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DETERMINISM AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE OPERATING THROUGH FIVE EXPERIENCES IN PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIVES OF THREE OF GEORGE ELIOT'S HEROINES

by

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND
IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

JULY 1973

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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I

INTRODUCTION

George Eliot's world is a deterministic world. She believed that circumstances and conventions imposed by society control events in an individual life; nevertheless, in the inevitable conflicts between inner desire and outer reality, the individual is responsible for his own choices and the acts which they direct. Furthermore, only in a deterministic world are intelligent, moral choices possible. The explanation of this seeming paradox lies in education of the individual by experience to learn to make satisfying choices and to develop a strong will. Through experience, the individual learns both the hazards of the selfish choice and also the lasting values of the unselfish choice; through experience, he develops a strong will as he learns the satisfaction of doing his duty and of carrying out his decision, even though it involves self-sacrifice. In her novels set in nineteenth-century rural England, three of George Eliot's gifted heroines develop through five psychological experiences, beginning with egoism and progressing through suffering, the crisis of choice, and resignation, until they achieve altruism. Doing their duty does not bring the young women

happiness. As Virginia Woolf pointed out, "Save for the supreme courage of their endeavor, the struggle ends, and her heroines, in tragedy, or in a compromise that is even more melancholy."[1]

George Eliot was a determinist. Like many brilliant thinkers of the mid-nineteenth century, she believed that the newly discovered laws which applied to science and to nature applied also to man, since man is a creature of the natural world.[2] Among these laws was the law of causal antecedents, the principle that all events follow as the invariable result of their causes which, for all practical purposes, are beyond the control of man.[3] This doctrine, known as determinism, has been given three different philosophical interpretations of its significance in relation to human responsibility. In the first interpretation, the world is so completely determined that there is no possibility of man making a free choice; in the second interpretation, determinism controls all other world processes but not human choice, with the result that man is responsible for his decisions and ensuing actions; in the third interpretation, the world is strictly determined in all its processes

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[1] Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader (New York, 1948), p. 242.

[2] George Levine, "Determinism and Responsibility in the Works of George Eliot," PMLA, LXXVII (1962), 269.

[3] This definition of determinism seems to be what Levine implies. It is similar to the meaning of necessitarianism in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, (Springfield, Mass., 1953), p. 561.

including human choice, but man is nevertheless responsible for his choices and his resulting behavior.[4]

While the last interpretation appears to be contradictory, it is the position taken by John Stuart Mill and today's analytic philosophers as well. It is also the position taken by George Eliot because she believed that it justifies the importance of the human will, the interdependence of people within a society, the individual's capacity to acquire knowledge and to develop, and the impelling need for him to do his duty. The apparent contradiction within the third interpretation of the deterministic theory resolves itself through George Eliot's explanation of the role of education through experience and of the importance of the human will.[5]

Her belief in Christian doctrines shattered, she held tenaciously to her confidence in Christian morality, for which she sought verification in science. Mill's theory of determinism provided that verification. Both George Eliot's personal philosophy and its artistic expression in the world of her novels are persistently deterministic.[6] An analysis of the complexity, democracy, and condemnation of chance in that world will clarify the key role determinism plays in George Eliot's novels.

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[4]Levine, p. 269.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

George Eliot's fictional world is complex. The present is the cumulative product of events of the past, just as the future will become the cumulative product of events of both past and present. Enmeshed in the intricate, circular pattern of this organic world are the individual characters, each making his distinctive contribution as part of the whole and at the same time being shaped and limited by the whole. When the deepest desires of his heart are at variance with the inexorable demands of his society, the reverberations of his personal crisis affect everyone. If he dares to shun his responsibilities or to break with his society, inevitably he faces failure or a steady withering of the human qualities which grow and thrive only through human relationships. Similarly, when any character has been deprived of the influence of a parent or of a native community in his youth, the break in the continuity of these formative factors results in flaws in his adult personality.[7]

The world of George Eliot's fictional people is a democratic world because the laws of causal antecedents are impersonal laws, affecting all persons equally. Since she stressed normal, everyday people and affairs, heroic characters are unusual in her scheme of things. She felt that by dramatizing the heroic she would be false in her role as teacher to readers who could become unhappy with the commonplace patterns of their lives. Important to the plot is the

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[7] Ibid., pp. 270-271.

egoistic factor which unavoidably must accompany the heroic and raise a barrier between the character himself and his acquaintances, friends, and relatives in his community, with all the resulting evil such isolation implies. Consequently, the reader of a typical George Eliot novel comes no closer to heroism than noble renunciation of innermost longings and of unrealistic ambitions. Conforming to the demands of society leaves a character little chance of accomplishing more than the most routine ends. Yet each small act, stimulating and combining with a mounting total of other small acts, makes its contribution to the slow, historic progress of the community.[8] In the final paragraph of Middlemarch, George Eliot emphasizes the role of the average person in the world's progress by concluding that

> the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.[9]

In its practical application in George Eliot's novels, determinism not only eliminates both chance and coincidence but actually causes censure of the character, as being morally culpable, if he relies on either. Each responsible character has learned that like occurrences produce like

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[8] Ibid., p. 271.

[9] George Eliot, Middlemarch (New York, 1962), p. 795.

results. To rely on fortuitous circumstances to prevent those results brands a character as weak and invites disaster. Occasionally when an event seems to have been the result of chance, subsequent developments make it very clear that additional factors, unknown to the guilty character, have been operating in complete accordance with natural law.[10]

George Eliot felt that she was free to exercise her own will and to be responsible for her actions. This feeling was in harmony with her emphasis on the importance of the individual. An excerpt from one of her letters indicates the intensity of her feeling:

> Every fresh morning is an opportunity that one can look forward to for exerting one's will. I shall not be satisfied with your philosophy until you have conciliated necessitarianism with the practice of willing strongly, of willing to will strongly, and so on, that being what you certainly can do and have done about a great many things in life.[11]

Although philosophers have made many efforts over the centuries to demonstrate the compatibility of determinism with personal responsibility, the majority of modern philosophers seem to agree that no entirely satisfactory reconciliation ever has evolved.[12] However, George Eliot considered John Stuart Mill's reconciliation to be satisfactory and applied its principles in her novels. For this reason, an examination of Mill's reconciliation of determinism with responsibility is

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[10] Levine, p. 272.

[11] The George Eliot Letters, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 7 vols. (New Haven, 1954-56), VI, 66, in Levine, p. 273.

[12] Levine, p. 273.

enlightening.

At the same time, then, that George Eliot earnestly believed in the infallibility of the laws of universal causality, she believed equally strongly in the freedom of her own will and in her responsibility for her own actions. Determinism and freedom of choice, in her powerful mind, reinforced each other, and this conviction of hers paralleled the principles of John Stuart Mill in these ways: (1) in the complexity of the variety of stimuli responsible for character formation; (2) in acknowledgement of the disparity between cause and compulsion; (3) in the importance of the role of character in controlling the fate of the individual.[13]

Concerning complexity, Mill stated that

> the agencies which determine human character are so numerous and diversified (nothing which has happened to the person throughout life being without its portion of influence) that in the aggregate, they are never in any two cases exactly similar. Hence, even if our science of human nature were theoretically perfect, that is, if we could calculate any character as we can calculate the orbit of any planet, from given data, still as the data are never all given, nor ever precisely alike in different cases, we could neither make positive predictions, nor lay down universal propositions.[14]

What John Stuart Mill is saying, essentially, is that in a study using scientific procedure a large number of cases must

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[13] Ibid., p. 274.

[14] John Stuart Mill, A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive (New York, 1853), VI, 529.

be analyzed to make results representative of all reactions. From such investigation, there results (1) a list of established causes, and (2) a list of invariable results. These findings apply to all reactions except for a minimum number of identifiable exceptions. For a study of human character it is impossible to follow this scientific procedure because no two individuals, not even identical twins, follow an identical pattern of development. Consequently, a list of causes and results common to all cases cannot be drawn up. Furthermore, since complete data are never available, the study could never have been made in the first place; or even if accurate criteria did exist, they could never be used.[15]

Certain conclusions follow, however. Although the law of causal antecedents has not been proven true in relation to human character, this does not mean that the law has been proven false. On the contrary, since criteria for physical sciences have been established, investigation of human character demonstrates that laws governing its development are more complex than laws governing physical sciences. Actually, then, determinists are free to believe, as George Eliot and John Stuart Mill did, that the law of cause and effect functions continually in character development, even though exact sequences are not known.[16]

The second point in John Stuart Mill's discussion of

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[15] Levine, p. 275.

[16] Ibid.

the reconciliation of determinism with responsibility is the difference between cause and compulsion as stimuli for human behavior. Once again, George Eliot's point of view paralleled that of Mill in that

> human actions . . . are never (except in some cases of mania) ruled by any one motive with such absolute sway that there is no room for the influence of any other. The causes, therefore, on which action depends, are never uncontrollable; . . .[17]

Mill's reasoning here makes it clear that there is always more than one motive pressuring an individual before he decides to take any resulting action. Furthermore, since not many motives are so powerful that they exceed the individual's ability to control or change his decision, and hence his action, he makes a deliberate choice. Under only three conditions, according to Mill, can a person be compelled to act without choice or control: (1) if he is mentally unbalanced; (2) if he is physically unable to act differently; (3) if he is threatened by physical danger or death.[18] Since in all of George Eliot's novels there is no memorable instance of such compelled action,[19] her important characters are always free to exercise their wills and to make their choices. As a result, they are responsible for their actions. Usually the decision confronting an individual is concerned with a conflict between outer pressure and inner desire. Weakness of

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[17]Mill, VI, p. 524.

[18]Levine, p. 275.

[19]Ibid., p. 276.

will or a moral flaw, under these conditions, will prevent an ethical choice and lead to the character's downfall.[20]

For example, in Middlemarch when his Uncle Featherstone gives Fred Vincy one hundred pounds, Fred might give the money to Caleb Garth at once, in payment of two-thirds of a one hundred and fifty pound debt. Instead, Fred chooses to gamble twenty pounds at billiards and thirty pounds in a horse trade, in the optimistic notion that he can increase the sum by fifty pounds to pay the entire debt. By relying on chance, he does not gain fifty pounds but loses it; furthermore, he exhibits the weakness of his character by choosing to gamble with the fifty pounds rather than to pay as much of his debt as he can with it. Finally, his choice provides an example of George Eliot's deterministic belief that relying on chance to produce fortuitous results invites disaster. Since Fred does not conscientiously plan a reliable way to provide the extra fifty pounds, he fails to pay his debt and incurs instead the bitter resentment of Mrs. Garth and the contempt of Mary Garth, whom he loves and hopes to marry.[21]

The third and last point in John Stuart Mill's discussion of the reconciliation of determinism with responsibility is the importance of character in controlling the fate of the

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Middlemarch, pp. 223-232.

individual. As the results of one choice become factors in the development of possibilities limiting the next choice, each individual is himself one of the causes in the formation of his own character. Mill considered this his most convincing point in refuting necessitarianism.[22] He explained his theory:

> /Man/ has, to a certain extent, a power to alter his character . . . /which/ is formed by his circumstances (including among these his particular organization); but his own desire to mould it in a particular way, is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential . . . . We are exactly as capable of making our own character, if we will, as others are of making it for us.[23]

Therefore, as Levine explains it, instead of being a passive pawn moved by inflexible forces, each individual can be a dynamic power in shaping his own character. Educated by earlier experiences of blame and acquittal, penalty and reward, he can use the knowledge he has gained from experience to make correct choices in the next decision. George Eliot makes it very clear that in every crisis each individual has a clear-cut choice.[24] For example, Maggie Tulliver could have hurried to rejoin Stephen Guest, instead of sacrificing her own love for the happiness of three people dear to her; Dorothea Brooke Casaubon need not have smothered her own grief in order to help Tertius and Rosamond Lydgate; Gwendolen Harleth might have vindictively schemed to bring about Henleigh

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[22] Levine, p. 276.

[23] Mill, VI, 524.

[24] Levine, p. 277.

Grandcourt's death instead of struggling valiantly to stifle her malicious impulses. Thus, each heroine has discovered in an earlier, painful experience that yielding to her egoistic desires does not produce either happy feelings or satisfactory results. By applying the lesson she has learned, each girl unselfishly renounces her own desire in making the next choice and thereby achieves a degree of nobility in the development of her character. Clearly, Levine concludes, George Eliot's plots demonstrate her agreement with Mill's principle of freedom of choice and its vital importance in altering character.[25]

A vital corollary follows naturally from this process of deductive reasoning which confirms the validity of freedom of choice. Only in a deterministic world can an educated choice be effective, according to George Eliot and moralist philosophers of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. If an individual learns from several reinforcing experiences that a certain cause always produces a certain effect, he will learn to choose a course of action compatible with that invariable effect.[26]

For example, when a small child discovers that he gets wet each time he goes outside in a downpour of rain, he will learn either to stay inside or to carry an umbrella unless, conceivably, he enjoys getting wet. However, if on one

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

occasion he goes outside in a downpour and does not get wet, he will become thoroughly confused about what to do when it rains, and experience will have taught him nothing.

Therefore, only in a deterministic world, where the law of causal antecedents operates to ensure that all events follow as the invariable results of their causes, are intelligent choices possible. To achieve significant results, in any scientific demonstration, there can be only one variable; all other factors must remain constant. Without the invariable operation of the law of cause and effect, of similar causes producing similar results, education by experience is valueless, and moral choice is meaningless.[27] George Eliot expressed her unequivocal belief in this principle:

> The divine yea and nay, the seal of prohibition and of sanction, are effectually impressed on human deeds and aspirations . . . by that inexorable law of consequences, whose evidence is confirmed instead of weakened as the ages advance; and human duty is comprised in the earnest study of this law and patient obedience to its teaching. . . . every past phase of human development is part of that education of the race in which we are sharing . . . .[28]

The performance of duty, then, is the ultimate practical consequences of George Eliot's belief in freedom of choice in a deterministic world. As the superior individual

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[27] Ibid.

[28] "Mackay's Progress of the Intellect," The Writings of George Eliot, Warwickshire Edition (Boston, 1907), XXII, 279, in Levine, p. 278.

grows and learns how to make decisions which not only bring the greatest good to those about him but also avoid causing misery for anyone else, he becomes aware of the weight of his responsibility in shaping the lives of others. With the development of self-knowledge and maturity, this awareness grows into a compelling sense of duty, even at the cost of self-sacrifice. Because of the interpendence of man and society, faithful performance of duty by a single intelligent individual contributes to the slow progress of his entire society.[29]

Many philosophers and readers in the last century did not agree with either John Stuart Mill's theory of the reconciliation of freedom of choice with determinism or George Eliot's artistic interpretation of it in her novels. While it is controversial, it offers one plausible explanation of life's events and is not altogether simple to refute.[30] If one can consider freedom of choice to mean ability to choose within reasonable limits in keeping with motives (and neither the novels nor her letters concede more), there will be fewer obstacles to acceptance of the theory.[31] However, agreement or disagreement with the theory is irrelevant in a study of the novels, since the novels necessarily must be studied as

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[29]Bernard J. Paris, Experiments in Life: George Eliot's Quest for Values (Detroit, 1965), p. 45.

[30]Levine, p. 268.

[31]Ibid., p. 278.

they were written.

In the psychological development of three exceptional young heroines, the novelist conducts each of them through five psychological experiences: egoism, suffering, the crisis of choice, resignation, and altruism. Both determinism and free will play large roles in the experiences, but the fate of George Eliot's heroines results from their own folly or wisdom, as the novels themselves make frighteningly obvious.[32]

While little similarity exists between the personalities of the three intelligent girls, marked similarity becomes apparent in the patterns of their growth to psychological maturity in an inadequate environment. Their search provides an example of the irreconcilable differences between the ignorance of tradition and the new thought of a scientific age, an important nineteenth century social question.[33] George Eliot herself, in discussing the lives of the Dodson and Tulliver families in the old English town of St. Oggs, speaks of "this sense of oppressive narrowness" and expresses a sympathetic attitude toward youth's longing for change:

> It is necessary that we should feel it, if we care to understand . . . how it has acted on young natures in many generations, that in the onward tendency of human things have risen above the mental level of the generation before them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the

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[32] Ibid., p. 269.

[33] C. B. Cox, The Free Spirit (New York, 1963), p. 37.

> strongest fibres of their hearts. The suffering, whether of martyr or victim, which belongs to every historical advance of mankind, is represented in this way in every town, and by hundreds of obscure hearths . . . .[34]

Here George Eliot spells out the unifying theme in the stories of Maggie, Dorothea, and Gwendolen--the probing quest of the intelligent, sensitive young girl to widen the meaning of her own life in tempo with the larger spirit of the Victorian Age. Her struggle against the obstacles of custom in her small society mirrors the struggle of courageous individuals everywhere to advance the slow progress of mankind step-by-step.

During her first experience of psychological development, egoism, as each heroine seeks single-mindedly for a way to satisfy her own desires, she neglects the links of vital connection with family and friends; this separation dooms the egoist to failure since it interferes with the normal functioning of the deterministic society where lives are interdependent. Further, in George Eliot's intricately linked universe, where each event is not only the result of the interaction of a chain of causes but is itself the source of a chain of effects reaching many persons within the radius of the reaction, no single person can expect help with his individual problems; for impersonal laws operate impartially in their treatment of all men in general.[35] Inevitably, then,

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[34]George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss in The Best Known Novels of George Eliot (New York, 1940), p. 596.

[35]Levine, p. 270.

each girl makes a disastrous decision about her future which concludes her egoistic experience. Before the decision, each girl has access to another, conventional course of action. However, she ignores either the warnings of others or her own inner voice and selfishly makes the egoistic decision which results almost immediately in an experience of intense suffering. Thus she finds herself in the second psychological experience.

Cut off from former close associations with her family, the heroine endures her agony in the isolation and frustration to which her willfulness has brought her, and here George Eliot is most perceptive when she shows that a noble struggle to accomplish idealistic objectives often results in only desolation and defeat.[36] However, from her own suffering, the heroine learns compassion for someone else, her first step toward understanding her role of responsibility to society.[37] She begins the process of self-discovery through sacrifice of her own desires in order to meet the needs of other people, as a duty which provides a sense of personal fulfillment. Since her choice of self-sacrifice and duty (rather than of retaliation) is free and deliberate, she demonstrates Mill's theory that man can learn from experience; consequently, she herself becomes a factor in determining her own future.

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[36] Cox, p. 37.

[37] Ibid., p. 26.

Conditioned by her experience of suffering, each heroine is prepared to make an unselfish decision as she approaches the third experience in her psychological development: the crisis of choice. She has learned, as George Eliot repeatedly emphasized, that "human duty is comprised in the earnest study of . . . the inexorable law of consequences . . . and patient obedience to its teaching. . . . /which/ alone can give value to experience and render education in the true sense possible."[38]

In summary, as her heroines grow and mature, George Eliot illustrates the functioning of determinism. Since she was personally convinced that determinism is the foundation of education, it is a constant factor in her social relationships, in the unavoidable consequences of one's actions for both the innocent and the guilty, in her examination of the weakening role of egoism and of the moral strength of external goodness. Experience alone teaches man to exercise his will for what is right and good. George Eliot was convinced that in order to rise above the limiting conditions of one's life, the individual must accept the fact that the operation of the law of consequences can neither be changed nor its effects revoked. He must realize that his past actions have permanently influenced his character, and that consideration for

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[38] "Mackay's Progress," in Levine, p. 278.

society must be an important factor affecting his actions.[39]

Experience, consequences, society, character, and will--these are the vital elements in each important choice. As the heroine is confronted with her individual crisis which requires an irrevocable choice, her earlier tragic experience of suffering reminds her that a selfish, egoistic choice will result in greater misery than she can possibly foresee. She therefore considers the practical consequences and selects a course of action which is directed by compassion for one or more other people. In her weighing of consequences, she is oblivious to their effect on her own happiness, which she has no reason to hope can survive. Her performance demonstrates that she has learned the lesson from her earlier experience well, i.e., that she must accept her responsibility in society by adapting her desires to accomplish the greatest good. She demonstrates, too, that she herself has been an important factor in making her character what it becomes.[40] Because of constant, earlier striving to do what is good, when she is faced with a personally desirable alternative, she possesses the strength of character to make the choice which requires renunciation of her own desires. But nothing can be accomplished without a strong will, and her immediate action demonstrates that her character development has included a forceful will which is deaf to self-pity and which

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[39]Levine, pp. 278-279.

[40]Ibid., p. 276.

shuns consequences harmful to another. While her possibilities of choice have been obviously limited, she has had freedom to choose the course her conscience approves. Limited though it is, this freedom has all the advantages that a wise decision carries with it, for the heroine is fully aware of both the reasons for and the results of her action. Because she can anticipate the pressures of habit, emotion, and circumstance, she is prepared to withstand them.[41]

Her decision made and executed, the heroine struggles to accept it and to live through the day-to-day testing period which follows her experience of choice and which develops into her fourth psychological experience, that of resignation.

During this period, the heroine suffers from self-flagellation and perhaps also community castigation. To secure counsel, she confides completely in someone whose wisdom she can trust; from him she receives guidance which helps her to resign herself to her lot and to learn to devote herself to the service of others. During the darkest moments of her struggle, she may wish to die, or if a reversal of her choice is possible, to yield to the original temptation. Instead, with the support of her mentor, she accepts total renunciation of self interest and resolutely turns her thoughts to ways of helping others.[42] Through this experience of resignation, inexorable deterministic forces continue their

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[41] Ibid., p. 278.

[42] William R. Steinhoff, "Intent and Fulfillment in the Ending of The Mill on the Floss," in The Image of the Work, ed. R. H. Lehman and others (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955), p. 234.

crushing effects. This is the inevitable working of the law of causal antecedents. Among them is the cumulative stress of her own former digressions contributing to the weakness of self-doubt and indecision; cumulative social pressures expressed as rigid conventions can result in the heroine's social ostracism.

The fifth and final experience in the heroine's psychological development, the achievement of altruism, is confirmed by an opportunity the heroine voluntarily seizes upon in order to perform an act of impressive proportions for someone to whom she is bound by ties of admiration and affection.

In her experience of altruism, the heroine's superior qualities of character reach their fullest expression. Suppressing all concern for her own personal welfare, she demonstrates her essential nobility by her purposeful and successful effort to bring about a satisfactory resolution of a major problem for someone else. The initiative is completely her own. To ignore the opportunity for her magnanimous deed would be easy; obviously, then, she once again exercises freedom of choice.

By this act, she brings to fruition all of the forces George Eliot has been carefully preparing in her fictional deterministic world. The slowly moving external events in society have developed in accordance with the fixed laws of nature by which man, as a part of nature, is also controlled.

The superior young woman, functioning in accordance with the more complex laws which apply to character, is responsible for her own behavior, within possible limits, because there is always more than one choice to influence her conduct. As her story unfolds, she makes important errors which are at least partially the result of her exceptional abilities.[43] She progresses in keeping with George Eliot's "inexorable law of consequences," the "undeviating law which gives value to experience and renders education in the true sense possible."[44] Through her constant fervor to do only what is right and good, she helps herself to become noble in character. Educated from ignorant egoism to willing resignation through suffering, she has learned to make a noble choice as her duty, even though she understands it can mean only renunciation of her own longing. She is the victor in this battle with herself, which to George Eliot is the most conclusive battle she will ever fight.

Furthermore, she grows to understand her insignificant place in the panorama of mankind.[45] Clearly, throughout the five experiences in the psychological development of Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Gwendolen Harleth, both

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[43] Levine, pp. 270-278.

[44] "Mackay's Progress," in Levine, p. 278.

[45] Steinhoff, p. 236.

determinism and freedom of choice are significant fibres of continuity.

Critics point out that the good deeds of George Eliot's characters are frequently rewarded almost at once. In proportion to the magnanimity of her deed, the heroine is rewarded by what William R. Steinhoff calls a "fortunate accident." This event is highly significant because it seems to detract from her moral victory by invalidating the consequences of her earlier mistake and also seems to remove the need for sacrifice. In each case, just as the girl steels herself to endure a bleak future, the necessity for her preparation vanishes.[46] However, the unexpected event is an obvious illustration of the deterministic theory about chance described earlier. While the event may seem to be the result of unpredictable circumstances, it is actually the logical culmination of a process of which the individual who profits was unaware. For Maggie, Dorothea, and Gwendolen, the "fortunate accident" consists respectively of a flood, a fatal heart condition, and a drowning caused by incompetent handling of a sailboat. The flood accomplishes the reunion of Maggie and her brother, Tom, the dearest wish of Maggie's heart. By removing two less than satisfactory husbands, the heart attack and the drowning prevent barren lives for the two remaining heroines. While the calamities may seem to be exceedingly convenient coincidences, Steinhoff suggests that

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[46] Ibid., p. 235.

George Eliot "saw an important truth about life in the ironic reversal of fortune which drove people to a high pitch of martyrdom and then neglected, as it were, to light the faggot."[47]

The several similarities between Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Gwendolen Harleth--similarities which do not apply to the heroines of George Eliot's three remaining major novels--constitute the basic reason for their selection for study. Each girl is a fully delineated and successful character whose life is set in the middle-class society of nineteenth-century rural England. Nature has endowed her generously with intelligence, beauty, sensitivity, a zest for living, and a latent capacity for nobility. During adolescence not one of the girls has had the guidance of a living father. All three of the novels, in which the lives of the girls are chronicled, have particular significance in George Eliot's career. The Mill on the Floss is the second highly successful novel of the early part of the novelist's writing span; Middlemarch is her acknowledged masterpiece; Daniel Deronda, published two years before her death, represents her final and most mature style. Furthermore, both Maggie's childhood and Dorothea's young womanhood reflect important phases of George Eliot's own life.

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[47] Ibid.

The heroines of Adam Bede, Silas Marner, Romola, and Felix Holt vary from the pattern of similarity sufficiently to disqualify them for the purposes of this study. Hetty and Eppie are simple unsophisticated girls, of not more than average intelligence, whose girlhood environments are lower in social position. Romola's setting in fifteenth-century Florence removes its heroine from both the nineteenth-century and rural England. Esther Lyon in Felix Holt is not considered by critics to be a successful, fully developed characterization. Therefore, the selection of Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Gwendolen Harleth provides significant unity for an analytical study of the five experiences in psychological development in Victorian England.

II

MAGGIE TULLIVER

Maggie Tulliver, heroine of The Mill on the Floss, is chronologically the first of George Eliot's heroines who progresses through five experiences in psychological development: the experiences of egoism, suffering, crisis of choice, resignation and altruism. The Mill on the Floss, published in 1860, was the second of George Eliot's full-length novels. Unlike either of the others, the narrative begins during the childhood of the main character, a childhood which is largely George Eliot's own story when she was a little girl.[48]

In nature, Maggie Tulliver possesses the qualities she shares with Dorothea and Gwendolen: intelligence, sensibility, and imagination. Neither the times nor the circumstances in which Maggie grows up provide fulfillment for the breadth of her mind or the depth of her feeling. As she herself says, "I was never satisfied with a little of anything . . . . I never felt I had enough music--I wanted more instruments playing together--I wanted voices to be fuller and deeper."[49]

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[48]Joan Bennett, George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art (Cambridge, 1962), p. 115.

[49]Eliot, Mill, p. 638.

As the quote implies, the arc of her emotions is wide and deep.

Maggie's experience of egoism begins within her immediate family environment, in the venerable brick house next to the mill. Both the house and the mill have been in the Tulliver family for more than one hundred years. The solution for Maggie's conflicts must be found within the limits of her surrounding social world, the ancient, provincial town of St. Oggs. The portrayal of Maggie's world illustrates the structure of George Eliot's most successful novels, an inner circle of important characters in their little, intimate group enclosed by an outer circle consisting of a complex society in its several levels of work and leisure. It is an organic structure used by no other novelist before her, and George Eliot herself explained it as originating through "the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself."[50] In recollection, it is impossible to remember Maggie's story separately from St. Oggs,[51] because the little town's social and moral attitudes, evolved only from hereditary custom, determine Maggie's development as inevitably as the soil in which a plant grows and matures.[52]

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[50] J. W. Cross, George Eliot's Life as Related In Her Letters and Journals (London, 1885), II, 10.

[51] Bennett, p. 78.

[52] Ibid., p. 80.

Maggie's resolution of her conflict, the degree to which she resists or succumbs to the pressure of St. Oggs' conventions, makes its small, barely perceptible contribution to the gradual transmutation of those conventions.[53]

In the opening chapter, the deterministic causes of Maggie's inadequate environment at home are clearly established. Through the dichotomy of the characters of Edward Tulliver's children, George Eliot dramatizes the fateful role of heredity in determining both inner and outer pressures. When Mr. Tulliver selected Bessy Dodson for his wife, he exhibited a characteristic lack of foresight in anticipating for his children the desirability of intellectual potential in both parents. He explains that

> I picked the mother because she wasn't o'er 'cute--. . . . 'cause she was a bit weak, like; for I wasn't a-goin' to be told the rights o'things by my own fireside. But you see, when a man's got brains himself, there's no knowing where they'll run to; an' pleasant sort o' soft woman may go on breeding you stupid lads and 'cute wenches, 'til it's like as if the world was turned topsy-turvy.[54]

To Mrs. Tulliver, however, Maggie's ugly duckling, the "'cute" Tulliver heritage is a marked disadvantage because she said

> I'm sure the child's half an idiot i' some things; for if I send her upstairs to fetch anything, she forgets what's she's gone for . . . . That niver run i' my family, thank God, no more nor a brown skin as makes her look like a mulatter. I don't

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[53] Ibid., p. 101.

[54] Ibid., p. 405.

> like to fly i' the face o' Providence, but it seems hard as I should have but one gell, an' her so comical . . . . It seems hard as my sister Deane should have that pretty child; I'm sure Lucy takes more after me nor my own child does.[55]

When Maggie's imagination and impulsiveness lead her into mischief, her mother's admonition frequently takes the form of her disadvantageous comparison with the perfect cousin Lucy.

If Tom's being a poor scholar distresses his father, nine-year old Maggie's love and adoration for her older brother prevents her from detecting any flaws in his boy's knowledge of fishing and kites and the wonderful games which he sometimes allows her to share with him. But if her forgetfulness results in failure to follow his instructions, his self-righteous sense of the need for her punishment cannot be diverted by her pleas.

For example on the day Tom discovers his rabbits are dead because Maggie has forgotten to feed them while he has been away at school, he tells her, "I don't love you, Maggie. You shan't go fishing with me tomorrow. I told you to go and see the rabbits every day." Although Maggie tearfully protests, "I'd forgive you, if you forgot anything--I wouldn't mind what you did--I'd forgive you and love you," Tom runs off, leaving the sobbing Maggie to retreat to her hiding place in the attic. There she wails, "What use is anything if Tom doesn't love me?"[56]

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[55] Ibid., pp. 399-400.

[56] Ibid., pp. 417-418.

Mr. Tulliver often takes Maggie's part when she is in trouble because he realizes Tom's attitude toward his sister is frequently high-handed. At tea-time two hours later, when Mr. Tulliver discovers Maggie has been missing, he sends Tom off to bring her to tea, with a firm reminder to be good to his little sister. In the attic, both a rescue and a reconciliation are accomplished.[57]

The pattern of these incidents within the family circle repeats itself over and over throughout the novel, in Maggie's and Tom's later years as well as in the childhood scenes. Tom frequently expects too much of Maggie, and when trouble results, he coldly withdraws his love as a punishment[58] and refuses to listen to her side of the story. As a child, she turns to her father for comfort and love; but after his illness, and later his death, she can turn to no one. She never outgrows her sobbing wail in the attic that nothing matters if Tom doesn't love her anymore.

Of the three heroines who are the subjects of this study, Maggie Tulliver is the only one in whose deterministic development heredity is stressed so emphatically.[59] Underlying all the strife, as Maggie's tragedy unfolds, is Mr. Tulliver's mistaken judgment, his uncontrollable passions,

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[57] Ibid., pp. 419-420.

[58] Jerome Thale, The Novels of George Eliot (New York, 1967), p. 50.

[59] W. J. Harvey, "Idea and Image in the Novels of George Eliot," Critical Essays on George Eliot, ed. Barbara Hardy (New York, 1970), p. 161.

and his bull-like obstinacy. His unfortunate choice of a wife is responsible for the opposition between father and son, mother and daughter, brother and sister.[60] Tulliver and Dodson characteristics do not blend, as Jerome Thale points out. Maggie is basically a Tulliver, for from her father she inherits her passionate impulsiveness, her disregard of consequences, and her day-dreaming approach to reality. While she lacks her father's obstinacy, his warmth and vigor are reflected in her deep need to love and to be loved in return. Tom is basically a Dodson, for he has inherited their single-minded pursuit of selfish interests which they succeed in representing as impeccable principles. His indifference to his sister's acutely painful self-reproach results from his shallow Dodson vein of sensibility. Jerome Thale suggests that there is an ironic reversal of hereditary combinations, however, in that Tom inherits the Tulliver obstinacy while Maggie inherits the Dodson moral sense. The irony lies in the conflicts which this interchange in characteristics stimulates.[61]

Deterministic causes and their effects in chain reaction control not only heredity but also environment. Tulliver traits control Maggie's inner tensions through direct

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[60] V. C. Knoepflmacher, George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968), p. 194.

[61] Thale, pp. 45-46.

inheritance of similar traits from her father; Tulliver traits influence Maggie's outer tensions through the effect on her environment of her father's controversial actions. The antagonisms between Maggie and her Dodson mother are repeated sources of rejection in her childhood environment; these Dodson antagonisms and rejections are intensified and multiplied for Maggie through their inherited presence in her brother, Tom.

In George Eliot's fictional world, the society which encloses her heroine's immediate family group plays a definitive role in shaping the heroine's fate; for, as the novelist herself wrote, "there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it."[62] St. Oggs is an ancient, provincial town located on the River Floss, within sight of the Tulliver home and mill. As George Eliot describes it,

> It is one of those old, old towns which impress one as a continuation and outgrowth of nature, as much as the nests of the bower-birds or the winding galleries of the white ants: a town which carries the traces of its long growth and history like a millennial tree . . . .[63]

George Levine's interpretation of the significance of the paragraph suggests that the growth of St. Oggs has been slow and without design, spreading naturally like the trees and undergrowth of the forest. Expressed in the continuing description is the implication that the people have developed

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[62]Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 725.

[63]Eliot, Mill, p. 480.

as the town has developed, from nature and out of the past, much like the bower-birds or the white ants. Similarly, their traditions of custom and of feeling governing relations with each other have grown slowly, one developing out of the other like the concentric circles of growth of the "millennial tree."[64] Clearly, George Eliot is showing determinism to be the controlling force in the evolution of St. Oggs' society. Furthermore, through marked emphasis on the town's resemblances to nature, the novelist is subtly suggesting that St. Oggs' heritage of both good and bad ideas of how men can best live together has not progressed very far beyond the elemental.[65]

The Dodsons and the Tullivers personify the attitudes and customs indigenous to St. Oggs.[66] The conventions of the town are presented almost entirely through the rigid code of the Dodsons, a large and dominant family in the society. Jerome Thale analyzes appreciatively the amusing heterogeneity of the Dodsons' hallowed habits and unwritten laws. Individual Dodson households and customs are described in great domestic detail which include, among other miscellany, the only proper way of writing wills, storing linen and china, making investments, and planning a correct funeral. A proper Dodson is acutely aware that for performing each task there

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[64] George Levine, "Intelligence as Deception," PMLA, LXXX (1965), p. 404.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

is only one right way from which he may never deviate.[67] For generations the Dodsons have been a family of stature and wealth in the community. In contrast, there have been individual members of the Tulliver family who have taken chances which would be anathema to the Dodsons. Ralph Tulliver, an ancestor who enjoyed high living, squandered a fortune;[68] Grittie Tulliver in the current generation married a poor man for love;[69] and Edward Tulliver has a costly compulsion for "going to law" to settle disputes over water rights. However, the Tullivers, too, have long been a family of substance, as their ownership of the mill for over a century indicates. Nevertheless, the hereditary differences between the families have been as apparent in the community as they are in the home beside the mill.

The mass of detail in the series of Dodson and Tulliver households contributes to an understanding of the stresses of Maggie's society in her formative years which pressure her[70] and create the contradictions in her character. As Walter Allen emphasizes, her world is a world of pride in property and in family. Of the two, the former is the more important, since the latter serves primarily as the agent in the ritual of conventions by which property is preserved and increased.[71]

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[67] Thale, p. 41.

[68] Eliot, Mill, p. 598.

[69] Knoepflmacher, p. 200.

[70] Bennett, pp. 81-82.

[71] Walter Allen, George Eliot (New York, 1965), p. 109.

George Eliot herself implies that these conventions constitute a kind of morality equivalent almost to a "pagan" religion which is stifling "for want of an outlet towards something beautiful, great, or noble."[72] The child, Maggie, is entirely a Tulliver. Her impetuous childhood collisions with the dictates of Dodson practice mirror her passionate, uncontrolled Tulliver traits in inner struggle with the smothering restraints of the Dodson code.[73] Her stormy, little-girl defiance of the Dodson authority personified by Tom, her mother, and her aunts foreshadows the agonizing conflicts of her young adulthood.

Of Maggie's five experiences of psychological development, her first experience, the experience of egoism, begins in childhood. In this respect, the story of Maggie differs from the stories of both Dorothea and Gwendolen, who are young women of marriageable age in the opening chapters. This difference in Maggie's age causes certain differences in the timing of her first two experiences in psychological development; however, these differences in timing blend so that her resulting progress is essentially similar to that of the other two girls by the time of the onset of the third experience in psychological development.

In her early experience of egoism, Maggie is an

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[72] Eliot, Mill, p. 596.

[73] Thale, p. 50.

impulsive, nine year old girl who dearly loves her brother and her father and who craves not only their affection but also its overt expression in return. George Eliot tells the reader: "Poor Maggie was by no means made up of unalloyed devotedness, but put forth large claims for herself where she loved strongly."[74] Maggie enjoys her own intellectual superiority as her fondness for books makes apparent, and she enjoys, too, displaying her intellectual accomplishments when she has the opportunity. Her father tells Mr. Riley that "she'll read the books and understand 'em better nor half the folks as are growed up." When Mr. Riley turns to Maggie and asks her to tell him something about her book, "The History of the Devil" by Daniel Defoe, "Maggie's cheeks begin to flush with triumphant excitement: she thought Mr. Riley would have a respect for her now; it had been evident that he thought nothing of her before."[75]

Much as she loves her brother, her love does not eclipse her desire to keep him well aware of her superiority in learning to his mediocre performance in that area. On the day they are building card-houses with Lucy, when Tom ridicules Maggie's inability to successfully place a last card to form a roof on her house, Maggie retaliates. "'Don't

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[74]Eliot, Mill, pp. 545-546.

[75]Ibid., p. 403.

laugh at me, Tom!" she burst out, angrily, "I'm not a stupid. I know a great many things you don't.'" Tom's retort, "'I like Lucy better than you: I wish Lucy was my sister,'" hurts Maggie. As she rises from the floor, she quite unintentionally upsets Tom's pagoda, but her distressed protests that she did not mean to do it do not convince Tom. After that, he ignores Maggie altogether and speaks only to Lucy.[76]

That day which George Eliot says "had begun ill with Maggie"[77] grows steadily worse. How Maggie combats its evils illustrate her resourcefulness, her confidence in her own impulsive decisions, and her rash courage in carrying them out. Each incident shows a small egoist falling into errors.

In Aunt Pullett's immaculate parlor that same afternoon, Maggie absentmindedly drops her cake and then accidentally grinds it into the carpet. She is so delighted when Uncle Pullett's musical snuff-box plays "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir" that she impulsively puts her arms around Tom and says, "O, Tom, isn't it pretty?" Unfortunately her affectionate enthusiasm causes Tom to spill his cowslip wine and to cry out loudly. Characteristically for Maggie, Dodson judgment is swiftly pronounced. Aunt Pullett scolds, "'Little gells mustn't come to see me if they behave in that way,'" and Uncle Pullett echoes, "'Why, you're too rough, little

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[76] Ibid., p. 456.

[77] Ibid., p. 455.

miss.'" No words of comfort are forthcoming from Mrs. Tulliver. "'Why don't you sit still, Maggie?' her mother said peevishly." As a precaution against further mishaps, the children are sent outside, with Aunt Pullett's command that they are not to go out of the garden.[78]

Fresh from the scathing reprimands of her Dodson relatives, Maggie finds Tom taking advantage of his brotherly prerogative to punish her. His bravado fortified by the prospect of a safe escape from the garden, Tom invites only Lucy to go to the edge of the pond to see the pike. Frowning, Maggie begins to think that

> as Tom seemed to prefer Lucy to her, Lucy made part of his unkindness. Maggie would have thought a little while ago that she could never be cross with pretty little Lucy, any more than she could be cruel to a little white mouse; but then, Tom had always been quite indifferent to Lucy before, and it had always been left to Maggie to pet and make much of her. As it was, she was actually beginning to think that she would like to make Lucy cry, by slapping or pinching her, especially as it might vex Tom . . . .[79]

As Maggie creeps up beside Lucy, Tom at last condescends to speak to her and says, "'Now get away, Maggie. There's no room for you on the grass here. Nobody asked <u>you</u> to come!'" Maggie needs no further incentive "to push poor little pink-and-white Lucy into the cow-trodden mud."[80]

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[78] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 461-462.

[79] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 467.

[80] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 468.

Yielding to her passionate anger and unhappiness, Maggie has made a selfish decision and impulsively has carried it out. Furthermore, as the omniscient author states, she is not sorry, because Tom deliberately made her unhappy, and he also habitually delays forgiving her, even though she tells him she is sorry and he knows how bad she feels.[81] Since Maggie considers this a major crisis in her life, she makes another decision, to run away to join the gypsies who will welcome her because of all her superior learning. She does not feel sorry that her disappearance will distress her father who loves her dearly. Instead, she "reconciled herself to the idea of parting with him" by means of a plan to send him a mysterious letter to tell him she is well and happy and loves him, but not to tell him where she is. In running away to the gypsies, she is actually carrying out a favorite, make-believe game with which she had often comforted herself. An important motive is that "cruel Tom" and her Dodson aunts and uncles who have scolded her will never know where she is.[82]

Maggie does find the gypsies; however, they are not exactly where she expects to find them, and they are certainly not at all what she expects them to be. Actually, little Maggie is terrified by their unintelligible language, by their

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., p. 471.

unappetizing food, and most of all by their mysterious behavior toward her. When miraculously her father appears on a white-faced horse, she sobs out of sheer joy.[83]

Maggie Tulliver is a smart little girl who is certainly capable of reaching some obvious conclusions about her visits to Aunt Pullett and the gypsies. She did not mean to step on the tea-cake and never would she deliberately have spilled Tom's wine. However, Maggie thinks, Aunt Pullett, being a Dodson aunt, is just naturally cantankerous. Doesn't something unpleasant almost always happen on visits to the Dodson aunts? For the reader's purposes of analysis, the force motivating Aunt Pullett is determinism in the guise of the Dodson Code, the curious conventions accumulating for centuries and controlling the performance of each small act. Much as Maggie loves Tom, surely she must admit to herself that Tom was even more disagreeable than Aunt Pullett that day. The explanation of Tom's behavior is the determinism of heredity, for Tom is a Dodson, too, with the same certainty that his way is the right way.

In her heart, Maggie knows that she can only blame herself for part of her troubles and the worst part, at that. Aunt Pullett specifically forbade the children to leave the garden. Maggie knows she could have stayed in that garden

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[83] Ibid., pp. 473-479.

and perhaps even have imagined a fascinating game that would have lured Lucy away from Tom, for Maggie loves to make-believe with her gift of imagination. The meanest thing is having pushed Lucy in the mud, because it was really Tom at whom Maggie was so angry. Besides, Maggie herself has been blamed so many times for things that have not been really her fault that she should have tried to be more understanding toward Lucy. The issue in each of these offenses is, obviously, freedom of choice. While there is no evidence that Maggie had any real qualms of conscience over either of these naughty choices, she is too intelligent a child to be unaware that the decisions were her own.

Running off to find the gypsies results from another selfish choice; however, a different factor enters into the adventure, as Barbara Hardy points out, because Maggie's flight to the gypsies is also a flight from reality. She is acting out one of her day-dream flights of fancy with which she has comforted herself for so long. She finds the reality of gypsy life a hideous contrast to her alluring day-dream.[84] Again, Maggie is intelligent enough to realize that one cannot count on a day-dream adventure turning out to be wonderful in real-life experience. She must realize that trying to find happiness away from the family and home she has always known

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[84] Barbara Hardy, The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form (New York, 1963), p. 56.

did not solve the old, painful problems, but only created terrifying new ones. Surely she must wonder what terrible things might have happened if her father had not found her and rescued her, not only from the gypsies but also from retribution at home.

Underlying all of Maggie's difficulties that day is the basic reason for her doing everything she did, the reason implicit in her sobbing explanation to her father: "'I ran away because I was so unhappy--Tom was so angry with me. I couldn't bear it.'"[85] Maggie is the victim of her Tulliver passions and rashness; she is the victim, too, of the Dodson pressures which dominate her little world. These deterministic factors are the causes of her calamities that evil day. She had not yet learned to feel compassion for someone dear to her, compassion which would enable her to make an unselfish choice. Neither had she learned to harness her passions to her will, a will which would then be strong enough to carry out a correct but difficult choice.

Clearly in her childhood experience of egoism, Maggie's actions are controlled by deterministic factors at work both inside and outside herself. Her abortive, egoistic attempt to join the gypsies was doomed to failure because of the severance of home and community ties vital to human growth. But Maggie has begun the process of education which

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[85]Eliot, Mill, p. 479.

will prepare her for her adult crisis of choice.

Maggie is precipitated into her experience of suffering, her second experience of psychological development, by the bankruptcy which results from her father's selfish, passionate choice to risk the family's wealth in a futile lawsuit, which is won by the lawyer Wakem. During the first weeks of Mr. Tulliver's critical illness which follows his realization that Wakem is now the owner of his home, his mill, and his land, Maggie's loving distress for her father teaches her the compassion and understanding which will enable her to make future, unselfish decisions for the good of others. As the thirteen-year old girl sits at the foot of the sick bed, George Eliot describes Maggie's sorrow and love that

> went out to him with a stronger movement than ever, at the thought that people would blame him . . . . Her father had always defended and excused her, and her loving remembrance of his tenderness was a force within her that would enable her to do or bear anything for his sake.[86]

When he recovers after months of illness, and is able to resume some of his old duties at the mill, he is preoccupied with bitter anxiety about the five-hundred-pound debt both he and Tom are struggling to pay. Tom, tired by his clerical work for his Uncle Deane and harrassed about the debt, has little time for his sister in his brief hours at home. Although her father's life is no longer in jeopardy, Maggie has

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[86] Ibid., p. 546.

a new sorrow, for neither father nor brother responds to her love; and love is the mainspring of Maggie's being. As she sits with her cheek against Mr. Tulliver's knee, she longs for him to "give some sign that he was soothed by the sense that he had a daughter who loved him! But now she got no answer to her little caresses, either from her father or from Tom--the two idols of her life."[87]

Maggie's life now is a life of harsh frustration. She can no longer attend school because there is no money for tuition; at the auction to pay her father's debts, even her few old books were sold. George Eliot describes her as "a creature full of eager and passionate longings" for beauty and gladness. She is "thirsty for all knowledge, with an ear straining after dreamy music that died away and would not come near to her."[88] George Eliot blames Maggie's unpreparedness to face hardship on the lack of real knowledge typical of the accepted education for women at that time.[89] Barbara Hardy interprets Maggie's problems, including education, as being directly related to the handicap of being a woman; for Maggie and subsequent George Eliot heroines, this handicap is comparable to that of being a younger son or a poor man. It is a handicap which governs the depth of the tragedy of

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[87] Ibid., p. 602.

[88] Ibid., p. 569.

[89] Ibid., p. 608.

suffering and limits redemption.[90] A direct, practical result, in George Eliot's novels at least, is that the heroine has access to no obvious, worthy occupation which will provide a useful outlet for her talents and energies. Eventually Maggie will teach; but the teaching will be done during a period outside the narrative when Maggie is again unhappy. While Tom may work, Maggie is condemned to both idleness and ignorance.[91] Maggie's doing menial jobs causes her mother such distress that the girl is deprived of the satisfaction of even such physical work.[92] Maggie's harsh reality is alleviated by a gift from an unexpected source. Bob Jakin, a simple young man who had been a boyhood playmate of Tom's but who is now a peddlar, brings her a few old books he bought for her because he has been haunted by the expression on Maggie's face the day her own books were sold.[93]

Bob Jakin is a traditional character whose repeated sets of loving kindness express his moral value in terms of old-fashioned goodness. Bob has had few advantages, and his daily efforts are limited to being a good peddlar and meeting his human responsibilities as he comes upon them.[94] C. B. Cox

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[90]Hardy, p. 47.

[91]Ibid., p. 51.

[92]Eliot, Mill, p. 600.

[93]Eliot, Mill, pp. 603-604.

[94]Cox, p. 13.

explains that Bob's traditional pattern of moral worth is in contrast to Maggie's striving for a fuller life by which George Eliot portrayed psychological development.[95] The novelist repeated this device in most of her novels, as part of her broad picture of everyday life and the richness of ordinary people.[96]

One of the old books which Bob brings to Maggie is a copy of Thomas à Kempis' The Imitation of Christ, which opens up to her a whole new world of thought and which lessens her painful frustration. In this devotional work of the middle ages, Maggie makes her first acquaintance with resignation:

> Know that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than anything in the world . . . . If thou seekest this or that, and wouldst be here or there to enjoy thy own will and pleasure, thou shalt never be quiet nor free from care: for in everything somewhat will be wanting, and in every place there will be some that will cross thee.[97]

Maggie interprets the old monk's philosophy as a magic formula for happiness achieved by a triumphant defeat of her own desires. She does not grasp the central idea, "that renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly."[98] Thus Maggie's first venture in self-denial takes on the character of martyrdom which rewards her with the pleasant feeling of

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[95] Ibid., p. 15.

[96] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[97] Eliot, Mill, p. 609.

[98] Ibid., p. 610.

being good.[99] Although her interpretation obviously retains a generous proportion of egoism, Thomas à Kempis' philosophy of resignation becomes part of Maggie's moral standard for herself and prepares her for the psychological experience of her crisis of choice.[100]

When Philip Wakem, the crippled son of Mr. Tulliver's hated enemy, returns to his family home, he follows Maggie on her favorite walk to the Red Deeps one day to beg her to renew their friendship which began when he and Tom were schoolmates.[101] While Maggie at first declines, she allows herself eventually to be persuaded. After Philip accepts her refusal to meet him regularly in the Red Deeps, he asks only that she allow him to walk there "sometimes so that once in a while they may meet "by chance," which could not be considered "concealment."[102] When Maggie does not forbid this arrangement, she is once again making a selfish choice. The omniscient novelist tells us that while Maggie sincerely believes her father's attitude of hate and revenge is both useless and morally wrong, yet she knows that discovery of a secret friendship between her and Philip would make Mr. Tulliver furiously angry and cause much agony for everyone.[103] Even allowing

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Paris, p. 161.

[101] Eliot, Mill, pp. 614-623.

[102] Eliot, Mill, p. 629.

[103] Ibid., p. 636.

Maggie every chance for an impartial judgment, the reader cannot ignore the egoistic pleasure (innocent though it is) that she has had in Philip's admiring glances[104] and in his careful attention to her every word.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Philip's motives are less than altruistic in his meetings with Maggie in the Red Deeps. He has, of course, tempted her to violate her family loyalty in continuing to meet him. Very soon he upsets the peace Maggie has found in the Thomas à Kempis philosophy by telling her that the day will come when "'every rational satisfaction of your nature that you deny now, will assault you like a savage appetite.'"[105] On their last afternoon alone, after more than a year of meetings, Philip tells Maggie that he loves her. Maggie admits in return that she cares for him.[106] However, there are dubious undertones in the love scene. Whether it is out of fear of family repercussions, or of regret, Maggie suggests that they give the idea up; but during the happiness of their single kiss, her fleeting thought of the "sacrifice" in marrying a cripple is clear enough. When she bends to kiss Philip, George Eliot

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[104]Bernard J. Paris, "The Inner Conflicts of Maggie Tulliver: A Horneyan Analysis," The Centennial Review, 13 (Spring, 1969), 185.

[105]Ibid., p. 639.

[106]Ibid., pp. 642-643.

says his face is "like a woman's."[107]

When Tom discovers her relationship with Philip Wakem, once again Maggie feels the force of his inflexible certainty that he is right in demanding her oath on the family Bible to give up all private communication with Philip. Her only alternative is Tom's threat to tell her father, an alternative he offers saying coldly, "Choose!" Added to the pressure from Tom is the realization that this is one more blow in the long series of blows resulting from her father's calamitous errors which have made her unhappy for so long. It is a familiar story to Maggie, the family pressures determining the outcome of a crisis in her life. Since the omniscient novelist says that Maggie feels a certain relief that the clandestine relationship has been concluded,[108] perhaps her inner pressures are less in this decision. Nevertheless, not for a moment does she consider the choice which will result in her father knowing and suffering about her relationship with Philip. Neither does she give Tom exactly the promise he demands; she gives her word only that she will neither see Philip nor write to him without telling Tom. Limited though it is, Maggie exercises some freedom of choice.

John Hagan suggests still another way in which Mr. Tulliver's financial ruin influences Maggie's plight at this

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[107] Ibid., pp. 644-645.

[108] Ibid., p. 654.

period of her life. Hagan insists that a primary factor in Maggie's attachment to Philip is Tom's and Mr. Tulliver's neglect of Maggie and her great need for their love. Her frustration intensifies her need for love outside the family circle, and Philip meets that need. Then when Tom discovers the relationship, with self-righteousness reminiscent of his childhood he punishes Maggie for a crisis which he helped to create. John Hagan's theory adds an ironic twist to another injustice in Maggie's life.[109]

Maggie's experience of egoism begins in childhood. Her father's bankruptcy precipitates her prematurely into her experience of suffering at thirteen years old. The two experiences can be considered to overlap until her selfish decision at nineteen years old brings her experience of egoism to an end. Her suffering continues until her moment of choice. During the long six years of suffering, she learns to feel compassion during the periods she is close to her father's suffering and to Philip Wakem's suffering; she learns to practice self-denial and to exercise her will while she is living by the precepts of Thomas à Kempis. At the time of the forced termination of her friendship with Philip, she learns to make necessary choices under difficult conditions. While Maggie's experience of egoism begins earlier and is overlapped for an extensive period by her experience of

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[109] John Hagan, "A Reinterpretation of The Mill on The Floss," PMLA, LXXXVII (January, 1972), 59.

suffering, the only significant difference between her first two experiences and those of the remaining heroines is in timing. Lessons learned from the experiences are essentially comparable by the time the girls reach the onset of the third experience, the crisis of choice. The two psychological experiences, the experience of egoism and the experience of suffering, are in progress concurrently when she comes to stay with Lucy. Two years have elapsed since Mr. Tulliver's death. Nineteen year old Maggie has come back to St. Oggs after giving up a teaching position in which she was lonely and where, she tells Lucy, she has acquired the habit of being unhappy because of her unfulfilled desires.[110] The attraction between Maggie and Stephen Guest, which springs up at once, is the single vivid episode characterized by sexual tension in George Eliot's novels.[111] Philip Wakem understands immediately that the attraction is physical and that Stephen is unworthy of Maggie, in spite of his wealth and social position.[112] Bernard Paris suggests that Maggie is drawn to Stephen by the glamor of his position and by what it could mean in her life to be his acknowledged sweetheart.[113] In contrast, Barbara Hardy advances her opinion that it is

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[110] Eliot, Mill, p. 671.

[111] Hardy, p. 56.

[112] Ibid., p. 54.

[113] Paris, Inner Conflicts, p. 187.

George Eliot's voice speaking when Philip later writes to Maggie that he has always been convinced that only a part of her nature was drawn to Stephen, and clearly the least responsible part.[114] Barbara Hardy contends that George Eliot does not put the terms "tragedy" and "human lot," which appear in Philip's letter, in the mouths of casual characters.[115] The distinction is important because of the significance George Eliot attaches to motive in the reader's judgment of the deed which Maggie will soon perform.[116]

George Levine maintains that although some of George Eliot's characters seem to be compelled by some inner force to perform an action, in actual fact the occasion has been anticipated by the character, and the decision has been made well in advance. Consequently, such characters are as responsible for their decisions as if there were an obvious period of debate preceding the action.[117]

Maggie Tulliver appears to be anaesthetized by Stephen's presence and by the gliding motion of the boat downstream. Significantly, except for Stephen, she is alone, isolated from her mother, her cousin, and Philip; typical of the egoist

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[114] Hardy, p. 54.

[115] Ibid., p. 55.

[116] Bennett, p. 113.

[117] Levine, Determinism, p. 276.

selfishly in search of her own satisfaction, she is cut off from people usually close to her who could protect her from harm. Yet by the principles of John Stuart Mill's theory of determinism, she is responsible for her action in passing the landing at Luckreth, where they should have stopped in order to be able to return to St. Oggs that night.[118] She is equally culpable in not insisting that he make every effort to get to Torby from which they might at least get home late that night.[119] Maggie has made her selfish egoistic choice which concluded her long experience of egoism and sends her on her way in her own experience of suffering in deadly earnest.

As her third experience in psychological development approaches, the crisis of choice, Maggie is alone in the early morning darkness on the steamer. Maggie's guilt and agonizing remorse assail her with all the ferocity of her passionate Tulliver nature. Her conscience goads her with the memory of her evil deed which must be a stain on her character forever. As compassion for Lucy and Philip fills her heart, she knows she cannot marry Stephen. She must spare Lucy and Philip that final blow and return to St. Oggs. Instead of her blind egoism of yesterday, she is driven by her suffering to choose the course of self-sacrificing duty, for she has

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[118] Eliot, Mill, p. 741.

[119] Ibid., p. 743.

learned from her past experiences that she can find peace only in renunciation of her love for Stephen and in resignation to the resulting pain. She neither expects nor asks it to be easy to face the disgrace that violating St. Oggs' conventions will bring upon her. Telling Stephen will be her first sorrow, but even with the burden of her deeds and the painful limitations of her world, she trusts that her will is strong enough to meet the test. She relies on what experience has taught her.

George Levine explains that Maggie's behavior with Stephen has grown out of wilfullness and egoism which together preclude moral integrity.[120] Because of her flight with Stephen, she cannot base a practical choice in Mudport on the least harmful consequences, for she has already injured Philip and Lucy. However, she does develop perspective and sees things in their proper relation to each other. She accepts the irreversible consequences of what she has done to herself and to those she loves. Feeling lost and helpless, she looks back to the past to find meaning in her life.[121]

Back in St. Oggs, her fourth experience in psychological development, the experience of resignation, is put to the test; for her relationship with the townspeople is similar to the familiar tensions between the Tullivers and the Dodsons.[122]

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[120] Levine, Intelligence, p. 405.

[121] Ibid., p. 406.

[122] Ibid.

Aunt Glegg shows how family unity can begin changes toward social unity by refusing to blame Maggie. As conventional pressures become heavier, she seeks advice from a mentor, the minister Dr. Kenn, who respects her principles.[123] Once again she takes refuge in the philosophy of Thomas à Kempis, but this time it is true resignation, for she bears her burden of sorrow voluntarily.[124] Because of her deterministic concern with the stress of everyday events, her understanding of the moral power of public opinion, and her psychological insights, George Eliot could not allow Maggie's tenuously held resignation to go unchallenged.[125] Gossips force Dr. Kenn to replace her as governess for his children.[126] Tom in cold fury has forbidden her to enter the old home near the mill.[127] But Bob Jakin, in loving compassion, rescues her again, as he did so long ago, and takes her into his home next to the river where she lives with his little family.[128] There in her room late one night she fights her hardest battle after rereading a letter from Stephen whose misery prompts her to begin a letter telling him to come. Instead, she burns Stephen's letter and tells herself that

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[123] Ibid., p. 407.

[124] Paris, p. 190.

[125] Ibid., p. 407.

[126] Eliot, Mill, p. 776.

[127] Ibid., p. 755.

[128] Ibid., p. 757.

> I will bear it and bear it till death . . . . But how long it will be before death comes! . . . . Am I to struggle and fall and repent again?--has life other trials as hard for me still? . . . .[129]

Then she prays:

> O, God, if my life is to be long, let me live to bless and comfort /others./ . . . .[130]

Maggie has successfully met the challenge to her resignation in the fourth experience of her psychological development. In spite of the deterministic pressures of St. Oggs' vicious ostracism, Tom's cruelty, Stephen's pleading letter (a result of her last selfish act), and her own temptation, as has had the will to reaffirm her noble choice.

With her prayer, she has begun her fifth and final experience in psychological development, the experience of altruism. Her prayer is interrupted by flood water rising in her room. As Bob takes one boat for his family, Maggie is suddenly carried off in another by the current.[131] With the oars she manages to get to her family home and rescue Tom, trapped alone upstairs.[132] Now at last Tom suddenly realizes with wonder, humiliation, and admiration that he has been wrong about his sister, as Maggie understands when he calls her his old childish name for her, "Magsie."[133] However,

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[129] Ibid., p. 778.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid., p. 779.

[132] Ibid., pp. 779-782.

[133] Ibid., p. 782.

their reunion is brief; for as Tom sees a mass of floating wooden machinery racing toward the boat, he embraces Maggie and they go down together.[134]

Maggie's fifth experience in psychological development, the experience of altruism, is successfully concluded with the rescue of Tom. After her prayer which indicates her desire to devote her life to the service of others, she discovers the rising flood water in her room. Her first thought is to rescue her mother, of whose absence Maggie is unaware, and the hard brother who has disowned her. When the boat is struck, they are in Tofton, where Maggie has directed Tom to row so that they can rescue Lucy.[135] Immediately after the declaration of the altruistic purpose of her life, she puts it into practice by her effort to save the lives of three people who might themselves have brought supreme happiness into her life had they displayed her unselfishness. The flood represents the harsh deterministic force of nature which thwarts Maggie's hereditary, impulsive Tulliver generosity. Maggie might have tried to save only herself in the selfish hope that Lucy might be drowned and Tom justly rewarded for his brutality. But instead, strengthened by the knowledge that she has won her battle of resignation, she freely chooses

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134 Ibid., p. 783.

135 Ibid., p. 782.

to attempt the rescues in spite of the physical drain on her strength and of the risk of her own safety.

Maggie's five experiences of psychological development, the experiences of egoism, suffering, crisis of choice, resignation, and altruism, successfully illustrate the influences of determinism and freedom of choice in her growth to maturity. Maggie's life ends in tragedy. The deterministic forces of her father's fatal errors and her own impulsive passions doom Maggie to tragedy. However, she wages a valiant battle, and through her courageous strength of will she succeeds in regaining Tom's love and in winning his admiration and respect in the final minutes of her life. These have been life-long objectives. Many critics agree with Bernard Paris that she dies at the moment of her greatest moral triumph.[136]

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136 Paris, Experiments, p. 168.

III

DOROTHEA BROOKE

Dorothea Brooke's story opens on her first experience of psychological development, the experience of egoism, when she is nineteen years old. From egoism, she will progress like Maggie Tulliver through the experiences of suffering, crisis of choice, and resignation until she embarks upon the experience of altruism, which will complete her psychological development. Dorothea is the heroine of Middlemarch, which critics regard as George Eliot's finest novel. Like Maggie, Dorothea possesses intelligence, imagination, sensibility and beauty, but with those qualities the similarity ends, except perhaps for the ignorance which is common to the three girls. Following the deaths of their parents, Dorothea and her sister, Celia, have been educated in Switzerland, "on plans at once narrow and promiscuous,"[138] with the result that their education is typical of the inferior instruction provided for young women of the early eighteen thirties in England and abroad.[139]

However, Dorothea's tastes in reading Pascal and

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[138] Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 10.

[139] Hardy, p. 49.

Jeremy Taylor[140] are as exalted as her ideals are romantic, for she is searching for a way to fill her life with intelligent, zealous activity.[141] She considers it ridiculous that anyone should think of the young, attractive Sir James Chettam as her suitor, since Dorothea longs for a distinguished scholar for a husband, "a sort of father," who will help her to become learned.[142] In her egoistic dream of marriage, her husband not only will be both teacher and guide in directing her life to accomplish altruistic social purposes, but he also will welcome her talents to aid him in his scholarly pursuits. John Hagan points out that Dorothea's romantic notions of social improvement are vague and abstract, that they ignore specific needs of people in her immediate world, and that consequently they violate the interdependence within the community which is characteristic of the social structure of the novel.[143] Hagan's comment identifies the conflict between Dorothea's objectives and the deterministic principle on which George Eliot's fictional social structure is based.[144] Furthermore Dorothea is obviously selfishly thinking primarily of the ways in which a husband can respond

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[140] Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 10.

[141] Ibid., p. 85.

[142] Ibid., p. 12.

[143] John Hagan, "Middlemarch: Narrative Unity in the Story of Dorothea Brooke," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 16 (June, 1961), 21.

[144] Levine, Determinism, p. 270.

to her needs; she is not equally concerned with the ways in which she can respond to his.[145]

George Eliot suggests that Dorothea displays a certain resemblance to an ancestor who was a Puritan gentleman active in Cromwell's government, because of her choice of plain dresses[146] and her impatience with her uncle's neglect of farm buildings on the estate.[147] John Hagan, however, advances the theory that Dorothea is deceiving herself about the true needs of her nature, as her fascination with her mother's emeralds[148] and her enjoyment of horseback riding[149] imply. In addition, she is equally deceived about both the kind of marriage which will provide real fulfillment and also the necessary requirements for the altruistic deeds she wishes to perform. Both spirituality and sensuality, Hagan maintains, make up her character; she is concealing the latter behind a shield of religious self-denial.[150] More important, she has not yet awakened sexually.[151]

Everyone close to Dorothea knows that her engagement

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[145] Thale, p. 116.

[146] Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 11.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., p. 15.

[149] Ibid., p. 12.

[150] Hagan, pp. 19-20.

[151] David Daiches, George Eliot: Middlemarch (London, 1963) p. 14.

to the scholarly clergyman, Edward Casaubon, is wrong.[152] "'A great bladder for dried peas to rattle in!'"[153] Mrs. Cadwallader, the Rector's wife, calls him. Dorothea is deaf to all appeals to consider the unhappiness the disparity in ages and habits can cause her. Her reply to her sister, Celia, typifies her egoistic condescension: "'Many things are true which only the commonest minds observe.'"[154] Dorothea opposes, therefore, every one of her friends and the members of her family. In addition, she lacks a father's guidance at the time of this major decision. Both of these deterministic factors, isolation from family and friends[155] and a break in the sequence of parental influences,[156] threaten her happiness. She herself fails to notice that Mr. Casaubon's long letter making her his offer dwells largely on his observations of her characteristics which ensure her being a suitable wife for the eminent author of The Key to All Mythologies. His strongest feelings are expressed by the words "affection" and "sincere devotion"; not once does he mention "love."[157] Her own egoistic reaction is equally devoid of rapture, as her thoughts and the author's

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[152] Thale, p. 17.

[153] Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 58.

[154] Ibid., p. 48.

[155] Levine, Determinism, p. 270.

[156] Ibid., p. 271.

[157] Eliot, Middlemarch, pp. 43-44.

comment disclose:[158]

> Now she would be able to devote herself to large yet definite duties; now she would be allowed to live continually in the light of a mind that she could reverence. This hope was not unmixed with the glow of proud delight--the joyous maiden surprise that she was chosen by the man whom her admiration had chosen. All Dorothea's passion was transfused through a mind struggling towards an ideal life; the radiance of her transfigured girlhood fell on the first object that came within its level.[159]

Dorothea's state of mind illustrates a constant theme in George Eliot's work, the tragedy of a contradiction between reason and feeling.[160] The intensity of Dorothea's wilfulness inevitably must bring disaster upon her.[161]

During her girlhood experience of egoism, Dorothea's tragedy lies in her misunderstanding of herself and in her misconception of her association with and function in the society in which she lives.[162] Perhaps the deterministic factor of her Puritan ancestry influences her in the self-denial which conceals the sensuality of her nature even from herself. The deterministic limitations of being a woman in a provincial English country area prevent her from finding an immediate, obvious outlet for her superior abilities and from learning from experience how to adjust her aspirations

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[158] Ibid., p. 44.

[159] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[160] Hardy, p. 53.

[161] Thale, p. 116.

[162] Daiche, p. 10.

to the realities of the community. Neither education nor experience have prepared her to make a wise choice; neither custom nor the presence of a wise father prevents her from making a disastrous choice. Actually, with her beauty, social position, and independent income, she is under no pressure to marry when she does. Even if she were, Sir James has made his intentions toward her unmistakably apparent. Clearly, while the forces of determinism bear down upon her, Dorothea chooses freely and on her own initiative decided to marry Edward Gasaubon.

Dorothea begins her experience of suffering, the second of her five experiences in psychological development, soon after her arrival in Rome with her husband on their wedding trip. Five weeks after the ceremony, she sits weeping in her boudoir.[163] She and her husband have had their first exchange of angry words, the result of Dorothea's accumulated disappointments in her marriage.[164] As she sobs, she recalls that

> she had been becoming more and more aware, with a certain terror, that her mind was continually sliding into inward fits of anger and repulsion, or else into forlorn weariness. . . . but her husband's way of commenting on the strangely impressive objects around them had begun to affect her with a sort of mental shiver: . . . . What was fresh to her mind was worn out to his; and such capacity of thought and feeling as had

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[163] Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 187.

[164] Ibid., pp. 195-196.

> ever been stimulated in him by the general life of mankind had long shrunk to a sort of dried preparation, a lifeless embalmment of knowledge.[165]

When she tries anxiously to follow his thoughts concerning his research, she can not "see any wide opening where she followed him. Poor Mr. Casaubon himself was lost among closets and winding stairs."[166] In addition, he has rebuffed her affectionate caresses and has shown by his behavior that he considers them to be rather surprising and somewhat unrefined.[167]

On this particular morning, while they are drinking their coffee, she tells him of her anxiety to be of more help to him in his research when they return to Lowick. Further, she suggests that perhaps with her clerical help he can actually begin to write The Key to All Mythologies.[168] His irritable response conveys the unmistakable message that he will begin his book when he is fully prepared, but that meanwhile persons of lesser ability will do well to remain silent.[169] If his reply hurts Dorothea, she herself has unwittingly given her husband a severe blow, because the question of when he will begin the actual writing of his

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[165] Ibid., p. 191.

[166] Ibid., p. 192.

[167] Ibid., pp. 192-193.

[168] Ibid., p. 194.

[169] Ibid., p. 195.

book is one which causes him intense anguish.[170] He fears that his young wife is beginning to probe at his greatest weakness.[171]

In Rome Dorothea begins her relationship with Mr. Casaubon's young cousin, Will Ladislaw, who appears to be everything that her husband is not. When Dorothea learns from Will that Mr. Casaubon's research has ignored the findings of German scholars,[172] her first feeling of alarm for him and his work changes to compassionate tenderness. For the first time, she thinks of him with a willingness to try to understand his problems.[173] She realizes how mistaken she has been to expect him to display affection. She begins to wonder whether there may be some sadness creating a void in his life.[174]

Dorothea's experience of suffering, the second of her five experiences of psychological development, persists after her return with her husband to Lowick. As she walks into her blue-green boudoir, she feels that the room and its contents are smaller and shrivelled, changed as her dreams for her married life have changed since she last saw the

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[170] Ibid., p. 196.

[171] Daiches, p. 42.

[172] Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 202.

[173] Ibid., p. 203.

[174] Ibid., p. 205.

room.[175] She asks herself how she can make her marriage all that she once intended it to be. As she tries to answer her own question, she realizes she cannot bring the strength to her husband and the high purpose to her own life in the same way she planned. But perhaps "duty would present itself in some new form of inspiration and give a new meaning to wifely love . . . somehow."[176]

She begins by joining Mr. Casaubon in the library early each morning to read aloud or to copy his material. As she demonstrates her value to him in his work, he begins to demand more of her time and labor.[177] She welcomes his need for her and his trust, for she has resolved to increase her effort to help and comfort him, and to give up her own desires for his sake.[178] She accepts the fact that living with Mr. Casaubon imposes restrictions she hoped her marriage would free her from, restrictions such as narrowness and frustration.[179] By her efforts, Dorothea shows that her emotions of tenderness and pity, which she first began to feel toward her husband in Rome, are developing into genuine compassion. However, in spite of her good intentions, sometimes she feels sorry for herself:

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[175] Ibid., p. 264.

[176] Ibid., pp. 264-265.

[177] Ibid., p. 456.

[178] Paris, Experiments, p. 187.

[179] Hagan, "Middlemarch: Narrative," p. 24.

> She was always trying to be what her husband wished, and never able to repose on his delight in what she was . . . . She longed for work which would be directly beneficent like the sunshine, and now it appeared that she was to live more and more in a virtual tomb, where there was the ghastly labour producing what would never see the light.[180]

Unfortunately, Mr. Casaubon's suspicions of the motives behind Dorothea's solicitousness for him, suspicions which also began in Rome, increase. Gnawing away at him is the conviction that Dorothea's kind attentions to his wants mask condescending criticism.[181] In addition, he is nursing a consuming jealousy of his cousin, Will Ladislaw. Originally, he resented the warm friendship which has grown between Dorothea and Will, but his jealousy now gives way to silently accusing Will of planning to ensnare Dorothea in marriage should he, Mr. Casaubon, die.[182] This jealousy is the cause of the quarrel which precedes his first heart seizure, of the change in his will, and of his heartless treatment of Dorothea in the yew-tree walk. Her response to his repulse of her sympathy is another indication of Dorothea's psychological development during her experience of suffering. When her resentment melts and she waits for him in the dark hall, Casaubon's response creates the most perfect moment

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[180] Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 455.

[181] Ibid., p. 402.

[182] Ibid., p. 405.

in their life together, in the opinion of David Daiches.[183] Because Dorothea forgives Casaubon, the omniscient author says Dorothea feels "something like the thankfulness that might well up in us if we had narrowly escaped hurting a lamed creature." David Daiches terms Dorothea's emotion as pity, but he considers it a condescending pity which serves to absolve Casaubon from the burden of blame.[184] While Daiches, and other critics as well, give Casaubon credit for this perfect moment betwen Dorothea and Casaubon, it is nevertheless her compassion which makes it possible.

Casaubon causes Dorothea suffering once more before his death in the summer-house by asking her promise to do whatever he may request, in the event of his death. After a night of agonizing debate, Dorothea realizes she can never bring herself to refuse. However, Casaubon dies before she gives him his answer. Once again, she has been prepared to completely sacrifice her own desire out of a sense of duty to her dying husband.

Throughout Dorothea's long experience of suffering, each incident is the deterministic consequence of her egoistic marriage to Edward Casaubon. Continuing to bear down upon her are all the forces of society and heredity which influenced her girlhood. Included in the latter is the

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[183]Daiches, p. 36.

[184]Daiches, p. 36.

blend of the sensual and the spiritual characteristics in her nature. In Rome and frequently at Lowick, she suffers both loneliness and a sense of futility, usual characteristics of the period of suffering. Since Casaubon remains an egoist until his death, his egoism is the most important factor in Dorothea's day-to-day environment. The necessity that she conform to his demands in everything to make the marriage work results in her plaintive comment that she can never simply be herself. An additional complication is his suspicion of her motives which prevents maximum effectiveness of her self sacrifice. Will Ladislaw is her mentor, but his effectiveness is incomplete because of Casaubon's jealousy. The debilitating effects of Casaubon's egoism are convincingly illustrated by its crippling influence on Dorothea's life as well as his own. Throughout her long experience of suffering, whatever measure of success Dorothea has is clearly traceable to her compassion for Casaubon which enables her to sacrifice her own desires. Few alternatives are available to her, although it is conceivable that with her private income a life alone might be possible. Thus, upon her return from her honeymoon in Rome, she exercises a certain amount of freedom of will and resolves to remain with her husband and place his needs before her own. That decision and the will to carry it out are responsible for her valiant struggle to seek her "duty /which/ would present itself in some new form of

inspiration."[185]

Dorothea's third experience in psychological development, the crisis of choice, follows swiftly after her discovery of Will Ladislaw with Rosamond Lydgate in what Dorothea construes to be a love scene.[186] At home in the privacy of her own bedroom, Dorothea carefully considers the three other people whose happiness is at stake. The lessons she has learned so well from her own marriage come back to her and reinforce her character. She asks herself what she can do to help Rosamond, Lydgate, and Ladislaw, and she is at peace when the answer comes: she will stifle her own pain and return to Rosamond in an effort to help Lydgate's marriage.[187] She believes she has no choice other than to accept the fact of Ladislaw's duplicity, and because she became inured to long periods of deprivation during her marriage she is able to face this painful fact.

Thus Dorothea passes through her crisis of choice, and she accepts what she must in her experience of resignation. As she embarks upon her experience of altruism, happiness awaits her. For by going to Rosamond to bring help to the

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185 Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 265.

186 Ibid., pp. 736-737.

187 Ibid., pp. 749-750.

Lydgate marriage, she finds to her joy that Will has not been guilty of the duplicity of which she accused him. Thus, as Daiches emphasizes, Dorothea offers proof through this voluntary act that she is "at last wholly outward in her idealism, not using others' needs as a means of satisfying her own idealistic ambitions."[188]

Dorothea's quest ends in compromise because she never attains the exalted life she aspired to, and her marriage to Will represents only partial fulfillment.[189] As critics frequently imply, the lack of a conventional, happy ending suggests that George Eliot did not intend readers to believe marriage to Will fulfilled Dorothea's high potential.[190] However, her story conforms to the pattern of psychological development in five stages, controlled by both determinism and freedom of choice. As Daiches interprets the Prelude, Dorothea's development is limited to the time, the location, and conditions of her individual life.[191]

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[188] Daiches, p. 23.

[189] Thale, pp. 119-120.

[190] Ibid., p. 63.

[191] Ibid., p. 43.

IV

GWENDOLEN HARLETH

Gwendolen Harleth is winning in a game of roulette as the novel opens on her first experience in psychological development, the experience of egoism. Following the same pattern as Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke, Gwendolen will make an unfortunate decision which will plunge her first into her experience of suffering and then force her through the resulting successive experiences of crisis of choice, resignation, and altruism. Gwendolen, the heroine of George Eliot's last novel, Daniel Deronda, represents the novelist's most mature work and, in the opinion of some admiring critics, is her finest characterization.[192]

Gwendolen Harleth possesses the same basic attributes possessed by Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke, the qualities of intelligence, imagination, sensibility, and beauty. She shares with them the disadvantage of ignorance, ignorance both of the world's knowledge and of herself. But again, as in the comparison of Maggie with Dorothea, the similarities extend no farther. Frank Leavis calls

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[192]Frank R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (New York, N. D.), p. 123.

Gwendolen a tragic figure, since even with all her enviable qualities she nevertheless becomes trapped because of her ignorance of herself and of true values.[193] However, at the end of the novel she is alive, unlike Maggie, and unlike Dorothea she is unencumbered by a husband with obvious handicaps. Repeatedly throughout the story, Gwendolen demonstrates that she is resourceful. The ending of Daniel Deronda is different from the endings of the other George Eliot novels in that Gwendolen's future is not specifically spelled out. These facts in combination may leave the reader with a more optimistic feeling about the heroine's future than Mr. Leavis' opinion suggests.

One of the qualities about Daniel Deronda which differs from The Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch is its structure. In the stories of both Maggie and Dorothea, the influence of the communities in which they live on their development is inescapable. In Gwendolen's story, George Eliot reverses the procedure. Mrs. Davilow and her five daughters have roved about the Continent, sometimes stopping at watering-places and at other times living in furnished apartments in Paris.[194] Consequently, the family has no roots. When Mrs. Davilow, twice widowed, rents Offendene,

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[193] Leavis, p. 109.

[194] George Eliot, Daniel Deronda (Boston, N. D.) I, 20.

Gwendolen, who is older than her half-sisters, is delighted.

George Eliot explains what Gwendolen has missed:

> Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well-rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth . . . . But this blessed persistence in which affection can take root had been wanting in Gwendolen's life . . . .[195]

In George Eliot's earlier fiction, one function of the community is to furnish moral guidance for the characters.[196] But in Daniel Deronda, as Joan Bennett points out, George Eliot's plan is to show Gwendolen's psychological development in a situation where there is the absence of community guidance. This void in Gwendolen's background has its own deterministic effects because her development lacks the enriching influences of the social and religious traditions which a community provides.[197]

Gwendolen is selfish. Her mother's preference for her eldest daughter has encouraged this trait, but, Bennett suggests, the lack of a constant community environment is a factor contributing to her selfishness and essential narrowness.[198] George Eliot, in a paragraph of authorial

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[195] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[196] Levine, Intelligence, p. 116.

[197] Bennett, p. 83.

[198] Ibid.

comment, calls Gwendolen "the princess in exile" and explains that she has a certain charm and positiveness of manner which, together with her beauty, stimulate family and people about her to do as she asks.[199] Miss Merry, the governess of the younger girls, remarks that "'Gwendolen will not rest without having the world at her feet.'"[200]

An egoistic method of "having the world at her feet" is doing only those things at which she excels and for which she will receive the admiration she desires.[201] However, when Rex Gascoigne's admiration deepens into love, Gwendolen is repulsed, even though she has been leading her cousin on. She tells him: "Pray don't make love to me! I hate it."[202] Afterward, when she tells her mother about it, she concludes, "I can't bear anyone to be very near me but you."[203] Gwendolen's reaction to poor Rex is symptomatic of her inability to love or to feel sympathy.[204] Another curious eccentricity is the fright which seizes her sometimes when she is alone in a large area. She feels terrified and incapable of exercising her will. Albert Cirillo interprets her fear of

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[199] Eliot, Daniel Deronda, I, 39.

[200] Ibid., I, 37.

[201] Albert R. Cirillo, "Salvation in Daniel Deronda: The Fortunate Overthrow of Gwendolen Harleth," Literary Monographs, I., (Madison, 1967), 222.

[202] Eliot, Daniel Deronda, I, 82.

[203] Ibid., I, 84.

[204] Cirillo, p. 222.

space as manifestations of her narrow egoism and of her separation from reality.[205]

In her early relationship with Grandcourt, the glamor of his social position is a challenge to Gwendolen. While her desire to excite his admiration alternates with her desire to keep him at a distance, she finds his cold, undemonstrative manner acceptable. She mistakenly interprets it to mean that he is a man of whom she will be able to gain control. D. R. Beeton suggests that Grandcourt's coldness, like Gwendolen's, stems from fear; his fear originates from the uncertainty of his acquitting himself so as to receive the response due him.[206] When she accepts his offer of marriage, her acceptance is another example of a decision in which she seems powerless to say no; but actually it is a decision made long in advance of the actual proposal. As George Levine states unequivocally, under these conditions the individual is held responsible for his choice.[207]

When Gwendolen accepts Grandcourt and marries him, her experience of egoism is concluded. Bearing down upon her has been the pressure of economic need, resulting from the loss of her mother's fortune through the speculations

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[205] Ibid., p. 208.

[206] D. R. Beeton, "George Eliot's Greatest and Poorest Novel: An Appraisal of Daniel Deronda," English Studies in Africa, IX(September, 1966), 13.

[207] Levine, Determinism, p. 276.

of an incompetent broker. This is a deterministic pressure resulting from a failure in the social mechanism. Another deterministic factor is the absence of environmental roots in a community which deprives her of such guidance as social experience can provide. The disadvantage of being without a real father since babyhood has been intensified by an unsatisfactory step-father; her submissive mother is ineffectual in her maternal role. The deterministic pattern of parental guidance is therefore a further handicap. Her inner conflicts, objectified by her fears of space and affection, have been produced by hereditary and environmental causes which are also deterministic. Her habitual, self-centered egoism cuts her off from human help. However, her uncle has arranged a position as governess for Gwendolen so that at the time of her acceptance of Grandcourt, she does have access to an honorable alternative. Obviously, then, Gwendolen's acceptance is an exercise of her free will. However, she is unable to resist the appeal to her vanity to become the wife of a man who will one day be a baronet. Also, she mistakenly believes that she can master him and thus have more personal freedom than she has had in a house with four younger sisters. Most important, the gambler in Gwendolen is willing to run the risk of marrying a man who has a mistress, the mother of his two children.

Gwendolen's experience of suffering begins on her wedding night with the arrival of a searing letter from

Lydia Glasher, Grandcourt's mistress.[208] Within seven weeks, the omniscient novelist tells the reader, Grandcourt has "made her proud and rebellious spirit dumb and helpless before him."[209] This transformation of a spirited girl in a few weeks is chilling proof of Grandcourt's evil.[210] That Grandcourt's motive in marrying was solely the sadistic pleasure of subduing Gwendolen is plainly apparent.

Daniel Deronda is Gwendolen's savior, the mentor to whom she turns for help. Cirillo states that the New Year's Eve ball marks the real beginning of her transformation from the self-centered, reckless girl who married Grandcourt, into the young woman who conscientiously fulfills her obligations at the end of the novel. On the evening of the ball, Gwendolen makes it clear to Daniel that her real problem is her absorbing egoism, unrelieved by complete, unselfish love for anyone. (Even her love for her mother is not unmixed with selfishness and condescension.) However, she makes it equally clear that she is turning to him, in absolute trust, for guidance.[211] A measure of his progress with her is indicated by her admission of selfishness and ignorance, as she begins to feel remorse and humility. He urges her to try to care about worthwhile objectives outside of her own personal

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[208] Eliot, Daniel Deronda, I, 370.

[209] Ibid., II, 26.

[210] Beeton, p. 17.

[211] Beeton, p. 216.

desires.[212]

In order to bring Gwendolen's potentially objective nature to fulfillment, Daniel must dominate her psychologically. A vital part of her experience of suffering is to move inward from her old vantage point outside society and become a member of society, and to suffer willingly as her penance.[213] By means of her suffering, she will develop sympathy and compassion; she will escape from her narrow egoism into reality. Cirillo states that Gwendolen's will yields to Daniel's will because she falls in love with him.[214]

As the months of her experience of suffering pass, Gwendolen becomes haunted by thoughts she cannot control, thoughts of killing Grandcourt. She fears that an uncontrollable impulse may result in tragedy. On an occasion when she can appeal to Daniel Deronda, he advises her: "'Take your fear as a safeguard. It is like quickness of hearing . . . . use it as if it were a faculty, like vision.'"[215]

Gwendolen's third experience of psychological development, her crisis of choice, strikes suddenly. As Grandcourt puts about in a small sailboat, he is swept into the sea. When he cries for her to throw the rope, she picks it up but holds it as he goes down for the second time. Then comes an important realization: she knows she would throw the rope

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[212] Ibid., p. 217.

[213] Ibid., p. 206.

[214] Ibid., p. 207.

[215] Eliot, Daniel Deronda, II, 58.

now if he were there. The realization is too much to bear, and she jumps into the water herself. Afterward she tells Deronda: "'I was leaping away from myself--I would have saved him then.'"[216] But her choice is made, Grandcourt is dead, and Gwendolen herself is saved only by the fortunate arrival of another boat. Gwendolen experiences her crisis of choice in brief minutes, perhaps seconds. Maggie has hours to anticipate her choice, while Dorothea spends a full night reaching a decision. Gwendolen's immediate regret after Grandcourt has gone down seems almost virtuous.

Gwendolen's experience of resignation is long and slow. She remains dazed intermittently, her senses dulled by her ordeal.[217] She confides in Deronda and is guided by him to try to accept what has happened as a preliminary to making her life better than it has ever been. Cirillo advances the theory that Daniel's commitment in Palestine is a necessary factor in Gwendolen's development to force her to achieve complete independence.[218] This independence for which she is now ready represents her full acceptance of Daniel's departure and the completion of her experience of resignation. Throughout the experience, Deronda has

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[216] Ibid., II, 310.

[217] Hardy, p. 28.

[218] Cirillo, p. 204.

counselled her and supported her in her effort to accept Grandcourt's drowning as a disaster caused by nature. He urges her to devote her energies to others. Her knowledge of her constant desire to do what is right, for weeks before the drowning, strengthens her returning courage; for she has tried to make a constructive contribution in the formation of her own character.

Gwendolen's fifth and last experience in psychological development, the experience of altruism, begins on Daniel's wedding day when she sends him her letter. She repeats that she remembers his words that she may become one of the best of women. If it happens, she adds, it will be because of his help. She concludes: "'It is better--it shall be better with me because I have known you.'"[219] Cirillo maintains that Daniel's marriage and departure accomplishes both Gwendolen's independence and salvation. Her letter is a voluntary act of kindness for Deronda. She has begun her experience of altruism.[220]

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[219] Eliot, Daniel Deronda, II, 430.

[220] Cirillo, p. 204.

V

CONCLUSION

As Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Gwendolen Harleth progress through their five experiences of psychological development in George Eliot's rich, deterministic world, these exceptional young women are striving to fulfill their highest aspirations which represent the struggle of youth everywhere to advance beyond the goals of their preceding generation. They are the experimentalists who with their creator's sympathy are seeking the wider, fuller life achieved in the Victorian Age. Opposed to these exceptional characters are the traditional characters, like Bob Jakin and Mary Garth, whose moral worth is represented nostalgically by time-honored deeds of kindness and righteousness. Although Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Gwendolen Harleth never achieve their full potentiality, they do discover that "human duty is comprised in the earnest study of that inexorable law of consequences . . . and patient obedience to its teaching."[221] As they demonstrate that "the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts,"[222] they add a realistic element and a rich complexity to the novel form.

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[221] George Eliot in Levine, Determinism, p. 278.

[222] Eliot, Middlemarch, p. 795.

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VITA

Elisabeth Cecilia Even was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, May 29, 1916. Finishing Kenosha High School in 1934, she entered the University of Wisconsin where she majored in dietetics. As a freshman she was awarded the scholarship cup for the highest freshman grade point average in the Department of Home Economics.

In 1935, she enrolled for her sophomore year at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia; but in 1936 she returned to Madison, Wisconsin, to complete requirements for a Bachelor of Science degree awarded by the University of Wisconsin in June of 1938. During her undergraduate years; she became a member of Omicron Nu and Delta Delta Delta.

In 1939, she married William Andrew Sale, an alumnus of the College of William and Mary. Their two children are a daughter, Elisabeth Cecilia Sale and a son, William Andrew Sale, Jr. The family has lived in Richmond since 1945.

During the intervening years, Mrs. Sale has taken courses in the University of Texas, Carthage College, the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee, University College of

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After attending the University of Richmond in the academic year of 1964-1965 to meet teacher certification requirements, Mrs. Sale began teaching in 1965 in the Sixth grade at Crestview School. Since 1967 she has been teaching English in John Randolph Tucker High School in Henrico County.