

CHAPTER 9 ; DANIEL DERONDA.

While the world of Middlemarch is oriented about the 'particular web' of community, the light of Daniel Deronda would seem to be 'dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called "the universe"'.<sup>1</sup>

Middlemarch begins with its heroine chatting with her sister in the home of their uncle, who represents one of the leading families of the district. Dorothea is firmly and safely 'placed' or 'situated' within a developing picture of an ordered social framework. The tone of the opening sketches hints at the presence of other significant people in Middlemarch among whom Dorothea moves and whose opinions will influence her in shaping her life. The meaning of her life is to be sought after among the histories of the many other lives which make up the community.

Daniel Deronda begins heavy with unspoken fates, and the opening scene appears from nowhere; it is unplaced and unrelated to any other apparent set of circumstances. It strikes one as an arbitrary yet absolute glimpse of the world we are about to enter. The scene is very close in effect to a Hogarth print. We get the impression of something utterly dreary and philistine. It is rare in George Eliot that the grotesque should dominate so thoroughly in an introductory scene, and appear to set the tone for the depiction of a whole class of

society. In Middlemarch there is grotesquerie in the death of Featherstone and in the depiction of Casaubon, but these impressions are softened by pity and treated as sicknesses in relation to a healthier human norm. They have meaning within a more comprehensive definition of community.

The gaming room clientele of Daniel Deronda are absolute grotesques, inhabiting what may be, for all that we are shown, an absurd universe. There is nothing but the human figures of Deronda and Gwendolen to assure us that there may be more human standards and more worthwhile communities within this vision of the world. But Deronda and Gwendolen move among an 'insect swarm'<sup>2</sup> rather than the representatives of a community.

While Gwendolen is not a grotesque, she plays the game of the gaming room clientele, and so identifies herself with their standards in the eyes of Deronda. For this reason he wishes to have no more to do with her. She disturbs him and so impairs his non-committal detachment. In spite of himself, he cannot tell whether the 'dynamic quality'<sup>3</sup> of her glance is due to the 'good or the evil genius'.<sup>4</sup> For her part, Gwendolen winces under his gaze and what she assumes to be his contempt. She objects to being regarded as a part of the room, as a part of the game, but at least she knows she is not ignored:

There was a smile of irony in his eyes as their glances met; but it was at least better that he should have kept his attention fixed on her than

that he should have disregarded her as one of an<sub>5</sub>  
insect swarm who had no individual physiognomy.

The essential structure of what is to be the relation between Gwendolen and Deronda is laid down in this scene. Gwendolen's superstition, her fears and guilt and everything about her which inspires uncertainty in contrast to her bland egoism, all combine to erect Deronda into a superior being who can judge her and know her. This is humiliating but it is necessary for her. She may wince under his regard but she must wish him to change his obviously bad opinion of her. As for Deronda, Gwendolen will continue to invite his solicitude in one way or another just as she drew his attention, almost against his will, in the gaming room. Significantly, the scene ends with their not meeting. The mystery of identity remains unsolved and their mutual fascination takes on an air of symbolized values. The impression each has of the other will remain unsullied by the trivia of polite conversation until Gwendolen is nearly married, when their mutual predicaments begin to make each of them more conscious of the meaning of their peculiar relationship. Each is to become more self-aware through the other, for there is little the English community can tell them.

George Eliot structures these opening scenes to reinforce the sense of strangeness and arbitrariness. She deliberately abandons the sort of structure we find in

Middlemarch, ordered to reveal a gradual development of events in time. It is a sign of Daniel Deronda's difference in emphasis that time is disregarded, and we begin with a scene in medias res, this having the effect of making absolute the significance of the events described in that scene. This opening impression of Gwendolen and Deronda, suspended in the midst of the chaos of the gambling den, suggests an existential confrontation which we are to find dictating the movement and structure of the novel as a whole.

After the opening encounter, it is Gwendolen's world rather than Deronda's which is developed. The news that 'Grapnell and Co. have failed for a million and we are totally ruined'<sup>6</sup> belongs to the same arbitrary world as Gwendolen's loss at the gaming table. For us as for Gwendolen the effect is of confusion and meaninglessness. As a result of the letter Gwendolen must go back 'to some hut or other',<sup>7</sup> and to a life which is totally alien to life as she has known it:

It was almost as difficult to her to believe suddenly that her position had become one of poverty and humiliating dependence as it would have been to get into the strong current of her blooming life, the chill sense that her death would really come.<sup>8</sup>

As in the opening scene we see the effect of a sudden jolt in bringing together several levels of self-awareness:

She stood motionless for a few minutes, then tossed off her hat and automatically looked in the glass...

but now she took no conscious note of her reflected beauty, and simply stared straight before her as if she had been jarred by a hateful sound and was waiting for any sign of its cause.<sup>9</sup>

The image in the glass remains but it no longer has any recognizable connection with the present reality. However, it is characteristic of Gwendolen that she soon regains her equanimity in a growing sense of her own superiority. In the face of hardship the habit of her mind runs to weaving stratagems by which to maintain her customary identity and adjust an unobliging world to her needs. In this she has much in common with Rosamond and other egoists from previous novels. But she is more intelligent than Rosamond and correspondingly less sure of herself. The memory of Deronda must intrude into her egoistic fantasies as a symbol of destiny and judgement:

But always...there was the presence of that Deronda, watching her with exasperating irony, and - the two keen experiences were inevitably reined together - beholding her again forsaken by luck.<sup>10</sup>

However, after a night of packing and daydreaming her complacency prevails:

And even in this beginning of troubles while for lack of anything else to do, she sat gazing at her image in the growing light, her face gathered a complacency gradual as the cheerfulness of the morning. Her beautiful lips curled into a more and more decided smile, till at last she took off her hat, leaned forward and kissed the cold glass which had looked so warm.<sup>11</sup>

But events are on the side of her insecurity. Deronda does observe her in unfortunate circumstances again and must disbelieve in her luck again. The stratagem whereby she pawns

the necklace becomes another humiliation for her. Deronda now becomes symbolic of Gwendolen's fears and uncertainties. In her mind he takes on an existence apart from himself, and this existence serves to combine the various unexplored rills of unease which Gwendolen's self-evolved myths have failed to contain.

As the novel progresses beyond the immediacy of the first two chapters into an account of Gwendolen's history, its mode becomes more discursive. Some of the causes of her alienation are made apparent. We are told that 'Offendene', the home she has just lost, is not the home of her childhood. There is no home to unite her with her past:

A human life, I think should be well rooted in some spot of native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definitiveness of early memories may be inwrought with affection and kindly acquaintance with all neighbours even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood.... But this blessed persistence in which affection can take root had been wanting in Gwendolen's life. <sup>12</sup>

Gwendolen's childhood was a perpetual 'roving from one foreign watering place or Parisian apartment to another'.<sup>13</sup> Her insecurity and selfishness tend to dominate in the way she relates to her mother and sisters. She is first the spoiled child and then the young lady with a 'sense of superior claims'.<sup>14</sup>

Both these growths are unnatural reactions to an unnatural state of affairs.

But the paradox is that the unnatural state of affairs was becoming commoner in contemporary society as George Eliot saw it than the more 'natural' condition of being in touch with one's past. Alienation from one's past had to be accepted as a consequence of increased social mobility, industrial progress and growing internationalism; it was becoming the existential norm. In such a world, individuals are detached from the scenes uniting them with their past lives, forced to make sense out of a fraction of themselves as their environments change. They are removed from objects which suggest the 'blessed persistence'<sup>15</sup> of past into present. The genius of Gwendolen's portrait lies in George Eliot's uniting her unusually sharp perception of the egoist, which we find developed in all her fiction, with the awareness of the inevitable condition of existential alienation in a modern society.

This sense of disrelation gives the novel its distinctive poise. Gwendolen is in a condition of psychic weightlessness in an arbitrary society. She is not oriented by long habit to particular places or people or modes of social interaction. Her family are the only people she can relate to, and though she genuinely loves her mother, their relation cannot encourage clearer vision on Gwendolen's part. She imagines herself perfectly adjusted to the chances of a society

whose central image is the gambler. She is determined not to lose her chance of happiness, her chance at positioning herself so as to exercise her will just as she pleases for the rest of her life:

Other people allowed themselves to be made slaves of, and to have their lives blown hither and thither like empty ships in which no will was present: it was not to be so with her, she would no longer be sacrificed to creatures worth less than herself, but would make the very best of the chances that life offered her, and conquer circumstance by her exceptional cleverness.<sup>16</sup>

Just as Gwendolen has no feeling for anything other than the force of circumstance in the society she is part of, there is nothing of pronounced moral value about her to set her above it. Her distinction is meaningless in ethical terms. There is no obvious greatness of soul in her as there is in Dorothea. The fact that she interests Deronda, and presumably George Eliot, while the people she moves among are only of secondary interest, can be put down to her intelligence and the tension set up by the conflict of her intelligence with her egoistic cast of mind and the worthless values she inherits from her society. When other characters besides Deronda admit that she is outstanding, they invariably couch their praise in ambiguous, neutral terms which suggest that her pre-eminence is of a purely gratuitous or even animal nature. She is a 'sort of serpent...all green and silver',<sup>17</sup> whose beauty and calculating selfishness are likely to make

others fall a prey to her rather than she to them. Why does everyone admit her general superiority?

The answer may seem to lie quite on the surface: in her beauty, a certain unusualness about her, a decision of will which made itself felt in the graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones, so that if she came into the room on a rainy day when everybody else was flaccid and the use of things in general not apparent to them, there seemed to be a sudden sufficient reason for keeping up the forms of life; and even the waiters at hotels showed the more alacrity in doing away with crumbs and creases and dregs with struggling flies in them. <sup>18</sup>

What is most significant about Gwendolen and what gives her such power over others is her 'inborn energy of egoistic desire'.<sup>19</sup> This is the first time in George Eliot's fiction that an egoist is placed so much at the centre of things - at the centre of a scheme which has no clear orientation to anything (apart from the theme of *Deronda*) other than more pronounced models of selfishness such as Lush and Grandcourt on the one hand, and more restrained though ineffectual models of self such as Gascoigne and Sir Hugo on the other. Though Gwendolen's mother is no egoist, she is weak, and even if she were not weak but impressive like Mr. Gascoigne, she could hardly provide effective guidance for Gwendolen because their social values are very similar. In fact, as George Eliot remarks, far from being a backward pupil Gwendolen has so absorbed the values of her society as to be a model of the educated woman:

In the schoolroom her quick mind had taken readily that strong starch of unexplained rules and disconnected

facts which saves ignorance from any painful sense of limpness; and what remained of all things knowable, she was conscious of being sufficiently acquainted with through novels plays and poems...who can wonder<sup>20</sup> if Gwendolen felt ready to manage her own destiny?

So Gwendolen's 'problem' cannot simply be put down to egoism. There are no models apart from the impossible Klesmer ideal, or Deronda, whom it is even suggested that she emulate. Gwendolen cannot look to Gascoigne for guidance because, as she is quick to realise, he is like her in that he lives for the forms of things and has no understanding of the contradictions underlying the forms. Gwendolen's problem is that she is a child of her time and of her social condition. She is not wholly responsible. In this way she differs from Rosamond Vincy whose selfishness is not softened by being regarded as an almost inescapable existential condition. Rosamond at least has Lydgate to guide her, to provide her with an image of value, which she rejects. Thus Rosamond is more culpable, for her egoism can be explained in terms of her own spiritual smallness rather than as typical of the whole community.

But Gwendolen is strongly reminiscent of Mrs. Transome in the way her 'egoism' relates to and is a part of notions derived from the society in which she lives. In Gwendolen, however, the paradoxes of 'egoism' and its relation with society, the deep unconscious fear for self in a dimly perceived absurdity and the guilt attendant on careless pride

are dwelt on as a central interest, which is not the case with Mrs. Transome or Rosamond. Gwendolen is a creature of paradox, never quite predictable like Rosamond, because she is seen from a variety of viewpoints. She is a creature of greater potential either for good or evil. Her character reflects the mystery of life as we behold the various possibilities of her nature poised before each moment of decision. With Gwendolen we are more aware of a woman creating her own destiny and reacting with growing awareness to the consequences she has drawn upon herself than we are with Rosamond, who tends to respond to events mechanically. With Gwendolen we are closer to the mystery of choice, more aware of the defining contours of circumstance and the variety of possibilities.

The mystery revealed in Middlemarch, that every seemingly insignificant action has incalculable influence in shaping human destinies, that nothing is finally written or fully determined while life is going on, appears in a different perspective in Daniel Deronda. Because the novel focusses on a more or less contemporary situation and lacks the comforting distance of a retrospective structure, its tone is more urgent and the situation more existentially immediate. We are continually made aware of the creative possibilities inherent in each moment, of the multidimensionality of the present:

For Macbeth's rhetoric about the impossibility of being many opposite things in the same moment referred to the clumsy necessities of action and not to the

subtler possibilities of feeling. We cannot speak a loyal word and be meanly silent, we cannot kill and not kill in the same moment; but a moment is wide enough for the loyal and mean desire, for the outlash of a murderous thought and the sharp backward stroke of repentance.<sup>21</sup>

While Gwendolen's nature is complex her ideals, the models for action, are coarse. She is not an idealist in the sense of Dorothea. She has no St. Theresa to inspire her to a life of selfless devotion. Her ideal resembles Dorothea's only in its vagueness, but it is completely selfish and very common, and in this she is like Rosamond:

She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance, where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes. Here is a restraint which nature and society have provided on the pursuit of striking adventure; so that a soul burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and ready to take all existence as fuel, is nevertheless held captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms and does nothing in particular.<sup>22</sup>

This description of Gwendolen's selfish, vaguely Romantic dreams being sadly out of touch with the 'ordinary wirework of social forms' which must frustrate them suggests that the definition of the English section of the novel will be dominated by the idea of 'ordinary causes' which we find informing the depiction of Middlemarch. This might suggest that though Daniel Deronda as a whole promises a new kind of insight not to be found in the earlier works, it differs from previous

works as diverse as Middlemarch and Felix Holt in poise and tone rather than by way of basic insight.

However I hope to show that behind the different poise of Daniel Deronda, which I took pains to describe at the beginning of this chapter, there lies a different vision, an interpretation of the self and the world radically different from anything which went before. The clue is to be found in the fact that the definition of the relation of self to society, of character to medium, is based on a completely new kind of image.

The basic impression of Gwendolen's world is one of vastness and meaninglessness with a recurring sense of ambiguity on all levels. The disturbing sense of an unpeopled vastness manifests itself in 'that liability of hers to fits of spiritual dread',<sup>23</sup> which she tries to repress but which forces itself upon her at unexpected moments. She may be suddenly afraid in the midst of a vast deserted landscape and only in the presence of other people can she recover 'her indifference to the vastness in which she seemed an exile'.<sup>24</sup> She is terrified by the panel falling open to reveal the painting of the dead face during her tableau: 'she wondered at herself in these occasional experiences, which seemed like a brief remembered madness, an unexplained exception from her normal life'.<sup>25</sup>

There is nothing Gwendolen can learn from her upbringing or her immediate surroundings which could lead to an understanding of her dread. In the gamble of her life the

only check she acknowledges is the restraint of circumstance:

She had no consciousness of other fetters, or of more spiritual restraints, having always disliked whatever was presented to her under the name of religion, in the same way that other people dislike arithmetic and accounts.<sup>26</sup>

Gwendolen's acknowledged values cannot account for her fear:

'This fountain of awe within her had not found its way into connection with the religion taught her or with any human relations'.<sup>27</sup> Gwendolen cannot afford to acknowledge something greater than she is, or anything that can threaten her. However, she is never completely sure of herself. The image of the glass recurs again and again. It is as if Gwendolen looks for herself in the glass. Often her vanity and complacency are gratified by what she sees, but occasionally she seems to see herself against the vastness she cannot control, and then her image has no meaning for her. She is impressed with this sense of her ultimate unimportance and fragility on returning to the station near 'Offendene' from her gambling losses at Leubronn, when her image in the glass fails to reassure her. The sense of disrelation is what really makes Gwendolen's need of Deronda. He is the symbol of the awful challenge which 'that liability of hers to fits of spiritual dread' poses to the values of her normal life.

The images of disrelation and the sense of vast uncontrollable forces are not only important as essential parts of Gwendolen's consciousness but also as the prime facts

of the author's creative consciousness, as we find it in the creation of Gwendolen's world. A sense of meaninglessness underlies the very definition of Gwendolen's life and the lives of those around her, Grandcourt, Lush, Sir Hugo, Gascoigne, Rex and even Klesmer. This whole section of the novel is drawn with a kind of brilliant nervous cynicism. The author never ceases to be aware that a whole way of life, a whole class of society, is founded upon appearances such that ultimately in Macbeth's words 'nothing is but what is not'. Nothing will ever really mean what it appears to mean.

Grandcourt must be ranked as one of the author's most brilliant achievements, perhaps because his sparely drawn portrait suggests rather than explains away the mystery of human evil. Nothing is overstated and very little, apart from his sheer impact, is ultimately comprehended.

In previous works George Eliot could explain evil in terms of the moral stupidity attendant upon egoism. Consequently there are no other characters who are à priori evil, that is, whose evil cannot be explained as the effect of the moral and psychological category of selfishness. The one possible exception would be Dempster of 'Janet's Repentance'. However, in the great egoists of the author's previous fiction, Casaubon, Bulstrode, Jermyn and even the Machiavellian Tito Melema, we are invited to see evil as the consequence of a process of psychological degeneration into selfishness.

Consequently we understand them and by recognizing the universality of egoism and its inevitable operation within ourselves, we are also invited to pardon these characters to some extent. Hence there is no independently existing force of evil, but an unfortunate absence of moral courage and true valuation. Though Tito's inherent selfishness is exacerbated by circumstances, he is not basically and always evil. When free of the demands of power we find him developing a genuine affection for Tessa the simple peasant girl who accepts him without asking too many questions.

Grandcourt too is explained to some degree. We are told how the circumstances of his life were precisely of the kind to exaggerate his degenerate tendencies. We even sense the activity of a withered affection for Lydia Glasher. However his evil is never effectively explained in terms of other categories such as the force of circumstance and selfishness. It is too palpable and real to be so contained, too dangerous and immediate to be pardoned. With Grandcourt, to understand is not to forgive, because he is evil whether he needs to be or not. In moments of idleness his pleasure is to torment his dogs much in the way that he plays with Lush, Gwendolen and everyone else. His evil is the natural expression of boredom and neutrality. The imagery describing him suggests an intractably reptilian quality. He is 'neutral as an alligator';<sup>28</sup> and to Gwendolen he appears as 'a handsome

lizard of a hitherto unknown species'.<sup>29</sup> His dialogue; 'the little pauses and refined drawlings',<sup>30</sup> with which he courts Gwendolen, or the lazy indifferent tones with which he dismisses Lush, always suggests an utter disregard for the humanity of others.

The obsequious Lush whom Grandcourt accurately describes as 'a sort of cross between a hog and a dilettante',<sup>31</sup> displays a lack of moral pride which is scarcely less revolting than his master's sadism:

Lush's love of ease was well satisfied at present, and if his puddings were rolled towards him in the dust, he took the inside bits and found them relishing.<sup>32</sup>

Though explainable in terms of selfishness, and never gratuitously evil like Grandcourt, Lush is part of a world in which evil seems to have a power of independent existence.

There is a kind of bottomless indirection in the way people relate to each other. Gwendolen has no idea of what she is addressing when she speaks to Grandcourt. His true form of being, 'the slowly churning chances of his mind',<sup>33</sup> is as far removed from her comprehension as the inner worth of her own nature is incomprehensible to Grandcourt. George Eliot informs us that 'Gwendolen had no sense that these men were dark enigmas to her'.<sup>34</sup> She recognizes certain things about them but fails to comprehend them, just as 'we recognise the alphabet, but [we]are not sure of the language'.<sup>35</sup>

For George Eliot herself, the explanation of evil

in terms of egoism or its 'alphabet', is the same here as in previous novels, but the structuring of evil in relation to good, or the 'language' has changed. There is something so essentially unacceptable and unendurable about the evil of Grandcourt and his world that the good in the novel is conceived of as part of a different world, the world of Deronda. Thus in the definition of Gwendolen's world there is an essential indirection, a controlled sense of the uncontrollable, in the very way its scenes and impressions are rendered.

We feel that in describing it George Eliot has abandoned it. The self doubt, equivocation and amoral stupidity which are characteristic of Gwendolen and much of her world find no ultimate endorsement in their own terms. George Eliot does not value this world highly; its shifting ambiguities are to be avoided:

Grandcourt's passions were of the intermittent flickering kind; never flaming out strongly. But a great deal of life goes on without strong passion: myriads of cravats are carefully tied, dinners attended, even speeches made proposing the health of august personages without the zest arising from a strong desire. And a man may make a good appearance in high social positions - may be supposed to know the classics, to have his reserves on science, a strong though repressed opinion on politics and all the sentiments of the English gentleman at a small expense of vital energy. Also he may be obstinate or persistent at the same low rate, and may even show sudden impulses which have a false air of daemonic strength because they may seem inexplicable, though perhaps their secret lies merely in the want of regulated channels for the soul to move in - good and sufficient ducts of habit without which our nature easily turns to mere ooze and mud, and at any pressure yields nothing but a spurt or a puddle.<sup>36</sup>

It is not only Grandcourt whose qualities are depreciated but the social condition of the gentility of which he is representative. This description would not be unsuited to the amiable Sir Hugo. Even in a less severe mood, George Eliot can find little to praise, in terms of value, in the 'Englishness' of Englishmen:

We English are a miscellaneous people and any chance fifty of us will present many varieties of animal architecture or facial ornament; but it must be admitted that our prevailing expression is not that of a lively, impassioned race, preoccupied with the ideal and carrying the real as a mere make-weight. The strong-point of the English gentleman is the easy style of his figure and clothing; he objects to marked ins and outs in his costume, and he also objects to looking inspired.<sup>37</sup>

What George Eliot had found admirable about the English in previous novels were precisely 'good and sufficient ducts of habit', the qualities instilled by tradition and kept vital by a real community. Without this parochialism, the English do not seem to retain her confidence in Daniel Deronda where the very essence of the positive values is in their aura of foreignness and mysticism. Of the Englishmen in the novel, none is capable of bearing the weight of real positive values. The clergyman Gascoigne has made a too easy accommodation between worldly concerns and his pastoral duty. His alacrity in advising Gwendolen to marry Grandcourt without delay, almost regardless of mere personal scruple, is positively indecent. His son Rex is not morally objectionable but lacks the independence of mind required to encourage respect. Both

Rex and the rector's other son, Warham, lack the independence to question the anomalies of the society they serve. Thus Warham blindly memorizes Browne's pastorals as preparation for service in India.

Rex shows some moral strength in resolving to do his law degree at Oxford in spite of his disappointment with Gwendolen. There is even the suggestion that his ambition may lead to his becoming a famous law maker in order to right the wrongs of the country. However, George Eliot is not interested in treating him as anything more than a good fellow. He has little to contribute to what she regards as important. It is significant that, after Gwendolen's long and painful lesson in self-denial, George Eliot does not succumb to the temptation to marry her off to Rex. The sort of 'meliorism' that found a place in Middlemarch has no place here. The search of Daniel Deronda must go beyond meliorism and the sort of character for whom a form of meliorism is the only possible affirmation after failure in more direct forms of endeavour.

Sir Hugo, the Arrowpoints, Rex, Gascoigne, Grandcourt and Lush may each be sharply individualised and widely different, and yet they are of a kind. Grandcourt and Sir Hugo may represent moral extremes, but they are alike in that they accept a similar

pattern of social values. The importance of money and position is questioned by neither. Though Grandcourt may be considerably less scrupulous in his dealings with others than Sir Hugo, Sir Hugo is as capable of offending others by the coarseness which is typical of his class. Sir Hugo has few qualms about being commonly regarded as Deronda's natural father. It never occurs to him that Deronda may be hurt by suspecting that he is a bastard but never knowing for sure. There is something obscene about sleek, well-fed English noblemen like Sir Hugo and Lord Brackenshaw whose composure is not ruffled by the suffering which supports their affluence. Excellent fellows though they may be, the good men of the English community in this novel never seek to exercise their compassion beyond certain assumptions of what is socially proper, even though this may be morally wrong. The society is run on humbug:

'I'll tell you what, Dan' said Sir Hugo, 'a man who sets his face against every sort of humbug is simply a three cornered impracticable fellow. There is a bad style of humbug, but there is also a good style... It's no use having an order in council against popular shallowness'. 38

As in Middlemarch, politics are completely despaired of as a means of salvation of this society and the general fatuousness of the gentleman politician is satirised in Sir Hugo and Mr. Bult, the rising parliamentarian and man of action.

...who rather neutral in private life, had strong opinions concerning the districts of the Niger, was much at home also in the Brazils, spoke with decision of affairs in the South Seas, was studious of his Parliamentary and itinerant speeches, and had the general solidity and suffusive pinkness

of a healthy Briton on the central table-land of life. <sup>39</sup>

Herr Klesmer and Catherine Arrowpoint are the only exceptions to the 'popular shallowness' of the English community and so they provide the only source of really positive values to be found in it, apart from Deronda himself. It is significant therefore that, like Deronda, they fulfil themselves by leaving it, and denying its values.

Klesmer's advice to Gwendolen on the inadvisability of her choosing a career as a singer or an actor brings out the terrible uncertainty of an artist's existence in this society. He tells Gwendolen that if she is to act she must be 'trained to bear [her] self on the stage as a horse, however beautiful, must be trained for the circus'.<sup>40</sup> In the house of the Arrowpoints, Klesmer is in the same relation to society as an animal trained for the circus. Thus Mr. Bult is quite capable of wounding his dignity by unconsciously addressing him as one of the household effects.

Catherine is

...one of those satisfactory creatures whose intercourse has the charm of discovery; whose integrity of faculty and expression begets a wish to know what they will say on all subjects, or how they will perform whatever they undertake; so that they end by raising not only a continual expectation but a continual sense of fulfilment - the systole and diastole of blissful companionship. <sup>41</sup>

But as well as this she is an heiress and well aware of her social redundance.

Klesmer and Catherine find themselves in their love for each other. Klesmer realizes that he need not give Catherine up for Bult, and breaks the mould of household musician to marry her. Catherine also breaks the social mould into which she has been cast by marrying 'beneath' her. Catherine's choice of Klesmer over Bult, of love and idealism rather than money, contrasts sharply with Gwendolen's eventual choice of Grandcourt. But in her defense it must be said that for Gwendolen the idealistic course is far more difficult to take because of its dreariness.

The scene in which Klesmer shatters Gwendolen's artistic ambitions is brilliant, and so too are the scenes in which he and Catherine realize their love for each other and bring upon the Arrowpoints their 'hour of astonishment'.<sup>42</sup> George Eliot's touch is not less sure with them than with anything else in the book. Surely they are much more impressively handled than the Fred Vincy - Mary Garth relationship which constitutes the model for redeeming values and a valid way of life in Middlemarch. But George Eliot loses interest in them - Why? The reason is to be found in the fact that Daniel Deronda, like Middlemarch, is written for the benefit of what Myers calls 'the republic'. If George Eliot wishes people to profit by the example of her novels she must not focus her positive values around ways of experience that are inaccessible to her public. There are very few people who are geniuses or heirs-esses. If 'the higher life'<sup>43</sup> is to seem accessible, it must

be accessible as an essential experience and not contingent on one's being a musical genius. Thus the beautiful life of Klesmer and Catherine is finally irrelevant to the purpose of the novel.

Thus in Daniel Deronda the English community is no longer the basic frame of reference and the individual is not valued solely in its terms, because as it stands it can no longer be the prime reality. In Middlemarch a community is viewed through the perspective of the past, and we get the impression that though itself limited in possibilities for moral action it could support characters of high purpose and even provide the means of chastizing them with a sense of the value of interdependence. The fact that in her only non retrospective contemporary novel, George Eliot should choose as her representative of English society a group so barren in possibilities for a meaningful existence suggests a basic reorientation of feeling. The class George Eliot has chosen to deal with is decadent and trivial having lost any purposeful relation with other classes. The group within which Gwendolen moves is losing its roots in its own country. It is an international group, with very little of the parochial about it, whose scene of action is Europe. The people it deals with do not really exist in a true spatial community, they interact and mix together, but the pairings and groupings of this society tend to be dictated by what the author once referred

to as 'the vulgarity of exclusiveness'.<sup>44</sup> Due to class mobility and decadence the solidity and real value of a community is gone. In the absence of a sense of an enduring community to which one can relate morally, the novel concentrates more on the self, on the struggle through blindness for identity and spiritual purpose. While Gwendolen does not actually search for spiritual purpose as Deronda does, it is clear that her nature requires some sort of faith to shield it from the spiritual dread it is liable to. Thus the destinies of Deronda and Gwendolen are to some extent dictated by common concerns. Great pains are taken by the author to ensure that the circumstances of Deronda's life should closely parallel those of Gwendolen in many significant particulars. Both are in some way disowned by or alienated from their preconceptions of what life is and their position in it. If Gwendolen has no fixed piece of earth to call home, Deronda is in terrible uncertainty as to his true status in what he has been brought up to regard as 'home'. Is he a bastard child and, if so, who are his mother and father? How is he to continue as an Englishman without accepting charity from Sir Hugo?

However it is not in Deronda's nature to be made either bitter or ruthlessly competitive by his ambiguous position in Sir Hugo's household:

The sense of an entailed disadvantage - the deformed foot doubtfully hidden by the shoe, makes a restlessly active spiritual yeast and easily turns a self-centred unloving nature into an Ishmaelite. But in the rarer sort who presently see their own frustrated claim as one among a myriad, the inexorable sorrow takes the form of fellowship and makes the imagination tender. Deronda's early awakened susceptibility...had given a bias to his conscience, a sympathy with certain ills and a tension of resolve in certain directions, which marked him off from other youths more than any talents he possessed. <sup>45</sup>

So instead of pressing his own claims, Deronda develops 'a meditative interest in learning how human miseries are wrought'.<sup>46</sup>

His broad sympathy with people in general gives Deronda an aversion towards the life generally considered to be fit for high-born youths. In University his inclination is towards a broad comprehension rather than achievement within narrowly defined fields of scholarship. In fact, he sees narrow achievement as a form of idiocy because of its lack of general relevance.

If his virtues are on the side of broad comprehension, his faults are on the side of 'reflective hesitation',<sup>47</sup> for want of any clearly determined mode of action.

Sir Hugo urges him to go into politics, but Deronda sees through 'the good sort of humbug' of which Sir Hugo and Mr. Bult are representative. He sees that in the political sphere 'opinions [are] mere professional equipment',<sup>48</sup> Sincerity and meaning have no place in politics.

He goes through a period of Romantic fervour for unity with nature once he rejects the forms of society:

It was his habit to indulge in that solemn passivity which easily comes with the lengthening shadows and mellowing light, when thinking and desiring melt together imperceptibly and what in other hours may have seemed argument takes the quality of passionate vision. 49

He is in this mood of Romantic rapture when he rescues Mirah from drowning:

He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape...when... 50

It is not only Mirah who is saved by the encounter. The implication is that without something concrete for Deronda to exercise his broad sympathies upon, he may have lost himself in a futile Romantic dream-world. Mirah brings him back to earth. Deronda actually gives her a new life, achieves something concrete.

Deronda's intellectual and personal development is endorsed by his creator every step of the way. He consciously works for a way in which to make his life meaningful. So far he has rejected narrow empiricism, at least of an academic variety, when he sacrifices his chance of a university career in mathematics by devoting too much of his time to ensuring that his needy friend Hans Meyrick passes instead. He has also rejected the Romantic abdication of the will by actively involving himself in Mirah's plight. Deronda comes to realise that if he is to make a fully satisfactory marriage of his personal destiny to the destinies of his fellow-men, so that

'sympathy with mankind' will not be an empty formula, he must accept the transformation of his life as it has been. At one point the Meyrick sisters compare his generosity to the generosity of Buddha who gave himself to feed a hungry tiger. When Mab quite sensibly points out that if this generosity was common 'the world would get full of fat tigers',<sup>51</sup> Deronda sees nothing ridiculous in the fable and calls it an image 'of what is happening every day - the transmutation of self'.<sup>52</sup> As Silas Marner had shown, one's life will be transformed and one will suffer whether one wishes to or not, but Daniel Deronda must not only accept full responsibility for this transformation, he must direct it.

It is interesting to compare Deronda's problem with what Carlyle says in Sartor Resartus, in which he expands an idea stated elsewhere:

Few men have the secret of being at once determinate (bestimmt) and open; of knowing what they do know and yet lying ready for farther (?) knowledge.<sup>53</sup>

Like Deronda Teufelsdröckh, the hero of Sartor Resartus, is shattered by the discovery of his adoption. He is confronted by the spirit of eternal negation, 'the everlasting No',<sup>54</sup> but his answer is a complete affirmation of life involving a complete transformation: 'the first preliminary moral act is annihilation of self'.<sup>54a</sup> But the transcendental affirmation must be grounded in the reality of living and working. Belief is 'worthless till it convert itself into conduct'.<sup>55</sup> However

the nature of the conduct is unspecified:

Do the duty which lies nearest to thee which  
thou knowest to be a duty! Thy second duty  
will already have become clearer. <sup>56</sup>

To some degree Deronda's way into himself is a humanistic reformulation of the Carlylean annihilation of self so as to be fit for 'work'. George Eliot attempts to validate the growth of Deronda's translation of 'sympathy' into active duty by a detailed account of a tediously lengthy series of personal encounters and revelations. She is careful to show Deronda finding himself not so much through the discovery of a new 'explanation' of the way things happen, followed by an adjustment of life-style to suit it, as through being in the world in particular situations and reacting to them in complete consistency with his general sympathies. Paradoxically it is his relationship with Gwendolen which aids in the development of a more complete sympathy and the self-awareness to give it direction.

Gwendolen's experience with Grandcourt is a painful 'letting in of light'<sup>57</sup> for Deronda as much as for her, for in it Deronda is able to behold the spectacle of a promising life wasted. He sees at close quarters the process of guilt, waste and disillusion in a high-spirited girl whose only crime is to indulge the petty failings of egoism and self-ignorance now shown as co-extensive with a whole way of life. He does not love Gwendolen. He has no ulterior motive behind his sympathy for her. In fact his growing involvement with her

is an embarrassment for him. It leaves him open to sneers from Grandcourt and unwanted hints from Sir Hugo. In addition to this it distracts him from the revelations of his past by his mother and of his future by Mordecai.

But it is of the utmost importance that he never be brusque with Gwendolen, that he never remain untouched by her tortuous attempts to find herself. His instinctive sympathy for her reflects George Eliot's awareness that Gwendolen's individual fate is as important in its implications for mankind as the most widely applied theoretical models, or the most excitingly new 'explanation' of mankind:

Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history that this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant? - in a time too when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely...: a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unheard, until their full sum made a new life of terror or of joy.

What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions? They are the Yea or Nay of that good for which men are enduring or fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections. <sup>58</sup>

For Deronda, Gwendolen is a

...way of keeping emotion and its progeny of sentiments - which make the savours of life - substantial and strong in the face of a reflectiveness that threatened to nullify all differences. <sup>59</sup>

Thus in the fullest sense Deronda's new way of life grows out of an active sympathy; only so can it avoid the partial sympathy, the lac-

of vital harmony with one's fellow men and so with one's best self, which George Eliot sees vitiating the endeavour of a Lydgate.

When Deronda sees Gwendolen for the second time he realises that

...the struggle of mind attending a conscious error had wakened something like a new soul, which had better but also worse possibilities than her former poise of crude self-confidence...<sup>60</sup>

It is this which Deronda is most alive to in Gwendolen and its better possibilities are what he draws out. During casual argument with herself and Grandcourt, Deronda is able gradually to interpret her life to her and to give it shape while articulating and confirming his own inner promptings:

'...all reckless lives are injurious, pestilential - without feeling remorse'. Deronda's unconscious fervour had gathered as he went on: he was uttering thoughts which he had used for himself in moments of painful meditation.<sup>61</sup>

His answer to Gwendolen's soul weariness is 'Look on other lives besides your own'.<sup>62</sup> Later when Gwendolen asks 'What is the good of trying to know more unless life were worth more?'<sup>63</sup> Deronda replies, with 'a touch of indignant severity':

'Life would be worth more to you: some real knowledge would give you an interest in the world beyond the small drama of personal desires. It is the curse of your life - forgive me - of so many lives that all passion is spent in that narrow round, for want of ideas and sympathies to make a wider home for it. Is there any single occupation of mind that you care about with passionate delight or even independent interest?'<sup>64</sup>

Then comes the crux of his message to Gwendolen:

'The refuge you are needing from personal trouble is the higher, the religious life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities. The few may find themselves in it simply by an elevation of feeling; but for us who have to struggle for our wisdom, the higher life must be a region in which the affections are clad with knowledge'.<sup>65</sup>

But how can this be real to Gwendolen, tortured as she is by fear and hatred of Grandcourt and the guilt of having chosen falsely? In her hatred she even fears herself. Deronda replies 'with quick comprehension':

'Turn your fear into a safeguard, keep your dread fixed on the idea of increasing that remorse which is so bitter to you. Fixed meditation may do a great deal towards defining our longing or dread. We are not always in a state of strong emotion, and when we are calm we can use our memories and gradually change the bias of our fear as we do our tastes. Take your fear as a safeguard. It is like quickness of hearing. It may make consequences passionately present to you. Try and take hold of your sensibility, and use it as if it were a faculty like vision'.<sup>66</sup>

However when Gwendolen does not understand how this can really help her and answers 'But if feelings rose - there are some feelings, hatred and anger...'<sup>67</sup> Deronda realises that his words have not been heard:

He was under the baffling difficulty of discerning that what he had been urging of her was thrown into the pallid distance of mere thought before the outburst of her habitual emotion. It was as if he saw her drowning while his limbs were bound.<sup>68</sup>

Deronda's advice to Gwendolen is meant to be delivered in a state of acute emotion, but there is something infuriatingly bland about it. We cannot really credit Deronda with the first-hand experience of evil and despair that Gwendolen has

had. There is something too inviolate about him for us to believe that he can be radically affected by Gwendolen's suffering, or for that matter, by the suffering and degradation of the lower life among whom he mixes so properly. We must feel that someone who is as incapable of personal blemish as Deronda, lacks an essential dimension of fellowship with the sort of degradation and suffering which form the objects of his sympathy. After Gwendolen has suffered her long slavery to Grandcourt and has finally been released from it, only to be possessed by the horrifying feeling that she has, by willing it, caused his death, we sense that Deronda cannot possibly know the sort of torture she is going through.

In spite of seeing through contemporary society and gradually finding a sense of universal destiny with Mordecai, Deronda is the innocent, not the initiate. He has never himself been steeled by a direct confrontation with the evil which impresses us so strongly about the Grandcourt world. We notice that he never confronts Grandcourt and what he stands for in a direct test of strength but is forever politely disagreeing with or avoiding him. Thus we must feel that Deronda is not really 'into' Gwendolen's experience, and consequently his sympathy must lack an essential depth and reality, particularly as it is held up as the main value of the novel.

The relationship between Gwendolen and Deronda

must be regarded as one of the most important features of the novel, not only because it is of central importance in influencing its bipartite structure but because George Eliot herself must have considered it of prime importance as a means of consciously addressing the world. Deronda's Olympian sympathy for Gwendolen recalls George Eliot's relationship with Mrs. Ponsonby and the spiritual daughters. Certainly his advice to Gwendolen has the concrete, pragmatic virtues of George Eliot's to Mrs. Ponsonby. Within its own context the therapy of the advice, in each case, is sound enough. No practising psychiatrist would deny the therapeutic effectiveness of coaxing a neurotic patient into a wider view of the human condition transcending the closed circuit of despairing self-preoccupation. We need only witness William James' observation that querulous misery generally precludes the larger awareness that leads to peace of mind:

...you see how the querulous temper of his misery keeps his mind from taking a religious direction. Querulousness of mind tends in fact, rather towards irreligion; and it has played, so far as I know, no part whatever in the construction of religious systems. 69

But in the case of the novel, the pragmatic virtue of the soothing effect such advice has on Gwendolen is not enough. The question should be one of artistic validation. Though we gather that the dramatic tone of Deronda's advice is one of passionate intensity, we sense that essentially it is a reproduction of the tone George Eliot employed with her

spiritual dependents. It is not enough that George Eliot felt this sort of advice important enough to occupy a central position in what might be called her book of revelations.

I would go further and suggest that, far from providing an artistic validation of this advice, the novel exposes cracks in the structure of feeling behind it which are not so apparent in the letters. By this I mean that when Deronda speaks of the 'real knowledge' which Gwendolen needs to clothe her affections and so enable her to partake of 'the higher life', we must ask ourselves whether it is possible for Gwendolen to gain such knowledge. If it is not, we must conclude that Deronda has played a spiritual confidence trick on her. We know that Deronda is capable of this sort of 'wider life'. The whole point of the Jewish section is to show his growth into it. We could reformulate the question by asking to which extent does Deronda's world carry over into Gwendolen's.

The consensus of opinion from the date of publication of the novel to the present day, which praises the Gwendolen section but discards the Jewish section, suggests that at the level of artistic effect the two existences are mutually irrelevant. Thus Joan Bennett complains that there is no 'inevitable connection'<sup>70</sup> between the two worlds, and F.R. Leavis dismisses the whole Deronda section from serious consideration.<sup>71</sup>

I would like to suggest that there are two closely related reasons for the failure of the relationship of sympathy through which George Eliot intended the two sections of the book to be united. Firstly there are artistic weaknesses inherent in the figure of Deronda himself; secondly, while the value of Deronda's sympathy for Gwendolen is amply stated, the whole movement of the Jewish section through which Deronda grows into 'real knowledge', is away from Gwendolen and the problems of her world in which we should expect this sympathy to find an active and potent expression. In spite of frequent suggestion by vaguely angelic metaphors that Deronda is something of a saviour, he finally reacts to Gwendolen, not as a personified essence from whom something extraordinary has all along been expected, but in terms of a sympathy, which inevitably leaves Gwendolen cold and alone in the same meaningless world.

I have already suggested that the impression of innocence which makes Deronda's position as Gwendolen's mentor unconvincing, constitutes an artistic weakness. This is one aspect of a general failure of characterization due to excessive idealisation. Deronda not only lacks specific human limitations but also defining human contours. We do not sense the presence of the human animal in him. The world in which he comes to find himself tends to suffer from the same sort of idealizing tendency.

There comes a point at which Deronda can learn no more from either Gwendolen or any other of his English acquaintances. He really begins to reconcile his inner contradictions and to scent the possibility of a definite active destiny in life when he comes into contact with Mirah and Mordecai. In Mirah he finds the pure sympathy and total lack of selfishness for which his own inner emotional bias had been searching unsuccessfully, and in Mordecai he finds the larger human vision to justify his emotional bias in terms of an organic approach to mankind as a whole.

From the very first we are assured that no process of inner examination is necessary to reveal the true character of Mirah:

Even in this frail and corrupted world, we sometimes meet persons who in their very mien and aspect, as well as in the whole habit of life, manifest such a signature and stamp of virtue as to make our judgement of them a matter of intuition rather than the result of continued examination. <sup>72</sup>

Mirah remains the exact fictional embodiment of this 'stamp of virtue' before which sceptical introspection is pointless. The history of her unhappy past which she reveals to the Meyricks and to Deronda lets us know that, like Deronda and Gwendolen, she is a displaced person in search of love and meaning. She thus contributes to the formal balancing of characters within the overall plot, as well as providing a contrast to Gwendolen's querulous egoism. However, as a living being she is totally unconvincing. Because of the unrelieved

sweetness and virtue she embodies, she shows not the slightest sign of independent being. Fictionally she falls easily into that category of virtuous but helpless maidens whose only raison d'être is to be saved from a cruel insensitive world by an equally flawless hero. Her history is saturated with the same type of maudlin sentimentality with which Dickens draws many of his heroines.

Due to these obvious weaknesses in characterization the love of Deronda and Mirah proves unequal to the task of effectively embodying the sense of wide ranging destiny which it was meant to:

In all ages it hath been a favorite text that a potent love hath the nature of an isolated fatality whereto the mind's opinions and resolves are altogether alien. Yet all love is not such... this passion hath as large scope as any for allying itself with every operation of the soul: so that it shall acknowledge the effect of the imagined light of unproven firmaments and have its scale set to the grander orbits of what hath been and shall be. <sup>73</sup>

From the moment he saves Mirah, Deronda follows an elaborate train of mystery, coincidence and final revelation which leads him to Mordecai. During this period of searching Deronda moves back and forth between the houses of the Meyricks and the Cohens. The function of these two groups of characters is to provide studies in contrast to the decadence of the Mallingers and Arrowpoints of the novel.

The Meyricks are whimsically and intentionally Dickensian genre pieces, drawn with an exaggerated innocence

and quaintness, thereby balancing the disturbing nihilism of their social betters. However, as in similar characters in Dickens, the little mother and her daughters seem to occupy a hazy limbo bearing no relation to the conditions pertaining to the hard world of the fallen. Thus the 'little mother's' selflessness has a redundant quality, spent as it is in a world of unreality. The family as a whole is often tiresomely literary. As with the Poysers in Adam Bede, we are irritated by the rather pointless and shallow attempts at individuation within the group. Mab is distinguishable from her sisters by her sprightliness, but her displays of it are predictably boring. The same pedestrian quality is apparent in the handling of Hans Meyrick, Deronda's one-time close friend. When George Eliot is unsure of her ground and her grasp on reality fades, convention dictates her work and the picture lapses into the diagram. It is doubtful whether people like the Meyricks ever existed anywhere outside the popular literary imagination. That this kind of irritating innocence held so strong a grip on literary convention is a sign of the difficulty the bourgeois novel had in adequately realizing a sense of something better to balance the keen perception of evil.

The Cohens also have a Dickensian quality, but fortunately they are not entirely innocent nor are they trivial. The picture one gets of the shopkeeper Cohen is vivid. Here George Eliot finds definite characteristics to react against. Cohen is constructed of real matter rather than literary

convention. His is the anxious, cunning, greasily self-satisfied shop-keeper's mentality that we sensed among the 'emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers'.<sup>74</sup> George Eliot's long standing dislike of vulgarity ensures a firmly distanced portrait. But Cohen is more; he is warm, and, for all his vulgarity, he is vital. He is knit to life by a strong sense of community which shines through in his family life. His sense of racial heritage is dim but George Eliot implies quite firmly that it is there.

Lapidoth, Mirah's father, is also quite successfully drawn. But, in the presence of his daughter's saintliness, his earthy, out-at-elbows shiftiness tends to cast him too straightforwardly in the role of the villain.

While the Cohens and Meyricks, with differing artistic success, show that a healthy vital life is possible in the midst of materialism and decadence, they are also meant to show that it has its own validity in comparison with the kind of vision that Deronda finds in Mordecai - for in Mordecai Deronda sees the answer for himself, but it is an answer which is not for everyman.

Deronda first really begins to understand Mordecai during their visit to the working man's philosophy session. The philosophers' meeting is almost a veiled parody of the standard nineteenth century conjectures about change in society.

Mordecai's passion and personal humility raise him above the argument of the opinionated philosophers. The vanity of intellectualism is revealed by the complete failure of the philosophers to come to any sort of an agreement or even to listen to each other, a failure closely linked with their total incapacity for the faith which gives Mordecai vision above mere speculation. However, the philosophers are not to be despised or completely ridiculed. They are

...a company select of the select among poor men being drawn together by a taste not prevalent even among the privileged heirs of learning and its institutions. <sup>75</sup>

Their debate is a fair representation of the main line of thought about change as opposed to development. We find that Lilly holds the positivist's position:

Change and progress are merged in the idea of development, the laws of development are being discovered and changes taking place according to them are necessarily progressive; that is to say, if we have any notion of progress or improvement opposed to them, the notion is a mistake. <sup>76</sup>

Deronda counters this determinism by emphasizing the importance of free will, for

There will still remain the danger of mistaking a tendency which should be resisted for an inevitable law that we must adjust ourselves to. <sup>77</sup>

The question of nationalism is raised. The lapsed Jew, Pash, puts nationalism down to the superstition of 'backward nations'. It is this urbane Europeanism in Pash, and Deronda's

belief in the will, which inspires Mordecai to state his vision: 'Woe to the men who see no place for resistance in this generation! ...<sup>78</sup> for resistance is an important element in the development of a people, which can only be such if it is a truly organic growth of national culture. Therefore Pash's denial of his birthright is wrong, even though in the growth of the nation

There may come a check, an arrest; memories may be stifled and love may be faint for the lack of them; or memories may shrink into withered relics - the soul of a people, whereby they know themselves to be one may seem to be dying for want of common action. But who shall say the fountain of their life is dried up?...[a man's] very soul is resistance, and is as a seed of fire that may enkindle the souls of multitudes and make a new pathway for events.<sup>79</sup>

To the charge by Gideon and others that the Jews are a 'stand-still people',<sup>80</sup> ignorant and prejudiced, Mordecai points to their endurance under stress:

The exile was forced afar among brutish people, where the consciousness of his race was no clearer to him than the light of the sun to our fathers in the Roman persecution, who had their hiding place in a cave and knew not that it was day save by the dimmer burning of their candles. What wonder that multitudes of our people are ignorant, narrow, superstitious?<sup>81</sup>

This is far more than an apology for the Jews. The effect is closer to mysticism than the sort of liberalism which the author espoused as a motive in a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe.<sup>82</sup> The implication is that Western culture is lacking in something essential which George Eliot finds only among the Jews - a tradition of suffering out of which can develop the

capacity for a truly national destiny:

...but which among the chief of the Gentile nations has not an ignorant multitude? They scorn our people's ignorant observance - sunk to the cunning greed of the fox to which all law is no more than a trap or the cry of the worrying hound. There is a degradation deep down below the memory that has withered into superstition....the soul of Judaism is not dead. Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality.<sup>83</sup>

Mordecai supplies the ultimate formal contrast to Grandcourt.

As opposed to 'a mind reduced to the barrenness of a fastidious egoism',<sup>84</sup> we behold

...a man steeped in poverty and obscurity, weakened by disease, consciously within the shadow of advancing death, but living an intense life in an invisible past and future, careless of his personal lot, except for its possibly making some obstruction to a conceived good which he would never share except as a brief inward vision.<sup>85</sup>

After Deronda has realized his Jewish descent and has heard of his father's vision from Joseph Kalonymos, he knows that it is his own vision. His cautious reservations regarding Mordecai are finally overcome. He is satisfied that Mordecai's cause has a breadth and a sense of proportion not found in the narrow enthusiasm of fanaticism. Deronda commits himself in his meeting with Joseph Kalonymos. When asked what his vocation is to be, he replies

'I shall call myself a Jew....But I think I can maintain my grandfather's notion of separateness with communication. I hold that my first duty is to my own people, and if there is anything to be done towards restoring or perfecting their common life, I shall make that my vocation.'<sup>86</sup>

In his mother Deronda sees the agent whereby he had seen severed from his grandfather's vision. Again he sees the devastating results of personal ambition cutting itself off from tradition. In this sense Deronda's mother adds a new dimension to our understanding of Gwendolen. We see that she has achieved everything that Gwendolen has ever dreamed of, but the effort of achievement tragically isolates her from her people. Nevertheless, she would do it all again, and George Eliot does not blame her for acting as she has because it is in her nature to be assertive and to rebel against the narrow lot of the Jewish woman. But, nonetheless we see in her the tragic result of assertiveness, of egoism, a result that the symmetry of the novel makes inevitable.

In addition to this obvious comparison of Deronda's mother with Gwendolen, there are many instances of contrasting characters and situations already mentioned which suggest that the author was very concerned to link the two sections of the novel by an overall impression of symmetry. In the balancing of Mordecai with Grandcourt, of the Meyricks and the Cohens with the nobility, of Gwendolen and Deronda's mother with Mirah, we find, overall, a comparison of an organic sense of life with an egoistic and consequently decadent sense of life. I think we can say that in this respect there is a certain connection between the world of Deronda and the world of Gwendolen. However this does not alter the fact that the

language of the organic sense we find in Mordecai has no real meaning in terms of the idiom of Gwendolen's world. Thus there is a problem of divided focus, consequent on the split in the nature of the vision which ultimately shapes the novel.

We find that 'the knowledge', the 'answer' which Deronda finds in the organic sense of life goes far beyond the personal. It is ultimately impersonal and mystical. The men like Mordecai and Kalonymos who find a positive meaning in life do so only because they have entirely sacrificed any idea of personal satisfaction, even of personal vision. They are agents of an impersonal vision, of a mystical sense of unity with the broader life of men and of one race in particular, a concept completely alien to Gwendolen's nature.

Thus there is no answer to the existential dilemma originally posed by Gwendolen's existence. There can be no truly moral regeneration for her because the only ground of transcendent moral regeneration is in a transcendent mysticism, a way of knowing which she is not capable of achieving, and which excludes a whole society.

Whether it is successful or not, underlying the attempt to relate the ultimately dissimilar experiences of Deronda and Gwendolen is the theme of a search for self and for meaning. We have so far established that the relation is unsuccessful because of the artistic failure of the Deronda experience as a whole and because the direction of his search

seems to lead away from the real concern with the tangible evils of Gwendolen's lot which his sympathy for her implies. I should now like to examine the structure of feeling which conceives of Deronda's successful search for self as a movement away from the prosaic conditions determining life within a vicious English society.

When George Eliot embodies her positive and successful experiment in life in the figure of Deronda and the knowledge he comes to acquire, she reflects a structure of feeling which we find expressing itself as a widespread desire for 'real knowledge' and spiritual meaning. Kristian Smidt finds this sort of search central to an understanding of Victorian poetry:

Characteristically the poetry of the Victorian period deals with a search or quest for knowledge or something symbolising knowledge or certainty. 87

In moving away from the recognizable English society in his search after identity, Deronda seems to embody a Victorian poetic archetype. As well as recalling Teufelsdröckh and the general nineteenth century archetype of the Wandering Jew, Deronda resembles Tennyson's Sir Galahad searching for the grail. In his search for his true home he fulfils Matthew Arnold's

...unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life,  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true original course;

A longing to inquire  
 Into the mystery of this heart that beats  
 So wild so deep in us, to know  
 Whence our thoughts come and where they go.<sup>88</sup>

Like Matthew Arnold, Deronda is

...wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
 the other powerless to be born  
 With nowhere yet to rest my head.<sup>89</sup>

And like Browning's Paracelsus, the knowledge that Deronda finds makes him a new sort of man embodying a mystical sense of human destiny which has no obvious connection with the vulgar mechanisms of this world:

All shape out dimly the superior race  
 The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,  
 And man appears at last.

...man is not man as yet  
 ...Such men are even now upon the earth  
 Serene 'mid the half formed creatures round  
 Who should be saved by them and joined with them.<sup>90</sup>

Throughout the text of Daniel Deronda we find frequent use of quotations from poetry, or pseudo-poetic utterances, to provide a kind of framework for the action of the novel. Thus, heading Chapter 24 we find a quotation from Wordsworth prefacing a section dealing with Gwendolen's indecision over Grandcourt and her more profound indecision concerning her actual purpose in life:

I question things and do not find  
 One that will answer to my mind<sup>91</sup>  
 And all the world appears unkind.

In his study of the Victorian quest for selfhood, The Divided Self, Misao Miyoshi notes that:

...by the time of the Victorians sharp genre distinctions had been blurred. The poet writing his sonnets found it impossible to put out of his mind the novels, idylls and dramatic monologues he had been reading; and the novelist certainly learned a great deal from poetry. Indeed, border crossing between the genres is one of the important features of Victorian writing.<sup>92</sup>

Miyoshi's whole approach is based on the assumption that it is valid to look for common structures of feeling and thought underlying and interpenetrating genres which have tended, as they have in this case, to lose their distinctness. Thus I do not think that what I am about to say violates critical decorum. In the case of Daniel Deronda I feel that this interpenetration is very marked and that it holds the secret of the book's peculiar effect and meaning.

The opening motto of the novel suggests very strongly that the search for identity is more fruitfully undertaken through the visionary, intuitive approach of the poets rather than the empiricism of science:

Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even Science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the stars' unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is at Nought. His less accurate grandmother Poetry has always been understood to start in the middle; but on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different from his; since Science too reckons backwards as well as forwards, divides his unit into billions, and with his clock-finger at Nought really sets off in medias res. No retrospect will take us to the true beginning; and whether our prologue be in heaven or on earth, it is but a fraction of that all-presupposing fact with which our story sets out. <sup>93</sup>

This motto has two quite distinct artistic functions, one of which is to indicate the area of concern of the novel as a whole, the concern with searching for a beginning, while the other is to prepare us for the opening existential confrontation of *Deronda* by Gwendolen. The significance of immediately presenting the basic issue of the book without first taking the trouble to ground it in a recognizable time and place, is that the search for self is conceived as something fundamental and timeless, as the motto would indicate, rather than being essentially the historical result of a particular time and place. Certainly the particular circumstances are important and highly representative of a particular historical moment, but there is also an overview that very consciously tries to see beyond history. The structure of the novel, emphasizing existential immediacy, a particular historical community and a movement into a mystical grasp of the whole of history, reflects a mixed aim. U.C. Knoepfelmacher has noted how the temporal and spatial structure of this novel suggests a mystical view of history:

The desire to transcend time led these three Victorian novelists [George Eliot, Walter Pater and Samuel Butler] to go beyond the purely sequential or episodic form of the traditional novel. The intricate causal web which in *Middlemarch* so inextricably connects the notions of all characters is enriched by a network of allusions to history, literature and myth which endows each of the unhistoric events examined in the foreground with wider and universal implications.<sup>94</sup>

Thus we can appreciate that the mottos, sententia and poetic

quotations play a very definite role in giving an overall sense of the place of the novel within a broad frame of intellectual, mythical and spiritual reference. They also play a part in mediating the structure of the book as I have suggested with the opening motto. The motto beginning Chapter XXI suggests that the sort of knowledge that George Eliot is looking for must be the kind that endures, like the Jews, and like them it must transcend change because the solutions of history are temporal, tactical solutions which are vulnerable to change:

It is a common sentence that knowledge is power; but who hath duly considered or set forth the power of ignorance? Knowledge slowly builds up what Ignorance in an hour pulls down. Knowledge, through patient and frugal centuries, enlarges discovery and makes record of it; Ignorance wanting its day's dinner, lights a fire with the record, and gives a flavour with its one roast with the burnt souls of many generations. Knowledge, instructing the sense, refining and multiplying needs, transforms itself into skill and makes life various with a new six days work; comes Ignorance drunk on the seventh, with a firk of oil and a match and an easy 'Let there not be' - and the many coloured creation is shrivelled up in blackness. 95

The English society of Daniel Deronda is seen as a tissue of humbug and ignorance, the human ignorance which can negate the labours of knowledge. Within this social context any of the classical nineteenth century models of Faustian endeavour are ruled out. The Scientist and the Scholar had already been shown to be lacking in Middlemarch - lacking both in self-awareness and in truly responsible relation to

the community. In Daniel Deronda, George Eliot finally does away with the notion that inquiry or adventure is enough:

Extension, we know, is a very imperfect measure of things; and the length of the sun's journeying can no more tell us how far life has advanced than the acreage of a field can tell us what growths may be active within it. A man may go south, and, stumbling over a bone, may meditate upon it until he has found a new starting point for anatomy; or eastward, and discover a new key to language telling a new story of races; or he may lead an expedition that opens new continental pathways, get himself maimed in body, and go through a whole heroic poem of resolve and endurance; and at the end of a few months he may come back to find his neighbours grumbling at the same Parish grievances as before, or to see the same elderly gentleman treading the pavement in discourse with himself, shaking his head after the same percussive butcher's boy, and pausing at the same shop window to look at the same prints.<sup>96</sup>

The word 'extension', then, incorporates the typical mode of nineteenth century endeavour - the exploration impulse, the Faustian endeavour to push back ignorance and explain the world. It is found wanting on two counts: firstly because of the human arbitrariness of its basic assumptions and secondly the total incapability of Faustian endeavour to directly overhaul the basic problem of being. Not one model of endeavour mentioned - science, scholarship or exploration - is capable of taking out the order against popular shallowness that Sir Hugo jokes about and Deronda is in earnest about. Extension is not transformation, nor a revelation of basic meaning, nor conversion. Extension cannot help Gwendolen, nor can it really suffice for the world.

If the novel is seriously or even vaguely concerned

with testing these notions perhaps they could help us to better understand George Eliot's use of coincidence and melodramatic revelation as principal means by which Deronda comes to discover his destiny. After witnessing the profound level of understanding that the author had achieved in regard to plot and character in Middlemarch, I think we must find some explanation over and above technical and psychological naivety to account for the overall weakness of architectonic in Daniel Deronda.

In conclusion I think we can say that the peculiarity and failure of the novel is due to a complex of inconsistencies in conception and design: a loss of faith in the English community and a consequent sense of evil, of existential aloneness and spiritual hunger; the mysticizing of the affirming idea of community and purpose in the Jewish race, thereby splitting and shrouding in vagueness the whole process of community which can be the only expression of humanist sympathy; the introduction of structures of feeling which grew out of the poetry of the age; and lastly a mystical scepticism of the empiricism which in Middlemarch had reconciled faith and knowledge in a higher order. The conceptions behind Daniel Deronda required a new form or a number of new forms of the novel which George Eliot tried to supply but failed to thoroughly understand and reconcile. But as U.C. Knoepfmacher has suggested, the attempt of the novel to

embrace new orders of philosophical, existential and mystical reality brought new dimensions to the English novel and indicated the direction in which modern fiction would grow.

1. Middlemarch, ed. cit., p. 122.
2. George Eliot, Daniel Deronda in 2 Volumes, introduction by Emrys Jones, Dent (Everyman), London, 1964, p.5.
3. Ibid., p. 1.
4. Ibid., p. 1.
5. Ibid., pp. 4-5.
6. Ibid., p. 7.
7. Ibid., p. 8.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 10.
12. Ibid., pp. 12-3.
13. Ibid., pp. 13-4.
14. Ibid., p. 8.
15. Ibid., p. 13.
16. Ibid., p. 26.
17. Ibid., p. 5.
18. Ibid., pp. 27-8.
19. Ibid., p. 28.
20. Ibid., p. 27.
21. Ibid., p. 28.
22. Ibid., p. 37.
23. Ibid., p. 44.
24. Ibid., p. 45.
25. Ibid., p. 44.

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., p. 115.
29. Ibid., p. 100.
30. Ibid., p. 224.
31. Ibid., p. 227.
32. Ibid., p. 94.
33. Ibid., p. 115.
34. Ibid., p. 89.
35. Ibid., p. 80.
36. Ibid., p. 115.
37. Ibid., p. 74.
38. Ibid., p. 287.
39. Ibid., pp. 178-9.
40. Ibid., p. 192.
41. Ibid., p. 178.
42. Ibid., p. 176.
43. Ibid., p. 340.
44. Review of The Natural History of German Life, Westminster Review, LXVI, 1856, in Essays, ed. cit., p. 270.
45. Daniel Deronda, ed. cit., p. 130.
46. Ibid., p. 132.
47. Ibid., p. 133.
48. Ibid., p. 139.
49. Ibid., p. 140.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., p. 351.

52. Ibid.
53. C. Norton (ed.), Two Notebooks of Thomas Carlyle, Grolier Club, New York, 1898, pp. 77-8.
54. T. Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, Chapman and Hall, London, 1831, p. 110.
- 54a. Ibid., p. 129.
55. Ibid., p. 135.
56. Ibid.
57. Daniel Deronda, ed. cit., p. 340.
58. Ibid., pp. 89-90.
59. Ibid., p. 272.
60. Ibid., p. 246.
61. Ibid., p. 335.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., p. 339.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., p. 340.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid., p. 341.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., p. 130.
70. Joan Bennett, George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art, op. cit., p. 183.
71. The Great Tradition, op. cit., p. 79.
72. Daniel Deronda, ed. cit., Motto to Chapter XX, p. 154.
73. Ibid., Motto to Chapter XXXII, p. 268.
74. The Mill on the Floss, ed. cit., p. 238.
75. Daniel Deronda, ed. cit., p. 393.

76. Ibid., p. 395.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., pp. 395-6.
80. Ibid., p. 399.
81. Ibid., p. 392.
82. G.E.L., VI, 301-2.
83. Daniel Deronda, ed. cit., p. 399.
84. Ibid., p. 206.
85. Ibid., p. 401.
86. Ibid., p. 545.
87. Kirstian Smidt in Kumar (ed.), 'The Intellectual Quest of the Victorian Poets', British Victorian Literature, ed. cit., p. 54.
88. The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold, Oxford University Press, London, 1950, p. 170.
89. Ibid., p. 272.
90. Robert Browning, 'Paracelsus' in The Poetical Works of Robert Browning, Vol. II, Stafford, Smith, Elder and Company, London, 1889.
91. Daniel Deronda, ed. cit., p. 197.
92. Misao Miyoshi, The Divided Self: A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians, New York University Press, New York, and the University of London Press, London, 1969, Preface.
93. Daniel Deronda, ed. cit., p. 1.
94. U.C. Knoepflmacher, 'Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: A Postscript' in British Victorian Literature, ed. cit., p. 212.
95. Daniel Deronda, ed. cit., p. 168.
96. Ibid., p. 530.

CONCLUSION.

In a letter to John Morley from which the title quotation of this thesis is taken, George Eliot argues that though women have 'the worst sphere in existence' they also have 'an art which does mend nature'.<sup>1</sup> The art referred to is not the art of fiction but the art of love and 'it is the function of love in the largest sense to mitigate all fatalities'.<sup>2</sup> But for George Eliot, the art of fiction is an expression of love 'in the largest sense' and so is very consciously a means of mitigating all fatalities.

As a true expression of an existential, Feuerbachian desire to understand love in the 'thatness' and the 'suchness'<sup>3</sup> of human being, George Eliot develops an idiom combining empathy with an awareness of ambiguity and nuance; sympathy with an awareness of limitation. The complexity and power of her idiom correspond to a deeply felt desire to find nature and to 'mend' it. But this mixed desire should not be understood in terms of a confusion of mutually incompatible principles which the genius of the art may sometimes veil and appear to reconcile. The assumption that there is a moralism in George Eliot's art which intrudes on her realism, is commonly invoked to explain artistic failures which are essentially failures in understanding. Critics who argue from this categorical assumption ignore the wide range of

situations covered by her art, and consequently the range of perspectives required for these situations to be fully understood. The ability of her intellectual and emotional understanding to embrace a wide variety of perspectives and situations determines the success or failure of her art. Art, like love, must be an attempt to comprehend, for nature cannot be 'mended' without being understood: 'The measure of the nature is also the measure of the understanding'.<sup>4</sup> To discover what humanity is capable of and how it may 'become', George Eliot realizes that she must understand it within the context of her age.

In the novels preceding Middlemarch she develops an idiom in which the process of love and morality is examined in its psychological and social aspects, in a variety of situations. Extensive but creative use is made of existing forms such as the Pastoral, the Fable, the historical romance and the early tradition of social realist fiction.

With Scenes of Clerical Life she extends the range of social realism to unfashionable classes and in her exploration of interpersonal love within limited human situations she adds a dimension of psychological maturity to English fiction. In spite of the flaws of the tales, she achieves a poise between sympathy and understanding which anticipates later works. But she also anticipates certain aspects of her later

work by going only so far in presenting the evil and the sordid. By acknowledging that the real Janet, the real Dempster and the real Milby were more tragic and sordid than in her portrait of them, she defines to an extent the limits of her realism.

In Adam Bede an attempt is made to understand human morality and nobility in terms of a lower social order. But the Wordsworthian idiom in which the nobility is expressed presupposes a structure of feeling essentially 'other' than the actual life of the rustic community. The gratuitous intimacy of the Poysers fails to compensate for the lack of a real interest in their class. The Wordsworthian emphasis on nobility leads to an unreal polarizing of characters in terms of either nobility or egoistic limitation whereas the plot derives its main strength from the awareness of egoism only.

However, where Adam Bede fails, The Mill on the Floss succeeds brilliantly by integrating a subjective feel for the nobility of a character with an awareness of limitation. The strong autobiographical element means that the retrospective structure of the novel corresponds to a profound understanding of personally remembered experience rather than to the relatively vague Wordsworthian idealization of the past we find in Adam Bede. But the sense of character as destiny - the artistic result of empathy with remembered experience, means that the ambiguities of moral choice which the novel later explores are not fully understood, and it is significant that

the emphasis on duty is here tied to a lack of understanding.

But in Silas Marner, George Eliot's perspective is wholly adequate to her material. Sympathy rather than empathy is the prevailing emotion and a balance is achieved between feeling and judgement. The novel also achieves a balance between the use of Wordsworthian pastoralism, as a parable illustrating essential truths, and a social and psychological realism which extends the conception of character beyond the mode of the parable. The sense of character as determined is reconciled with the sense of character as responsible and the individual is seen as representative of the species.

In contrast to the serenity of Silas Marner, Romola and Felix Holt are very uneven and are perhaps the least satisfactory of George Eliot's novels. But they extend her idiom in several important directions.

In Romola a sustained attempt is made to understand the individual in terms of society and in terms of the larger historical life of mankind. In Felix Holt a similar attempt is made to formulate a public and private morality but this time within a definite historical context. In both cases the attempt to understand character and the medium of state and society in terms of the same process produces a simplistic juxtaposition of nobility with egoism. As had been the case with Adam Bede the plots of these novels rely on the actions

of egoists for their main impetus. The noble characters never really seem to be part of the world of the egoists and the society which produces them. Consequently each novel ends with the noble characters, Romola and Felix, maintaining their integrity by dissociating themselves from the political process of their immediate social environments.

In Middlemarch, George Eliot regains the emotional perspective of Silas Marner but her idiom presupposes a far more sophisticated conception of society, and consequently of the individual. She succeeds brilliantly here, where she had failed in her two previous novels, in realizing character and a sense of its social, historical and cultural medium in terms of a common process. Characters of nobility and egoism alike are dynamically interrelated at the deepest level of plot. The failure of noble aspirations due to the egoistic self ignorance of individuals within the larger indirection of an alienated society, is counterbalanced by a consequent Feuerbachian participation with otherness. Feeling is reconciled in community, and the nobility of the character isolated from the social process is exposed as sham. In the meliorism of Middlemarch George Eliot realizes Feuerbach's profoundest insight, an insight which has persisted to form the very basis of Martin Buber's existentialism:

Sensations man has in isolation; feelings only in community...In feeling man is related to his fellow-men

as to himself; he is alive to the sorrows, the joys of another as his own. Thus only by communication does man rise above merely egoistic sensation into feeling. He who has no need of participating has no need of feeling.<sup>5</sup>

In Middlemarch the painful recognition and acceptance of limitation as a consequence of community and personality, however noble, constitute a valid affirmation in the face of those very limitations. But the reconciliation in community of a sceptical intelligence with faith, of an enervating awareness of uncertainty and nuance with a passionate need to find unequivocal truths, is short lived. In the period during which Daniel Deronda is created, George Eliot becomes pre-occupied with dispelling uncertainty in her admirers by stressing the unqualified truth of duty and altruism.

Partaking of this structure of feeling, Daniel Deronda marshals the full force of Victorian philosophic idealism in an attack on equivocation and uncertainty. George Eliot's idiom proves brilliantly adequate to the task of presenting the uncertainty, the faithlessness, the valuelessness of her age. But in knowing it so thoroughly she rejects it for the unknown and the limitless. The affirming values of the novel are associated with a sense of community as a mystical brotherhood unbound by time and change. The split in the idea of community reflects a split in the conception of character. Gwendolen is tied by egoism to the evil and uncertainty of her world. Deronda's lack of that limitation enables him to find purpose and certainty outside the conditions of that world.

Each character is explained in terms of a different process and neither is quite understood in terms of the other. The value that is to unite the two conceptions is sympathy but in turning away from Gwendolen and her world Deronda betrays his essential lack of interest in them. His sympathy is an expression of pity rather than fellowship in limitation and suffering. In this way it is not the profound value that emerges from Middlemarch, in which people are drawn to each other by a fellowship of mutual need and suffering. The existential meaning of character, the 'I' and 'Thou' of Middlemarch is created in the very act of meeting, thus realizing Feuerbach's insight that the essence of man consists

...only in community, it is found only in the unity of man with man - a unity that is supported only by the reality of the difference between I and Thou...  
Man with man - the unity of I and Thou - is God.<sup>6</sup>

In Daniel Deronda however, in spite of the elaborate pains taken to stress Deronda's sympathy with Gwendolen, he is independent of her. He is not constituted by his meeting with Gwendolen and her problems, rather his whole essence consists in escaping their deeper implications. The artistic failure of Daniel Deronda warrants explanation as part of a broader philosophical failure characteristic of nineteenth century idealism as a whole. In Middlemarch George Eliot had achieved an artistic and philosophical reconciliation which was uniquely

the result of her own idiom. However it is significant that though the Gwendolen section of Daniel Deronda is also uniquely her own, the Deronda section reflects the influence of a wide range of nineteenth century archetypes.

In drawing a clear distinction between Gwendolen the egoist and Deronda, a covertly feminine version of the Carlylean 'thought hero', George Eliot reflects the Messianic response of Carlyle in Sartor Resartus, to the problem of evil:

A vain interminable controversy...touching what is at present called Origin of Evil, or some such thing arises in every soul since the beginning of the world; and in every soul that would pass from idle Suffering into actual Endeavouring must first be put an end to. The most, in our time, have to go content with a simple, incomplete enough Suppression of this controversy; to a few some Solution of it is indispenable. <sup>7</sup>

While Gwendolen is one of the many whose destiny is in the hands of 'ordinary causes', Deronda, like Teufelsdröckh or Browning's Paracelsus, is one of the few - the spiritual heroes who control their own destinies by recognizing them as expressions of the larger movement of human spirit. As with Carlyle, ethical shortcomings such as egoism and 'vanity'<sup>8</sup> are what distinguish the many from the few, whose liberation therefore is imagined in ethical terms, as is the ultimate meaning of history. Thus Deronda finds his purpose in the age old tradition of the Jews which represents the endurance of suffering humanity and holds the seeds of the future. His identification with this eternally true process is his apotheosis,

his release from the bonds of 'ordinary causes' which had made for Dorothea '...perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity'.<sup>9</sup> The apotheosis of Deronda mirrors the apotheosis of man by Feuerbach which both Marx<sup>10</sup> and Karl Barth<sup>11</sup> attack for its facile ignorance of the real evils inherent in, respectively, man's social organization and his spiritual condition, which can only be purged by a radical social and spiritual transformation. George Eliot shows she is aware of the need for transformation when she has her hero point out the profound meaning of the myth of Buddha offering himself to the tiger. But nothing Deronda ever does suggests even remotely a sacrifice of this order. His discovery of a place in the eternal order of suffering humanity represented by the Jewish race shields him from the necessity of facing the evils of present society in the evil of a Grandcourt. If one is to accept that Grandcourt's evil is explainable in terms of egoism, one is entitled to expect that the non-egoistic endeavour of Deronda will overshadow and invalidate it. But it does not. In creating her new 'mythus',<sup>12</sup> of eternal sympathy, George Eliot satisfies an existential need for certainty but at the cost of turning away from a social and spiritual malaise which demands immediate historical commitment. By answering the uncertainties inherent in a particular social and spiritual condition with ahistorical assurances, George

Eliot is indulging in what Feuerbach had criticized as the wish fulfilment characteristic of religious systems:

God is the love that satisfies our wishes and our emotional needs; he is himself the realized desire of the heart, lifted up to the certainty of its fulfilment and validity, to that undoubting certainty before which no contrary claim of the intellect, no objection coming from external experience, can stand. <sup>13</sup>

With George Eliot's emphasis on endurance in the face of uncertainty and in her willingness to arrive at a complete knowledge of the worst, the search for man begun by Feuerbach had indeed been carried further. But in the mystical apotheosis (or in the language of Marx and Barth 'hypostasis') of 'human nature' by Feuerbach or of 'duty' by George Eliot it had only found another God.

The transformations demanded by the very real evils that George Eliot saw in her time were to be attempted, but under auspices vastly different than she had imagined. Marx's creation of a revolutionary 'practical-critical' theory,<sup>14</sup> which whatever its dangers devised real solutions for real problems, would inspire men to violently change the structure of human society. But perhaps more profoundly, humanity would witness a revolution of the spirit in painful and sometimes disastrous attempts to transcend evil by personally comprehending it.

In Crime and Punishment published a decade before Daniel Deronda, Dostoyevsky steeps his hero in an evil that defies categorization in terms of 'egoism' and only thereafter

absolves him from a universal guilt. Raskolnikov's dream of an old horse being brutally beaten to death while he looks on as the helpless child,<sup>15</sup> underlines Dostoyevsky's insistence that evil is a universal fact of spiritual existence rather than the avoidable psychological accident implied by 'egoism'. By taking on responsibility for the sins of the world in his own sin; by identifying himself with the worst in humanity and then repenting, Raskolnikov makes a successful transformation from helpless innocence to spiritual wholeness. But this harrowing transformation is not to be recommended as a universal remedy guaranteeing certainty. A decade after the publication of Daniel Deronda, Friedrich Nietzsche would go permanently insane trying to shield a horse that was being beaten to death by throwing his arms around its neck. For Kierkegaard as for Nietzsche, 'the sickness unto death',<sup>16</sup> the despair of the socially adjusted and therefore falsely constituted self, demanded a desperate courage to face and accept ontological uncertainty rather than a desire to direct one's life into an ethically predetermined path.

In the Gwendolen section of Daniel Deronda, George Eliot achieves the highest development of her idiom precisely because it is an expression of her ability to face spiritual uncertainty and nihilism. The Deronda section, the ahistorical search for purpose outside of society, is an

elaborate decoy, a deflection of her idiom from its true subject - the human being in community, in the eternally uncertain process of meeting and becoming.

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1. See Introduction footnote 35.
2. Same source.
3. cf. Karl Barth, introduction to The Essence of Christianity, op. cit., p. xxiv.
4. Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, op. cit., p. 8.
5. Ibid., p. 283.
6. Feuerbach, Die Philosophie der Zukunft, H. Ehrenberg (ed.) in Frommann's Philosophische Taschenbücher, Stuttgart, 1922, quoted by Karl Barth in his introduction to Essence, op. cit., p. xiii.
7. Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, ed. cit., p. 131.
8. Ibid., p. 132 - 'I tell thee Blockhead, it all comes of thy vanity'.
9. George Eliot, Middlemarch, ed. cit., Vol. I, xiii.
10. Karl Marx, Theses on Feuerbach 1845 in Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Lewis S. Feuer (ed.), Doubleday (Anchor), New York, 1959, pp. 243-5.
11. Barth, introduction to Essence, ed. cit., p. xxix.
12. The term is Carlyle's. Sartor Resartus, ed. cit., p. 134.
13. Feuerbach, Essence, op. cit., p. 202.
14. Marx, Theses, op. cit., I, p. 243.
15. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment, David Magarshack trans., Penguin Press, Harmondsworth, 1971, pp. 72-8.
16. Søren Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto Death (1849), W. Lowrie trans., Oxford University Press, London, and Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1941.

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