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A Consideration of Child Characters
in the Fiction of George Eliot

Rica-Judith Kalman

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

May 1991

c Rica-Judith Kalman, 1991

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ABSTRACT

A Consideration of Child Characters in the Fiction of George Eliot

Rica-Judith Kalman

Using Catherine Belsey's definition of Expressive Realism as a starting point, this thesis explores George Eliot's consideration of the idea of community, especially as it pertains to children. In the realistic mode which Eliot adopted and adapted to express the complexities of family and community life, she recognized the centrality of the child; children abound in all her novels, both as a paradigm of the ideal in society and as indicators of its flaws. The role of the child is examined as peripheral and central image, as symbol and reality; child characters exist in the novels both as depictions of concrete values and as yardsticks against which others are measured and sometimes found wanting. Focusing on the greater part of George Eliot's 'oeuvre', this thesis examines the implications of childhood in the light of family and its obligations, education, differing expectations of and for male and female, and the plight of the child-adult.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: The Image of the Child.................	10
CHAPTER 2: The Child-Adult........................	31
CHAPTER 3: The Child and Education................	58
Chapter 4: Childhood, Male and Female.............	94
EPILOGUE	142
BIBLIOGRAPHY......................................	146

INTRODUCTION

> It is the growth of the plant, the gradual unfolding of character in its environment, that compels attention, not the mere contatenation of events. (Bennett, 77)

In this discussion, I will focus on the child images as a way of talking both about George Eliot's vision of the relationship between the individual and the community and about her handling of the conventions and value systems of the realistic novel. Catherine Belsey's definition of Expressive Realism as "the theory that literature reflects the reality of experiences as it is perceived by one (especially gifted) individual, who 'expresses' it in a discourse which enables other individuals to recognize it as true." (Belsey, 7) provides a starting point for this discussion insofar as it presupposes an audience which responds to the "truth" that George Eliot creates about communal life. Expressive Realism presupposes an author like George Eliot who creates in her writing the threads of life as she sees them, highlighting some struggles (those of women,

for example), and downplaying others, in an attempt both to discount the impossibility of resolving these dilemmas and to fulfill the expectations of "closure" in the realistic novel. It also presupposes an audience which aknowledges as true her depiction of the communal life. But George Eliot does not, and indeed cannot, present "truth" as an unblemished whole, free of discrepancies and omissions. The reader must read for what is unsaid as well as stated, for what is absent as well as present. In the images of children in these works, one can see Eliot's attempt to integrate the disparate elements of her vision and to bring the novel to its obvious conclusion, but these images also reveal the gaps which lie beneath the surface of the writing.

The inclusion of many child characters introduces a "completion" in terms of domestic realism, that is, the image of the family as it is stands as the model of the ideal in all its component parts. But children are also shifting symbols which present inconsistencies and internal conflicts which George Eliot attempts to resolve through the form of the realistic novel, and which disclose her manipulation of those elements which both draw and trouble her. Thus children stand for conflicting qualities: innocence, truth, continuity, unconditional love, and freedom but also escape, perennial immaturity, egocentricity, rebellion, and sometimes cruelty. The child images in these books are both symbols of unity and elements of disunity, despite the use of literary devices of integration. So children are both paradigm of the ideal in society and indicators of its flaws.

The novel of community, which is the vehicle for George Eliot's

expressive realism, can be defined as "a novel that studies individual character as it is shaped by the society in which it lives." (Veneta Colby, 230), and it includes the study of childrearing which is the beginning of that shaping process. The idea of the community and its component, the family, is central to George Eliot's artistic vision. She weaves the image of community around the theories of Feuerbach, Comte, and Joseph Jacobs, to whose ideas she is sympathetic and with which she is for the most part in agreement. She takes into account Feuerbach's idea of the community as the result of man's inability to live alone (Baker, 57), which is extended in Comte's consideration of man as living for the community in which he dwells. Comte sees duty as a subordination of the personal self to the feeling for one's community and society. Moreover, George Eliot favours the theme enunciated by Joseph Jacobs of "the appeal of the circle in which one is born even if one has in certain ways grown beyond or outside it." (Baker, 67/8). She portrays her characters, adult and child, as living in just such social interdependence, which assumes common interests and goals, and which presents the overriding concern of the group as the common good, defined by those most firmly committed to society's ideals and most influential by virtue of their espousal of these ideals. Her fictional community embodies an integration of prevalent and visions of reality informed by empathy. Superimposed on a given historical vision of community as a homogeneous entity cleaving to a common set of laws and expectations are Eliot's attempts to assimilate the disparate elements of her world view as required by the novelistic conventions of her time if not also by her own imperative.

George Eliot, more than any other novelist of the nineteenth century, speaks to the concerns of our times, to those problems of shifting values, rootlessness, and urban life in constantly changing, often fragmenting communities. She was aware of the ethical, religious, and social conventions of the world she depicted, an ever-evolving world within the processes of history. She was concerned with the pressure these conventions exerted on individual lives, and with the difficulties inherent in resisting or succumbing to that pressure (Bennett, 101). The community and family are forces of the historic continuum, an amalgam of acts and qualities, culture, beliefs, and moral standards which are perpetuated in this stable and static form with its implied and imposed homogeneity. She uses the construct of the family and the community as the medium to convey her sense of humanism and morality. The community and the family are the disseminators of class values, sexual mores, and religious identification. They are the ballast, the milieu in which the self and other integrate, and this merging of self and other expresses the community in its finest form.

Conversely, the dilemma of the individual is always seen within the context of the community and the enforced adherence to a creed which it imposes. The community encloses by both security and stricture; it exerts pressure upon the individual character, and this pressure has some influence on his/her place within that society. The forces of community belief and action conjoin to form a barrier against one who is not cast in the same mold and who will not or cannot bend. The characters, then, are embedded within their communities, with all the traditions and values that this implies;

their evolution is community-centred, shaped by its values and its history, by its modes of stratification, both economic and social. The combination of the sacred and the secular, abstract principles and practical codes, creates a set of conventions shaped by individual qualities, but always expressing a commonality of tradition.

If George Eliot emphatically portrays the forces of family and community in a positive light, she is by no means an uncritical onlooker of the faults and limitations of these structures. She shows both the formative and the destructive side of society, both integration and alienation. Her books are concerned with the responses of her protagonists to the society in which they live, a society depicted as both the shaper of life, arbiter of morality, rewarder of acquiescence, and the repudiator and punisher of those who must be different. Children are the mirrors of adult responses in all their variety and must learn to manage, much as adults must, the hard realities of life.

Her relations with her own family shaped her vision of familial communion, inasmuch as she was acutely affected by the contrary pulls of family expectation and an inner reality all too often divergent from the postulated model. George Eliot's real and compelling depictions of children, are a major clue to unravelling her work. One can trace the progression from the unthinking, self-satisfying , and necessary search for fulfillment and comfort of the child to the pain of the adult, with the struggle to go beyond the self with its primordial desires to that empathy with another experience which forms a conscious link with history.

The process of growing up, then, becomes a balance between

integration into society on its own terms and the maintenance of the individual's central imperative, that is, truth to the ongoing lessons of historic process and supra-historic moral imperative. Moreover, it is perhaps possible to draw a parallel between the passage of a character from childhood to maturity and from egotism to empathy. A child's allegiance to those with whom s/he lives closely, that is, the family, widens to encompass the allegiance the child owes to the extended community; working through egotism, with its child's illusion of his/her centrality on every level of existence, the child comes to a wider vision of his/her responsibility toward others and to an entry into their experience. S/he comes to experience for others feelings akin to those felt for the self. This synthesis of self and other is a growth process and expresses the community in its finest and most valid sense.

However,those characters who do not manage to attain moral sensibility, who do not gain an empathetic communion with others, remain "children" with all that this connotes: dependence on the parent figure, a need for gratification gained of and for others, and unconstricted freedom.. George Eliot's many orphaned children and children portrayed as having only one parent are initially placed without the pale, beginning their "created lives" loosely grafted onto an existent community. Some never achieve communion with their adopted communities and remain, in a way, isolated in a childhood that has no "roots" physically or spiritually, the most extreme example of which is to be found in the alienation of Latimer in the dark tale, The Lifted Veil. More than this, Eliot's portrayal of the orphaned condition has a symbolic dimension in its state of

deprivation and its lack of the sense or knowledge of heredity and all that this means.

Eliot's wide reading of Comte, Feuerbach, and Lewes found expression not only in her definition of community, but also in in her examination of the questions of heredity, tradition, and history. (Baker, 57). The movement of her protagonists from egoism to awareness is predicated on a philosophical structure. She espouses the idea that an individual needs links with those among whom he lives to give him some sense of being, a place in the past and the future. Her hypothetical man is Spencerian, inheriting characteristics from the generations which have preceded him, is aided in his development from a primitive state of evolution to a more complex state of being which includes the evolution of moral intuition from utilitarian considerations to unconscious responses to "right" and "wrong" which no longer relate to "individual experiencees of utility". (Baker, 65). And finally, experience is that which is a part of individual history and life, but also that of the totality of race, language and "inherited institutions" which act as moral forces. (Baker, 67) Those characters whose inner reality is disconnected from a sense of their forebears, George Eliot dooms to a literary existence in isolation; they are the symbols of spiritual orphanhood. Eliot's intellect, spirituality, and sensibilities led her to a desire for an existence encompassing a sense of communion and community. Her vision of life is that of moral engagement with others; the ego is extended from the narrow train of personal concerns to a broader relationship with others through sympathetic understanding. Independent thought and action exist in accordance with this empathetic identification with

others. The harmonious co-existence of self and society is the goal, a shared sympathy as opposed to a rigid conformity.

Moral sensibility, then, comprehends the acceptance of frailty and error. Action must be a composite of emotions and of intellect, of feeling and of analysis; to act fitly is to rise to the moral test. Feelings which catapult a character into action, noble or ignoble, have inherent in them the force of all past experience and past association. One cannot slough off the past, the sum of all that makes up the psychological being. There are no "new beginnings" (Buonaparte, 35), and one uses the past as a yardstick to one's own actions. The wisdom culled from the historic past, then, is not dogma, but a guide whose application to life can vary according to the elements of any situation.

Eliot uses child characters to explore the idea of community. While many of the critical appraisals of George Eliot's books examine the primary place of the family and the community in her work, there are few critical references to children in these sources, and those few do not consider the images of children in any systematic way. All her novels contains references to children. An examination of the role of the child as both a central and a peripheral image, as symbol and reality, on a conventional level and in all the complexity of multiple roles and expectations, is a fruitful endeavour.

Children are depicted in their function as evokers of both positive and negative qualities in those about them. In the picture of maternal bonding is the expression of the most positive elements of family and community, of the value of nurture and of deeply-felt commitment to another. Furthermore, children, in George Eliot's

vision, embody the "moral norm" (Lerner, 68) in their honest reactions to and exact appraisal of others. They reflect, in their instinctual reactions to adult presences around them, their perception of sincerity and moral worth. However, children can evoke, in adult characters, the image of caregivers as inadequate to the task, unable to accept adulthood itself. Children exist in these works as both characters depicting concrete experience and values, and as yardsticks against which others are measured.

In the realistic mode which George Eliot adopted and adapted to portray the multifaceted complexities and layers of communal life as she conceived them, she recognized the centrality of the child. Without the image of the child, those strands of connection which she weaves throughout her works are meaningless. For children are the promise, the continuity, and the challenge of the community and of the macrocosm for which it stands.

CHAPTER 1

The Image of the Child

Thus rambling we were schooled in deepest lore,
And learned the meanings that give words a soul,
The fear, the love, the primal passionate store,
Whose shaping impulses make mankind whole.

Those hours were seed to all my after good;
My infant gladness, through eye, ear and touch;
Took easily as warmth a various food
To nourish the sweet skill of loving much.

(Colby, 234)

George Eliot creates childhood both within the context of her particular time and place, which sees it as a training ground for the inculcation of the expectations of mid-nineteenth century England, and within her endeavour to present a discourse which mirrors her own value judgements. The reader, examining these child images which reflect such diverse references, cannot help being aware of the many layers of the novels, most of all in the inconsistencies inherent in the expression of these incomplete "truths". Ultimately, the clarity of any ideological vision eludes Eliot: Maggie Tulliver's death

leaves her dilemma unresolved and unvalidated in any definitive way; Latimer's clairvoyance bears no direction toward a reconciliation with life; Dorothea Brooke's embrace of an existence which was available to her all the time and which falls far short of her ideal, leaves a sense of irresolution in its wake, despite her acceptance of it. If a George Eliot novel can be considered a "rhetorical text" which "satisfies" its readers (Fish in Belsey, 32/3), it also must be said to contain elements of the "dialectical text" which leaves the critical reader with problems to solve and questions to answer. (Fish in Belsey, 32/3)

The reader is presented with important thematic strains through the examination of children in these works. The children speak of moral descrimination, of education, of growth, and of probity. They describe their place within a patriarchal society, and their possibilities within its constrictions. They reflect both unchallenging goodness and astute perception of the natures around them. Thus, children represent various modes of seeing within the books, and provide a framework for examining not only the form of the literary and psychological creation, but also a critical format of the ultimately unknowable and unanswerable.

What does it mean to be a child? What does it mean to grow up? Over the nineteenth century, society moved from an attitude of stringent moral discipline to one of greater awareness of children as separate parts of a family unit and as beings of integrity. George Eliot, mirroring the changing perceptions of her era, recognized the centrality of the child's experience and perception in the creation of the fully formed adult, and she forged the links of a complex

intertwining of youth and adulthood in her novels. The emotions and apprehensions of childhood and the way they relate to the maturation process are central themes in her works.

The novel of the nineteenth century was drawn from the lives of ordinary people. Family- centred, it espoused standards, values, and precepts with which the author and the public were familiar, and which the public was ready to digest. At that time,

> Relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, home and family were explored, idealized and worried over to an extent that had never occurred before, a reflection of the enlarged importance of the family; and the novel itself, the chief vehicle for this exploration, to a great extent owed its vast success to this preoccupation. (Calder, 210)

Eliot, in her turn, created not an exact replica of family life, but a selective reality arranged to characterize her artistic sensibility and purpose. From the scene of fireside and family life she constructed a microcosm of the universe as she saw it. In the domestic realism of George Eliot, children are representative of the authenticity of those about them. She speaks through the concrete presence, the realities of children, and her images of them contain the whole of life. From the more conventional depictions of children in Amos Barton to the more complex rendition of Maggie and Tom Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss, children are a seamless part of

the community she creates. To the moral and pedagogical intentions of the Victorian novelist was added the function of child psychologist, and this psychological dimension is evident in the awareness and insights of the author. One result of this stance is the establishment of an intimacy between reader and writer, audience and narrator as the writer, in just such terms, engages the sympathy and interest of the reader. A special vision is created, and a special relationship is kindled between the reader and the character s/he is reading. The frequent inclusion of child characters draws the reader into recollection of his own earliest feelings and sensibilities, and he thus becomes attuned, through the chord of personal reminiscence, to the child's vision of joys and woes. A complex link of this kind is formed in the opening pages of The Mill on the Floss, wherein the reader, the narrator, and a yet nameless Maggie are drawn together into the embrace of childhood:

> Now I can turn my eyes towards the mill again and watch the unresting wheel sending out its diamond jets of water. That little girl is watching it too: she has been standing on just the same spot at the edge of the water, ever since I paused on the bridge. And that queer white cur with the brown ear seems to be leaping and barking in ineffectual remonstrance with the wheel: perhaps he is jealous because his playfellow in the beaver bonnet is so rapt in its movement. It is time the little playfellow

> went in, I think: and there is a very bright fire to tempt her: the red light shines out under the deepening grey of the sky. It is time too for me to leave off resting my arms on the cold stone of this bridge.... (54/55)

In the wonder and warmth of childhood and childhood remembered, along with the menace of its uncertainties, the past and the present coalesce in the mind of the reader, and the multiple meanings of childhood work on the perception of a participant.

Children represent those qualities which speak to the memory and sympathy of those further on in life: wonder, innocence, reverence, sensitivity, and generosity. In these characters, George Eliot preserves the positive values of childhood, the empathy of the young with their surroundings and with the people around them, and the mystery of the child's view. This intention becomes clear in an excerpt from an unpublished portion of the original "Amos Barton" manuscript:

> Oh that happy time of childish veneration! It is the fashion to regret the days of easy merriment, but we forget the early bliss of easy reverence, when the world seemed to us to be peopled with the great and wise, when the old, weather-prognosticating gardener was our Socra-

> tes, and our spirits quailed before the clergyman without needing to be convinced of the Apostolic Succession. (Notes, "Amos Barton", 414)

Childhood is shown to be a time of freedom, the physical freedom to roam at will, as Tom and Maggie, Hetty and Gwendolyn do. This wandering symbolizes far more than the exhuberance of fishing in the "Round Pool", of rambling in the "Grove", or of riding in the fields about Offendene. For childhood represents that unguarded bubbling up of true feelings, that wandering of the mind and the senses without heed to the inhibitions and constraints society places on adults:

> We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older. We keep apart when we have quarrelled, express ourselves in well-bred phrases, and in this way preserve a dignified alienation, showing much firmness on one side, and swallowing much grief on the other. We no longer approximate in our behaviour to the mere impulsiveness of the lower animals, but conduct ourselves in every respect like members of a highly civilized society. Maggie and Tom were still very much like young animals, and so she could rub her cheek against his, and kiss his ear in a random, sobbing way, and there were tender fibres in the lad that had been used to answer to Maggie's fondling:...
>
> *The Mill on the Floss*, 91)

Yet even here are undercurrents to this freedom. As the image of wandering presents a dialectical pull, setting the elation of childish high spirits against the illusions of childhood not yet outgrown, so freedom of emotion moves from unfettered joy to the dark wilfulness of passion. As she shows the physical liberty of her youthful characters to have elements of both sun and shade, so she shows the possibility of grace. Maggie and Tom, in their childish nuzzling, betoken the loosing of repressed emotion, expressive of that which their author prizes in adulthood and which is so rare: the accessibility of empathy, affection, and loyalty. The last sequence of tenses, framed in the past, suggests, more than a backward lool at childhood idylls no longer possible, a doubt that the qualities of closeness and love are easily found. She who describes the destructive toll of unbridled, childlike passion in the desperation of Caterina Sarti ("Mr. Gilfil's Love Story"), depicts the value of the easily accessible well of positive feeling in youth which, at its best, transposes itself into the empathetic morality of adulthood.

Inherent in the freedom of action and emotion in childhood is the shelter from the often harsh, unloving reality of adulthood. Home is optimally a haven attaching boy and girl to a life the remembrance of which will, in after years, be a refuge and a ballast against the vicissitudes of adult life, a strength in all trouble. It is the sense of home and its comfort which Mirah, in Daniel Deronda, nourishes as a hope when she is rescued, and which she brings with her to the Meyricks:

> ...I think my life began with waking up and loving

> my mother's face: it was so near to me, and her arms were around me, and she sang to me. One hymn she sang so often, so often: and then she taught me to sing it with her: it was the first I ever sang. They were always Hebrew hymns she sang; and because I never knew the meaning of the words they seemed full of nothing but our love and happiness. When I lay in my little bed and it was all white above me, she used to bend over me between me and the white, and sing in a sweet low voice. (Daniel Deronda, 250)

Her need to believe translates unknown Hebrew words into expressions of love, and safety, setting up alliances between language, prayer, security, love, and sustenance. The lack of "home", for those child characters of uncertain roots or careless parentage, (Hetty, Gwendolyn, and Caterina among others), creates a profound uncertainty in their lives, a depression that craves filling. In an existence outside the bounds of sure comfort are the seeds of their alienation, and it is in this alienation that George Eliot's ambivalence resides, that longing for security and innocence which often goes unfulfilled and which she does not find it possible to portray with consistency. Indeed, in the passage which begins The Mill on the Floss, quoted earlier, the hovering disappointment and lurking danger to childish security and belief appear in the seminal images of the wheel and the water. Wheel, water, and child symbolically confront each other in

their conflicting meanings.

Childhood can be a refuge, as the home is, from the temptations and turmoils of adulthood, a temporary abeyance of the stringent demands of self-induced and socially-imposed moral and emotional growth. Not only is the child more attuned to his own nature, but also, because exceptions are made for a child's impulsive actions and limited understanding, s/he is not so harshly judged. Maggie's retribution for abandoning herself to jealousy and pushing her cousin Lucy into the pond is finite; her atonement for her outing with Stephen on the river, which blasted all Lucy's best hopes, is ongoing. "Feelings have no morality" (Spacks, 57) and some leeway is vouchsafed by adults for the child's estate. The response to honest childish feeling is tutelary rather than condemnatory, for childhood errors are untempered by knowledge and experience. The ending of The Mill on the Floss can thus be seen, on one level, as symbolic of the "truth" of childhood's freedom. It is not a depiction of unsullied youth nor a sentimentalized picture of misery, but a crystallization of those qualities of the child, love, loyalty, courage, emotional honesty, which George Eliot deems of benefit if brought into the adult psyche.

George Eliot considers childhood as one stage of an ever evolving, ever changing being. Growth from youth to adulthood can then be seen as a symbol of society as a process, of the evolution of society historically. Childhood shows the reader of an Eliot novel the example of the past which shapes the present. Those elements which form the youthful character (family, home, community), are those elements which remain an integral part of the character evermore. The child is a concrete symbol, part of the daily life and social scheme

he represents beyond the confines of his individuality. Daniel Deronda presents a complex example of such continuity in the Cohen children, Jacob and Adelaide Rebekah. These children represent more than the compelling aura of childhood; in their existence, they stand not only for the continuance of society and its values, but also for the existence of an historic people, facing a multiplicity of hardships through the ages. The fortitude of the Jewish people, of their sense of nationhood and tradition, is affirmed in its children. Theirs is a community passing on tradition from generation to generation, as shown in the tutelage of Jacob by Mordecai, who is named after him who, in Biblical lore, saved his people from destruction by an enemy. So are Jacob and Adelaide Rebekah informed by the forces and meanings of historic continuity.

The connections of past and present postulated by the child characters are not only expressed in a linear progression, but also in the density of the communal and familial relationships. One of the things by which George Eliot's children are affected is the interpenetration of their lives with the lives of those around them. In the communal events of Adam Bede; (Dinah's preaching, Thias Bede's funeral, Arthur's coming-of-age celebration, and the harvest supper), events which correspond to important life cycles, all strata of society are bonded together in a cohesion and solidarity that include both adult and child. The child becomes a thread connecting the generations, subtly caught in a web of alliance with family and with others, as the image of family widens to include the community in terms of education, religion, and vocation. The constriction and the complexity, the aesthetics and the creativity imaged forth by the web,

which, as discussed by Reva Stump in her book _Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels_, forms a major pattern in George Eliot's work, can be viewed as interconnecting in the image of youth. The placement of children within the plot of the novels is often at junctures of crisis or change which depicts the gathering of the outsider into the fold. This is particularly evident in _Silas Marner_. Silas has been twice removed from human attachment when Dolly Winthrop brings her son Aaron to visit him. He has fled the disappointment and betrayal of the community in Lantern Yard for the pastoral peace of Raveloe. In Raveloe, his intercourse with his neighbours is peripheral, existing in the exchange of goods and coin, the solace of his life. When this too is stolen from him, and he is completely bereft, Dolly brings him Aaron, believing "it must do Master Marner good to see such a 'pictur of a child'" (_Silas Marner_, 87). That Silas sees the boy as a "mere dim round, with two dark spots in it" (87) does not negate the value of Aaron's presence, which brings Silas into contact with those around him. Aaron is a small spark in the humanizing process that will bring Silas back to society; he is an earnest for the coming of Eppie. Eppie leads Silas into the community; she is a connection in the human chain. She, child with the golden curls, is linked to all that is positive in his life, to his gold and his relationship with his sister, symbols, however disparate, of faith and caring and purpose in life. The child represents the revivification of feelings from the long ago past, bonding Silas to others and to herself, accepting his presence and kindly offices, a remembrance of his care for his sister. "As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory: as her life unfolded, his soul long stupefied in a cold,

narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness." (131). The parallel construction here implies a parallel movement, the child's movement being the catalyst to the man's. Leading Silas into a fuller relationship with those around him, Eppie and, in a measure, Aaron before her, bring him to a fuller life, until he is an active participant in the life of humanity again. The child is an integral part of the social fabric both in his relations with others, and with his/her own psyche in youth and adulthood.

Furthermore, children exist, in these works, both as characters depicting concrete experiences and values, and as yardsticks against which others are measured. The depiction of maternal bonding suggests the most positive elements of family and community, of nurture, and the value of deeply-felt commitment to another. Children, evokers of both positive and negative attributes in those about them, in George Eliot's vision, embody the "moral norm" (Lerner, 68) in their honest reactions to and exact appraisal of others. They show, in their instinctual reactions to adult presences around them, their perception of sincerity and moral worth. This function is most clearly apparent in the character of young Harold Transome. George Eliot suggests moral perception in _Felix Holt_ in "Mr. Harold Transome's extraordinary little gipsy of a son" (_Felix Holt_, 189), with the skittishness and abandon of a "wild animal", a child who "would hardly ever talk, but preferred making inarticulate noises, or combining syllables after a method of his own." (349). Harry's untutored sensibility distinguishes between Mrs. Transome's bitter self-absorption and Mr. Transome's needy gentleness. To Mrs.

Transome's impatient "Go, go Harry; let poor Puff alone-he'll bite you" (87), Harry responds with a bite, transforming his grandmother into the image of a worrying being, while to Mr. Transome's feeble withdrawal from animated life, he responds with playful nurture and fierce protectiveness:

> Little Harry, alive to anything that had relation to "Gappa", had paused in his game, and discerning what he thought a hostile aspect in this naughty black old woman, rushed towards her and proceeded first to beat her with his mimic jockey's whip, and then, suspecting that her bombazine was not sensitive, to set his teeth in her arm. (93)

With a child's instuitive sense, Harry establishes who is worthy of admiration, and with a child's facility, he draws to the surface heretofore hidden truths about the characters of those about him.

As child characters are the delineators of the true natures of others, so they are the evokers of kindness and sensitivity, of the often dormant empathy of others. Adults respond to the best in their natures in their interaction with children. Job Tudge, the "little whitefaced monkey" in Felix Holt, establishes a thread of care linking three generations together in a bond of concern and nurture. Job represents the standard of Felix's caring nature: Moreover, Felix involves his mother in the care of Job, and, in their concern for his misfortune and attention to his wellbeing, they find a common ground

of sympathy that they both can share. Esther Lyon, in her fond interaction with Job, finds the link between Job's childish innocence and her developing empathic understanding. Job draws out Esther's finer qualities which, when she makes the acquaintance of Harry, touch an answering chord in him, and which create the mutual "extraordinary fascination" between them which ripens into friendship (Felix Holt, 348). Job, then, is a symbol of a child's need, over which Felix and Esther as well as Felix and Mrs Holt can meet in united feeling.

More than eliciting positive qualities in others, children create a beatitude for the adults they love, removing them from the more stringent communal and familial stigma of "failure". Maggie does not see her father as a "Tulliver", someone who will never reach the heights of "Dodsonness". She responds to his kindness and indulgence with caring loyalty, true to her intuitive sense of his intrinsic worth in ways that matter. Her childish perception of her father's true goodness-- "...Maggie never forget any of these moments when her father 'took her part': she kept them in her heart and thought of them long years after, when everyone else said that her father had done very ill by his children." (The Mill on the Floss, 125)--looks forward to her mature defense of his worth:

> "Why do you come, then," she burst out, "talking, and interfering with us and scolding us, if you don't mean to do anything to help my poor mother- your own sister-if you've no feeling for her when she's in trouble, and won't part with anything, though you would never miss it, to save her from pain.

> Keep away from us then, and don't come to find fault with my father—he was better than any of you—he was kind—he would have helped _you_, if you had been in trouble.... (The Mill on the Floss, 296)

Maggie has a deep understanding of the tragedy of her father, who is, at bottom, a being of goodness and probity overcome by a confusion of justice and obstinate pride, a being of well-disposed understanding overcome by rash passion. In Maggie's, and also in Tom's, support of their father rests his manly dignity. Similarly, the unruly behaviour of Harry Transome, in Felix Holt, is co-existent with an openness toward his grandfather who blossoms in his contact with Harry's childhood. In her youthful characters, George Eliot postulates a force of creative energy which elicits what is best in the adults around them. As grownups are in the main indulgent toward childish follies born of inexperience, so the young discern the fragmentation of the beleaguered adults, and in love, try to make them whole.

George Eliot sees in childhood the beginning of the shaping process within the adult community, the time when the "self" is molded into that which will ultimately be tested against society. The family demands obedience to parents, loving conduct toward siblings and other relatives, and subordination of self to the creed of generations past and present. A need to please others, a self-consciousness, and a narcissistic impulse are all manifestations of George Eliot's child characters. In her depictions of childhood, Eliot shows the manner in which one does or does not become fitted to live in and deal with the reality of the community that surrounds one. The Garth and

Vincy families in Middlemarch demonstrate the validity of this point.

Mary Garth and her siblings are educated in letters and life by the close attention of parents who themselves are versed in the realities of existence. Caleb and Susan Garth have a firm grasp of who they are and what they represent. The bitterness of hardship is mitigated by adhering to positive values of probity and right living. Caleb Garth, who has "failed in the building business" struggles to pay his creditors "twenty shillings in the pound" (Middlemarch, 225); Susan Garth, "adoring her husband's virtues,...had very early made up her mind to his incapacity of minding his own interests and had met the consequences cheerfully", recognizing that family life, good character, education, and hard work outweigh "teapots or children's frilling" (237). They stand united for their children's welfare, material and spiritual, and balance an acquiescence to the forms of society with its "nice distinctions of rank in Middlemarch" (226) with a firm stand on principle.

The Vincy family displays a lack of education in both a formal and a spiritual sense. The children, educated entirely outside the family, impart a sense of aimless superficial knowledge, composed of "Latin and things" (102) musical endeavours, and correct expression. The decided standards of the Garths stand in relief against the relentless and placatory good humour of Mr. and Mrs. Vincy. Mrs. Vincy's placid temperament, mirrored in her face, with its "radiant good humour...in which forty-five years had delved neither angles nor parallels" (98), complements Mr. Vincy's "general good fellowship" (97), little inclined to a hasty choice of factions. However, the

seemingly positive qualities of benignity and fellowship of the elder Vincys are translated into the more equivocal one of offhand indulgence towards all:

> The Vincys lived in an easy, profuse way, not with any new ostentation, but according to the family habits and traditions,so that the children had no standard of economy, and the elder ones retained some of their infantine notion that their father might pay for anything if he would. Mr. Vincy himself had expensive Middlemarch habits-spent money on coursing, on his cellar, and on dinner giving, while Mamma had those running accounts with tradespeople which give a cheerful sense of getting everything one wants without any question of payment. (224)

Therein lies the pattern of the Vincy family, self-indulgence based on a tradition of easygoing and therefore easy munificence passed on from parent to child. Unlike the Garth offspring who are brought up in an atmosphere of nurture tempered by firm expectations, the Vincy children are set upon the unstable parental platform of prosperity and position. It is thus that Fred pins his hopes on an ephemeral inheritance, and Rosamond creates her ideal life out of a genteel girl's imaginings of highborn husband, elegant equipage, and refined relatives. For the Vincys, unlike the Garths, are unable to see that a wish is not a reality and is only an end if one actively pursues the means to secure it. The Vincys' inability to shape and guide their

children's lives in accordance with a pattern of necessity, self-control, moderation, and identification with others finds its fruition in Rosamond who, although she escapes the harshest realities of life, never grows beyond the image of the basil plant, that plant which "had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains." (808). Rosamund stagnating in the state of egotistic emotion, responds to crises with petulance or tears, seeking only the comfort of petting. She remains in an uneducated state, with a child's responses which do not grow into moral vision. It is Mary Garth who, with her deeply inculcated sense of "honesty (and) truth-telling fairness...neither tried to create illusions nor indulged in them for her own behoof" (113), and who grows into an understanding of what she must accept in the demands of society upon her. Mary, in her own growth, brings Fred into the reality of the world in which he must live.

George Eliot reflects the instability of segments of society in her portraits of children who chafe at the strictures of a community which imposes its shape upon them. These are the children who, as outsiders or as orphans, are juxtaposed to the stable community; indeed, the state of being an orphan can betoken a spiritual loss in which the child, and later the adult, are bereft of true kinship with others:

> Family likeness has often a deep sadness in it. Nature, that great tragic dramatist, knits us together by bone and muscle, and divides us by the subtler web of our brains; blends yearning and

> repulsion; and ties us by our heartstrings to the beings that jar us at every movement. We hear a voice with the very cadence of our own uttering the thoughts we despise; we see eyes-ah, so like our mother's!-averted from us in cold alienation; and our last darling child startles us with the air and gestures of the sister we parted from in in bitterness long years ago. (Adam Bede, 49)

This dilemma of the separation of the adult self from society, of the lack of synthesis of the true self and the community-postulated self, is passed from adult to child. Gritty Moss, Mr. Tulliver's sister, having broken with the expectations of her family, "quite thrown herself away in marriage", and "crowned her mistakes by having an eighth baby" (The Mill on the Floss, 136), is symbolically placed in Basset, "a beggarly parish" of "poor soil, poor roads, a poor non-resident landlord, a poor non-resident vicar, and rather less than half a curate, also poor" (137). The misguided Mrs. Moss is far removed from the environs of St. Ogg's, with its aura of right-living. Mr. Tulliver, at Dorlcote Mill, is half in and half out of the community for which St. Ogg's stands; he is "a man who worked his own mill and owned a pretty bit of land" (136), but he is a man who, subject to his "generous imprudence, warm affection, and hot-tempered rashness" (365), is not comfortable with the rigid standards of conformity imposed upon him by his neighbours and his family. And finally, the Dodsons, who live and/or work in St. Ogg's, have encapsulated society's dicta and made them their own. Indeed, to

the four Dodson sisters, the ways of society take on the solemnity of ritual:

> The religion of the Dodsons consisted in revering whatever was customary and respectable: it was necessary to be baptised, else one could not be buried in the churchyard, and to take the sacrament before death as a security against more dimly understood perils; but it was of equal necessity to have the proper pall-bearers and well-cured hams at one's funeral, and to leave an unimpeachable will. A Dodson would not be taxed with the omission of anything that was becoming, or that belonged to that eternal fitness of things which was plainly indicated in the practice of the most substantial parishioners, and in the family traditions-... (364)

Gritty's children are outside the pale of conventional existence; they are lacking in any quality that distinguishes them from their surroundings. They remain in their milieu, awaiting visits which rarely come, and never venturing into the wider world of Dorlcote Mill or St. Ogg's. Maggie is the link between St. Ogg's and Basset, as are her father and mother. She carries on and internalizes the legacy of a struggle for synthesis between the Tulliver qualities which predominate, and the lure of the Dodson ethos, represented by Tom and by her cousin Lucy Deane. It is Tom and Lucy who, seeing clearly

before them, feel no divergent pull away from the Dodson, and ultimately, the St. Ogg's, creed. In these struggles and interactions of the second generation is the postulation of characters who are immobilized, outwardly or inwardly, in a form which society decrees for them.

Ultimately, childhood is a metaphor for the process of growth George Eliot seeks for her characters. The reality of the child's development, his/her grasping for maturity or his/her emotional stagnation in childhood, becomes reflected in the elements of adult characters, for childhood is, in some way, ever present in her fictional world.

CHAPTER 2

The Child-Adult

The theme of childhood in George Eliot's fictional world encompasses the view that the "child is father to the man", with all the ambivalence which this suggests. Both the formative and the destructive forces of life are recognized as Eliot gives the responses of her characters to the milieu in which they live. Society, the shaper of life, is also the arbiter of morality and the vehicle of continuity, and as such, it rewards conformity and repudiates and punishes those who would live by another imperative. The unformed, put to the test before the expectant eyes of the community, succeed or not and must learn to manage a child's harsh realities. A character's response to life depends on his willingness to come to understand and to embrace it.

Child images share with the patterns of action in Eliot's novels the "tension from contradictory urges to see and avoid seeing" (Stump, 3). Learning "the art of vision", as Reva Stump postulates it, is part of the growth process that takes a character from childhood to maturity (Stump, 5). The idea of vision is an integral part of Eliot's conception of the child's estate and visual enlargement is a symbolic rite of passage to the level of adulthood. As a character is able to reconcile his fear of seeing with his need to know, he is able to leave the haven of childhood for the complex and often painful way to adulthood. To remain a child is to negate the struggle, for childhood is an image of stasis which gives security in a changing world; to retain this stasis, it is necessary to

relentlessly close oneself off from "knowing", from vision. Clinging to childhood is an attempt to deny the mutability of nature, and to circumvent the constant struggle toward a fixed core upon which to base one's moral vision.

George Eliot portrays many of her characters as unable to see by paradoxically giving them an alternate vision, that of fantasy. Felicia Buonaparte claims that to "recognize the futility of fantasy, whether it shows itself in self-gratification or reckless idealism, is a strict exercise in discipline, but knowledge of this kind is, for Eliot, a necessary concession to the inevitable" (Buonaparte, 128). Most of Eliot's characters have great difficulty wrestling with the inevitable, and conceding to it in any meaningful way. Hetty Sorrel and Gwendolyn Harleth, Felix Holt and Dorothea Brooke, Bulstrode and Casaubon exhibit the capacity to create much of life in their own image; however, necessity forces all at some time to merge the hooded vision of the inward ideal with the clarity, often difficult to assimilate, of the outwardly real. To be unable or to refuse to effect the integration is to be, in some sense, destroyed in one's potential for maturity. Fantasy caters to the egoism of the child as it expresses his/her sense of what should be and his/her self worth. Fantasy, then, as both self-affirmation and exclusive creation, is a way of seeing which binds many characters to a childhood which is past.

Only cataclysmic events break the thread of the childlike self-image woven by fantasy. Caterina Sarti's attempt on Wybrow's life, Hetty Sorrel's pregnancy, Rosamund Vincy's crises in her marriage to Lydgate and in her relationship with Will, among countless

possible examples, create the sudden shattering of the web of illusions to which the child-adult clings. Those who can grasp another image, who can become more connected with those about them, the Dorotheas and Gwendolyns, are affirmed in the process of becoming adults. Those who cannot make the transition are truly separate from and alien in a world in which they can accept no function and can have no status. For such as these, to leave childhood is to court nothingness.

If the maturation process is a journey from childhood, from a natural self-love whereby one sees everything as affecting one's own life, to adulthood, to the individualism and self-reliance whereby one forms one's own ideas and ideals and formulates one's own society within the circle of family and friends, many of George Eliot's characters cannot and do not make that journey. The critical reader cannot discount a possible dichotomy between the nineteenth century ideology of community as articulated in this journey and George Eliot's deepest misgivings, which would then form one dimension in her characters' desperate struggle to remain children, a struggle which becomes the only possible denial of the dominant creed. Fisher states: "Eliot's earlier novels often preached or allegorized the limited power of the self and will in the final life each has; she contrasted the egoistic self to unreal and pious alternatives of duty, selflessness, resignation and sympathy." (Fisher, 198). More than this, she postulates situations in which the character is too locked in a childlike protective persona to grow in any direction, nor is s/he met with expanding generosity in society. Childish reactions such as "fantastic calculations", "reckless invitations", and

"convulsive, motiveless actions are combined in the images of men and women; the child and the adult then become one, with a connotation of "moral drifting" (Stump, 27). Thus the child/adult is born, an adult relentlessly clinging to the safety of youth and denying present expectation with a fantasy of what could be.

The child-adult is archetypally portrayed in the creation of Caterina Sarti and of Hetty Sorrel, forerunners of the more complex Maggie Tulliver. Both Caterina and Hetty attempt to remain within the cocoon of a fantasy which contains the secure elements of a childhood in which someone is there to care for them as they would be cared for. A strong element of their dream world is the repudiation of demands of the real existence which is their lot. In refusing Maynard Gilfil and Adam Bede, both Caterina and Hetty are saying a decided "no" to the life which their respective communities have set out as their proper sphere. But indeed, both Caterina and Hetty stand without their communities in a real sense, in that they are both orphans, grafted onto the society in which they live. Moreover, Caterina and Hetty look forward to Maggie, an orphan in a symbolic sense, espressing the progression of bereavement and separation of many of George Eliot's later characters. With Maggie Tulliver, the sense of aloneness and the search for connectedness takes on a deeper dimension as she struggles to define herself within a life process which is pulling her steadily from the safe moorings of childhood.

From the first appearance of Caterina Sarti in "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story", the boundaries of her existence are set, and the two factors governing her life, her size and her social position, are immutable

givens symbolically delineating her inner being. She is a young lady built upon a childlike scale, whose "small stature and slim figure rest on the tiniest of full grown feet" (Scenes of Clerical Life, 133). The word "little" constantly recurs, keeping the image of childhood always in view of the reader, in an implicit expression of Tina's refuge in neverending youth. She does not grow, nor does her life expand. She is, in her "role" as protegee, a delicate "objet d'art", useful in a decorative way and a pet, Sir Christopher's "little black-eyed monkey", and everyone else's "Tina".

Caterina is allied with the fantasy world of George Eliot's other child-adults in the fairy images by which she is depicted. These images betoken a world of childhood possibilities opposed to the realities and necessities of life. The dialectic of the child-adult is compellingly drawn in descriptions of her interaction with Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel, with their mixture of benign paternalism and stringent expectation:

> "Excellent, Caterina," said Lady Cheverel, as there was a pause after the wonderful linked sweetness of 'Che Faro'. "I never you heard you sing that so well. Once more!"
>
> It was repeated; and then came, 'Ho perduto' which Sir Christopher encored, in spite of the clock, just striking nine. When the last note was dying out, he said-
>
> "There's a clever black-eyed monkey. Now bring out the table for picquet."

> Caterina drew out the table and placed the cards: then, with her rapid fairy suddenness of motion, threw herself on her knees, and clasped Sir Christopher's knee. He bent down, stroked her cheek and smiled.
>
> "Caterina, that is foolish," said Lady Cheverel. "I wish you would leave off those stage-players' antics." (143)

Here is the dialectic between childish abandonment to passion and to circumspect duty, between the craving for parental indulgence and the adult imperative. In this scene of command and subjection, the internal conflict of Caterina and of those who come after is externalized.

Caterina, as a "little woman", is pulled back into the realms of the child who is winning and insinuatingly appealing, but not sensual in her love; in her relationships with Maynard Gilfil and Anthony Wybrow is the model of the struggle between the sensual and the safe which informs all George Eliot's child-adults. In Maynard Gilfil is a childhood playmate, a "brotherly and sisterly familiarity" which is a haven for one whose "only talent", save for singing, "lay in loving" (160). Maynard is always a presence to Caterina, always loving, never obtrusive in his gradually increasing hope that "some time or other she would at least care enough for him to accept his love" (162). In Anthony Wybrow is the antithesis of the solid "stalwart young man" (161); an "admirable figure, the whitest of hands, the most delicate of nostrils" (164) characterize the heir to Sir Christopher.

Seductive in his words and looks toward Caterina, Wybrow, a "young man of calm passions", is under no delusion that his lovemaking bespeaks more than a mild flirtation, for an heir to an estate must marry according to duty, whatever his inclination.

For Caterina, reaching out for a relationship with Wybrow is not possible, for society, in its view of the expectations of an heir and of the place of a protegee, shapes her destiny. As an orphan, she is without the community, and in succumbing to her passion for Wybrow, she places herself in conflict with her postulated destiny. In her nature, elemental passions of love, hatred, and jealousy remain in an embryonic form, unshaped by mature sensibility and understanding. From her first knowledge of Captain Wybrow's engagement, Caterina is at the mercy of her feelings, which George Eliot portrays in the stamp of a foot and the dashing of a beloved souvenir to pieces, a child's physical manifestation of emotion. The struggle of an unformed sensibility is made evident from the time of Wybrow's revelation of his engagement, a struggle toward that consciousness and empathetic mastery which to Eliot is the harbinger of growth:

> ...The fawn-like unconsciousness was gone, and in that one look were the ground tones of poor little Caterina's nature-intense love and fierce jealousy. ...There was a voice speaking in Caterina's mind to which she had never yet given vent. That voice said continually, "Why did he make me love him-why did he let me know he loved me, if he know all the while

> that he couldn't brave everything for my sake?"
> Then love answered, "He was led on by the feeling
> of the moment, as you have been, Caterina; and
> now you ought to help him to do what is right."
> Then the voice rejoined, "It was a slight matter
> to him. He doesn't much mind giving you up. He
> will soon love that beautiful woman, and forget a
> poor little pale thing like you." (145)

Thus the pattern of the struggle is set, in which self-mastery becomes more and more unequal to the feints of Captain Wybrow and the thrusts of his intended, Miss Assher. Even as Captain Wybrow indulges his attraction to Caterina, he uses what he is drawn by, her childlike appearance and untutored demeanor, to deflect Miss Assher's suspicions of a close relationship between them: "Is there anything about her to attract that sort of attention? She is more child than woman. One thinks of her as a little girl to be petted and played with." (186). It is Wybrow's perfidious nature and his gratuitous disloyalty which draw Caterina ever more deeply into a transmuted fantasy, from clinging love to a consuming desire to avenge her betrayal.

It is when Sir Christopher discusses a possible alliance between herself and Maynard that Caterina displays the interplay of the adult and child in her personality most clearly. Marriage, conferring social approbation and a stable position, is proffered to Caterina, yet the interview is fraught with layers of half expressed paternal expectations and girlish emotion. Caterina's position reflects the childlike response with which she meets life: leaning against Sir

Christopher's knee, she hides her face and weeps at the idea of a union between Maynard and herself. Sir Christopher's speech reduces the distance between the child and the bride; everything is on a small scale, from the "little wedding gowns" to the home over which she would preside as the "little mistress". "Padroncello" vouchsafes "Tina" his vision of a life of woman's fulfillment. Yet beneath this scene of relentless paternalism and answering sensibility smoulders Caterina's futile passion for Wybrow and its as yet unarticulated pathway towards the catharsis of vengeance. Caterina's passion overmasters her filial obedience and duty, and her foray into the world of maturation is doomed. She cannot accept Wybrow as he is, and she succumbs to her overmastering desire to avenge her shattered fantasy of Wybrow as she believed he was. Caterina cannot consent to marry Maynard, as Sir Christopher desires; to consent to a union with Maynard is to reconcile the adult and the child in her, and this she cannot do.

Wybrow's final act of betrayal, described by Miss Assher with malignity masquerading as compassion, is the catalyst for a cataclysmic act on Caterina's part, her planned murder of Wybrow.

Eliot creates, in her description of Caterina's response to Miss Assher's revelation, the image of an uncontrollable natural phenomenon, the rushing onslaught of the "pale meteor" (211). Miss Assher's call for self-control on Caterina's part has loosed restraint and elicited uncontrol, and it is at this moment that the adult response is submerged in the child's pain and her reaction to it. Eliot, in an apostrophe by the narrator, explicates the paradox of how far Caterina has travelled from the child's vision and yet how

closely, in her passion, she has approached that child again:

> Poor child! poor child! she who used to cry to have the fish put back into the water-who never willingly killed the smallest living thing-dreams now, in the madness of her passion, that she can kill the man whose very voice unnerves her. (212)

With sympathy, the narrator shows Caterina's approach to the dark side of a child's unconscious act of passion which, in the adult world and on a larger scale, has consequences of great magnitude.

Wybrow's natural death dissipates Caterina's vengeful anger, but precipitates her final withdrawal into the safe haven of childhood. As shock becomes guilt, as Caterina takes "sin" upon herself for her unfulfilled passions, she retreats into the responses to pain of the very young; she believes that her act will cause those who love her to view her with reprobation, and she courts punishment for her "wrongdoing". On both a literal and a figurative plane, she flies what she cannot bear, both the outward sorrow of Sir Christopher and the visible reminders of her own emotional pain. The flight from Cheverel Manor is the flight toward the complete succour and care of childhood; in her extreme debility is the search for a child's innocence and unconsciousness of evil.

From her arrival at Dorcas' home until her death, Caterina resigns herself to the care of parental figures. Dorcas is reinstated

in her role as caregiver; Maynard's sister becomes an elder sibling to Caterina, "bending over her carressingly, and speaking in low loving tones." (238). And Maynard, who has spent a lifetime ministering to Caterina's welfare, now breaks through her anguished withdrawal and lays to rest her darkest apprehensions, responding to her clinging trust with unremitting care. Maynard, bringing Cristina within the folds of his own family, paradoxically both leads her back into the community and, providing her with a safe harbour in love, allows her to remain outside it. She leaves Cheverel Manor, a fantastic creation of another world in its rhythms and rituals, which has contributed to the creation of Caterina in the image of a child; Cheverel is an interlude, and as such, Caterina is unable to return there. Instead, she marries Maynard who is associated with her life at Cheverel Manor, and in his love finds the continuity of the blessings of her childhood; to this she clings.

Caterina's pregnancy highlights the dilemma of childhood past but not past, of a child in imminent peril of having a child. Impending motherhood necessitates a choice of active commitment to life in all its manifestations, to growth of strength and purpose. Childbearing, a symbolic affirmation of continuity, of joy in new life, threatens the fragile stasis of Caterina's own existence. She has buried those passions which were the wellsprings of her being, and found sustenance enough to live in 'nestling affection" (243) in Maynard's careful love and in responsiveness to his joys. There is nothing here of the passionate energy requisite to a new beginning. Caterina, enfeebled by pain and supported only by love, is unequal to the "struggle to put forth a blossom" (243). As she has not changed in appearance, so she

has not changed in her essential understanding, and in static life and quiet death are expressed her inability to move forward, her essential being imprisoned in her first consciousness. So dies the first of George Eliot's child-women.

Like Caterina Sarti, Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede, is lost in an adult world, the first of George Eliot's major characters to be cast adrift in a reality to which she cannot aspire and which she is not equipped to reach. In Hetty, the concept of the child-adult comes to full fruition, presenting one who can never grow, but is doomed to remain a prisoner of her child's impulses. Dinah Morris early apprehends Hetty's lack of growth, seeing her as

> that sweet young thing, with life and all its trials 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 to bear hunger and cold and unsheltered darkness. (158)

In the growing interaction of Dinah and Hetty is a complex rendition of the pull both to and from adult vision.

The diminutive imagery which created Caterina in the mold of a child has given way to imagery which connotes another type of childish appeal. Like Caterina, Hetty is compelling in her abundant youth and freshness, her "beauty like that of kittens, or very small downy

ducks making gentle rippling noises with their soft bills, of babies just beginning to toddle and to engage in conscious mischief-..." (Adam Bede, 90). And yet, George Eliot hints at a greater lack in Hetty, a suggestion of darker consequences beneath the playful wantonness of her magnetism:

> ...Hetty's was a spring-tide beauty: it was the beauty of young frisking things, round-limbed, gambolling, circumventing you by a false air of innocence-the innocence of a young star-browed calf, for example, that, being inclined for a promenade out of bounds, leads you a severe steeplechase over hedge and ditch, and only comes to a stand in the middle of a bog. (91)

Here is the undercurrent of wilfullness, the sense of being "out of bounds", and perhaps, at a deeper level, a manifestation of authorial ambivalence and latent hostility toward the feeble Hetty, which points to an impatience with and resentment toward the claims of the "winsome child". Certain it is that Hetty, in her longing for the gratification of her own desires, is at variance with her aunt and uncle, and by extension, with the society around her. She is motherless, the "rootless child" who is set apart from those with whom she lives. Hetty's reactions to the large gatherings and communal occasions are those of a child and focus only upon her own sensibilities, for Hetty is involved solely in the world of pleasure

and has no sense of a shared past or a shared life in the community:

> There are some plants that have hardly any roots: you may tear them from their native nook of rock or wall, and just lay them over your ornamental flowerpot, 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. I think she had no feeling at all towards the old house.... It was wonderful how little she seemed to care about waiting on her uncle, who had been a good father to her-she hardly ever remembered to reach him his pipe at the right time without being told, unless a visitor happened to be there, who would have a better opportunity of seeing her as she walked across the hearth. Hetty did not understand how anybody could be very fond of middle-aged people. And as for those tiresome children, Marty and Tommy and Totty, they had been the very nuisance of her life-as bad as buzzing insects that will come teasing you on a hot day when you want to be quiet....Hetty would be glad to hear that she should never see a child again; they were worse than the nasty little lambs that the shepherd was always bringing in to be taken care of at lambing time; for the lambs <u>were</u> got rid of sooner or later. (154/5)

In this rather lengthy passage is the essence of Hetty's rejection of every aspect of community life, every adult tie. Her vanity, her lack of sympathy and involvement with all around her on any but a superficial level are the overt manifestations of this separation. A glimmer of the future is here, in her petulant repudiation of Totty, for, with her own baby to care for and none to rescue her, Hetty is lost as her own baby is lost.

Hetty does not accept the life for which she is destined, nor does she actively court the maturity which will lead her to reconcile her desires and her functions. Her vision throughout the various scenes in the novel is fixed inward, in childish egocentricity. She has the hard and unempathetic vision of the young; she "hates the leveret that runs across her path,...hates everything that is not what she longs for." (138) The sharpness of Hetty's unfulfilled expectations leads her to a world of fantasy, in which her dreams have a fairytale element. In this world, Arthur Donnithorne, the "young squire", is favoured over Adam, the adult caregiver to whom she cannot respond, and takes on the appearance of a rescuing knight, able to transport her to a special realm where "Perhaps some day she should be a grand lady and ride in her coach, and dress for dinner in a brocaded silk." (152) Hetty's dreams of marrying Arthur to escape her life with its monotonous and tiresome duties point her toward another existence, dreamlike and wonderful, where her defined tasks will be vague, amorphous, and ever pleasurable. Significantly, Hetty's vision substitutes one set of rituals for another; she rearranges her community and its reality much as a child does. She denies her life, with its prescribed acts, those duties linked with the Poyser

household, and so finally denies her true self in the woods with Arthur.

Arthur shares the fairytale world of Hetty, encouraging them both in it. He is playing "squire", indulging in dreams which have an aura of the Arabian Nights: "I used to think if ever I was a rich sultan, I would make Adam my grand vizier." (70) However, beneath the gaiety of Arthur's coming of age celebration is the reality of his position in the family, as heir to a grandfather who keeps the power within his own grasp and can't allow himself to pass on the responsibility of the estate to his grandson. In like manner, Arthur's relationship with Hetty, the romantic dalliance of a young man who likes to be well thought of and loved, has a darker side in its reality, an avoidance of duty and right action in the pursuit of pleasure in a world of make-believe. Arthur knows that marriage to Hetty is neither possible nor desirable; in his interlude with her, a child's will to possess is set against a man's opportunity for generosity and beneficence and wins.

The scene in which Arthur meets Hetty is a storybook setting where they come together as if propelled by a youthful need of each other. As the woods are ajacent to habitation, not within it, so the acts that remove Hetty and Arthur from society take place in a shelter secluded from that society. The forest, enclosed and enclosing, languid and secretive, shades meetings without the dictates of Hayslope so ety, as a child's hiding place protects him from parental discovery in the act of wrongdoing. The forest suggests an interlude of freedom from the watchful eye of others; the shade, the meandering paths that lose themselves in the undergrowth, the hidden cottage

where Hetty and Arthur have their trysts, symbolize the self-disguising fantasy of their lives, a fantasy behind whose self-deceptive abandon lurks society's mores, only evaded for a time. Adult authority, the voice of the temporal and moral, enters the woods with Adam. Thus the consequences of their fantasy propel each into a reality that neither can face, the cold reality which lies behind the enchantment and the enclosed, womb-like safety of "warm downy wings". A child's secret meeting has implications of adult proportions, for Hetty and Arthur are not children, either in chronological age or in the eyes of those around them.

Adam's discovery of Hetty and Arthur, shattering their world of makebelieve, precipitates, in Hetty, the terror of the child's not knowing and her responses to her abandonment by Arthur are those of a child. George Eliot delineates the distraught passivity of a child in trouble in the scene in which Hetty receives Arthur's farewell letter. The mirror into which she stares returns the empty image of a hollow life; it is the visual manifestation of an external being not allied to Hetty in any spiritual way, a false guide and inanimate seducer in its outward appeal to impossible dreams. From her now-convulsed reflection, Hetty can receive no succour. Eliot renders Hetty in the helpless images of childhood sorrow, as with "dark overflooding eyes" and "quivering mouth" (319), she "sat sobbing till the candle went out, and then, wearied, aching, stupefied with crying, threw herself on the bed without undressing and went to sleep." (320)

A firm reality of present trouble and impending shame is juxtaposed to Hetty's dream world of a pampered life of elegance and love. Her "blind vague hope" for an event that will change the

circumstances and the outcome of her pregnancy is an extension of her dream world. Her wandering in search of Arthur, a symbolic progression from the child's fantasy of pleasureable dependence to an enforced regard for the reality of self-sufficiency and inevitable consequences, is an odyssey which looks forward to Maggie's sojourn among the gypsies, a desperate search for an outwardly imposed solution. Hetty's failure to find Arthur betokens a failure to find a guardian who will magically solve her dilemma and precipitates the sense of isolation and terror of a child not able to articulate her troubles. Hetty, trapped in the unfamiliar, faces motherhood, emblem of mature desire and competence, as one excluded from the props of family and community. Like Caterina, Hetty is forced to define a role for herself which she is unable to adequately conceive or fulfill. Unsophisticated, brought up in rustic protection and isolation, she is cast adrift in an (at best) indifferent world. She does not understand the implications of her troubles, nor their dimensions, but alternates between a child's longing for her home and her desperate fear of discovery. In images redolent of youthful security and simple diction expressive of uncomplicated desire, George Eliot paints Hetty's yearning for her past:

> Now for the first time, as she lay down to-night in the strange, hard bed, she felt that her home had been a happy one, that her uncle had been very good to her, that her quiet lot at Hayslope among the things and people she knew, with her little pride in her one best gown and

> bonnet, and nothing to hide from anyone, was what
> she would like to wake up to as a reality.... (354)

But Hetty's reality is the isolation of her contemplated suicide and of the abandonment of her baby. Alone and ever needing care, Hetty cannot care for another.

Hetty's withdrawal is a symbolic rejection of the adult role she does not understand; it is a death as sure as suicide, for she is dead to the expectations of the community, to that moral imperative which has been imposed upon her, but which she cannot internalize or understand. Unable to "resonate to tremulous rapture or quivering agony" (102), Hetty, by her withdrawal, willingly embraces a childhood which never progresses. Her confession to Dinah is not a spiritual awakening, for the childishness of Hetty is stressed not only to enhance the pathos of her plight and the egocentric nature of her desires, but also to emphasize her inability to develop from a state of moral blindness. Rather, Hetty, in her fear, grasps at Dinah as a drowning being, in a desperate search for sustenance and support. In her lack of inner strength and understanding, Hetty reposes her trust in Dinah as a symbol of maternal power.

The triumph of society is the confession of Hetty and the exposure of the "truth". Society's interpretation of the duties and values of life is upheld by its institutions of church and court in a statement of the power of a prevailing ideology as well as a possible postulation of George Eliot's own vision. Its treatment of Hetty is the parental chastisement of a wayward child. Those who cannot grow up are isolated in their noncompliance with community rules and

become, in their exile, invisible to those with whom they have lived, in both a figurative and literal sense. When Hetty's interior life fails to meet external realities, when it is no longer a part of the novel itself, she ceases to exist within the fictional community except as an example of society's precepts.

Adam's awakening to the true nature of Arthur and Hetty, likened to a youth's departure from home, is the beginning of a journey into the world of self-knowledge and greater responsiveness to those about him, a journey which Hetty, and to some extent Arthur, do not make. Arthur, like Godfrey Cass in Silas Marner who slowly drifts into a situation whose consequences he refuses to see, comes to realize, in an initiation into some degree of adult sensibility, that actions have consequences which can never be obliterated, and to which no remedy can be applied in expiation of wrongdoing. Hetty does not reach even this partial awareness nor is she cared for in her extremity as Arthur is at novel's end. She dies, transported from the community in which she never really lived.

In the character of Gwendolen Harleth, George Eliot merges the child's overwhelming passions of Caterina Sarti and the ascendant fantasy life of Hetty Sorrel; yet Gwendolyn's life is expressive of a a process of growth which brings her through the childhood in which most of George Eliot's child-adults remain enmeshed, into that life which has been distilled from egocentricity to that which nourishes both the self and others. Daniel Deronda is the measure against whom Eliot places Gwendolen's actions and her consciousness, and through his understanding and his agency, Eliot leads Gwendolen from the realm of the child to that of the adult, the only one of her

characters to discover the meaning and complexity of maturity through the synthesis of previous experiences.

In the story of Gwendolen, George Eliot alternates fantasy and reality as she has with others of her characters, juxtaposing an acting out of a self and a fear of a self enmeshed in a life that touches and includes others. Gwendolen's created life is one of constant excitement that denies "muddling away my life as other people do, being and doing nothing remarkable". (58) Yet behind the ascendance of her fantasy is the child's fear of impotence, of those aspects of life that evade control. The accidental revelation of the picture behind the wainscot, the "upturned dead face, from which an obscure figure seemed to be fleeing with outstretched arms" (56), symbolizes the dark vision, the primal fear of the child conscious of the threat of all beyond his/her protected existence. Gwendolen's care in locking up the panel, and in possessing the key, is an expression of her attempt to shore up her defenses, to control both her own dark vision and the threat of intrusion into her self-made history.

In scene after scene, George Eliot creates an interchange of fantasy and reality in which Gwendolen, seeing reality impinge more and more on her vision, resolutely struggles to keep her childishly determined egocentricity intact. Eliot depicts the manner in which illusion acts upon existence in her telling contrast of the two:

> Gwendolen was as inwardly rebellious against the restraints of family conditions, and as ready to

> look through obligations into her own fundamental want of feeling for them, as if she had been sustained by the boldest speculations; but she really had no such speculations, and would at once have marked herself off from any sort of theoretical or practically reforming women by satirising them. She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes.... (83)

It is the change from imposed image to actuality which causes Gwendolen to cling to the makebelieve where to wish is to make everything possible.

The embodiment of all Gwendolen's inner conflicts is found in the figure of Grandcourt. George Eliot has created in this narrative of a union the sense of embattlement made tangible before Gwendolen's eyes. Grandcourt fulfills the requirements of her fantasy life, "the dignities, the luxuries, the power of doing a great deal of what she liked to do." (173); he is the physical representation of that for which Gwendolen has been longing. The delicate thrust and parry of his courtship allows Gwendolen to hold at bay her disgust of an intrusion, both physical and emotional, into her existence. As she

acquiesces in her uncle's view that her union with Grandcourt will fulfill her duty to her family and society, and will place her in that position which a woman must look to hold, Gwendolen distances herself from the reality of the communion which is the essence of marriage. In her childish ignorance of the true nature of others, in her numb reliance on Grandcourt's undemonstrative nature, she plots her manoeuvres and charts the obstacles and advantages of her course, much as a young general deploys his toy soldiers.

However, Gwendolen, in her marriage, has ironically brought on herself not a position of power but the life of a child, wherein no decision is hers. Like Lydia Glasher before her, she is completely subjugated by the silent strength of Grandcourt, and is trapped in the web of childlike obedience:

> One belief which had accompanied her through her unmarried life as a self-cajoling superstition, encouraged by the subordination of everyone about her-the belief in her own power of dominating-was utterly gone. Already, in seven short weeks, which seemed half her life, her husband had gained a mastery which she could no more resist than she could have resisted the benumbing effect from the touch of a torpedo. Gwendolen's will had seemed imperious in its small girlish sway; but it was the will of a creature with a large discourse of imaginative fears: a shadow would have been enough to relax its hold. And she had found a will

> like that of a crab or a boa constrictor which goes on pinching or crushing without alarm at thunder. (477)

She is a child in the midst of an adult's deadly game, unequal to the machinations of one who plays upon her pride and fears, overrides her desires and passions, and always prevails. Grandcourt's pleasure is to reduce Gwendolen's lively engagement with society to feeble looking on. He increases the distance between his wife and her family, isolating her from any sense of communion and community. Diplow, like Grandcourt himself, self-contained and out of society, exacerbates the exile Gwendolen has always contended with in her heart.

Yet Gwendolen's immersion in childhood, in her relationship with Grandcourt, paradoxically charts the beginning of a move toward adulthood. Unlike Caterina and Hetty, who are unable to move beyond the cataclysmic destruction of their childhood and who cannot find redemption in adult bonding, Gwendolyn, in her most desperate trials, in her deepest immersion in childhood, begins to move forward. She has a dawning realization of something outside the self, of whose existence she is woefully ignorant. With her increasing contact with and knowledge of Daniel Deronda, Gwendolen perceives a model, with whose help she can struggle to reconcile her life with a reality which she must live: "He was unique to her among men, because he had impressed her as being not her admirer but her superior: in some mysterious way he was becoming a part of her conscience..." (468). Daniel's succour, his wisdom, is the vision of reaching outward, beyond the world of misery left to Gwendolen with the annihilation of her fantasy, to something larger than herself and more worthy.

As the physical boundaries of Gwendolen's life symbolically narrow from Diplow to yacht to sailboat, there is the inception of a vision which no longer deludes itself with childlike fantasy, but which comes to see, with an active and painful moral sense, the repulsive path by which she has arrived at her easeful oppression. Out of the "poisonous misery" (723) will come the seeds of growth. Gwendolen is, of all George Eliot's heroines, the character with the most difficult (because unresolved) lot, but she has the greatest potential for moral growth stemming from her reliance on Deronda as spiritual mentor and guide. In Gwendolen's confession to Daniel of her paralysis to aid the drowning Grandcourt, the reader is recalled to a similar confession in Eliot's earliest work, Scenes of Clerical Life, in which Caterina deplores her murderous impulse and expresses her sense of guilt to Maynard Gilfil. Both Caterina and Gwendolen turn to the men who have been their stays in the vicissitudes of life, and cling to them in the passivity of childlike misery; Eliot reinforces this parallel by her rendition of Gwendolen's youthful dependence in the images of "childlike beseeching" (755) in which Gwendolen confesses to Deronda and the childlike clasp of hands which gives her strength. Unlike Caterina, however, Gwendolen, in her outpourings of feeling to Daniel, begins to approach an understanding of the process by which she has arrived at this extremity and by which she can integrate past feelings and dawning perceptions into a more purposeful life. The existence of the "small and sharp" object in the "silver sheath" (756), that mysterious weapon about which Gwendolen apprises Daniel, hearkens back to that similar object of which Caterina had possessed herself in order to seek liberation from her

obsession for Wybrow. Perhaps only circumstance has prevented Caterina from using this symbol of destruction, while Gwendolen's confession places the object of her temptation, the weapon she has taken, in a locked drawer, symbolizing the desire to cleave to better impulses, a desire which Daniel has activated. Gwendolen's scenes of communion with Deronda are a working out of her perceptions of guilt, a catharsis, a purging of her worst feelings so better may follow.

The lesson of Gwendolen's marriage and its concomitant misery is a lesson in consequences, wherein pleasure has turned to pain. It is here that George Eliot brings Gwendolen into the sphere of moral engagement by which she characterizes a successful initiation into adulthood. Gwendolen's movement toward the vision of adulthood is, in part, comprised of her increased self-awareness, of the struggle of desire and remorse. Her knowledge and detestation of her worst thoughts and actions lead her to better. It is Deronda who crystalizes this precept for her: "Within ourselves our evil will is momentous, and sooner or later it works its way outside us-it may be in the vitiation that breeds evil acts, but also it may be in the self-abhorrence that stings us into better striving." (764) Therein lies the process of growth that reaches toward maturity, toward moral senibility, which is George Eliot's rite of passage from the child's estate.

In George Eliot's vision, the child-adult is almost surely doomed to failure. For the most part, he or she stands outside the purview of society which presents in the Dinah Morrises and Mary Garths t' models in whom the integrative process between outer demands and inn imperative is complete and in whom the synthesis of desire and reality

comes about within the boundaries of the community. Against the widening vision of an Esther Lyons, a Dorothea Brooke, or an Adam Bede stands the entrenched tragedy of the child who never grows up, with the resultant dissolution of her inner being. George Eliot depicts the engagement of mutable and inexorable nature against resolute human stasis; nature prevails, a nature against which the wilfully blind have neither recourse nor protection. Fantasy, the double vision, is lost, and the child-adult is swallowed up by a dark and ongoing reality.

CHAPTER 3

The Child and Education

> At eighteen, the school of experience
> is to be entered, and her humbling,
> crushing, grinding, but yet purifying
> and invigorating lessons are yet to
> be learnt.
>
> Shirley, Charlotte Bronte

An examination of nineteenth century thinking on education, which was based on the ideas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, forms a substantial theme in George Eliot's fiction. Prior to the nineteenth century, comparatively few children attended school. The Church had established the framework for what education there was, and the school's primary function had been religious. In the 1800s, such a system as existed consisted of semi-public and private instruction, in accordance with the fear that a state system would interfere with "civil and religious liberty" (Adamson, 26). The question asked about education, secular or Church, was: What is the relationship between the institution and the community, the individual and society? The Non-Conformist view was that the state should not be involved in the schoolroom. The idea of the individual was ascendent, and each man

was required to stand fast against control by the state. However, little by little, the magnitude of the cost of education, which only the state could meet, moderated the individualist stance.

The nineteenth century saw the transition of educational responsibility from the Church to the State. No longer was the school a place to learn the barest basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, nor was the purpose of education to counteract the impulse toward rebellion of the lower classes, as Utilitarian Adam Smith had considered it in the previous century: "An instructed and intelligent people, besides, are always more decent than an ignorant and stupid one." (Adamson, 5) The great changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution in technology, agriculture, demography, transportation, and class structure necessitated a new mode. The rising middle class did not perceive the strictly classical education, promulgated by the ancient grammar schools, as useful; many boys, immersed in Latin and Greek, left school in their late teens ignorant of mathematics, history, and modern languages, nor were they able to write correct English or solve a problem in geometry. (Curtis, 152) Criticism of schools touched on the exclusion of modern studies in the curriculum, and on the issue of control over pupils by bullying and fagging. Rote learning and repetition at the hands of men and women who often had few qualifications to teach crushed curiousity and individual initiative; stringent discipline enforced an obedience to authority.

By mid-nineteenth century, the conception of what consituted education had undergone a radical change. The base had broadened from the Sunday Schools of the early part of the century, which had laid the foundation of public education for the poor (Adamson, 19), to the

beginnings, in the 1860's, of a movement toward compulsory universal schooling based on a philosophy of dispelling ignorance, teaching morals and religion, teaching the poor to accept their station, and counteracting disruptive political movements. (Adamson, 16-17) This diffusion of culture, particularly to the poor, politicized education as the curriculum was enlarged to embrace the subjects of deportment, discipline, and moral living. This widening of the availability of schooling in a sense increased the control of the state; the political elements, represented in the dialectic between a state system with state-postulated goals and personal and religious freedom (Adamson, IX) suggests a particular discourse, of which George Eliot was very aware and which she treats in her depiction of various modes of learning. Felix Holt's school represents, in literary form, the principles of such an establishment as that of John Pounds of Portsmouth. Pounds, a cobbler by profession,

> ...extended his activities and divided his time between his trade and caring for the poorest and most uncared-for children of the town. He seems to have wielded extraordinary influence over them. His workshop was his schoolroom, and as well as attending to his craft, he managed to instruct the destitute boys and girls in reading and writing, and also give them lesson in cookery and cobbling. (Curtis, 71)

Also within the broad spectrum of education about which she writes in the progressive mid-1800's is the matter of girl's schooling. Prior to the nineteenth century, girls were educated, for the most part, by governesses or in private institutions, where they learned languages, deportment, and accomplishments. (Curtis, 71) If girls attended grammar schools, a very rare occurrence, they were required to leave school at an earlier age than boys were; in addition, grammar schools offered females neither training for the job of governess nor an opportunity to qualify themselves for university entrance. The movement for better education of boys and girls parallelled the movement to emancipate women; George Eliot wrote at a time when consideration was being given to the teaching of girls and when the philosophy that girls could not learn as well as boys could, that they needed accomplishments of a more ostentatious nature, and particularly that more solidly intellectual attainments would work against them in their efforts to make eligible matches, was beginning to be decried and discounted. (Curtis, 167)

George Eliot's novels reflect the great changes in the school system debated and acted on in her era. Her writing demonstrates her familiarity with many contemporary educational theories. John Mills' belief that education occurs on many levels: "domestic, scholastic or technical..., social" (Adamson, 106), and through the agency of "family, school and political institutions" of the community of which the student is a part (Adamson, 106) finds a place in all Eliot's major novels, as does Pestalozzi's credo that, without education as a process of growth, humans cannot attain adulthood. She shares with Pestalozzi the idea that education should be the "process of assisting

the development of intellect, emotion, and will." (Adamson, 126) More than this, she presents the prevalent concern of her countrymen that a bureaucratic state education would produce citizens in one common mold in accordance with a given social ideology.

In George Eliot's novels, education is one of the threads of a complex fabric of existence which she weaves so tightly. Lifting education from out of more general considerations of her novels is, in a sense, artificial, for it is inextricably bound up with how boys and girls come to learn their appointed roles in the community, or don't learn their "lessons". Nevertheless, a consideration of the directions and meanings of the learning process is intrinsic to any consideration of the theme of children in her work. George Eliot's social vision, the underpinning of the various thematic strains in her books, places education in a primary position; learning, in her writing, is not only an odyssey of the mind and a way of channelling intellectual energy, it is also the road to maturity. The failure to nurture that first desire to know and understand, or the failure to encourage one whose natural curiosity and ability lie dormant, is a consignment of that child to the realms of immaturity, to a world of oversimplifications and childish emotions.

The importance of the process of learning permeates George Eliot's books. Knowledge is the catalyst to the flowering of the mature understanding from which right actions flow. Schools, classes, and lessons become a paradigm for improving the lot of mankind, a way of enhancing the wellbeing of the community. The ideal of bettering the world through the dissemination of learning is exemplified in the provision of an opportunity for youth to rise up from the lowest level

of illiterate society and thereby experience life more fully. Both Bartle Massey, in Adam Bede, and Felix Holt, in the novel of the same name, symbolize this principle of nurturant instruction.

Bartle Massey, misogynist that he is , embittered by a past which has left him alone, is yet drawn to his fellows by a love of imparting knowledge and seeing students prosper. He teaches not only young pupils, but older ones: "Such full-grown children" (229), helpless as toddlers in their struggling ignorance, touch Bartle's sympathy and he meets their halting efforts with quiet patience. This sense of bringing a child-adult to manhood is demonstrated in Bartle's relationship with Adam, his care for both his intellectual growth, and, when he cannot take that any further, his spiritual growth. The scene with Adam at the prison, with its images of bread and drink reminiscent of the communion meal, casts Bartle in the shades of that supreme Teacher of men. Thus, in George Eliot's description of Adam's "sense of enlarged being", the narrative moves toward what Reva Stump considers Eliot's schema, that "true vision is moral vision" (Stump, 64) and involves a process of education, a growth from the "excessive pride and stubborn will" (Stump, 65) to the integration of a shared life and experience. In Adam Bede, the parallel processes of the growth of a child and the growth of being are clear. Adam, responsible and manly as he is at the book's beginning, is a caregiver in physical ways only; he is unable to respond to the more ephemeral needs of others with compassion. His experiences in his relationships with Hetty and Dinah are the learning process he needs to be fully adult. Bartle Massey, in his role of teacher, is the symbolic link between past and future, an educator both in a literal sense, for his

instuction has enabled Adam to progress in a worldly way, and in a more abstract sense of the communion of understanding which exists between them in the room hard by Hetty's prison. Through Bartle, Adam comes to understand in a more than cerebral fashion the needs and feelings of others.

The character of Felix Holt follows in conception that of Bartle Massey, in his response to the ignorance of the unschooled. The untutored workingman, in Felix Holt as in other of her novels, is described as possessing a native, inborn cleverness often stymied of expression by the lack of learning and by its concomitant inarticulateness. Felix is blessed with an understanding of those who stagnate at the bottom of society, and who pass on the same fate to their children, and he seeks to ameliorate the harshness of their lot by breaking this chain. Teaching, for Felix, is not only a way of augmenting his income; it is a commitment to the betterment of present and future generations:

> There was nothing better than a dame school in the hamlet; he thought if he could move the fathers, whose blackened week-day persons and flannel caps, ornamented with tallow candles by way of plume, were a badge of hard labour for which he had a more sympathetic fibre than any ribbon in the buttonhole-if he could move these men to save something from their drink and pay a school master for their boys, a greater service would be done them than if Mr. Garstin and his

> company were persuaded to establish a school.
>
> (*Felix Holt*, 121)

Their children's improvement is to imbue them with the will and desire to grow. Felix possesses a respect for learning along with a genuine sense of comraderie and compassion for those whom he feels bound to instruct, and a vision of education as a conduit for right action and feeling. George Eliot embodies, in such characters as Felix Holt, her vision of the ideal empathic response, which looks to education as a means to dignity and worth. In this, Felix is allied to the character of Mrs. Garth in *Middlemarch*, a teacher whose response to the vagaries of life is that of an educated woman fulfilling not only a "woman's role" in the conventional sense, but also the role of nurturer of youthful minds and understanding. Mrs. Garth is presented as teaching a manner of deciphering the world, and of responding positively to those around one. Education is thus linked to a way of regarding existence, to a respect for others and pride of accomplishment for oneself. In her characterization of teachers, George Eliot most often represents the interplay of experience and sympathy between instructor and instructed, and depicts an enlarged participation in life as within their purview to give and receive.

Yet not all teachers in George Eliot's novels are the disseminators of better understanding and expanded knowledge. Side by side with those dedicated to teaching and with those who, through lack of opportunity, never evolved from childish ignorance, is the inept scholar/tutor. George Eliot brings the weight of her irony to bear

upon the unskillful educator, in a particularly pungent manner, in _The Mill on the Floss_:

> All this, you remember, happened in those dark ages when there were no Schools of Design, before schoolmasters were invariably men of scrupulous integrity, and before the clergy were all men of enlarged minds and varied culture. In those less favoured days, it is no fable that there were other clergyman besides Mr. Stelling who had narrow intellects and large wants,...The problem these gentlemen had to solve was to readjust the proportion between their wants and their income; and since wants are not easily starved to death, the simpler method appeared to be-to raise their income.... Besides, how should Mr. Stelling be expected to know that education was a delicate and difficult business? any more than an animal endowed with a power of boring a hole through rock should be expected to have wide views of excavation.... But among Tom's contemporaries whose fathers cast their sons on clerical instruction to find them ignorant after many days, there were many far less lucky than Tom Tulliver. Education was almost entirely a matter of luck--usually of ill-luck--in those distant days. Excellent men, who had been forced all their lives to spell on an

> impromptu phonetic system, and having carried on a successful business in spite of this disadvantage, had acquired money enough to give their sons a better start in life than they had had themselves, must necessarily take their chance as to the conscience and the competence of the schoolmaster whose circular fell in their way and appeared to promise so much more than they would ever have thought of asking for-including the return of linen, fork, and spoon.... (240/2)

In the voice of the narrator, she deplores the ignorance, well-meaning but inherently stultifying, of the selector of tuition, tutor, and taught in most educational opportunities. More insidious than malicious misrepresentation, well-intentioned ignorance misleads in its very atmosphere of confidence and competence. Tom Tulliver stands as a model of those whose lives are narrowed rather than widened by misplaced scholarly endeavour.

The sixth volume of The Mill on the Floss, entitled "School Time", depicts Tom's schooldays at the hands of a maladroit Mr. Stelling, but is, in a broader sense, a compendium of attitudes from which emanate ineffective teaching and learning. The various directions in which Tom is pulled manifest the multiple visions of society with regard to the learning process, and provide a sense of tension within the work. Tom's boyish ideas of education mirror the opinions of many of those around him, and like them, his opinions of education and of its relation to manhood are not particularly

interconnected. Tom is presented as one who equates learning with a modicum of writing and spelling, about which he need not be too particular. His happiness at Mr. Jacob's Academy stems from the fellowship of other boys, and from prevailing over them with his superior physical prowess. Life will be an extension of the Academy; there will be few rigours of learning, and Tom will excel in the manly arts of business and hunting. He is presented in pragmatic images; not a reader, he is not comfortable with abstract concepts or historical perspectives.

The juxtaposition of Tom and Philip Wakeham at Mr. Stelling's serves as a comparative device for the explication of differing perspectives on learning. Philip looks on Mr. Stelling's lessons as the inculcation of the accomplishments of a gentleman. Knowledge leads him where his crippled body has difficulty taking him, and he gains satisfaction in knowledge for its own sake. His nimble mind and impaired body form a direct contrast to the slow apprehension and vibrant frame of Tom Tulliver. George Eliot stresses the dichotomy of opposing abilities and preferences in the juxtaposition of the image of Tom as the "well-made barbarian" and that of the "superior mentality" of Philip. (237)

At the last, Tom's education from books, which has been the focus of so much effort and anguish, is compared to life experience and found wanting. George Eliot presents the ironic vision of an incapable and unwilling Tom, entrapped by the very masculine privilege of an education which is meant to lead to freedom by enlightenment. Tom is, during his tenure at Mr. Stelling's, reduced to an unmasculine weakness and inferiority in his inability to function on the level

expected of him by both his tutor and schoolmate. Mr. Stelling has expectations which go beyond the pedestrian realm of mapping and penmanship to the complexities of Latin pronunciation and grammar and Euclid; he stands for standards other than and above those of the Tullivers, and Tom, understanding this, is acutely aware of his deficiencies. Thus far, Mr. Stelling has opened the horizon for Tom, but he cannot help him take advantage of the opening. Tom, a thorough pragmatist, is given to concretizations of principles and is lost to the imaginative leaps that abstract concepts demand. Mr. Stelling's ineffectual teaching is met by an unimaginative mind. His response, paralleling that of his milieu, is lacking in spirit and freedom. He finds that his sojourn with Mr. Stelling has not molded him into the approved shape set forth as the standard of the community; Tom's eventual focussing on business, so far removed from his studies under Mr. Stelling, constitutes his reeducation into "utility" and his teachers' relegation into the realms of the irrelevant and ineffectual.

Tom's education has taken the direction it has in consonance with his father's desires. George Eliot embodies in Mr. Tulliver the error of the well-meaning but unschooled parent who wants his son to have the opportunities to be a better man than he himself has been. Mr. Tulliver sends Tom to Mr. Stelling in an attempt to mold him into an educated man for whom the world is never "too much". Mr. Tulliver's frame of reference is others' opinions and he considers the recommendations of those of equal or better social standing with care. Moreover, he is impressed by the fact that Mr. Stelling is an Oxford man and possessor of a higher degree, with its aura of scholastic

excellence. Tom is his greatest "investment", and he wishes to get the best return that a man of acuity can get. In this portrait of Mr. Tulliver, George Eliot has embodied the most practical elements of society's desire to educate its young, those elements which have little potential elasticity with which to expand into curiosity and yearning toward knowledge.

In the works of George Eliot, education is often comprised of a hodgepodge of philosophies and requirements, ill-conceived and ill-executed. Mr. Stelling is the symbol of a society which knows the right path for its members, one which is illuminated by the feeble light of collective learning. In the hands of Mr. Stellings, Mr. Jacobs, and Mrs. Lemons, education becomes a self-serving modality, an inward vision of egocentric needs and skills which does not create a movement toward a truly open engagement with life; education paradoxically contributes to the stasis of characters in their childhood. Without the tools with which to grow, without the encouragement to see and to analyze, the characters remain in the untutored realm of youth forever.

George Eliot also considers the inequality of the educative process for boys and girls; boys have the opportunity, if not always the will or the ability, to become "wise", whereas girls are restricted in their very exposure to the tools of knowledge. George Eliot's recitation of schools at which males can make their mark is a litany of prestigious academies; Eton, Rugby, Oxford, Cambridge, and Heidelberg all stand for male power to excel, to direct their lives, and to grow into the role of autonomous individuals, while finishing schools of doubtful fame are the lot of the most fortunate female

student. Moreover, the directions which a boy's or young man's education can take are manifold, and the vocations to which such learning can lead are many and varied in the context of the novels. Felix Holt and Adam Bede reach, through their education, the crest of their desires for independence of action and thought. Daniel Deronda becomes Mordecai's pupil, studying Hebrew and Jewish philosophy to fit him for his work in Palestine, in the translation of a visionary nation into a reality. Lydgate asks to have a medical education, his all-pervading desire to know, in his boyhood, having led him to this passion for scientific investigation.

Male characters in George Eliot's works are allied to a search for knowledge, even when the search is misguided or unconventional. Will Ladislaw, having studied in Germany for a year, loses himself in a variety of intellectual pursuits, in much the same way that his uncle, Mr. Casaubon, does; for although Casaubon has followed a more conventional course of clerical and classical studies, he too is floundering in the mass of scholarly material at his disposal. Hans Meyrick, recipient of a university scholarship at the behest of his friend Deronda, finds his metier in the world of painting; and Fred Vincy registers his opposition to taking clerical orders, an opposition seconded by Mary Garth who, weighing filial duty against a lack of vocation, firmly approves an honest decision based on true feeling, against the remonstrances of his sister, Rosamond:

> 'He is not fit to be a clergymann.'
> 'But he ought to be fit.'
> 'Well, then, he is not what he ought to be. I

> know some other people who are in the same case.'
>
> 'But no one approves of them. I should not like to marry a clergyman, but there must be clergymen.'
>
> 'It does not follow that Fred must be one.'
>
> 'But when Papa has been at the expense of educating him for it!' (Middlemarch, 115)

George Eliot depicts here, as elsewhere, the scope of opportunity that a male character has, either to reject or accept a learning experience. Whether Fred turns his back on the lifework designated for him or not, the vistas of education are still open for him. More than this, skills for males have always the possibility of development into "mature occupations", and the potential to seek out knowledge for its own sake cannot but add a dimension to masculine existence denied to the feminine, even if that knowledge is not totally assimilated.

Behind the panorama of choices for male characters lies the quiet assumption that boys may always learn in the best way possible. Bartle Massey's school is for boys, as is Felix Holt's. Ezra Cohen tutors Jacob, but not Rebekkah Adelaide. Public schools and colleges are part of the landscape of male children, as are tutors. Throughout George Eliot's fictional world is the assumption that the male, from childhood onward, is provided with a multiplicity of learning experiences from which to garner a direction in life and from which to develop a sense of place. Perhaps Daniel Deronda best mirrors George Eliot's ideal of education, viewing learning as a way "to feed motive and opinion" rather than as a "instrument (...) of success". (219)

Rather than learning by rote and performing academic feats of manipulation, rather than apprehending just such material as will obtain for him a place in the world, he has, from childhood, sought to open his mind to disparate forms of knowledge and to "the principles which form the vital connections of knowledge". (220) As the prototype of the truly educated male, Daniel Deronda exemplifies the best choices which the privilege of scholarship provides.

If education gives a sense of one's accepted position in the community, George Eliot's consideration of the schooling available to girls paints a woeful picture of the inadequacies of female life and expectations. It is true that educational opportunities are not wanting for her female characters; nary a girl in an Eliot novel has not had some instruction. However, there are no Harrows, Etons, or Oxfords for Maggie, Dorothea, Rosamond, and Gwendolen. Rather, the best of the institutions characterized is of the finishing school variety exemplified by the description of Mrs. Lemon's school in _Middlemarch_:

> Rosamond Vincy...was admitted to be the flower of Mrs.Lemon's school, the chief school in the county, where teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female-even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage. Mrs. Lemon herself had always held up Miss Vincy as an example: no pupil, she said, exceeded that young lady for mental acquisition and propriety of speech,

> while her musical execution was quite exceptional....
>
> (96)

The education outlined in this "novelistic prospectus" is one of accomplishments which make a woman what she should be. In this form of schooling, there is no development beyond the shining surface, no widening of the mind from its childish fantasies of a "sugarplum life" to a broadened insight into the relationship between the self and the world, the self and history. The focus of a girl's education is presented as the self, and contrary to the encouragement of perception which is its vaunted purpose, education, as it exists for the female, discourages that understanding which is requisite to maturity and an enlarged experience. A girl's education contributes to keeping a woman a child, an amusing child who fills the leisure hours of father, brother, mother, and spouse with relaxation and enjoyment.

Female learning is of an imitative kind, taking its cues from its masters. At its best, it is the echo of the great interpretive abilities of others, and belies the emptiness of the vessel from which it makes its sonorous exit:

> Rosamond played admirably. Her master at Mrs. Lemon's school...was one of those excellent musicians here and there to be found in our provinces.... Rosamond, with the executant's instinct, had seized his manner of playing, and gave forth his large rendering of noble music with the precision of an echo. It was almost

> startling, heard for the first time. A hidden soul seemed to be flowing forth from Rosamond's fingers; and so indeed it was, since souls live on in perpetual echoes, and to all fine expression there goes somewhere an originating activity, if it be only that of an interpreter. (158/9)

In this passage, George Eliot allies engrafted knowledge, superficial in itself, with unformed understanding. For Rosamond Vincy, as for other of George Eliot's female characters, schooling has provided her with a way of life performed by rote, as a song or a recitation. The "role" of life is a perfected lesson, aesthetic in its form, and following a prescribed sequence set down for her

> ...in sketching her landscapes and marketcarts and portraits of friends, in practising her music, and in being from morning till night her own standard of a perfect lady, having always an audience in her own consciousness, with sometimes the not unwelcome addition of a more variable external audience in the numerous visitors of the house. She found time also to read the best novels, and even the second best, and she knew much poetry by heart. Her favourite poem was "Lalla Rookh". (165)

Rosamond is admirably schooled in the graces which will contribute to

the childish fantasy of marital happiness in which a spouse will respond to her accomplishments with punctilious attentions and the world with much admiration. Her education has been a drill in the repetition of skills deemed necessary by the society in which she lives and exposure to the scattered pieces of information which will round out the persona of perfect womanhood.

George Eliot created the fullest portrait of the plight of the "educated" girl in the delineation of Gwendolen Harleth in Daniel Deronda; here, the expectations arising from her education render Gwendolen unfit for growth and responsibilities within the framework of her possibilities. Gwendolen's instruction fits her to shine within a certain milieu, but leaves her woefully inadequate in a more genuinely learned circle. At the first gathering at the Arrowpoints, Gwendolen is shown as the limited girl she has been trained to be. Her superficial knowledge of German and her glib "I dote on Tasso." (Daniel Deronda, 76), form part of the superficial familiarities which overlie both her ignorance and her distaste for the application necessary for acquiring true learning. The musician Klesmer is the voice of the purist, both knowledgeable and sensible of the mysterious powers of study merged with ability. His analysis of Gwendolen's musical education stands as a comment on her education in general, and what it represents:

> "Yes, it is true; you have not been well-taught," said Herr Klesmer, quietly.... "But you produce your notes badly; and that music which you sing is beneath you. It is a form

> of melody which expresses a puerile state of culture-a dangling, canting, see-saw kind of stuff, the passion and thought of people without any breadth of horizon." (79)

Gwendolen has learned neither the basic techniques of nor an appreciation for the more complex but meaningful forms of art. Klesmer is George Eliot's beacon of genius, lighting the way to the struggle toward something larger than self; as such, he illuminates the deficiencies of society's expectations of feminine erudition.

Gwendolen is at first sanguine about her education, but it is a serenity borne of inexperience and ignorance. Her knowledge has been tailored to her particularly female need to impress and to dazzle; to excel in the feminine sphere is to gain power over others. Gwendolen does not see learning as a process of dedication and enlightenment, but as a way of shaping events to her vision of her own destiny. Yet in her sudden need to earn an independence, Gwendolen comes to the painful realization of how defenseless her years of schooling have left her. This is impressed upon her again bv Herr Klesmer, in an interview in which she seeks his help and advice. Klesmer here takes Gwendolen's accomplishments out of the realm of self-indulgent whimsy and places them in the cold light of critical appraisal. Her aspirations are not to be arrived at easily; the transition from young lady not long out of school to competent performer is not a painless one:

> "You would find-after your education in doing things slackly for one-and-twenty years-great difficulties in study: you would find mortifications in the treatment you would get when you presented yourself on the footing of skill. You would be subjected to tests; people would no longer feign not to see your blunders...." (303)

Reality and romance are juxtaposed in the images in which George Eliot chooses to render Gwendolen's education; reality, with all its pragmatic, discouraging, disappointing elements, is ascendent. Gwendolen's training has, in her real necessity of earning her bread, qualified her in the only occupation for which a lady can hope beyond home and family, that of teacher or governess; her French, music, dancing, and deportment can lead to no higher calling.

The education of Gwendolen has something of the indulgence of the child about it:

> Only a few hours before, the dawning smile of self-contentment rested on her lips as she vaguely imagined a future suited to her wishes....Why not? At home, at school, among acquaintances, she had been used to have her conscious superiority admitted; and she had moved in a society where everything, from low arithmetic to high art, is of the amateur kind politely supposed to fall short of perfection only because gentlemen and

> ladies are not obliged to do more than they like—otherwise they would probably give forth abler writings and show themselves more commanding artists than any the world is at present obliged to put up with. (306/7)

In this juxtaposition of the images of gentlemen and ladies, George Eliot has depicted with great efficiency the sad fate of feminine accomplishments. For the man, to whom the world is open, all accomplishments are but welcome addenda to his life; for the lady, however, accomplishments are her life, and, in the final analysis,, give her her worth and influence. For Gwendolen, as for most females, all that is valuable in learning is denied, and all impulse toward inquiry rests undeveloped. Gwendolen basks in the glory of those first feeble accomplishments of childhood, which are ever made much of and focussed upon, while the rich possibilities of the expansion of the intellect go unappreciated and unencouraged. She stands beside Daniel Deronda as the uninitiated beside the savant, and is imprisoned within the selfishness of her ignorance of which society has approved. in the juxtaposition of the natures of Gwendolen and Daniel, George Eliot expresses the unfortunate distance between one whom society limits in growth, leaving her childlike in apprehension and dependence within the deceptive mystique of the accomplished female, and one whom, in his privileged masculinity, society has set afloat on an unlimited voyage of discovery.

Intellectual curiosity, as it applies to the female characters in George Eliot's work, is in some sense tragic, for, given the capacious

abilities and talents inherent in many of them, where is their avenue of expression within the boundaries of their assigned roles in society? In Catherine Arrowpoint, George Eliot creates a potential of unlimited promise; she is joined to the outstanding Herr Klesmer not only in their roles as teacher/pupil and lovers, but in the consonance of their shared talent. She attracts not only the eager tutelage of a master who cleaves to talent, but the respect of one dedicated entirely to his art and chary of meting out unmerited and incautious encouragement. In Catherine resides an example of the height of feminine talent and artistic sensibility, yet these abilities are finally only able to find a place in the sphere of marriage and home, of service to another's artistic genius. Similarly, Mirah Lapidoth's exquisitely trained and thrillingly moving voice leads her to give singing lessons in order to earn her bread, and it is here that the differential between talent and mediocrity breaks down; for Mirah's employment resembles in its social significance, that of a governess, and her extraordinary abilities are submerged into the boundaries of the permissable female role. Marriage or patronage is the only choice, each keeping a woman's talents in thrall.

Taught to fit the mold, George Eliot's women are kept to society's vision of a woman's place, often with negative consequences of vague, inarticulate yearnings for other experiences, and a reliance on the care of another. They possess a lamentable ignorance of life outside the realm of genteel accomplishment, which enhances the possibility of wrong choices. Dorothea Brooke is trapped by society's model of womanhood and is at the mercy of a childlike, untutored enthusiasm toward greater things. Both Dorothea and her sister Celia

were recipients of those catholic lessons vouchsafed the well-connected young lady; they "had both been educated since they were about twelve years old and had lost their parents on plans at once narrow and promiscuous, first in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family at Lausanne...." (Middlemarch, 10). Dorothea has not any sense of connection with the world at large, nor any ability to link the self with the patterns and possibilities of history. With her passionate desire to perform great deeds, she has not been furnished in her growing years with a knowledge of how to go about articulating and performing these acts. Indeed, she is symbolically linked with the child, St. Theresa, portrayed in the prelude to the book in the unformed image of "a little girl walking forth one morning hand in hand with her still smaller brother to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors." (vii). Dorothea's mind, arrested in childish dreams of the grandiloquent act, is awaiting the imprint of surer knowledge and experience.

Dorothea's incomplete education and emotional nature prevent her from being able to assimilate such opportunities for learning as are open to her. She is enmeshed in a child's world of ideas and ideals, and her emotions, close to the surface, are often ascendent. She sees life through a veil of sensibility with nothing more substantial to act as ballast to her passions. In this frame of mind and because of a painful lack of critical ability, Dorothea is seduced by Casaubon. He is the knowledge of the world personified; he is teacher, scholar, arbiter of that right thinking which will lead Dorothea toward rational meaning in life. George Eliot here postulates the compelling appeal of education, to a mind like Dorothea's, over the more mundane

offer of a hearth such as Sir James Chettam's: "Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage. The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it." (12) More than young energy, insufficient of itself and waiting to be guided by parental care into fruitful endeavours, here is the unformed, unequipped to discriminate between substance and ephemera. Dorothea's unworldliness, unmitigated by her schooling, is such that she is unfitted to discern the flaws in Mr. Casaubon, both as a teacher and as a man. He is sterile in intellect and in emotion, and has nothing to teach Dorothea that will lead her into more meaningful insights. Moreover, from his sublimated fear that he cannot succeed either in his life's work or in his marriage comes an extreme unwillingness to loosen the yoke of child-womanhood which is Dorothea's lot.

George Eliot sets forth, in her images of Celia and Dorothea, two paths of womanhood nurtured by the same educative experience. Celia, steeped in an instinctive awareness of the expectations of the world vis-a-vis young ladies out of the schoolroom, is the one who survives intact, finally revelling, as Sir James' wife, in her assigned place in the scheme of feminine existence. On the eve of Dorothea's acceptance of Casaubon, Celia is presented within the established confines allowed her capabilities: "After dinner, when Celia was playing an 'air, with variations', a small kind of tinkling which symbolized the aesthetic part of the young ladies' education, Dorothea went up to her room to answer Mr. Casaubon's letter." (45) Dorothea, "whose slight regard for domestic music and feminine fine art must be

forgiven her, considering the small tinkling and smearing in which they chiefly consisted at that dark period" (65), is the one who is cast adrift by her longing for greater experiences than those with which her education and community provide her. In her fateful marriage to Casaubon lies the danger of wrong choices, embraced in unquenched thirst for a larger vision than that which a girl's education provides.

Like Dorothea Brooke, Maggie Tulliver, in The Mill on the Floss, is placed outside the bounds set her by her community. George Eliot presents, in the character of Maggie, the able and robust feminine curiosity; in the complex creation of Maggie, a yearning toward knowledge and concommitant understanding plays no minor part. From the novel's beginning, Maggie is perceived as having desires and abilities not consonant with the expectations of her gender; she has an urgent desire both to know and to receive encouragement in and acknowledgement of her eruditon.

That most positive trait of intellectual initiative is, from the first volume, seen as a sad liability in Maggie. While Tom's schooling is of paramount importance to Mr. Tulliver, Maggie's ready facility with books is viewed as a sad characteristic:

> "She understands what one's talking about so as never was. And you should hear her read-straight off, as if she knowed it all beforehand. An' allays at her book! But it's bad-it's bad," Mr. Tulliver added, sadly, checking this blameable exultation "a woman's no business wi' being so

clever; it'll turn to trouble, I doubt...."

(The Mill on the Floss, 66)

The approbation of a superior ability is thus curbed by an explicit worry of Maggie's failure in the place allotted to her in life. An essential part of Maggie's character is lamented; what would be a cause for joyful approbation in Tom lies atrophying in Maggie, who will never, among other options, have a chance to be a "match for the lawyers". (68) Maggie's imagination and learning alternately fill Mr. Tulliver with fatherly pride and amazement and make him uneasy and his imperative "Go, go!...Go-go and see after your mother." (68), solves his acute dilemma in the socially acceptable way, sending Maggie back into her own sphere. Mr. Tulliver's response to Maggie's intellectual acumen foreshadows the dialectical pull of her own mind as she struggles between the opposing forces of desire for forbidden knowledge and acquiescence to the dictates of those around her.

In this particular scene, George Eliot draws the picture, in miniature, of the principle of education for children. For boys, eager or recalcitrant, clever or slow, education is a birthright which leads to success. It stands as a matter of course that Tom should be educated, for "...there's no greater advantage you can give him than a good education." (65) For Maggie, rigorous schooling and books are dangerous, for they make her unfit for the retiring role she is expected to play. With the negative "pity", "sad", "mischief", "bad", and "trouble", planted in the speeches of a fond father, George Eliot vividly evokes the response to Maggie's unorthodox desires. Her visions for herself are at variance with the family as her father

construes it, he who considers he has intelligence and ability and has chosen his wife as a mate because she was not "o'er 'cute", but rather "a bit weak, like" (68), thus contributing to the natural order of ascendent male and supportive female. In a sense, Maggie's quick, incisive understanding and search for a self-determining equality and Tom's unimaginative pragmatism invert this natural order. George Eliot, in her portrait of Tom and Maggie, has drawn children who do not easily fall into the conventional family pattern; and if Tom finally shapes himself to fill his appointed slot with more or less ease, Maggie's veneer of acquiescent acceptance is not firmly fixed.

Maggie seeks not only the satisfaction of sharing her perceptions with others, but also that of their acceptance of her status as an equal participant in the learning process. Maggie early sees the difference in attitude toward Tom and herself, and understands that education is the great equalizer of boy and girl. Mr. Riley and her father, Tom and her mother, uncles, and aunts, none sees that she is different from what she "ought" to be, that she has special needs and abilities. The figurative alliance of Maggie with the gypsies, perjorative in its connotations, alienating in its tone of displeasure, has made her feel akin to them; there is a sphere of influence in which Maggie feels she can manoeuvre. Characteristically, when Maggie runs away to the gypsy camp, her sojourn with its inhabitants is conceived in terms of teaching; she will be heeded and revered for her "superior knowledge". (168) George Eliot, in drawing so clearly the discrepancy between Maggie's vision of the power of knowledge, that of "beginning to instruct the gypsies and gaining great influence over them" (173), and the reality of a

hierarchical society in which she is valuable not in herself, but as the daughter of a man with money to disperse for her recovery, presents the dilemma of self-actualization in a world which stunts originality and lauds undiscerning conformity which forms such a strong current in the book.

The confrontation between educational growth and social confinement set out in the episode of Maggie and the gypsies is elaborated in the descriptions of her visits to Tom at King's Lorton. Here Maggie's confidence in her ability to learn is set against Tom's assertion of male superiority. In these scenes, intellectual development is allied to independence of thought and action; in both areas, Maggie is depicted in all her eagerness to carve her own way according to her vision. A thread throughout this segment is her fascination with books; the availability of new material and her quickness of apprehension in at least some portion of the material joins with her pride in her interest to spur her on. Her dream of being a 'clever woman" (216) is symbolic of her need to be in some sense independent, although this yearning for separateness is at war with her more conventional need to be soft and loving. This inner conflict is mirrored in the friction of the differing views of feminine experience portrayed in the confrontations between Maggie and Tom. Maggie's satisfaction in the experience of learning and the insight gleaned is set against the male configuration of girlhood. Mr. Stelling enjoys Maggie for her lively conversation, but her ideas are relegated to the level of "prattle" (220), with it connotations of charming irrelevance. He assigns Maggie the "dreadful destiny" of all femininity, that of being "quick and shallow" and never able "to go

far into anything". (221) Tom, in his interchanges with his sister asserts his predominance in emphatic declarations of her silliness, reaffirming a boyish pride which is all the more content in the presence of an inferior being after having been sorely tried by his own scholastic inadequacies. George Eliot clearly juxtaposes Maggie's greater facility in the process of learning and her abilities shared with her brother to her lower place in the social order, evidenced by her dismissal from the privilege of mathematics and Latin. Tom's and Maggie's affection for each other exists within the experience of jockeying for superiority of place; more than just the rivalry of children, this contest is a rivalry for the right to self-acualization and for the tools to make it possible.

The idea of girls as unable to assimilate learning on any but a superficial level speaks to the theme of the education of girls and their eventual place, as women, in society. This issue is depicted as strongly contributing to Maggie's sense of placelessness, her constant need to reaffirm her roots. It not only pertains to the crippling of her intellectual curiousity, but also to a concommitant attack on her feelings of self-worth. The women of her community, Aunts Glegg, Pullet, and Deane, add their female disapprobation of her pursuits as "unfeminine" to those criticisms their male counterparts put forth in such terms as "o'er 'cute". Here is the pressure of conformity and communal vision brought censoriously to bear upon the sensitivity and precociousness of the girl, ensuring uniformity over mature understanding.

Maggie's embrace of the tenets of Thomas a Kempis is the result of her search for some understanding of her suffering and misery after

her father's misfortunes. She is unable to tap the riches of education by herself; those insights vouchsafed in a girl's schooling are simplistic, and those topics treated in a boy's curriculum are inaccessible to her mind. She cannot glean meanings from the books she has in her possession, nor can she make correspondences between their postulations and the life around her. Thomas a Kempis provides the solution to an aching longing impossible of satisfaction; in the pain of renunciation is peace. George Eliot describes, in Maggie's espousal of Thomas a Kempis' philosophy, the seduction of the abrogation of a will to a teaching which will provide surcease from a tempestuous existence. Yet, in this marriage of mind to philosophy, Eliot sees the ascendence of society's dictates; for the stifling of Maggie's intellectual curiosity as well as her wilfullness, while bringing a measure of tranquility, also accomplishes, for a time, her metamorphosis into the feminine role of passive caregiver, of "angel in the house".

Philip Wakeham is the catalyst for the reawakening of Maggie's sensibilities and desires. Through her reacquaintance with Philip, she comes to a reacquaintance with books and the enlightenment they represent. From this forbidden association with Philip arises the less overtly but nonetheless real forbidden engagement with learning. Philip recognizes that Maggie's intellectual craving cannot be subdued permanently without the great cost of unconsciousness and the ultimate risk of explosive escape from self-delusion. He brings to the surface the conflict between longing and self-denial that has been suppressed but not eradicated, a continuation of that dialectic of her childhood which will surge within her until she is lost with Tom in the rushing

river. Carried into the more conventional path of teacher, Maggie yet lives with her yearnings unfulfilled. Her hunger takes another road, but all her life has reference to her earliest desires to chart her own way to knowledge. In all the vicissitudes of Maggie's life, George Eliot establishes education as an undertone to her daily existence and a key to her growth. The thwarting of her most imperative needs and talents dooms Maggie to relive, over and over, a childhood in which conflicts were never resolved, in which understanding was never developed, and in which the maturity that comes from the expansion of ideas and experience never came.

In a consideration of learning in a broader context, the treatment of education in George Eliot's writing owes something to the ideals of Maria Edgeworth and others of her era who considered that: first, education belonged within the environs of the home, and within the influence of well-informed, responsible, and loving parents; second, education is "child-centred", and minds which are growing toward maturity need careful nurture as well as factual teaching. (V. Colby, 142) Education denotes, in George Eliot's perspective, not only the formal experience of schooling, but also the broader realm of the teaching of societal expectations. Children await the imprint of family and community, the imprimatur of the adult world. This is the experiential part of the educative process. The conditioning of expectations, in conjunction with the strongly differentiated opportunites for male and female, child and adult, form an education in the role a character has in society. The apprehension both of skills and of sexual roles, along with the ingestion of moral values instilled from earliest childhood, creates a stringently circumscribed

boundary beyond which the protagonist moves with peril and pain.

Education denotes conformity to the social norm for both males and females; indeed, it is the way in which society reaffirms and renews its shape and values. The molding of a child's character by what s/he is permitted to learn is part of the community expectation and defines the life to be lived by the child as s/he grows up. As children, George Eliot's protagonists begin a process of formal education paralleled by the teaching of expectations, and the educative experience within the family is predicated on the teaching of normative actions and reactions. It is required of parents, and of the society of which they are a part, to inculcate principles of duty, self-denial, and upright conduct, those qualities which enhance self-abasement before stronger claims. Education, outside of as well as within the classroom, forms the outlines of and becomes an integral part of the characters themselves, drawing them into the life of the community and interweaving their existences with the communal cloth.

Further, education, it is suggested, is often a means of keeping girls forever in bondage to their girlhood. Enveloped in a cocoon of learning that is oriented toward genteel accomplishments rather than ideas, girls and women are neither able to analyze ad assimilate the needs and visions of others, nor to assess their contribution to those about them. Thus it is that, in adulthood, a woman can, in the frustration of her own life of empty dissatisfaction, react adversely upon those about her. George Eliot demonstrates that, far from perpetually creating women in the configuration of an angelic ideal, the constriction of the energies of female reality, operative from childhood, fetters the more active male. The result of the action of

limited learning upon a wider vision is destructive.

This misfortune is embodied in the relationship of Rosamond Vincy and Tertius Lydgate. Lydgate, possessed of the knowledge and passion to discover scientific truths, is seduced by the untasted promise of the shallow, unempathetic Rosamond, the flawless exemplar of successful feminine scholarship. Satisfied with the view of the world so ably learned at Mrs. Lemon's, Rosamond lacks even the realization that there are answers to find; she revels in the self, nourishes inward visions, and elevates purely egotistic desires into principles. Lydgate and Rosamond are chained together in a union of constant opposition, the resurgent need to know in conflict with a stunted curiosity and a stunting antipathy toward what removes Lydgate from her. Rosamond, as George Eliot creates her, is a product of her society, perfect of her kind, but arrested in a state of neediness that keeps her ever a child. Lydgate misapprehends the meaning both of her nature and her nurture, of what it will be like to live with a "child"; for even a charming and accomplished child must still be cared for. Without the inculcation and encouragement of the need to know and to understand, girls and the women they become are shown as imprisoned where they begin, keeping those more fortunate than they shackled at their sides.

Feminine reality, to George Eliot, is often a life lived solely in emotion and the pain it brings, a child's world of feeling untempered by the guidance of informed reason and empathy. In Hetty's childish behaviour lies an inarticulate rebellion against the instruction offered by the Poysers, that instruction which so limits her life and nullifies any hopes and dreams she has for experience

beyond the immediate environs of the Hall Farm. Those lessons in housewifery which Totty emulates so willingly represent a role which Hetty repudiates; she fails to internalize those teachings which show her the boundaries of her station in life. In the absence of choices, of the wherewithal to expand from the discomfort of the self, girls then look to others for completion. As Hetty embraces Arthur Donnithorne and the elevating freedom for which he stands, so Dorothea is attracted to Casaubon, expressing in this relationship a desire to enlarge her life by espousing those of his qualities which she covets, to escape the pain of futility in her life, her sense of its inompleteness. Dorothea cannot see that Casaubon's lacl of an emotional life cripples him; in the limitations of her emotive reality, she seeks only the expansion for which she thirsts in the knowledge he can impart. Feminine teachings, then, prevent the progress of the child-woman beyond the emotive to the apprehended; yet only with an enlightened mind and an empathetic understanding can a woman come to fruition.

For those characters who temper their pain by reaching out toward others, adulthood comes within their grasp; it is they who can be regarded as completing their education. George Eliot shows that much is to be learned independent of what society would teach. The lessons of goodness and of the sway of a moral imperative are embodied in those characters for whom the discovery of their true origins serves as an experience of growth. Eppie, Esther Lyons, Daniel Deronda and, in some sense, Harold Transome all culminate their education in the acceptance of who they really are and of the interrelationships and responsibilities that this acceptance entails. In the internalization

and assimilation of who they are and from whence they come lies the way to maturity. Thus George Eliot charts the possible progression from childhood through education to the awakening of empathy and a concommitant morality in the relationships many of her characters form with those about them. Adulthood is, in Eliot's work, the passing of "the golden gate" from out of the Eden of innocence to the difficult lessons of life. Whether these lessons, learned in youth and continued in later years, are beneficial or harmful, joyous or tedious, enlarging or retarding, education is the medium from which Eliot creates her characters.

CHAPTER 4

Childhood, Male and Female

> Mrs. Linton of Thrushcross Grange, and
> the wife of a stranger; an exile, and
> outcast...from what had been my world...
> I wish I were a child again...half sa-
> vage and hardy and free...and laughing
> at injuries, not maddening under them.
> Why am I so changed?
>
> Wuthering Heights, Emily Bronte

If one views ideology in literature as one way in which bias masquerades as "truth", one can perceive George Eliot as attempting to break down this structure. Nineteenth century literature, embodying a discourse inclusive of the premise of masculine superiority and feminine inferiority, is transformed, under Eliot's guiding hand, into a complex examination of the interplay of male and female roles, mirroring an interior reality not always synchronized to social expectations. George Eliot's consideration of the possibilities of changing roles, mostly female but also male, is presented not only within the context of a jockeying for power, but also of a striving for self-definition within the inflexibility of the "immutable" social

construct, out of which one breaks for a glimpse of another "reality".

George Eliot's constant examination of childhood from the perspective of sexual roles strongly influences the manner in which she represents the ways her characters see themselves; their awareness of themselves as male and female begins in her depictions of their youth. How male characters respond to the feminine strains in their natures and how female protagonists respond to these feminine qualities in males are questions which find partial their answers in the conditioning of childhood. Does George Eliot present male characters as successfully learning to integrate all aspects of their personalities? If they cannot integrate the softer and more empathetic traits in their natures, if they cannot sublimate the "womanly" to the "manly", does this cause them to remain outside the world of masculine norms and symbols? These questions George Eliot links to the formative years of youth.

The development of the feminine side of male protagonists is only as successful as its integration with the more aggressive side of manhood, and in George Eliot's male characters, this integration is incomplete in every sense. Imagery depicting the dominance of the masculine persona from childhood onwards predominates; circumstances are shown to reinforce masculine privelege, and girls/women are depicted as encouraging it by a subordinate and care-giving solicitude. However, George Eliot portrays the male who, in his partial rejection of the givens of his sex, faces the same spectre of incompleteness, the same unresolvable imbalance between self and universe that her female characters do. Herein resides one of the reader's principle dilemmas in reading George Eliot; reading for the

successful integration of male/female traits, s/he is everywhere confronted by a lack of wholeness. George Eliot's quest to break through the discourse of the nineteenth century novel seems ever to culminate in the accepted and acceptable literary conventions which unsuccessfully support her breadth of vision.

In this light, Daniel Deronda's life can be considered a procession of attempted syntheses, beginning in his childhood doubt about his origins. The discovery of his mother and the return of his Hebrew heritage facilitate a problematic amalgamation of Daniel's Jewish and Christian selves:

> ...The effect of my education can never be done away with. The Christian sympathies in which my mind was reared can never die out of me... But I consider it my duty-it is the impulse of of my feeling-to identify myself, so far as possible, with my hereditary people, and if I can see any work to be done for them that I can give my soul and hand to, I shall choose to do it.
>
> (Daniel Deronda, 724)

In like manner, Daniel's attempt at the synthesis of his masculine and feminine elements appears to the reader largely unsuccessful, for his gentleness and sensitivity to others' pain and need never overcome in any meaningful way his aloofness and removal from emotional contact on his own behalf. He is neither relentlessly

masculine, grooming himself by the charted path of career and marriage for the conventional life of his class and society, nor is he unabashedly feminine in impulse, filling his life with the discourse of intimacy and sharing. Unable to assimilate the attraction the image of Gwendolen Harleth wields for him and to return her attachment in kind, Daniel chooses Mirah, undemanding in her feminine and childlike simplicity, and devotes himself to the more objective vision of Palestine, symbolic of the masculine spirit of mission. Thus it is only in his relationship to Mordecai, a relationship expressed in the imager · of love, with Mordecai the wooer and Daniel the wooed, that he can find a semblance of wholeness. In modelling the possibility of the female spirit in the male character to bond with another such for a richer life, George Eliot goes far toward dismantling the stereotype of "manly" perfection. Yet the relationship between Mordecai and Daniel remains awkward; that the reader finds the ending of Daniel Deronda, with its actual and its symbolic marriages, unsatisfactory testifies to George Eliot's unease as she attempted to grapple with the internal fragmentation of Daniel's character.

Philip Wakeham, in The Mill on the Floss, is even less able than Daniel to integrate the disparate elements of his character. He is pictured as both crippled and effeminate, and it is not coincidental that George Eliot combines these two elements in her portrayal of him. Philip, mercurial, sensitive, and artistic, retains his feminine side, resisting its subordination into a masculine self, but only because his disability denies him manly hopes and aspirations. His misfortune gives Philip, looked upon as an aberration because he is physically inadequate, a choice, or perhaps

allows him the luxury of no choice; for if society has declared him deficient in matters masculine, Philip can direct his deficiency in the way he wishes to go. As his one attempt at a male role, his wooing of Maggie, is a failure, he can be allowed to sink back into the refuge that has been his since childhood, accepting care and nurture, and expressing his unfulfilled longings in his art and emotions. Philip, slotted as unmasculine in his inability to live a man's life, thus resides forever as a child, indulged both in the physical attentions vouchsafed him and in the freedom allotted him to express his intuitions and emotions.

One can argue that the greatest tension between male and female impulses is in the portrayal of Latimer, the protagonist in _The Lifted Veil_, a book which is considered most pertinent to George Eliot's own personal and artistic sensibilities. Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate the distinct parallel George Eliot draws between the plight of the second son and that of women. (Gilbert and Gubar, 447) In contradistinction to the stereotype of masculine privelege, Latimer, the younger son, is not treated as a boy usually is treated; his is the isolation, the indifference, and the lack of affection which is most often the patrimony of a daughter. In Latimer's physical incapacity, sensitivity, and secondary position within the family is a symbolic link with the lot of women, a link which George Eliot reinforces by ascribing feminine characteristics to his appearance. Latimer's "half-womanish, half-ghostly beauty" underlines his feminine feeling, so in contrast to the definitive virility of his brother. However, unlike those characters whose feminine qualities add something of a positive dimension to their lives, despite the

inner conflict they may cause in the firm establishment of gender identity, Latimer's impulses are allied solely to deprivations in his life. In Latimer, artistic sensiblity is silent because it lacks an authentic voice with which to speak. In Latimer, the silencing of artistic expression means an isolation akin to the expressionless "non-existence" of womanhood. In Latimer, empathetic sensibility becomes allied not with emotional connection but with the uncanny, that sense which repulses connection. In Latimer, the feminine impulse and its concommitant isolation create a need to distance himself from the pain of non-integration, and encourage the passivity and chronic complaints which represent his search for the child's estate, that mythic search for perfect love and acceptance. In Latimer, the powerlessness of the child and the woman and the search for approval of the child and the woman coalesce. In Latimer, the reserve of Daniel Deronda and the withdrawal of Philip Wakeham find their apotheosis. In this least successful synthesis of a character's male and female selves is demonstrated George Eliot's greatest unease and uncertainty in her depiction of gender and the crises of identity it brings.

Childhood, in its innocence, minimizes the not-yet-fully-emergent differences of ability and privilege, holding out the possibility of integration between the masculine and feminine sides of the self. George Eliot masterfully draws the keen awareness children have of their own impulses and their points of congruence and incongruence with those around them. The female component of male character is shown in its integrative aspects, drawing those of the opposite sex to them from boyhood on. Yet because of the very strength of this

element within them, male characters are brought to face the challenge of incompleteness and incompletion, which dilemma results from the flaws of both an ambivalent self and an imperfect world which discourages sythesis of those elements out of synchronization with society's rhythm. That George Eliot's male characters are not wholly effectual betokens the ambivalence and perhaps the limitation of vision of the author who, within her fiction, strives to frame a resolution of the fragmentation of the self, imprisoned by the unbending codes of family and society. Despite the revolutionary expression of the feminine impulses of male characters, George Eliot is not wholly able to find a place for her creations in a new discourse: while the emotional distance between Daniel Deronda and Tom Tulliver is great, Daniel nevertheless cannot escape Tom's world entirely.

In like manner, society dictates the subversion of all unfeminine abilities and impulses in the girls and women who people Eliot's fiction: a woman must find the core of her being within the prescribed limits of womanhood. There is a determined non-recognition and non-acceptance of the needs of women and girls as identical to those of their male counterparts for "work and love, independence and dependency, solitude and relationship, to enjoy community and value one's specialness." (Spacks, 230) Girls are brought up to deny those female affinities to male aspirations, and to articulate feminine goals of nurture, passivity, self-abnegation, and dependence. Males move from the protection of childhood to a more and more innovative life; women remain children or they are not accepted as "knowing their place". Efforts to move toward self-assertion are lauded in boys;

girls are expected to be self-contained and other-oriented. All independent steps such as education, rational thought, and vocation are deplored for the female.

George Eliot plainly explicates the role of childhood as a mirror of adult ways of being. The doll-like passivity enjoined upon and lauded in little girls flowers in the child-woman. The approbation and indulgence of the child's understanding and demeanor lead to the admiration of such qualities in later years, and the reward of husband and home. Such characters as Lucy Deane, conditioned to the feminine virtues, adroit in displaying them, and malleable to their teachings, do not need the independence and outlet of hoydenish activities to prove their worth. Lucy's orderly life bespeaks her espousal of the role of women, so at variance with that of her cousin Maggie who, tomboyish and "unfeminine", exhibits those qualities which make her manifestly unfit for her place in the world. In Maggie's consideration of Mme. de Stael's novel Corinne, that first story of the travails of gifted girlhood, (Moers, 204) is the symbolic realization both of the conventional heroine of acceptable mold and of her counterpart, she who is excitingly different and hence threatening. Here, in Maggie's analysis of diametrically opposed female characters, is her realization of an abstract reality which she is yet unable to accept in Philip's more concrete example of Lucy and herself. Here George Eliot extrapolates the true integrative dilemma of womanhood, that of vision and of choice.

The difference between "heroes" and "heroines" in these novels is in the possibility to mature and to grow in one's role within the boundaries of the community. Finding in the fulfillment of one's

duties a sense of personal expansion and of satisfying fitness betokens growing up; girls, in the prescriptions of their destinies, grow up at their peril. The weak-willed men whom George Eliot delineates, the Arthurs, Freds, and Stephens, are often childlike in their wilfullness. Stephen Guest, in The Mill on the Floss, the son of the family and receptacle of its expectations, in choosing Lucy, despite his show of independence in having to "defy and overcome a slight unwillingness and disappointment in his father and sisters-" (The Mill on the Floss, 478), has fulfilled the requirements of his community. It is in his professed attraction to Maggie, while affianced to Lucy, that he oversteps the bounds of the permissible in his attempt to chart an individual destiny; yet always there is the knowledge that repentent scapegrace sons are accepted back into the fold. When Maggie repudiates his attachment, he is able, unlike her, to choose to return home with his worth to the community intact. The comradeship of a commission, the rigours of a profession, or the anonymity of a larger venue embrace the hapless male and give him the chance of a life to be lived anew. For womankind, it is the life of a girl's submission writ large in marriage or it is the discomfort of finding an authentic voice which no one, neither family nor community, will validate.

In George Eliot's novels, female protagonists, no matter how they yearn to liberate the more masculine qualities of their natures and chafe against restrictive conditioning, must always in some sense conform in the end, or else risk their identity, their reality. Neither Hetty nor Maggie, the only unmarried heroines in George Eliot's fiction, finds a legitimate presence in her removal from

community dicta; both find death, and it is a fortuitous escape from their predicament. For a while, community authority is subtly challenged in the person of Dinah Morris. One of George Eliot's orphans, Dinah is placed symbolically outside the influence of a conventional family upbringing. This independence is mirrored in her spiritual life, spurring her to active choice in her vocation rather than leading her to a passive reception of the collective vision of her life's work. Dinah's travelling stands as a metaphor for her journey away from the constriction, physical, spiritual, and emotional, of a woman's life. (Moers, 54) Her sojourn with the Poysers is a sally into a conventional communal estate, but she is constrained to leave the comfort of Hayslope, which is all too seductive in the tempting embrace of rhythmic female life it o..ers. If Hetty denies her assigned role for personal inclination, and Maggie denies hers for an inner imperative, Dinah withdraws herself from a sense of duty and purpose which transends her own personal temptation. (Fisher, 154) But unlike Hetty and Maggie, Dinah stands as a threat to the community because her moral stance makes it impossible for the community to remonstrate against her chosen role of unmarried helper of all, under God; her position is unassailable. Both Hetty and Maggie, lapsing in a way that appears to the eyes of the community as morally reprehensible, can be castigated and condemned; Dinah carves out her independence from . the female norms of care, succour, and nurture by the will of God which is the lynchpin of social stability and structure. Yet, after creating a female character who can stand alone, self-defined, apart yet not excluded, George Eliot undermines her own création; for Dinah, coming to a realization of her love for

Adam, translates her duty into a conventional marriage, with one who is both literally and symbolically custodian of Hayslope. (Fisher, 154) Her marriege does not exclude preaching; rather, preaching is relegated to a sideline, where it fades under the proscription of the Conference against female preachers. Thus, in its paramatres, Dinah's marriage encompasses the duality of community renewal and barren ending much as Daniel Deronda's does. In choosing to end Adam Bede in the conventional manner of "happily ever after" of which society approves, George Eliot displays the dichotomy which exists in the very heart of her writing, the dialectic which she is in no way able to resolve satisfactorily in fiction, as it remains unresolvable in life; the artificially supplied solution to the indissoluble dilemma of the integration of self and other remains artificial.

Can George Eliot's female protagonists successfully define and find an outlet for their more assertive and more independent selves? What are George Eliot's heroines, apart from the rigid convention of wives, daughters, and sisters? The answer might be sought in Ellen Moers' idea of heroinism, which is, in her view, akin to literary feminism. Moers' "matrilineal line of educating heroinism" is that construct whereby the mother, as educator of her children, exacts obedience to maternal bidding; all good emanates from the impulses of filial conduct. Children, marrying in accordance with their mother's approbation, remain within the sphere of parental influence. (Moers, 228) In the concept of the "educating mother" is a source of feminine power. (Moers, 215) She is not a proponent of display and admiration, but a quiet, restrained influence, subtly pervading with her presence those about her. She is a celebrant of reason over emotion and

respect over love. Here is the image of a substratum of invincibility, the power of womankind to mold the young from that most malleable stage of infancy, and to create a world wherein she is the sole arbiter of customs and mores. Here is a society, in little, of her own shaping. Yet inherent in this concept is the irony of a power only to recreate the feminine experience as it has always been, of a narrowness of experience that precludes the creation of a specifically female reality. In this concept is the impotence of a fledgling independent girlhood writ large. The sense that "...childhood is where the self is created, in the female as in the male sex;..." (Moers, 18) depicts the double edge of self-actualization and constriction.

From a female perspective, the hardwon position of female authority in motherhood for the most part fails. George Eliot gives the reader the paradox of a strength that is not strength; for matriarchal power is cast in the "gentle" mold seen fitting by others, devoid of possibility of dominance. In accepting her limited sphere of influence, woman neutralizes its worth; her power becomes, in its creative manifestations of childbearing and gender patterning, but a replication of her own possibilities and limitations. A mother, in her formative influence and self-creative capacity, is yet not more than woman following the well-trodden road, dependent on the male sex in the person of a husband, following the male dicta in all life's major events, performing the rituals of this reliant state, and ever inculcating the ideal of this pattern by teaching and example.

George Eliot presents, in several of her characters, an instinctive realization of the powerlessness inherent in the feminine

model and a recoil against its forms: marriage and motherhood. If children are the bridges of society, linking one generation to another, they are also the chains which bind their mothers to the stagnant life of generations past and future. In this light, the meaning inherent in Hetty's, Gwendolen's, and Princess Halm-Eberstein's repudiation of children becomes clear. Each perceives powerlessness and despair as elements of her own childhood, wherein her dreams have no place; her rejection of children, images of her own creation,, involves her fear of being bound by them to an existence each is striving to change.

If George Eliot is concerned with the relationships of her heroines to the society in which they move, she considers, as a major part of this theme, their attitude toward nurturence as it is allied to their perception of their place in society. The absence of nurturing qualities in several of George Eliot's female characters is a minor chord in her examination of their relationships with those about them. The lack of this quality of caring is allied to self-centred egoism, but even more to the underlying sense of exclusion from a life not based on their needs and their abilities. Princess Halm-Eberstein, Daniel Deronda's mother, is the archetype of this woman, the "Melusina" who is doomed to suffer in her choice of life, whatever that choice may be, but who must choose dramatic suffering over the nagging, crippling pain of submission. She stands before her son as a mother in name only, one who has no affinity to her offspring save that of blood, who feels no kinship to him, and who is driven to self-disclosure only by an imperative need of expiation before her death. The Princess is under no illusion about her nature,

and presents a self-portrait striking in its bitter self-awareness:

> "But...I am not a loving woman. That is the truth. It is a talent to love-I lacked it. Others have loved me-and I have acted their love. I know very well what love makes of men and women-it is subjection. It takes another for a larger self, enclosing this one...I was never willingly subject to any man. Men have been subject to me." (Daniel Deronda, 729/30)

She burns with an intensity of passionate engagement in what first drew her, that force of genius which would express itself in her art and that passionate hatred of what would hold her back, the constrictions of Jewish womanhood. Hers is not the nature which clings with womanly affection to home and family. In Princess Halm-Eberstein, George Eliot has shown that side of woman which is "monstrous" to contemplate, and which must be suppressed:

> "Every woman is supposed to have the same set of of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel-or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others. When you reproach me in your heart for sending you away from me, you mean that I ought to say I felt about you as other women say they feel about their children. I did

> <u>not</u> feel that. I was glad to be freed from you. But I did well for you, and I gave you your father's fortune." (691)

It is in the Princess that George Eliot most clearly outlines the dilemma of powerless girlhood and womanhood fraught with desires never to be met and importunate claims incapable of fulfillment.

The Princess Halm-Eberstein, in placing Daniel under Sir Hugo's guardianship, has given her progeny away; Hetty Sorrel's murder of her baby is the ultimate end of that refusal to take on the mantle of motherhood. Hetty, in rejecting her assigned task of caregiver to Totty, foreshadows her ultimate denial of the role of nurturer/mother in the abandonment of her infant. Hetty's exposure of her child is the act of the weak and unformed trying to preserve her illusion and to escape from the encroaching expectations of those around her. Philip Fisher emphasizes this when he states:

> Hetty is beyond the inevitable claim of her nature, both social and human (social feeling as betokened by the relationship of mother and child). What outweighs these claims is the need to deny the reality of what she has become by destroying the evidence, the baby. (Fisher, 55)

In her enclosed isolation, the physical imprisonment mirroring the spiritual, is a relentless removal of the self from the deed, and thus from the prescribed life from which she desperately longs to escape.

George Eliot paints most clearly in Gwendolen Harleth the portrait of one whose proportion least fits the medium in which it rendered. Gwendolen's less-than-half-hearted embrace of the duties of daughter and eldest sister grows into an antipathy toward the condition of which they are ever the reminder, that of wife and mother. Her abhorrence of the concept of married love, with its connotations of physical contact, emphasizes the link for Gwendolen of sexuality with childbearing, that most irrefutable evidence of the state of adulthood and its responsiblities. In Gwendolen, George Eliots pits the dreams of childhood against the images of sexuality and what they suggest, that is, the ceding of the power and primacy of childhood to another. Gwendolen's fierce repulse of Tom Gascoigne's addresses, with their declaratory passion, expressed succinctly in her terse rejection: "Pray don't make love to me. I hate it!" (Daniel Deronda, 114), stands in distinct contrast to her receptivity of a relationship with Daniel. Gwendolen perceives this relationship as non-threatening; its needs and dependencies are never described in images of adult love and passion. Daniel stands as a bulwark, a non-demanding, ever-supporting masculine image, against the inescapable power of Grandcourt whom Gwendolen at first perceives as the answer to her longing for a lover who is not a "lover". She finds reassurance, during their courtship,in his lack of passion and his diffidence, secure in her power to control, as she always has, those near to her:

> He lifted her little left hand to his lips, and
> then released it respectfully. Clearly it was

> faint praise to say of him that he was not disgusting: he was almost charming; and she felt at this moment that it was not likely she could ever have loved another man better than this one. His reticence gave her some inexplicable, delightful consciousness. (373/4)

Her subsequent experiences in matrimony, by which she is disabused of her notions of freedom, influence and inclination within the marriage bond, hearken back to her plaintive question to her mother: "Why did you marry again, Mamma? It would have been nicer if you had not." (52), with its half-submerged repugnance to the married estate and its expectations, and its clinging grasp upon the child's estate. With Mrs. Davilow, Gwendolen relentlessly remains "the child" on an emotional level, however she may regulate household rhythms. Gwendolen, as do Princess Halm-Eberstein and Maggie, shrinks from the rigid destiny awaiting her in the image of motherhood.

Yet George Eliot conceives of motherhood as a statement of the dignity and consecration possible in female existence. Motherhood is expressive of those ideals which were so important to her; it is allied with all that is positive in the community, with the espousal of nurturant love, and with the value of unwwavering commitment to others. In George Eliot's first book, _Scenes of Clerical Life_, all meaningful relationships originate in the bond of mother and child, according to Gilbert and Gubar, because "in the love of a brave and faithful man there is always a strain of maternal tenderness; he gives out again those beams of protecting fondness which were shed on him as

he lay on his mother's knee." (Gilbert and Gubar, 499)

The relationship between mother and child permeates the life of the novels. The roots of the mother/child bond, in its most positive aspect, nourish a most sacred love which is not broken, a "...mother's yearning, that completest type of the life in another life which is the essence of real human love, [and] feels the presence of the cherished child even in the debased, degraded man." (Adam Bede, 409) A mother'a affection, that security of infancy which is never lost in maturity, is often the only link between the adult child and all which his mother has taught him and wished for him. In "Janet's Repentance", Mrs. Dempster acts as the only restraint, feeble as it may be, on her son Robert; she is the only one to elicit what very little remains of a child's grace. His use of the diminutive "Mamsey" symbolizes the strength of Robert's connection to his mother; in the relationship between them is the only spark of the goodness inherent in the image of the child:

> It was rather sad, and yet pretty, to see that little group passing out of the shadow into the sunshine, and out of the sunshine into the shadow again: sad, because this tenderness of the son for the mother was hardly more than a nucleus of healthy life in an organ hardening by disease, because the man who was linked in this way with an innocent past, had become callous in worldliness, fevered by sensuality, enslaved by chance impulses; pretty, because it showed how hard it

> is to kill the deep-down fibrous roots of human love and goodness-how the man from whom we make it our pride to shrink, has yet a close brotherhood with us through some of our most sacred feelings. ("Janet's Repentance", 299)

Mamsey exerts the influence of perfect faith; believing in Robert, she is the one element of pure feeling in his otherwise embittered and embittering life. When she dies, Robert, deprived of the last restraint of one who has known his better self, is lost to all consciousness of a better life, and "his good angel, lingering with outstretched wing on the edge of the grave, cast one despairing look after him and took flight forever." (Janet's Repentance, 337)

As a model of meaingful feminine experience, the mother figure finds its apotheosis in Mrs. Poyser, mistress of the Hall Farm in Adam Bede. George Eliot brings Mrs. Poyser to life, with all the testy sharpness and all the humour of a country dame who rules all who come into her territory, while she appears to take note of masculine authority. Whether confronting the Squire with his duplicitous cupidity or the "gells" with their lackadaisical ways, Mrs. Poyser speaks from a depth of right feeling. Plainspoken and simply clad, keen of eye and sharp of tongue, her strong opinions are tempered by kindness and concern. In Mrs. Poyser's care for old Martin and in her love for Totty and the boys, George Eliot traces the spectrum of virtues from respect for parents to maternal tenderness; in her mothering of Hetty and Dinah, Mrs. Poyser cares for the orphan. Her scolding of Hetty bespeaks an intuition of what transpires in a young

girl's mind and to what dangers it can lead, and expresses her sense of responsibility for Hetty's contentment within the bounds of her expectations; her plaints to Dinah are attempts to draw her into the fold from which she has excluded herself, and to help her toward the fulness of life as Mrs. Poyser understands it. The Poysers, like the Garths who come after them, are a family dwelling under the aegis of one whose principal care is the duty and honour she owes to those with whom she lives. Mrs. Poyser represents, in all her simplicity, the positive attributes which George Eliot extrapolates from the image of conventional womanhood.

Because a mother molds the reality of the family, George Eliot suggests that the family is lost without the binding influence of a mother. In Patty's assumption of Milly's role, ("Amos Barton") in which George Eliot places the burden of womanhood on a child's shoulders, there is the suggestion not only of the perpetuation of the legacy of womanhood from mother to daughter, but also the salvation of a weak man and his hapless, helpless children. George Eliot makes the ramifications of a motherless home particularly clear in _Silas Marner_; the absence of all womanly influence in Squire Cass' house, due to the loss of wife and mother, is mirrored not only in the physical decrepitude of the hearth but also in the Squire, who has found refuge in idleness and sloth, and in his sons, who, to the detriment of their characters, suffer the irremediable effects of parental neglect. In contrast to Squire Cass' house, which remains relentlessly male with all the deprivation that this connotes, the masculine sparcity, emotional and physical, of Silas Marner's home, on the arrival of Eppie, is mitigated by Dolly Winthrop's motherly

presence and advice. In George Eliot's ideal vision of motherhood, it is the maternal figure who creates the bond among all the disparate elements of the family and who creates the cohesive whole from the heterogeneous parts.

If, at its best, motherhood is a statement of the most worthwhile of endeavours, yet there is a darker side which George Eliot demonstrates in her depiction of the tragic inversion of the mother/daughter schema, wherein the mother is dependent on her daughter for emotional sustenance, and both mother and daughter struggle to grow up in tandem. These enfeebled mothers cling to the ballast of social convention as an assurance against their fear of chaos inherent in the idea of innovative decision-making. If adherence to social convention does unexpectedly bring a disequilibrium into their lives, engendered by the nonconformity of their offspring, these mothers return to a period of greater dependency, a childlike inaction that images a feeling of safety. George Eliot's fearful mothers will not recognize and cannot encourage their daughters' acuity, intellectual curiosity, and independent moral imperative, all of which can stand apart from community standards; they cannot foster the desire to excel in uncharted areas. In failing to accept their children as they really are, they fail to teach their daughters to be all it is possible for them to be; rather, their maternal inaction creates an imprisoning cocoon for those dearest to their hearts.

The weakness of these mothers contributes to the inner conflict which is so much a part of George Eliot's heroines, a conflict evolving from a demand for that which society cannot give, a challenge

to an immoveable, impenetrable body of "Thou shalts" and "Thou shalt nots". This conflict begins in childhood, at the knees of mothers who, rigidly adhering to the ways of their "foremothers", cannot break out of the pattern of maternal expectations and are at a loss how to control the restless seeking of their daughters. Clinging to a role which proves ineffective inclines these women to a passivity which, encouraged by society's admiration of the child/woman, is a potent force in the creation of the unsuccessful mother. Encouraged to be helpless, they cannot transcend this pattern in order to be mothers to their daughters. The Mrs. Davilows and Mrs Raynors are the Caterinas and Hettys who did not die leaving infants behind them, but who lived to educate and bring up their children. Fitting but ill the role to which they have been assigned, their own growth but an imperfect thing, they passively look upon needs and actions so different from those which they have learned and have expected to see reenacted by their progeny.

Mrs Raynor, in "Janet's Repentance", is the first of George Eliot's passive mothers, and is the forerunner of Gwendolen Harleth's mother, Mrs. Davilow. Mrs. Raynor and Mrs. Davilow must both bring up their daughters without the guidance of husbands; theirs is the sole responsibility for much-loved girls and they stand, in their weakness, as the only buffer between their unfortunate offspring and the fixed choice of a position as governess or wife. Under such tribulations, both Mrs. Raynor and Mrs. Davilow must struggle to maintain the spirit to combat the insupportable burdens their lot has cast upon them, for they do not rise easily to the challenge of an independence not expected of wives and mothers. They have not been reared to

authority; their indulgence of their headstrong daughters thus betokens an inability to respond to the necessity for firm guidelines which take into account the individuality of their children.

The close relationship which Janet Dempster has with her mother, and which George Eliot so carefully sketches, adds a dimension to the precariousness of Janet's domestic situation, as the intercourse between Mrs. Davilow and Gwendolen never does. For Mrs. Raynor is acutely aware of the anguish of Janet's marriage to Robert Dempster, and of the pain which finds its outlet in brutality and drunkenness. George Eliot crystalizes Mrs. Raynor's passive helpessness in her depiction of the beating Robert administers to Janet in the dining-room; the abuse of Janet below the silent portrait of her mother is symbolic of the interaction between them, the "grey-haired, dark-eyed old woman in a neatly fluted cap" ("Janet's Repentance", 285) seeking Divine guidance and the strength to endure all trials rather than engendering the assertiveness to guide Janet in combatting her grievous ills. She is willing in her ministrations to Janet in her neediness, and she administers all her acts of succour with a mother's love. Janet, at her worst moments, recognizes this dimension in her mother and feels its merit:

> If her mother had been very feeble, aged or sickly, Janet's deep pity and tenderness might have made a daughter's duties an interest and a solace; but Mrs. Raynor had never needed ten- dance; she had always been giving help to her

> daughter; she had always been a sort of humble ministering spirit, and it was on of Janet's pangs of memory, that instead of being her mother's comfort, she had been her mother's trial. (350)

She imbibes the comfort of her mother's love, but she is never guided toward the strength she needs to grapple with her life. Janet's weakness is supported, and her life is given shape, in her most desolate moment, by other than her mother. When soothing words are inadequate, it is first to feisty Mrs. Pettifer and then to the Reverend Mister Tryan that Janet turns. After Janet is forced from her home, it is Mrs. Pettifer who provides the practical means by which her stricken soul can recover, ensuring her a haven of rest and privacy, facilitating her meeting with Mister Tryan, in which Janet opens her heart to faith and trust in her own strength through a Higher power. At tale's end, Mrs. Raynor is as she was, a gentle soul, accommodating and loving, with hope for a better world to come rather than the force to manage well in this. Through the strength of another, Janet lives, "rescued from self-despair, strengthened with divine hopes, and now looking back on years of purity and helpful labour." (412). George Eliot, in leaving us with the image of this beneficent and noble personage, leaves us with a wisp of the untapped potential that lies beneath the surface, potential undeveloped by a mother's nurture.

Mrs. Raynor's inadequacies become translated and magnified in the immobilizing trepidations of Mrs. Davilow, the most ineffectual of all George Eliot's mothers; her contrivances to meet contingencies all

depend on others, on the position of her second husband, on the counsel and strength of her brother-in-law Mr. Gascoigne, and on the shifting desires of Gwendolen. The order of mother/daughter is inverted, and rather than Mrs. Davilow guiding her child through the vagaries of temperment to a firm base, she is in thrall to her child. In the characterization of Mrs. Davilow are none of the corners and crotchets, the shades and shadows of George Eliot's most amply realized mothers; world-weary, self-effacing, and apologetic, Mrs. Davilow looks for nothing beyond Gwendolen's happiness, despite Gwendolen's often careless demeanor toward her. Mrs. Davilow's unconditional indulgence and support--for example in her petition to Mr.Gascoigne for a horse for Gwendolen--not only tells of a desire to spare Gwendolen the worst of the family situation, but also of her own need to escape from the onerous task of preparing Gwendolen to face the unpleasant choices of life. Mrs. Davilow's self-obliterating attitude sublimates any human wants on her part to the all-consuming desire to satisfy Gwendolen. All else tumbles before the need to secure Gwendolen's satisfaction and approbation; all cogent planning for others is forsaken in the need to grant her wishes. Such indulgence mitigates against giving direction to her indiscriminate willfulness and against guiding her toward those things which give lasting satisfaction in life. Tied to the directives of others, finding her only validation in doing others' bidding, Mrs. Davilow has no conception of a woman's life as an entity, complete in itself. Her dictum, "'Marriage is the only happy state for a woman, as I trust you will prove.'" (58), although it belies her own unsatisfactory experience, is yet the only hope she can conceive of for Gwendolen,

the only maternal guidance she can give. And when Gwendolen, in her first frightening glimpse of self-knowledge, cries in her despair, "'I shall never love anybody. I can't love people. I hate them.'", Mrs. Davilow can do no better than to reiterate her one woman's hope: "'The time will come, dear, the time will come.'" (115), that eventual death knell to all Gwendolen's possibilities.

Mrs. Davilow's first grateful realization that Gwendolen needs her, and her overwhelming love for this first child coexist with her timidity before her headstrong daughter. Gwendolen's momentary lowering of her guard after Rex's declaration, the brief breakdown of her habitual self-assertion, calls upon a maternal strength which is not there; Mrs. Davilow, long supported by Gwendolen and ruled by her every whim, can respond in no other way than by formless sympathy. Her subsequent delicacy in the matter of her daughter's consideration of Grandcourt's marriage proposal speaks to the form of Gwendolen's responses, not to the content. In this most crucial step of a daughter's life, Mrs. Davilow removes herself from the guidance and advice which place maternal experience at the service of youthful inexperience and possible indiscretion, and sits passively apart:

> "I said that I should be at home," answered Gwendolen, rather loftily. Then, after a pause, "You must not expect, because Mr. Grandcourt is coming, that anything is going to happen, mamma."
>
> "I don't allow myself to expect anything, dear. I desire you to follow your own feeling. You have never told me what that was."

> "What is the use of telling?" said Gwendolen, hearing a reproach in that true statement. "When I have anything pleasant to tell, you may be sure I will tell you." (339)

The very quality of the diction in these passages reinforces the definitive nature of the one and the tentative quiescence of the other. Ever present yet never present, Mrs. Davilow follows in Gwendolen's wake.

It is left to Daniel Deronda, whose life George Eliot has joined to Gwendolen's in its nurturing capacity in the first chapters of the novel, to fill the place of nurturer that is by right and duty her mother's. It is he who makes her aware of her deficiencies: it is he who speaks to her of fortitude, duty and self-abnegation. It is Daniel who gives Gwendolen the will to strive for a better self; it is about Daniel that she can say at the last: "'...it should be better...better with me...for having known you.'" (878) If, at the last, Mrs. Davilow sits with Gwendolen as she bitterly suffers to reconcile herself to Daniel's parting from her, if she provides all the loving, watchful care that a child could wish, yet it is Gwendolen herself who walks through the agonizing shades of doubt, fear, and loss to say at last what Daniel Deronda has instilled in her in her mother's stead: "'I shall live. I shall be better.'" (879)

Of all George Eliot's "passive mothers", Mrs. Tulliver (The Mill on the Floss) is the only one who takes a step toward a more active engagement with her maternal role. If, for most of the novel, Maggie is doomed by her actions, probing and seeking beyond the permitted

boundaries of female existence, Mrs. Tulliver is doomed by her inaction, fussing and chafing at the challenges appearing unsolicited and leaving her in confusion. Mrs. Tulliver is reinforced in her passive acceptance of woman's lot both by her husband's view of her as "a bit weak-like" (The Mill on the Floss, 68) with its implication of necessary dependency on male sagacity, and by her sisters' relegation of her to the weakest link of the Dodson heirarchical chain:

> The feeblest member of a family-the one who has the least character-is often the merest epitome of the family habits and traditions, and Mrs. Tulliver was a thorough Dodson, though a mild one, as small beer, so long as it is anything, is only describable as very weak ale. And though she had groaned a little in her youth under the yoke of her elder sisters, and still shed occasional tears at their sisterly reproaches, it was not in Mrs. Tulliver to be an innovator on the family ideas: she was thankful to have been a Dodson, and to have one child who took after her own family, at least in his features and complexion, in liking salt, and in eating beans, which a Tulliver never did. (97)

Mrs. Tulliver is bolstered in her role of wife and mother by her sisters who stand firmly behind her, emblems of that sure standard of

her own girlhood. It is her sisters who supply her with her sense of security, for the Dodsons represent not only a family heritage but a code for living. It is, in part, this very sense of "Dodson-ness" which prohibits Mrs. Tulliver's examination of Maggie's neediness and sense of alienation; to be a parent to Maggie on any other level than that which her sisters practice or approve is to court disastrous disapprobation. To Mrs. Tulliver, as to Mistresses Glegg, Pullett,and Deane, there are "good girls" and "bad girls", those who cleave docilely to the guidelines of feminine existence and those who rebel. Those things which differ from the model of feminine propriety and over which her daughter Maggie has no control, such as her hair, her complexion, and her intelligence, cause Mrs. Tulliver great grief, and Maggie's spirit, incorrigible and irrepressible, original and alien, causes Mrs. Tulliver consternation. Mrs. Tulliver is successful in her role as mother,in her own eyes and those of her siblings, only insofar as her children are copies of the Dodson ideal of childhood; to sanction any other way of being, to explore, support, or encourage a different vision for her daughter, is to open a yawning chasm beneath her feet. Not able to create a place for Maggie, in accordance with her nature, within the family, Mrs. Tulliver falls back upon plaint and "mute resignation", leaving it to her sisters to scold Maggie into submission, and to Mr. Tulliver to sooth her into compliance. It is indeed Mr. Tulliver who makes some attempt to reach out to Maggie, but he is hampered by his masculine vision which sees misfortune in feminine risk-taking. Moreover, he is in every way aligned with the alien; not a Dodson, he is outside the pale of right action along with all Tullivers; not a woman, he is at best an

unsatisfactory mother.

Mrs. Tulliver represents the women to whom things happen which should not occur according to the expectations bred in girls from birth onward. When it is borne in upon Mrs. Tulliver that her husband is but a weak reed upon which to lean and that his frailties have brought about an irrevocable disaster, she loses her "self" and in a sense joins Maggie in her placelessness. Being "sold up" is a symbolic banishment as well as a real one; Mrs. Tulliver, physically remaining at Dorlcote Mill, has lost the reality of her Dodson self, chatelaine of a substantial home; her total reality, girl and woman, daughter, sister, and mother, is contained in the objects of her home, almost all of which are lost to her. Her position of wife and mother, as she can envisage it, destroyed, her husband defeated and inward-looking, Mrs. Tulliver, ivy-like, clings to her chldren for support, a "childish bewildered mother". (379) She transfers the attentions she lavished on his father to Tom, deferring to him as the scion of the family, and as its hope of salvation. George Eliot emphasizes this state of dependency in her description of that scene wherein Tom announces he has paid his father's debts; in a cocoon of family feeling, in which Maggie, relegated to the fringe of the circle, barely figures, Mrs. Tulliver gives vent to her motherly pride and happiness, but most of all, to her relief:

> His mother's arms were round his neck as soon as the last words were uttered, and she said, half-crying
>
> "O my boy, I knew you'd make iverything right

again, when you got a man." (454)

With these words, George Eliot has delineated the transference of Mrs. Tulliver's dependence from husband to son, a dependence which precludes the ability to teach her daughter how to actively discover her place in the world which she inhabits.

It is in "The Final Rescue", the last book of the novel, that Mrs. Tulliver moves toward the realization of self, and thus, in a sense, her own salvation or "rescue". In her words: "My child! I'll go with you. You've got a mother." (614) is her declaration of a newfound strength born of sorrow and pity, and independent of allegiance to anything but an inner sense of the necessity for justice. For the first time, she acts as a mother, feeling as her child feels and taking action on her behalf; she becomes the manifestation of the best of Dodson principle, that principle which leads Mrs. Glegg to stand by Maggie. Mrs. Tulliver's decision to accompany Maggie into exile from her childhood's home and all that this connotes is a concrete assertion of herself both as a decision-maker and as a maternal figure. Her union with Maggie in her need is a "reunion"; in it are the seeds of reconciliation, and the forward impetus to the positive acts of mothers. Mrs. Tulliver has moved toward Maggie to protect and support her. This development, however incomplete it may be, is Mrs. Tulliver's progression.

George Eliot, while evoking a model for the ideal mother, firmly grounding her "motherly" characters in the principles of duty and care, most often presents the readers with those who fail their children in their greatest need, who fail to widen for their daughters

the horizons that female society has been set, and who fail to foster growth in all its aspects. In the development of child-mothers and their relationships with their offspring, neither mother nor child has an opportunity to grow; each buttresses the other, yet neither can move toward the fulfillment of potential, remaining immobilized at the same level of development. George Eliot extends this failure of the mother toward her child to the community as a whole. The reader is caught up in the dialectic whereby the effective molding of the child is counterbalanced by that very svstem of values which is the mainstay of society, enhancing it and preserving its continuity.

One cannot end an examination of George Eliot's consideration of childhood in terms of sexual roles without touching upon the theme of violence in her novels. Violence, in George Eliot's books has much to do with sexual conditioning; indeed, it can be viewed, in part, as a manifestation of an approach to gender patterning. This element of violent reaction has been largely neglected by the critics, although it forms a significant substratum in most of Eliot's works. Carolyn Heilbrun, in her book Writing a Woman's Life, links childhood and violence in this manner: "Nostalgia, particularly for childhood, is likely to be a mask for unrecognized anger." (15) A distancing of violence is a distancing of anger; allowances can be made for anger in youth, when emotions, like so much else, are at the mercy of external influences. So, perhaps, one can define much of the motive for George Eliot's backward gaze to times of youthful gladness and content. In support of this concept, childhood, as it is drawn by George Eliot, is in part the creation, by family and society, of the life that every adult must live. To be unfit to live this creation is to suffer, and

this suffering, in its very powerlessness and desperation allied to childhood, is often the precursor of the violent act. In many of those characters who succumb to violent impulses, there is a manifestation of a child's anger which cannot be controlled in the adult and which finds its way to the surface in diffuse ways. Hetty's childish neglect of her duties toward the Poyser children becomes the fatal neglect of her own child. Rosamond Vincy, beset by Lydgate's failures as a husband and determined to be mistress of her life and her will, courts violence to herself and her unborn child in an ill-considered horseback ride with Captain Lydgate, her husband's cousin. Gwendolen's inert reaction to the drowning of Grandcourt has its roots in her refusal to come to her mother's aid in the night, and in her strangulation of her sister's canary. The physical violence which Maggie unleashes in pushing her cousin Lucy into the pond metamorphoses into the emotional trauma she causes by usurping Lucy's lover. Those who cannot embrace, in some way, the life of adult responsibilities, (marriage, sexuality, parenthood, and duty to the community), remain locked in a world in which violence often plays a part, and give vent to the acts and thoughts of the trapped and thereby furious.

George Eliot's evocation of the roving freedom, the rollicking spirit, and the dash and daring of boyhood, giving promise of the best of manhood to come, overlays the psychological conditioning of power. Males, from boy's to man's estate, are made aware of their ascendence as the dominant sex in society, and violence is one tool by which to ensure male suasion over the "weaker sex". George Eliot, in her depictions of masculine dominance, rarely relies on descriptions of

crude physical confrontations, but renders the psychological depredations which the male visits on those whom he would control. In Mallinger Grandcourt she has created the most brutal of men, his inner reality the more shocking when contrasted with his "faded fairness" (Daniel Deronda, 145), and his air of sophisticated ennui belies the latent sadism with which he establishes his control over all who are weaker than he. He is painted in reptillian images, the images of slow-moving, lazy, and diffident things whose lack of motion belies the sudden, destructive action which imprisons, pinching and suffocating, always wounding the victim. There is an escalation of violence in Grandcourt directly proportional to the degree of resistance which he meets. For those who bend to his will, Grandcourt's blows are of the random sort, thrown out as the spirit moves him, without much effort. His sadistic teasing of his dog Fetch (chapter 12), mute and dependent, has a bearing on how he treats Lush, not mute but equally needy at chapter's end. The coupling of the dog and the servant, receiving ill treatment at the hand of the same master, gives a sense of Grandcourt's view of the similarity of beast and man, alike subject to him. Grandcourt's violations, in the main phlegmatic for those who are wary of him, become more debilitating for those who oppose him. Lydia Glasher and Gwendolen Harleth are yoked together in the common lot of their rebellion, doomed to failure, against Grandcourt's hegemony. The scenes in which Lydia appears are scenes of the bitterness and gall of an unequal struggle, marked by the poison of resentment and ultimately lost. If Lydia corrupts Gwendolen's married life by her intrusion upon it, yet she has little real effect on Grandcourt and her battle is doomed as Gwendolen's

fight for autonomy and influence over Grandcourt is doomed from the beginning of her relationship with one who has raised masculine power and its successful exercise to a "raison d'etre". George Eliot traces the increasingly constricted boundaries within which Gwendolen, like Lydia before her, is permitted to move before feeling the curb; the control exercised by his "incalculable turns and his tendency to harden under beseeching" (307) leads by imperceptible degrees to the paralysis of action engendered by his knowledge of Gwendolen's most secret thoughts and the unexpected effects of that knowledge.

If Grandcourt is the most fully rendered of George Eliot's dominant males, Lapidoth, Dunsey Cass, Peter Featherstone, and Captain Wybrow, among others, are also drawn in this mode of a violence not physical but nonetheless forceful and forcible. Only Robert Dempster is the exception to this model of man whose brute force is not manifestly physical. George Eliot, introducing Dempster in the first lines of "Janet's Repentance", presents the contrasts of character which are the seedbed of the physical violence he looses upon his wife. The emphatically powerful "No!", Dempster's first word beginning the tale, followed by his strong speech in which the word "power" figures prominently, is juxtaposed to those qualities that suggest an opposing weakness in him: the sneezing caused by excessive snuff; the imbibing of a third glass of brandy; and the gaze which never lights firmly on anyone or anything before him. The self-indulgence of sons whose very being makes life worthwhile to fond parents finds its most perfect example in Dempster, conditioned to show those other than himself how little power and influence they wield. George Eliot adds to this the philosophy of a weak man with a

streak of brutality in his nature to which he gives play. And Janet, standing before the storm that is her husband, drinking to dull her desperation and misery, yet not translating that misery into anything less worthy than a proud endurance of injustice, is the challenge that must be tamed, the whetstone to all Robert's craving for supremacy:

> But do not believe that it was anything either present or wanting in poor Janet that formed the motive of her husband's cruelty. Cruelty, like every other vice, requires no motive outside itself-it only requires opportunity. You do not suppose Dempster had any motive for drinking beyond the craving for drink; the presence of brandy was the only necessary condition. And an unloving, tyrannous, brutal man needs no motive to prompt his cruelty; he needs only the perpetual presence of a woman he can call his own. A whole park full of tame or timid-eyed animals to torment at his will would not serve him so well to glut his lust of torture; they would not feel as one woman does; they could not throw out the keen retort which whets the edge of hatred. (334/5)

In Robert Dempster, George Eliot depicts a male lust for dominance that begins in boyhood, and a scorn for weakness in the worst manifestation of irrational anger: physical brutality. In the descriptions of his assaults on Janet, culminating in threat: "If you don't come, I'll kill you." (341), and in her forced eviction, George

Eliot has telescoped both the potential violence of accepted male domination and the untenable subordination of its victims.

It is in Tom Tulliver that George Eliot most distinctly traces the evolving connection between a boy's insistence on his special place within the social hierarchy and the man's method's of self assertion to impress his position upon others. The undercurrent of violence with which Tom again and again violates his sister's deepest feelings is linked to his sense of his maleness, with its rights and duties. Tom early learns to speak to Maggie's need for love and acceptance with a psychological manipulation which asserts his supremacy. Small acts of seemingly random violence represent his deepest impulses toward mastery. His deliberate destruction of the bluebottle, early in the novel (The Mill on the Floss, 147), is the symbolic culmination to his torment of Maggie. Calling her "stupid" when Maggie knocks her own card houses down, "white with anger" when she shows her rebellious rage by destroying his pagoda, Tom, in crushing the bluebottle, crushes Maggie. A parallel of sorts is drawn when Tom destroys the earwig (161), the subject of one of Maggie's tales about the things Tom, Lucy, and she find upon their walks, those tales which Lucy so admires and which highlight Maggie's inventiveness, and so Tom, smashing the insect, destroys his sister's positive image, reasserting his ascendance while reducing Maggie to a nonentity.

Out of such incidents arises the foreshadowing of Maggie's and Tom's relationship as adults, in which Maggie is doomed never to be heeded in any of her talents and ever to be chastised, or far more intolerable, to be ignored, for her faults. Tom bases his unyielding

brutality to Maggie's feelings on the positive attribute of fairness, a fairness which must pass the criterion of his judgement. George Eliot recounts the incident of the jam puff with this perspective, offering the reader insight into the principle of fairness as it operates upon Tom's treatment of his sister. When Maggie, out of her love for Tom, offers him the most amply-filled piece of jam puff, Tom, rejecting her gesture, defines the "fair" way of division. Maggie, winning the better morsel, disposes of it with gusto, with no intimation that her brother is aggrieved. Tom believes that, as he acted rightly in the dispute, so Maggie should have acknowledged his righteousness and position by rewarding him with the choicest part for his goodness. Put another way, Tom's righteousness should prevail, winning him the prize for his stance. He punishes Maggie's "selfishness" by withdrawing his companionship and affection, a ploy which leaves her bereft of that which she most needs. This aspect of justice and punishment as forming part of the male's purview, ("...he was particularly clear and positive on one point, namely that he would punish everybody who deserved it: why, he wouldn't have minded being punished himself if he deserved it, but then, he never did deserve it." (91)), is the basis of much of the cruelty he displays toward Maggie in the larger events of her life. She pays dearly for Tom's attention in the violence which he, as sole guide and judge, does to her inner being. After Maggie's voyage with Stephen, Tom, claiming her to be incorrigible, in his anger believing her to be beyond the reach of his influence and power, perpetrates the fin.l outrage to her being by banishing her from the Mill, her roots, and all that gives her sustenance. Like Grandcourt and Robert Dempster, Tom's power lies

in placing a woman beyond the community and isolating her in a final violent severence from all she needs. So the petty deprivations visited by boyhood flower in the more violent betrayals perpetrated by the man.

Viewing violence mainly in its negative aspects of anger and control, still George Eliot does not deny the possible catharsis of a single violent act, born of strong feeling and subject to later analysis. Adam Bede, accosting Arthur Donnithorn in blind fury upon his discovery of Arthur's deceit with Hetty, displays the violent reaction of one who is suddenly faced with a catastrophe not of his own making and with which he is at a loss how to deal. Adam's battle can be juxtaposed to Hetty's infanticide, as both are rash and violent acts of desperation; however, from Adam's eruption of feeling comes a reassessment both of himself and of Arthur, a constructive process of renewal. Adam, discovering in himself a violence which he has been unable to control, internalizes this warning of the frightening price of anger unleashed and what it reveals to him about himself. This adult response to anger, conducive to maturity and positive in its implications, places in relief the tragedy of the child-woman who remains mired in a child's emotions.

Uncontrol has the potential of violence, and in the child and the child-adult, anger and powerlessness are its breeding ground. The adult is one with all the passions of the child but with the maturity and empathic understanding to place them at the disposal of the ever-conscious awareness of danger to be averted and right actions to be struggled toward. It is this positive spark that George Eliot fosters amid the dark depictions of violent domination, that men's

anger, at least that of males who are truly men, has the possibility of a constructive element; the random aspect of a child's anger and the physical force inherent in a man's rage can be shaped into the mature qualities of manhood at its best.

If male passion denotes the wilful assertion of power, female anger expresses impotence. This rage is borne of no choice but that of acquiescence to another's will, a child's obedience to another's bidding, and can give birth to no positive action. Sexual roles precipitate violent acts in George Eliot's protagonists, particularly those roles which offer no option to girls who are desperate for something beyond what they are given. Caterina cannot settle for a marriage devoid of passion; Hetty cannot assimilate a reality which contains a child born out of wedlock. Maggie and Gwendolen, in different ways, cannot accept what the world has to offer them in terms of emotional fulfillment and accomplishment. All stand at the mercy of others.

In Caterina Sarti, George Eliot presents to the reader the first of her desperate heroines. She describes the tensions emanating from the psychological undercurrents common to all beings pushed to the limits of endurance and delineates the potential violence which erupts from wrongs done and ills borne. "Tina" encapsulates those qualities of foreignness and childishness which in some sense mitigate, in their intimations of helplessness, her violent impulses toward Captain Wybrow, as do the unperpetrated deed and the remorse which follows. The reader, conscious of Caterina's inexperience in emotional matters, a naivete of which Wybrow is quick to take advantage, has the sense of the play of a fish with which the fisherman sports, reeling the line

in and out; in the intimations of unwilling subjugation is the symbolic violation of the weak by the strong. Tina bears within her the conflict of all women, the pressure of what is expected of her in contention with the passionate emotions of burgeoning womanhood. Confronted with the impending marriage of her beloved Wybrow to one she can neither esteem nor admire, and with the weight of the propriety demanded of her in her pain, she is caught up in an escalating emotional turmoil which is transcribed to her visible life. From her childlike reaching out to all things in innocence and love has evolved an adult's passion all misused. In her child's image of justice, in which she can avenge Wybrow's baseness and his treachery to her, comes the cold reality of the dagger.

Tina's confession to Maynard of her aborted plan, after Wybrow's demise, returns her to the dependency of childhood. Her revelation of ill-feeling and wickedness, a disclosure couched in the diction of a young girl, ("Then I was so deceitful; they didn't know how wicked I was. Padroncello didn't know; his good little monkey he used to call me; and if he had known, O how naughty he would have thought me!" [237]), elicits from Maynard an explanation of her actions in terms of infancy: "the little birds when they are young and just begin to fly, how all their feathers are ruffled when they are frightened or angry; they have no power over themselves left....You were like those little birds. Your sorrow and suffering had taken such hold of you, you hardly knew what you did." (235) The dissipation of Tina's feelings of guilt is presented in the exchange of minister and penitent, father and daughter, lover and loved. She is placed on the level of a child who cannot help herself, whose violence is the reaction of a helpless

and confused being pushed beyond what it is possible for her to suffer.

The pattern of benign neglect so tied to feminine powerlessness, can be seen in Hetty, among other characters, as a substratum of violence. When ignoring a dilemma does not bring about the desired result, violence surfaces as the manifestation of a mind beset by a force which the victim is unable to stem and by the intolerable impositions of others over which she has no control; disordered impulse then becomes ascendant. The amalgamation of passive suffering and violent resistance into a single impetus can be traced backward in the life of a character, as in Hetty's neglect of the Poyser children and Gwendolen's unresponsiveness toward the needs of her mother and sisters. In a momentary fragmentation of will, a suspension of action, George Eliot denotes the possibility of a violence done to others.

Perhaps F.R. Leavis, describing Maggie Tulliver, best states the case of the origin of the violent impulse in George Eliot's female characters:

> Maggie's emotional and spiritual stresses, her exaltations and renunciations, exhibit, naturally, all the marks of immaturity; they involve confusions and immature evaluations; they belong to a stage of development at which the capacity to make some essential distinctions has not yet been arrived at-at which the poised impersonality that is one of the conditions of

> being able to make them can't be achieved. (Harvey, 187)

These words provide an explication of the vulnerability underlying the social conditioning of many of Eliot's girls and young women, a vulnerability from which arises that turmoil and hopelessness whose extreme result is the ill-considered act. The spectrum of this reaction, from physical acts to waves of feeling which, uncontrollable, violate others emotionally, is most clearly set forth in George Eliot's depiction of Maggie. Maggie idealizes, in her childhood and in her memories of it, the state of being loved. Yet Maggie's childhood, far from the idyll to which she clings all her life, is a series of displacements: she allows Tom's rabbits to die and he rejects her; Lucy is made much of while Maggie is denigrated; Maggie visits Tom at school and learns the impossibility of being able to study at his level; and finally, in the downfall of the family fortunes, she loses studies, books, Philip, that is, all that is meaningful to her. Sublimating all needs and imperatives to her one overwhelming desire for affection, Maggie, never cared for as she so yearns and needs to be, is often met with insensitivity, bullying, and cruelty. In her youth she is a child smarting under criticism she does not understand; she transposes this rejection to a perception of her displacement in the greater world outside Dorlcote Mill:

> ...everybody in the world seemed so hard and unkind to Maggie: there was no indulgence, no fondness such as she imagined when she fashioned the world afresh in her own thoughts. In books there were people who were always agreeable or tender,

> and delighted to do things that made one happy, and who did not show their kindness by finding fault. The world outside the books was not a happy one, Maggie felt: it seemed to be a world where people behaved the best to those they did not pretend to love, and that did not belong to them. And if life had no love in it, what else was there for Maggie?
>
> (The Mill on the Floss, 319/20)

With Maggie, a child's craving for unconditional love, which seeks to avoid conflict with those for whom she cares, erupts into unacceptable actions when thwarted or denied. Maggie's attempts to curb these reactions within herself, to find another outlet for her strong emotions, lead her to Thomas a Kempis; however, her adherence to his teachings of renunciation, while bringing her approbation for her new-found restraint, does not signify real growth. Maggie's passions are only damped and smoulder still; a relentless tamping down of her nature in a vain search for approval and boundless love results in a violent eruption of feeling, when Maggie is pushed beyond the limits of her endurance. On her visit to Lucy, exposed to a plenitude matching her deepest desires and so unlike the meanness with which she has lived, Maggie is in danger of sliding from awareness into sensation, the forerunner of violent reaction. The magnetism of her attraction to Stephen, leading her to abandon herself to his desire that they go together on a river odyssey, has in it an element of negative significance; the pain which Maggie brings to her family and to Lucy, the message which her actions have for her community,

parallel those of Hetty's misconceived actions. Maggie becomes, in her unguarded state on the water with Stephen, "Hetty-like". Awareness betokening a movement toward development is lacking, while sensation leaves Maggie in a childhood realm of powerless succumbing, a realm paradoxically reinforced by the subliminal negativity of her acts.

In Maggie's childhood relationships, particularly in her interaction with her brother, there are the seeds of that violent impulse which, erupting from the depths of despair, shapes her life. As Maggie's engagements with Tom progress, all of her resentment and isolation and all the cold, rational self-righteousness of Tom come together with a clarity of discord that looks backward to its roots in childhood and forward to the ultimate disharmony attendant on Maggie's leaving Stephen to return to St. Ogg's. Maggie's elopement with Stephen precipitates the most convulsive stage of that clash between Tom and Maggie, that pattern of action and reaction, of turbulent disagreement between brother and sister that is reiterated over and over in this novel. George Eliot sets up a paradigm of the interaction between the two: movement on Maggie's part followed by Tom's disapproval, Maggie's rebellion, and then reconciliation of an increasingly weak nature until, after Maggie's return from her sojourn with Stephen, there is no reconciliation. Her remaining in St. Ogg's cannot repair the damage that her passion and the violence of her response have wrought. She is locked in the patterns of her childhood, the searchings, the yearnings, the rebellions, and the atonements. The fact that Maggie does not, in the end, succumb to Stephen, does not complete the "outward act" (597), cannot change the

meaning of the emotional turmoil behind the event, the impetus toward both love and revenge which had a more physical manifestation in her childishly pushing Lucy into the mud. Maggie realizes this, but in her contrite understanding is a passive core; she rises to acts of furious pain, but falls back upon that passive attachment and love which immobilizes her.

The violence of Maggie's death comes to symbolize the violence of life: the currents and acts of anger unacknowledged; the yearning for a childhood devoid of such impulses; and the clinging to childhood's love as to all good. Maggie's death encompasses the failure of adult possibilities, a remorseless reclaiming of life by the forces of childhood, the turbulence, the violence, the powerlessness diffused by that relationship which has ever held out the tantalizing possibility of completion. Susan Siefert suggests just such a resolution when she says: "What the mature Maggie remembers is the idealized state of loving and being loved. The desire to relive this childhood memory, to fuse past and present, leads her to Tom through the surging waters of the terrible flood." (Siefert, 56) If it is true that, on many levels, the ending of The Mill on the Floss is unsatisfying, yet the underlying modalities of life, the underlying strains and convulsions of possibilities, strongly insist upon the inevitability of the novel's resolution. Maggie, repressing for so long both her strongest urges and her sense of the imposed limitation of her experience, is not able to reflect rationally, but allows the passionate feelings which are encouraged by the unaccustomed lushness and freedom of her existence at Lucy's to break through her guard with childlike abandon. A child's insensibility to all that is not allied to feeling strongly

mixed with a newly-burgeoning sensuality is finally mastered by her adult vision as her moral imperative controls her emotional outpouring; however, in her death, ineptly delineated as it may be, is the only possible reconciliation of her sundered selves, the only way she can "exist". To return to a life of futile, renunciatory self-mortification and remorse is not possible in any naturalistic sense, once the bonds have been loosed. Death, more than a solution which is a convenient way to end a novel, is the inhalation necessary after the prolonged holding of breath, an inevitable ingathering of the farflung parts of Maggie's being.

In Maggie's death is the representation of the struggle central to George Eliot's vision, that ongoing struggle to define and refine the self, to develop one's boundaries beyond the demands of society, that persona rooted in rigid rules and roles beneath which lurks the child's frenzy to lash out. How the characters in George Eliot's novels integrate the contradictory impulses of their natures, how they grow or fail to grow, how they diffuse or dissipate the violence that betokens the strongest currents of anger and anxiety that reside in humanity are rooted in both their youth and their gender. Those who conform to society's norms find a secure place within its confines; those who cannot conform suffer the chaos of internal conflict because of it. This is the particular lot of the woman whose needs go beyond the boundaries of the feminine role of marriage which can be, as Calder expresses it, both "sustaining and damaging." (Calder, 130) George Eliot's heroines are ill-equipped to define their needs, and fear the responsibility of self-definition and of freedom of action. This lack of unity between aspirations and emotions is part of the

fragmentation of their lives, exacerbated by the judgement of women in male terms. George Eliot places the pragmatism of the male-oriented world on the lips of Lawyer Wakem, when she has him say: "We don't ask what a woman does-we ask whom she belongs to." (The Mill on the Floss, 452). Yet male characters too are at the mercy of society's narrow sympathy and imagination, because of which the male faces from childhood the impossibility of the synthesis of his different selves. The male must reinforce the fact that he is "not woman" (Heilbrun, 82), as the female must submerge her individuality; therein lies the danger and the doom in much of the interaction in George Eliot's works. Her doubts find expression in the antithetical voices of sexual conditionings, of masculinity, marriage, and motherhood. Her examination of sexual roles and the actions and reactions they engender reveal different levels of reality, the outer reality and the inner imperative visibly or invisibly at odds.

EPILOGUE

In her consideration of relationships, particularly those of adult child and parent, or those of siblings, George Eliot stresses the continuity of the familial relationship through time. Through narrative, description, and flashback, she creates the ever-developing, never static bonds between her characters, presenting these ties primarily as obligations one family member has for another, and which become more solid as time passes. The values of relationship, such as those shared by the Dodsons in The Mill on the Floss, are ordinary in the sense that society is ordinary; they form the historic thread that is stripped of the mythic quality which is impossible of attainment in the pedestrian rhythms of daily existence. Yet these values, from whence come no heroes and heroines in the Romantic sense, no St. Thereses and no St. Oggs, Eliot would have the reader see as forming the basis of society. Tradition, at the core of the relationships, is posterity.

In her novels, George Eliot reproduces the complexities of human interactions which begin in infancy and grow as the child grows. She captures the kinetic movement of human bonds, for the relationships of childhood do not remain static with the passage of time. The experiences of a child not only shape him/her to be in concert with the community, but also change their meaning according to the vicissitudes of life. However, Eliot's fiction presents relationships with layers of motive and action often unclear in their implications for character, reader, and author alike. Her own often ambivalent

attitude towards childhood in both its symbolic and literal sense, particularly with regard to her female characters, points out to the reader some of the problems of the novels themselves.

George Eliot's "positive" attributes of society, (tradition, history, and a moral imperative), are countered by a non-evolutionary thread in her narrative. What appears is the dilemma of the society which remains static. The ideals of empirical investigation and moral quest, with their sense of forward vision, which so concern Eliot, sink under the weight of images which negate change and which place the thrust of the novels on the side of human existence which remains as it always has been. The heroines, from Janet Dempster to Dorothea Brooke, whose place in their society never evolves, repeatedly speak against the evolution which Eliot describes as a necessary and desireable movement forward. Thus, all the possibilities of the novels move *away* from the postulated model of St. Theresa who is the archetype of life's challenges met. The perceptive reader, then, is confronted with the question of whether George Eliot is, at some level, torn between the innate need for stability and place and the persistent desire to carve a niche according to one's impulses and abilities. Living in an era of unprecedented development, (educational, technical, scientific, and humanistic), she does not translate them into the growth of her child characters. So many of her books are set in the past, the pull of which is a counterweight to the growth which she espouses so strongly.

George Eliot breaks many of the nineteenth century conventions in her treatment of theme, character, and plot, and yet is unable to formulate an escape from its constriction for her characters,

particularly those who are female. Children are trapped by the rigidity of custom and convention, politics and parents. Careers for women founder; for Dinah and Mirah, all but the "acceptable" options of women's roles within the family and community are closed. St. Theresa's walk is circumscribed by the garden wall. The reader must confront characters whose lives run counter to Eliot's postulated literary quest, characters who seem not able to exist outside the function of or preparation for the position of wife and mother.

George Eliot does not transfer elements of her own experiences as an adult, unconventional and free far beyond the boundaries of her time, to her novels. Liberated by her relationship with G.H.Lewes, her intellectual pursuits and accomplishments, and her importance and success as a writer, she constrains her heroines in ways she is not herself constrained. There are no "happy endings" in the couplings of her novels. The growth of the child toward "happily ever after" or at least toward the expansion of his/her talents and abilities, is not present in her stories. Relationships are oftentimes stultifying; love and communion, which Eliot celebrates, do not expand horizons but rather narrow possibilities. For Dinah Morris, the way to good works outside the family circle is blocked. In choosing Adam Bede, she accedes to the life of Mrs. Poyser and must thereby give up the life of her preacher Aunt Judith; and the Methodist Conference, which has forbidden preaching by women, shuts the door more securely still. Felix Holt's humanitarian goals are translated into Esther Lyon's life in terms of her marriage; she is to be a loving support to him in his endeavours for the disadvantaged while her talents never lead her to any greater utility than self-abnegation. Dorothea Brooke gives up

her aspirations of learning and enlightened action for a life with one inferior to herself, a dilettante whose attainments never match his talents for want of application. The repression of Eliot's characters, as child and adult, are glaringly in contradistinction to her espousal of intellectual development and humanistic endeavour. Growing up and growth are often far apart in her novels, and however she strives to integrate the disparate claims of history, community, and progress, in the end she leaves the reader with unresolved dissonances and questions left unanswered.

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