticism, recognizing that in Eliot's historical time the issue of the status of women was of minimal concern. The result of this last criticism is that Eliot is unusual for her time both in terms of her own personal accomplishments and the extent of her understanding of the painful results of women's inequality, e.g., Janet of "Janet's Repentence".

Eliot's view of women as creatures of love and duty originates in her conceptions of the differences separating men and women. Considering women as physiologically different from men, and then attributing to the female's difference the quality of greater understanding, Eliot has imprisoned women within a doctrine of sympathy and love which serves to shackle them with their own deification. By centering on the moral issues of sympathy and love rather than on social concerns, Eliot appears to underestimate the powerful influence of society on the individual. In fact Eliot's conception of the loving female worked in conjunction with the accepted societal role of the female -- that of the traditional wife.
and mother -- as both Eliot's and society's conception of
the female depended upon love and duty.

But Eliot did not agree with the limitations placed upon
women in society, as her attitude towards women's education
proves. In her view, education was necessary in order for
women to find employment where needed and, regardless of their
monetary concerns, to find a purpose outside of home and
family. While Eliot recognized the physiological difference
between the sexes as important, she did believe that the
sexes possessed equal ability in a professional sense. As
far as employment was concerned, once educated, women should
be able to take their place beside the man. In her essay,
"Women in France", Eliot writes that women will be able to
take a new place in relation to men, once educated and able
to recognize and develop their true potential. Until this
happens a true marriage of souls cannot exist:

Let the whole field of reality be laid open to women as
well as to man, and then that which is peculiar in her
mental modification, instead of being, as it is now, a
source of discord and repulsion between the sexes, will
be found to be a necessary complement to the truth and
beauty of life. Then we shall have that marriage of
minds which alone can blend all the hues of thought and
feeling in one lovely rainbow of promise for the harvest
of human happiness. 34

In view of this quotation a conflict emerges between Eliot's
views of women's capacity to share the man's role in the
social world and Eliot's belief in the female's suitability
for sympathy and love. Eliot's personal concern with self-
fulfillment, and her recognition of women's need to possess
a purpose in life, force her, at least partially, to reexamine her belief in "female" love and sympathy.

She does this, to at least some extent, in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. In both these novels Eliot creates characters and situations which force a confrontation between her belief in selflessness and the need for self-fulfillment. The result of both appears to be an acknowledgement of the self-destructiveness which is the ultimate result of the female's self-denial. Yet Eliot's ability to perceive the negativity in self-denial is undercut by conclusions in the novels which avoid dealing with this issue. Maggie does not have to deal with the results of her decision not to marry Stephen because she is conveniently removed from the conflict by making the ultimate sacrifice of her life to save Tom. Dorothea's questionable marriage to Will is blamed on the existence of social forces which are never analysed, and Deronda leaves England to fulfill himself in a new homeland, leaving behind him Gwendolen and the problems which have forced her to resign herself to never fulfilling her desires.

The positive acknowledgment of how Eliot did move beyond the restrictions of her time, relates largely to Eliot's perception of herself as living outside of the "normal" female role. Eliot, as mentioned before, was unusual in her scholastic achievements. At the time of Eliot's first achievements the problem of women's status had only started to become an issue. By the time Eliot was asked by the leading feminists of her day to contribute to the women's movement, she had
already achieved some personal success on her own and tended to view the movement with some suspicion:

There is no subject on which I am more inclined to hold my peace and learn, than on the "Women Question". It seems to me to overhang abysses, of which even prostitution is not the worst. Conclusions seem easy as long as we keep large blinkers on and look in the direction of our own private path.

I have already emphasized the extent to which Eliot has avoided dealing with many major issues, concerning men and women alike, due to her taking a spiritual rather than a social emphasis. There is also the indication that because of her own career Eliot perceived herself inside rather than outside the professional world of her day. What is therefore important to note here are the positive effects that originated from Eliot's own sense of being outside of the major problems affecting women.

Eliot wrote as a person rather than as a woman. Because of this her writing contains what some have referred to as an androgynous character. Many later female writers have been inclined to concentrate on any and all issues with regard to their position as a female, limiting as a result the scope of their work. While Eliot concerned herself with the problems of women, one gets the sense that her perception is androgynous rather than sexist. In other words, in regard to the problems of female status, Eliot wrote from the position of one who did not consider herself a victim. Eliot often created in her writing women who were victims, for example: Maggie,
Janet, Dorothea. But, rather than indulging in their victimization these characters were discussed from an ultimately positive point of view. Eliot's heroines always succeed. Maggie may die, but she dies a heroine. Janet reforms herself and Dorothea learns enough from one bad marriage to make her next a success.

True, Eliot's belief that a woman is more naturally suited to the qualities of love and sympathy than a man caused her to substantiate a concept of woman which historically has been used to maintain male supremacy. But for the most part Eliot's beliefs came out of her past Evangelical faith and her interest in Feuerbach rather than from a chosen submission to the male sex. Therefore the important aspect of Eliot's approach to females is her emphasis on spiritual rather than social issues and not her apparent tendency to assume a sexist position.

Rather than emphasizing the somewhat faulty motives behind Eliot's "androgynous" perspective, it is important to emphasize the clarity of perception and thought characterizing her work, which women writers are struggling to acquire today: a creative style that is neither controlled by a male concept nor is in reaction to one.

It has often been noted that Eliot never created a female character equivalent to herself. This omission can be seen as the result of her own awareness of the peculiarities of her position. Sharing this opinion, Jenni Calder states:
If it seems that in George Eliot's novels the ultimate answer is very often retreat and compromise, whereas in her own life she did neither, this may reflect her own very intimate understanding of the difficulties. Social and moral pressures disadvantaged women. In George Eliot novels it is her heroines who have to compromise.

Redinger gives what may be an answer to Calder's point by stating:

George Eliot was automatically out of the struggle; her unique position as George Eliot and Mrs. Lewes made her so exceptional that the whole complex issue lost its relevancy when applied to her. She was sadly aware of this, as she showed in 1867, when she said to John Morley, who had asked her opinion of Mill's amendment to Gladstone's Reform Bill to give women the vote, "The peculiarities of my own lot have caused me to have idiosyncracies rather than an average judgement."

Both of these critics acknowledge Eliot's omission of a female character equal to herself. In response to this they both point to the discrepancy between Eliot's life and that of the average woman of her day. Because of this discrepancy, Eliot has no doubt created a more realistic fiction by not including a female character equivalent to herself. The harshest criticism that can be levelled at Eliot in regard to her stance towards women is that she is unable to accept how the basis of her philosophical perception (a belief in selflessness and duty), when related to the female, can act as a destructive rather than constructive philosophy. But more than anything else, Eliot goes beyond the boundaries of male and female in the brilliance of her perception and artistry.
FOOTNOTES


2 Eliot, Deronda, p. 37.

3 Eliot, Deronda, p. 35.


5 Roberts, p. 200.


8 Eliot, Felix Holt, p. 488.

9 Eliot, Deronda, p. 83.

10 Eliot, Deronda, p. 58.

11 Eliot, Deronda, p. 295.

12 Eliot, Deronda, p. 267.

13 Eliot, Deronda, p. 147.


15 Eliot, Deronda, p. 114.

16 Eliot, Deronda, p. 173.


18 Roberts, p. 209.


20 Eliot, Deronda, p. 802.


22 Eliot, Deronda, p. 803.
23 Eliot, Deronda, p. 803.
24 Eliot, Deronda, p. 802.
26 Eliot, Deronda, p. 694.
27 Eliot, Deronda, p. 688.
28 Eliot, Deronda, p. 691.
29 Eliot, Deronda, p. 689.
30 Eliot, Deronda, p. 695.
31 Eliot, Deronda, p. 507.
32 Eliot, Deronda, p. 882.
34 Eliot, Essays, p. 81.
37 Redinger, p. 358.
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