Her resentment against Felix gradually diminishes, and there grows in her a strong desire to understand his philosophy of life better, and to show him that she was not so petty as he thought her to be. In fact, 'now she had known Felix, her conception of what a happy love must be had become like a dissolving view. ... The favourite Byronic heroes were beginning to look something like last nights decoration seen in the sober dawn.'

"Behind all Esther's thoughts, like an unacknowledged yet constraining presence, there was the sense that if Felix Holt were to love her, her life would be exalted into something quite new — into a sort of difficult blessedness, such as one may imagine in beings who are conscious of painfully growing into the possession of higher powers."  

Felix too felt that there was a new tie of friendship between them, but 'he was not going to let her have any influence on his life'. Yet he was gradually falling in love with her. When Esther claims that she could imagine herself choosing hardship as the better lot, he is tempted to believe her.

With great care George Eliot manipulates her plot:

Esther's love shall be tested when she will have to choose

44 Felix Holt. Chap. XXII.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
either Harold and wealth or Felix and poverty. The circumstances by which she turns out to be the rightful heir to Transome Court are very much there, and she finds herself greatly tempted, indeed. With Felix in prison and Harold present and wooing, good sense and vanity both suggest she should accept him, but her decision to stand by Felix and give up Transome Court is a measure of how deeply he has reshaped her character.

Esther's experiences with Felix have a powerful influence upon her reactions to the change in worldly fortune which follows the discovery that she had the legal title to the Transome estate. On the one hand, this discovery seemed to herald the fulfilment of her dreams of luxury, and refinement; as these things had not yet entirely lost their appeal for her. On the other hand, she hears Felix warning her, "remember what I once said to you about a vision of consequences; take care where your fortune leads you."47 She has come to imagine Felix Holt's probable reaction to everything she did:

'The first religious experience of her life — the first self questioning, the first voluntary subjection, the first longing to acquire the strength of greater motives and obey the more strenuous rule — had come to her through Felix Holt.'48

47 *Felix Holt*, Chap. XXXVIII.

48 *Ibid.*, Chap. XXVII.
Esther's visit to Transome Court completes her education, for it gives her an opportunity to see how limited is life or love. She could have desired no one more refined and gentlemanly than Harold Transome, yet 'she saw something more admirable than Harold Transome'. What she saw was Felix Holt, whose rugged virtues appeared more sympathetic by contrast with Harold's facility 'and there was a vague consciousness that the love of this not unfascinating man who hovered about her gave an air of moral mediocrity to all her prospects'.

In accepting Harold, although she does not finally marry him, she felt that she would have 'left the high mountain air, the passionate serenity of perfect love, for ever behind her, and must adjust her wishes to a life of middling delights, overhung with the languorous laziness of motiveless ease. . .'.

Esther having had a vision of life's high purpose felt 'nothing less than a fall and degradation' to choose a life so devoid of the high feeling and purpose. She had known though Felix. George Eliot reassures us:

'this life at Transome Court was not the life of her day-dreams. There was dullness already in its ease, and in the absence of high demand.'

49 Felix Holt, Chap. XLIII.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
The tragic spectacle of Mrs. Transome in her sorrow greatly moved her, and forced her to decide against a life of 'good taste'; it urged her towards a life 'where the draughts of joy sprang from the unchanging fountains of reverence and devout love'. Seeing the barrenness of Mrs. Transome's existence, Esther 'saw herself in a silken bondage that arrested all motive, and was nothing better than a well-cushioned despair'.

The fellow-feeling with the suffering Mrs. Transome, and her reluctant admiration of Felix — whose moral refinement she recognizes beneath his uncouth manners — work a moral revolution in Esther. The climax of their relation occurs on the day of Felix's trial, when she testifies in his defence to the nobility of his character: 'Her clear voice sounded as it might have done if she had been making a confession of faith.'

She finally chooses to cast her lot with Felix, and lives in benevolent poverty as the wife of the altruist Felix.

'In this, at least,' comments George Eliot, 'her woman's lot was perfect: that the man she loved was her hero;

52 Felix Holt, Chap. L.
53 Ibid., Chap. XLIX.
54 Ibid.
that her woman's passion and her reverence for rarest
goodness rushed together in an undivided current."55

Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch; like Adam and Maggie
belongs to the category of noble characters who make a tragic
error. She is first seen as an ardent young woman, glowing
in health, and fond of comfortable life:

'Riding was an indulgence which she allowed herself
inspite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she
enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and always
looked forward to renouncing it.'56

She is described as an enthusiastic girl, with high
impulses which are a little unintelligible to the people
around her:

'a young lady of some birth and fortune, who
knelt suddenly down on a brick floor by the
side of a sick labourer, and prayed fervidly
as if she thought herself living in the time
of the Apostles.'57

As quickly get a clear picture of Dorothea's strength
and weakness:

"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 . . .'58

55 Felix Hold, Chap. XLVI.
56 Middlemarch, Chap. I.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
She wants to do great things in the world; and George Eliot explicitly tells us:

'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 centre in some long-recognisable deed.'

Dorothea is emphatically not a feminist. Her odd indifference to clothes and jewelry amazes her sister Celia, who serves as a charming foil to set off her unworthy aspirations. The scene to which we allude, the first in the book, gives a most skilful artistic portrait of Dorothea’s enthusiasm and her mystic, though slightly haughty nature. Without meaning to be hard on Celia, she takes away all her pleasure in the jewels, by saying: “Not for the world, not for the world. A cross is the last thing I would wear as a trinket.” Celia, the simple nature, with her perfectly normal and unconcealed wish to wear splendid jewelry is here the more objective of the two. Dorothea with ‘her concern for the preservation of her own superior morality is more egotistic than she realises’.

59 Middlemarch, Prelude.

60 It would be relevant to quote Cockshut here: ‘...somewhat self-centred and self-deceiving. It is the weakness of characters of this kind to make no allowance for the existence of other temperaments and other interests,’ in AOJ Cockshut: Middlemarch (Oxford, 1966), p. 17.

An ardent young girl, she is framed for a larger moral life, 'yearning for a motive for sustained spiritual effort'. And yet she is wasting her ardour; an obscure St. Theresa soaring 'after some illimitable satisfaction,' with an intense yearning to do some good in the world in which she lives. Her nature demands an 'epic life,' but she is born in an age in which faiths are disintegrating and social forces are still unorganised. 

Young and idealistic, but without the experience to give toughness to her ideals, she is 'enamoured of intensity and greatness and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects'. She develops to the full, the natural feminine capacity for devotion. Here is the spirit of sacrifice — 'she likes giving up.' But with her feeling of self-sacrifice goes a narrowness of understanding. "I cannot help believing in gloriuous things in a blind sort of way." And her blindness makes her feel that Casaubon is different from her foolish uncle and the conventional Sir

64 Middlemarch, Chap. XXII.
James Chetham, for she is attracted by what she thinks is his profoundness of mind. She is fascinated by 'the great soul in a man's face', and 'a man who could understand the higher inward life' which she strives to attain. Enamoured of the supposed spiritual and intellectual greatness of Casaubon, she is rude to Chetham, who tried to help her with her plans to renovate the cottages of Brooke's tenants.

Dorothea's intellectual longings are, however, born of intellectual in experience. She informs Casaubon of her belief in the 'submergence of self in common with Divine perfection' and her 'soul-hunger' is after matters of a 'theoretic' nature. His conversation makes her think that she had found the person who can help her out of the narrowness of a woman's world into the clear, invigorating atmosphere of man's intellectual existence. She thinks that he will be able to teach her, inspire her by example, and raise her nearer to his great height by allowing her to take part in his ennobling work. She wants so much, and yet she does not know what she wants:

"Her energies and affections were undirected; she was left free to dwell on 'vague ambitions' and to soar 'after some illimitable satisfaction'.

(Prelude)"65

65 Faris: op.cit., p. 117.
Celia tells her "It is impossible to satisfy you; yet you never see what is quite plain".66

Dorothea's character is full of imperious self assertion and self-willed idealism. Celia accuses her of being impatient when people don't do and say just what she likes, and Dorothea herself admits. "I never called everything by the same name that all people but me did."67

The British Quarterly Review is right in pointing out that she has an imperious disregard of the prevailing conventional ideas consequently, she shows hasty contempt for the existing social standards. It is her ambitious idealism and somewhat wilful independence which lead her into the mistake of her marriage with the pedantic bookworm, Mr. Casaubon. She must organise her life in her own way, despite the advice of all around her, and in doing so one realises that her high-flown idealism fails to disguise a good deal of childish naivety.68

Dorothea's initial mistake is due to her ardour of knowledge. Her desire to devote herself to someone wiser and deeper than herself, leads her into marrying the Rev. Edward

66 Middlemarch. Chap. IV, p. 89.
67 Ibid., Chap. LIV.
68 See The British Quarterly Review, 1 April 1873, in Patrick Swinden (ed): op.cit., p. 75.
Casaubon, a dry and vain middle-aged, clergyman, given to laborious researches into a somewhat vague science — Comparative Mythology. She thinks that in marrying him, her idea of a perfect marriage is realised — one in which "your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew if you wished it." 69

Obviously, Dorothea erred, and suffered for her error, with Casaubon, though she is right about Ladislaw and Lydgate. She fails to see that Casaubon's pedantic assertions about love and religion were merely parades of conventional feelings which he had never experienced. And yet she creates illusions about him: 'Dorothea's faith supplied all that Mr. Casaubon's words seemed to leave unsaid.' 70 The few deficiencies she sensed in him, she filled them up 'with unmanifested perfections, interpreting him as she interpreted the works of Providence.' 71 As Paris observes:

'In her relation with Casaubon, Dorothea fell into the mental habits of the egoist. She failed to see him as a subject to whom she was an object. She did not regard him as an autonomous individual with needs and desires of his own, but rather as a means to her own ends. Her subjective approach to Casaubon was not the result of a basically egoistic nature; it was the product rather of her frustration.' 72

69 Middlemarch, Chap. 1.
AES Viner says, 'Dorothea's idealism leads her to feel that her vocation in life is marriage with a man of genius to whom she will be the humble hand-maid — a serious bit of self-dramatisation that leads her to disaster.'

70 Ibid., Chap. V.
71 Ibid., Chap. IX.
But Dorothea, like Adam, must learn to bear frustration, and to accept the weakness of human beings and the limitations of human lot. Soon after her marriage, she experiences a severe disillusionment, and her self-reflexive image of Casaubon and her dreams of a life of grand action and devotion were shattered. It was during her honeymoon itself, that she realised that she was 'a mere victim of feeling'. A 'sort of mental shiver' passed through her: she experienced anger, revulsion, and weariness — she now understood what she had brought on herself. Casaubon's life eventually revealed itself to her as 'questionable riddle-guessing... instead of the fellowship in high knowledge which was to make life worthier'.

She had a need for an immediacy of affection as well as a 'yearning to know what was afar off and to be widely benignant', but he regarded her manifestations of devotion as 'crude and startling'. Her affection was met by a frigidity which left her in dismay. The reality into which she awakens is alien to her earlier expectations, she realises that she has enslaved herself to an alien being. All paths of escape were closed, even imaginary ones. Before her marriage, the future had been rich with vague and glorious

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73 *Middlemarch*, Chap. XLVIII.
74 *Ibid.*, Chap. XX.
possibilities; now she was committed to binding ties. The hopes of the past were dead, and the future could only be a continuation of the unhappy present.

Dorothea's unhappy marriage, however, extended the range of her vision and sympathy. Her own need of responsiveness, companionship led her heart open to give and receive compassion. Her disillusionment about Casaubon gradually led her to an understanding of him as he was for himself, and of her relation to him as he conceived it. Through the intimate experience of marriage, she began to sense his inner state, and now she felt neither contempt nor antagonism but the 'first stirrings of a pitying tenderness fed by the realities of his lot and not her dreams'.

Instead of rejecting her disappointing husband, Dorothea is moved to sympathy by her vision, and she strives to comfort him in his loveless and hopeless life and to resign her claim for herself: Lowick Manor will be a prison, but one in which she chooses to remain, for she must offer a life-time of devotion to a man who will never show affection.

At this stage of her moral and intellectual frustration, Will Ladislaw is the only person in all her experience with whom she could have communication. Their intimacy had its beginning

75 Middlemarch, Chap. XXI.
in their conversation in Rome; Dorothea 'felt an immense need of some one to speak to and she had never before seen any one who seemed so so likely to understand everything'.

Her delight in Will Ladislaw is entirely derived from his pleasant personality and responsiveness, and his ability to discuss and instruct her on artistic matters that mean nothing to her husband. The mere chance of seeing Will occasionally in her loneliness and self-repression was 'like a lunette in the wall of a prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air' and in looking backward through sadness she felt a past silence: 'it seemed fresh water at her thirsty lips to speak without fear to the one person whom she had found receptive.'

Paris rightly points out that

'her suffering in marriage altered the nature of Dorothea's needs. Before marriage she had longed chiefly for an epic life, while now she required most of all an affectionate and understanding response from another to mitigate the isolation and positive hardness of her lot. In Will alone she found a look which recognized her humanity'.

77 Middlemarch, Chap. XXI.
78 Ibid., Chap. XXVII.
79 Paris: op.cit., p. 188.
Dorothea gets concerned and distressed when her husband is taken ill. She goes to share his sorrow with him, but he makes no response to her sympathy and distrusts her devotion. At this she reacts, but her imagination of what must be his state of mind restores her resolution to help him. After Casaubon's death the knowledge of Will's love for her did much to comfort her, even though she did not see any probability that they could unite their lives. The British Quarterly Review wrote about Dorothea's interest in Will, "her interest in him is chiefly due to Mr. Casaubon's indifference and apparent injustice, and her love begins only after her attention is painfully called to the subject by the revelation of her husband's suspicions in his will. She lavishes herself on Will Ladislaw as a sort of generous compensation for his own relative's coldness to him." 80

This generous love colours so many of her actions: her attempt to clear Lydgate's reputation, to find work for Garth, to repair the relationship of Lydgate and Rosamond. Warm-hearted is her zeal in making life better for people in the district — financing whatever was good. She is firm in her belief:

80 The British Quarterly Review, op. cit., p. 79.
'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.' 81

Dorothea's greatest crisis, the climax of her moral development, comes when she is cast into despair by her loss of faith in Will, when she finds him apparently making love to Rosamond. She discovers the full force of her love for Will 'in the unshrinking utterance of despair', and Will is now 'a detected illusion'. 82 Her personal disappointment does not, however, result in feelings of isolation, for she had been educated through her marital experience to an awareness of the interior lives of others. After her night of anguish at her own state, 'she waked to a new condition'. She resigned herself to her fate and accepted her grief to be 'a lasting companion', 83 and found that, thus liberated, her mind was flooded with thoughts of others. Here Dorothea, like Maggie Tulliver is motivated at her moment of great moral crisis by her past experience and by the vision and sympathy which that experience had nurtured in her'. 84

81 Middlemarch, Chap. XXXIX.
82 Ibid., Chap. LXXX.
83 Ibid.
84 Paris: op.cit., p. 190.
Dorothea's moral development is complete, for at this point she experiences a vivid sense of her solidarity with her fellowmen; she transcends the limits of self and of her individual lot by identifying self with the world:

'She was part of that involuntary, palpating life and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining.' 85

Dr. Tertuis Lydgate too, in the same novel, along with Dorothea, presents an instance of redeemable egoism, 'Lydgate appears as a masculine counterpart of Dorothea with the relative proportions of head and heart reversed.' 86 Professionally, he is ahead of his times. The pursuit of knowledge is with him an intellectual passion rather than, as with Casaubon, a means of exalting his own ego. Lydgate's goals are social as well as intellectual; he hoped to contribute to medical progress by making 'a link in the chain of discovery'. He had radical notions of medical ethics, too, due to which he made himself unpopular among his competitors. Lydgate thought: 'He would keep away from the range of London intrigues, jealousies, and social truckling, and win celebrity, however, slowly, as Jenner had done by the independent value of his work.' 87

85 Middlemarch, Chap. LXXX.
87 Middlemarch.
He is an excellent doctor, launched by a few lucky cures and the mistakes of busier rivals; he might have made himself a fine career, had he been a different person. His is "the story of a young doctor, with great gifts and a high ideal, frustrated by the circumstances in which he must work and the human mixture of faults and virtues in his own nature."88 He finds the seclusion and calm of medical research more to his taste than the gatherings to which he is invited; and if he had kept out of emotional complications he might well have been a social attraction whenever he found it convenient. But Lydgate's promise, the promise of a man with exceptional intellectual gifts was unfulfilled 'partly because of the obstructive stupidity of the people among whom he worked, partly because of professional jealousy, but partly also because of positive and negative qualities in his own character'.89

The grave weaknesses which prevented him from realizing his potentialities are his own spots of commonness, to use George Eliot's phrase. They lay 'in the complexion of his prejudices, which, in spite of noble intentions and sympathy were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world'.90 Though an innovator in the field of medicine, in

89 Ibid.
90 Middlemarch, Chap. XV.
his social attitudes he had hardly risen above his class:

'In the rest of practical life,' observes George Eliot, 'he walked by hereditary habit; half from that personal pride and unreflecting egoism which I have already called commonness, and half from that naïveté which belonged to preoccupation with favourite ideas.'

Allen comments:

'There is another words, a lack of balance, an unevenness, in Lydgate's development. The independence of mind and the sceptical questing intellect, which distinguish him as a scientist, have little part in his larger life as a man. There, his values are purely conventional, he lacks discrimination. The sign of this is his marriage to Rosamond Viney, whom he sees, and who very largely sees herself, as closely akin to the warrior's plaything.'

Unfortunately 'Lydgate's conceit was of the arrogant sort, ... but massive in its claim and benevolently contemptuous'. And it led him to have 'a fearless expectation of success, a confidence in his own powers and integrity' to conquer all obstacles. Lydgate is arrogant, but his arrogance is of a kind that Middlemarch has not seen before. Middlemarch is used to the arrogance of rank, and to the pretentions of money. But Lydgate is obviously superior in birth, taste, and intelligence. His ideas about expenditure are derived from his gentlemanly upbringing, and are not compatible with

91 Middlemarch, Chap. XXXVI.
David Daiches points this as 'the clearest of all the several statements linking social complacency with pride and with lack of imagination.'

his professional aims. This is what is implied by his 'commonness'. Joan Bennett observes:

'The streak of arrogance and of snobbishness, venial faults such as mar the best of men and women, are a part of the reason why he chooses the pretty, refined product of Miss Lemon's finishing school, Rosamond Vincy, without either expecting or wishing to find in her an intellect or aspirations to match his own. George Eliot informs us that Lydgate's intellectual distinction of mind 'did not penetrate his feeling and judgment about furniture, or women or the desirability of its being known...that he was better born than other country surgeons'.93

Lydgate though progressive in his ideas about medicine, has very old fashioned views about women and society:

'He held one of the prettiest attitudes of the feminine mind to adore a man's preeminence without too precise a knowledge of what it consisted in'.94

He did not like Dorothea's style of woman; he gave adornment the first place among wifely functions. In this 'he is comparable to the egoist Casaubon', for 'neither sees woman as anything more than decorative appendages to a man's life'.95 Seeing women in this way it is 'inevitable that he should fall in love with Rosamond. Her blonde, demure, innocent qualities suggest to him the kind of woman he has postulated to himself that he would marry.

93 Middlemarch, Chap. XV.
94 Ibid., Chap. XXVII.
As with Dorothea, his good qualities, just as much as his weaknesses, bring about his downfall. When he finds that he wants more from a wife than an elegant ornament, it is too late. He quickly comes to understand that he can expect nothing from Rosamond, whose cold egoism he only gradually comes to realize because he had not deemed it necessary to look for anything else in her than what he expected to be there. He had considered his wife chiefly as a woman who would assist him to obtain the calmness of mind he requires for his research, but she turns out to be the one who cares twopenny about his aims.

Once married, Rosamond has shown herself to be 'ruthlessly obstinate and totally unloving; with such qualities she will destroy her husband. Had he been less sensitive and affectionate she could not have exerted the malign influence upon his life that she does'.

Much of Lydgate's trouble stems from his lack of realism in money matters; he was unconsciously extravagant, having naturally expensive tastes and an inbred assumption that he should have the best as a matter of course. Obviously 'The coming together of Lydgate's complacency with Rosamond's calm selfishness is ominous'.

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96 AES Viner: op.cit., p. 84.
Their marriage brought disillusionment to both Rosamond and Lydgate. Lydgate soon discovers that Rosamond is interested in his talent only as a means to prestige. Any love he had felt for her is gone: he is aware only of her extravagance and stubborn wilfulness, and his own mounting debts for which she is largely responsible. And it is because of these debts that he becomes obsessed with his wasted efforts, degradation and failure; and the wife with whom he is forced to live is the personification of discontent and irresponsibility. 'But Lydgate's discontent was much harder to bear: it was the sense that there was a grand existence in thought and effective action lying around him, while his self was being narrowed into the miserable isolation of egoistic fears, and vulgar anxieties for events that might allay such fears.'

So Lydgate has fallen from the contemplation of wide and noble ends into a preoccupation with the petty sordid cares brought only by his money problems.

Lydgate's failure is to be attributed to himself. He is partly responsible for his own ruin. 'He never considers any standard of living below that of a gentleman and sets himself on the rickety basis of credit'. The financial

98 *Middlemarch*, Chap. LXIV.
99 GG Urwin: op.cit.
and social difficulties widen the alienation between husband
and wife: 'it was as if they were both adrift on one piece
of wreck and looked away from each other.'

Lydgate's worst trial comes when he is involved in the
scandal surrounding Raffles death, and he is inclined by
nature to keep his troubles private. "Rosamond's ungenerous,
unsympathetic attitude drives him more into himself; by the
time of the Bulstrode scandal there has developed between
them a situation comparable with that which once existed
between Casaubon and Dorothea. 'I ought to be more open',
says Lydgate, but Rosamond discourages any sort of frankness.'

Lydgate finds himself sinking deeper into disaster.
Unpopular in the town, disappointing to his wife, closely
linked to the much — disliked Bulstrode, financially ruined —
this is the state from which he must drag himself alone,
unaided. Nobody in Middlemarch, stands by him, and the only
person capable of giving him necessary strength and confidence
needed to face the aftermath of the scandal is not his wife
but Dorothea. He is saved from despair by her ardent faith
in him; he 'felt that he was recovering his old self in the
consciousness that he was with one who believed in it'.

100 Middlemarch, Chap. LXXV.
101 GG Urwin: op.cit., p. 55.
Joan Bennett remarks: "The relation between Lydgate and Dorothea is a principal factor in the development of Lydgate's character; the ennobling of Lydgate and purgation of his 'spots of commonness', which partly compensates for the tragic waste, is affected by his contact with Dorothea." 102

Dorothea wants to use money to help him follow in the footsteps of his heroes, Louis and Laennec. But Lydgate is a changed man. He has lost belief in his will by his experience of failure, nor has he any confidence left to accept the money:

'I have not given guarantees enough. I must not sink, at least sink into the degradation of being pensioned for work that I never achieved.' 103

Lydgate has come to terms with life; to remain a 'gentleman' he has thrown aside his pride in being a doctor; to live peacefully with Rosamond, he gains money from the patronage of wealthy invalids whom he probably despises.

He is a changed man, and his moral development is complete. From a naive believer in activity, Lydgate had been transformed into an exponent of resignation. He recognised the irreversibility of his acts and he accepted responsibility for them:

Lydgate had accepted his narrowed lot with sad resignation. He had chosen this fragile

102 Bennett: op.cit., p. 166.
103 Middlemarch, Chap. LXXVI.
creature and had taken the burthen of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carrying the burthen pitifully.'

Gwendolen is the last among the redeemed egoists, she begins as an egoist of the class of Hetty and Rosamond, but her suffering, along with the redeeming influence of Deronda makes for her moral development.

Her coldness and egoism are partly the result of her restless, pampered existence. Men need, George Eliot felt, 'a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection'. Her selfishness was partly the product of her mother's indulgence. She had always been the pet and pride of the household, waited on by everyone 'as if she had been a princess in exile', and 'she naturally found it difficult to think her own pleasure less important than others made it'. Her importance in the family was the result not only of 'her potent charm and peculiar filial position', but also of her strong determination to have what was pleasant, and her readiness to hurt others when they got in her way.

104 *Middlemarch*, Chap. LXXXI.
Joan Bennet observes 'Lydgate's final capitulation to circumstances, after the exposure of Bulstrode and that it involves, is the result of his loyalty and tenderness for the wife he no longer loves; much more than of defects in his nature.'

105 *Daniel Deronda*, Chap. III.

106 *Ibid.*, Chap. IV.
In her unchecked egoism, Gwendolen came to have a firm conviction that no exceptional person as herself must have an exceptional destiny. She could not find, even in her imagination, destiny befitting her own grandeur. She always wanted to be thought of as a lady; 'her horizon was that of a genteel romance.' She wanted the romance, power, and egoistic satisfaction of being:

'Very much sued or hopelessly sighed for'; but she abhorred the limitations and responsibilities of marriage, which she regarded as 'a dreary state, in which a woman could not do what she liked'. She shuddered at the loss of personal freedom which marriage entailed, and she was violently repelled by the thought of love-making. Her 'fierceness of maidenhood' is an expression of her desire for mastery and her unwillingness to give anything of herself to another. Ironically, one of the things that made Grandcourt tolerable to her as a lover, was the absence of ardour and eagerness in his attentions. With no real knowledge of him whatsoever, she constructed an image of him after her own desires, and saw no obstacle to her determination to make marriage 'a state of greater freedom than her girlhood'. Gwendolen thought that after marriage 'she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly'.

With all her egoism, and to some degree because of it, Gwendolen had an extreme sensibility to the world and to

107 Daniel Deronda, Chap. VI.
108 Ibid., Chap. IV.
109 Ibid., Chap. XIII.
people when they did not respond to or echo her consciousness. She is a prey to fits of timidity and terror, one of which comes upon her when she is startled by the picture of the dead face during her acting of charades. This is 'spiritual dread' for George Eliot, and it is out of her susceptibility to it and her sensitivity to the opinions of others that her moral consciousness is to develop. This explains the profound effect which Deronda's measuring gaze has on her. Henry James describes Gwendolen through Theodora:

'a perfect picture of youthfulness — its eagerness, its presumption, its preoccupation with itself, its vanity and silliness, its sense of its own absoluteness. But she is extremely intelligent and clever, and therefore tragedy can have a hold on her.'\(^{110}\)

When the financial disaster falls upon her family, she returned from Leubronn to Offendene her egoism somewhat chastened. She had lost some of her power over the course of things, but she looks at the world from a thoroughly subjective point of view and feels that life is conspiring against her, that she is receiving far less than her due. Her first thorough shock out of subjectivity comes from Herr Klemer's discouragement of her hope for pre-eminence as a professional singer and actress:

'For the first time since her consciousness began, she was having a vision of herself on the common level.'\(^{111}\)

Gwendolen is unable to accept the hard necessities of her new lot. She rebels at the disparity between 'what


\(^{111}\) Daniel Deronda, Chap. XXI.
she might have expected in her lot and what it was actually to be, and she is thrown into a 'sick motivelessness'. Happiness for her has always been associated with 'personal pre-eminence and eclat' and when these are denied to her she feels 'life to be hardly worth the having'.\textsuperscript{112} To her, under these circumstances the renewal of Grandcourt's attentions presents a prospect which, despite its taint is irresistibly alluring. Finally, she is persuaded to accept Grandcourt's proposal almost as much by the coldness of his manners as by the prospect of relief from poverty and a future of affluence and elegance; although she knows he has four children by another woman to whom he has long promised marriage. To deaden her scruples she persuades herself that her dominant motive is altruistic: she is marrying for the sake of her mother.

In Grandcourt, the wilful Gwendolen has met more than her match: 'He meant to be master of a woman who would have liked to master him...\textsuperscript{113} Her will, moreover, is to some extent paralysed by the conscious guilt that she has incurred in deliberately injuring Mrs. Glasher; and she experiences a dread of punishment which gives her a new sensitivity to moral issues and introduces her to a new phase of moral

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Daniel Deronda}, Chap. XXIV.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}
development. Her self-complacency is permanently shattered, she was 'accustomed to think herself blameless',\textsuperscript{114} but now 'the struggle of mind attending a conscious error'\textsuperscript{115} awakens something like a new soul in her.

Her second contact with Deronda at Diplow (the first being at Leubronn when he watched her gambling and then redeeming her pawned necklace for her) with his 'gravely penetrating' look compelled her to an interest in what he thought of her, her marriage to Grandcourt, and life in general. And her vague feelings of guilt take a positive shape by this contact.\textsuperscript{116} The story that Deronda was Sir Hugo Mallinger's illegitimate son had special significance for her; for Grandcourt would eventually come into possession of Sir Hugo's estates, estates that might rightfully have been Deronda's inheritance. Deronda became, along with Mrs. Glasher and her children, one of those who had been excluded from their rights by the unfairness of another.

When Deronda sees Gwendolen at the Abbey after her marriage, he observes from her behaviour that there was 'at work within her the same demonic force that had possessed her when she took him in her resolute glance and turned away a loser from the gaming table'.\textsuperscript{117} He inferred correctly

\begin{footnotes}
\item[114] Daniel Deronda, Chap. XXVII.
\item[115] Ibid., Chap. XXIX.
\item[116] Ibid., Chap. XXIX.
\item[117] Ibid., Chap. XXXV.
\end{footnotes}
that her life with Grandcourt had proved painful beyond her expectations, and he was moved to pity at the sight of her inner struggles.

With reading of Mrs. Glasher's letter begins her 'husband's empire of fear' and she finds herself living in constant dread of a calamitous visitation of nemesis and in complete subjection to the imperious will of a man towards whom she has an overpowering repulsion. What she most cares about is that Grandcourt shall not know that she knew of Mrs. Glasher before accepting him (though, ironically he has known it all along). She had brought on herself this indignity in her own eyes — this humiliation of being doomed to a terrified silence lest her husband should discover with what sort of consciousness she had married him. As for her guilt, her pride overrides her remorse. As F.R. Leavis puts it, 'so much pride and courage and sensitiveness and intelligence fixed in a destructive deadlock through false valuation and self-ignorance — this is what makes Gwendolen a tragic figure.'

Though Gwendolen keeps up appearances before the world, she has no desire to impress Deronda with her coolness; she seeks rather, to discover and live up to his standards and

to escape from her moral impasse through his guidance:\textsuperscript{119}

'. . .in some mysterious way he was becoming a part of her conscience, as one woman whose nature is an object of reverential belief may become a new conscience to a man.'

She wishes that Deronda could know everything about her without her telling him:

'Without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume her feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest.'\textsuperscript{120}

Deronda's understanding and sympathetic nature, prepares the way for a free discussion with Gwendolen of her problems. And Gwendolen confesses to him that she has made her gain out of another's loss in a way worse than playing roulette. And he advised her to try to rise above self to dispel her dread and misery. Gwendolen's self-judgement makes her ask, "You mean that I am selfish and ignorant." And to this Deronda answers firmly: "You will not go on being selfish and ignorant," and he perceived a change come over her face which indicated 'the subsidence of self-assertion'.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{119} Reminds of Esther's attitude towards Felix.

\textsuperscript{120} Daniel Deronda, Chap. XXXV.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., Chap. XXXVI.
In another interview she tells him of violent tendencies in her towards Grandcourt, and Deronda admonishes her to make her fear of remorse, which is so bitter to her, a safeguard against such impulses. The nature of their relationship at this point underwent a profound change. Deronda's face revealed the suffering which came from his deep sympathy. The pained compassion in his face 'affected her with a compunction unlike any she had felt before' and she promised Deronda that she would try that his efforts for her would not be in vain. And thereafter, the chief motive for suppressing her destructive impulses was her knowledge of the suffering which she could cause him.

Gwendolen's peculiar sensibility makes her a haunted woman, and her haunting takes the form of the dead face, seen at the beginning of the book, repeating its terror in her dreams until it fuses with the murderous thought and becomes Grandcourt's face.

After Grandcourt's death, Gwendolen feels a compelling need to confess her most secret desires to Deronda. She describes what she actually did to save him from drowning and how her actions were accompanied by the wish that he might drown. And Gwendolen saw Deronda's suffering on her account, and was again "pierced, as she had been by his face of sorrow at the Abbey, with a compunction less egoistic than that which
urged her to confess, and she said regretfully 'I make you unhappy'.

Deronda's influence on Gwendolen cannot be underestimated, for she had found in him not only sympathy but also forgiving pity. He sees in her remorse 'the precious sign of a recoverable nature', and he told her of his belief that she would become worthier than she had ever yet been — 'worthy to load a life that may be a blessing'. And she declares her dependence on him: 'I will bear any penance. I will lead any life you tell me. But you must not forsake me. You must be near.'

When they meet next in London at Sir Hugo's, he tells her that her sorrow had prepared her for higher existence: 'You can, you will be among the best of women, such as make others glad they were born.' His words fill her with a strength 'that seemed the beginning of a new existence', but

122 *Daniel Deronda*, Chap. LVI.
123 Harold Fisch has successfully argued that Deronda is more than a lay-confessor to Gwendolen. He argues 'His function in relation to Gwendolen is rather to provide a perspective by means of which the relative insignificance of her world and its affairs may be properly perceived,' in "'Daniel Deronda' or 'Gwendolen Harleth'?" in *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, Vol. XIX (March 1965), Number 4.
124 *Daniel Deronda*, Chap. LVI.
125 Ibid., Chap. LVII.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid., Chap. LXV.
this new existence seemed inseparable from Deronda's direct inspiration — for he was her 'outer conscience'.

Gwendolen's greatest trial comes when she learns of his love for Mirah, and his plan to travel to the East (now that he had discovered his Jewish entity) to fight for a Jewish State. She feels bewildered and forsaken: '...here had come a shock which went deeper than personal jealousy — something spiritual and vaguely tremendous that thrust her away, and yet quelled all anger into self-humiliation.'

Paris rightly says:

'Gwendolen could not rebel against the larger claims which took Deronda away from her, and her discovery of the great world which lay aloof from herself was the beginning of her ultimate integration of self into the world.'

Gwendolen is desolate at the thought of Deronda's departure, she falls asleep after fits of hysterical weeping. She tells her mother on waking: 'Don't be unhappy. I shall live. I shall be better.'

It seems at the end of the novel that though she has yet a long and painful process to undergo, Gwendolen will ultimately become for her one of those who make others glad

128 Daniel Deronda, Chap. LXIX.
130 Daniel Deronda, Chap. LXIX.
that they were born. She is redeemed through suffering and her moral regeneration is final. Gwendolen's case breaks through the dividing line between the repentant egoists and the redeemed egoists—though her redemption is hardly better than the suffering without and imposed upon sinners like Godfrey and Mrs. Transome.

All these characters are instances in George Eliot's novels of worldly failure and of moral error and frustration resulting from thoughts that do not agree with the nature of things. Man's egoistic impulses, his concern for himself at the expense of others, are manifestations of his animal nature; but his moral life, his desire for the welfare of others, is the consequence of his relationship with society. The moral education of the individual is the process by which his animal egoism is subdued and transformed into altruism.
The characters already in these two chapters are redeemed from egoism, with a consequent growth in altruism, through the painful experience of suffering, repentence, renunciation. We shall now deal with those characters who appear as altruists from the beginning of the story; who are not shown in a process of development but as a result of a process. The basic difference between the two courses of action may be outlined as follows:

'The law of animal action', as Lewes writes 'is Individualism': its motto is 'each for himself against all'. The ideal of human action is Altruism; its motto is 'each with others, all for each'.

Consciousness is the primary source of the moral order; it produces that awareness of species, which is the basis of all ethical action, a sense of solidarity with our kind which leads us to sacrifice our own immediate gratification for the good of others. "The egoistic impulses," Lewes explains, "are directed towards objects simply so far as these are the means of satisfying a desire. The altruistic impulses, on the contrary, have greater need of Intelligence to understand

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the object itself in all its relations." That is, a man ought to have mental vision to have sympathy and his impulses are towards benevolence.

George Eliot's realism led only few of her characters to attain this ideal state. Infact such an ideal state is not to be attained in this world and the characters who attain it to some extent are those who have shed of their egoism. There are thus, a very few representatives of the class of Altruists. Dinnah Morris, Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda represent the same urge away from self; though Philip Wakem in The Mill on the Floss too could be classed along with the pure altruists, because of his unselfish devotion to Maggie.

First is Dinnah Morris. Her religion manifests itself in the service of the destitute and the needy. She desires the welfare of others, hence God always 'leads' her to acts of self-sacrifice and altruism. She guides her actions by heaven-sent signs and directions which are really her own 'spontaneous affections'. People about her love 'to listen for her voice as for a recurrent music; to think everything she said and did was just right, and could not have been better'. 133

133 Adam Bede, Chap. I.
Dinnah herself, by the power of her love and of her subtle sympathy with the suffering, produces in others a sense of the divine presence she feels so strongly. The potency of her sympathy is clearly seen in the way she soothes Lisbeth Bade after Thias' death, and Lisbeth comes to feel 'a vague sense of goodness and love, and of something right lying underneath and beyond all this sorrowing life'.

Dinnah's benevolent and helpful nature is acknowledged by all. Adam thinks to himself:

'It's like as if it was new strength to me... to love her, and know as she loves me. I shall look t' her to help me to see things right. For she's better than I am — there's less o' self in her, and pride. And it's a feeling as gives you a sort o' liberty, as if you could walk more fearless, when you've more trust in another than y' have in yourself.'

Even Hetty has faith in Dinah's goodness. As she wanders homeward in despair, after having failed to find Arthur, she thinks of going to Dinah: 'She couldn't imagine Dinah's face turning away from her in dark reproof or scorn, Dinah's voice unwillingly speaking ill of her, or rejoicing in her misery as a punishment. Dinah did not seem to belong to that world of Hetty's whose glance she dreaded like scorching fire.'

134 Adam Bede, Chap. X.
135 Ibid., Chap. LIX.
136 Ibid., Chap. XXXVII.
It is Dinah's love and fellowfeeling which rescues Hetty from the black despair into which her crime and punishment lead her. Though Hetty is obstinate and refuses to confess, Dinah does not lose her faith in the power of love to save Hetty:

'She felt the Divine presence more and more, — nay as if she herself were a part of it, and it was the Divine Fire that was breathing in her heart, and was willing the rescue of this helpless one.' 137

To Hetty, Dinah is the representative of the species; through her, Hetty becomes the conscience of the divine love, that is, of love as it is a predicate of the species.

Felix Holt is a watchmaker, who has something of Adam Bede's manliness, honesty, and love of independence. Though educated, he is wholly loyal to his class. He identifies himself with the cause of the workingmen, and dedicates his life to their betterment. 'Felix Holt', remarks Paris, 'lives the higher life by devoting himself to the improvement, through education, of the lot of the working men.' 138

He has understood the nature and order of things in the universe. He has learnt by 'profound experience', before the novel begins, that the disparity between the inner and

137 Adam Bede, Chap. XLV.
Mr. Tryan in Janet's Repentance is the forerunner of the altruists in the novels. Both Dinah Morris and Mr. Tryan save Hetty and Janet from sin and suffering and both derive comfort and strength from this belief in Dinah and Tryan that they are human beings who are not hard and condemning, but who are loving, understanding and forgiving.

the outer can never be eliminated, but it can certainly be diminished by knowledge. He tells the workingmen that 'the way to get rid of folly is to get rid of vain expectations, and of thoughts that don't agree with the nature of things'.

Felix is a Radical, but of a different sort from Harold Transome. 'I want to be a demagogue of a new sort', he says, 'an honest one, if possible, who will tell the people they are blind and foolish.' He is a moral agitator rather than a political one. Even Harold calls him a 'moral and political enthusiast, who if he sought to coerce others, would seek to coerce them into a difficult and perhaps impracticable, scrupulosity'.

The altruistic strain in his personality colours all his actions and speech:

'I don't say life is not worth having: it is worth having to a man who has some sparks of sense and feeling and bravery in him. And the finest fellow of all would be the one who could be glad to have lived because the world was chiefly miserable, and his life had come to help someone who needed it. He would be the man who had the most powers and the fewest selfish wants.'

139 Felix Holt, Chap. XXX.
140 Ibid., Chap. XI.
141 Ibid., Chap. XLVI.
142 Ibid.
The love story of Felix and Esther embodies one of the favourite themes of George Eliot. Felix serves as a mentor to Esther, leading her away from vanity and egoism to an awareness of the larger, higher life of love and service to one’s fellow men. 'He gives her, by love and what she calls angry pedagogy, the strong vision which leads her away from the life of her romantic dreams.' 143

A reviewer applauds the delicacy and ingenuity with which George Eliot makes Felix 'the effective stirrer-up of a pure and lofty enthusiasm in the mind of her heroine'. 144 He elevates her to a height as lofty as his own by the subtle force of his own character.

Felix remains true to his social cause. To 'live for others' is the goal of his life. Esther too forswears her inherited wealth to join him in his benevolent poverty. Paris rightly observes:

'The harmony between the personal and the social, the individual and the general, which Daniel Deronda comes to experience is exceptional in George Eliot's world. His high fulfilment is approached by Felix Holt; though with Felix there was initially the threat of a conflict, for Felix was convinced that the prettiness of woman would force him to sacrifice the joys of marriage if he would be true to his cause.' 145

Daniel in *Daniel Deronda* is innately endowed with high intelligence and a sympathetic nature. He is held in worshipful regard by several people in the novel. Sir Hugo Mallinger finds him indispensable, and praises him on all occasions and in all sorts of company. He is equally indispensably demanded in the Mallinger household, and is adored by Lady Mallinger and her three daughters. Sir Hugo's is not the only household where his word is law and his actions the code of conduct. His hold on the Meyrick household is supreme, for the Meyrick girls consider him the emblem of what should be in every walk in life. Mordecai and his host of enthusiastic Jews adore him.

His painful experience of the disparity between the inward and the outward quickly moulds him into a superior moral being. His early history speaks of his suspicions about Sir Hugo who, he thinks, has wronged him and his mother; this brings him a sense of painful disillusionment that he is an illegitimate son. This unsettles many of his attitudes. His anxious uncertainty about his parentage, and his 'sense

146 'Persons attracted him...in proportion to the possibility of his defending them, rescuing them, telling upon their lives with some sort of redeeming influence; and he had to resist an inclination to withdraw coldly from the fortunate.'
of an entailed disadvantage 147 produces in him both an ardent sympathy for all fellow-sufferers and a paralyzing reluctance to commit himself to a particular cause or to choose a definite plan in life.

His approach to reality is objective in the extreme. He thinks 'how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape.' 148 His ability to see himself and the world from points of view other than his own was the source of much of his moral nobility, leading him to act generously towards all. He is compared to the Buddha who gives himself to the starving tiger. He is an altruist whose generous impulse has not grown out of moral stupidity, and is not changed or chastised in the process of the story.

Deronda's 'sensibility to the half-known facts of his parentage' 149 was the one of the main causes of his moral and social paralysis. What Deronda lacked, was an identification with a special group, cause or tradition. And lacking this he lacked a centre of self, a core of prejudices and cherished interests which would define his identity, establish his goals, and channel his thoughts, feelings and actions. Thus he

147 Daniel Deronda, Chap. XVI.
148 Ibid., Chap. XVII.
149 Ibid., Chap. XVI.
suffers from rootlessness; with all his vision and sympathy and desire to live for others, he was significantly limited as an active moral being. He is himself aware of his limitation, and suffers from a deep unrest and a sense of unfulfilment.

His life takes a more definite shape when his actions are guided by the responsibilities he felt in his relations with Mirah and Gwendolen — the two women who become part of his life quite accidentally. But his relation to them, important and satisfying to him, does not constitute a vocation for him. He serves as a mentor to Gwendolen, and advises her that she could overcome her discontent with her personal lot only by forsaking self and by living for others. He preaches to Gwendolen his 'transmutation of self'.

Admirable are his ability, his mind and his unswerving moral rectitude, and sense of human fellowship. His emotional sensitivity never upsets the balance of reason. After his parentage is revealed to him, and he learns that his grandfather like Mordecai, was an ardent advocate of Jewish separateness, he has 'a quivering imaginative sense of close relation to the grandfather who had been animated by strong impulses and beloved thoughts, which were now perhaps being

150 Daniel Deronda, Chap. XXXV.
roused from their slumber within himself'.

Mirah regards Deronda as a human god. From the moment he saved her from drowning, and gave her a new life of hope and happiness, she believed that 'he had been a rescuing angel to many besides herself'.

Gwendolen is absolutely dependent on him throughout her sufferings. She is redeemed by literally following his directions: 'Gwendolen was like one perched with thirst, drinking the fresh water that spreads through the frame as a sufficient bliss.' In the crisis of her husband's death, the presence and confidence of Deronda supports her. Pariss rightly observes:

'In his relation to society Daniel Deronda is perhaps the most fortunate of George Eliot's characters. Once his initial problem of rootless cosmopolitanism is resolved by the discovery of his Jewish heritage, he has an opportunity to lead an epic life, like St. Theresa's — the kind of life that Dorothea so yearned for but could not find. There is no conflict in his lot between duty and inclination, or between public duty and private duty — though Gwendolen's dependence does cause him some uneasiness.'

151 Daniel Deronda, Chap. LVI.

Deronda says, 'I consider it my duty — it is the impulse of my feeling — to identify myself... with my hereditary people'.

152 Pariss: op.cit., p. 209.
George Eliot gives Deronda what she conceives to be the ideal human lot. For him, love and duty, personal affections and social sentiments, lie along the same path; his discovery of his Jewish identity at once gives him a heroic vocation and imperative duties, and makes it possible for him to marry the woman he loves, Mirah. Once he discovers his true social identity, all the elements of his life fall into place.

In Philip Wakem we see the power of unselfish love for another person to give life a meaning apart from the pains and pleasures of our individual lot. The combination of his deformity and his sensitivity makes his life a torment to Philip, who cannot resign himself to his stunted existence.

As a child, in school with Tom, he is very kind and sympathetic to Tom. And he does not have prejudices against Tom as the son of his father's enemy. He presents the only genuine response to Maggie's emotional and intellectual needs. He gives her music, books and responds to her childish need to be loved. The friendly and relaxed gentleness of Maggie's relation with Philip (in contrast to the uneasy embarrassment of her relations with Stephen) reflects on the quality of Philip's noble and selfless love.

His sincere love for Maggie persists throughout the novel. When Maggie returns (after her elopement with Stephen)
to St. Ogg's in disgrace and is not accepted by her brother even; it is Philip who proves true to her. He is still prepared to accept her, and he writes her to let her know that despite all, his love for her has made life a good to him:

', . . . no anguish I have had to bear on your account has been too heavy a price to pay for the new life into which I have entered in loving you. ... I think nothing but such complete and intense love could have initiated me into that enlarged life which grows and grows by appropriating the life of others; ... And remember that I am unchangeably yours: your — not with selfish wishes, but with a devotion that excludes such wishes.'153

The way in which Philip regards Maggie is typical of the objective relation of self to other people. Philip is perhaps the most successful mentor and rescuer. He is also, in human terms, the least successful, for his rescue, like his love is frustrated. He accepts his lot silently; but acts in the interest of Maggie due to the urge of benevolence in him.

The other characters who have this altruistic strain in them are minor characters like Bob Jakin, Henreitta Noble, Farebrother and Dolly Winthrop from the novels of George Eliot.

153_ The Mill on the Floss_, Bk VII, Chap. III.
CHAPTER VI

TECHNIQUE OF CHARACTERIZATION
The technique of characterization has its origin in the novelist's desire 'to make his readers so intimately acquainted with his character that the creations of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, living, human creatures.' Its success depends on the writer's ability to build up a person and a personality. To this end the author employs certain devices, depending upon his purpose and subject-matter. Obviously, the technique of fiction which served well the purposes of Scott and Dickens would not do for George Eliot. Her preoccupation with moral problems and consequent mental states necessitated a new kind of psychological character-analysis. Before we examine these devices, it will be useful to consider first her general narrative mode.

George Eliot's general narrative mode depends primarily on the convention of the omniscient, commenting narrator. Technically, like her English contemporaries (Dickens, Thackerey, Trollope), she looks upon the novelist as an omniscient narrator, relating an action long after its conclusion as though she were a God, commenting on the action, telling us which characters in it are to be admired, which to be deplored and why. 'It depends for complete artistic success, however, upon the novelist's tone of voice, for we are in this kind of

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novel inescapably in the presence of the story-teller telling the story.  

The 'omniscient author convention' is only a convenient shorthand term describing one kind of relationship between the writer and his work. Harvey describes it thus:

The author is not to his characters as we are to other people; his relationship to them is not human but god-like. However invisible he may make himself, whatever narrative technique he may use to conceal his exit from fiction, the novelist is and must be both omnipotent and omniscient. The last word is, both literally and metaphorically, his alone.

This being so, the novelist may confer on us his god-like power and privilege; we too can see the fictional character in his private self.

Obviously, the 'omniscient' narrative convention is complex and contains many elements that manifest themselves in the novel through a variety of techniques. Thus the use of

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4 David Daiches in George Eliot: Middlemarch (London, 1963), p. 12, says 'The omniscient author is omniscient in three dimensions — psychologically, in knowing what goes on inside her characters' consciousness; in space, in knowing what is going on in different places at the same time; and in time, in knowing how the historical pattern in which the characters are unwittingly involved is really shaped.'
the convention will differ from author to author; for instance, if we compare the use of the convention in Fielding, Scott, Thackeray, and George Eliot, we find that it covers four different techniques adapted to very different ends. 'Strictly speaking,' WJ Harvey observes, 'the omniscient author convention does not exist apart from any particular manifestation of it and that only these manifestations are the proper objects of critical study.' 5

At its simplest it manifests itself in the form of description, commentary and analysis. These authorial comments may take the form of moral comments, link comments which are often anticipatory in nature, or oblique statements with suggestiveness. Before we examine these devices of characterization, let us look closely at the narrator's voice.

George Eliot's voice is sometimes a fictitious one, like the professional voice of the author in Scott, Thackeray and Conrad, though it is never presented with the status of a dramatically conceived personality like a Pendennis or a Marlowe. To begin with, in Scenes of Clerical Life and Adam Bede, the voice is masculine. It is the voice of the pseudonym, and its tone and reference are often elaborate. There are pointed reminders of the author's masculinity. For

instance, in *Adam Bede*, 'he' holds a conversation with Adam about Parson Irwine.  

One thing is noticeable, that as soon as George Eliot embarks on her long novel, her tone of voice becomes much more mobile and varied, and the fictitious mask is shed. It is the voice of George Eliot or Marian Evans at its calmest and without disguise. The characters are people she or 'he' has known. John Paterson has convincingly shown that the authorial voice in *Adam Bede* is deliberately simple and restrained.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, however, we have the voice of that Victorian sage who was to speak with far greater assurance in *Middlemarch*. Multiple allusions to Greek and Shakespearian tragedy, to natural science, history, and legend are made by a bookish commentator. This narrator differs considerably from the limited observer who had pretended to know Adam Bede and Amos Barton personally. He is learned and erudite and the story is revealed to us by an ironic commentator whose own superior intelligence constantly makes itself felt. "It is the narrator who damps Mrs. Tulliver by slowly likening her to those Madonnas whose 'somewhat stupid expression' might have grown even more stunned and stupefied by their later experiences:

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again, with tongue in cheek, this narrator compares the impetuous miller to Hotspur. 8

Sometimes, there is a marked shift in treatment and style of narration. For example, in The Mill on the Floss, Maggie the child and Mr Tulliver are viewed by a narrator able to maintain an aesthetic distance. But as Maggie grows up, the young woman is idealized and she is likened to a 'tall Hamadryad' with a 'queenly head'. On the contrary, Mr. Tulliver, though pitiful is not spared the ironic treatment accorded to his rivals in St. Ogg's. The adult Maggie is untouched by the sarcasm with which the narrator blames society for barring its doors to an innocent victim.

The narrator's art matures in Silas Marner. Silas's early piety, his unexpected afflictions, the injustice he rails against, the nature of his eventual reconciliation, are handled without the loss of distance. By openly sharing Maggie's unsatisfied yearnings, George Eliot had dispensed with the protective mask of a detached observer. The narrator of Silas Marner, however, coldly observes that he finds it difficult 'to enter that simple untaught state of mind' which belongs to the weaver's limited powers of comprehension.

The narrator gradually recedes to the background in the

later novels and the characters are presented to us by the narrator not in his own person but as they appear to the world. As a consequence the authorial asides too become rare.

By the end of her career George Eliot achieves a mastery in the use of this convention. WJ Harvey observes:

"Middlemarch is firmly within the omniscient author convention; the difference is one of quality, not of kind. George Eliot has become more expert in handling her chosen convention and one element of expertise is economy."^9

Dorothea, in Middlemarch, is presented in an unusual way. She is presented subjectively from her own point of view and not from the author's.

"This kind of point of view was not easy for the omniscient Victorian novelist, who had not yet hit upon the technique of the limited third-person point of view, and in Middlemarch George Eliot achieves it only by the most studied neutrality, and through the careful combination and alternation of irony and sympathy."^10

This device of omniscient narration becomes a device of characterization as well. Through her comments on events and people, and even by her language, the narrator gives us an insight into the character and his temperament. George Eliot's

narration of a simple event in Adam Bede, explains the character of Hetty:

'Hetty blushed a deep rose-colour when Captain Donnithorne entered the dairy and spoke to her; but it was not at all a distressed blush, for it was inwreathed with smiles and dimples, and with sparkles from under long curled dark eyelids; and while her aunt was discoursing with him, . . . Hetty tossed and patted her pound of butter with quite a self-possessed, coquettish air, slily conscious that no turn of her head was lost.' 11

We are made at once aware of Hetty's physical charms and her vain and shallow nature.

Among the devices used by George Eliot for character-portrayal, the first and the simplest is description. She describes her characters externally before proceeding to give us an internal picture. Adam is introduced thus:

'Such a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned muscular man nearly six feet high, with a back so flat and a head so well poised that . . . he had an air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength; yet the long supple hand, with its broad finger tips, looked ready for works of skill. In his tall stalwartness Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name. . . . The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of good-humoured honest intelligence.' 12

11 Adam Bede, Chap. VII.

12 Ibid., Chap. I.
Adam is preeminent; in his 'tall stalwartness' he looms above every one of his Loamshire compatriots.

Sometimes these descriptions gives more than a visual image of the characters. They suggest what is within, and, in this sense, become symbolic. The following description of Romola is an example:

'The only spot of bright colour in the room was made by the hair of a tall maiden of seventeen or eighteen. . . . The hair was of a reddish gold colour, enriched by an unbroken small ripple, such as may be seen in the sunset clouds on grandest autumnal evenings. . . . (Her) cheeks were also without any tinge of the rose. There was the same refinement of brow and nostril counterbalanced by a full though firm mouth and powerful chin, which gave an expression of proud tenacity and latent impetuousness; an expression carried out in the backward poise of the girl's head, and the grand line of her neck and shoulders. It was a type of face of which one could not venture to say whether it would inspire love or only that unwilling admiration which is mixed with dread; the question must be decided by the eyes, which often seemed charged with a more direct message from the soul.'13

Description not only provides 'solidity of specification' but often serves as an index to the characters temperament. The following description of Dorothea in the opening passage of the novel is revealing:

'Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare in style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian

13 Romola, Chap. V.
painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible, — or from one of our elder poets, — in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper.

Dorothea knew many passages of Pascal's Pensees and of Jeremy Taylor by heart. She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving eternal consequences, with a keen interest in guim 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.'14

The first half of the passage establishes Dorothea's fineness and austerity, what could be called her distinction of soul. The second half continues to emphasize her spiritual aspirations, which amount almost to a lust after goodness and the life of self-sacrifice; nevertheless, their tone is critical. Dorothea is the victim of her own headlong spiritual enthusiasm, of her ignorance of the world and of herself. Dorothea, it is suggested, lacks self-knowledge and has altogether unreal ideas about her true or her possible relation to her environment. Yet this in no way detracts from the genuine quality of Dorothea's spiritual ardour.

A little later, George Eliot tells us:

14 Middlemarch, Chap. I.
'She would perhaps be hardly characterized enough if it were omitted that she wore her brown hair flatly braided and coiled behind...at a time when public feeling required the meagreness of nature to be dissimulated by tall barricades of frizzed curls and bows... This was a trait of Miss Brooke's asceticism.'

Our earliest glimpse of Maggie Tulliver tells us that she is an anomaly in her environment. She has a dark complexion; her hair will not curl; she is careless of her personal appearance; she is felt to be too intelligent for a girl; her interests are not those of a normal young lady of nine years; and her passionate and seemingly wilful nature makes her unmanageable for her elders. In one phrase George Eliot describes her as 'this small mistake of nature'.

These are the outward manifestations of the deep-seated dislocation which is to have the most serious consequences for the mature Maggie. Besides, we are told in many ways of her susceptibility to music, which will be crucial in her relations to Philip first and Stephen later.

With her appealing childhood in mind and her ascetic life in 'the Valley of Humiliation', many readers fail to notice the hints of strong sensuality in the Maggie of Book VI, 'The Great Temptation.' Physically she looked older than she was. Even at seventeen her tall, 'broad-chested figure has

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15 _Middlemarch_, Chap. III.
16 _The Mill on the Floss_, Bk I, Chap. 1.
the mould of early womanhood'; her arms recall the Demeter
group of the Parthenon marbles; her 'coronet' of hair is jet
black, her brown cheek firm and rounded; her eyes are liquid,
her lips full and red. Both in build and complexion she
resembles her Aunt Gitty Moss, that 'patient, prolific,
loving-hearted woman'. At nineteen Maggie's dusky vigour is
accented by the pretty slimness of Lucy Deane, who inherited
the fair skin and curls of the true Dodsons as well as their
habit of doing what is expected of them.

Stephen too is tall. He has long legs, strong, firm
hands, a large head 'with a square forehead, short dark-brown
hair standing erect with a slight wave at the end like a
thick crop of corn, and a half-ardent, half-sarcastic glance
from under his well-marked horizontal eyebrow.' His first
glance at Maggie produces the wholly normal masculine inference,
'An alarming amount of devil there', an observation we recall
when, after the disgrace, the gossips of St. Ogg's declare
that 'there had always been something in Miss Tulliver's very
physique that a refined instinct felt to be prophetic of harm.'

Bethell observes:

'in Middlemarch her style is achieved. . . . There a
few descriptions, . . . and such as there are, are
strictly utilitarian in intention: the outward
appearance of a character is summarized at once and
left alone, excepting where, as in the case of
Rosamond Vincy, it is of extrinsic importance. Even
then the description is not mainly in terms of
sensory fact, so as to arouse admiration (cf. Hetty),
but in such terms as to present its social and
ethical significance.'

17 SL Bethell: 'The Novels of George Eliot' reprinted from the
Criterion, XVIII (October, 1938). 39-57 in Richard Stang (ed):
Discussions of George Eliot (Boston, 1960), p. 44.
This is the passage introducing Rosamond:

'Old provincial society had its share of this subtle movement: had not only its striking downfalls, its brilliant young professional dandies who ended by living up an entry... Settlers, too, came from distant countries, some with an alarming novelty of skill, others with an offensive advantage of cunning... though I, as a maiden apparently beguiled by attractive merchandise, was the reverse of Miss Brooke, and in this respect bore more resemblance to Rosamond Viney, who had excellent taste in costume with that nymph-like figure and pure blondness which give the largest range to choice in the flow and colour of drapery. But these things made only part of her charm. She was admitted to be the flower of Mrs Lemon's school, the chief school in the county, where the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female — even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage.'

This description of Rosamond, develops the general theme, and shows her as a product of the conditions just presented. The 'nymph-like figure and pure blondness is intentionally featureless; and, in the next phrase, the value of a dressmaker's block; this phrase is very subtly differentiated into satire by the 'largest range of choice'.

Gwendolen is imperfectly exteriorized. Our first sight of Gwendolen is at the gaming table of a continental spa. She is described as a 'problematic sylph' and a 'Nereid'. And there is a rich cluster of similar images in the comments of the onlookers:

18 Middlemarch, Chap. XI.
19 Daniel Deronda, Chap. I.
"She has got herself up as a sort of serpent now, all green and silver, and winds her neck about a little more than usual. ... A man might risk hanging for her — I mean, a fool might," he continues playfully.

"Woman was tempted by a serpent: why not man?"

"It is a sort of Lamia beauty she has."

Lamia, the serpent, and the other metaphors suggest — what is confirmed later — Gwendolen as attractive, feminine and at the same time man-devouring and, in a way, sexually morbid. 'With all her imaginative delight in being adored, there was a certain fierceness of maidenhood in her.' Rex Gascoigne, her first suitor, thinks of her as 'instinct with all feeling, and not only ready to respond to a worshipful love, but able to love better than other girls'. But as soon as she finds out, the sylph becomes something else when she is made love to. She is 'passionately everse' and objects 'with a sort of physical repulsion, to being directly made love to'. She dislikes being touched and will have no one near her but her mother. And we see the same thing in her relation to Grandcourt; she tolerates him as a lover because she does not fear that he is going to kiss her.

If it is Gwendolen's 'dynamic glance' which creates a hubbub in the Casino, it is Silas's strange 'gaze' that was
enough to make the Raveloe boys 'take to their legs in terror'. George Eliot does not require anything else to invest the harmless linen-weaver with an aura of mystery.

Sometimes the character's dress too indicates the kind of person within. For instance, when Hetty's beauty is described as 'a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you.'

George Eliot further adds:

It is of little use for me to tell you that Hetty's cheek was like a rose petal, that dimples played about her pouting lips, that her large dark eyes hid a soft roguishness under their long lashes, and that her curly hair, though all pushed back under her round cap while she was at work, stole back in dark delicate rings on her forehead, and about her white shell-like ears; it is of little use for me to say how lovely was the contour of her pink-and-white neckerchief, tucked into her low plum-coloured stuff bodice, or how the linen butter-making apron, with its bib, seemed a thing to be imitated in silk by duchesses, since it fell in such charming lines, or how her brown stockings and thick-soled buckled shoes lost all that clumsiness which they must certainly have had when empty of her foot and ankle; — of little use, unless you have seen a woman who affected you as Hetty affected her beholders...20

20 *Adam Bede*, Chap. VII.
But what does all this lead to? Hetty remains at best a hollow vain egoist. Perhaps George Eliot, like Thackeray and Hardy, felt that the strikingly handsome or flashily beautiful types (with their fashionable dresses) would not do for a specially virtuous character. A certain lack of colour or paleness like Romola's, if not actual plainness and homeliness like Dinah's or Maggie's, is felt to be more in keeping with a good character. Beauty has always been a suspect quality in fiction. George Eliot has a knack of quick and humorous characterization, that gives us a scene or a person in a few strokes of the pen:

'While this greeting was going forward, Mr. Bridman and Jet the spaniel looked on with the air of actors who had no idea of a by-play.'

Or again,

'Mr. Bridman had put his neck under the yoke of his handsome sister, and though his soul was a very little one — of the smallest description indeed — he would not have ventured to call it his own.'

21 *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Vol. I.

Celia shows a kitten-like content and hatred of 'notions'; Sir James Chetham, 'doesn't go much into ideas'; Will Ladislaw, has his amiable vagabond dilettantism, and looks upon all forms of prescribed work as 'harness,' and holds genius to be 'necessarily intolerant of fetters'. Thus through statement or hint in passing, George Eliot is able to illuminate a character.

Direct comments on the characters also help us understand the characters better. The following comment on Hetty is revealing:

'Does any sweet or sad memory mingle with this dream of the future — any loving thought of her second parents — of the children she had helped to tend — of any youthful companion, any pet animal, any relic of her childhood even? Not one. There are some plants that have hardly any roots; you may tear them from their native nook or rock or wall, and just lay them over your ornamental flower pot, and they blossom none the worse. Hetty could have cast all her past life behind her, and never cared to be reminded of it again.' 23

Similarly, Dorothea in *Middlemarch* is characterized in a sentence:

'She was open, ardent, and not in the least self-admiring...' 24

The following comment on Dorothea, which is representative of scores of others, emphasizes her spiritual aspirations.

23 *Adam Bede*, Chap. XV.
24 *Middlemarch*, Chap. I.
which amount almost to a lust for goodness and the life of self-sacrifice; nevertheless, the tone of these comments is critical:

'All Dorothea's passion was transfused through a mind struggling towards an ideal life; the radiance of her transfigured girlhood fell on the first object that came within its level. The impetus with which inclination became resolution was heightened by those little events of the day which had roused her discontent with the actual conditions of her life.' 25

Such comments in a way hint at Dorothea's headlong spiritual enthusiasms, of her ignorance of the world and of herself, of her lack of self-discipline.

As we have seen, George Eliot comments on the characters unhesitatingly in her own person. Occasionally there is a slight variation of this device when the author entrusts this task to one of the other characters. For instance, Mrs Poyser in Adam Bede gives a fair estimate of Hetty:

'She's no better than a peacock, as 'ud strut about on the wall, and spread its tail when the sun shone if all the folks i' the parish was dying'. 26

Or, the landlady's comment on Hetty at Windsor, when she discovers Hetty's condition and feels her own superiority:

'It 'ud have been a good deal better for her if she'd been uglier and had more conduct. . .'. 27

25 Middlemarch, Chap. V.
26 Adam Bede, Chap. XV.
27 Ibid., Chap. XXXVI.
Mr. Casson, the landlord of Donnithorne Arms, thought of Adam as 'a little lifted up and peppery like'.

Take, again, Mrs. Cadwallader's comment on Casaubon: 'a great bladder for dried peas to rattle in!' or Mrs. Cadwallader's description of Ladislaw as 'a very sprightly sprig'.

Mr. Brooke in Middlemarch is the richest source of ironic comment about the protagonists. This is Brooke's opinion of Ladislaw:

'Ladislaw's sentiments in every way I am sure are good — indeed, we were talking a great deal together last night. But he has some sort of enthusiasm for liberty, freedom, enthusiasm — a fine thing under guidance — under guidance, you know.'

His remark on Casaubon derives the irony from his comic analogy:

'I overdid it at one time'. . . 'about topography, ruins, temples, — I thought I had a clue, but I saw it would carry me too far, and nothing might come of it. You may go any length in that sort of thing, and nothing may come of it, you know.'

Casaubon's Key to the Mythologies shrivels up in such a context. Mr. Brooke speaks truer than he knows. . .

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28 Adam Bede, Chap. II.
29 Middlemarch, Chap. VI.
30 Ibid., Chap. XXXVIII.
31 Ibid., Chap. XXVIII.
Sometimes the characters consciously or unconsciously reveal their own characters by their own speech. This dramatic self-revelation is an essential part of characterization — and one which is obviously far removed from the intrusive authorial comment. For instance, Adam speaks about his own unimaginative rectitude:

'Ah! I was always too hard,' Adam said to himself. 'It's a sore fault in me as I'm hot and out o' patience with people when they do wrong and my heart gets shut up against 'em... I see there's more pride nor love in my soul...'''

Again when Casaubon tells Mr. Brooke:

'I feed too much on the inward sources; I live too much with the dead.' Casaubon has told the truth about himself, again more profoundly and symbolically than he realises. And Dorothea's piece of self-characterization lies in: 'I am too short-sighted...'' when she tells Celia the fact, than what she actually realizes.

We learn later that he has no true inward sources, so that in fact it amounts to saying that he is spiritually — starving as well as emotionally dead.

32 Adam Bede, Chap. XVIII.
33 Middlemarch, Chap. II.
34 Ibid.
In general, a character's actions and behaviour, and the unfolding of the plot are enough to bring out the whole of the personality. But George Eliot seems to feel that we may misunderstand her characters or fail to understand them if she did not explain their behaviour. For instance, in Dorothea's case, although her 'ardent' and 'theoretic' nature are characterized on the impact of Rome on her, George Eliot explains further:

'To those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes... let them conceive one more historical contrast: the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism... a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into that would, and whose quick emotions gave the most abstract things the quality of a pleasure or a pain...'

Here Dorothea's own feelings, are revealed as embedded within a generalized situation.

These explanatory comments or explanations may be limited only to a few words or may extend to pages. She defends as well as accuses her characters. She seems to be very anxious that the reader must see them through her eyes. Here is an explanatory comment, trying to justify Adam's love of Hetty:

35 Middlemarch, Chap. XX.
'Possibly you think that Adam was not at all sagacious in his interpretations, and that it was altogether extremely unbecoming in a sensible man to behave as he did — falling in love with a girl who really had nothing more than her beauty to recommend her, attributing imaginary virtues to her, and even condescending to cleave to her after she had fallen in love with another man. . .nay, I think the deep love he had for that sweet, rounded, blossom-like, dark-eyed Hetty, of whose inward self he was really very ignorant, came out of the very strength of his nature, and not out of any inconsistent weakness. Is it any weakness, pray to be wrought, pray, on by exquisite music?'

The voice which speaks with sympathy and pathos can also be ironic in the presentation of the character. For instance, in this comment on Hetty, who is a vain egoist:

'Ah, what a prize the man gets who wins a sweet bride like Hetty! How the men envy him who come to the wedding breakfast, and see her hanging on the arm in her white lace and orange blossoms. The dear young, round, soft, flexible thing! Her heart must be just as soft, her temper just as free from angles, her character just as pliant. . .'  

These intrusive comments may often take the form of moral comments:

'It is too painful to think that she is a woman, with a woman's destiny before her — a woman spinning in young ignorance a light web of folly and vain hopes which may one day close round her and press upon her, a rancorous poisoned garment, changing all at once her fluttering, trivial, butterfly sensations into a life of deep human anguish.'

36  Adam Bede, Chap. XXXIII.
37  Ibid., Chap. XV.
38  Ibid., Chap. XXVII.
Harvey observes in regard to George Eliot:

'Her intrusive comments are generally neither dramatic gestures, rhetorical embellishments demanding an overwrought emotional response from the reader, nor are they the dogmatic assertions of a particular philosophy; rather they are in the main, the sober, unemphatic and mature statement of those great commonplaces of human nature, those basic facts of life (specially facts of moral life) that underlie all human situations, real or imaginary.'

Often they take the form of generalizations. Behind these too, we feel the 'weight of lived experience' in a way that guarantees their validity. Since their function is expansive and generalizing, they are essential to George Eliot's purpose, both moral and aesthetic. George Eliot creates the widest, most inclusive of contexts by her intrusive comments.

There are places where the modern reader feels that the commentary is excessive. Modern critics consider such direct description and comment a defect in the art of characterization. She gets involved in the life of her characters, and approves or condemns their actions without hesitation. In such cases the author is like the chorus in drama, supposed to reflect the feelings of an ideal spectator.

There is a considerable reduction in these intrusive authorial comments in the later novels; and there are many

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details which are not directly commented on but are left to
the reader to supply from the trailing clues of image and
coincidence. 40

Next, we encounter George Eliot's analysis of her
characters. It is another of her omniscient techniques.
Such analysis plays an essential part in the novels,
especially when she is primarily concerned with the moral life
of her characters. The technique of psychological analysis
is the one which she employs to reveal her developing
characters. By the term psychological analysis, we generally
mean the novelist's attempt to represent the motives and the
conscious or unconscious thought processes of the characters.
It is therefore an important element in characterization. 41

W.J. Harvey maintains that this is an excellence:

'Analysis, in George Eliot's hands, is an important
element in the creation of a body of particular
life... superbly handled, as it generally is by
her, analysis is a literary mode in no way inferior
to full dramatic representation. ... Surely in the
case of Bulstrode, or Casaubon or Rosamond Vincy,
analysis produces a sense of intimacy, of human
reality as profoundly felt and as subtly conveyed
as any 'inside' representation.' 42

40 See Harvey: 'The Omniscient Author Convention,' Chap. III
of The Art of George Eliot.

41 Felham Edger: The Art of the Novel (New York, 1963), p. 34.
'Only Richardson used it as a device in the eighteenth
century — sparingly used by Scott, and more subtly and
extensively by Jane Austen. Neglected by Thackeray and
Dickens it is further developed by George Eliot and
Meredith. Henry James was still more lavish in its use.'

For example, the success of Arthur Donnithorne's portrayal is achieved mainly, though not entirely, by analysis. To this end we must explore his character. In the novel _Adam Bede_, we first meet Arthur when, with Irwine, he visits the Poyser's farm. In other words, George Eliot carefully establishes him in a dramatic scene before offering any analysis of his character. From this scene we learn a good deal both about him and about other things necessary to the novel — the awe in which the gentry are held, for example, which is so necessary to the kind of tragedy which later develops. Besides this awe contributes to Hetty's romantic dreams. It is, in fact, Irwine who suggests that Hetty will make a good wife for Craig and Adam is destined to marry Mary Burge. Arthur only learns about Adam's feelings for Hetty when it is too late. In this first scene, too, the relationship between Arthur and Hetty is set in motion while one important facet of Arthur's character is firmly established. This is what one might call the public part of his personality — his desire to be liked, to cut a fine figure in society, to be a good squire. His tragedy is in part caused by this desire; the misguided perception within himself of a reflection of what he thinks the world sees in him prevents true self-knowledge and thus obscures true moral judgement. What this desire — potentially a genuine one — amounts to, is seen in this opening scene; all his good qualities are somehow twisted by his anxiety for the good opinion of the world; his natural
courtesy and goodwill dwindle into traditional but empty gestures, into giving sixpences to little Totty. Arthur must learn that some things cannot be bought and that other things can never be paid for.

'We don't inquire too closely into character in the case of a handsome generous young fellow who will have property enough to support numerous pecadilloes—who, if he should unfortunately break a man's legs in his rash driving, will be able to pension him handsomely; or if he should happen to spoil a woman's existence for her, will make up to her with expensive bon-bons, packed up and directed by his own hand.' 43

George Eliot's analytical comment underlines the impression of the first scene: Gestures, promises to himself, blank cheques drawn on the future—these constitute a large part of Arthur's moral life.

But Arthur possesses a moral dimension lacking in Hetty; as George Eliot tells us:

'he felt the situation acutely; felt the sorrow of the dear thing in the present, and thought with a darker anxiety of the tenacity which her feelings might have in the future'. 44

The dimensions of Arthur's life are limited, however, by the social perspective in which he views things, all part and parcel of the public persona he creates for himself:

43 Adam Bede, Chap. XXII.
44 Ibid., Chap. XXIX.
'To flirt with Hetty was a very different affair from flirting with a pretty girl of his own station; that was understood to be an amusement on both sides; or, if it became serious, there was no obstacle to marriage. But this little thing would be spoken ill of directly, if she happened to be seen walking with him; and then those excellent people, the Foysers, to whom a good name was as precious as if they had the best blood in the land in their veins — he should hate himself if he made a scandal of that sort, on the estate that was to be his own some day, and among tenants by whom he liked, above all, to be respected.'

But this social view is not supported by any real sense of social responsibility. Instead, we have a moral vacuum which is masked but not filled by a graceful observance of traditional forms. Arthur's weakness at the core is revealed and the burden of this revelation is carried largely by passages of analytical comment. These define with remarkable precision the evasive twists and turns of Arthur's mind, dominated as it is by 'hopeful self-persuasion'. A trait which clearly links up with the easy rationalization of guilt in the scene in which he determines to break with Hetty:

'It was an unfortunate business altogether, but there was no use in making it worse than it was imaginary exaggerations and forebodings of evil that might never come. The temporary sadness for Hetty was the worst consequence; he resolutely turned his eyes away from any bad consequence that was not demonstrably inevitable. But — but Hetty might have had the trouble in some other way if not this. And perhaps hereafter he might be able to do

45 Adam Bede, Chap. XIII.
46 See Harvey: op. cit.
a great deal for her, and make up to her for all the tears she would shed about him. She would owe the advantage of his care for her in future years to the sorrow she had incurred now. So good comes out of evil. Such is the beautiful arrangement of things!47

Arthur's irresponsibility, his easy optimism, his evasion of guilt and his sense that the future can be bribed with good intentions — all these characteristics are made manifest by means of analysis and comments.

Romola is a greater triumph than any earlier novel of George Eliot in respect of her skill in the delineation of character. Tito Melema, at any rate, is a masterpiece in psychological analysis. His degeneration, the development of treachery, a vicious trait of character has been recorded step by step with a wealth of psychological insight and incisive powers of analysis.

The fall of Tito has been portrayed on two fronts. One is his moral blindness toward everything except his own selfish interests that leads him to a series of dishonest, ungrateful and heinous acts of treachery. The other is his softness, physical and mental, which compels him to indulge in actions and failings in the face of his better judgement.

47 Adam Bede, Chap. XXIX.
The first crisis in the moral career of Tito comes when he has become rich enough (making five hundred florins through the sale of Baldassare's articles lying with him) to be able to attempt to rescue Baldassare from drudgery in unknown places. At this stage the greedy self-interest of Tito awakes, and after a moral tussle, he decides to betray the trust of his adoptive father in pursuit of his own welfare. George Eliot has analysed this struggle of motives thus:

'Yet the moment when he first had this sum in his possession was the crisis of the first serious struggle his facile, good-humoured nature had known. An importunate thought, of which he had till now refused to see more than the shadow as it dagged his footsteps, at last rushed upon him and grasped him: he was obliged to pause and decide whether he would surrender and obey, or whether he would give the refusal that must carry irrevocable consequences. . . . "A man's ransom!" who was it that had said five hundred florins was more than a man's ransom? If, now, under this mid-day sun, or some hot coast far away, a man somewhat stricken in years — a man not without high thoughts and with the most passionate heart — a man who long years ago had rescued a little boy from a life of beggary, filth, and cruel wrong, had reared him tenderly, and been to him as a father — if that man were now under this summer sun toiling as a slave, hewing wood and drawing water, perhaps being smitten and buffeted because he was not deft and active? If he were saying to himself, "Tito will find me: he had but to carry our manuscripts and gems to Venice; he will have raised money, and will never rest till he finds me out?" If that were certain, could he, Tito, see the price of the gems lying before him, and say, "I will stay at Florence, where I am fanned by soft airs of promised love and prosperity; I will not risk myself for his sake?" No, surely not, if it were certain. But nothing could be further from certainty. . . Had not he, Tito, suffered shipwreck, and narrowly escaped drowning? He had good cause for feeling the omnipresence of casualties that threatened all projects with futility. . . Why, that he should
be himself seized, and spend all his florins on preliminaries, and he again a destitute wanderer — with no more gems to sell.48

The passage above is an excellent word-picture of Tito's mind in action — his ingenious prevarications, his seemingly judicious appraisal of the situation, his laborious assessment of pros and cons, his careful assertion of his good opinion of himself — all leading ultimately to the foregone conclusion.

Such passages of psychological analysis are interspersed throughout the novel, along with moral comment:

'This was his first real colloquy with himself; he had gone on following the impulses of the moment, and one of those impulses had been to conceal half the fact; he had never considered this part of his conduct lay enough to face the consciousness of his motives for the concealment. What was the use of telling the whole? It was true the thought had crossed his mind several times, since he had quitted Nauplia that, after all, it was a great relief to be quit of Baldassare. . . He did not admit that his gratitude had failed; but it was not certain that Baldassare was in slavery, not certain that he was living: "Do I not owe something to myself?" said Tito inwardly with a slight movement of his shoulders, the first he had made since he had turned to look down at the florins. "Before I quit every thing, and incur again all the risks of what I am even now weary, I must at least have a reasonable hope. Am I to spend my life in a wandering search? I believe he is dead. Cannini was right about my florins: I will place them in his hands tomorrow.'49

48 Romola, Chap. XV.
49 Ibid.
This mixture of moral comment and analysis helps in the exposition of the character:

...Tito had never had occasion to fabricate an ingenious lie before; the occasion was come now—the occasion which circumstance never fails to beget on tacit falsity; and his ingenuity was ready. For he had convinced himself that he was not bound to go in search of Baldassare. He had once said that on a fair assurance of his father's existence and whereabout, he would unhesitatingly go after him. But after all, why was he bound to go? What, looked at closely, was the end of all life, but to extract the utmost sum of pleasure? And was not his own blooming life a promise of incomparably more pleasure, not for himself only, but for others, than the withered wintry life of a man who was past the time of keen enjoyment, and whose ideas had stiffened into barren rigidity? Those ideas had all been sown in the fresh soil of Tito's mind, and were lively germs there. ...50

After this brilliant assessment of Tito's moral degradation, there is an admirable picture of his mind in action weav[ing] out prevarications:

Certainly the gems and therefore the florins were, in a sense, Baldassare's; in the narrow sense by which the right of possession is determined in ordinary affairs; but in that large and more radically natural view by which the world belongs to youth and strength, they were rather his who could extract more pleasure out of them. ...Not that he cared for the florins except for Romola's sake: he would give up the florins readily enough. ...He would rather that Baldassare should not suffer; he liked no one to suffer; but could any philosophy prove to him that he was bound to care for another's suffering more than for his own? To do so he must have loved Baldassare

50 Romola, Chap. XVI.
devotedly, and he did not love him: was that his own fault? Gratitude! Seen closely, it made no valid claim: his father's life would have been dreary without him: are we convicted of a debt to men for pleasures they give themselves?51

After attaining this mental situation, Tito has no alternative but to commit acts of meanness.

This analysis of a character into its element enabled her to deduce its central principle, so that however complex and inconsistent it might appear, she saw it as a unity. It is this grasp of psychological essentials which gives her characters their reality. "Drawing from the inside out, starting with the central principle of the character, she is able to show how it reveals itself in the most variecoloured surface of character, that prevalent tone which marks it as the expression of one personality."52

Thus it is George Eliot's character analysis which convinces us that Lydgate's schemes for medical reform and his place in medical science are as much part of his character as his way with the ladies. Her judgement on Lydgate as a doctor is a judgement on his fate as well:

"He carried to his studies in London, Edinburgh and Paris the conviction that the medical profession as it might be was the finest in the world; precisely the most perfect interchange between science and art; offering the most

51 Romola, Chap. XVI.
direct alliance between intellectual conquest and the social good. Lydgate's nature demanded this combination: he was an emotional creature, with a flesh and blood sense of fellowship, which withstood all the abstractions of special study. He cared not only for 'cases' but for John and Elizabeth, especially Elizabeth. 53

The analytic process, when skillfully used, reveals character more subtly, if not more vividly, than speech or mere narrative. At its best it is in the nature of a spiritual monologue, and is well suited to George Eliot's purpose. 54

The author's commenting voice, after giving us an external description, soon proceeds to give us an internal view of the characters. The device she uses for presenting the character's mind is free indirect intercourse which, because it consists of the narrator indirectly voicing the character's thoughts, blends easily into analysis. From analysis we may move to further levels of generalization or comment. For instance, here is a piece of analysis of Lydgate's thoughts — a reflection on Dorothea's character:

"As Lydgate rode away, he thought, 'This young creature has a heart large enough for the Virgin Mary. She evidently thinks nothing of her own future, and would pledge away half her income at once, as if she wanted nothing for herself but a chair to sit in from which she can look down with those clear eyes at the poor mortals who pray to her. She seems to have a lot what I never saw in any woman before — a fountain of friendship towards men — a man can make a friend of her". 55

53 Middlemarch, Chap. XV.
54 Guy de Maupassant: 'Preface to Père et Jean' in Walter Allen (ed): Writers on Writing (New York, 1963), says 'The supporters of the novel of analysis claim that the writer should set himself to demonstrate the slightest evolutions of the soul and all the secret motives which determine our actions and accord to action itself only a secondary importance.'
55 Middlemarch, Chap. LXXVI.
More significant is the stress intended by George Eliot herself; for she herself says:

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

Or again Dinah's thoughts about Hetty are revealing:

'Her thoughts became concentrated on Hetty, that sweet young thing, with life and all its trial before her — the solemn daily duties of the wife and mother — and her mind so unprepared for them all; bent merely on little foolish, selfish pleasures, like a child hugging its toys in the beginning of a long toilsome journey, in which it will have bear hunger and cold and unsheltered darkness.'

Or take Gwendolen's reflections about Grandcourt:

'He delights in making the dogs and horses quail: that is half his pleasure in calling them his... It will come to be so with me; and I shall quail.'

Thus, George Eliot leads us through different phases of feeling towards her principal character through the sensibilities of other characters rather than through her own overt comment. 'Analysis' as Leslie Stephen puts it 'gives us an accurate account of their moral evolution'.

56 Middlemarch, Chap. LXXVII.
57 Adam Bede, Chap. XV.
58 Daniel Deronda, Chap. XXXV.
Such analysis plays an essential part in George Eliot's novels as she is primarily concerned with the moral life of her characters. Harvey, in his introduction to *Middlemarch* has praised George Eliot's 'subtlety of psychological analysis and the maturity of moral comment'. 59 We often occupy a character's mind for a paragraph or two and learn about his conscious or unconscious motives and thought processes. This technique anticipates the modern technique of psycho-analysis whose able exponents are Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. But George Eliot can claim to be an innovator in respect of this technique, though in an immature form.

George Eliot's language too reveals the characters. Derek Oldfield rightly comments that 'The writing is individual — in the sense, each word is individually selected for its purpose'. 60 Thus 'moral vulgarity cleaved to him like an hereditary odour' is an apt simile, providing an insight into Matthew Jermyn's habits and character. Rosamond's cold passivity is suggested both in the incidents and the language used for her. We are told that she falls back on 'quiet steady disobedience' to her husband. Again, the old

miser Peter Featherstone seeks, as he declares in his will, 'to please God Almighty' by building alm houses, and Mr. Bulstrode attempts 'an act of restitution which may move Divine Providence to avert painful consequences'.

Her clearness of expression condenses into a single happy word at times, which does duty for a sentence. "There is a perfect picture in her metaphorical adjective describing Casaubon's 'sandy' absorption' of his wife's care. Fred Viney is in the 'pink-skinned' stage of typhoid fever; in almost everybody else's hands he would have been 'trembling on the verge' of it. A 'violoncello' voice is a novel inspiration for 'barytone,' and a 'chiaroscuro' parentage is a stroke of genius. The sense of Baldassare's weakness pressed on him like a 'frosty' ache. Mr. Vincy's florid style is contrasted with the 'Franciscan' tints of Bulstrode." 61

Her dramatic sense prompted the sure adjective at critical moments. As the French army approached Florence, the dark grandeur of the mass overwhelmed the onlookers with its 'long-winding terrible pomp'. And there is a fine recklessness, suitable to a wild acceptance of the future as a result of a delirious pleasure in the present, in her 'hell-braving joy'.

George Eliot is not afraid of using a word usually stamped as vulgar, if circumstances justify it: 'There was something very fine in Lydgate's look just then, and any one might have been encouraged to bet on his achievement.' She employs 'kick' and 'roast' in the same manner. She makes use of quaint but appropriate words with the prefix un, as 'unappraisive audience' and 'uncherishing years'.

George Eliot uses the word 'narrow' to characterize Hetty. The equivalent terms for Dorothea are 'ardent' and 'theoretic'. In reading George Eliot, one gets the feeling frequently that through this happy gift for selection, the one correct word is found to describe what must otherwise require circumlocution, 'and that no synonym could have been used without weakening the picture'.

A literary form may be given to the dialectal words and expression that constitute the folk-speech of a district. George Eliot uses it for the elucidation of character and by its aid increases the individuality of the portrait. 'George Eliot's use of dialect was distinctly artistic. She used just so much of it as was necessary to give point and finish to the personages of rural life who live and breathe in her pages.'

In Adam Bede, the very opening chapter shows her

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skill and discretion in the use of dialectal expressions. The characters engage themselves in a free and unconstrained talk of the workshop; there is, in fact, a certain individuality in the way they employ the dialect which marks them off from one another. Mr. Casson, the host of the 'Donnithorne Arms' speech is characteristic:

"I'm not this countryman you may tell by my tongue, Sir, they're cur'ous talkers i' this country, Sir; . . . I've heard Squire Donnithorne say many a time; 'its the dileck,' says he." 64

The departure from conventional English is in this case a note of caste. The English gentry have a flavour of culture, while their household dependents speak in another tongue. For instance, the speakers at 'The Rainbow' inn speak in a language different from those at the dinner at Squire Cass's. The drawing room and the servants' hall have each their own vocabulary and grammar, and there is a philological gulf between the two.

Derek Oldfield demonstrates how skilfully George Eliot provides the people in Middlemarch with an idiom which is an extremely sensitive register of their natures:

64 Adam Bede, Chap.
"Bulstrode has evolved a highly efficient means of concealing himself; his abstract and infinite predicates are nebulous, his constant prepositional phrases conceal connections and weaken his utterances. . . . Lydgate, the scientist, has a clarity of expression which, through sentence structure and metaphor, lucidly juxtaposes prepositions. Casaubon, the 'scholar', accumulates pieces of language, moving further and further from his main clause. Casaubon, the inadequate human being, has 'not two styles of speaking at command', but is strangled by the measured public voice he has developed. His powers of communication have completely atrophied. In his researches, he cannot publish; in meeting other people, he cannot seek for a common idiom, and we watch him grow even more isolated. Fred Viney's unpretentious speech ('oh, fudge!') establishes his basically genuine nature, whilst Mr. Brooke's evasive, muddled half-finished speeches are a perfect 'organ' for the politician mangue."**65**

George Eliot does not concern herself exclusively with the psychology of grammar and diction; she is also at great pains to make us 'realize' her characters in her novels, through description of their voices and intonation. In Middlemarch, for example, Rosamond's voice, 'fell and trickled like cold water drops' (Chap. 64). Dorothea's speech is often 'recitative' (Chap. 5), or it has a bird-like modulation' (Chap. 22). Lydgate has a voice 'habitually deep and sonorous, yet capable of becoming very low and gentle at the right moment' (Chap. 13). Will Ladislaw has a 'light voice' (Chap. 49). Celia a 'quiet guttural' (Chap. 55).

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Mrs. Garth has a 'deep contratate' (Chap. 56), Mrs. Waule a 'woolly tone' (Chap. 32), and Captain Lydgate a 'rather heavy utterance' (Chap. 58). There are many other examples. In Daniel Deronda — Grandcourt's slow and low sentences give all who have to deal with him the sense of 'as absolute a resistance as if their fingers had been pushing at a fast-shut iron door.'

Some of these voices are described as changing in different situations. Dorothea's voice can take on a 'melancholy cadence' (Chap. 44), and Fred's 'a tone of grumbling remonstrance' (Chap. 52), and Will's 'a hoarse undertone extremely unlike his usual light voice' (Chap. 49). Rosamond, on the other hand, never 'raised her voice' (Chap. 58), and Celia can be outrageously insensitive 'without the least change of tone' (Chap. 50).

These tones matter while making an accurate study of George Eliot's characters. They matter, too, in understanding the relationships established between the characters themselves. A highly significant distinction is made between Rosamond and Dorothea — and this distinction is, indeed, conceived in terms of sensitivity of utterance. Thus Lydgate remembers Dorothea's 'tones of emotion', when she cried — '----- think what I can do -----'.

66 Middlemarch, Chap. 58.
"That voice of deep-souled womanhood had remained within him as the enkindling conception of dead and sceptred genius had remained with him... the tones were a music from which he was falling away — he had really fallen into a momentary daze, when Rosamond said in her silvery neutral way, 'Here is your tea, Tartius.'" 67

Rosamond throws the same 'neutrality' into her later words, echoing with significant difference of tone the words of Dorothea, 'What can I do, Tartius?'. Mr. Casaubon 'delivered himself with precision, as if he had been called upon to make a public statement; and the balanced sing-song neatness of his speech, occasionally corresponded on by a movement of his head, was the more conspicuous from its contrast with good Mr. Brooke's scrappy slovenliness'. 68

The dead pedantic calm of Casaubon's speech as contrasted with Mr. Brooke's cheerfully wandering garrulity reinforces the contrast between the emotionally dead Casaubon and the lively, scatterbrained Mr. Brooke.

Imagery plays a vital role in George Eliot's characterization. Both the content of the image and the method of presentation make a part of the author's technique. She pleads for the limited sensibility of Hetty; she says we must learn to accommodate ourselves to the discovery that some of those 'cunningly fashioned instruments called human

67 *Middlemarch*, Chap. LVIII.
souls have only a very limited range of music, and will not 
vibrate in the least under a touch which fills others with 
tremulous rapture or quivering agony'. 69

Animal images characterize Hetty's limited sensibility. 
She is compared to a 'bright-eyed Spaniel with a thorn in her 
foot', 'a round, soft-coated animal' and 'the hunted wounded 
brute', and they are often used with stern irony. The 
'animal' image is also used to signify the situation of the 
pathetic childish heroine Tessa, at the same time fixing 
Tito's character:

'That future necessity of grieving Tessa could 
be scarcely more to him than the far-off cry of 
some little suffering animal buried in the 
thicket, to a merry cavalcade in the sunny plain.' 70

There are images which emphasize the theme of growth 
and regeneration of the characters; these are seed-images 
and images of flower and plant. The flower-image is used 
for Hetty to make a point about character and environment. 
It is an ironical revaluation of Hetty:

'Those eyelids delicate as petals...long lashes 
curled like the stamen of a flower...How she 
will dote on her children! She is almost a child 
herself, and the little pink round things will 
hang about her like florets round the central 
flower.' 71

69 Adam Bede, Chap. IX.
70 Romola, Chap. XX.
71 Adam Bede, Chap. XV.
This image is used again in *Felix Holt*, to underline the theme of Esther's nurture:

>'In our spring-time every day has its hidden growths in the mind, as it has in the earth when the little folded blades are getting ready to pierce the ground.'\(^72\)

Daniel speaks to Gwendolen after Grandcourt's death:

>'You will find your life growing like a plant.'\(^73\)

The following 'child' image brings out Arthur's and Hetty's lack of social 'complication', rather than the purity or simplicity implicit in the image:

>'Poor things! It was a pity they were not in that age of childhood when they would have stood face to face, eyeing each other with timid liking, then give each other with timid liking, then give each other a butterfly kiss, and toddled off to play together. Arthur would have gone home to his silk-curtained cot, and Hetty to her homespun pillow, and both would have slept without dreams, and tomorrow would have been a life hardly conscious of a yesterday.'\(^74\)

Dorothea's simplicity too is presented in terms of the child. She speaks to Will 'with the simple sincerity of an unhappy child, visited at school',\(^75\) and they look 'at each other like

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72 *Felix Holt*, Chap. XVIII.
73 *Daniel Deronda*, Chap. LXV.
74 *Adam Bede*, Chap. XII.
75 *Middlemarch*, Chap. XXXVII.
two fond children who were talking confidentially like birds'.

Esther's and Felix's love, like Dorothea's and Will's, is presented through a 'child' image: 'He smiled, and took her two hands between his, pressed together as children hold them up in prayer'.

In *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen is often called 'child' 'poor child', and 'poor spoiled child'. Mirah too shares the image. Daniel thinks of her: 'It was a delight to have rescued the child acquainted with sorrow'. Gwendolen's 'belief in her power, with her other dreams before marriage, had often to be thrust aside now like the toys of a sick-child, which it looks at with dull eyes, and has no heart to play with, however it may try'.

The naivety of characters is sometimes expressed through imagery. Adam Bede thinks of life and laws in terms of images drawn from the carpenters shop. This use of imagery helps to differentiate the characters as well. For instance, in *Adam Bede*, Adam sees life in terms of his trade, Mrs. Poyser

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76 Middlemarch, Chap. XXXIX.
77 Felix Holt, Chap. XLV.
78 Daniel Deronda, Chap. XXXII.
79 Ibid., Chap. XXXV.
in terms of the farmyard, Bartle Massey in terms of the schoolhouse. Silas Marner's fumbling equation of the lost gold and the golden hair is also of the same kind.

There is also another kind of imagery repeatedly used in *The Mill on the Floss* and *Romola*. The metaphors of river and music in the one, and of Greek and Christian myth in the other, acquire a symbolic meaning in the novel. Maggie's love of music, the voices of Philip and Stephen and the river Floss, the paintings of Piero di Cosimo, all have a larger meaning.

There are ironical images which characterize the main theme of egoism in the novels, and the concurrent theme of frustration for the characters. For instance, in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* the characters are usually unaware of the significance of the images they use.

Here Dorothea is learning to know her future husband; the imagery here has a highly critical function:

'Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr Cassaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought.' 80

A little later:

80 *Middlemarch*, Chap. III.
'He thinks with me,' said Dorothea to herself, 'or rather, he thinks a whole world by which my thought is but a poor twopenny mirror. And his feelings too, his whole experience — what a lake compared with my little pool.' 81

This image is echoed in Casaubon's mind with accumulated irony in his metaphor of water:

'Hence he determined to abandon himself to the stream of feeling, and perhaps was surprised to find what an exceedingly shallow rill it was. As in droughty regions baptism by immersion could only be performed symbolically, so Mr Casaubon found that sprinkling was the utmost approach to a plunge which his stream would afford him.' 82

We learn further about Casaubon's narrow mind and soul, from Dorothea's point of view:

'Having once embarked on your marital voyage, it is impossible not to be aware that you make no way and that the sea is not within sight — that, in fact, you are exploring an enclosed basin.' 83

We later hear of 'the cloudy, damp despondency of uneasy egoism', 84 of 'the swampy ground' where his soul was hatched, 85 and of his 'passionate longings' which 'clung low and mist-like in very shady places'. 86

81 Middlemarch, Chap. III.
82 Ibid., Chap. VII.
83 Ibid., Chap. XX.
84 Ibid., Chap. XXI.
85 Ibid., Chap. XXIX.
86 Ibid., Chap. XLII.
Casaubon becomes more and more associated with images of imprisonment like 'labyrinth'. His antiquarian researches provide the source for the image. Dorothea turns to Casaubon who walks in 'vaults, taper in hand'\textsuperscript{87} as an escape from this walled-in maze, and the image returns ironically to Casaubon's plight:

'Poor Mr Casaubon himself was lost among small closets and winding stairs. . . . With his taper stuck before him, he forgot the absence of windows, and in bitter manuscripts remarks on other men's notions about the solar deities, he had become indifferent to the sunlight.'\textsuperscript{88}

The claustrophobic images of 'tomb', 'vaults' 'labyrinth' and 'closet' are suggestive of the enclosed and enclosing egoism of Casaubon's world, they also define his narrow and sterile life. Besides, these images of space suggest the narrowness and restriction of a woman's lot embodied in Dorothea.

In contrast to these, there are images of space and light to define Ladislaw, as the antithesis to the 'rayless' Casaubon. To Dorothea he is 'a lunette opened in the wall of her prison'.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{87} *Middlemarch*, Chap. X.
\textsuperscript{88} *Ibid.*, Chap. XX.
\textsuperscript{89} *Ibid.*, Chap. XXXVIII.
The portraits of Rosamond and Grandcourt — the two grim egoists — are built up by means of animal images. Rosamond has a 'torpedo contact' (Chap. LXIV) and possesses 'Pincers' (Chaps. LXV, LXVIII) and Grandcourt in Daniel Deronda is a masculine version of Rosamond. When Gwendolen first met him, she feels:

'Grandcourt after all was formidable — a handsome lizard of a hitherto unknown species, not of the lively, darting kind'.

Two chapters later, the lizard becomes 'an alligator' in the mind of Lush, who knows Grandcourt better than Gwendolen. Later, he is compared with a 'sleepy-eyed animal on the watch for prey', and also with a torpedo, a crab and a boa-constrictor. Like Rosamond's, his is the egoism which grasps, encloses, and paralyses. The lizard recurs, together with the pincers, and the last inhuman image comes just before Grandcourt's death, when the animal is 'a dangerous serpent ornamentally coiled in her cabin'.

90 Daniel Deronda, Chap. XIII.
91 Ibid., Chap. XXXV.
92 Ibid., Chap. XLVIII.
93 Ibid., Chap. LIV.
Another device is the use of classical or literary figures. She compares the impetuous miller, Mr. Tulliver to 'Hotspur'. Like Oedipus, to whom he is compared, Mr. Tulliver has become entangled in 'the skein of life' through his own blind pride. And in his case he might plead like Oedipus, that his deed was inflicted on him rather than committed by him. In the same novel, the allusions to the 'small demons' taking possession of Maggie, and the likening of this Faustian soul to a 'small Medusa with her snakes cropped,' only heighten our sense of the acute differences which separate her from her more ordinary family-members. In the same chapter, 'she sat as helpless and despairing among her black locks as Ajax among the slaughtered sheep'.

In *Middlemarch*, the devoted and idealistic doctor of the early novel is compared to Bichat, the French Physiologist. So also in the eyes of Dorothea, Casaubon bears a resemblance to Locke and the great theologian Hooker for his erudite learning. And, of course, the 'Prelude' to the same novel carries the analogy of Dorothea to St. Theresa a little too far.

94 The *Mill on the Floss*, Bk I, Chap. XIII.

95 Ibid., Bk I, Chap. VII.
In *Romola*, the Florentine artist of the story, Piero di Cosimo, is eager to paint Tito (on his very entrance into the story) as Sinon the traitor. Also *Romola* is referred to at different times as 'Madonna', 'Blessed Virgin', and 'Antigone'. She resembles them more than she resembles 'Ariadne', as Tito prefers to call her.

Another device of characterization is the names given to the persons in the novels. A novelist selects names for his characters on purpose to convey some meaning, or an impression through the names. In many novels and plays we find more or less a direct relationship between the names and the moral or intellectual qualities of the characters. The way be unconscious or even deliberate. Among the Victorians, it was Dickens who used such almost directly descriptive or suggestive names more frequently than any other novelist.

However, there may be a few names which have no direct bearing upon the character. Though they do not have any obvious significance, we do find something suggestive in them. Often the sound of the name conveys something of his character.

Hetty Sorrel, who is at her best empty, at her worst essentially insincere, lives up to her name — the sorrel plant takes its name from its sourness. Bede too is an appropriate name; he too utters a moral maxim whenever he opens his mouth. George Eliot herself says of him 'A saxon
and justified his name'; and Adam may have been chosen for its archetypal significance. Dinah is derived from the Hebrew word signifying judgement, although this is probably accidental. Or Dinah is Diana, the moon goddess, signifying her purity. V.C. Knoepflmacher explains:

"Godfrey Cass is ironically named. His Christian name suggests that he is free, at peace with God. Godfrey (Geo ffroi, Go fredo, Gott frid) is a combination of got (the deity) and fri (peace or freedom). The name thus signifies 'divine peace'; it can connote the freedom granted by God, as well as (in this case) the desire to be free of God, or 'god-free'. Yet this young man will be punished by the past he tries to deny. Cass (Casus) — as his surname suggests — seeks to explain life in terms of chance (Casus): 'Favourable Chance is the god of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe in.' (Chap. IX)."

A few names of the characters of Middlemarch too are suggestive of meaning. Brooke, a running course, and old Mr. Brooke exhibits this liveliness through the novel; and Lydgate, his progress blocked by his wife, twice-blocked by his name (lid and gate).

In Silas Marner, Dunstan Cass, besides relying on chance like his brother is a stone-hearted person, who does not even refrain from black-mailing his brother. In old English his Christian name suggests hill + stone. Eppie, the dimunitive

96 UC Knoepflmacher: op.cit., p. 240.
of Euphemia means 'fair speech' in Greek and she is a girl of fair heart and speech.

Felix in Latin means 'happy'. Perhaps it is Felix's lot only, which is not troubled by dilemmas, as the lives of other protagonists in George Eliot's novels are.

Finally, one simple device seen most in the early work is the contrasting of pairs of characters. In Adam Bede there is a double contrast of Arthur with Adam, and of Hetty with Dinah, while parallels appear both in the moral cause and in the nemesis. The contrasted pairs are never the black and white stereotypes that Dickens was so fond of; they are rather shown in a process of change. Sometimes the contrast is extended to the scenes as in Adam Bede and Middlemarch. In Adam Bede, the chapter 'The Two Bed Chambers' shows Dinah, looking out of her window over the peaceful fields, while Hetty in the adjoining room has been admiring the effect of her cheap earrings in the mirror. The contrast intensifies the difference between Dinah's wider vision and Hetty's self-absorbing egoism.

In Silas Marner, the contrast is simple and rigid. Godfrey does not claim his child, and Silas takes her. Godfrey remains childless, while Silas finds all he has lost — love, respect, and a place in the community.
In *Felix Holt*, there is the political and moral contrast embodied in the ideal Felix and the morally mediocre Harold Transome. The contrast is not only emphasized throughout the novel but even Esther compares the two suitors to her hand:

'Felix Holt's rugged virtues appeared more sympathetic by contrast with Harold's facility. In accepting Harold, she felt she had 'left the high mountain air... and must adjust her wishes to a life of middling delights...''

In *Middlemarch*, there are four pairs, linked by love and marriage: the Casaubons, the Lydges, the Bulstrodes, and Fred and Mary. The correspondence is of moral implication. Each is a marriage of opposites and a moral battlefield where there can be no truce. As far as the Casaubon and Dorothea are concerned, there is the moral contrast of rigidity and chill, pliancy and warmth. The contrast is repeated between a similar pair of opposites, Rosamond and Lydgate.97

Dorothea's virtue is defined by the comparison with Lydgate, and Mary Garth, though it is also defined by its opposites: Rosamond and Casaubon. The contrast is there between the 'reless' Casaubon and the bright and illuminating personality of Ladislaw. Or the contrast lies in that Mr. Brooke is on the side of life as Casaubon is not. In the same novel, the researchers Lydgate and Casaubon, are

97 See Barbara Hardy: *op.cit.*
distinguished not only in speech but also in their subject of research. Casaubon's futile **Key to all Mythologies** lies in contrast to Lydgate's research on living diseases. The situations and characters are more subtly contrasted in *Middlemarch* than in the other novels. The contrast between the devoted wife Dorothea and the selfish, self-centred Rosamond is no less illuminating.

*Daniel Deronda* depends on the central contrast of character — the contrast of Gwendolen and Daniel. Like the contrast in *Middlemarch*, this is a moral opposition in human relations. Then there is the contrast between Gwendolen and Mirah, Gwendolen's rival and moral opposite. There is another set of contrasting pair in the novel, Deronda and Grandcourt:

'No doubt the noble vagueness and wax-like tentativeness of Deronda's character...is meant to be specially contrasted with Grandcourt's sterile, inert, and stony selfishness of imagination; and to suggest to the reader that there is something absolutely good in the impenetrability which shuts out with a sort of rigid snap all purposes but its own.'

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CHAPTER VII

SUMMING UP
The editors of *Modern Fiction Studies* consider modern fiction as beginning 'since about 1880' when Henry James began to produce his novels. Though 1880 is the year of George Eliot's death, it is not surprising that she should appear among the 'moderns'. She depended less than most Victorians on mere story-plot and melodramatic coincidence. As D.H. Lawrence has remarked, she was the first to put the action inside her characters. Expressing serious ideas through the life of ordinary people, her novels are infused with keen intelligence and profound moral vision. It was these very qualities that damned both George Eliot and Henry James with the critics who looked chiefly for entertainment in fiction.

George Eliot may claim precedence in respect of some points. She may be said to have furthered the growth of the novel by the depth and sincerity of her psychological analysis. Fritchett observes:

'A forerunner of the psychologists, she promises no heaven and threatens no hell... Her world is the world of will, the smithy of character, a place of knowledge and judgements.'1

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George Eliot was interested in exploring and comprehending human motives. She is the first English novelist to analyse the secret thoughts of her characters, to probe their inmost desires and reveal the operations of the human will. Unlike the typical 'instinctive' Victorian novelist, she is an intellectual writer, and offers not, 'primarily an entertainment,' but the exploration of a significant theme — a theme dealing with the 'serious problems and preoccupations of mature life'. Her chief characters are scholars, politicians, artists, musicians; and she is deeply involved in intellectual discussions, serious problems and philosophy. Diana Neill points out:

'Even more important than her contribution of the novel of ideas was George Eliot's use of a convincing, dynamic psychology in presenting her characters. She was the first Victorian novelist to depict a character from the inside and to portray realistically the spectacle of deterioration in people who are not intrinsically evil.'

For George Eliot a writer 'assumes the office of teacher or influencer of the public mind.' For her the artist's role was far from that of an entertainer, as her artistic creed makes it clear. It may be summarized thus:

(1) Art's greatest benefit to men is the widening of their sympathies. (ii) Art has a moral mission, and must develop awareness of moral and spiritual as well as sensuous beauty. (iii) Art must minister morality through pleasure, not pain. (iv) Art can fulfil its moral and aesthetic purposes only if it tells the truth about life, only if it presents life realistically.

'Art has a moral mission to perform.' George Eliot's reviews are filled with variations of this idea, showing how this novel or that succeeds or fails in this prime essential of the art of fiction.5 As regards the second article, she had made the significant juxtaposition of sensuous and moral beauty as two essential attributes of art:

'The object of art is the development of beauty — not merely sensuous beauty, but moral and spiritual beauty.'6

The exposition of the third article of George Eliot's creed is also found in her review of "The Blithedale Romance". She points out that 'the ministry of art' should be one of pleasure not of pain... Art has a moral purpose to fulfil; its mission is one of mercy, not of misery.'7

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7 Ibid., pp. 594-95.
The last point of her creed states the fundamental principle of her own realism. In her review of "Modern Painters", she defines realism as 'the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature...'.

Again and again she objects to 'unrealistic' novels whose characters do not behave or speak like real people, and whose problems are not those of real life. She maintains:

'Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.'

George Eliot, thus, shows a seriousness of outlook and purpose in her novels and stories. She defined artistic power as 'an instinctive perception of the varied states of which the human mind is susceptible, with ability to give them out anew in intensified expression'.

Connected with this outlook is her deliberate renunciation of the stock themes of traditional fiction and the stage-properties of 'romance', in favour of the imaginative penetration of the commonplace which she often achieves. She is a great novelist in handling, with subtlety

8 Review of Modern Painters, op. cit.
and with psychological and moral insight, the personal relations of characters in society. This moral seriousness and psychological subtlety gave her a kind of influence that her great contemporaries could hardly claim. As Henry James tells us, for George Eliot the novel 'was not primarily a picture of life, capable of deriving a high value from its form, but a moralized fable, the last word of a philosophy endeavouring to teach by example'.

George Eliot herself writes:

>'If art does not enlarge man'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.'

To further this kind of 'moral progress' was her most conscious aim as a novelist, just as it was Wordsworth's aim to widen his readers' sensibility and make them more 'actively and securely virtuous'. The supreme power of all her work is ethical. Her themes are in general high, and her treatment serious, and the moral inevitable like the moral of life. Her

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novels are all preoccupied with profound problems. She was primarily interested in ethical dilemmas and her individuals emerge primarily as moral beings. In each tale, the question of the ruin or restoration of the moral character arises, and she seeks to discuss this in a philosophical context.

The doctrine that neither contrition nor sacrifice can appease Nemesis, or avert the consequences of our wrongdoing from ourselves and others, filled a very large space in her scheme of life and literature. From her first work to her last, retribution is the constant theme of her art. She thought that the world would be infinitely better and happier if men could be made to feel that there is no escape from the inexorable law that we must reap what we have sown.

Thus George Eliot has a theory of human morality, and her moral vision is embodied in her novels by her method of interweaving concurrent stories and by her delineation of growing characters. It is also emphasized by her structure of parallels and contrasts and by her adoption of the mode of omniscient author, controlling the action, sometimes acting as a guide and sometimes as an unobtrusive chorus.

The relations that human beings form with one another in her novels are not merely social relations but also moral. 'The taproot of her vision, that which nourishes the whole fabric, is her concern with what we have called the transcendence
of self. The typical psychological and spiritual development of her protagonists is the painful struggle to break free from the prison of egoism into a life of sympathy with their fellowmen. In the course of this thesis, we have seen that her most acute studies are often of the reverse process, the spiritual degeneration of the corrupted soul as it creates its own private hell. These modes of life form the basis of classification of her characters into different categories, and it is these categories that form the main body of the thesis.

But the characters are not mere illustrations of some moral point which George Eliot wishes to drive home. For instance, take the characters of Dorothea and Lydgate in Middlemarch in the context of the theme — the search for one's true vocation and the ways in which this may be frustrated by one's environment. The theme is not so much exemplified as incarnated in these characters. These characters take their place among a host of minor characters who collectively create a spectrum of human possibilities in their different reactions to society. All of these characters enrich the theme of vocation with their individuality; between them, they diversify and enliven what might otherwise remain a moral abstraction.

Thus George Eliot reconciles moral interest with her creation of a densely populated and immensely interesting human scene. In this context, David Daiches's remark is appropriate:

'In all her fiction, George Eliot was concerned with moral problems of character, but she never abstracted her characters from their environment in order to illustrate their moral dilemmas.'

The characters never become abstractions or personifications but register on our minds as persons. Strong as it is, the moral concern, or the philosophical interest does not tend to weaken the individuality, the living quality of the personages.

This study has attempted to show that the moral and social themes are worked out well, without marring the liveliness of individual characters. The novels are an exploration of moral situations through the presentation of characters, interacting on each other and belonging to intersecting social groups. Maggie, Casaubon, Tito, Mr. Brooke, Rosamond, are all vivid individual creations, but they are also strands in the total pattern. With George Eliot's philosophic power, all is disciplined to the demands of the whole.

The drama with which George Eliot was concerned was the interior drama. The successive mental changes whereby a

person gradually attains his or her development are the events which play so important a part in her fiction. The characters are individualized by their mental complexions; their evolution is a mental one; they change, develop, deteriorate, in consequence of seeing things differently. Their troubles are largely mental perplexities. And it is her insight into the characters and their thoughts which lies at the centre of her art.

George Eliot's strength lies in the analysis of moral and psychological states. She develops real psychological complexity in Lydgate by showing how his dedication to science and public health is frustrated by the pressures of political expediency and worldly ambition. Lydgate is a vividly consistent manly figure, as we have seen in the course of his character-analysis.

Initially, George Eliot shows most of her characters as egoists. And since her world vision is 'mellioristic', she shows them ascending towards altruism. Except for the absolute egoists, all others are shown in a process of development and these redeemed egoists attain altruism in a smaller or larger degree. This element of 'change', or 'the process of development, gives a 'living' quality to the characters of her novels.
Of course, there are very few altruists. Altruism is an ideal state, and George Eliot's philosophy does not assume it in a large measure. However, there may be some characters, who may serve as mouthpieces to illustrate the author's views or philosophy, or may be embodiment of ideas; yet they do not become thin, they remain human beings by and large. Most of them are successful, living characters like Maggie, Casaubon or Dorothea. Any tendency to idealize Dorothea is checked by a cool flow of ironic and qualifying comment. On the contrary, they do not dwindle into caricature. For instance, George Eliot's depiction of Casaubon's hollow pretentiousness with so little of sarcasm and so much of philosophic sympathy earns for her the claim of being a rare moralist as well as a rare story-teller. The whole portrait of Mr. Casaubon has an admirably sustained greyness of tone in which the shadows are never carried to the vulgar black of coarser artists.

What is most striking in George Eliot's ethical treatment of character is her strong sense of continuity within the moral life, her studies in the progressive improvement or deterioration of character, and her oft-stated moral determinism. Her moral philosophy is, in fact, supported by an unusual subtlety in the analysis of motives. In her we find a recognition of psychological depths, the process of what we call rationalization, and the determination of action by what we call the unconscious.
George Eliot has, indeed, a unique power of penetrating into the moral nature of her characters. She brings out the individual traits of the characters, and discusses their peculiar predicament and ethical dilemmas. Her analysis of Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea clearly brings out the difference between them. Dorothea is a young girl, passionate, austere, intolerant of triviality, and possessed by the desire to sacrifice herself to some altruistic idea; Maggie too is equally noble, and instinct with spiritual enthusiasm. Yet both of them are individualized by means of analysis, and both are equally convincing and substantial.

Arthur Donnithorne would well have appeared a typical Victorian villain but for his easy optimism and his love of pleasure and a consequent evasion of pain to himself. George Eliot's psychological analysis of Arthur reveals how well-meaning and harmless he is at heart, and yet how he is the prime cause of misery to so many.

We have an apt and well-deserved tribute to her skill in characterization from a reviewer:15

'On the one hand we find, an extraordinary sustained and competent grasp of certain phases of character, a capacity of rendering minute effects of light and shade, attitudes, transient moods of mind, complex feelings and the like, which is simply unparalled in any other prose writer; an aptitude for minting sympathy with humanity, so far, at least, as it is congenial to the writer.'

I have tried in this thesis to examine George Eliot's characters in relation to their moral, philosophical and psychological concerns, to bring out the devices employed by her to achieve her purpose, and to record my appreciation of her art. A novelist who can deal with profound moral ideas and problems and, at the same time, ensure that the story is interesting as a story, in its events and episodes as well as the personages who act and suffer in the course of it, is surely worthy of the highest admiration.