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WRITTEN IN OPPOSITION: NARRATOR-NARRATEE RELATIONSHIP IN THE MAJOR NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT

by

ARUNDHATI MAITRA SANYAL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2000

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

5-12-00

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Abstract

Written in Opposition: Narrator-Narratee Relationship in George Eliot's Major Novels

by

Arundhati Maitra Sanyal

Advisor: Professor Anne Humpherys

This dissertation examines the major novels of George Eliot from the perspective of a narrator-narratee relationship that is always dialogic and frequently oppositional. The argument is based within the context of Reader-Response and Communication theories, more specifically Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the dialogic nature of language, that posit dialogic narratives as the basis of creative writing.

Initially, George Eliot's letters are discussed to show the evolution of a narrator-narratee relationship that is later carefully honed to a dialogic and contestatory one as she focuses on various themes and issues in the novels.

The discussion of the novels involves a close reading of the narrator's addresses to the reader/narratee as also of those passages where the voice of the narrator is covertly present. The narrator's primary aim in the novels is to create his ideal narratee, and to that end the earlier

novel such as Adam Bede has explicit passages on how to read and respond to the narrative. In the later novels the narrator begins to anticipate the narratee's opposition or unpreparedness for the text in more subtle ways, and also begins to inhabit more in the voices of principal protagonists than as an explicit persona.

The dissertation argues that dialogue, whether assimilative or contestatory, makes empathy possible in the novels. Those characters who are incapable of dialogue are also incapable of triumphing over irreconcilable forces.

The final discussions focus on the gradual fading out of the narrator from these dialogues as characters begin to take these on and initiate a discussion of the ambiguities of the narrator. In Daniel Deronda Deronda becomes a test case for the ubiquitous presence of a narrator/mentor figure, and the dissertation ends with hypotheses about Eliot's conscious awareness of the pitfalls of an omniscient narrator.

Acknowledgments

The idea for this dissertation first came to me in several graduate seminars offered by Professor Janet Larson of Rutgers University (Newark). I wish to thank her also for her initial encouragement to me which prompted me to go on to a Ph.D program.

I am grateful to Professor Anne Humpherys for agreeing to be the advisor and first reader for this dissertation. Through the five years that it took to complete this work, she has been consistently optimistic, enthusiastic, and patient with the progress of the work. At most difficult times these qualities helped me overcome my own hesitancies and frustrations with the project.

I wish to thank all the staff of the Rutgers Dana Library and the Mina Rees Library for having helped me in my research.

I also wish to acknowledge the efforts of all of my teachers and mentors at Presidency College, Calcutta University, Rutgers University, and City University of New York. They collectively are responsible for instilling in me a love for nineteenth century literature and close textual reading -- both of which helped me in finding pleasure in this project. Special mention must be made of the following : Sukanta Chaudhuri, Kajol Sengupta, Virginia Tiger, Malcolm Kiniry, John Hall, Richard McCoy, Donald Stone, Felicia Bonaparte, and Jackie DiSalvo.

At a personal level, this dissertation could not have been written without the active and generous support of my husband, Tapas Sanyal. For his patience and interest I am very grateful. I apologize to him and our son, Aditya, for all the turmoil my life as a graduate student inevitably brought to our family. In the long course of working on this project a second child, Ishani, has joined the first. Together they have added much joy, and not a little delay, to what has sometimes seemed a project without end.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to my parents for having nurtured and instilled in me a life-long love for literature. I understand now how they walked the difficult paths so I could walk the easy ones.

May, 2000

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a close reading of the personal correspondence and major fiction of the nineteenth century British novelist, George Eliot (1819 - 1880). Since she is a novelist whose narrator is explicitly speaking to a figure inside the novelistic framework and text, the focus here is on the relations between the author and narrator on the one hand and narrator and readers on the other.

The narrator has a corresponding figure at the receiving end called the "narratee" in reader-response and communication theories of literature (Wallace Martin 154 - 155). This "narratee" for whom the narrative is intended is a crucial component of my readings of George Eliot's works. The particular ways in which Eliot's narrators perceive the needs of the narratees determine the growth and direction of her narratives. While the above statement might be postulated for most creative writers, especially in prose, what is special about George Eliot is that her narrator-narratee relationship functions in dialogic and frequently oppositional terms.

In order to understand the significance of this frequently oppositional dialogue in the makings of the novelist's narrative, I draw on the ideas of the Russian formalist critic M.M Bakhtin, who takes dialogue as the basis of any kind of communication in language. In his collection of essays, The Dialogic Imagination, Bakhtin touches on the various levels at which it is possible to see dialogue

functioning as the basis of speech and language. In a novel such a dialogue takes place between various " belief- systems" or ideologies that are present in the language of the text (Bakhtin 259 - 422). In his chapter on the novel, Bakhtin identifies various kinds of dialogue, but the most relevant for my purposes is the one between the author and the narrator[1].

In my reading of George Eliot's novels I have separated the biographical author from the narrator who actually relates the story. The narrator's voice is one of the many contending voices that the author creates in order to dialogically let her larger conception of the themes emerge. I have also separated the reader into the narratee and the ideal reader and have envisaged the narratee's voice to be an important one in this collection of dialogic relationships. In Bakhtin's words:

> The author utilizes now one language, now another, in order to avoid giving himself up wholly to either of them; he makes use of this verbal give-and-take, this dialogue of languages at every point in his work, in order that he himself might remain as it were neutral with regard to language, a third party in a quarrel between two people (Although he might be a biased third party) (Bakhtin 314).

The idea that a particular belief system or ideology "appropriates" language at any given time and makes it its

vehicle of expression, has enabled me to identify within a given passage or chapter of Eliot's novels, different speech/responses attributable to the narrator or narratee, as well as to any character-as-commentator. I have used Bakhtin's theoretical assumptions of "heteroglossia" (the term he uses for the presence of multiple voices/ideologies in the text) to read and analyze passages in George Eliot's text where I have tried to demonstrate the presence of different narrator and narratee's voices.

Reader-response theories or communication theories of novels have also provided terms that I use to explain the relationship between the author and the reader and to construct a working "communication model" for studying George Eliot's narratives from the basic terms, as used by Gerard Genette, Gerald Prince, and more recently Robyn Warhol. On the author's side of the relationship there is the biographical author (in my case , Mary Ann Evans/George Eliot) who is actually writing the words of the novel on paper; the implied author who represents the norms and values we recognize as coming from the author's telling of the story; and the narrator whose voice we hear in the novel telling us the story. On the reader's side of the relationship there is the narratee to whom or, in my scheme of things, in reaction to whose opposition the narrator is addressing the narrative; the ideal reader who understands the relationship between the narrator and the oppositional narratee; and the actual reader

with the novel in hand. The actual reader tries to become the ideal reader as far as possible in course of the narrative.

Reader response theories concentrate on the reader's end of the communication, studying the principal tasks performed by the narratee which the ideal reader is aware of, and also how the actual reader holding the text in his hand tries to eliminate the distance between himself and the ideal reader. It is this end of the dialogic relationship that my dissertation has focused on. Thus, this study will raise the following questions with respect to George Eliot's novels: What is the relationship between the narrator of the text and its narratee? What part does this relationship play in the formal structure and themes of the novels? How does the language of the text help us characterize the nature of the narratee? What is the function of the dialogue between the narrator and narratee in terms of the actual reader's creation of new meaning from the text? In what different ways are the dialogic and oppositional impulses revealed in terms of theme and characterization? If the dialogic and oppositional relationship between the narrator and narratee forms the basis of George Eliot's creative practice, what, if any, is her perception of herself as an author? In other words, how does this dialogic relationship sustain, or not, George Eliot's various images of herself as a Victorian sage, a moralist, or a teacher?

In trying to understand the relationship between the

created narrator and the created narratee of George Eliot's novels the reader remains outside the orbit of the controlling author, in terms of the various consciousnesses within the work which have been "created" in order to collectively make meaning for him. This position of the reader mirrors that of the narratee with the narrator who tries to bridge the distance between him and the narratee and bring the latter "in" as it were through persuasion, argument, logic, or forcing the narratee to place himself in the characters' shoes. Wayne Booth's reader -- an understanding or agreeable persona who is persuaded to grasp a core of norms everywhere implicit in the work thus interpreting its events -- is definitely present in George Eliot's narratives, but most often the George Eliot narratee is a more active participant in the production of meaning. The relationship is closer to that posited by Wolfgang Iser in The Implied Reader.

He demonstrates how a narrator can engage the reader in his narrative, frustrating his expectations in order to bring the reader's perceptions to coincide with the demands of the author's thematic or conceptual innovations. In other words, Iser implies that the author second-guesses or anticipates what the reader might or might not accept, and according to the author's necessities vis a vis the narrative, manipulates such knowledge to get a suitable response from the reader. This ensures the reader's participation in the relationship among author, narrator, text, and reader. However, my

dissertation deviates from Iser's formulation in one significant respect. I have applied Iser's model to the relations between the narrator and narratee rather than the reader, including the anticipatory function of the narrator in his creation of the narratee. Yes, the narrator that the biographical author George Eliot has created is aware of what his narratee expects, likes, or dislikes. In fact, the relationship is so symbiotic that the narrative emerges out of a constant necessity to respond to an anticipated question or point of anxiety, or a source of opposition on the narratee's part. Iser looks at negation as a tool coming from the author to the reader. I, on the other hand, perceive the relationship to be oppositional from the naratee's side. Iser's author witholds or grants information according to his knowledge of what the narratee expects. In my conception of George Eliot's narrator, a clear picture of the narratee exists before the narrator so that his narrative emerges as a response to what the narrator understands as the narratee's opposition. The very raison d'etre for the narrative to proceed comes from the desire to respond to the narratee. This is true of the presentation of the different themes of moral sympathy and liberal acceptance of difference that her narratives are so deeply marked with. My principal argument here is that the presentation of most of her themes and perspectives is made possible within the created dialogic construct of the textual framework because of the anticipated presence of an

oppositional narratee who calls forth the appropriate narratorial response that keeps the narrative moving.

In trying to develop the relationship between the narrator and the narratee in this oppositional way, I have traced, in the first chapter, the origins of such a narrative voice to her letters, essays and notebooks. Her letters are an excellent source for examining her self-construction because in them we can see her answering, responding, discussing, justifying, and arguing her self into existence in the face of what she sees as oppositional constructions of her correspondents.

The first chapter examines how in the process of addressing her correspondents Eliot creates a narrative voice that is flexible enough to respond to the covert and overt questions of her readers, and which is also oppositional, in the sense that it owes its themes and tones to the presence of an anticipated opposition on the part of a constructed narratee. This makes for a curiously self-enclosed prose, with the narrator consciously aware of the narratee soliciting multiple perspectives that the narrator then has to acknowledge, refute , incorporate, and transform through his narrative. The narrative voice in her letters is a precursor of the narrative voice created in the novels. Both owe their creation and continuance to a principle of anticipated opposition from their respective narratees.

Within the correspondence of George Eliot, the terms of

opposition that the narrator is anticipating are always related to her personal life and its dynamics vis a vis her self-construction as daughter, sister, valued family member, woman with special intellectual gifts, and a self-conscious prose-writer. Such issues as her unease with roles defined for her at her parental home, her religious dissent, her dissatisfaction with her prose as a vehicle for addressing adequately all her complex needs, her relationship with George Lewes, all find expression in perceptible ways in the dialogic relationship between the narrator and narratee of the letters.

In the subsequent analyses of the narrator's relationship with the narratee in the novels, I argue that this dialogic and oppositional relationship is particularly suited to the content of the novels. George Eliot herself saw her fictions as "experiments in life" (Gordon Haight 6:216) and in her novels placed the central character or characters within a range of experiences that would test, juxtapose, compare and contrast different ways of making sense of the world. Even as the characters undergo these sets of experiences, the narrator's principal task is to explicate, describe, and dramatize the issues of conflict, the points of comparison, and the results of the test to the narratee.

Because of George Eliot's rich background of intellectual scrutiny and scholarship before her career as a novelist, such experiences in her novels inevitably deal with contemporary philosophical, ethical, and scientific issues of

significance. As an editor, translator, and critic of formidable ability, it was natural to incorporate, within the world of her novels, the problems that an intellectual of her times would face in defining him/herself vis a vis religious, social, intellectual crises of the times. Her novels frequently expose crises faced by characters either deluded, or disillusioned, or defeated by the experiences they encounter and through which they attempt to make meaning of their lives in relation to their community, religion, scholarship, politics, and history. The narrator has to reflect the crises in all of their manifestations and perspectives, and has to finely strike a balance between judgment and interpretation. That is why the total omniscience of the typical third-person narrator has to be qualified with the dialogic presence of both the narrator and the narratee, the latter being in the position of questioning, and at times undermining the "omniscience" of the narrator. Moreover, through her narrator, George Eliot frequently questions the interpretation of a particular principle or ideology that the character seems to be making. The agility of the narrator is crucial in such cases because he has to subtly undermine the meaning a character is making without appearing to destroy the stature the character has in the ideal reader's eyes. At such points in the novels, the presence of a naive, yet oppositional narratee in relation to the narrator is an advantage. Instances such as Maggie's reading of Kempis'

Imitation of Christ (in The Mill on the Floss), Dorothea's reading of Casaubon's letter of proposal (in Middlemarch), Gwendolyn's sense of invincibility on the roulette table under the watchful eyes of Deronda (in Daniel Deronda), all require the narrator to be comprehensive; the comprehensiveness in all such instances result from a dialogic narration rather than the total omniscience of the third person narrator. But in Romola and Daniel Deronda, the narratee begins to depart in the face of the merging of the narrator's position with the characters' voices.

I

Chapter 1 discusses the personal correspondence of George Eliot in an effort to establish certain unique narratorial traits exhibited between Mary Ann Evans and her correspondents. Such traits are later exhibited in the relationship between the narrator and the narratee in her novels. In the first half of this chapter I discuss a selective number of letters that are chosen from certain crucial moments of her eventful life, for example, her early belief in Evangelical ideas, her discursive days with the Brays and John Sibree, and most importantly, her days of the "Holy War" against Evangelical established religion, as well as her elopement to the continent with George Henry Lewes.

The letters show the author/narrator developing a distinct narrative persona through overt and covert

projections of the narrator's self-definition in the dialogue with the narratee. These dialogues depict a mostly agonising and apologetic acknowledgment that Evangelical humility, notwithstanding the narrator is erudite, stylistically self-conscious, and overwhelmingly opinionated. The narrator hesitantly puts forward this persona even though she is ever aware of a narratee who might find the assumptions of superiority to be presumptous. However, the narrator enjoys playing with the narratee in such letters by apologising about the superiority only to demonstrate stylistic and erudite flourishes within the very apology itself.

The readings of individual letters demonstrate the narrator's ability to anticipate the narratee's response (oppositional or sympathetic) and then address this in an elaborate process of self-justification which itself is the driving force behind the letter itself. In other words, the author creates an oppositional persona in the narratee.The need to answer the opposition brings forth the narrator's voice.

The relationship between the narrator and the constructed narratee is symbiotic: the one cannot exist without the other. The oppositional narratee gives the narrator the motive to write, but the main purpose of the narrator is to achieve some level of parity and similar purpose of values with the narratee.

One of the more remarkable traits of the relationship

between the narrator and narratee is one where the narrator "works" through a conflict or a debate, coming in the course of the dialogue with the anticipated narratee to understand and even accept the "other" side of the issue. This is particularly evident in the series of letters written during the crisis of the Holy War with her father, Robert Evans. In this group of letters one can read the first fully developed treatment of multi-perspectivism where the narrator in an open letter to the patriarch discusses and then assumes some of his shortcomings in the crisis. Some of these narratorial strategies will find expression in the play of multi-perspectivism in Middlemarch.

Multi-perspectivism is the logical evolution of George Eliot's dialogic narration in the letters. The self-definition that is so important in the letters in the face of an oppositional, judgmental, and at times, hostile narratee proceeds not merely through self-assertion, but also through an evaluative process for which the narrator employs dialogue in order to show the working out of an opinion on a particular issue. The many intended themes of the novels get expressed through this dialogic working-out of issues, and the reader can see this process being honed in the letters.

The next half of the first chapter points out the strong connections between the narrative practice of George Eliot's personal correspondence and that of her most autobiographical novel, The Mill on the Floss (1860). Thematically the novel

explores the conflict between individual and collective or social responsibility by focusing on the life and decisions made by the protagonist Maggie Tulliver and the effects they have on the world surrounding her. I read the narrator's voice as a dual one in this novel, one being that of a Wordsworthian narrator who stresses the romantic connection to the past and the importance of memory and nostalgia in the lives of his protagonists Tom and Maggie, and the second being that of an ethnographer who details the social life of St.Ogg's by describing its population and its history to show the impact of some of the choices Maggie will make. While the voice of the first narrator is personal and personable, that of the second one is factual, objective, yet capable of ironic maneuverings *vis a vis* the narratee.

The second narratee resembles, in narrative practice, the narrator of the letters in that there is an insistence on the importance of multiple perspectives on the part of the narrator. The narrator of the novel almost always shifts perspectives when he is describing either the protagonist's actions or the social milieu of the novel. Thematically, the novel has strong oppositional and binary patterns that seem to divide on issues of conformity versus rebellion, rationality versus the passionate, mechanistic versus the organic, male authority versus female desire. The dialogue between narrator and narratee begins to focus on these issues of opposition with the narrator trying to tutor the narratee on a wider

response by giving him lessons in adapting to multiple perspectives on the same issue.

Eventually the dialogue is taken over by Maggie and Tom, the chief opponent to what she stands for in the novel. While Tom's perspective appears to be correct on the whole and is shown to possess obvious material benefits in that it helps him pull the family fortunes back, it is shown to be mechanistic and limited because it ignores the individual emotional needs that Maggie seems to aspire to. Without these emotional underpinnings, the values of Tom appear to be rigid and cold. The defence for Maggie in the narrator's shifting perspectives is similar to that of the narrator of the letters, who has similarly undergone the effects of her decisions and has come to view them in a different light. The narrator uses different narrative versions of the same incident, for example, the flight of Maggie and Stephen, to show how widely differing perspectives, sometimes contradicting each other, seem to better portray the real more clearly. The narrator in all of this is in dialogue with the narratee and in an elliptical way acknowledges the assumptions, pre-dispositions, and prejudices of the narratee. But the narrator also is involved in a conscious effort to educate, qualify, or render more sensitive the narratee's perceptions so that what the narrator is presenting may be interpreted in the richest sense possible.

II

The narrator in Adam Bede (1859) is as much engaged in creating the narratee as the other characters. The narratee is in a participative relationship with the narrator, and has to be actively engaged in the creative process. The narratee is "sympathetic" to all of the issues raised in the novel. This is the opposite of an "indifferent" narratee but this does not necessarily mean that the narratee is in agreement with all that the narrator puts forward. In fact, particularly in this novel, the nature of the narrator-narratee dialogues is oppositional, with the narrator trying to persuade the narratee to change his perceptions and expectations of the creative process, and that of the mediation the artist subjects his material to in order to make it "presentable" to the narratee.

In this novel the topic of "realism" is the focal point of the relationship between the narrator and the narratee. The oppositional dialogue involves an argument about the nature of realism, the moral ethics closely related to realism, and the part that realism compels the narratee to play in the creation of the narrative.

This dialogic relationship between the narrator and the narratee is so basic to the creative principle of this novel that the relationship is given several analogues within constructed relationships between characters.

The focus of my discussion is Chapter 17 of the novel, which shows the oppositional play between narrator and narratee at its most explicit. The narrrator anticipates censure from the narratee because of the unconventional portraiture of Reverend Irwine in the previous chapter of the novel. Such censure was the staple of the comments Eliot initially received from her publisher, Blackwood. There are parallels between the ways in which Eliot sensitively agonized over ambiguous comments made by her publisher and the narrator's attempts to anticipate and aggressively respond to the narratee's objections in this chapter.

In the final section of this chapter I move on from the dialectical nature of narrator-narratee relationship to that of character-to-character relationships. There are distinct parallels drawn between the narrator and Dinah on the one hand and the narratee and Adam on the other hand. Set within the context of a definition of the pastoral as a genre these analogies ultimately help us understand the thematic underpinnings of the novel.

III

In my third chapter I discuss two of the novels, Felix Holt (1866) and Middlemarch ((1871-72), in terms of multi-perspectivism in the narrator's use of and comments on the events. These are novels that are also predominantly concerned with the relationship of the public worlds and the private lives of individuals. To that extent the narrator is concerned

with impressing on the narratee the need to locate the private motives prompting larger public and political movements as well as realizing that the private self and concerns by itself and devoid of a larger motivation ultimately is harmful to the larger community.

In Felix Holt the narrator appears in the first section as a tour guide of the country-side. He points out the effect several public and historical events have had in the lives of private individuals, and conversely the very private individual decisions that have resulted in public and historical events such as the founding of the town of Treby Magna. This reinforces the close connection between the public and the private that becomes a major theme of this novel.

The narrator does not address the narratee in direct monologues as in the previous novel. Here the narrator creates representative characters such as Felix Holt, Esther Lyon, and Rufus, among others, who come to embody the different thematic lines that are to be in dialogue with each other. Thus the narrator instead of engaging directly in the dialogue with his narratee uses characters who talk to each other and interact in ways that reveal their inner promptings and extend the discussion of public commitment and private motives, representation in politics, and the intertwining of the two in actual political life.

The narrator-narratee dialogue however muted it may be in this novel is one which centres on multi-perspectivism

with the narratee being schooled to understand that no perspective is the ultimate one and that truth emerges out of a palimpsest of perspectives overlapping each other. In the novel, the voice which most closely echoes this is that of Rufus Lyon. He stands by his principles, but also warns Felix against too much iconoclasm which might make him lose perspective completely.

The dialogue between the public and the private continues in the second novel under discussion in this chapter, Middlemarch. Here too the narrator proceeds to educate the narratee on the appropriate acceptance of reality by approaching every issue and character through multiple perspectives. In this, George Eliot's magnum opus, all of the dialogic qualities and strategies exhibited by the narrator-narratee relationship reach a climax. Thematically, the novel explores in detail the intersecting narratives of public commitment/service and individual aspirations. The narrator consistently uses multi-perspectivism to portray the trajectory of the principal characters Dorothea, Casaubon, Will Ladislaw, Lydgate, and Bulstrode.

Following the formulations of such critics of the novel such as Felicia Bonaparte and David Carroll, I focus on the principal characters as representatives of different individual aspirations and achievements of the nineteenth century. This kind of characterization lends credibility to the author's dialogic strategy in the narrator-narratee

relationship. Because the narrator wishes to educate the narratee on the complexity of each life in its journey from individual ambition to communal fulfilment or failure, the narrator uses multiple perspectives on any given character or important episode. The rest of this chapter focuses on the textual analysis of passages showing the uses of multiple perspectives. Most effective are those multiple perspectives which occur simultaneously within a single narrative unit.

Interpretation becomes the major theme of the novel because the protagonists' ability to interpret their own aspirations correctly in the context of external circumstances becomes key to the growth of the character concerned. Thus Lydgate's failure to interpret rural community vis a vis his personal ambition as a scientific researcher results in his failure to establish himself in ways he originally wanted to. The narratee is asked to evaluate characters based on their ability to interpret their environment correctly. Inevitably those characters who are able to do so are those who are able to put themselves in others' shoes and perceive life from several perspectives. These are the characters who are seen as morally/ethically superior to the rest. Thus the narrator's own enterprise of educating the narratee is enacted within the characterization itself to reinforce the author's belief in the principle of multiplicity of perspectives.

IV

There is an oscillating movement between the narrator's

omniscient role and the delegatory/participatory role in all the works of George Eliot. The author creates both a strong speaking voice for the narrator in certain novels but has him delegate this authority to central characters in other novels. The participatory mode of the narrator is seen in Romola (1862-63), where Eliot first tackles a historical novel. The delegatory/participative side finally triumphs in the last of her novels Daniel Deronda (1876).

In this last chapter I discuss the gradual exit of the narratee and the emergence of a narrator who increasingly delegates his functions and characteristics to the protagonists of the novels. Thus the debates between the narrator-narratee that raised important issues in the earlier novels now tend to become discursive sections between various characters who, operating within the boundaries of the plot, become the vehicles of these debates. In fact, in Daniel Deronda the character of Daniel seems to embody the qualities that the narrator wanted his ideal narratee to have. In many ways, Daniel becomes a surrogate narrator for the novel as well as being one of the principal protagonists.

In Romola the debate develops through the interaction of Romola and Tito as well as Romola and Savonarola. The issue is obedience versus rebellion, and each interaction of these characters hones the dialogue between these two principles into complex terms. Structurally the novel is dialogic as well, as Susan Winnett has demonstrated.The narratee is

positioned along with the actual reader at the receiving end of these character confrontations, and the plot-line progresses along the dialogic exchanges of the characters. One of the reasons for the lack of an opppositional dialogue between narrator -narratee in this novel is its genre, the historical novel. Because the events of the novel do not form part of the narratee's contemporary life, the narrator cannot ask him to get involved intellectually. The locale lends a distance between the narratee and the themes of the story so that the narratee cannot be expected to have a ready response to these events described in the novel. Rather, the narrator's principal task is to demonstrate that despite the historicity of these various oppositional themes, the stories remain the same through all ages, and only the characters change.

In Daniel Deronda the pairing of Deronda and Gwendolen gradually begins to replicate the narrator-narratee relationship with Deronda playing the role of the narrator-confessee-mentor figure for Gwendolen's narratee- confessor-protege. But the narrator-Deronda figure becomes a test case for a final evaluation of the narrator's role that the author has presented to her audiences in her previous novels.

What are the implications of total omniscience whereby one is privy to another's confession and deepest moral development ? What are some of the constraints and obligations that the narrator is subject to? What level of honesty and disclosure should the receiver of information be expected to

show himself? Does George Eliot in her last novel undermine the all-knowing narrator, or the over-bearing teacher-narrator in favor of a participative sharing of the roles and functions of the narrator? Speculations about these questions close this dissertation.

ENDNOTE

1. "We acutely sense two levels at each moment in the story; one, the level of the narrator, a belief system filled with his objects, meanings and emotional expressions, and the other, the level of the author, who speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story" (314).

Chapter One: George Eliot's Letters and The Mill on the Floss: In Search of a Narrative Voice

This chapter focuses on certain common characteristics in both the personal correspondence of George Eliot and her fiction, particularly The Mill on the Floss (1860), especially the elaborate discussion in both the letters and the novel of the validity of a constructed narrative persona.

In the letters the construction of the narrator's persona, through conscious stylistic and tonal maneuvrings, includes the narrator's awareness of the presence of a narratee. In the novel there is a philosophical debate between the narrator and the narratee about the validity of depicting a self in all its complexity, particularly a self in a society which does not possess the nobility that would be discernible in Greek tragedy, for instance. In the novel, anticipating the narratee's opposition and thus developing an elaborate dialogic relationship, the narrator creates the structure necessary for a discussion of the relationship between self and society at various crisis points in the character's development. These points focus on the tension between renunciation and gratification that ends with an attempt to reconcile the "validity of opposite claims" that George Eliot recognises as central in her discussion of tragedy in her

essays.

This discussion begins as hesitant and apologetic references to personal emotions and concerns in the letters (1840s to 1850s), and becomes extended both in the letters and the fiction (in the description of her characters' emotions and concerns) into an elaborate framework in which the narrator's hesitancy is conquered by over-riding necessity and seriousness of purpose that the narratee either directly demands or that the narratee's naivete prompts in the narrator. This framework is seen also in a more elaborate stylistic flourish by the narrator in the letters, which by its presence belies and argues against all earlier protestations of hesitancy and self-abnegation on the narrator's part.

In reading George Eliot's published collection of letters, the actual reader is placed in a peculiar position concerning his/her relationship with the narrator. These letters were originally written for a specific reader, the actual correspondents to whom they were addressed. Once they are placed together and collected in specific volumes, however, their interest for the reader obviously transcends the specific, individual occasions for which they were originally penned , and become more generic. The reader of the collection of letters thus both simulates the individual position of the specific correspondent while reading the specific letters [1], and also retains his/her separate entity as reader of a

collection of past letters, a student of the author's life, a critic of the style and technique of the prose. This tension makes clear the differences between various kinds of reader at the receiving end of the communication model.

In trying to read these letters of George Eliot, I have adopted both personae of the reader. On the one hand, as a reader of the individual letters, I have tried to place myself in the position of the individual reader for whom a particular letter was intended, examining the circumstances under which the letter was written and trying to understand the narrator's choices, techniques, and strategies. On the other hand, I have stepped back from the individual letter to look at the generic pattern that the letters as a whole reveal about the general relationship between the narrator and the narratee in Eliot's letters.

George Eliot's letters are an excellent source for studying Mary Ann Evans' self-construction because here we see her answering, responding, discussing, justifying, and arguing her self into existence in the face of oppositional definitions and constructions implied by her correspondents. These letters have as their subject-matter her personal life and its dynamics and demonstrate her self-constructions as daughter, sister, valued family member, woman with special intellectual gifts, and a self-conscious prose-writer. The letters are testimony to the way in which the various circumstances of her personal existence bear upon the kind of

narrative she creates in her letters and, by extension, in her fiction. For example, in the early letters, one can see her Evangelical background impinging consistently in the tone and voice of the narrator. Even as the narrator reveals the extensive learning of an acute mind that finds itself trapped in the constrictions of a working provincial family, there is simultaneously an involuntary drawing-back from open confession and/or artful demonstration of clever prose as being too egocentric a narrative habit. In the place of this clever prose, the narrator constructs an elaborate framework of apologia expressed in clever, sophisticated, and metaphoric language that, in an admission of culpability, both demonstrates and re-enacts the crime.

Take as an example, a letter to the steady correspondent Maria Lewis (dated 12 August 1840). In this letter, the narrator begins by giving the little, inconsequential news of appointments with friends (Martha Jackson), book deliveries, and more substantial discussions of sermons, hymns, and doctrinal issues that seem normal between two devout Evangelists. However, at the end, the narrator begins a remarkable passage of apology that shows how the narrator perceives the narratee, how the narrator chooses to respond to the narratee, and most importantly, how this response becomes an occasion for a burst of creativity in terms of narrative composition:

You will think me interminably loquacious, and

> still worse you will be ready to compare my scribbled sheet to the walls of an Egyptian tomb for mystery, and determine not to imitate certain wise antiquaries or antiquarian wise-acres who "waste their precious years, how soon to fail?" in deciphering information which has only the lichen and moss of age to make it more valuable than the facts graphically conveyed by an upholsterer's pattern book (Haight 1:64).

Here the narratee is pictured as being critical of the wide-ranging discussion the narrator has indulged in so far because it reveals to the narratee a "dryasdust" erudition and conscious flaunting of the intellect. The narratee in this suppositional exercise of the narrator's is critiquing the useless compendium of information and opinion that the narrator has demonstrated early on in the letter. The comment on "information which has only the lichen and moss of age to make it more valuable" undermines the preceding discussion and book and hymn reviews that the narrator had undertaken with some gusto. But the narrator turns the tables by combining the portrait and "dialogue" of the narratee , her [2] own portraiture in the narratee's eyes (similar to the "wise antiquaries or antiquarian wiseacres") , and a self-deprecating contrast between the "walls of an Egyptian tomb" and "the facts graphically conveyed by an upholsterer's pattern book" into one intricately-woven syntactical exercise. In other words, in

trying to 'appease' the narratee's criticism of an egotistical demonstration of the narrator's learning, the narrator demonstrates her ability to make her prose contain within it multiple usages and perspectives. The vehicle of self-deprecation ends in being an affirmation of the intellectual prowess of the narrator and the author who creates that narrator.

The narrator of these letters is thus engaged in a self-conscious narrative where she anticipates her reader's potentially judgmental response and addresses it constantly. In most cases the actual correspondents were probably sympathetic to Mary Ann's ideas and trials. But in order to write, the author needed to construct a narratee who draws out and requires self-justification from the narrator. At times it is clear that the driving force of individual letters, why Mary Ann Evans sits down to write these letters is because of the desire to set things straight or to discuss issues that the created narratee might have brought up before the narrator. Sometimes the narratee calls forth a liberating moment from the restricted evangelical notions of self-hood. Both these situations make possible the narrator's admissions of personal feelings and sensations.

As an example of the latter, writing to Maria Lewis about sundry other things in a letter dated 17 September 1840, the narrator gives a subjective rendering of the effect good weather and bright skies have had on her mind:

> The beautiful heavens that we have lately enjoyed awaken in me an indescribable sensation of exultation in existence and aspiration after all that is suited to engage our immaterial nature; but I feel that this is not pure, not chastened, and therefore not to be indulged. So much for self of which I believe you wish me to speak and so I will not even ask pardon (1:64).

What seems too pleasurable and hence inappropriate and "not chastened" to the over-scrupulous mind of the narrator can escape censure because it has been called forth by the narratee. A little later towards the end of this letter when the narrator asks conventionally for a reply, it almost seems to bear an added pressure of urgency in it, as if, a reply not forthcoming, further narration might be difficult: "If you can scribble me a few lines before I am able to write again I shall be grateful" (1:67).

In a later letter to another close associate, John Sibree, the narrator makes clear the dialogic nature of the narrative. The letter is obviously a response to the narratee's request for the narrator's comments on contemporary French politics : "Write and tell you that I join you in your happiness about the French Revolution? Very fine, my good friend" (1:252). What follows has then been asked for by the narratee. One can sense the relief that mutual confidence and parity of thought make possible in the relaxed and casual

tone of this letter. The narrator puts explicitly on paper the important role Mary Ann Evans has given to writing and expressing thoughts:

> It is necessary to me, not simply to *be* but to *utter*, and I require utterance of my friends. . . . It is like a diffusion or expansion of one's own life to be assured that its vibrations are repeated in another, and words are the media of those vibrations. . . . . .,so I say again utter, utter, utter, and it will be a deed of mercy twice blest, for I shall be a safety-valve for your communicativeness and prevent it from splitting honest peoples' brains who don't understand you and moreover it will be fraught with ghostly comfort to me (1:255).

What the narrator states in the opening statement here reveals the intrinsic dialogic nature of the letter. Not only must she utter but she requires utterance of her narratees/friends. This narrator-narratee relationship in terms of shared values and philosophies , in her fiction, gets expressed as "sympathy". Here, the knowledge that the correspondent shares common ideas forms the basis of sympathy, which, in the remarkable second sentence, seems to suggest the possibility of vicarious existence in the other's ideas and expressions ("a diffusion or expansion of one's own life"). The symbiotic nature of the narrator-narratee relationship is clear. This is

not merely a relationship where the narrator responds to the narratee, but one where the narrator shares a common world with the narratee, and the narratee's queries, observations, or even mis-conceptions help the narrator expand/ clarify/ re-affirm this shared world in the process of narration. In Bakhtinian terms, this dialogic relationship creates the possibility of expanded, clarified perspectives based on the principle of sympathy.

In the next section quoted from the letter, the narrator acts out the role of the narratee for the correspondent. The exhortation to "utter, utter, utter" is what the narrator expects to receive from his narratee. Here the narrator plays the role of the catalyst and "safety-valve" for the narratee. Mary Ann Evans' own life was one fraught with events, situations, and circumstances that created intense moments, especially moments that involved gossip, mis-interpretations, and imprecations directed at decisions made by her. What she is offering as a narrator here for her narratee-as-narrator is something she, herself, must have acutely felt the need for. In presenting herself as the perfect narratee for John Sibree's letters, Mary Ann's narrator voices clearly her expectations of the perfect narratee for whom she puts pen to paper. In fact, the particular letter under discussion was written under the growing stress of her father's deepening illness that was gradually transforming her into his full-time nurse until his death in May 31, 1849. To that extent the

narrator's wish to be a safety-valve for the narratee is an expression of a poignant and urgent need to have a narratee who can act in turn as a source of release and comfort to the author.

Two important moments of Mary Ann Evans' early life yielded extremely powerful and intense letter-writing: one when her brother Isaac had been engaged to marry and the Evans household was in turmoil about the living arrangements of an unmarried daughter and her father. The second was when she had left for Germany with George Lewes and was forced through her correspondence to acknowledge and justify their union and proclaim in strongest terms her notion of private space.

Biographically speaking, the first of these periods led to her rejection of the church of her father and forefathers. Biographer Ruby Redinger in The Emergent Self has traced a logical connection between the feelings of disorientation she had been made to feel after Isaac's marriage and the loss of faith that she revealed to her family two years later [3]. The letters of this period are filled with unspoken questions about her identity as a valued, if unconventional member of her family. The narratee's opposition forces her to question her equanimity in the face of personal, familial humiliation. It forces her to confront bitter truths about the instability of her life, her loss of control over decision-making concerning her life, and her emotional stress because of it. The letters reveal how the narrator makes use of the dialogic

narrator-narratee relationship to refine her own definition of what constitutes rebellion, and the extent to which one can rebel without reversing rebellion's desired results.

In most of the letters in this first period of crisis, Mary Ann constructs a narratee who seems to oppose mere pleasantries as subject-matter for these letters and instead demands a clarification of the narrator's state of mind. The narrator then responds but only indirectly. For example, the narrator uses a combination of defensive irony, hyperbole and self-deprecation to answer an implied question of how she feels: "I forbear to put down on paper . . . I will only hint that there seems a probability of my being an unoccupied damsel, of my being severed of a usefulness beyond that of making up the requisite quantum of animal matter in the universe" (1:50). Further, in letters addressed to Maria Lewis, the most frequent and closest of Mary Ann's correspondents at this time, the narratee is seen as reluctant to come and visit her which accentuates the loss of security she seems to be facing. The narrator expresses this indirectly:"So you intend to cheat us by migrating in any direction rather than ours? . . . I did hope to have the benefit of a little unfettered intercourse with you to have all those little plans and feelings to which recent circumstances have given birth passed through the crucible of your judgment, but it is good to see future disappointments in a camera obscura" (1: 50).

What is striking in these letters is a kind of meta-narrative that seems to stand above the overt informational narrative and to comment on it or add significance to it. This meta-narrative is the common ground between the narrator and narratee. Thus the narrator seems to assume the narratee's complete comprehension and receptivity of the figurative and allusive images used. Towards the end of the letter to Maria, the narrator, without giving any specific transition, says:

> To be faithful to my theme, I fear I am laboriously doing nothing, for I am beguiled by the fascinations that the study of languages has for my capricious mind, and could e'en give myself up to making discoveries in the world of words. My pilot too is anything but uninteresting, all external grace and mental power, but "Cease ye from man" is engraven on my amulet. And to tell you the truth I begin to feel involuntarily isolated, and without being humble, to have such a consciousness that I am a negation of all that finds love and esteem as makes me anticipate for myself - no matter what; I shall have countless undeserved enemies if my life be prolonged, wherever my lot be cast, and I need rigid discipline, which I have never yet had (1:51).

This brings to the fore the hurt and the insecurity in an elliptical manner that expects much empathy from the

narratee, who for the most part, is required to possess a combination of a broad, sympathetic vision, a wide-ranging erudition that helps him identify the rich literary and religious allusions, and a sense of humour. Here, the narratee who demands has transformed to a narratee who is demanded of.

The need for such a narratee is seen in the letter where her despair at having to leave home is expressed by reference to the dislocation suffered by all of the victims of the Industrial Revolution she has learned about from Carlyle. The letter is a plea to Maria Lewis to come and re-live moments of their happy friendship at a home soon to be lost. The narrator's awareness of the actual reader's importance in making the most of the last few days at her parental home triggers off a sense of her vulnerable world that is dependent on so many variables that it seems claustrophobic to the narrator. The letter brings forth the pain of such a world by universalizing the pain to the sufferers of a social revolution:

> Carlyle says that to the artisans of Glasgow the world is not one of blue skies and a green carpet, but a world of copperas-fumes, low cellars, hard wages, 'striking,' and gin; and if the recollection of this picture did not remind me that gratitude should be my reservoir of feeling, that into which all that comes from above or around should be received as a source of fertilisation for my soul,

> I should give a lachrymose parody of the said description and tell you all seriously what I now tell you playfully that mine is too often a world such as Wilkie can so well paint, a *walled-in* world, furnished with all the details which he remembers so accurately, and the least interesting part thereof is often what I suppose must be designated the intelligent; but I deny that it has even a comparative claim to the appellation for give me a three-legged stool and it will call up associations moral, poetical, mathematical if I do but ask it, while some human beings have the odious power of contaminating the very images that are enshrined as our soul's arcana, their baleful touch has the same effect as would a uniformity in the rays of light - it turns all objects to pale lead colour (1:71).

It is only in the middle of this Carlylean world that the narrator allows her personal "walled-in" world its own voice . It is a voice that the special relationship with the narratee has called for. The narrator creates an intellectually receptive narratee who accepts the allusive covering that this voice comes packaged in. There is a double movement of asking and seeking out that is a fairly representative movement in the letters as a whole. The narrator's assurance that what she has to say has been asked

for/demanded/expected, and that the veiled language in which she will set it out will be accepted by the narratee forms the basis of such communication.

In some of the later letters to Maria Lewis, when Lewis is in an uncertain position and looking for employment herself, the narrator of Mary Ann's letters constantly reminds the narratee of the special dialogic nature of their relationship which is by itself comforting. A letter dated 21 August 1841 urges the narratee to "write, write, write" (1:104). This is followed by a letter that elaborates the request:". . . to receive the mere *outpouring of feeling* from you is my chief consolation under inability to assist you more validly" (1:105). In other words, the narrator here perceives expression of emotion as an alleviator of stress, and the facilitator of such expression a source of consolation. Mary Ann's narrator implicitly acknowledges the functions of her narratee as a 'facilitator' eliciting much-needed expression of intense feelings by agreeing to perform the same service for the narratee. The lines which follow reinforce this belief that the participative audience generates a narrative:

> Ergo *never* apologize for details about yourself, they being the gold dust for which I barter my large sheet of *rag*. And, anah, my honey, why talk you in voice as hollow as that of a half-starved hermit, about plans for the future, their deceptiveness, impossibility etc. etc.? (1:105-

106)

Gordon Haight's explanation of "Anah"(a Hebrew word) is to "respond" or "answer" (footnote5, 105), and in the sentence above it is in the form of an imperative on which the rest of the sentence rests syntactically. The entire participative nature of the creative process is underscored here in a network of imagery drawn from the world of banking and finance. The exchange is seen as profitable to the narrator ("they being the gold dust for which I barter my large sheet of rag"). Words written in correspondence are "contributions to the revenue" that is collected in the bank of the narrator-narratee relationship. If the narratee refuses to express herself , she is in effect refusing to pay the "principal" to the bank that is their friendship (1:105-106). Here characteristically a single network of imagery is sustained consistently through the major part of this letter creating a kind of special language for the narrator-narratee exchange.

In the letter dated October23,1841, another dimension of this relationship is revealed when the narrator humorously confesses the power of the narratee over her choice of subject-matter:

> You are veritably an overreaching friend, my dear Maria, not content with my scribbling a couple of sheets to every quarter of the moon, not content you even insist on dictating the subjects of the same, and the one you now impose on me is at once

> so sterile, so incomprehensible and so unfascinating that I should be quite justified in refusing to descant *thereon* (1:116).

The subject-matter in question is the personal health of Mary Ann. Here the narratee elicits or draws out the information that the narrator, either on grounds of privacy or some evangelical propensity to humility, cannot bring up unassisted. Even when the admission of ill-health comes, it does so in a defensive manner :

> Your fears about my health I feel that I have been culpable in raising from a foolish habit both in writing and discourse of saying *all* the truth. What mortal has not occasionally headaches? and if there are exceptions in this case, I am sure there are none who have not sometimes heartaches. Both are salutary for us while we tread "this spacious globe" and like ipecacuanha and juleps, though not good in se are often invaluable in their effects (1:116-117).

This period was a difficult one for Mary Ann because it was approximately in the mid-point between Isaac's marriage and her move to Foleshill on the one hand, and her refusal to go to church on the other. The strain of this interim period is reflected in this admission of both ill-health and a depressed state of mind.

Mary Ann's refusal to go to church sparked off an

emotional and domestic turmoil in her life that brought to a crisis her relationship with her father, and revealed both the ambiguous nature of her social and familial status, and the power of social opprobrium. The letters written in the aftermath of this upheaval reflect Mary Ann Evans' attempt to justify her decision by clarifying her position regarding her religious rebellion. They also show how, progressively responding to social critiques and paternal silence and intolerance, she qualifies the terms of her religious rebellion by separating the spheres of filial love and religious belief.

The narrator's argument in these letters is far more rooted in an oppositional narratee than in any of the previous group of letters. The opposition might not be a particular individual or correspondent, but rather a generalised aggregate of the mis-constructions, antagonisms, and cross-purposes Mary Ann, in the aftermath of her rebellion, might have encountered. But the letters are strictly non-apologetic. Gone are the nervous speculations of "egotistic" personal expressions aimed at appeasing an evangelical narratee. In its place there is a quiet and firm reiteration and clarification of the terms of the rebellion. In content these letters come closest to the themes of obedience, rebellion, and freedom of choice in the context of societal expectations and pressures which are significant issues in her major novels.

The most graphic and concrete reference to the reaction of her Holy War comes, naturally it seems, in the letter to Maria Lewis. Towards the end of this letter, an a-syntactic sentence is inserted with no prelude:

> I have had a weary week and you have the fag end. At the beginning more than the usual amount of *cooled* glances, and exhortations to the suppression of self-conceit (1:127).

The narrator assumes the narratee's expectation of or preparation for this discussion, and so no introductory remarks are necessary. The sentence that follows gives the effect of all this on the narrator: "The former are so many hailstones that make me wrap more closely around me the mantle of determinate purpose - the latter are needful and have a tendency to exercise forbearance that well repays the temporary smart" (1:127). The actual physical expressions of social ostracism do not faze the narrator. In a later letter to Mrs Charles Bray (12March 1842) the narrator says it is only the grief of parting from Robert Evans that is hurtful.

In the letter to Maria Lewes, the option to "exercise forbearance" and suppress self-conceit is used to re-examine Mary Ann's motivations for rebelling . Early on in the letter, the narrator describes the specific kind of pitfall the martyr might find himself/herself in:

> The martyr at the stake seeks its [ego] gratification as much as the court sycophant, the

> difference lying in the comparative dignity and beauty of the two egos. People absurdly talk of self-denial - why there is none in Virtue to a being of moral excellence - the greatest torture to such a soul would be to run counter to the dictates of conscience, to wallow in the slough of meanness, deception, revenge or sensuality (1:127).

The narrator argues for the existence of ego-gratification even in the martyr. Such ego is a necessary deterrent to the excesses of self-denial. There is a pleasure in being true to one's conscience. This kind of unequivocal statement about the pleasures of being true to one's conscience in a letter to her evangelical friend and confidante makes clear the direction in which the narrator's reasoning is tending. She is gradually working out "self-conceit" that might have been charged against her. The narrator of the post-Holy War letters is engaged in sifting between degrees of self-awareness and self-conceit, and trying to re-define or qualify the rebellion.

In an earlier letter to Mrs Abijah Hill Pears (28 January 1842), the narrator, in a typical stance, welcomes the narratee's opposing input to this delicate and traumatic choice of Mary Ann's religious life. In fact, the presence of the opposing *other* seems to lend a healthy balance to the internal discussion Mary Ann is engaged in as she considers the aftermath of her rebellion in her domestic and social life:

> Never again imagine that you need ask forgiveness for speaking or writing to me on subjects to me more interesting than aught else, - on the contrary believe that I really enjoy conversation of this nature; blank silence and cold reserve are the only bitters I care for in my intercourse with you. . . . Do not fear that I will become a stagnant pool by a self-sufficient determination only to listen to my own echo; to read the yea, yea, on my own side, and be most comfortably deaf to the nay, nay. . . . To *fear* the examination of any proposition appears to me an intellectual and a moral palsy that will ever hinder the firm grasping of any substance whatever (1:125).

The structure of the statement in this passage makes clear the connection the narrator-narratee relationship has with the working-out of the crisis in ideological terms. In other words, the principle behind the structure of the letter informs the way the content/ideology evolves as well. The practice of acknowledging the other voice, be it oppositional or otherwise, is the way to freely examine the "proposition" in hand, and any dogmatic refusal to do so leads to moral and intellectual atrophy. This should be conceded by all of the parties concerned, here the wronged and intransigent parent, the egotistical and rebellious child, the concerned and judgmental social and familial circle. All must be open-minded

in discussing the issue if the situation is to have more meaning than injury.

In an attempt to address the way Mary Ann Evans perceived her story should proceed versus the impasse she had reached in her actual dialogue over the issue with her father, she pens a letter, an actual letter to her father (though they are living in the same house), where she tries to answer his oppositions and mis-constructions. In this remarkable letter (28 February 1842), the narrator acknowledges the failure of actual dialogue with the narratee, and hopes to use the breadth that a written text provides for responding to opposition without actually physically encountering the immediate naked emotions such responses might generate:

> As all my efforts in conversation have hitherto failed in making you aware of <my> the real nature of my sentiments, I am induced to try if I can express myself more clearly on paper so that both I in writing and you in reading may have our judgements unobstructed by feeling, which they can hardly be when we are together (1:128).

The narrator tries to present the Holy War in perspective, carefully distinguishing between the rebel firm to her cause and belief ("I regard these writings [scriptures] as histories consisting of mingled truth and fiction, and while I admire and cherish much of what I believe to have been the moral teaching of Jesus himself, I consider the system of doctrines

built upon the facts of his life and drawn as to its materials from Jewish notions to be most dishonourable to God and most pernicious in its influence on individual and social happiness") and the affectionate and intensely vulnerable daughter who would risk losing all her patrimony in return for the privilege of her father's presence in her life ("I should be just as happy living with you at your cottage at Packington or any where else if I can thereby minister in the least to your comfort - of course unless that were the case I must prefer to rely on my own energies and resources feeble as they are - I fear nothing but voluntarily leaving you") (1:128-129).

The narrator here responds to the narratee's narrow perception of her rebellion. More specifically, the narratee is apprehensive that the narrator's actions were prompted by the influence of her friends, the Brays specifically, and that she wished now to join the Unitarian sect of which they were members. The narrator responds to this by pointing out how fundamentally her actions have been based in the promptings of her conscience: " Such being my very strong convictions, it cannot be a question with any mind of strict integrity, whatever judgement may be passed on their truth, that I could not without vile hypocrisy and a miserable truckling to the smile of the world for the sake of my supposed interests, profess to join in worship which I wholly disapprove" (1:129). Her brother's attempt to coerce her into changing her mind by

threatening to leave her out of the inheritance, is seen by the narrator as a confusion of the goals of her rebellion with the material gains that a daughter of Robert Evans might or might not enjoy. She emphasizes her sincerity of belief and rightness of conduct according to those beliefs. Any other material considerations, therefore, are unimportant. The narrator is aware that all of this probably will not convince her narratee; nevertheless she makes her impassioned assertion: "I do not hope to convince any other member of our family and probably not yourself that I am really sincere, that my only desire is to walk in that path of rectitude which however rugged is the only path to peace, but the prospect of contempt and rejection shall not make me swerve from my determination so much as a hair's breadth until I feel that I *ought* to do so" (1:129). In her mature fiction George Eliot would again and again draw on this Antigone-like dilemma to create crisis points for her characters.

One of the last letters on this subject, to Sara Hennell on October 9, 1843, records the result of the intense re-examination of the rebellion Mary Ann had undertaken in the last year and a half. The awareness of her two lives, the intellectual rebel and the dutiful and loving daughter, has influenced the way the narrator judges the effects and gains of the rebellion.

In this letter the narrator admits that she has considerably modified her once strictly-held opinion about her

religious rebellion. She wishes her narratee to know and understand the modification and its basis: "I will tell you as briefly as possible my present opinion which you know is contrary to the one I held in the first instance" (1:160-162). The correspondent, Sara Hennell, should realize that this letter was probably the last one of a series where Mary Ann's changing views and willingness to soften and have a working relationship with her family on the matter of the Holy War had been discussed with increasing assurance and pleasure by her friends and well-wishers. This is a document that shows the initial workings of a synthetic mind that evolves a way of thinking which proceeds through reconciliation of opposites through the bridge of "truth of feeling." The narrator takes a retrospective look at the moment of rebellion and tries to evaluate the effects of such a sudden release from a bondage which might, in its exuberance, bring about excessive intensity of fanatic belief:

> The first impulse of a young and ingenuous mind is to withhold the slightest sanction from all that contains even a mixture of supposed error. When the soul is just liberated from the wretched giant's bed of dogmas on which it has been racked and stretched ever since it began to think there is a feeling of exultation and strong hope. We think we shall run well when we have the full use of our limbs and the bracing air of independence, and we

> believe that we shall soon obtain something positive which will not only more than compensate to us for what we have renounced, but will be so well worth offering to others that we may venture to proselyte as fast as our zeal for truth may prompt us. But a year or two of reflection and the experience of our own miserable weakness which will ill afford to part even with the crutches of superstition must, I think, effect a change. Speculative truth begins to appear but a shadow of individual minds, agreement between intellects seems unattainable, and we turn to the *truth of feeling* as the only universal bond of union. We find that the intellectual errors which we once fancied were a mere incrustation have grown into the living body and that we cannot in the majority of causes, wrench them away without destroying vitality. We begin to find that with individuals, as with nations, the only safe revolution is one arising out of the wants which their *own progress* has generated. It is the quackery of infidelity to suppose that it has a nostrum for all mankind, and to say to all and singular,'Swallow my opinions and you shall be whole.' (1:162).

The narrator takes a retrospective look at her earlier, younger , and less experienced self, and admits to the

excessive rigidity of her beliefs. The narrator is now able to see how the Holy War might not have been just a rightful rebellion of a young woman against the rigidities of accepted religion and patriarchy, but an imposition of her strong views on her family and society. If the narrator has so far engaged in a dialogue between herself and the narratee, in this particular letter a parallel dialogue emerges between the former self and the present, mature self of the narrator. The two sets of dialogue seem to be embedded in each other within the same text.

What emerges from the analysis here is the way language and syntax is being used to obfuscate the identity of the subject responsible for proselytising ('Swallow my opinions and you shall be whole'), or suffering a "miserable weakness" that makes it difficult for him/her to give away the"crutches" of superstition or false belief. Biographically speaking, both of these crimes were visited on Mary Ann Evans by her father and family in the aftermath of the Holy War. However, the plural first person and the syntax of the sentences here might suggest that the narrator is talking about the author being herself responsible for these actions. Is Mary Ann Evans taking the burden of responsibility for the family impasse on herself by assuming responsibility for the lapses commonly attributed to her father? In other words, is this deliberate obfuscation of subjects Mary Ann's way of empathizing with her father and family, and is this an opportunity to see her

father and family's weaknesses from her general and specific position? As Rosemarie Bodenheimer points out, "The Holy Warrior was bent on testing her father's fidelity and tolerance; now she implicitly shifts to herself the failure of his performance" (75). This kind of collapsing of subject and perspective is a common feature of novels such as Middlemarch where such a stylistic technique takes on ethical dimensions as it illustrates the author's belief in sympathy or as the narrator puts it in this letter "truth of feeling."

Another important device that George Eliot the author commonly uses in her novels is to re-tell the story from a different perspective. Towards the end of this letter the narrator gives us such a shift in a condensed narrative of the Holy War from the other side, which tries to illustrate the disruptive force of an over-zealous rebellion in the family:

> An influential member chooses to omit an observance which in the minds of all the rest is associated with what is highest and most venerable. He cannot make his reasons intelligible, and so his conduct is regarded as a relaxation of the hold that moral ties had on him previously. The rest are infected with the disease they imagine in him; all the screws by which order was maintained are loosened, and in more than one case a person's happiness may be ruined by the confusion of ideas which took the form of principles(1:163).

Here the narratee is given the story in its revised perspective from a narrator who has set this letter up as an occasion to work out the evolution of her changed and more conciliatory perspective on rebellion. None of the parties concerned are to be solely blamed even though the devastating effects of a non-conformity results in confusion and lack of verities and certainty. The principal drawback is seen to be the subject's inability to make his/her reasons for the rebellion intelligible to his detractors. Because the process by which the initial decision was reached remains obscure, the narrator argues that there is an over-dramatic emphasis on the outcome of the events, rather than sympathy for the subject and awareness of his suffering in this event . This kind of re-focussing of the "plot" so that it is seen from a different even opposing perspective is present in all the important novels, including Tom's unsympathetic narrative of Maggie's elopement with Stephen Young discussed below.

In the elopement letters of George Eliot, the narratees also play a crucial role. George Eliot's continental tour with George Henry Lewes from July 1854 to March 1855 created a furor in the intellectual circles of the author's London acquaintances, though the gossip about the two of them was anything but intellectual. Like all gossip it revealed the conventional assumptions of the society and its direction was inevitably towards finding fault, trying to put the blame on one of the three parties,Mary Ann, George Lewes, or Agnes

Lewes. Mary Ann's friend, colleague, and the owner of the *Westminster Review* John Chapman faced most of the questions and speculative gossip about his friend and her companion, and tried his best both to clear the air as far as the relationship was concerned and to protect Mary Ann from the direct heat of the attacks.

This did not always work out to the benefit of Mary Ann, however. For instance, when Chapman heard Lewes being condemned as a violator of virgins, Chapman felt obliged to intervene and let slip a few hints about Mary Ann's previous intimacy with Charles Bray and himself. This created further trouble as Bray was brought into the rumour mill and became an active participant in it.

The Coombe -Bray letters give examples of the kind of narratees the letters of Mary Ann Evans were addressed to. They ranged from the sympathetic to the severely judgemental. The following is Charles Bray heroically defending his friend in the face of scandal:

> As a daughter she was the most devoted I ever knew, and she is just as likely to devote herself to some *one* other, in preference to all the world, and without reference either to the regularity or legality of the connection. It would never be other than a *strong sense* of *public* duty to the highest interests that would separate me from her or her from my friendship (8:128-129).

Mary Ann's rebuttal of the gossip surrounding her and Lewes would finally stress this element of a free-thinking spirit that rises above conventional expectations to create its own relationships in its own terms that Bray's letter indicates.

Some of the basic discussion surrounding this event was to assess who was most to be blamed[4]. Was Lewes the heartless and irresponsible seducer, likely to leave Mary Ann stranded? Or was Mary Ann responsible for breaking up the Lewes marriage? Which had come first, the separation in marriage, or the seduction and flight to Germany? Coombe in the following letter to Charles Bray (dated 15 November,1854) reaches hysterical heights of disapproval and anxiety over the event:

> We are deeply mortified and distressed; and I should like to know whether there is insanity in Miss Evans' family; for her conduct, with *her* brain, seems to me like <insanity> morbid mental aberration. . . . ; and an educated woman who, in the face of the world, volunteers to live as a wife, with a man who already has a living wife and children, appears to me to pursue a course and to set an example calculated only to degrade herself and her sex, if she be sane.- If you receive her into your family circle, while present appearances are unexplained, pray consider whether you will do justice to your own female domestic circle which makes no distinction between those who act thus,

> and those who preserve their honour unspotted (8:129-130)?

This is the kind of Dodsonian conventionality that relies solely on the "appearance" of things that Mary Ann would repudiate in her response to such gossip.

In her letter to John Chapman of 15 October,1854, she first of all repudiates in unequivocal terms the notion of Lewes as the villain of the situation: "About my own justification I am entirely indifferent. But there is a report concerning Mr.Lewes which I must beg you to contradict whenever it is mentioned to you. It is,'that he has run away from his wife and family'" (8:123). She goes on to give reasons for this by pointing out what an excellent father he was, and how, in spite of enough reasons (Agnes Lewes' illegitimate children with Thornton Hunt), he had continued to support her and her children to the best of his ability. Towards the end of this letter she addresses Chapman's query about what answer could be made about her own conduct in this affair. In her answer to this she is obviously thinking of a narratee represented to her as personified gossip or, as the narrator names him in The Mill on the Floss, the "world's wife":

> I have nothing to deny or to conceal. I have done nothing with which any person has a right to interfere. I have surely full liberty to travel in Germany, and to travel with Mr.Lewes. No one here

> seems to find it at all scandalous that we should be together. . . .But I do not wish to take the ground of ignoring what is unconventional in my position. I have counted the cost of the step that I have taken and am prepared to bear, without irritation or bitterness, renunciation by all my friends. I am not mistaken in the person to whom I have attached myself. He is worthy of the sacrifice I have incurred, and my only anxiety is that he should be rightly judged (8:124-125).

The different levels of response in this letter all emerge as an answer or a continuation of the dialogue that the narratees collectively had initiated in their varied responses to her journey to the Continent with Lewes. The narrator is abrasive and defensive with the harshest of those queries, honest yet unapologetic with the sympathetic narratees, and overall, tries to come to an independent position, one that helps her rise above the partisan voices of the narratees, and define this episode as an intensely private one that she and Lewes alone should judge.

At the beginning, there is a stance of indifference: "since you want to know how to deal with questions about me, I am telling you that I do not really care because in my mind I have no sense of wrong-doing." This is mixed with the argument that she is merely travelling, and there is nothing wrong in doing so with a companion. This stance, however, does

not last because she goes on to reverse this position to one acknowledging that there is a large measure of unconventionality that the narratee might feel she is ignoring. Hence, she squares off to address that part of her argument:"But I do not wish to take the ground of ignoring what is unconventional in my position." The narrator acknowledges that unconventionality comes with a price; she knows it, and is willing to pay it. The narrator then completes the argument by coming back to Lewes. The price is bearable, indeed, the sacrifice is bearable because it involves Lewes, and the narrator has complete faith that he is worthy of the choice. The narrator presents Mary Ann in a multi-faceted portrait as defiant outcast, the alleged fallen woman, the re-created martyr sacrificing known relationships for a higher, worthier one that she has apprehended through her intellect and her senses. The loneliness of making a choice, the price to be paid, the dilemmas to be endured, the overcoming of the temptation not to face the bitter truths about the choice, and finally the clarity that such a process brings, all are part of this letter. Needless to add, they are also elements that constitute George Eliot's representation of the consciousness of her heroines when they faced similar choices. At crucial moments of the novel, Maggie's perception of her world in The Mill on the Floss is seen in terms of making the right choice that reconciles the dualities of her inheritance and her aspirations . The failure of such a

reconciliation is inherent in Maggie's choice, and therefore underscores the tragic potentiality of the novel.

George Eliot's collection of personal letters shows, then, the "narrator" responding to various interpretations of Mary Ann Evans' life from the external world of the correspondents, and appropriating a definition of the self through her responses. The narrator of the letters is acknowledging, sometimes encouraging the frequently oppositional opinions of the narratee and then counter-responding to them. The dialogue between the narrator and the narratee permeates most facets of the letters. Whether trying to assert a conviction, argue her belief, justify a rebellion, or re-evaluate its aftermaths, the narrator is always in a dialogic relationship with her narratee. Sometimes this dialogue is explicitly present, as in the elopement letters where for the most part her narratees are oppositional, so that the narrator is justifying her position. In all cases, the dialogic relationship makes it possible to examine and re-examine personal, moral, and ethical choices made by the subject of the story. These dialogues detail the many conflicting formulations of claims, valid or questionable, through which individuals must pass before the decisive moment of decision. They show how the meaning of that choice may be altered (as in Mary Ann's revision of the meaning of her Holy War in the letter to Sara Hennell). But most importantly the letters show us how the narrator makes use of the dialogic

relationship with her narratee to present thematic ideas. In all of these respects there is a similarity of function in the narrator-narratee relationship in the letters and the novels.

II

The narrator of The Mill on the Floss engages in an extensive dialogue with the narratee throughout the course of the novel. The narrator-narratee dialogues first discuss the ways the community of St.Ogg's, both in terms of its history and its relationship to the individual, can be interpreted. This is important because it provides a context for Maggie (who is the second focus of the narrator-narratee relationship) and Tom to construct themselves in response to the values and principles of their two families, the Tullivers and the Dodsons, and the society of Saint Ogg's. Just as the letters of Mary Ann Evans (particularly, the elopement letter to John Chapman and the letter to Sara Hennell re-evaluating her Holy War) show the development of a narrator capable of varied and even opposed perspectives on a single event or crisis, the narrator of The Mill on the Floss presents a range of perspectives on how to interpret the social milieu of St Ogg's. Sometimes he contradicts his own stance. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer points out,"George Eliot's narrators are Marian Evans's answer to a life about which 'there is not a *single person* who is in a position to make a true representation'" (101). This is evident in the presence of two sets of personae

as narrators, one predominantly in the first half of the novel and the second taking over the narration in Book 4.

Thematically, the novel has strong oppositional patterns that divide on issues of conformity versus rebellion, rationality versus the passionate, mechanistic versus organic, male authority versus female desire. These patterns seem to align themselves on the side of the social organism/community on the one hand and the individual protagonist on the other. For events and relationships to make sense, the novel seems to argue, they must be governed by laws, moral and communal, which, if enforced, must paradoxically reduce individual freedom and responsibility to illusions and actors to mere puppets. The author develops two principal versions of the narrator to explore this dilemma -- the personal, "Wordsworthian" narrator of the childhood past of Maggie and Tom, and the social ethnographer who seems to take over the narration after the first three Books of the novel.

The novel opens with the first of the narrators, who seems to be looking at the setting of the novel from the same perspective as the young protagonist, Maggie. The opening description of this narrator allies him with the Romantic sensibility towards nature that is typical of Wordsworth. All of the benevolent, homely, yet precious moments of Maggie's childhood days are narrated by this narrator. In dialogue with his narratee, this narrator stresses the beauty and potency of memories as mediated by the perception of our childhood

environment:

> The wood I walk in on this mild May day, with the young yellow-brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white star-flowers and the blue-eyed speedwell and the ground ivy at my feet - what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid broad-petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home-scene? These familiar flowers, these well-remembered bird-notes, this sky, with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields, each with a sort of personality given to it by the capricious hedgerows - such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the deep-bladed grass today, might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off years which still live in us, and transform our perception into love (41-42;bk.1,ch.5).

This narrator has the narratee by his side and expects to be the facilitator of the language of memory which fosters imaginative vision. True to this role, this narrator creates the sense of nostalgia that Maggie and Tom experience at the

loss of their childhood Eden. Similarly the past and its recovery through memory is a potent expression of kinship and relationship in Mary Ann Evans's letters. In a letter to Cara Bray at a point when their relationship is seriously threatened by her elopement with George Henry Lewes, the narrator insists to the narratee that the past is a deified concept that helps relationships survive after they have objectively ended:

> The feeling that you and Sara have been and always will be the women I have loved best in the world - the women I have had most reason to love and admire - strengthens instead of fading with time and absence. It is impossible ever to revive the past, and if we could recover the friend from whom we have parted we should perhaps find that we could not recover precisely the old relation. But that doesn't hinder the past from being sacred and belonging to our religion (8:199-200).

The narrators of the letters and the early parts of the novel The Mill on the Floss are similar in their evocation of memory that alerts the respective narratees to the power of the language of memory when both Mary Ann Evans and Maggie sever their relationships with the past through the choices they make.

On the other hand, the second narrator becomes evident when he begins to detail the familial milieu of Tom and

Maggie. This narrator is a learned social observer and scholar who puts the Dodsons and the Tullivers under a microscope as it were. This narrator's principal mode is his constantly shifting perspective. The only consistent quality he exhibits is a refusal to show a single perspective. Thus even as he is ironic about the Tullivers and the Dodsons and places the narratee in a superior position in relation to them, he also renders the idealism of his protagonist, Maggie, in ambiguous tones. The narratee at the receiving end of this narrator is at different times being educated, presumed to possess social and literary snobbery, and expected to be receptive to the constant shifting of perspective.

This narrator's principal concern is for his narratee and through him the reader to understand the way in which the public and the private worlds honor and ironize each other. Also the narrator wants to examine the extent to which inner experience of the characters is both alienated from and reflective of the forms established within social life. In order to do this, the narrator has to reconstruct a complex society. The nature of this society, whether it is represented as "real" or "idealised", and its relationship with the individual protagonists of the novel are issues that the narrator is deeply interested in. This is an agenda that has attracted the biographical author to the novel as a genre in the first place. As a literary journalist and translator of philosophical texts, and as a serious scholar of contemporary

philosophical debates, George Eliot was deeply interested in resolving the dilemmas between idealism in art and representational realism in art[5]. In other words, she found the novel to be a vehicle for articulating a flexible mode of perception that would make it possible for the author to be non-doctrinaire in representing "reality". Dialogue between the narrator and the narratee becomes a structural device to resolve this issue of perception. In this novel, the narrator provides sets of contrasts to help the narratee interpret the social milieu of Maggie, with the result that the values and issues that are important for her bildung are evaluated by the narratee who experiences Maggie's choices in the narrator's varied presentation.[6]

In Book 4 Chapter 1, for example, when we first see this narrator addressing the narratee, he proposes a comparison between the ruins of past ages that dot the banks of the two rivers the Rhine and the Rhone. By looking at the ruins the narrator surmises the nature of the societies that had lived there. In other words, the narrator is assuming the role of the archeologist and the ethnographer and working on the assumption that the characteristics of a society are reflected in the ruins it leaves behind. The point of his comparison is not quite evident. Obviously, the humble ruins on the banks of the Rhone are indicative of a society similar to that of the Dodsons and Tullivers. The archeologist/ethnographer narrator assumes that the narratee might have reservations about

accepting such a "narrow,ugly, grovelling existence, which even calamity does not elevate" (271-272;bk.4,ch.2). On the other hand, the noble ruins beside the Rhine do not really have a societal counterpart in the novel. The question then is why is a comparison set up between two strata of existence when one of them is decidedly extraneous to the novel? The answer is that the narrator wishes to resolve the issue of representing reality by conversing with the narratee, anticipating his narratee's unease with the representation of the sordid, so that he can correct the narratee and in the process present the narrator's harmonised perspective on the matter[7].

Similarly, in the third chapter of Book 4 the narrator seeks to explain why Maggie, a representative of the "unfashionable families," made out "a faith for herself without the aid of established authorities and appointed guides" unlike the class which has its "science done by Faraday" and its religion by the superior clergy. The experience of the narrator in writing about such a class is different from writing about the upper-classes, where one has the luxury of "light and graceful irony." However, in writing about the class and situation of Maggie, the narrator has to take into account what he calls "the emphasis of want." The rest of the passage shows a radical side of the narrator that foreshadows the speeches of Felix Holt. While the narrator wants his narratee to understand the "need for an emphatic

belief" in Maggie, he makes use of light irony in talking about her occasional over-enthusiasm as she tries to renounce:"From what you know of her, you will not be surprised that she threw some exaggeration and wilfulness, some pride and impetuosity, even into her self-renunciation . . . . And so it came to pass that she often lost the spirit of humility by being excessive in the outward act; she often strove after too high a flight, and came down with her poor little half-fledged wings dabbled in the mud" (290-293;bk.4,ch.3). Thus even as he wants his narratee to understand the difference of perception necessary for understanding these two classes, the narrator himself crosses the lines, and subverts his high earnestness by being ironic about the unfashionable working-class generally and Maggie specifically.

This restless movement of perspectives argues for an attempt at a holistic view of realism, whether sordid or idealised, and a refusal to be dogmatic on any particular perspective. This is similar to Eliot's letter to Sara Hennell where Mary Ann Evans works out and justifies a revised perspective of her Holy War, and effectively reverses the qualities of the participants in that war, showing her narrator's ability to switch perspectives. One notices the same switching of perspectives here as the narrator establishes the society of Maggie and places her individual development in its context.

In his ongoing conversation with the narratee the

narrator feels the necessity to contextualize in history the evolution of specific public thought. For example, the apparent idiosyncratic selfishness and short-sightedness of the Gleggs, Dodsons, and Tullivers are compared to the "Puritans [thanking] God for the blood of the Loyalists, and then [the] Loyalists [thanking] God for the blood of the Puritans" in the past history of St.Ogg's (117;bk.1,ch.12).Here the narratee is assumed to be one of those "refined readers [who is well-versed in] the best classic pastorals" and therefore used to exotic details of trade that earlier towns might have engaged in such as "the well-crushed cheese and the soft fleeces" (115;bk.1,ch.12). Needless to add, the narrator wishes to educate the narratee in the way history reflects curious, unexpected continuities and revisions in every-day life. Such a discussion acknowledges the past ages when passionate belief in ideas was the norm and heroism was commonplace, but it also stresses the vulnerability of human beliefs and the irrationality of actions emerging from such beliefs. This latter makes the Dodsons, Gleggs, and Tullivers recognisable as the contemporary expressions of an older historical process. Thus, the keen eye for business that the Dodson sisters exhibit with pathological intensity is perhaps the latter-day evolution of "the long-haired sea-kings [who] came up the river and looked with fierce eager eyes at the fatness of the land" (116;bk.1,ch.12). Similarly the narrator's foray

into pre-historic mythology in the story of Ogg the son of Beorl reminds the narratee of an underlying framework of emotional idealism that the Tullivers, especially Maggie, could trace as an antecedent. The outcry of the Blessed Virgin, "It is enough that thy heart needs it" (116;bk.1,ch.12) in Ogg's myth becomes a creed for Maggie in the crucial moments of her decision-making, whether to agree to meet Philip in spite of her family's opposition or whether to refuse to marry Stephen after having been "seduced" by him.

While there is ample evidence of generosity in the cultural history of the town, our ethnographer-narrator does not want the narratee to forget the indifference its inhabitants exhibit towards their historical inheritance: "The mind of St Ogg's did not look extensively before or after. It inherited a long past without thinking of it , and had no eyes for the spirits that walk the streets" (118;bk.1,ch.12). Unike the "wordsworthian" narrator's deification of the past, the collective mind of this town ignores its history, and so is unaware of any historical context to its actions and laws. Later in the novel when Maggie realizes that,"If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie?" and that the ignorance of history forces society to indulge in "the inclination of the moment" (475;bk.6,ch.14), the narrator's recognition of the need for a historical awareness is clear.But the narrator recognizes and instructs his narratee that, unlike in pastoral romances, in the reality of his novel's society, cultural

historiography might remain the private world of the scholar, and might never mean anything in a life lived according to habits and customs that unthinkingly have become a part of a social psyche. In other words, there is a steadfast refusal to smooth out the contradictions inherent within the subjects that the narrator wishes to educate his narratee about.

III

The debate between romance and realism is explored through the working out of "choice" in the decisions made by Maggie[8]. The characters of Maggie and Tom reveal these oppositions and paradoxes through the traits inherited by the two from the Tullivers and the Dodsons, who represent characteristic society of St Ogg's[9]. There is a close connection between the narratee's interpretation of the protagonists' choices and the narrator's reading of the kind of society such protagonists live in. Maggie's bildungsroman becomes a test-case for the narrator in his response to the implicit critique of his narratee that the lives the narrator is chronicling are irredeemably sordid and actions are based on selfish desires.

For Maggie loss of the mill is not merely loss of family property. For her the mill symbolises an unfractured existence with the possibility of fulfilling most desires. It represents an idyllic existence for her relationship with Tom, because even though they had their childhood differences, they

always came together under stress. That possibility is increasingly lost in the new life they encounter after the mill has been lost. Maggie's response is in spiritual terms. Bereft of the masculine responsibility that Tom is privileged to shoulder in his efforts to restore the family property, Maggie must come to terms with the loss of a spiritual haven in the loss of the mill and her father and the family-life as she was used to as a girl without support. The narrator explicitly acknowledges this difference and places it within the historical-mythological traditions of the difference between the sexes. Memory is shown to be the special privilege or curse of the woman, who fills her days of expectancy with memories from the past. Men on the other hand can "quench memory in the strong light of purpose":

> While Maggie's life-struggles had lain almost entirely within her soul, one shadowy army fighting another, and the slain shadows for ever rising again, Tom was engaged in a dustier, noisier warfare, grappling with more substantial obstacles, and gaining more definite conquests. So it has been since the days of Hecuba, and of Hector, Tamer of horses: inside the gates, the women with streaming hair and uplifted hands offering prayers, watching the world's combat from afar, filling their long, empty days with memories and fears: outside, the men, in fierce struggle with things divine and

> human, quenching memory in the stronger light of purpose, losing the sense of dread and even of wounds in the hurrying ardour of action (308-309;bk.5,ch.2).

Thus the ethnographer-historian narrator responds to the "Wordsworthian" narrator's deification of the past in terms of feminine practice.

Whereas Tom deprives himself of a spiritual outlet by pursuing single-mindedly an attenuated existence bent on restoring financial stability, Maggie finds herself caught in a spiritually-impoverished world which ill-matches her impassioned need to live life to its fullest potential. Because her struggle is mental, she has to rely on her memories and past aspirations whereas Tom can brush those aside in his quest for manhood in an ever-new battlefield of work and opportunity. Maggie's aspirations do not match the opportunities her present life can offer, and in a vain attempt to reconcile her aspirations and her opportunities she oscillates between renunciation and gratification of desire. This process is involuntarily initiated as she tries to regain the unified consciousness that the mill and her family symbolised through a relationship that would be reciprocal at intellectual, emotional, and sexual levels, first with Philip Wakem and then with Stephen Guest.

For the narrator-narratee dialogue this part of the development of Maggie's character is an opportunity to discuss

commitment, the need for passion, or as the narrator puts it "enthusiasm". This narrator's comments on Maggie's development respond to the possible critique raised earlier by the narratee, namely that the Dodsons and Tullivers inhabit a "sordid" existence that the narratee could not possibly live and/or appreciate. While Tom's career after the family's downfall follows the predictable route of the monotonous and uninspiring ruins of the Rhone valley "which even calamity does not elevate, but rather tends to exhibit in all its bare vulgarity of conception" (272;bk.4,ch.1), Maggie's search for a spiritual stand-point from which to proceed with her life enables the narrator to show the narratee how grandeur inhabits, nay, is essential in such uninspiring circumstances. It is natural the narrator says that "life in this unpleasurable shape demand[s] some solution even to unspeculative minds" (292;bk.4,ch.3). Slipping into his most prosaic imagery so far,the narrator explains: You ask this ". . . just as you inquire into the stuffing of your couch when anything galls you there, whereas eider-down and perfect French springs excite no question" (292;bk.4,ch.3). So Maggie, who must re-examine her inner life at this moment of constriction, must find a solution. If "unspeculative minds" in such circumstances seek "ekstasis or Outside standing-ground" it is doubly appropriate for a mind as sensitive and vulnerable as Maggie's to seek an "enthusiasm" , or "something that will present motives in an entire absence of high prizes,

something that will give patience and feed human love when the limbs ache with weariness, and human looks are hard upon us--something, clearly, that lies outside personal desires, that includes resignation for ourselves and active love for what is not ourselves" (292;bk.4,ch.3).

Maggie's fascination with Thomas a Kempis' The Imitation of Christ and its message of renunciation not only shows her effort to make meaning but also shows the kind of experience the narrator himself finds most worthwhile and wishes his own narrative to achieve:

> It was written down by a hand that waited for the heart's prompting; it is the chronicle of a solitary, hidden anguish, struggle, trust and triumph -- not written on velvet cushions to teach endurance to those who are treading with bleeding feet on the stones. And so it remains to all time a lasting record of human needs and human consolations: the voice of a brother who, ages ago, felt and suffered and renounced -- in the cloister, perhaps, with serge gown and tonsured head, with much chanting and long fasts, and with a fashion of speech different from ours -- but under the same silent far-off heavens, and with the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the same failures, the same weariness (291;bk.4,ch.3).

The sincerity of experience bridges the differences time and

locations create. What Maggie responds to in Kempis is this passionate sincerity of renunciation as it comes across the ages. In certain respects, the narrator wishes the narratee to follow Maggie's bildungsroman in much the same way as Maggie empathises with Kempis' prose -- as the outpourings of a sincere experience, told from a personal (Maggie's) point of view. The ethnographer- narrator acknowledges here the pressure of personal emotions that have so far been the hallmark of the "Wordsworthian" narrator. The narratee is drawn to judgment of Maggie's character less on the grounds of the choice itself than through the narrator's description of how the process of choice has been internally experienced by her.

The choice of renunciation that Maggie makes in this section of the novel echoes Mary Ann Evans's personal letters, especially those written during the Holy War and her elopement. The process through which significant life-choices are made was dramatised in the letters through the narrator-narratee dialogue. By making the narratee not only an audience but a participant the letters' narrator harmonises new choices with older values, or revises new choices and views them from a reconciliatory perspective as in the letter to Sara Hennell where the narrator recognizes the downside of her Holy War. The narratee participates by being the perfect audience and acquiescing in the revisions and choices because she has seen the experience that has led to them, much as a dramatic

audience experiences the choices of characters in a play.

In a similar way, the narrator of the novel (both the ethnographer and the "Wordsworthian") engages the narratee in a discussion about the choices Maggie makes, and also some of the characters participate. Renunciation is the first subject because it is the the first of the choices Maggie makes.

The ideal of renunciation that is adopted by Maggie is a kind of spiritual justification for her limited social and emotional outlets after her father's financial ruin. This necessary defence of renunciation stands in the way of an enlargement of her emotional and spiritual life through relationships. Philip in his attempt to revive his childhood friendship with Maggie, questions her adoption of renunciation:

> Joy and peace are not resignation: resignation is the willing endurance of a pain that is not allayed-that you don't expect to be allayed. Stupefaction is not resignation:and it is stupefaction to remain in ignorance- to shut up all the avenues by which the life of your fellow-men might become known to you. I am not resigned: I am not sure that life is long enough to learn that lesson. You are not resigned:you are only trying to stupefy yourself (328;bk.5,ch.3).

Maggie's reaction to this criticism of her ideal shows this is partially the truth: "she felt there was some truth in what

Philip said, and yet there was a deeper consciousness that, for any immediate application it had to her conduct, it was no better than falsity. Her double impression corresponded to the double impulse of the speaker" (328;bk.5,ch.3).

Philip's complex intentions of helping a friend out of her idealistic fantasies, and persuading her to remain his lover, obfuscate the equally complex meanings renunciation has for Maggie. Characteristically, the narrator subverts the critique of his heroine's beliefs by showing how Philip might have a self-interest in disillusioning Maggie about the validity of renunciation.

However,in a chapter significantly titled "The Wavering Balance," Philip's argument finds echoes in Maggie's own attempts to justify her revived friendship with him in the face of familial opposition: "Here suddenly was an opening in the rocky wall which shut in the narrow valley of humiliation,. . . She might have books, converse, affection--she might hear tidings of the world from which her mind had not yet lost its sense of exile; . . ." (325;bk.5,ch.3). The suggestion that renunciation might just be an ideal meant to lend credence to an otherwise insupportable constriction of the possibilities in her life seems well-founded in the light of the arguments she herself brings in, echoes of her father's dictates to his children. However just as strong is the ideal of selflessness. The narrator's gloss on Maggie's attraction to Kempis' teachings echoes almost verbatim Philip's equation

of renunciation with acceptance of sorrow. "She had not perceived--how could she until she had lived longer?--the inmost truth of the old monk's outpourings, that renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly"(291;bk.4,ch.3). The discussion between narrator-narratee shifts and moves to a conversation between characters, a technique that will take over the last novel Daniel Deronda.

In the elopement letters Mary Ann Evans's choice of Lewes necessitated confrontation of such issues as the advantages and politics of secrecy, the conflict between new choices and betrayal of old connections, the self-agonising over consequences, the definition of choice as sacrifice, and the public concern with "conduct". In Maggie's relationships with Philip and Stephen, and in trying to stand up for herself before Tom in defending her conduct in these relationships, Maggie faces the same issues. The overarching value in Maggie's debates with Tom and later with Stephen is the sincerity of her experience. This concern extends not only to how Maggie herself perceives this value and whether she sees her choices as sacrifice, but also to whether the narrative itself endorses her sacrificial thoughts on behalf of others, or whether it sees them as merely another form of self-validation.

In her argument with Tom Maggie explains how, in trying to pursue a faultless line of reasoning, Tom has actually

impoverished himself by denying the emotional aspect of life which leads men to a moral awareness larger than the mechanical one of right or wrong conduct: "But yet, sometimes when I have done wrong, it has been because I have feelings that you would be the better for, if you had them . . . You have no pity: you have no sense of your own imperfection and your own sins" (347;bk.5,ch.5). Ironically for Maggie, pity and a sense of her own imperfections have been the very emotions that have led her to take decisions that might seem self-serving and inconsiderate, as Tom points out in his rejoinder: ". . . if your feelings are so much better than mine, let me see you show them in some other way than by conduct that's likely to disgrace us all - than by ridiculous flights first into one extreme and then into another" (347;bk.5,ch.5).

Though this debate ends in a stalemate, Maggie is willing to accept that there might be disparity between conduct and feeling, a truth that Tom denies through his monomaniacal pursuit of revenge and reinstatement of the family fortune. Their perception of this difference between them is the basis of a separation that is not rectified until the penultimate moment of their lives. The narrator's comments on this conversation alert his narratee to recognize the complexity of Maggie's perceptions of her actions:

> Then, when the first burst of unsatisfied anger was gone by, came the recollection of that quiet time

> before the pleasure which had ended in to-day's misery had perturbed the clearness and simplicity of her life. She used to think in that time that she had made great conquests, and won a lasting stand on serene heights above worldly temptations and conflict. And here she was down again in the thick of a hot strife with her own and others' passions. . . . There was more struggle for her -- perhaps more falling. If she had felt that she was entirely wrong, and that Tom had been entirely right, she could sooner have recovered more inward harmony; but now her penitence and submission were constantly obstructed by resentment that would present itself to her no otherwise than as a just indignation. . . And yet, how was it that she was now and then conscious of a certain dim background of relief in the forced separation from Philip? Surely it was only because the sense of deliverance from concealment was welcome at any cost? (348;bk.5,ch.5).

The range of emotions and self-analysis spoken by the narrator is comparable to those in the letter of Mary Ann Evans to John Chapman in the wake of her travel to Germany with Lewes. The narrator muses over the benefits of Maggie's period of renunciation and asceticism, her awareness of the possibility of "falling" further, her resentment at Tom's treatment of

Philip, her resentment that she cannot be all in the wrong in this matter, and contradicting all of the above, her relief that there is to be no more concealment. This single incident with Tom becomes the occasion to reveal multiple and conflicting perspectives in Maggie's self-construction.

Maggie's relationship with Stephen can be seen as another movement on her part to reconcile the different halves of her world, for Stephen combines qualities and characteristics of both Tom and Philip. He is successful in business, yet artistically inclined, intelligent, sensitive, and in addition, sexually attractive. With some similarities to the Gwendolen-Grandcourt courtship much later, the relationship of Maggie and Stephen develops in a self-deceptive mode where both are inevitably drawn to each other in spite of self-conscious awareness of the moral pitfalls of their union. Stephen is obviously more aware of the ethical dilemmas involved than Grandcourt in the later novel. The narrator, in presenting this courtship playfully, engages the narratee in a game of negative psychology, pointing out how, because their chances to be together were so remote, given the absolute difference of their respective situations, it was inevitable that the attraction would be all the stronger:

> Gentlemen, you are aware, are apt to impart these imprudent confidences to ladies [Stephen had just told Lucy that Maggie was not his type of woman] concerning their unfavourable opinion of sister

> fair ones. That is why so many women have the advantage of knowing that they are secretly repulsive to men who have self-denyingly made ardent love to them. . . But you, who have a higher logic than the verbal to guide you, have already foreseen, as the direct sequence to that unfavourable opinion of Stephen's, that he walked down to the boat-house calculating, by the aid of a vivid imagination, that Maggie must give him her hand at least twice in consequence of this pleasant boating plan, and that a gentleman who wishes ladies to look at him is advantageously situated when he is rowing them in a boat. What then? Had he fallen in love with this surprising daughter of Mrs Tulliver at first sight? Certainly not (382;bk.6,ch.2).

Indeed, the narratee must hear beyond the mere words and use a "higher logic", possibly, to see it in the ironic light it is presented here, and to understand the moral pitfall Maggie is being led up to.

Even though the narrator distances himself from the two characters he never lets the narratee lose sympathy for Maggie. The narrator explains Maggie's unconscious attraction to Stephen in terms of her desire for a fulfilled world of emotional, intellectual, and sexual gratification:

> It was not that she thought distinctly of Mr

> Stephen Guest, or dwelt on the indications that he looked at her with admiration; it was rather that she felt the half-remote presence of a world of love and beauty and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all the poetry and romance she had ever read, or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries (385;bk.6,ch.3).

Here is an opportunity to have a union of the inward desires and the external possibilities, but only if Maggie agrees to stand outside of the real world of moral choices that have tangible consequences. And throughout her encounters with Stephen she experiences a powerlessness, much as though she is drawn into this game without any volition of her own:"Maggie only felt that life was revealing something quite new to her; and she was absorbed in the direct, immediate experience, without any energy left for taking account of it and reasoning about it" (403;bk.6,ch.6).

Most often the social narrator wishes his narratee to judge the quality of the debates within Maggie based on the extent to which the choices are self-serving or sympathetic to others' needs. This is in keeping with his earlier dialogue with the narratee over the nature of Maggie's renunciation given her social milieu where he argued for her need to believe in "something that lies outside personal desires, that includes resignation for ourselves and active love for what is not ourselves" . This notion of renunciation becomes for the

narratee a criteria for reading the numerous debates Maggie faces before the end :

> And when something like that fulness of existence -- love, wealth, ease, refinement, all that her nature craved -- was brought within her reach, why was she to forego it, that another might have it -- another, who perhaps needed it less? But amidst all this new passionate tumult there were the old voices making themselves heard with rising power, till, from time to time, the tumult seemed quelled. *Was* that existence which tempted her the full existence she dreamed? Where, then, would be all the memories of early striving - all the deep pity for another's pain, which had been nurtured in her through years of affection and hardship - all the divine presentiment of something higher than mere personal enjoyment, which had made the sacredness of life? She might as well hope to enjoy walking by maiming her feet, as hope to enjoy an existence in which she set out by maiming the faith and sympathy that were the best organs of her soul (458;bk.6,ch.13).

The emotion of sympathy is one that the narrator of Mary Ann Evans's letters has expected of her narratee especially in the letter to Maria Lewes where the narrator evokes Carlyle's world and inserts her own "walled-in" world.

The insistence on sympathy places Maggie's personal debate in the context of George Eliot's general idea of sympathy that she inherited from Comte and Feuerbach, and which in her scheme of things forms a bridge of reconciliation between the two opposed principles of individual sensibility and social commitment. Paradoxically, sympathy which has as its basis an overwhelming acknowledgment of the *other* becomes the means both of Maggie's fall and her redemption. In trying to reason with Stephen, Maggie finds herself most vulnerable when he points out that he is suffering as much as she is in this relationship. This is indeed the ultimate temptation . As the narrator alerts us: "This yielding to the idea of Stephen's suffering was more fatal than the other yielding, because it was less distinguishable from that sense of others' claims which was the moral basis of her resistance" (466;bk.6,ch.13). The "sense of others' claims" when joined with emotion becomes sympathy, and when joined with an ethical quality becomes social commitment. Maggie, in her movement from her fall resulting from desire and sympathy for Stephen to her redemption traverses the whole range of this "sense of others' claims." Because the narrative demonstrates this movement, it is possible for the narratee to be in sympathy with her choices even if they were not the ideal ones. As the narrator points out later: "We judge others according to results; how else? - not knowing the processes by which results are arrived at" (490;bk.7,ch.2). In showing the range

of Maggie's desires and choices, the narrator makes sure that the narratee is in the privileged position of having known the process by which Maggie's life comes to where it does.

The penultimate moments of the novel show the ethnographer-narrator's dialogue with his narratee on the topic of interpretation and judgment. The issue is "who judges best?" The answer is one who is aware of a complexity of perspective and is willing to allow for individual variations of experience:

> The great problem of the shifting relation between passion and duty is clear to no man who is capable of apprehending it: the question whether the moment has come in which a man has fallen below the possibility of a renunciation that will carry any efficacy, and must accept the sway of a passion against which he had struggled as a trespass, is one for which we have no master-key. The casuists have become a byword of reproach; but their perverted spirit of minute discrimination was the shadow of a truth to which eyes and hearts are too often sealed -- the truth, that moral judgments must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot.
>
> All people of broad, strong sense have an

> instinctive repugnance to the man of maxims; because such people early discern that the mysterious complexity of our life is not to be embraced by maxims, and that to lace ourselves up in formulas of that sort is to repress all the divine promptings and inspirations that spring from growing insight and sympathy (497-498;bk.7,ch.2).

The desired narratee thus would be open to individual variations of experience, and instead of applying general rules "by a ready-made patent method", would "exert patience, discrimination, impartiality" that would give him the "insight" to a "hardly-earned estimate of temptation" (498;bk.7,ch.2). Finally this narratee's judgmental instinct would allow for "a life vivid and intense enough to have created a wide fellow-feeling with all that is human" (498;bk.7,ch.2). A little earlier, Reverend Kenn echoes the same sentiments when he characterises the social opprobrium Maggie is about to face as coming from those "who are the most incapable of a conscientious struggle such as [hers]; because they will not believe in [her] struggle" (bk7 ch2 496;bk.7,ch.2).

Tom is one such example of a judge incapable of interpreting in complex terms because he has not participated in the struggle. Tom's reaction comes in a characteristic Eliot narrative form, one where Maggie gets to hear from Tom's perspective the narrative of her recent actions:

> You have been carrying on a clandestine relation with Stephen Guest _ as you did before with another. He went to see you at my aunt Moss's; you walked alone with him in the lanes; you must have behaved as no modest girl would have done to her cousin's lover, else that could never have happened. The people at Luckreth saw you pass - you passed all the other places; you knew what you were doing. You have been using Philip Wakem as a screen to deceive Lucy - the kindest friend you ever had. Go and see the return you have made her: . . .(485;bk.7,ch.1).

Tom's narrative is applying general maxims to the end result, without his having any experiential clue of the process through which Maggie has gone. His formulations are bereft of any complexity. They are all in the assertive and imperative mode, and have no qualifying clauses.

In contrast to this is Maggie's experience of the true nature of renunciation:

"she had thought it was quiet ecstasy; she saw it face to face now - that sad patient loving strength which holds the clue to life - and saw that the thorns were forever pressing on its brow" (471;bk.6,ch.14). Her personal narrative of her temptation and fall contrasts to Tom's:

"If I had been better, nobler, those claims would have been so strongly present with me -- I should have felt them pressing

on my heart so continually, just as they do now in the moments when my conscience is awake -- that the opposite feeling would never have grown in me, as it has done" (475;bk.6,ch.14). There is a conditional argument here, one involving complexity, and doubt, and also a strong revisionary impulse, a sense of revised interpretation of a past event/choice that reminds us of Mary Ann Evans's narrator in the letter to Sara Hennell, discussed earlier, revising her perspective on the Holy War. The narrator obviously wants the narratee to favour Maggie's narrative. Tom's narrative can be viewed as a preview of the "world's wife", the personified figure of social opposition and slander that Maggie faces in the wake of her decision not to marry Stephen. The narrator does not want the narratee to be "the world's wife."

In conventional, Dodsonian terms such a situation can only be redeemed with marriage, otherwise the girl's future reputation and position is in jeopardy. The narratee, on the other hand, has been prepared by the narrator to remember the trajectory of Maggie's development and hence to make a different judgment. The second chapter of the last book makes use of this disparity of knowledge of "process" to create sharp satire in two alternative narratives, the hypothetical one of her fulfilling conventional expectations and marrying Stephen, and the other, an unsympathetic explanation of her strange decision not to marry the lover she fled with.

The narratives are divided by gender. While Stephen

seems to be exonerated in both ("young men were liable to those sudden infatuated attachments" and "a young man of five-and-twenty is not to be too severely judged in these cases -- he is really very much at the mercy of a designing bold girl")(490-491;bk.7,ch.2), Maggie is enviously admired in the first scenario ("What a wonderful marriage for a girl like Miss Tulliver -- quite romantic!")and totally condemned in the second ("she had been actuated by mere unwomanly boldness and unbridled passion", "There was always something questionable about her")(490-491;bk.7,ch.2).

On the other hand the narrator wants his narratee to be open to the multiple, conflicting, and poly-semantic directions of the narrative. The initial dialogue that began as an exercise in adaptability of the narratee to the "sordid" and material world of Maggie's social milieu is carried on with the narration of Maggie's later story. The narrator increasingly becomes an advocate for a generous acceptance of her actions on the narratee's part based on a vicarious experience of the process of her choices. In splitting the narrative persona initially into two, the narrator reveals his moral position even though he also undercuts his own assumptions and perspectives, and can be ironic about the assumptions of those, like Maggie, whom he finally wishes to be seen as tragic protagonists.

This novel's narrator, then, is in earnest discussion with his narratee about the dignity of subject-matter, about

the validity of presenting a single life in all its complexities set in the midst of apparently hostile, trivial, and sordid circumstances. In trying to define the way his narratee should respond, the narrator resembles in tone and narrative practice, the narrator of the letters. Narrative in its performative nature is exploited by both the narrators of the letters and The Mill on the Floss. In this performance, the narrator is in dialogue with his narratee, and in an elliptical way is acknowledging his assumptions, pre-dispositions, and prejudices. But the narrator's acknowledgment leads to a conscious effort to qualify, educate, or render more sensitive the narratee's perceptions so that the story may be interpreted in the richest sense possible. In the letters, because of their directly personal nature, the narrator reveals her revisionary insights within the dialogue with the narratee. In the novel, the narrator and narratee take on the omniscient position. They are Gods debating and interpreting Maggie's life choices, as well as the quirks and shortfalls of her society. The debate, however, remains quite much the same. The outcome is to be determined by the party who is the most adept at receiving multiple and conflicting view-points and an experiential criterion for interpreting complex life.

ENDNOTES

1.Patricia Meyer Spacks in Gossip points out this simulation, "As readers, we imaginatively duplicate the original relationship letters evoke and we generate our own new relationship with the writer; we allow ourselves to receive what that writer gives and we exert judgmental force upon him/her; metaphorically, we gossip both with and about the text's originator" (89).

2.The narrator is perceived in an androgynous light in my entire work. That is why for the discussion on the novels I use the generalised masculine pronoun to denote the narrator. In the personal letters of Mary Ann Evans, due to the private nature of the text, I have kept the feminine pronoun while referring to the narrator. This is by no means to suggest that any shift of gender has taken place in the narrator between the personal correspondence and the fiction. My concern is to define the nature of the narrator-narratee relationship, and to that extent I picture the narrator in androgynous terms.

3.". . . . underlying her rebellion against her spiritual father lay the rebellion against her earthly father. Her real emotional struggle was over the latter. When that struggle with the real

father was seemingly overcome (it was to reappear in different form) and her intellect free to take command, all friction was removed from the path which led inevitably to the second rejection" (Redinger 113). Redinger further implies that Mary Ann's sense of injustice was aroused mainly because she felt her father had failed to create a strong enough presence that could sustain her independent identity as a daughter, and not a dependent sister whose future was dispensable and adaptable to her brother's needs. She never recovered from this uncertainty that was thrust on her in the couple of years before Isaac Evans was married in June 1841 (Redinger 113).

4.Ruby Redinger points out how vicious the attacks were particularly on George Eliot. She quotes Thomas Woolner (sculptor) to William Bell Scott (a friend of George Lewes):

> By the way - have you heard of. . . two blackgaurd literary fellows, Lewes and Thornton Hunt? They seem to have used wives on the ancient Briton practice of having them in common: now blackgaurd Lewes has bolted

> with a ---- and is living in Germany with her. I believe it dangerous to write facts of anyone nowadays so I will not further lift the mantle and display the filthy contaminations of these hideous satyrs and smirking moralists - these workers in the Agepemone - these Mormonites in another name - stink pots of humanity (269).

Redinger also suggests that even the apparently sympathetic Carlyle was "half-sarcastic" about the letter Lewes wrote him, and in his note to it stated," I had (at his request) approved unequivocally of parting *such a marriage;* and advised to contradict, if he could, on his word of honour, the bad rumours circulating about a certain "strong-minded woman" and him. He assures me, on his word of honour, the strong-minded did not *write* etc.: as well assure me her stockings are both of one colour; . . .(270). Redinger analyses this half-serious animosity in terms of Carlyle's jealousy regarding the collaboration the couple had planned on Lewes' biography of Goethe who had first been introduced to English literary circles by Carlyle. George Eliot's "large mind" and fine command of the German language would help Lewes "as he went onward into more and more sanctified Goethe grounds", and therefore, Redinger argues to Carlyle,"she was an interloper of a far worse kind than the ones who broke up physical families" (270). I am hesitant to acknowledge such an ungenerous Carlyle without stronger evidence. However, George Eliot's literary and intellectual capacities did make this event

something other than a sexual escapade for two tired intellectuals, and more of a union of soul-mates, and this was probably difficult for their social and literary milieu to accept.

5.In "The Natural History of German Life" (July,1856) George Eliot, reviewing Riehl's Land and Leute, wrote: "Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot. All the more sacred is the task of the artist when he undertakes to paint the life of the People. It is not so very serious that we should have false ideas about evanescent fashions - about the manners and conversation of beaux and duchesses; but it is serious that our sympathy with the perennial joys and struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the humour in the life of our more heavily-laden fellow-men, should be perverted, and turned towards a false object instead of the true one" (Pinney 271). In the narrator-narratee relationship the dialogue about realism and sympathy are important parts of the novel.

6.David Carroll in George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations points out the novelist's awareness of a strong hermeneutical tradition in the nineteenth century to which she actively contributed through her novels: ". . . it was because of her awareness of the fundamental role of interpretation in all areas of life that she was able to redefine the nature of Victorian fiction: its presentation of character, the role of the narrator, the structure of its

narrative, the depiction of social and historical change. The intensity of her career as a novelist comes from her vivid, almost apocalyptic, sense that traditional modes of interpretation - making sense of the world - were breaking down irrevocably. Each of her fictional experiments as it moves towards the inevitable episode, the contradiction, the gap which disconfirms its hypothesis, is enacting that crisis with increasing urgency" (4).

I am placing the novelist's focus on interpretation in the context of a consistent and ongoing dialogue with the narratee. 6.6.

7.George Henry Lewes thought, interacted, and wrote extensively on this issue of realism versus idealism. He had a synchretic approach to the debate. He felt that the two were not quite mutually exclusive. Art stemmed from the experience of a reality more complex than that presupposed by empiricism, and Lewes criticised that art which staked a claim to realism because it dealt with the sordid and the ugly (see Alice Kaminsky, "George Eliot, George Henry Lewes, and the Novel" *PMLALXX* Dec 1955,997-1013; Valerie A.Dodd, George Eliot:An Intellectual Life 262). George Eliot was influenced by this reconciliation of the debate. The tone of the narrator in this chapter demands that the narratee accept the sordid but the narrator, aware of the narratee's preference for the ideal, also sets up a comparison of the ideal and the sordid to frustrate gratification of the

narratee. The narrator uses a curious oppositional play to highlight the terms of the debate. The influence of Lewes may also explain the consistent undermining of both sides, the sordid and the "idealised" later on in the novel.

8.Rosemarie Bodenheimer in The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans reads the novel's autobiographical moorings in terms of the working out of Mary Ann and Maggie's choices, and notes how the narrative points out the ambiguities inherent in making "independent choices". Bodenheimer focuses on the early scene between Maggie and Tom where the two divide a jam puff to show that Maggie is deprived of the terms of choice, yet condemned for the enjoyment of her action that she has taken to appease Tom. This, according to Bodenheimer, sets a pattern for the rest of the narrative: "The scene establishes a structure in which Maggie is compelled to sacrifice the terms in which she would choose; then a pleasurable act that follows from her submission to another's needs is interpreted as her choice of greed, selfishness, and forgetfulness. The plot of The Mill on the Floss is a machine that replicates this structure in increasingly complicated ways" (106).

Philip Fisher in Making up Society: The Novels of George Eliot, points out how these alternatives of individual choices and social requirements reach a stalemate in the novel. He reads individual choice as a representative quality in the world of consumerism and commerce, the world

of Stephen Guest that Maggie ultimately refuses to be part of: "The continuity that makes life legible, even to oneself, rests on loyalties that destroy the very self that continuity was to make legible. . . .It is the intensity of perception on both sides of the impasse that creates the energy of the novel and creates, likewise, the stalemate" (97). In my analysis, I pick up the dissonances between individual choice and collective responsibility that these critics are reading in Maggie's development, and place them within the context of the narrator's own discussions about the interpretation of the history of St Ogg's, the importance of memory as a way of being connected to the past, and the treatment of Maggie's decision-making in the course of the novel.

9.Sally Shuttleworth in George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science:The make-Believe of a Beginning argues that this novel questions the premise of a unified history versus a unified self. The conflict is within both:"The novel portrays not only a society divided by conflict, but also an individual similarly torn. The analysis of the disjunction between the promptings of Maggie's unconscious and her social conscience gives rise to a multi-levelled theory of history which is also reflected in the narrative structure of the novel" (52). In my reading of the dialogue between the narrator and the narratee on ways of interpreting the society of St Ogg's, the narrator's response to the naive

assumptions of the narratee does bring out the complexities of history-in-process and the individual caught in a moment of time in ignorance or in defiance of the past. Maggie's question to Stephen at the end of her journey with him summarises the basic complexity here: "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment" (475;bk.6,ch.14).

Chapter Two: Adam Bede, Realism, and the Narratee

> In every novel the work is divided between the writer and the reader; but the writer makes the reader very much as he makes his characters. When he makes him ill, that is, makes him indifferent, he does no work; the writer does all. When he makes him well, that is, makes him interested, then the reader does quite half the labor. In making such a deduction as I have just indicated, the reader would be doing but his share of the task; the grand point is to get him to make it. I hold that there is a way. It is perhaps a secret; but until it is found out, I think the art of story-telling cannot be said to have approached perfection (Henry James, "The Novels of George Eliot",1866).

Henry James, in these words, highlights the creative center of a novel such as Adam Bede where the writer and the reader are engaged in a joint creative venture. I will substitute the terms narrator-narratee for writer-reader. However, the general thesis of Henry James that the narrator is as much engaged in creating the narratee as fictional characters, and further that the narratee is in a participative relationship with the narrator and has to be engaged actively in the creative process holds. Some corollaries to this basic thesis are that the narratee (like

James' reader) has to be in sympathy with the issues being raised in the text. This does not necessarily mean that the narratee is in agreement with all that the narrator puts forward. In fact, within Adam Bede the narrator-narratee dialogues are oppositional, with the narrator trying to persuade the narratee to change his perceptions and expectations of the creative process. The discussion on realism in chapter 17 leads to a series of analogues between character relationships and the narrator-narratee relationship. The neatness of such analogues is complicated in the portaiture of Dinah, who takes on the role of the narrator in trying to persuade the other "narratee" characters to avoid extreme positions. However, she herself is subject to an extreme isolation from the community by way of her participation only in crisis situations and her refusal to enter into inter-personal relationships when such crises are not present. Thus she herself undergoes a process of reconciliation and assimilation through the relationships she enters into with Adam and his family as well as Hetty.

The issue of "realism" is the fulcrum around which the novelist structures the oppositional relationship between the narrator and the narratee. Dialogue between the narrator and the narratee involves an argument about the nature of realism, the moral ethics closely related to this nature of realism, and the part that realism compels the narratee to play in the creation of the narrative.

This dialogic relationship between the narrator and

narratee is so basic to the creative principle of this novel that it is given several analogues within constructed relationships between the novel's characters. In a novel where one of the principal themes is the power of words to help persuade people to see their mistakes and be guided towards an appropriate perspective, there is an unmistakable analogy between the narrator I have described and the central character Dinah Morris whose principal role in the novel is that of the persuader and the mediator. On the other side of the communication model, it is possible to find analogies between the narratee with his set of pre-conceived notions that need serious revision, and the character of Adam, who shows a development in the novel from narrow, judgemental rigidity to a broader, more humane and sympathetic moral ethics. Adam must confront and accept the unflattering reflection Hetty's actions cast on his facile assumptions about our capacities for violence and destruction. When he stands by Hetty, the reader is asked to take the same position. Further, Dinah elicits the confession from Hetty, and like the narrator of chapter 17, Dinah lets her have "her say out." The other characters represent the means by which these two characters work out their respective analogies. Hetty and the course of her life bring out the best preacher and persuader in Dinah, and the most excruciating confrontation with truth and his own relationship with it for Adam.

Both the dialectical nature of narrator-narratee and character-to-character relationships are enmeshed with the issue

of realism in the novel with the result that a number of central concerns of George Eliot's major fiction are discussed through the dialogic structures set up between the narrator-narratee and the characters. The narrator consciously creates the narratee's perspective by anticipating his objections to character development and actions, and then explains the different perspective he wants from his narratee. Paradoxically, this practice by the narrator has brought charges of unrealistic treatment and deliberate suspension of verisimilitude from critics.[1] George Eliot, however, also deplored extraneous didacticism in a work of fiction. In a review of Westward Ho! she points out:"The preacher overcomes the painter often, which, though creditable to the writer's earnestness and honesty, injures his work as mere work of art, . . . we don't want a man with a wand going about the gallery and haranguing us. Art is art, and tells its own story" (474). Thus, far from being didactic in her own novel, her narrator, by explicitly "telling" the narratee to look at issues of the novel in a certain way, sets out to examine the nature of fiction and its peculiar kind of access to the truth, asking what differences there are between the way we read fiction and the way we "read" actual experience, and in what sense, following on from this, a novel can claim to offer its readers advice on how to conduct their lives.

With such tangible aims in mind, the narrator opens his conversation with the narratee in Chapter 17 of the novel. The conversation is sparked off by the narrator's portraiture of

Irwine in Chapter 5 and specifically in his relationship with Arthur in subsequent chapters. The narrator expects censure from his narratee,"'This Rector of Broxton is little better than a pagan!' I hear one of my readers exclaim. 'How much more edifying it would have been if you had made him give Arthur some truly spiritual advice. You might have put into his mouth the most beautiful things - quite as good as reading a sermon" (221;ch.17). It is too early in the novel for the narratee to foresee the disastrous consequences that a lack of clarity in the conversations between Arthur and Irwine will lead to. Indeed towards the end of the novel one tends to point an accusatory finger of negligence and callousness at the Reverend for having failed to detect and guide Arthur's wayward soul. But at the beginning of chapter 17 this is indeed premature. Thus the narrator intentionally makes the narratee conscious of the issue of Irwine's portraiture and its problematics in the novel. [2]

The biographical author meant to write of life realistically, as she had experienced and observed it, in order to achieve what were for her the proper ends of fiction. She knew, however, that her endeavours might not be understood or accepted by the many Victorian readers who had been contentedly buying in hundreds the popular novels she had long stigmatized as affected and false. In her dialogue with her publisher John Blackwood one can see the same kind of resistance to her realism from the publisher that the narrator of the novel anticipates in his narratee. Quite early on in the relationship, when George

Eliot had sent him her first fiction manuscript , Scenes of Clerical Life, John Blackwood revealed the limits to which he was open to her brand of real life. Blackwood seems to prefer the popular ideal, an ideal that the narrator of Adam Bede assumes the narratee has. Here is Blackwood on depiction of religion and religious characters in fiction: "I hate anything of a sneer at real religious feeling as cordially as I despise anything like cant, and I should think this author is of the same way of thinking although his clergymen with one exception are not very attractive specimens of the body" (Haight 2:272).

In the exchange of letters between Blackwood and Mary Ann prior to and during the writing of Adam Bede, the narrator of Mary Ann's letters is as self-conscious as the novel's narrator is about the Dutch school of art. There is the same anticipation of disapproval from the narratee in response to which the narrator of the letters writes: "In reference to artistic presentation, much adverse opinion will of course arise from a dislike to the *order* of art rather than from a critical estimate of the execution. Any one who detests the Dutch school in general will hardly appreciate fairly the merits of a particular Dutch painting. And against this sort of condemnation, one must steel oneself as one best can" (2: 291-292). In Blackwood's letter to Mary Ann to which she is responding here, there is no specific reference to critics' or readers' dislike of George Eliot's kind of realistic portrayal. Rather there are sundry reactions to the first reading of Amos Barton, with a particular reference to the

novelist's scientific bent of mind as revealed in certain portions of the narrative. That the narrator of Mary Ann's letter construes this as disapproval or unease with the whole realistic approach indicates her sense that her kind of realism was distinctive and new for her readers, so that any criticism of her novels could be traced to a discomfort with this realism.

Whether the subject is realism in art or humane acceptance of frailty in religion, the narrator approaches it dialectically by setting up explicit comparisons of characters' attitudes to such issues. One example of this is the comparison between Irwine and Dinah Morris as representatives of attitudes to a living Church. Through the comparison between Dinah and Irwine, the narrator reiterates his opposition to extreme dogmatic positions.[3]

The narratee, then, who might be having difficulty with the reality of a preacher not constructed along high notions of idealism but along intensely real yet imperfect character traits, needs to be given a glimpse into appreciation of "real" art as opposed to falsely rendered art. The humanity that the author favours in religious preachers is also the quality that endears particular artists to her. For example, in one of her letters from Munich, Mary Ann Evans explains why she loves the paintings of Rubens:

> His are such real, breathing men and women - men and women moved by passions, not mincing and grimacing and posing in mere apery of passion! What a grand, glowing,

> forceful thing life looks in his pictures - the men such grand bearded grappling beings fit to do the work of the world, the women such real mothers (11: 450-451).

Sincerity of execution and effect in rendering real life in as close and uninhibited fashion as possible is what she admires in these paintings. These visions remain consistent with what the narrator says in Chapter 17 in appreciation of the Dutch painters. The narrator makes the narratee aware that there is going to be a change in the way character is to be perceived in the novel. The example of the Dutch paintings serves as a parable to prepare for this change.

Essentially, Eliot's view of both painting and realistic literature is one of democratization. Hugh Witemeyer in George Eliot and the Visual Arts gives certain norms by which George Eliot decided the paintings and art of her choice:
"When George Eliot looked at a picture from one of her favorite schools, what did she see? Her letters and her entries in journals suggest that she judged painting by a Ruskinian combination of moral and aesthetic criteria. These include greatness of subject, truthfulness of representation, adequacy of expression, and handling of formal elements such as color and perspective" (24).

Like Wordsworth, George Eliot is interested in the commonplace, everyday nature of her subject-matter, and believed it to be capable of greatness of subject. In this she was

actively supported by George Lewes. Lewes, in July 1852 in a Westminster Review essay on "The Lady Novelists", outlined the theory that was later to become hers, that the literature of imagination must be based on real experience, and must enable readers to become more profoundly aware of the feelings and sufferings of common humanity[4]. Echoing Lewes' sentiments, the narrator of chapter 17 points out:

> I am content to tell my simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they were; dreading nothing, indeed, but falsity, which, in spite of one's best efforts, there is reason to dread. Falsity is so easy, truth so difficult. The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin - the larger the claws, and the larger the wings, the better; but that marvellous facility which we mistook for genius is apt to forsake us when we want to draw an unexaggerated lion. . . . It is for this rare precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous lonely existence, which has been the fate of so many more among my fellow-mortals than a life of pomp or of absolute indigence, of tragic suffering or of world-stirring actions. I turn, without shrinking, from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sibyls and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her

> flower-pot, or eating her solitary dinner, while the noonday light, softened perhaps by a screen of leaves, falls on her mob-cap, and just touches the rim of her spinning-wheel, and her stone jug, and all those cheap common things which are the precious necessaries of life to her; . . . (172-173;ch.17).

This catalogue of examples from true-to-life and unidealised Dutch paintings is introduced in response to the narrator's anticipation of the narratee's objections. "It is so very rarely that facts hit that nice medium required by our own enlightened opinions and refined taste!"

The narratee, who might be too idealizing or conventional or strait-laced, might find the portraiture of Irwine offensive, but he must learn to respond to complex motivation and character. The narrator refuses to idealize Irwine or anyone else at the expense of truth or representational realism. Truthfulness of representation determines the sublimity or humility of the subject-matter. In other words, a lofty subject deliberately idealized is inferior to a humble domestic subject truthfully rendered in all its mediocrity, contradictions, and humanity. Lewes, in another essay called "Realism in Art" (National Westminster, October 1858), pointed out that it was a question of not distorting or falsifying the facts of real life, but of conferring upon them a special intensity, of focusing them. In a warm response to volume 3 of Modern Painters George Eliot seems to agree in an essay called "Art and Belles Lettres":

> The truth of infinite value that [Ruskin] teaches is *realism* - the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be obtained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality. The thorough acceptance of this doctrine would remould our life; and he who teaches its application to any one department of human activity with such power as Mr Ruskin's, is a prophet for his generation. It is not enough simply to teach truth; that may be done, as we all know, to empty walls, and within the covers of unsaleable books; we want it to be taught as to compel men's attention and sympathy (626-27).

The artist can make the reality he depicts more intense so that it can compel men's attention and sympathy. However, this elevation or intensification of realism is different from the one the narratee is asking for.

The narratee, in this chapter, is asking for idealisation so that the facts reach the nice medium required by his refined taste. The narrator characterizes his views:

> Do improve the facts a little, then; make them more accordant with those correct views which it is our privilege to possess. The world is not just what we like; do touch it up with a tasteful pencil, and make believe it is not quite such a mixed entangled affair.

> Let all people who hold unexceptionable opinions act unexceptionably. Let your most faulty characters always be on the wrong side, and your virtuous ones on the right. Then we shall see at a glance whom we are to condemn, and whom we are to approve. Then we shall be able to admire, without the slightest disturbance of our prepossessions: we shall hate and despise with that true ruminant relish which belongs to undoubting confidence. (221-222;ch.17)

As a reader, the narratee is unambitious, not ready to be challenged, and unwilling to take risks with unexpected material. There is also a need to be in control of the response to the text,("we shall see at a glance whom we are to condemn, and whom to approve"), and to assume a sense of superiority to the material,("without the slightest disturbance of our prepossessions"). The narrator understandably wants to challenge this artificial equanimity of the narratee by offering him a brand of truth and realism that is unflinching and complex.

The implied discussion reflects the artistic debates of the mid-nineteenth century. Witemeyer points out that George Eliot seems Ruskinian in her approach to criteria of art appreciation. However, in this particular chapter, the narrator's views are more democratic than some of Ruskin's. George Landow in his discussion of Ruskin's theories of beauty, points out the contrast between two kinds of beauty in Ruskin's writings:

> Typical Beauty is the beauty of forms and of certain

> qualities of forms, which Ruskin now tentatively and now firmly asserts to be aesthetically pleasing because they represent and embody divine nature. Vital Beauty, on the other hand, is the beauty of living things, and it is concerned not with form but expression - with the expression of the happiness and energy of life, and, in a different manner, with the representation of moral truths by living things (148).

The concept of "Vital Beauty" is linked to the moral and ethical position of sympathy. This sympathy acts as a connection between the perception of beauty, and the exercise of morality. This kind of Vital Beauty is what the narrator refers to when he points out his preferences in chapter 17:

> But bless us, things may be lovable that are not altogether handsome, I hope? I am not at all sure that the majority of the human race have not been ugly, and even among "lords of their kinds", the British, squat figures, ill-shapen nostrils, and dingy complexions are not startling exceptions. Yet there is a great deal of family love amongst us. . . . Yes! thank God; human feeling is like the mighty rivers that bless the earth: it does not wait for beauty - it flows with resistless force and brings beauty with it (223-224;ch.17).

The kind of vitality that real human emotions of love and pain bring to a realistically depicted work of art is invoked as beauty replacing the strictly formal perception of Beauty that

Ruskin speaks of elsewhere in Modern Painters, and which the narratee would seem to prefer.

The narratee, then, is drawn into the larger dialogue engaged in by George Eliot's peers about the nature of beauty in both the visual arts and the literary arts. The Dutch genre painting had first discovered beauty in humble, everyday things, in creatures plebeian and anonymous; it was the harbinger of democratic art. By invoking these paintings, the narrator of chapter 17 reveals the perspective from which his narrative has to be experienced in order to get its true value.

But as Witemeyer points out, there is a danger of over-emphasising the importance of Dutch paintings. The narratee needs to be aware of the limitations of this classical criticism, so that he does not go to the opposite extreme and judge the narrative purely on the basis of its lack of "sublime" subject-matter or idealisation of character [5].

In a useful variation of the dialogic relationship between the narrator-narratee, Marie Maclean in her book, Narrative as Performance:The Baudelairean Experience points out that the relationship is not only dialogic but performative. In her words: "Through a narrative text *I* meet *You* in a struggle which may be co-operative or maybe combative, a struggle for knowledge, for power, for pleasure, for possession. The meeting is manifest in the course of the narrative performance in which the performer, whether human or textual, undertakes to control the audience by words or signs alone, while they, the partners in the act, use

their power as hearers to dictate the terms of the control. If you tell me a story, I can refuse to listen, but if I become a listener, even a forced listener, I can also always remind you that words, in the last resort, can only mean what my mind allows them to mean. I, too, am constantly performing" (Introduction 12).

The nature of the relationship between narrator and narratee that emerges from chapter 17 follows , to a certain degree, this structure. The "struggle" between the narrator-narratee, initiated at the behest of the narrator, is for possession of the right interpretation. The narrator, assuming that the narratee would make "wrong" meaning on his own terms ("Words, in the last resort, can only mean what my mind allows them to mean"), and represent characters (more specifically, mixed portrayals such as Irwine's) in a manner that jeopardizes the artistic intention of the narrator/author, wants to take control of the criteria of interpretation. He is anxious to appropriate meaning to the narrative that both he and the narratee can co-operatively enjoy/receive/critique/value. Thus the combative nature of the narrator's opening lines in the chapter, when the narrator surprises the unsuspecting narratee by mimicking the narratee's misgivings about Irwine's portrayal, gives way to a more genial exposition of what the narrator wishes to achieve in terms of the realism of treatment.

Another way to approach this relationship is to look at it in terms of a transaction between two sides who bring pre-

conceived social backgrounds and notions to bear on the text. As Barbara Hernstein Smith points out in On the Margins of Discourse:The Relation of Literature to Language:

> For discourse is not the transmission of information between two minds located at opposite ends of a channel but, rather, a series of complex transactions between two persons who are located in a rich world of objects, events, experiences, and motives, including *reasons* for speaking and listening to each other (83).

The motives for the narrator in chapter 17 seem clear enough. Through the projection of his anxiety onto the narratee's thought-process, he shows what he perceives the narratee to be questioning in his (narrator's) depiction of characters in the humble and realistic sphere of life. It is a complex transaction or performance (whichever way the narrative is perceived here). Through what the narrator attributes to the thought-process and speech of the narratee, we, the actual readers, get to see both the narrator's sense of an oppositional narratee and his need to have such a narratee.Realism is not an end in itself in this transaction, but rather a doctrine valued because it stresses sincerity. A sincere narrator is able to create the sympathy necessary for a work to have moral effect. It is because of the anticipated opposition from the narratee that the narrator is ultimately able to set clear for his readership at various levels, and for himself, the goals of realism and sympathy as important narrative principles in this novel.

The trope of the Dutch paintings with their illustrative principle of unflinching realism is connected closely to the thematic context and dialectic of Adam Bede as a pastoral. The pastoral as a genre has as its basis an inherent affirmation in the two-way relationship and communication between the self and the larger community. The concept of Arcadia with its perfect balance and harmony between the discrete parts and the unified whole that is the central affirmative spirit of the pastoral is viewed from a realistic perspective by the narrator. This realistic perspective results in the narrative including in the pastoral genre such dissonant notes as the existence of evil and the impact of self-absorption or egoism within the various parts of an organic, pastoral whole.

The narrator's anxious encouragement of the narratee to develop a complex perspective that is able to perceive simultaneously and sympathetically contradictory elements instead of relying on a simple and unified picture relates to the questions the narrative raises about the contradictory nature of the realism that underlies an idyllic pastoralism. A dialectical discussion is sought both in the thematic structures of the narrative and in the character-portrayals that develop those structures. The absence of multiple perspectives or absence of dialectic structures is seen as problematic within the pastoral. Such absence constitutes danger to the equilibrium of the pastoral community.

The narratee is given a hint of the preference for multiple

perspectives when a number of central figures in the novel are quite early on critiqued for their single-minded or almost monomaniacal obsessions with either their own individual selves or communal pre-occupations. Hetty Sorrel and Dinah Morris are the obvious examples of characters who are contrasted early in the novel with the intention of critiquing their individual pre-occupations. With Hetty the narrator anticipates that the narratee will have little trouble in realizing the extreme self-absorption that precludes her from possessing any communal self. Dinah Morris, though apparently different, is tantalisingly similar. Dinah seems to be devoted to communal concerns, her entire self-hood being at the service of her evangelical and Methodistic calling. However, the picture of the community that she has is that of an unembodied entity in need of redemption.In this, she is like Hetty. In relational terms both are the orphan off-shoots to the central pastoral family in the novel, the Poysers. Hetty is Mr. Poyser's orphan niece while Dinah is Mrs Poyser's. In her extreme absorption in communal needs Dinah has ceased to regard her individual self . She sees herself merely as an instrument who needs to work for an impersonal community. Her life, then, is as solitary as Hetty's. She has trouble relating to people at ordinary, everyday levels. She is only useful when there is grave danger or a disaster. Then she is able to find a level of two-way communication. The narrator distances himself both from Hetty and Dinah. These two figures seem to embody the two extremities of a monologic existence that disrupts the

pastoral existence.

There are versions of this solitary and monomaniacal pre-occupation in Adam, who in his pride in his ever-wakeful conscience is steadfastly invested in the sense of the irrevocability of sin and evil. The structure of the narrative posits Dinah and Adam as similar to the narratee in that they must be re-educated in a multi-perspectivism that will help restore balance to the pastoral community. These characters progressively grow and can act constructively only when they acknowledge the need for a complex "other" to complement their strong but inadequate world-views. The past brings them to this acknowledgement through a cathartic suffering and sympathy that gradually becomes the key concept that will help harmonise the idealism of the pastoral and the threat of its realistic de-construction by single-minded perspectives. In this development dialectical dialogue is crucial; the narrative irresistibly moves toward the central event, also the germ of the novel, the confession of Hetty Sorrel in the presence of Dinah Morris. Adam's development from a lonely ethically isolated and high-minded existence to the open and familial patriarch figure at the end of the novel is also developed carefully beginning with the description of the household of the Bedes.

II

Within the Bede household there are tensions in father-son and mother-son relationships. In a moving passage appropriate to Marian Lewes' personal situation, the narrator meditates upon

antagonisms wrenching apart those related by blood but effectively divided by differences in intellect and temperament:

> Nature, that great tragic dramatist, knits us together by bone and muscle, and divides us by the subtler web of our brains; blends yearning and repulsion; and ties us by our heart-strings to the beings that jar us at every moment. We hear a voice with the very cadence of our own uttering the thoughts we despise; we see eyes - - ah, so like our mother's ! averted from us in cold alienation (83-84;ch.4).

Rather than genuine dialogic relationship, the family members either engage in monologic harrangues which reveal their numerous anxieties and frustrations, or are silent and impervious to each others' anxieties, merely using their silence as a protective wall against the neuroses of affection or demands of familial ties.

In the interaction between Lisbeth Bede and her son Adam, the narrator shows the "unloving love" [6] that he had spoken of in operation. In Lisbeth Bede, the narrator explores the psychology of a discounted mother who attempts to control her son through martyrdom. Without real conviction of her own self-worth, Mrs Bede compulsively bemoans her uselessness as a surviving half of a marriage that had provided all identity:

> "Eh," said Lisbeth, "it's poor luck for the platter to wear well when it's broke i' two. The sooner I'm laid under the thorn the better. I'm no good to nobody now."

> Adam never took notice of his mother's little unjust plaints (248;ch.18).

The Adam who has from the first been shown faultless, a stalwart workman and a perfect blend of pastoral idealism and rough shod realism, here lacks patience and tolerance, a major shortcoming that seems to be forgotten by critics who stress his ideal qualities.[7] In his interaction with his mother, or lack of it, he reveals the same silent unresponsiveness and imperviousness, that the narratee will be asked to witness in Hetty. Both Adam and Hetty are similar in their whole-hearted absorption in their work or in themselves when we see them in their family settings. In Adam's case, this similarity with Hetty underscores the extent to which he needs to lose his unresponsive, single-minded sense of righteousness before he can share Dinah's ennobling sympathy with others.

The process of suffering that will enable Adam to shed his impervious self in favour of a sympathetic one is initiated with the death of his father. Adam is resentful of his father's weaknesses and alcoholism in particular, and the narrator reminds us that at one point in his life he had tried to distance himself from this family led by an imperfect parent by running away from home. He would never have returned had it not been for his overmastering sense of duty towards his hapless mother and younger brother. We are never shown Adam engaged in any dialogue with his father. The opening episode of his family life shows Adam using his anger and sense of superior self-hood to erect a

wall of silence against the lapses of his father. Thias Bede's death a few feet away from home moves Adam into acknowledging his resentment towards his father, whose death is almost a respite from family unpleasantness and the pain of "unloving love". As the narrator puts it, " When death, the great Reconciler, has come, it is never our tenderness that we repent of, but our severity" (97;ch.4).

The death of his father initiates in Adam's life both his fantasy or desire for Hetty and his frequent association with Dinah, who comes into the Bede family as the official consoler at the time of their grief. His involvement with these two women will provide the resources that will enable Adam's character to encounter, confront, and overcome suffering through sympathy.

Adam's desire for Hetty is curiously self-contained. As his personal situation at home becomes more painful, he slips more into fantasising about Hetty:

> The chief difference between the reality and the vision was, that in his dream Hetty was continually coming before him in bodily presence - strangely mingling herself as an actor in scenes with which she had nothing to do. She was even by the Willow Brook; she made his mother angry by coming into the house; and he met her with her smart clothes quite wet through, as he walked in the rain to Treddleston, to tell the coroner. But wherever Hetty came, his mother was sure to follow soon; and when he opened his eyes, it was not at all

startling to see her standing near him (152;ch.10).

The vision of Hetty is a defiance of his parental disapproval, and his fantasy about his relationship with her stems from a need to escape the strictures of his mother's nagging complaints.

As far as dialogic relationship goes, the Adam-Hetty relationship is without dialogue between them. She makes her appearance in his life only in his fantasy world. But she does figure indirectly in the dialogue he has with Dinah:

> "Who was it took the news to the Hall Farm?" said Adam, his thoughts reverting to some one there; he wondered whether *she* had felt anything about it.
>
> "It was Mr. Irwine, the clergyman, told me, and my aunt was grieved for your mother when she heard it, and wanted me to come; and so is my uncle, I'm sure, now he's heard it, but he was gone out to Rosseter all yesterday. They'll look for you there as soon as you've got time to go, for there's nobody round that hearth but what's glad to see you."
>
> Dinah, with her sympathetic divination, knew quite well that Adam was longing to hear if Hetty had said anything about their trouble; she was too rigorously truthful for benevolent invention, but she had contrived to say something in which Hetty was tacitly included. Love has a way of cheating itself consciously, like a child who plays at solitary hide-and-seek; it is pleased with assurances that it all the

> while disbelieves. Adam liked what Dinah had said so much that his mind was directly full of the next visit he should pay to the Hall Farm, when Hetty would perhaps behave more kindly to him than she had ever done before (162;ch.11).

The phrase "solitary hide-and-seek" typifies Adam's relationship to Hetty and underscores its monologic nature. This conscious self-deception on Adam's part reflects one aspect of his extreme pride and self-confidence. To the degree that the principal characters are duplications of the narrator and narratee, the Adam of this stage of the novel, locked in a solipsistic fantasy world with Hetty, represents the narratee whom the narrator-analogue of this novel, Dinah, helps to educate and bring into a dialogic relationship.

The narrator builds Adam's monologic solipsism by employing narrative comment in describing Adam's reaction to Hetty's beauty, reducing it to a general male reaction to feminine beauty of Hetty's kind: infatuated with the externals of feminine beauty Adam imposes on Hetty his own assumptions about female wholesomeness and vulnerability. This view of Adam is indeed the one that Bartle Massey, the official mysogynist of the novel, would be able to appreciate, but the narrator is even more ironic than Bartle would be:

> Her heart must be just as soft, her temper just as free from angles, her character just as pliant. If anything ever goes wrong, it must be the husband's fault there:

> he can make her what he likes - that is plain. And the lover himself thinks so too: the little darling is so fond of him, her little vanities are so bewitching, he wouldn't consent to her being a bit wiser; those kitten-like glances and movements are just what one wants to make one's hearth a paradise. Every man under such circumstances is conscious of being a great physiognomist. Nature, he knows, has a language of her own, which she uses with strict veracity, and he considers himself an adept in the language. . . . How she will dote on her children! She is almost a child herself, and the little pink round things will hang about her like florets round the central flower; and the husband will look on, smiling benignly, able, whenever he chooses, to withdraw into the sanctuary of his wisdom, towards which his sweet wife will look reverently, and never lift the curtain. It is a marriage such as they made in the golden age, when the men were all wise and majestic, and the women all lovely and loving (197-198;ch.15).

The narrator makes it clear that this fantasy is shared by the narratee as well as by Adam. The narrator hopes that this ironic description will enable the narratee both to understand Adam so as not to condemn him too much and also have a more correct view of male response: "Before you despise Adam as deficient in penetration, pray ask yourself if you ever were predisposed to

believe evil of any pretty woman - if you ever *could*, without hard head-breaking demonstration, believe evil of the *one* supremely pretty woman who has bewitched you" (198;ch.15). This assumption of similarity between the narratee and Adam links Adam's growth from a single-minded righteousness to a complex and sensitive approach to the problem of evil and the education of the narratee.

The exact kind of growth that the author has set out for Adam is underlined clearly by the narrator: "He had too little fellow-feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences. Without this fellow-feeling, how are we to get enough patience and charity towards our stumbling, falling companions in the long and changeful journey?" (255;ch.19). How this process of opening up sympathetically to the failures of his fellow-beings is to be achieved is confided by the narrator to the narratee: "And there is but one way in which a strong determined soul can learn it - by getting his heart-strings bound round the weak and erring, so that he must share not only the outward consequence of their error, but their inward suffering" (255;ch.19). The role of Hetty in the novel is underscored here as one that brings about the pain and suffering that helps arouse the sympathetic and complex perspective of Adam. The narratee's identification with Adam will similarly educate him.

Adam's sufferings vis a vis Hetty are in revealed in the three stages in which Hetty's liason with Arthur is gradually revealed to Adam: first, he learns that Arthur is Hetty's lover;

next he is led to believe that Hetty has run away from their impending marriage; and finally, he learns that Hetty has been brought to trial in Stoniton for murdering her newborn child.

When this final truth is discovered and Adam can no longer remain in his solipsistic fantasy world, he has to confront Arthur in the first true dialogue between them. The lesson for Adam here is the need to exercise a newly learned restraint:

> If he had moved a muscle, he must inevitably have sprung upon Arthur like a tiger; and in the conflicting emotions that filled those long moments, he had told himself that he would not give loose to passion, he would only speak the right thing. He stood as if petrified by an unseen force, but the force was his own strong will (342;ch.27).

This confrontation with Arthur brings out different approaches to the problem of evil represented by these two men. For Arthur every transgression is ultimately redeemable in moral-ethical terms. For Adam almost every fall into temptation is final and irrevocable in its effects. In the forest when the two men fight "with the instinctive fierceness of panthers," they seem to be acting out this dialogue between the two attitudes to sin. The thrust of the plot is to qualify both of these attitudes by demonstrating to each of the participants that no one position is solely the right one. Arthur, in his story-book chivalric fantasy of riding in with Hetty's reprieve, has to understand that sins have consequences which men may not be able to avoid.

Adam, in his sense of irrevocable evil that makes him shun Hetty as fallen and irredeemable, has to learn to forgive and regroup his life and energies to make a fresh start [8].

The first stage in this comes at the end of the fight when Adam helps Arthur recover. His raw anger gives way to qualified emotions and moderation as well as repentance:"And perhaps I judged you too harsh - I'm apt to be harsh; and you may have acted out o' thoughtlessness more than I should ha' believed was possible for a man with a heart and a conscience. We're not all put together alike, and we may misjudge one another. God knows, it's all the joy I could have now, to think the best of you" (351;ch.28).

The events that follow test this realization of Adam and bring him in contact with people and situations that require him to be moderate in his judgment about Hetty's fall. In one of his moments of acute despair, the one he suffers immediately after hearing of Hetty's arrest, Reverand Irwine brings him back from the edge of vengeance and despair:"No, Adam, no; I'm sure you will wish to stay and see what good can be done for *her*, instead of going on a useless errand of vengeance. . . . Remember there are others to think of, and act for, besides yourself, Adam: there are Hetty's friends, the good Poysers, on whom this stroke will fall more heavily than I can bear to think. I expect it from your strength of mind, Adam - from your sense of duty to God and man - that you will try to act as long as action can be of any use" (456;ch.39). This reminder that he is to think of

others before himself and channel his energy into activity that assuages the sufferings of others is a lesson for Adam not only for this situation but also for the future.

In Dinah's letter to Seth, which he lets Adam read, there is also a premonition of the self-lessness that she is to introduce into the dialogue which will lead to Adam's growth. Albeit sermonised and lyricised, parts of this letter hint at Adam's future course of life: "Infinite love is suffering too - yea, in the fulness of knowledge it suffers, it yearns, it mourns ; and that is a blind self-seeking which wants to be freed from the sorrow wherewith the whole creation groaneth and travaileth. Surely it is not true blessedness to be free from sorrow, while there is sorrow and sin in the world: sorrow is then a part of love, and love does not seek to throw it off" (374;ch.30). This is the belief that will become acceptable to Adam during and after Hetty's trial. A perspective that requires sorrow to be an intrinsic part of love (post-paradisal as this love is "in the fulness of knowledge") helps restore realism to the pastoral paradise which is in jeopardy of being undermined by the presence of unaccountable sin. A perspective sensitive to sorrow is one that is most akin to self-lessness, and ultimately in true Positivist fashion, this self-lessness saves the pastoral bliss of Hayslope by replacing the Adam-Hetty solipsism with the Adam-Dinah collaboration that restores family and broken ties to their pre-eminent position at the end of the novel.

Through the moral evolution of Adam, what is the narrator

trying to teach the narratee ? One of the principal lessons that the dialogues between Adam-Arthur, Adam-Dinah, and Adam-Irwine reveal is the opposition between individual egotism and self-less surrender to the social environment. Adam's lack of dialogic existence that I have noted earlier stems from his inability to reconcile his intense pride in his moral consciousness with the 'fallen' choices and compromised decisions made by people he loves. For Adam there is a rigid connection in terms of causality between the past and the present. Any individual failing to grasp this connection, from Adam's point of view, is unworthy of compassion and even justice. His impassioned words about Arthur's guilt and failure of accountability reflect this unrelenting opinion: "I'd sooner do a wickedness as I could suffer for by myself, than ha' brought *her* to do wickedness and then stand by and see 'em punish her while they let me alone; and all for a bit o' pleasure, as, if he'd had a man's heart in him, he'd ha' cut his hand off sooner than he'd ha' taken it. What if he didn't foresee what's happened? He foresaw enough: he'd no right to expect anything but harm and shame to her" (469;ch.41).

The narrator, however, complicates the connection between past actions and their consequences by bringing in psychological explanations of culpability. Arthur attempts to justify himself with untenable reasons why in spite of all moral reasons against meeting Hetty he still has to go. But the narrator, instead of judging him as Adam does, takes a more complex stand, one which points out the duality of men's motives:

> Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds; and until we know what has been or will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitutes a man's critical actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character. There is a terrible coercion in our deeds which may first turn the honest man into a deceiver, and then reconcile him to the change; for this reason -- that the second wrong presents itself to him in the guise of the only practicable right (302;ch.29).

In this focus on the unconscious drives in human motives, the narrator both spells both the danger of ignoring the causality of actions and also gives an explanation of why such ignorance might lead to further pitfalls. Thus Arthur is to blame both for not heeding the causal connections of events, and also once having failed to heed causality, for using the first failure to commit further ones that try to justify the first. The Reverend Irwine in his dialogue with Adam points out how this transgression must have been a moral struggle for Arthur too. In the narrator's statement here, there is a precarious balance between determinism and independent will that is not quite resolved. Arthur justifies his actions in terms of determinism and hence loses independent volition. Adam, with his pride of moral and independent conscience, also finds himself trapped in determinism when it comes to the transgression of his loved

ones: "This brave active man, who would have hastened towards any danger or toil to rescue Hetty from an apprehended wrong or misfortune, felt himself powerless to contemplate irremediable evil and suffering . . . Energetic natures, strong for all strenuous deeds, will often rush away from a hopeless sufferer, as if they were hard-hearted" (409;ch.52). The evolution of this Adam to one with a less deterministic more flexible sense of human failing reaches its climax when he has looked Hetty's crime square in the face, has endured her loss, and learnt to love again. It is made possible by his comprehension of determinism tempered by responsibility and sympathy.

III

While Adam parallels the narratee's role, Dinah Morris most closely parallels the role of the narrator. Just as the narrator is engaged in making the narratee aware of the presence of multiple perspectives on narratives with the expectation that the narratee will be receptive to the realism of all of them, Dinah's primary function as I perceive it is to be the narrator of alternative narratives within the moribund charm of pastoral existence. Through her preaching she makes the inhabitants of Hayslope aware of the dangers of sin and the possibilities of redemption through the emotionally charged, dramatic rendering of her evangelical perspective on the Gospels. She expresses her

need for introducing such an alternative narrative to the villagers here in her conversation with Reverend Irwine:

> "But I've noticed, that in these villages where the people lead a quiet life among the green pastures and the still waters, tilling the ground and tending the cattle, there's a strange deadness to the Word, as different as can be from the great towns, like Leeds, where I once went to visit a holy woman who preaches there. It's wonderful how rich is the harvest of souls up those high-walled streets, where you seemed to walk as in a prison-yard, and the ear is deafened with the sounds of worldly toil. I think maybe it is because the promise is sweeter when this life is so dark and weary, and the soul gets more hungry when the body is ill at ease" (137;ch.8).

The opposition seems to be similar to the one underlying the narrator's assertion of the realism of Dutch paintings in chapter 17. There the narrator pointed out that apparently 'humble' subjects might make more meaningful topics for works of art because they closely represent life as it is. In this passage Dinah points out that the apparent poverty and harshness of existence in the industrial slums and working-class towns fosters religion and spirituality much more intensely than the easy-going existence of the pastoral Hayslope.

When Dinah begins to preach for the first time, the main thrust of her interpretation of the Gospel is that Jesus came "*to preach the Gospel to the poor*". She explains the implication of this statement by pointing out how it is only among the poor and humble that "good news" (the literal meaning of Gospel) would be relevant. She reminds her listeners of their poverty and the trials of everyday work and living in order to reiterate that they can feel the presence of their saviour because of their trials: "We are just the sort of people that want to hear good news. For when anybody's well off they don't much mind about hearing news from distant parts; but if a poor man or woman's in trouble and has hard work to make out a living, he likes to have a letter to tell him he's got a friend as will help him" (69;ch.2). Just as the narrator's art will appropriate the humble plebeian world as its domain of interest in chapter 17, Dinah's preaching of evangelical doctrine focuses solely on the hard, rural existence underlying the placid pastoral landscape of Hayslope. [9]

She attempts through her preaching to make the inhabitants re-visualize their lives and understand the potency and necessity of religion: "See where our blessed Lord stands and weeps, and stretches out his arms towards you. Hear what he says . . . See the print of the nails on his dear hands and feet. . . And he is upon this earth too; he is among us; he is there close to you now; I see his

wounded body and his look of love" (74;ch.2). The entire Christian epic is worked out before the Hayslopers through vivid dramatising and invoking of the immediate presence of Jesus in all aspects of their lives. The climax of the sermon comes in the recognition of a collective betrayal of Jesus that merges with the narrative of Gethsamene, the crucifixion, and the forgiveness. The individualising of this epic for the people of Hayslope reaches its climax with the focus on Bessy Cranage who comes to typify at that moment everything Dinah wishes the Hayslopers to renounce--their indifference to the Word and their bucolic stupor to the realities that matter in their lives. The narrator, in order to make the parallel between his and Dinah's narration, distances himself from this preaching by handing over the task of comment to the traveller, whose sceptical distance gradually succumbs to the passion in Dinah's rhetoric, and hence lends an objectivity to the proceedings. The traveller narrates the circumstances of the preaching even as he is shown to be drawn into the narratee's position; he is, along with the crowd of listeners, an interested audience of Dinah's impassioned sermon which seems to him "as if it had been the development of a drama." Towards the climax of the novel, when Dinah helps Hetty's confession in prison, the same stranger returns as the governor who allows Dinah into the prison. The narrator steps aside for the governor, thus separating himself not

only from the stranger-narrator but also Dinah-the-narrator. This highlights the analogous role of narrator given to Dinah.

But the narrator of the novel complicates the analogical relationship between narrator-narratee and Dinah-Adam by showing how Dinah needs to go through her own process of sympathetic assimilation with the rest of the community at a humbler level than the idealistic one that she previously had. Paradoxically, this becomes possible through the interaction that she is able to achieve with another egotist in the novel, Hetty Sorrel. The moment in the prison where Dinah is successful in persuading Hetty to break her wall of silence and narrate her crime, is one where the dialogic principle working in the narrator-narratee relationship becomes instrumental in plot and character development. This moment is one of triumphant preaching for Dinah because, unlike in the first preaching, she is able to successfully engage her "audience" in dialogue. But in order to persuade Hetty to narrate the crime, Dinah is forced to lower her own exalted perspectives to engage those of Hetty's. This, in the long run, helps her to assimilate with the community at a more humane level than she has been able to do before.

In the dialogue between Dinah and Hetty, Dinah tries to give a spiritual response to Hetty's crime but Hetty responds based on her very real fears:

> ". . . But, Hetty, there is some one else in this cell besides me, some one close to you."
> Hetty said in a frightened whisper, "Who?"
> "Some one who has been with you through all your hours of sin and trouble - who has known every thought you have had - has seen where you went, where you lay down and rose up again, and all the deeds you have tried to hide in darkness. . . ."
> "O Dinah, won't nobody do anything for me? *Will* they hang me for certain? . . . I wouldn't mind if they'd let me live." (494-495;ch.45)

This dialogue at cross purposes results from Dinah's spiritual and other-worldly vision which does not recognize Hetty's sensuous and reality. Towards the end of the confessional dialogue between the two, each seems to impart a little of her own way of perceiving the world to the other. While Dinah's spiritual perspective lends bearable dignity to the agony of Hetty's near-death, some of Hetty's tangible notion of reality seems to rub off on Dinah. Thus Dinah evolves from the otherwordly methodist preacher into the domesticated angel of the house waiting for her husband Adam to return from work. This evolution was foreshadowed by the Reverend Irwine as narrated by Mr. Poyser:". . . The missis was saying, Adam, as the preaching was th' only fault to be found wi' Dinah, and Mr Irwine says,' But you mustn't find fault with her for that, Mrs Poyser; you forget she's

got no husband to preach to." (524;ch.49). Thus the silencing of Dinah the narrator of alternative narratives for the Hayslope Arcadia is prophesized and completed when Dinah becomes one of Hayslope's inhabitants.

In Adam-Dinah's courtship the two have to re-define their relationship with each other; the friend-mentor paradigm for the relationship has to be transformed into that of a romantic one. In this process, Dinah seems more self-conscious and aware of the change of her feelings than Adam is. In fact, the idea that the two of them have a future together is suggested to Adam by Lisbeth. From looking at her as the saviour of his past sweetheart, Adam is coaxed into feeling Dinah is the soul-mate he thought he had before. As the narrator points out," For in the darkest moments of memory the thought of [Dinah] always came as the first ray of returning comfort: the early days of gloom at the Hall Farm had been gradually turned into soft moonlight by her presence. . . " (532;ch.50).

For Dinah, marriage was an option that she emphatically intended to forego, as she told Seth earlier on. Her independence as a woman with considerable powers of influencing others seemed to her then to render marriage or motherhood as too self-indulgent. Just as Dorothea in Middlemarch gives up the gems that she is irresistibly drawn to, Dinah initially gives up Adam even though she feels strongly for him. She struggles against her attraction,

afraid that the spiritual desires will take second place to worldly love and domesticity: "Yes, Adam, my heart is drawn strongly towards you; and of my own will, if I had no clear showing to the contrary, I could find my happiness in being near you and ministering to you continually. I fear I should forget to rejoice and weep with others; nay, I fear I should forget the Divine presence, and seek no love but yours" (552;ch.52). The analogy of Dinah-Adam and the narrator-narratee relationship is fulfilled:" The growth of higher feeling within us is like the growth of faculty, bringing with it a sense of added strength: we can no more wish to return to a narrower sympathy, than a painter or a musician can wish to return to his crude manner, or a philosopher to his less complete formula" (574;ch.54).If this is what Dinah has wrought into Adam, then it is similar to the agenda that the narrator had, namely to challenge the narratee's easy, narrow view and substitute a wide sympathy that comprehends within its purviews multiple views of life and its values.

While it was necessary to suggest the alternative Christian narrative of suffering and redemption in the effort to challenge the pastoral placidity and moral obtuseness of Hayslope, the narrator of the novel does not lose sight of a perspective that shows the alternative narrative as only one of many options. Dinah herself needed to gain a better grasp of the tangible. Her speech in the

novel appears stylised and lyricised in comparison to that of all of the other characters. It is important to remember that the biographical author had renounced her Evangelical beliefs in favour of a Feuerbachian secularism and humanitarianism long before the creation of this novel. Thus the author imbues Dinah's speeches with language that the author does not believe any more, except as they are part of an historical verisimilitude that she wants to impart to her narrative. Diane F. Sadoff points out that: "Although George Eliot renounced Evangelicalism in favor of Feuerbachianism more than a decade before writing Adam Bede, her yearning for the transcendental signified undercuts her religion of man throughout the novel, and creates a tension between transcendence and realism which cannot be resolved in the novel's overdetermined closure" (411). Almost every instance of Dinah's spiritual experience is challenged by the narrator or other characters.

But the narrator also frequently undercuts his own challenge. For example, in chapter 3 he comments: "[Seth and Dinah] believed in present miracles, in instantaneous conversions, in revelations by dreams and visions; they drew lots, and sought for Divine guidance by opening the Bible at hazard; having a literal way of interpreting the Scriptures, which is not at all sanctioned by approved commentators; and it is impossible for me to represent their diction as correct, or their instruction as liberal. Still - if I have

read religious history aright - faith, hope, and charity have not always been found in a direct ratio with sensibility to the three concords; and it is possible, thank Heaven! to have very erroneous theories and very sublime feelings" (82;ch.3).

The figure of Dinah as the counterpart of the narrator in the novel is deliberately problematised, albeit affectionately, by the other perspectives operating in the novel. The narrator's dialogic relationship with the narratee which seemed reflected in the character relations between Adam and Dinah turns out to be as complex as the analogical roles Adam as narratee and Dinah as narrator play.

This complexity of perspective foreshadows the perspectival manipulations that George Eliot undertakes with finesse in Middlemarch and Felix Holt. The presence of multiple perspectives in these novels becomes an important moral and ethical statement as the following chapter hopes to demonstrate.

ENDNOTES

1.An example of such criticism is from George R. Creeger, who in his "Interpretation of Adam Bede" argues:"The ways in which George Eliot goes about defining the symbolic relationship [of Loamshire and Stonyshire] are occasionally clumsy, particularly for modern literary sensibilities with their strict demand that an author never intrude in his work. Like many other innocent Victorians, however, George Eliot does not hesitate to step in and speak directly to the point, telling us discursively, almost didactically, what Loamshire and Stonyshire represent" (87). Joan Bennett writes that "from time to time, [Eliot] breaks the illusion that she has so successfully built up, the illusion that we are actually in Hayslope. . . . An extreme example of this defect occurs in the first chapter of Book II, which is characteristically entitled 'In which the story pauses a little'. In it she makes a wholly unnecessary apology for painting the Rector of Broxton, Mr. Irwine, as a very pleasant man and not a saint and she discourses at unnecessary length about her own artistic aims. It is unnecessary, because those aims reveal themselves in their achievement" (106). W. J Harvey agrees with Bennett, and points out that chapter 17 is "probably the extreme instance in George Eliot's work of such intrusion". He finds that "George Eliot is here being tactless" and suggests that "the problem of portraying decency without doctrine in a clergyman must have been a real one . . . but it did not compel her to use the methods she does." (69-70).

2.Reverend Irwine is depicted as a worldly, liberal, though surprisingly self-abnegating preacher who does not take his job as seriously as the other preacher in the novel, Dinah. But he makes a virtue out of his nonchalant acceptance of the little foibles and paganisms of his parishioners. His generous acceptance of life and nature as it is becomes the cue for the narrator to educate the narratee about art and the theory of art appreciation that best approximates to this generosity of vision that Irwine shows in the sphere of religion. Thus, opening chapter 17 with a reference to Irwine is the narrator's way of setting up the narratee for a discussion on a humane acceptance of realism in life in much the same way as Irwine accepts his parishioners in all their obtuse complexity. This is how attitudes to religion and religious preachers parallel those towards art and artists (including the novelist's art) in this important dialogue.

3. The exact nature of Dinah's evangelical religion with its passionate belief in a fallen, sinful Nature that needs to be tempered by a strong, studied adherence to the Gospel was one that was deeply questioned by George Eliot, as her own experience of the Holy War reveals. In fact, in her essay, "Evangelical Teaching: Dr Cumming", she makes a sharp attack on the harsh dogmatism of Calvinistic Christianity, the "hard and condemnatory spirit towards one's fellow-men" which original-sin theology necessarily fosters, "the perverted moral judgment" inherent in the system of belief which Cumming, as Eliot says, "shares with

all evangelical believers" (Pinney 182). This essay shows that George Eliot favors a humanistic attitude towards human potentiality rather than the Evangelical propensity to damn human instincts which are assumed to be reprobate in their natural state of existence.

Christopher Herbert points out how in the conflicting definitions of Nature, one benevolent and hopeful, the other sinister and fallen, the two characters of Irwine and Dinah are contrasting poles. They are two preachers typifying two distinct approaches to religious practice: one relying on the natural benevolence of humankind to try and coax the better instincts to come to the fore, the other despairing of any natural goodness anxious to rigorously root out the fallen natural impulses. In this useful article, Herbert points out that this is an ongoing and important dialectic in the thematic constructions of the novel(412-427). I agree with this reading, and believe with Herbert that Irwine's importance in the novel (often neglected by critics) lies in the dialogic dimension he brings to the character and presence of Dinah. I am extending this dialogic discussion to examine its repurcussions in the narrator-narratee relationship .

4.This collation of Lewes and Mary Ann's views of art is discussed by Basil Wiley in Nineteenth Century Studies,p246.4.

5.Perhaps the last word on the debate between Realism and Idealism is given by Lewes:"A distinction is drawn between Art

and Reality, and an antithesis established between Realism and Idealism, which would never have gained acceptance had not men in general lost sight of the fact that Art is a Representation of Reality - a Representation which, inasmuch as it is not the thing itself, but only represents it, must necessarily be limited by the nature of its medium . . . but while thus limited, while thus regulated by the necessities imposed on it by each medium of expression, Art always aims at the representation of Reality, i.e. of Truth; and no departure from Truth is permissible, except such as inevitably lies in the nature of the medium itself. Realism is thus the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but *Falsism* ("Realism in Art: Recent German Fiction," Westminster Review (1858), qtd in A Victorian Art of Fiction, ed. John Charles Olmsted, 392). The narratee is shown to be demanding idealism that is false because it has no respect for the real as it is.

6.The English translation of the Greek phrase is used to characterize Squire Donnithorne's relation to his grandson Arthur, but it also accurately describes Adam's relation with his parents, and later his relationship with Hetty. Joseph Wiesenfarth points out that the phrase was taken from Aeschylus' The Libation Bearers.

7.Among early critics who found Adam Bede completely faultless are Lord David Cecil in Early Victorian Novelists: Essays in Reevaluation (1935), and Henry James in "The Novels of George Eliot," Atlantic Monthly 18 (October 1866), 486.

8. Wiesenfarth looks at the character of Adam as a re-working of the Prometheus myth as well as a complex, modernised version of the character Adam in Genesis. He feels that Eliot re-modelled the physical strength and power in both of these cases to accommodate a spiritual awareness that emerged not so much from an awareness of strength and righteousness but from an acknowledgement and acceptance of human weakness and frailty. In his words,"Adam Bede is a new archetype - the Adam of the modern world - a good worker, an upright man, a man of strength and good looks. But none of these things justifies him. Sympathy and understanding and fellowship justify him. Adam, with all his virtues, recognizes the sinner in himself. . . [He is] an Adam who sees that hardness is the sin of the upright and that such a sin must be repudiated" (87). In the narratee-analogue this aspect of Adam's characterisation parallels the attitudes the narrator requires of the narratee in order to be the novel's best reader.

9. Graver discusses George Eliot's works in relation to the typology of Ferdinand Tonnies, who formulated as an ideal construct a division of societies into two types : *Gemeinschaft*, or "local, organic, agricultural communities that are modelled on the family and rooted in the traditional and the sacred"; and *Gesellschaft*, or "urban, heterogeneous, industrial societies that are culturally sophisticated and shaped by the rational pursuit of self-interest in a capitalistic and secular environment" (14). Such a division might be superficially present between Hayslope

and Stoniton. However, the author complicates matters by introducing through Dinah's perspective the sense that there is a hard, impenetrable core at the heart of the "organic" community of Hayslope that might foster indifference, egotism, and deadness to the Word even in the midst of all of the organic relationships "rooted in the traditional and sacred." Dinah is eventually to become a part of the Gemeinschaft but not before she has helped it to lose some of its indifference and deadness. In the confessional dialogue she sets up with Hetty, Hetty, though originally from the community, must be removed from it and Dinah, though hailing from the Gesellschaft, enters the former and infuses it with spirit.

Chapter Three

Felix Holt and Middlemarch - The Public-Private Debate and the Narratee

Thematically, George Eliot's novels explore the relationship of the individual to the larger world where the forces of history determine political, social, and cultural life. There is an attempt on the part of the narrator to discuss the environmental component of individual action, and in doing so to recognize the relativism inherent in such action. This can be seen in two ways in terms of the dialogic relationship between the narrator and narratee. First, the difference between the public and the private worlds, and their respective locations within the world of the novel, forms an important element of discussion between the narrator and narratee; the narratee is oppositional to the presence of the public within the private and vice versa. The narrator, on the other hand, tries to establish the interweaving of the two and underscores the importance of history in our daily lives, and also, conversely, history's dependence on the daily chronicle of our lives for its validation. Thus the point of contention between the narrator and the narratee is based on their respective perspective of what constitutes history, and what role history plays in the everyday lives of the characters. Second, the narrator argues indirectly that if both individual lives and larger historical forces governing them are to be brought within the same text, a multi-perspectival

approach to the narrative is needed.

In three consecutive novels, Romola (1863), Felix Holt (1866), and Middlemarch (1872), George Eliot explores the relationship between the public and the private. The relationship between the narrator and the narratee again takes on a teacher-pupil character, where the narrator assumes the narratee's reservations about definitions of history and heroism and takes on the task of preparing him for more broadbased definition. The impulse of broadening his narratee's mind through art that we see explicitly stated in Adam Bede continues in these three novels also. In Romola, however, the debate is not structured as one between the narrator and the narratee because the narrator surrenders most of his educative work to the characters. Therefore this novel will be discussed in the next chapter on the disappearance of the narrator. In the other two novels the opposition forces the narrator to express his position clearly. He must force the narratee -- and ultimately the real reader -- to modify his views on realism, on public and private, on perspectivism. To do this, the narrator must anticipate both what the narratee thinks and what is necessary to make him modify his views.

I

In the introduction to Felix Holt the narrator adopts the voice of a social historian giving his listeners a tour of the Midlands in the 1830s from his vantage position of a

coachman's seat. This is a useful voice to adopt because it can mirror the various contending voices that the geographical locations along the ride yield. These stops on the way are not just historical and geographical locations, but are vivid representatives of the close connection between the public history and private lives of the common folk. Multiple perspectives occur in the very response to the stage coach. On the one hand the stage coach represents nostalgically for the Victorians that world lost to the railways, but to the elderly gentlemen in pony-chaises taken aback by its speed it embodies in its "rolling swinging swiftness" (5;ch.1) the onset of the destructively new.

Catherine Gallagher in The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832-1867 classifies this novel as a "condition-of-England" novel. She treats it as a text in which George Eliot simultaneously confronts contemporary issues of political representation and her own belief in realistic representation. In Felix Holt she deliberately shapes a character who stands for an Arnoldian "best self" that represents culture also, a realm necessarily separate from social conditions, and paradoxically also from the readable social signs of realism (217-267). I will extend this discussion to show how a dialogue of different voices is constructed on the basic subject of political representation at its best and worst manipulated forms. This dialogue takes

place implicitly between the narrator and the narratee, but explicitly between the narrator's statements and characterizations of certain characters, in particular Felix Holt, who takes on the task of re-defining political thought and representation by making them consonant with and answerable to genuine self-hood and inheritance. This novel, then, represents a critical examination of what constitutes a "condition-of-England" novel, with its parameters involving connections between individual and public actions, as well as the relationship between the representation of realism in fiction and the political representation of values in the machinery of government.

The vehicle of this examination of the genre is the use of multiple perspectives. The narrator of the introductory chapter makes the narratee aware of these perspectives through the adoption of a voice that, like a social antiquarian, reflects the various contending forces that have made up the history and political matrix of Treby Magna. The narrator also articulates the varying voices that express those forces in all their idiosyncratic, simplistic, idealistic, and inevitably human dialectics:

> At that time, when faith in the efficacy of political change was at fever-heat in ardent Reformers, many measures which men are still discussing with little confidence on either side, were then talked about and disposed of like

> property in near reversion. Crying abuses -- "bloated paupers," "bloated pluralists," and other corruptions hindering men from being wise and happy -- had to be fought against and slain. Such a time is a time of hope. Afterward, when the corpses of these monsters have been held up to the public wonder and abhorrence, and yet wisdom and happiness do not follow, but rather a more abundant breeding of the foolish and unhappy, comes a time of doubt and despondency (Felix Holt 179;ch.16).

This is an ironic perspective on the movement of a reformist impulse and its aftermath. There is something fortuitous in the way individual lives get entwined in the public issues. Also keenly described is the importance of public opinion to the movement which is transient in both its hope and exuberance. The political future that is foreshadowed here is always a disappointing one.

There is also an anxiety on the part of the narrator at the opening of the novel to present a heteroglot of pictures, voices, and mediations between the public and the private in as wide a range as possible. At the end of the introduction an attempt is made to step back from the narrative and look at it as indicative of a united body of meaning that its disparate structure belies. The commonality of the hidden life throbbing beneath these disparate

glimpses of provincial life and attitudes is to be explained through the paradigm of a journey of Dante through purgatory. This is a parable of the secret life common to all of the disconnected voices presented before, and also the common thread that links the public and the private. This hidden life of the purgatorial forest of Dante is one that binds the past to the present and future, and the individual to his ancestral heritage and a future contribution to the society. The narrator wishes to alert the narratee to the subtle representations of the signs of this hidden life, reiterating that he will be focusing on these apparent trivialities because they carry significance as much as if not more than the apparently "momentous" occurences of public political existence.

The narrator's anxiety to let the narratee into the secret potency of events reflects the relationship between politics and culture that had emerged in the writings around the 1860s of thinkers such as Mill and Arnold, who both influenced George Eliot. How the voters should be represented in parliament, what criteria should be followed to determine which section of the population was represented, and the relationship between actual political events and ideal political movements or values were discussed by both of these writers [1]. George Eliot was influenced by these questions because through them she saw a way to bring the worlds of the public and the private

together. What is understood to be excellent and unique in the private may by necessity be included in the public sphere of political representation.

In Felix Holt George Eliot is particularly interested in the mediation between the Arnoldian "best self" (found in the "aliens") and what its reflection seems to be in the actual action-filled world of representative politicking. In perhaps the only explicit address to the narratee the narrator makes in the novel, he points out the importance of the relationship between the individual self and the larger socio-historical forces that are at the root of this novel: "These social changes in Treby parish are comparatively public matters, and this history is chiefly concerned with the private lot of a few men and women; but there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life" (50;ch.3).

George Eliot's narrator relies on several characters, such as Felix Holt,Esther Lyon, and Rufus Lyon, for the explication of these ideas about politics, representation of the desirable, and presentation of the reality and the ideal.These characters are shown discussing such issues and trying to make decisions based on them. The narrator abjures the long direct addresses to the narratee where, in earlier novels, he would explain lucidly what he perceives to be the narratee's opposition to the subject or his lack of preparedness for the subject to be. In this novel, the

dialogue between the narrator and narratee is presented in an elliptical way with the narrator taking a representational rather than an explicatory mode of communicating with the narratee. The narratee's implied opposition is never clearly shown to have been anticipated by the narrator. Thus the dialogue between the narrator and narratee is one where there is meaningful silence on the narratee's part.

As in other novels, the narrator here does have a clear picture of his narratee, but he does not give the actual reader a direct picture of this narratee. However, the characterizations in the novel as well as the plot are based on a sense of the narratee's needs. Rather than focusing his dialogue on one or two addresses to the narratee,then, the narrator disperses his dialogic and multi-perspectival conception of the politics throughout the novel with the central characters embodying different elements of the dialectic. In other words, the dialogic relationship between the narrator and the narratee is embodied in the subject-matter itself, and is revealed in its dialectical complexity through the multi-perspectival treatment of the subject. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson in their commentary on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism state, "Bakhtin cautions that it is a crude understanding of dialogue to picture it as 'disagreement' and this crudity is only one short step from the outright mistake of reducing

dialogue to the logical relation of contradiction. Agreement is as dialogic as disagreement. Agreement has countless varieties, infinite shadings and gradations and enormously complex interactions" (132). In Felix Holt we see not so much as outright disagreement between the narrator and narratee, but a discursive attempt to understand different perspectives of political existence in all their various shades of agreement.

What is the dialectic that is presented in the novel? Broadly speaking, the problem is that of reconciling the gap in values between a public political existence with its monetary and materialistic value system, and the private or domestic value systems that govern an individual's life. More specifically, it is a dialogue between the common man's indifference to commmunal socio-politics and the revelation that every individual life is ultimately a living-out of a larger communal life. In chapter 3 of the novel, the narrator presents the history of Treby Magna in precisely these terms as a movement from a past where people have shown an unconscious indifference to and habitual acceptance of social and religious norms towards a present or future where they have an awareness and acceptance of change and a renewal of the close bond between individual life and the community of which the Reform movement of 1832 is an example . This is presented in the third chapter without ambiguity.

The evolution of the town from a sleepy rural existence into that of a fairly busy coal-mining and trading town is marked by the usual resistance to anything new and by the fortuitous accidents that resulted from individual and private ambitions. Typically, it was the outsider, Jermyn, who initiated the change by floating the possibility of its being a health resort. This was resisted at first, but the lawyer was able to rope in the landed aristocrats, the DeBarrys, into investing in the scheme. This proved to be a misadventure and the project failed. However, this did help open up the town to other investors and possibilities, and the beginning of a modern awareness was made: "In this way it happened that Treby Magna gradually passed from being simply a respectable market-town -- the heart of a great rural district, where the trade was only such as had close relations with the local landed interest -- and took on the more complex life brought by mines and manufactures, which belong more directly to the great circulating system of the nation than to the local system to which they have been superadded; and in this way it was that Trebian Dissent gradually altered character" (47;ch.3).

The new consciousness was first evident in the changed aspirations of the new church congregation "to whom the exceptional possession of religious truth was the condition which reconciled them to a meagre existence, and made them feel in secure alliance with the unseen but supreme rule of

a world in which their own visible part was small" (48;ch.3). The dissenting voices in the Church were responsible for creating a spirit of enquiry that in turn examined the potency of general social, religious, and political ideas and institutions and created an unlikely political consciousness : "Thus, when political agitation swept in a great current through the country, Treby Magna was prepared to vibrate" (48;ch.3).

Within the novel some of the major characters are shown to be undergoing the same movement from a close pre-occupation with their personal lives to a greater awareness of the necessity and inevitability of recognising the communal political existence affecting all of their lives. The notion that public institutions need to reflect a disinterested public voice that is paradoxically divested of social ills such as class-based posturing is represented in the narrator's presentation of the important characters. Most of the principal characters are self-conscious about their public and private entities, as well as their relationship with their pasts.

Felix Holt is the principal example. At the beginning, he perceives his life to be divided between his personal sensibilities toward Esther and his socio-political commitment to the community. He perceives the one to be inimicable to the other. That is why, even though he is attracted to Esther and to the possibility of changing her

perceptions about herself in relation to the rest of her social commitments, he resists the impulse to change her in the mistaken notion that by doing this he would be compromising his communal and public roles. As he points out to Esther,"That's what makes women a curse; all life is stunted to suit their littleness. That's why I'll never love, if I can help it; and if I love, I'll bear it, and never marry"(124;ch.10). In other words, he wants his private and public worlds to be consciously separated at the beginning of the novel.

He is also consciously attempting to re-define the "representation" of himself in the conventional sense of the term. Thus, at the beginning, Rev. Lyon has difficulty in trying to read "Felix" ; Felix himself points out: "You're thinking that you have a roughly-written page before you now" (60;ch.5). It is as if the protagonist of this novel has set out to review some of the assumptions of descriptive representation so strongly upheld by the narrator of Adam Bede. Felix Holt represents opposition to descriptive representation because he seeks to disturb the conventional interpretations of appearances and behavior as well as background/inheritance that are strong determinants of social reality. He seriously challenges the comfortable realism of women peeling potatoes that was so picturesque and persuasive as social realism in the previous novel. He shows the sham there is both to fashionable Byronism and to

his lower-middle-class origin.

The presence of this character is by itself a reminder of the self-consciousness of the narrator who delineates most characters according to descriptive representation only to find the practice consciously undermined by the protagonist. The narratee is made aware of this with the arrival of Felix in the novel when suddenly external signs become an issue:

> "You are doubtless amazed to see me with a wax-light, my young friend; but this undue luxury is paid for with the earnings of my daughter, who is so delicately framed that the smell of tallow is loathsome to her."
>
> "I heeded not the candle,sir. I thank Heaven I am not a mouse to have a nose that takes note of wax or tallow." (60;ch.5).

This is the first reference to Esther, this time through the candles that represent her fastidiousness. Felix is indifferent to them, and will eventually reject most of the external signs the narrator associates with Esther because he is interested in seeking out the value within rather than the tangible and transient externals.

However, in his abrasive implied evaluation of Esther, Felix has already set in motion the movement which will bring about a reconciliation between his own private and public worlds. Esther's reaction to Felix's humiliating

assault on her self-absorbed world helps her open up to sensations not merely of her choosing, but to those she is forced to experience. Felix's harsh assessments of her private world of ideas force her to re-assess these in a new light. His assessments also form part of a battle of the sexes whereby she is paradoxically and inevitably drawn towards him even as he ostensibly repels her. This sexual tension lends a potency to his critique of her self-absorption, and helps her recognize her place in the larger world. The dynamic of this relationship is such that the one helps the other to bridge the gap between his/her private and public worlds. Thus, Felix's impact on Esther and her consequent feelings for him and her subsequent spirited defense of him at court help him realize that she is not an obstacle but a pathway to his journey to the fusion of the private and public worlds: "But I'm proof against that word failure. I've seen behind it. The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be the best" (434;ch.45). In other words, her world, enlarged through his efforts, helps ease his own constricted world-view, and he is able to accept her not as a nemesis but as a good fortune for his public life and ideals: "her woman's passion and her reverence for rarest goodness rushed together in an undivided current" (447;ch.46). The narrator perceives this as a thesis for the novel. The question is: does the narratee?

In order to answer this we must look at Esther's relation to the two men in her life. The idea of woman as independent moral resource was put forward by, among others, John Ruskin, and reiterated by Gladstone in letters discussing the dangers of women's suffrage. In a letter written to Samuel Smith in 1892, Gladstone emphasizes this: "lest we should invite [the female voter] unwittingly to trespass upon the delicacy, the purity, the refinement, the elevation of her own nature, which are the present sources of its power." What is interesting is the close connection the public and private spheres seem to have in Gladstone's development of this problem: "I am not without the fear lest beginning with the State, we should eventually be found to have intruded into what is yet more fundamental and more sacred, the precinct of the family, and should dislocate, or injuriously modify, the relations of domestic life" (qtd. in Harman 7). Here Gladstone puts his finger on the crux of the matter: letting women have the vote would destroy the boundaries between the public and the private or domestic. This reveals the underlying belief in the conception of the woman as an independent source of strength who never quite participates in active political life, but who influences it from the confines of her domestic circle and through her relationship with her man. However, because there is already an acknowledgment of the inextricable connection between the public and the private roles of the woman, Gladstone's

letter is an admission that these two spheres are intimately connected and separation is impossible.

In the case of Esther, Felix's instant and simultaneous interest in her inner development as well as the electoral politics of Treby Magna seems to reinforce the narrator's awarenesss of this close proximity between the public and the private. In focusing on Felix's apparent misogyny and distrust of Esther's fancy taste in Byronic literature, the narrator points out further the parameters of these connections. Later, when Esther does cross the threshold into the public world and publicly defends Felix at the trial, she is doing so because of both private and public causes. She is also at this point in the novel debating between the two suitors who represent not just two choices of life partners, but two interpretations of the public-private, society-self debate.

Harold Transome, in his opportunistic dialogue between his class requirements and his radicalism, represents the comfort, class, and principles which would make life interesting and elegant for Esther. Felix ,in his mediation between his radicalism of reform and the practical politics of Treby Magna, represents the closest promise of a union between the public and the private on the most idealistic terms. Yet life with Felix would be absent of the material benefits that make Byronic romance so enticing. In Esther's attempts to resolve this impasse, she recognizes

the lack in romance: "And yet, this life at Transome Court was *not* the life of her day-dreams:there was dulness already in its ease, and in the absence of high demand; and there was the vague consciousness that the love of this not unfascinating man who hovered about her gave an air of moral mediocrity to all her prospects. She would not have been able perhaps to define this impression; but somehow or other by this elevation of fortune it seemed that the higher ambition which had begun to spring in her was forever nullified" (407;ch.43). She is acting on Felix's directives to her when, in an earlier conversation, he had pointed out: "I want you to have such a vision of the future that you may never lose your best self" (262;ch.27) .

The narrator wants the narratee to note what it is about Felix that Esther is able to hold on to, namely his desire to reconcile the inner self with the public conception of the future world. The narratee is to perceive a public-private dichotomy in a woman's life during the Reform movement as an important and inescapable issue. Whether he agrees with the narrator's outline of Esther's conformity to this vision in her ultimate union with Felix is debatable. As pointed out earlier, dialogue is not necessarily oppositional: there could be agreement too.

Felix Holt and Harold Transome are representations of alternative ways of reconciling the dialectic between individual self-hood and the social commitment that it is

inextricably bound to. Felix tries to reconcile the dialectic by looking beyond conventional definitions of class and generation. Thus even though he forms part of the educated middle-class, he identifies himself with the working class and chooses this class on which to focus his reformist energies . He also acknowledges the ambiguities of his ancestral inheritance by repudiating the business in spurious medicines that is available to him as part of his inheritance. To a great extent, Felix is rebelling against the spurious notions of loyalty that his class and his inheritance demand of him by trying to locate his identity within a re-constructed class that he himself feels a part of because it has a congruity between what he does and what he is. In attempting to get beyond the conventional expectations of his class, profession, and even his radicalism, Felix tries to forge a program of self-development at its most idealistic with a practical agenda of education and individual development that includes a strong system of values. As is evident from his Address, Felix would like the electoral process to be something more than a machinery of choice to be manipulated by the privileged classes and brutalized by the working classes. This is where Felix seems to embody some of the ideas on representative government of Mill that were discussed earlier. Felix wishes the electoral process to be an instrument that helps the working classes exercise their

restraint and loyalty to issues that are good for them. This, paradoxically, leads Felix to take the Tory position during the riots.

On the other hand, Harold uses the dialectic between self-interest and social commitment to get the best profit out of the new transitional age where nothing is certain and the old verities are gone. Like Felix, but in the opposite direction, Harold goes against the conventional expectations of his class to become a Radical parliamentary candidate. This is apparently a rejection of his landed position and ancestry, and Mrs Transome and Jermyn find it an inexplicable hitch in their plans of securing the inheritance for Harold. However, the narrator steps in to point out that there is a more practical and expedient aspect of this Radicalism in Harold's character:

> The years had nourished an inclination to as much opposition as would enable him to assert his own independence and power without throwing himself into that tabooed condition which robs power of its triumph. And this inclination had helped his shrewdness in forming judgments which were at once innovating and moderate. He was addicted at once to rebellion and to conformity, and only an intimate personal knowledge could enable any one to predict where his conformity would begin. The limit was not defined by theory, but was drawn in

> an irregular zigzag by early disposition and association (110;ch.8).

The dialectic between self and commitment in Harold is deeply implicated with the notion of winning the best deal. In this particular instance, his apparent iconoclasm is deeply rooted in his notion of self-interest. He understands that it is only as a Radical candidate that he will be able to maintain both his personal need to rebel and his fierce desire to remain part of the landed class to which he so ambiguously belongs. Unlike Felix, who repudiates the sham of a middle-class identity, Harold embraces it under cover of this Radical candidacy. As David Carroll points out in George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations, "Harold's self-confidence springs from his ability to reconcile comfortably in all areas of life his tendencies to rebellion and conformity" (209).

In the prologue to chapter 5 a dialogue between two citizens has been inserted that foreshadows the implicit dialogue the two characters who claim to be Radicals have throughout the novel. The first citizen points out the dangers of over-enthusiasm and hasty implementation of ideas. The second questions such caution as being insincere to the values and beliefs one holds, and consequently liable to charges of "loss of virtue." In reply the first citizen points out the inevitable cooling of all enthusiasms as the basic law of nature that likes to bring things to a mean.

This "future middlingness" however,is sharply criticized as "a poor climax" by the second citizen(59;ch.5). The dialectic is between the dangerous reversal of opposites and a kind of golden mean which is also viewed negatively as an expression of the universal entropy eradicating all differences. Felix takes the position of anti-compromise: "They may tell me I can't alter the world -- that there must be a certain number of sneaks and robbers in it, and if I don't lie and filch somebody else shall. Well, then,somebody else shall, for I won't. That's the upshot of my conversion. . ." (62;ch.5). Harold Transome has found the golden mean of compromise and lived with it all his life with great success: "The years had nourished an inclination to as much opposition as would enable him to assert his own independence and power without throwing himself into that tabooed condition which robs power of its triumph" (110;ch.8).

This representation of two sides of the dialectic within two characters takes place through separate narrative modes: on the one hand, Harold is portrayed almost solely through the narrator's words, while Felix is represented through dialogue, both others' words about him, and commentaries of his own. For example, we are told that a phrenologist who diagnosed his "large veneration" was contradicted by Felix's friend who considered him "the most blasphemous iconoclast living" (67;ch.5). A dialectic is

built in Felix's portrait. This enables the narrator to develop the link between the public and the private, particularly seen in terms of rebellion and conformity.

The rebel is someone who is against accepted notions of convention. His rebellion, if it is a true one, is not for self-interest, but for a higher sincerity and truth. It is imperative that this person have complexity so that he can see various interpretations of actions. A complex repertoire of perspectives is necessary both for Felix and for those around him in order to make his rebellion a living possibility:"thoughts, opinions, knowledge, are only a sensibility to facts and ideas. If I understand a geometrical problem, it is because I have a sensibility to the way in which lines and figures are related to each other; and I want you to see that the creature who has the sensibilities that you call taste, and not the sensibilities that you call opinions, is simply a lower, pettier sort of being - an insect that notices the shaking of the table, but never notices the thunder" (122;ch.10). Here, Felix points out the close connection between possessing a world view and possessing a clear correct perspective of things. Not having a global perspective is perceived as being inhuman. Descriptive realism tends to lose itself on the smaller details and is never able to portray the whole picture. The narrator reiterates this with an added agenda, namely, to know the "other" perspective if not to possess it: "We may

be sure of our own merits, yet fatally ignorant of the point of view from which we are regarded by our neighbour" (132;ch.11). For example, in Esther's encounters with Felix, she is able, for the first time, to perceive the "other" perspective from which her charm and good taste can be viewed.

Undoubtedly, Harold Transome and in general all of the Transome group of characters are focused on the shaking table and miss out the thunder. In his first meeting with Esther, Harold is thinking about furniture and the size of rooms as they would fit Esther's graces: "It was a pity the room was so small, Harold Transome thought: this girl ought to walk in a house where there were halls and corridors" (175;ch.16). He sees Esther in the long halls and corridors at the Treby mansion associating her with Mrs Transome, who however paces the long halls in agony and guilt over her adultery and its retributive results. It is as if Harold perceives Esther as a successor-figure to the Transome women as embodied by his mother. This perception lends an added ominousness to the choice Harold holds out for Esther.

If Harold Transome represents the compromised "middling" self-seeker and Felix the iconoclast who is re-defining "representation" both in political and literary terms, then Rufus Lyon adds another voice to the dialogue, one that cautions about too much iconoclasm which can undermine the concepts of right and law:

> Play not with paradoxes. That caustic which you handle in order to scorch others, may happen to sear your own fingers and make them dead to the quality of things. . . You yourself are a lover of freedom, and a bold rebel against usurping authority. But the right to rebellion is the right to seek a higher rule, and not to wander in mere lawlessness. Wherefore, I beseech you, seem not to say that liberty is licence (150;ch.13).

This is a voice that tries to forge a connection between rebellion and the right kind of conformity. This voice points out that any excess even of something as desirable as liberty leads to anarchy and pain. This is also a remarkable instance of the narrator surrendering his position to a character.

The novel is thus a polyphony of voices which point out the implications of the public-private debate to the body politic. As the narrator had pointed out, the end of most reform movements have disappointment in store for the hopeful public. So this novel too shows the election process ending in riots and chaos. However, the promise of bridging the gap between the public and the private, between an authentic past and the present seem to be fulfilled when Felix and Esther find themselves, and the Transomes retain their hold on the land even though, and paradoxically because, they do not belong to it. Their spurious past

becomes their spurious present.

In the end,the narrator has taught the narratee to broaden his perspective to a larger time-span of history and to achieve a flexible definition of heroic success:

> For what we call illusions are often, in truth, a wider vision of past and present realities -- a willing movement of a man's soul with the large sweep of the world's forces -- a movement toward a more assured end than the chances of a single life. . . We see human heroism broken into units and say, this unit did little -- might as well not have been. But in this way we might break up a great army into units; in this way we might break the sunlight into fragments. . . . Let us rather raise . . . a monument to the faithful who were not famous, and who are precious as the continuity of sunbeams is precious, though some of them fall unseen and on barrenness (184;ch.16).

The narrator here points out that the successful or unsucessful completion of a narrative action does not indicate heroic success or failure. Individual lives have an organic connection with the greater scheme of history, and so what might seem to be apparent failure (the election riots, the last debate that Rufus Lyon was expected to participate in and win, or the failure to oust the spurious inheritors of Transome Court) are actually incomplete stages

within a longer and complicated process.

The global perspective that Felix wanted Esther to develop is the one the narratee needs if he wishes to understand the novel adequately. Rather than the narrator, Felix, already in possession of this perspective, is able "to perform two different tasks in the narrative: he [gives] social meaning to personal choices and personal meanings to symbolic social actions" (Bodenheimer 222). In connecting the theme of the private and public debate with the orchestration of different perspectives within a text, the narrator is preparing the narratee for Middlemarch where symbolic and heroic lives are seen as models for individual private lives in order to conduct a narrative "experiment." But the experiment requires not only a complex perspective within the text, but also a more explicitly oppositional narratee, and that is what we get in Middlemarch.

II

Middlemarch is the text where narrator-narratee conversations on the topic of multi-perspectivism are most evident. As I stated earlier, one important aspect of the theme of the individual integrated within his larger environment is the question of the correct perspective necessary to understand the broad range of experience, personalities, and transformations of personalities that such a theme requires. That is why in most of the comments, asides, and intrusions made by the narrator in Middlemarch

there is a persistent demand for the resistant narratee to be as broadminded as possible, to have different perspectives of a situation, if necessary simultaneously. The narrator wants to educate a narratee who is both limited to a single perspective and who needs to be made aware of the ethical necessities of a multi-perspectival approach.

One of the principal characteristics that the narrator anticipates and tries to counter in his narratee is apathy born of familiarity and lack of imagination. There is a certain bitterness in the narrator's voice in the famous Roman chapter: "That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind" (Middlemarch 189;ch.20). Without an expanded perspective, what is commonplace does not yield tragic emotion by the very nature of its habituality. This chapter records a significant moment of self-awareness for Dorothea who, for the first time, is able to see the reality of her marriage to Casaubon. The chapter also records the inevitable crisis her unconventional aspirations reach when they collide with the values of her class and society. The narrator wishes the narratee to realize the metaphoric implications of Dorothea's impression of Rome as one of "stupendous fragmentariness." This impression reflects her failure to make sense of her own life which is caught between the aspirations of a saint from a previous age and the constricted reality of Dorothea's existence within the

nineteenth century provincial community. The chapter is addressed to a narratee who has not experienced this fragmentariness. He seems to have at his best "the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions which unite all contrasts", and at his worst "walk[s] about well-wadded with stupidity" (188-189;ch.20). The narrator explains the terms of Dorothea's fragmentary notion of things ("the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism") to the narratee so that he can realize how Dorothea fails, at this point, to see Rome as "the spiritual centre and interpreter of the world" (188;ch.20). The narrative effort is to create the perfect audience who could understand the tragic fragmentation of the protagonist's self-construction. The anxiety on the narrator's part is that this Roman incident might be trivialized in the narratee's mind. Hence, the challenge to look within the obvious to find new tragic meanings:

> If we had a keen vision and feeling of ordinary human life it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence (189;ch.20).

The narratee is ironically saved from over-exposure to

tragedy because he, like most people, is "well wadded with stupidity" against "that element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency" (189;ch.20). The function of the narrator's conversations with his narratee is to help him shed his imperviousness when necessary and open himself to the portrayal of "that roar which lies on the other side of silence" in the novels.

There is a close relationship between the term, "multiperspectivism" and George Eliot's notion of knowledge that she explains in her essay ,Notes on Form in Art:

> And as knowledge continues to grow by its alternating processes of distinction and combination, seeing smaller and smaller unlikenesses and grouping or associating these under a common likeness, it arrives at the conception of wholes composed of parts more and more multiplied and highly differenced, yet more and more absolutely bound together by various conditions of common likeness or mutual dependence. And the fullest example of such a whole is the highest example of Form: in other words, the relation of multiplex interdependent parts to a whole which is itself in the most varied and therefore the fullest relation to other wholes (Pinney 433).

Here her conception of knowledge is developed through a

principle that acknowledges diversity in achieving unity, and that accepts the co-existence of likeness and unlikeness in the search for a totality.

This principle operates not just in the structure of the novels, but also in the way the narrator's , the narratee's, and the characters' perspectives are presented and brought in relation to each other. In Middlemarch knowledge is being experimented with. What is accepted experience within one time-period (martyrdom as understood in Saint Theresa's age, for example) is being taken and placed in another time period (the nineteenth century) to test the results. The deliberate anachronism of Dorothea's life makes interpretation one of the most important functions of the narrator. The narrator-as-commentator is responsible for interpreting Dorothea's anomalous position of being "a fine quotation from the Bible in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper" (9;ch.1). In a situation where the heroine is "likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it" (10;ch.1), multiple view-points from which to interpret the character's growth and awareness of self are natural. One of the principal ways in which these view-points are brought to the reader's attention is by engaging them in a dialogue taking place between the narrator and narratee.

In this dialogue the position of the narratee is

changeable. Generally, the narratee seems to be one step behind the narrator, usually taking a more obvious formulation than the narrator's. D.A. Miller in his reading of the novel in Narrative and its Discontents has pointed out the importance of the communal voice in undermining the meanings the narrator's voice makes (107-194). In my reading of the narrator's voice in relation to the narratee, the narrator and the narratee seem to qualify each other with the narratee always voicing the more domestic and down-to-earth version of the martyr's story. Just as Bakhtin describes the co-existence of various levels of ideology and voices within the same discourse, a single paragraph in Middlemarch can voice the narrator's, the narratee's, and even the communal voices:

> And how should Dorothea not marry? -- a girl so handsome and with such prospects? Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers. A young lady of some birth and fortune, who knelt suddenly down on a brick floor by the side of a sick labourer and prayed fervidly as if she thought herself living in the time of the Apostles -- who had strange whims of fasting like a Papist, and of sitting up at night

> to read old theological books! Such a wife might awaken you some fine morning with a new scheme for the application of her income which would interfere with political economy and the keeping of saddle-horses: a man would naturally think twice before he risked himself in such fellowship. Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safegaurd of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them (11;ch.1).

In the few paragraphs preceding this one, the narrator's voice had begun to give the necessary background to the personality of Dorothea. In this paragraph that same voice begins to ironize the common perception of Dorothea's refusal to be part of the milieu of Middlemarch girls. The perspective moves from the community to the beau that the community puts forward as a prize match for Dorothea. In the process the narrator risks showing his heroine in a mock-epic posture illustrating the anachronism that she is. He is able to do this without hurting her image in the narratee's eyes because he has already ironized the suitor as one with limited vision. The narratee is put in the position of this beau ("Such a wife might awaken you some fine morning. . . ") so that the narratee can realize that Dorothea's

anachronistic ideas are less ridiculous than those of the man who wishes to strait-jacket her into his brand of "political economy and the keeping of saddle horses." The communal voice is given the forefront again in the last two sentences, the narrator being confident now that the narratee would be able to distance himself from this upholder of mediocrity and conventional wisdom.

The question and response taking place here form part of the hermeneutic enterprise of this novel ultimately which is to interpret the collisions of personal values and histories with larger communal values. Through the narrator's response not only is the community critiqued, but also is the naive assumption of sainthood on Dorothea's part. Moreover, in the Prelude, when the narrator speaks about Saint Theresa's travails, he mentioned the "domestic reality in the shape of uncles" that had initially stood in the way of the martyr's aspirations(Prelude 7). In other words, the epic of Saint Theresa that becomes a myth for Dorothea's narrative contains within itself hints of failed individual aspirations because of communal oppositions. Thus the possible failures of Dorothea's aspirations are built into the very structure of the myth. This further qualifies any straight-forward oppositional opinion that the narrator and narratee might have on the interpretation of the Theresa myth and its workings in Dorothea's life. Nonetheless,in the paragraph quoted above, in the dialogic relationship the

narrator plays ironically on some of the narratee's assumptions (the exclamation marks at the end of the third sentence seem to point to an implied comment of the narrator to the narratee in terms of his naive wonderment). The narrator ends with the voice of the communal wisdom taking over, revealing the close proximity of the narratee's views and that of the community's. The dialogue between the communal voice and the narrator makes the narrator-as-commentator himself subject to scrutiny as the narrator assumes the communal voice and the narratee can critique even the narrator.

The relationship of the narrator and narratee is used to examine some of the other major "myths" or models of life for Victorian society. The figures of the scientific explorer (Lydgate), the Puritan man of the world hoping to unite religion and profit (Bulstrode), the theologian/scholar engaged in a futile exercise of synthesis and interpretation (Casaubon), along with the modern saint (Dorothea) all embody major issues of the nineteenth century. The novel captures the dilemmas of their individual, imaginary aspirations brought together with the social realities determined by "the stealthy convergence of human lots." Both the narrator and the narratee are engaged in interpreting each of the protagonists' assumptions according to their different premises. Most of the times such premises are completely at odds but at times one is a

lighter shade of the other. There is no victor in this dialogue. The novel's multi-perspectivism makes sure that every perspective is qualified by the next one so that no one emerges as the primary.

Tertius Lydgate is the representative of the secular new man of the nineteenth century. If Dorothea represents the spiritual transition from a previous age to the novel's present, Lydgate represents the eighteenth century empiricist trying to pursue his scientific vocation as steadfastly as possible. Ambitious in his scientific passion, Lydgate is searching not for the religious key to life which the medieval Dorothea is seeking, but for the key to life as understood in the modern world -- not the life of the soul but, in an age of philosophic materialism, as matter, life not spiritual but biological.

In the narrator's portrayal of Lydgate, there is from the first a dual purpose -- one, to reveal what the character himself perceives his aims to be , and second, to reveal the flaws in his character which will eventually make it impossible for him to make good these aims. At times both of these purposes are present as dual possibilities in the narrator's description of Lydgate:" He was but seven-and-twenty, an age at which many men are not quite common -- at which they are hopeful of achievement, resolute in avoidance, thinking that Mammon shall never put a bit in their mouths and get astride their backs, but rather that

Mammon, if they have anything to do with him, shall draw their chariot" (138;ch.15). Given the fact that Lydgate's career throughout the course of the novel shows how the first of these possibilities eventually gets the better of his vocational aspirations and his professional life, and emerges as the only reality in his life, the description marks the clairvoyant quality of the narrator's voice with regards to Lydgate.

The narrator for the most part assumes the narratee agrees with him in giving his description of the inception of Lydgate's passion for his vocation ("Most of us who turn to any subject we love remember some morning or evening hour when we got on a high stool to reach down an untried volume, or sat with parted lips listening to a new talker, or for very lack of books begin to listen to the voices within, as the first traceable beginning of our love" 139;ch.15). Carefully, the narrator using the collective "we," makes the coalescence between vocation and passionate romantic love an issue by pointing out that both are subject to the possibility of the corruption of the initial dream, sometimes without the knowledge of the dreamer:" The story of their coming to be shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross, is hardly ever told even in their consciousness; for perhaps their ardour in generous unpaid toil cooled as imperceptibly as the ardour of other youthful loves, till one day their earlier self walked like a ghost

in its old home and made the new furniture ghastly". The narrator and the narratee remain together as voices which might have inadvertently reminded the character of the loss of his dreams through conventional assumptions:"In the beginning they inhaled it unknowingly: you and I may have sent some of our breath towards infecting them, when we uttered our conforming falsities or drew our silly conclusions: or perhaps it came with the vibrations from a woman's glance" (140;ch.15).

The challenge for the narratee in trying to conceive of Lydgate's character and its place in the scheme of the novel is to understand the potential of his ambition as a researcher and scientist, and at the same time grieve for the weaknesses and fatal mis-interpretations he is prone to. The narrator makes this duality of perception a requirement in the narratee's reading of Lydgate:

> The man was still in the making, as much as the Middlemarch doctor and immortal discoverer, and there were both virtues and faults capable of shrinking or expanding. The faults will not, I hope, be a reason for the withdrawal of your interest in him. Among our valued friends is there not some one or other who is a little too self-confident and disdainful; whose distinguished mind is a little spotted with commonness; who is a little pinched here and protuberant there with

> native prejudices; or whose better energies are liable to lapse down the wrong channel under the influence of transient solicitations? All these things might be alleged against Lydgate, but then, they are the periphrases of a polite preacher, who talks of Adam, and would not like to mention anything painful to the pew-renters (145;ch.15).

The passage points out the risks of an uncomplicated reading of Lydgate and reveals the narrator's anxiety that he might lose the narratee's sympathy or more devastating, his interest in Lydgate because he is not completely heroic.

This passage also is an example of a meta-text in George Eliot's fiction which talks about techniques of representation. The narrator points out that the grey areas of Lydgate's personality are painted but, with some trepidation, similar to the apologetic asides of a preacher anxious to appease the "pew-renters". The narrator places himself in place of the preacher, while the narratee is given the role of the pew-renters, in other words, people in authority. The narrator appears curiously nervous about the reception of his portraiture by the narratee. The narrator is also anticipating the narratee's obtuse response to the shades of Lydgate's character because they are so subtle and so intermixed with his brilliance in scientific pursuit, his "ambitious . . . social distinction", and his "generous and unusual. . . views of social duty". The narratee, like one

of Lydgate's casual romantic admirers, might ask,"Where then lay the spots of commonness?" (145;ch.15) In response to this question the narrator invites the narratee to read between the lines and understand the qualities, which make Lydgate exceptional in certain respects, but not in others: "Lydgate's spots of commonness lay in the complexion of his prejudices, which, in spite of noble intentions and sympathy, were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world.. ." (146;ch.15).

At the same time the narrator is careful to keep alive the sense of grandeur that exists at least in potential in this character. In talking about his aspirations, the narrator anticipates scepticism on the part of the narratee about the range of ambition of this provincial physician, and so defends his high hopes: "Does it seem incongruous to you that a Middlemarch surgeon should dream of himself as a discoverer?" (142;ch.15) Again Lydgate's commonness is an inevitable part of his journey to greatness: "Each of those Shining Ones had to walk on the earth among neighbours who perhaps thought much more of his gait and his garments than of anything which was to give him fame:. .. "(142;ch.15). The pressure is on the narratee to look beyond the obvious and find seeds of greatness as well as the "spots of commonness."

The narratee's preparation for correctly appreciating Lydgate is essential given the hermeneutic issues inherent

in the plot surrounding him. Lydgate's failure to achieve his idealistic goals of becoming the nineteenth century Vesalius results in part from his failure to interpret the peculiar qualities of provincial life . At different times the failure of dialogue between one of the Middlemarch characters and the "outsider" Lydgate reveals how the latter is mis-interpreting. In chapter 17 when Farebrother and Lydgate engage in conversation, Lydgate fails to respond or even comprehend almost all of Farebrother's warnings about the possible obstacles his parishioners might place on his professional ambitions:

> "In the country, people have less pretension to knowledge, and are less of companions, but for that reason they affect one's *amour-propre* less:one makes less bad blood, and can follow one's own course more quietly."
>
> "Yes - well - you have got a good start; you are in the right profession, the work you feel yourself most fit for. But you must not be too sure of keeping your independence."
>
> "You mean of family ties?" said Lydgate, conceiving that these might press rather tightly on Mr. Farebrother.
>
> "Not altogether. Of course they make many things more difficult. But a good wife - a good unworldly woman - may really help a man, and keep

him more independent. . " (ch 17,169).

Lydgate begins by pointing out the advantages of pursuing his dreams in the country where there are fewer obstacles placed by know-alls. Farebrother, agreeing that Lydgate has taken the right steps towards an early successful career, points out that he might not want to take his independence for granted. "Independence" is mis-interpreted by Lydgate to mean bachelor-hood as opposed to the cares of a family, and he thinks Farebrother is referring to his own family life with two sisters and a mother. Farebrother in turn allows himself to be led by Lydgate's suggestion. This confluence of vocation and married life in this dialogue full of mis-interpretations foreshadows Lydgate's fate for his marriage to Rosamond will be the cause of his professional demise.

The issue of independence that Lydgate interprets as freedom from familial relationships has other general implications for his career. His relationship with Bulstrode puts him in a position of ethical dilemma with regards to the freedom of his professional decisions. Lydgate is unable to be independent of the financial power that Bulstrode exerts in this provincial milieu. He becomes known as one of Bulstrode's party, and this undermines Lydgate's stature as an independent scientist considerably. When it is Lydgate's turn to put in the final vote for the hospital chaplain, he falls under pressure and votes for Bulstrode's candidate and against his friend Farebrother.

This is the first of the many losses of his independence. The narrator voices the community's perspective on this loss of independence:: "There was hardly ever so much unanimity among them as in the opinion that Lydgate was an arrogant young fellow, and yet ready for the sake of ultimately predominating to show a crawling subservience to Bulstrode" (432;ch.45). In an important dialogue between Will Ladislaw and Lydgate the compromised nature of Lydgate's independence is highlighted in his own defensive tone:

> ". . . I meant that a man may work for a special end with others whose motives and general course are equivocal, if he is quite sure of his personal independence, and that he is not working for his interest - either place or money."

To this Will Ladislaw answers as follows:

> Motives are points of honour, I suppose - nobody can prove them. (446;ch.46)

Motives are precisely the issue when the narratee is forced to judge the possibility of Lydgate's collusion in the death of Raffles that is facilitated by Bulstrode.

Lydgate faces the entire town's opprobrium once it becomes known that he has been bailed out of possible bankruptcy by Bulstrode while he was engaged by Bulstrode in treating Raffles. But, as Farebrother points out, an internal scrutiny can be ultimately more damning:"There is the terrible Nemesis following on some errors, that it is

always possible for those who like it to interpret them into a crime: there is no proof in favour of the man outside his own consciousness and assertion" (698;ch.72). The narrator thus prepares the narratee for the long self-examination that Lydgate conducts shortly afterwards in which he wonders if he might have acted differently had the money been not paid by Bulstrode:"But if he had not received any money -- if Bulstrode had never revoked his cold recommendation of bankruptcy -- would he, Lydgate, have abstained from all inquiry even on finding the man dead? - would the shrinking from an insult to Bulstrode - would the dubiousness of all medical treatment and the argument that his own treatment would pass for the wrong with most members of his profession - have had just the same force or significance?" (703;ch.73).

The narrator wishes the narratee to understand the extent of Lydgate's fall from his notions of independent scientific enquiry. So he gives one of Lydgate's arguments in favour of his independence: ""the purest experiment in treatment may still be conscientious: my business is to take care of life, and to do the best I can think of for it. Science is properly more scrupulous than dogma. Dogma gives a charter to mistake, but the very breath of science is a contest with mistake, and must keep the conscience alive" (703;ch.73). The narrator unequivocally points out how devastating Lydgate's present fall from this ideal is in the

context of the above arguments :"Only those who know the supremacy of the intellectual life -- the life which has a seed of ennobling thought and purpose within it - can understand the grief of one who falls from that serene activity into the absorbing soul-wasting struggle with worldy annoyances" (701;ch.73). In the passages where Lydgate is shown debating the crime he might have unwittingly committed, the narrator gives the narratee a hint of the interpretative capability of Lydgate's mind only to remind the narratee that all of this is wasted on the dross of life rather than the high ideals of scientific pursuit. Sympathy should come simultaneously with condemnation, the narrator implies here.

In Lydgate's case, sympathy is relatively easy to elicit from the narratee, but in case of Casaubon, the narrator has to step in aggressively to make sure that the pedant gets the sympathy he deserves. This is difficult because Casaubon is portrayed in order to show the tragic futility of Dorothea's aspirations. He is the object of Dorothea's mis-understanding both of the goals of marriage in general and her sense of her own role in particular. Casaubon is to be the scholar-theologian, the Milton, the Aquinas to her discipleship, at whose writing desk she would locate her true vocation of the "facilitator" of his scholarly ambitions. The narrator's task is multiple here. At one level, he needs to show the possibility of Casaubon's

being the scholar-mentor-as-husband to Dorothea's St.Theresian aspirations. At another level, the consciousness of his not being exactly what she wishes needs to be brought before the narratee. At yet another level, Casaubon has to be humanised enough so as not to be an object of comedy without sympathy; he has to be given a serious if not tragic background to indicate he is another failed aspirant to the vocation of his choice. To his credit the narrator does portray all of these levels of perceiving Casaubon. This is the reason sequences with Casaubon have many narrator-narratee dialogues; the narrator has to position the narratee to see from these various levels.

The narrator points out the need for a multi-perspectival approach in trying to understand both Casaubon and his impact on Dorothea :"Signs are small measurable things, but interpretations are illimitable" (26;ch.2).The narratee is given a larger window of vision to see the signs within a context than is Dorothea. The narrator has to make sure that because of the discrepancy of knowledge between character and narratee, Dorothea does not lose stature. He also needs to sustain some sympathetic interest in Casaubon. To keep sympathy with Casaubon the narrator shows in Casaubon's own private perceptions of his work and the progress he has made, hints of self-knowledge.

As early as chapter 10, Casaubon's inner daemons of insecurity are introduced as the narrator moves from

"outside estimates of [the] man " which have been anything but admirable to "the report of his own consciousness about his doings or capacity: with what hindrances he is carrying on his daily labours; what fading of hopes, or what deeper fixity of self-delusion the years are marking off within him; and with what spirit he wrestles against universal pressure, which will one day be too heavy for him, and bring his heart to its final pause" (83;ch.10). The narrator points out to the narratee that "even Milton, looking for his portrait in a spoon, must submit to have the facial angle of a bumpkin" (83;ch.10). The narrator warns the narratee of the dangers of single-minded attention to the external perspective of Casaubon that the narrative has presented till now.

By focusing on the inner workings of Casaubon's mind, the narrator makes it possible, as with Lydgate, to see the failures of high aspirations and the limitations of perspectives that these failures result from. But the fact that Casaubon has consciousness of his immense failure in the one master project of his life does not preclude the fact that he is totally self-absorbed and without multiple perspectives himself. The narrator wants this to be recognised not so much with the aim of condemning Casaubon but with the aim of better understanding Dorothea's points of misperceptions, the result of a too global perspective. The narrator on the other hand generalizes and includes all

humanity in his larger dictum :". . . it is a narrow mind which cannot look at a subject from various points of view" (66;ch.7). He points out the results of Dorothea's particular fallacy in not developing this extra perspective; it does not force Casaubon to confront his inadequacies vis a vis her: "She was not in the least teaching Mr. Casaubon to ask if he were good enough for her, but merely asking herself anxiously how she could be good enough for Mr. Casaubon" (51;ch.5).

This analysis pre-figures the problem the Dorothea-Casaubon marriage is about to encounter when she in her misperception constructs a vision of selfless devotion to her husband's ambitions, a vision which paradoxically feeds his self-absorbed paranoia about the worth of his vocational goals. Thus, later, when the narrator is describing the initial disagreement between the couple, he brings up this mutual blindness to each other's perspectives as the bedrock of their mis-communication :" She was as blind to his inward troubles as he to hers; she had not yet learned those hidden conflicts in her husband which claim our pity" (194;ch.20). The narrator makes full use of the larger range of knowledge that he has allowed the narratee to have by giving him an insight into the workings of Casaubon's mind. He demonstrates how the lack of such a perspective is a serious handicap for Dorothea, though she is never condemned as much as Casaubon is. The lesson for the narratee is clear enough:

keep as many perspectives and options open as possible because they enable a more profound ethical judgment than do single perspectives.

Dialogue that demonstrates the presence of multiple perspectives is built into the narrative by other means. Morson and Emerson in their discussion of Bakhtin's dialogism point out that in every utterance by a character or a narrator there might be two levels. One of these might be the level where contexts of words and situations are used but not so that the narratee receives them without any stylistic, intonational, or historical context. At the other level, each utterance has the contexts embedded:

> Let us consider two different cases. We have seen that with the right sort of analysis, the words of all utterances can be shown to be cited or reported from other contexts. But we can also appreciate that when we speak it is often not part of our purpose for our listener to consider the sources of our words. We may want him or her simply to consider what we are trying to say, to regard the discourse as our direct, unmediated, uncited word - spoken without "quotation marks" - about our topic. We may contrast this case with a second one, in which the very same words may be spoken but we want the listener to hear them *with* quotation marks. For example, a speaker may be

> alluding ironically to what someone else, known to both speaker and listener, might say on the topic. The speaker may incorporate into his utterance characteristic expressions or intonations of this common acquaintance in order to distinguish these from what "we" - the speaker and his listener - would say .(146).

In the narration of the Dorothea-Casaubon marriage George Eliot's narrator makes use of the implicit "quotation" marks within various perspectives of Casaubon and the Dorothea-Casaubon marriage. Each of these "quoted" perspectives embody the peculiar motivations of the character but the narratee hears them in a fuller context. Here is Will Ladislaw's perspective:

> But the idea of this dried-up pedant, this elaborator of small explanations about as important as the surplus stock of false antiquities kept in a vendor's back chamber, having first got this adorable young creature to marry him, and then passing his honeymoon away from her, groping after his mouldy futilities (Will was given to hyperbole) - this sudden picture stirred him with a sort of comic disgust: . . . (199;ch.21).

Will's perspective here is received by the narrator not "directly" but in quotation marks with humor directed both

at Casaubon and Will. The parenthetical note on Will's choice of rhetoric is meant to caution the narratee that he needs to read the rest in quotation marks.

The dialogue between this perspective on Casaubon and Casaubon's own perspective shows the narrator's effort to create an educated narratee who sees that there are no absolutes of evil, or stupidity, or vanity. The dialogue increasingly humanises Casaubon by asking the narratee to understand how Casaubon's failure at his vocational goal has warped his perception of others including his wife as well as his perception of how others perceive him. Casaubon's public life has impacted the innermost private decisions he makes because he bases them on his paranoid perspectives of others' notions of his failure vocationally.

> [Casaubon's intellectual efforts'] most characteristic result was not the "Key to all Mythologies", but a morbid consciousness that others did not give him the place which he had not demonstrably merited - a perpetual suspicious conjecture that the views entertained of him were not to his advantage - a melancholy absence of passion in his efforts at achievement, and a passionate resistance to the confession that he had achieved nothing (401;ch.42).

The implicit dialogue shown to the narratee here is between Casaubon and all the daemons of insecurity which are

powerful enough to influence his judgement with regards to Dorothea's motives. In true dialogic tradition, the narrator shows the workings of Casaubon's mind as a kind of secular psychomachia where we hear his thoughts forming in conversational speech. The narrator points out that mere description of this state of mind "is a very bare and therefore a very incomplete way of putting the case [because] the human soul moves in many channels, and Mr. Casaubon, we know, had a sense of rectitude and an honorable pride in satisfying the requirements of honour, which compelled him to find other reasons for his conduct than those of jealousy and vindictiveness" (404;ch.42). So instead of the narrator giving us more analysis we have Casaubon's explicit indirect discourse where he performs a psychological and ethical balancing act between his better self and the increasingly hostile future he wants to leave behind for Dorothea through his will.This is another utterance in quotation marks:

> In marrying Dorothea Brooke I had to care for her wellbeing in case of my death. But wellbeing is not to be secured by ample, independent possession of property; on the contrary, occasions might arise in which such possession might expose her to the more danger. She is ready prey to any man who knows how to play adroitly either on her affectionate ardour or her Quixotic enthusiasm;

> and a man stands by with that very intention in his mind - a man with no other principle than transient caprice, . . . He thinks of an easy conquest and of entering my nest. . . Such a marriage would be fatal to Dorothea. Has he ever persisted in anything except from contradiction? In knowledge he has always tried to be showy at small cost. In religion he could be, as long as it suited him, the facile echo of Dorothea's vagaries. When was sciolism ever dissociated from laxity? (405;ch.42)

Just as Will had perceived himself as a hero rescuing Dorothea, Casaubon argues away the petty jealous motive of his last testament to assume the position of Dorothea's saviour from the wiles of a greedy lover. This mode of presenting a character furthers the dialogue between the narrator and the narratee, for the narrator hopes to gain sympathy for the most unattractive character by presenting the inner workings of his mind and inviting the narratee to read it doubly -- in quotation marks.

In this novel, with the dialogic use that multi-perspectivism is put to, the narrator simultaneously represents and interprets. He represents other characters (such as Will Ladislaw) in the process of interpreting other characters (such as Casaubon). The narratee is then asked to interpret both characters based on all of these internal

textual interpretations. As David Carroll points out in, " the act of interpretation. . . affects what it interprets" (241). Thus in interpreting Casaubon's actions with regards to Dorothea in the high-pitched melodramatic tone of comedy, Will helps the narratee interpret Will's own unacknowledged feelings for Dorothea.

As pointed out earlier, the novel wants to connect some of the major myths of western society with the specific moment of the Reform Movement. One such myth is that of the Puritan self-made man who is in constant dialogue with his Maker. In the figure of Bulstrode the banker this myth is problematised by the dubious past out of which he has re-made himself. In this character, the narratee is shown the intertwining of the public expectations and the private re-construction of this man. Carroll points out ,"He is a classic version of the Puritan type defined by Max Weber as the coalescence of the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism: the'duty to attain certainty of one's own election and justification in the daily struggle of life' must come from intense worldly activity in one's calling and the assurances of salvation this provides" (254).

The dialogic development shown within the character is curiously not between his Puritan conscience and the reality of his past, but between the private working out of salvation and the possibility of a public negation of it. Bulstrode has explained away his questionable acts in the

past by immersing himself in the important good works he is involved in which are enabled by his ill-gotten wealth in his re-constructed life in Middlemarch. Self-deception is taken to such an extent that it affirms the shady past in the name of a brilliant present: "For the egoism which enters into our theories does not affect their sincerity; rather, the more our egoism is satisfied, the more robust is our belief" (499-500;ch.53).

While the internal dialogue within Bulstrode is resolved through his hypocrisy, the relationship between his past private life and his present public one makes him vulnerable. It is the one possibility where an open dialogue would destroy the dubious resolution of the internal dialogue between his egoism and his Puritan beliefs. Once again the narrator hopes to alert the narratee to a dialogic element in a human being. He consistently shows this dialogic nature to be the key to interpreting characters in as comprehensive a way as possible.

> In his closest meditations the life-long habit of Mr. Bulstrode's mind clad his most egoistic terrors in doctrinal references to superhuman ends. But even while we are talking and meditating about the earth's orbit and the solar system, what we feel and adjust our movements to is the stable earth and the changing day. And now within all the automatic succession of theoretic phrases --

> distinct and inmost as the shiver and the ache of oncoming fever when we are discussing abstract pain -- was the forecast of disgrace in the presence of his neighbours and of his own wife. For the pain, as well as the public estimate of disgrace, depends on the amount of previous profession. To men who only aim at escaping felony, nothing short of the prisoner's dock is disgrace. But Mr. Bulstrode had aimed at being an eminent Christian (504;ch.53)

The narrator is to see but to sympathize with Bulstrode's effort to stop any dialogue between the past and the present because any such dialogue would reveal both to the world outside and to himself the falsity of his re-creation of himself. But the past does catch up on his present world in the shape of Raffles. And Bulstrode's public dialogue ceases as is emphasized when Caleb Garth refuses to manage Bulstrode's property. But the narratee is not to lose sympathy and his role is modelled by Bulstrode's wife who begins with silent questioning and disapproval, but finally turns to sympathy and forgiveness in a remarkable scene of unspoken confession and possible repentance.

The final effect of the narrator's presentation of dialogue both within the characters' development and between the narratee and the narrator might suggest George Eliot's sceptical mind in operation since so many of the characters

are defeated in one way or another. This is the position taken by J.Hillis Miller in "Optic and Semiotic in Middlemarch" where he argues that the novel both implies an omniscient narrator and deconstructs the very nature of omniscience by demonstrating that all seeing is interpretation, so that there can be no objective stance (Buckley 125-45). However, George Eliot does not give in to complete skepticism. Even when the narrator shows the protagonists to be flawed he does not undermine the whole character, but only emphasizes the impossibility of attaining all knowledge. At the same time he makes sure that the narratee understands and protects those forms of knowledge which produce beneficial effects from misinterpretation. There is a more positive sense at the end of the novel than Miller's deconstructionist reading of it allows. There are positive possibilities for Dorothea, for example, in this remarkable Pisgah sight towards the end of the novel:

> She opened her curtains, and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond, outside the entrance gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving -- perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and

> the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining (777;ch.80).

Here Dorothea sympathizes with the world outside, a gesture that is emblematic of her action in the novel when she reaches out voluntarily to Rosamond.

The narrator ultimately does not give this experience of wide empathy to many of the characters but he does make sure that the narratee is prepared to accept those who are privileged enough to live an enlarged and sympathetically fulfilling life in the novel. The importance of a broad sympathetic perspective cannot be over-emphasized in the works of George Eliot. All of the positive characters are given an opportunity either to demonstrate their ability to be sympathetic and generous or to be able to receive and appreciate sympathy when it is offered to them. In fact, in the next novels under discussion (Romola and Daniel Deronda), the characters are divided into those who are open to sympathy and those who are not. These novels also experiment with a more democratically inclined narrator who delegates his functions to the protagonists so much so that Daniel Deronda in the latter of the two novels emerges as an alter ego for the narrator because of his ability

sympathetically to enter into other people's situations. The narrator has prepared the narratee and the actual reader well in Middlemarch so that even without his obtrusive presence in the last novel the reader/narratee will not lose his bearings.

ENDNOTE

1. Mill in his essay "On Representative Government" preferred intellectual superiority to be the norm of representation in parliament. This would counter the twin evils of universal suffrage, "that of too low a standard of political intelligence, and that of class legislation" (281). The state presents a norm before its citizens and therefore it should be constituted not through descriptive and numerical representation, but through the criteria of mental and intellectual superiority. In his words:

> The national institutions should place all things that they are concerned with, before the mind of the citizen in the light in which it is good that he should regard them: and as it is for his good that he should think that every one is entitled to some influence, but the better and wiser to more than others, it is important that this conviction should be professed by the State, and embodied in the national institutions (283).

The democratic perception that larger numbers provide more validation to facts of state does not necessarily work for Mill and Arnold. Rather, value is perceived in elitist terms as belonging to a select few whose duty it is to attend to matters of state. Mill and Arnold believe that electoral politics tries to bridge the gap between a public value system governed by monetary values and a private value system of personal ethics and well-being. Ideally, universal suffrage, far from reflecting the

actual world, would because of the criterion of representation, reflect the world of the morally superior and intelligent and hopefully the more disinterested.

Arnold in Culture and Anarchy also reiterates that something beyond the mere representation of the largest number and classes is necessary because, "By our every-day selves, however, we are separate, personal, at war; we are only safe from one another's tyranny when no one has any power; and this safety, in its turn, cannot save us from anarchy. And when, therefore, anarchy presents itself [reference to the Hyde Park riots in the 1860s] as a danger to us, we know not where to turn (95). His solution is to bring to the political forefront those exceptional minds that possess the necessary culture to speak beyond their class for humanity in general,"Therefore, when we speak of ourselves as divided into Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, we must be understood always to imply that within each of these classes there are a certain number of *aliens*, if we may so call them,--persons who are mainly led, not by theor class spirit, but by a general *humane* spirit, by the love of human perfection" (109).

Chapter 4: Romola and Daniel Deronda - Exit of the Narratee

In Romola (1863) George Eliot continues her concern with the individual in relation to his environment, and also holds to her overall thesis of the past permeating the present and being made real through individual apprehension of history and its lessons. While thematically there is continuity with the previous novels, in terms of narrative strategy an important development in this and the last novel (Daniel Deronda, 1876) is the disappearance of the dialogic structure. The narrator in these two novels has no opposition. The narratee is conspicuously absent. The actual reader meets with very few passages where the narrator steps out of the action of the novel to talk about the implications of the theme by anticipating the narratee's opposition.

Middlemarch chronologically comes between these two novels and typifies the dialogic structure as it develops the issues of perspectivism and the relationship of the individual to the community through the oppositional narrator-narratee relationship. But before Eliot completed the working out of the dialogic style in Middlemarch, she had spent years with Romola where she experimented with dialogue between the different narratives rather than between the narrator and narratee.

In Romola there is a powerful discussion of individual identity and its relationship to the environment. At the

most basic yet most philosophic level, this debate is expressed in Romola's thoughts: "The law was sacred. Yes, but rebellion might be sacred too. It flashed upon her mind that the problem before her was essentially the same as that which had lain before Savonarola - the problem where the sacredness of obedience ended, and where the sacredness of rebellion began" (Romola 255;ch.56). This is the crux of the thematic conflict in this novel.

From the writer's perspective this issue can be distanced by placing the characters within a known historical era of transition, where the issue of identity and environment were alive, thought about, and to the extent that the era is in the past now, been resolved. In other words, for the first time the narrator-as-historian begins to talk about a time and place that his narratee has not experienced. Therefore, the emphasis shifts from preparing the narratee for the perfect mind-set to receive the world views expressed within the nineteenth century to a situation different, yet similar where the problem can be shown to have worked itself out. Sally Shuttleworth points out one inevitable result of this change of locale and time-period, "George Eliot drops the narrator's persona, and the intimacy of the moral generalisations which assume continuity between the lives of the narrator and reader" (96-97). The narrator has taken his readers (narratees, ideal readers, and real readers) to a historical period

outside of their own so there is no need to mediate the present with the past because there is no present, just the past. He does not need to lead his readers to the plot through memory, nor to explain the relationship with the past. Thus a unified voice both at the end of delivery and at reception is possible in this novel.

Having said that, in the rest of this chapter I would like to suggest certain alternate routes through which opposition plays a part within the narrative structure of Romola. The narrator tells several narratives in parallel strands, a technique that the author perfects in Middlemarch. In Romola there are the three major narratives, those of Tito Melema, Savonarola, and Romola. While the novel opens with the arrival of Tito in Florence, and takes a picaresque form in the career of the free-spirited and amoral Greek, two other narratives begin to develop simultaneously, though not as obtrusively. These are the stories of Romola and , carrying the burden of the historical context of the novel, that of Savonarola. The narrator's major task in the novel is to develop these three narratives in close conjunction with each other, revealing the points of convergence where circumstance and/or theme bring one into a contiguous position to the other. The three narratives with their individual drives set up metaphoric dialogues with each other and are shown, at important junctures in the novel, to be openly in conflict with each

other. It is this kind of narrative opposition that the novel posits instead of a narrator-narratee dialogue of opposition.

The opening of the novel with Tito Melema gives his plot a kind of pre-eminence in the larger scheme of things that the thematic intentions of the novel do not bear out. We begin to read the novel as concerning a free-spirited, morally-unencumbered Tito who can lay out his master-plot of deception, betrayal of his past and origin, and manipulation of the present. Tito is really the classic smooth-faced villain. There are two sides to his appearance, an external and an internal. Depending on the positioning of characters, some are allowed a glimpse of the real Tito while most get to see only the outside. Romola is among the latter.

The two narratives, Romola and Tito's, are brought together under the aegis of a romance, that of the knight rescuing the captive princess :

> Tito's bright face showed its rich-tinted beauty without any rivalry of colour above his black sajo or tunic reaching to the knees. It seemed like a wreath of spring, dropped suddenly in Romola's young but wintry life, which had inherited nothing but memories -- memories of a dead mother, of a lost brother, of a blind father's happier time - memories of a far-off light, love, and beauty, that lay embedded in dark mines of books, and

> could hardly give out their brightness again until they were kindled for her by the torch of some known joy (59;ch.6).

The narrator seems to conspire with Tito in letting Romola perceive him in exactly the way Tito wishes to show himself. Joseph Wiesenfarth has pointed out that there are close connections between the Dionysus myth and the figure of Tito as presented in the novel[1]. The narrator lays these connections out when he shows Romola reacting to Tito: "Romola's astonishment could hardly have been greater if the stranger had worn a panther-skin and carried a thyrsis" (59;ch.6). There are two principal characteristics of the Dionysus/Bacchic figure that the narrator projects through the narrative of Tito: self-love and destruction. The first leads to situations where Tito makes choices based on the principle of least confrontation with truth. This prompts him to deny his past allegiances, even to commit unnecessary and incidental cruelty which leads to destruction of lives, relationships, bonds of trust, and basic humanity[2].

In Tito's narrative, at points where the narrator tries to explain the motives for a particularly heinous offence, a reluctance to engage in dialogue emerges as the sole reason for Tito's denial of his father or some such other serious crime. For example, as an explanation for why Tito chose not to recognize Baldassare Calvo when he met him on the streets of Florence trying to escape, the narrator

offers: "He had simply chosen to make life easy to himself - to carry his human lot, if possible, in such way that it should pinch him nowhere; and the choice had, at various times, landed him in unexpected positions". Tito is shown to debate what the other option would have been : "If he had not uttered those decisive words - 'He is a madman' - if he could have summoned up the state of mind, the courage, necessary for avowing his recognition of Baldassare, would not the risk have been less?" And the failure to confront his father with the truth pushes him on to further deceptions as well as fears of revenge from a father wronged. In explanation, the narrator points out that the lack of habit of choosing right over wrong lies at the root of Tito's behavior: "Tito was experiencing that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil that gradually determines character" (231-232;ch.23). This comment echoes those narrator/narratee dialogues where the narrator tries to head off response to apparent villainy. Rather Tito is to be judged because he rejects the dialogic principle and stands in monologic isolation with his self-interest in opposition to every positive impulse around him.

In an earlier chapter significantly titled "A Man's Ransom" (ch.9), the narrator pointed out the early and possibly only presence of a dialogic colloquy in Tito's character. After he has sold off the gems he had in his

possession, he is about to decide to keep the money for himself instead of paying off the ransom that would get his father freedom from slavery. The contestatory element is vividly displayed by the narrator when he shows Tito debating the possibilities. On the one hand is the expectation of the father about his son as reflected in Tito's mind: "Tito will find me: he had but to carry our manuscripts and gems to Venice; he will have raised money, and will never rest till he finds me out". On the other hand is Tito's prevarication :

> "And yet," he said to himself, "if I were certain that Baldassare Calvo was alive, and that I could free him, by whatever exertions or perils, I would go now - now I have the money: it was useless to debate the matter before. I would go now to Bardo and Bartolommeo Scala, and tell them the whole truth." Tito did not say to himself so distinctly that if those two men had known the whole truth he was aware there would have been no alternative for him but to go in search of his benefactor, who, if alive, was the rightful owner of the gems, and whom he had always equivocally spoken of as "lost"; he did not say to himself, what he was not ignorant of, that Greeks of distinction had made sacrifices, taken voyages again and again, and sought help from crowned and mitred heads for the

> sake of freeing relatives from slavery to the Turks.. . . This was his first real colloquy with himself (104;ch.9).

Interestingly, in this passage, the "first colloquy" that Tito has with himself is full of what he does not say to himself. This proves again that he avoids confrontation even in soliloquies with himself. So even within a novel where the narrator-narratee dialogue is absent, the characters are developed on the basis of whether they think in terms of dialogue or monologue. In this particular instance, it is a strong indictment of the character and a confirmation of his egotistic concerns that he is unable to acknowledge the "other" options that would affect someone else favourably.

Gillian Beer in her analysis of Romola focuses on this aspect of Tito's character," In Romola the tragedy that George Eliot analyzes with peculiar power is just the failure to confront, which is a strong temptation in marriage and which for Tito characterises his particular susceptibility to evil" (George Eliot 118). In most of the scenes between Romola and Tito where she tries to come to terms with the depth of his villainy in his betrayal of her and her father, Tito avoids confronting the issues of loyalty and fair-play as she understands them and tries instead to be overtly pleasant and to tide over the momentary conversation with some incidental closure . For instance, when Romola confronts him with the sale of her

father's library without her knowledge, the reason he gives for having done this is to avoid confrontation:

> "I am sorry to hear you speak in that spirit of blind persistence, my Romola," he said, quietly, "because it obliges me to give you pain. But I partly foresaw your opposition, and as a prompt decision was necessary, I avoided that obstacle, and decided without consulting you. The very care of a husband for his wife's interests compels him to that separate action sometimes -- even when he has such a wife as you, my Romola.". . .
> (297;ch.32)

This is the first time Romola is able to see Tito for what he is. Here too the narrator draws the contrast between her intensity and clarity and his shallow obfuscations: "Her nature, possessed with the energies of strong emotion, recoiled from this hopelessly shallow readiness which professed to appropriate the widest sympathies and had no pulse for the nearest" (296;ch.32). The breach between the two characters begins from this point. Nevertheless, their two narratives intertwine even as Romola increasingly wishes to redirect hers into any other direction than Tito's.

As a character, Romola is recognisably a precursor of Dorothea. Born into a rich and elitist family in Florence, her life is lonely and tragic from the start. She is not only an accomplished and loving daughter to Bardo, but with

the departure of her brother Dino she becomes the surrogate son to her father. However, her role as a child to Bardo is always fraught with the knowledge that even with all her concerns and good intentions, she is still not the full equivalent of a son. Bardo still mourns the loss of a son's help in the preservation of his library and learning.

With the arrival of Tito, Bardo finds a son in a more complete sense and Romola is enchanted with prospect of a life of light and pleasure as opposed to dark duties and impossible loyalties. Like everyone who meets Tito and is entranced by the beauty of the Greek, Romola too is seduced by the apparent clarity of Tito's classical learning and philosophy of life. On the one hand she has an option of a life with Tito with its carefree appropriation of the moment divorced from past loyalties and future responsibilities. On the other hand there are Dino's and ultimately Savonarola's perspectives that she finds herself drawn to -- an intense and at times extreme sensitivity to the world outside the self and the individual's responsibility to it. Romola's narrative develops out of a sustained interaction and colloquy between these perspectives [3].

As an observer of both these principles or ways of life, Romola has a breadth of vision that both Savonarola and Tito seem to lack. Each of these male figures is so rapt in his individual perspective that he conceives a world curiously narrow and unyielding to any "other" possibility.

Tito believes that "the sentiment of society" is "a mere tangle of anomalous traditions and opinions, which no wise man would take as a guide, except so far as his own comfort was concerned" (176;ch.6). This principle makes him strip all value from any interaction with society, and while it grants him a certain easy access to every element in the society, it makes him an impossibly amoral character with no ties to any larger purpose other than instant gratification or survival of self. Savonarola is completely absorbed in the idea of negating the self to a higher purpose and perceiving signs and significations of a higher moral nature in every external event. Towards the end of the novel, Savonarola also embodies Eliot's reading of "faith" as interpreted by Feuerbach in The Essence of Christianity :

> Thus faith is essentially a spirit of partisanship. He who is not for Christ is against him. Faith knows only friends or enemies, it understands no neutrality; it is preoccupied with itself. Faith is essentially intolerant; essentially, because with faith is always associated the illusion that its cause is the cause of God, its honour his honour (qtd.in Smith,Anne 90).

Romola is able to perceive Savonarola's narrow perspective when she pleads with him to intervene on behalf of her god-father and he refuses because it is not in the interest of

the Christian reformist movement that he has initiated.

The perspective that Romola has on both of these men in her interaction with them results in an overall assimilative perspective that is more holistic than either of these two influences. She is able to perceive the limitations of Tito after he sells off Bardo's library, so much so that, we are told,"Romola's mind had been rushing with an impetuous current towards this act, for which she was preparing: the act of quitting a husband who had disappointed all her trust, the act of breaking an outward tie that no longer represented the inward bond of love" (332;ch.36). The narrator is careful to delineate the differences between a dialogic decision and a monologic one, however; in the present instance the narrator makes it clear that this act is the first reaction to betrayal and not really the result of a true dialogue between varied options:

> She was not acting after any precedent, or obeying any adopted maxims. The grand severity of the stoical philosophy in which her father had taken care to instruct her, was familiar enough to her ears and lips, and its lofty spirit had raised certain echoes within her; but she had never used it, never needed it as a rule of life. She had endured and forborne because she loved: maxims which told her to feel less, and not to cling close lest the onward course of great Nature

> should jar her, had been as powerless on her tenderness as they had been on her father's yearning for just fame. . . . She was going to solve the problem in a way that seemed to her very simple. Her mind had never yet bowed to any obligation apart from personal love and reverence; she had no keen sense of any other human relations, and all she had to obey now was the instinct to sever herself from the man she loved no longer (333;ch.36).

It is not that she is a stoic who has consciously evaluated her decision to stand back from the relationship with Tito. Rather she is oscillating between a close relationship and a detached one and putting as much distance between herself and Tito as possible. It is the function of Savonarola's narrative to make Romola conscious of the elements of a dialogue which will give her options as to a way out.

The two narratives of Romola and Savonarola converge in the chapter significantly titled "An Arresting Voice" (ch.40). This chapter comes after the brutal chapter in which Tito's father fails to recover from amnesia enough to prove his son's villainy and is condemned and betrayed into bondage once again. Even as the reader is trying to recover from this motiveless malignity of Tito Melema towards his parent, the next chapter shows Savonarola for the first time assuming a personal mentoring role for Romola by stopping

her flight from Tito and giving her reasons to return to Florence and her duties as a daughter of the city. One obvious contrast is set up between the pagan egotism of Tito and the all-encompassing submersion of the self to a larger entity that Savonarola stands for. Her lesson is based on the paradox that freedom for Romola lies in obedience rather than flight.

This obedience is characterized clearly by Savonarola as awareness of a commitment to the world outside:

> 'And do you own no tie but that of a child to her father in the flesh? Your life has been spent in blindness, my daughter. You have lived with those who sit on a hill aloof, and look down on the life of their fellow-men. . . . If your own people are wearing a yoke, will you slip from under it, instead of struggling with them to lighten it? . . . . The servants of God are struggling after a law of justice, peace, and charity, that the hundred thousand citizens among whom you were born may be governed righteously; but you think no more of this than if you were a bird, that may spread its wings and fly whither it will in search of food to its liking (372;ch.40).

Savonarola's words to Romola represent the author George Eliot's own concept of morality as commitment to a larger cause. The character who adopts this after debating it with

other options, as Romola does, obviously will occupy a central position in the narrative. Savonarola teaches renunciation as a habit of mind within a larger commitment and so one never is without anchor when personal relationships change. This submersion of self is the basis of law as Savonarola understands it. The absence of this submersion explains the lack of law in Tito's career:

> "What! you say your love for your father no longer tells you to stay in Florence? Then, since that tie is snapped, you are without law, without religion: you are no better than a beast of the field when she is robbed of her young. If the yearning of a fleshly love is gone, you are without love, without obligation. . . . My daughter, every bond of your life is a debt: the right lies in the payment of that debt; it can lie nowhere else" (373-374;ch.40).

Romola, Savonarola reminds her, is about to commit the same crime that Tito has committed, that of divorcing gratification from responsibility.

Romola herself is able to recognise this result from her proposed action and for the first time acknowledges the possibility of a credible faith: "The chill doubts all melted away; she was subdued by the sense of something unspeakably great to which she was being called by a strong being who roused a new strength within herself" (376;ch.40).

Her role in the novel from this point onwards becomes similar to the Saint Theresa that Eliot posited as an impossibility for Dorothea in Middlemarch.

Her role as a madonna (the narrator identifies Romola explicitly as a madonna figure in the chapter titles,"The Unseen Madonna" and "The Visible Madonna")at first revolves around her godfather. She, through her new vision, is able to see him (and through him her father) in a new positive light. When Savonarola becomes caught in the internal power politics of Florence and is forced politically to acquiesce in the execution of Romola's godfather, she is able to remember the positives he and her father embodied. At this point in the novel she is also able to have a more assimilative view than Savonarola's:

> Her heart was recoiling from a right allied to so much narrowness; a right apparently entailing that hard systematic judgement of men which measures them by assents and denials quite superficial to the manhood within him. Her mind rushed back with a new attraction towards the strong worldly sense, the dignified prudence, the untheoretic virtues of her godfather, who was to be treated as a sort of Agag because he held that a more restricted form of government was better than the Great Council, and because he would not pretend to forget old ties to the banished family. . . . Her affection

> and respect were clinging with new tenacity to her godfather, and with him to those memories of her father which were in the same opposition to the division of men into sheep and goats by the easy mark of some political or religious symbol (459;ch.52).

There is a strong dialogic impulse in this chapter of Romola's narrative and the quote above points out one of its conclusions. If Romola is symbolically at the juncture of Renaissance/Reformation, pagan/Christian, then this is a sincere reappraisal of the best of pagan passivity that resists unnecessary categories. The fact that her godfather is a victim of such categorising makes the point real for Romola. This chapter also describes how Savonarola, caught up in this intensely divisive world, begins to give in to the corruptions of politics : " It followed that the spirit of contention and self-vindication pierced more and more conspicuously in his sermons; that he was urged to meet the popular demands not only by increased insistence and detail concerning visions and private revelations, but by a tone of defiant confidence against objectors. . . " (455;ch.52). The narrator points out that this crisis in the narrative of Savonarola constitutes one in Romola's narrative too. Her allegiances are divided, her perspectives take in both the evils and positives of each side, and she is torn:" In the Duomo she felt herself sharing in a passionate conflict

which had wider relations than any enclosed within the walls of Florence" (454;ch.52).

In a remarkable chapter, called "Pleading", the narrator brings the two characters, Savonarola and Romola, into opposition much in the way the author had with Adam and Rev Irwine in Adam Bede and Tom and Maggie in The Mill on the Floss. The Madonna here pleads for the life of her godfather using the same conceptual arguments Savonarola had given her of a wider responsibility than the individual egotistic demands[4]. Savonarola fails to respond to this. The narrator points out his lack of interest in entering into dialogue with Romola:"Savonarola had that readily roused resentment towards opposition, hardly separable from a power-loving and powerful nature, accustomed to seek great ends that cast a reflected grandeur on the means by which they are sought" (506;ch.59). In another instance we are told, "It was true that Savonarola's glance at Romola had some of that hardness which is caused by an egoistic prepossession. He divined that the interview she had sought was to turn on the fate of the conspirators, a subject on which he had already had to quell inner voices that might become loud again when encouraged from without"(502;ch.59). Just as Tito is unable to acknowledge the "other" even in his colloqies with himself, Savonarola suppresses dialogic impulses that arise both within himself and with Romola.

If this debate between them is seen in terms of Antigone-Creon as Eliot outlines in one of her famous essays, then it is Antigone-Romola who is in the right because the dialogic impulse is truly operative within her and not within Creon-Savonarola. The argument that Savonarola had made earlier, namely, that the ego has to be submerged in the larger cause of the communal, is reversed with equal reason by Romola, that is, that the individual needs to be acknowledged within the communal, otherwise the community is compromised. After the debate fails, and Romola is unable to persuade Savonarola into clemency, Cennini foresees how the execution of her godfather will raise "the old Bardi blood" in Romola. So it does: "Romola was feeling the full force of that sympathy with the individual lot that is continually opposing itself to the formulae by which actions and parties are judged" (513;ch.60). The debate is between Romola's own acquiescence to the principle of renunciation which here stands in stark opposition to the right of the individual not to be forced into artificial distinctions made by the political community.

In her article, "Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure", Susan Winnett uses psychonalytic and structural criticism to point out how the different narrative strands in Romola bear on each other. Her major contention in this essay is "the novel's own resistance to its pleasure principle, for what Brooks would

call its narrative desire and what the title indicates as its narrative interest turn out to occupy different and antagonistic trajectories" (512). In other words, the male narrative impulses that the narratives of Tito and Savonarola develop seem to dominate and drive Romola's narrative. It is the challenge of the novel to have Romola's narrative emerge as dominant by carving out its own trajectory even though the terms are provided by Tito's and Savonarola's narratives. Whatever the opposing principles these two men seem to uphold, the narrative reveals how both fail to respond in dialogic terms, while Romola, in her interaction with them, practises the dialogic mode of thinking. Her later narrative seems to border on the romantic and idealised legend of a saviour and a madonna partly because, in the world of male monologic discourse, she has been unable to express herself in fulfilling ways. A point of impasse was reached towards the end of the novel and the only course for her narrative was to embark on a different route, breaking the male mould of narratives altogether. By reacting in oppositional response to the two male narratives, Romola's narrative is able to develop into a new narrative that carries the novel's thematic burden.

The issue of Romola's narrative as separate from the male narratives is developed throughout the novel right from the beginning when we first see Romola as a reader involved in assisting her blind father and translating for him.

Margaret Homans points out that women's language is perceived as a means of transmission for male narratives, whereas male narratives are direct and goal-oriented : "If for Bardo femininity means only the most minimal contribution to the transmission of texts, Romola's only aim can be to make the connection between her father and some other male scholar" (199). Homans also points out that towards the end of the novel when Romola is teaching life-lessons to Tito's son Lillo, she makes use of the "paradigmatic stories of the three men most important in her life: her father's life as a scholar, Savonarola's life as a prophet, and Tito's life as a traitor" . This illustrates how " [Romola] is the facilitator of textual transmission from one generation of men to the next. . . in her life as reader, as transmitter of stories, her desire is always displaced" (197).

While this is true to some extent, the narrative that Romola creates as a cautionary tale for Lillo stands as markedly separate from the rest of the novel which has chronicled the life of Tito from the author's perspective. In this narrative, true to her own present status of a legend or a myth, all traces of the personal are removed and we have a parable based on Tito's life:

> There was a man to whom I was very near, so that I could see a great deal of his life, who made almost every one fond of him, for he was young,

> and clever, and beautiful, and his manners to all were gentle and kind. I believe, when I first knew him, he never thought of anything cruel or base. But because he tried to slip away from everything that was unpleasant, and cared for nothing else so much as his own safety, he came at last to commit some of the basest deeds - such as make men infamous. He denied his father, and left him to misery; he betrayed every trust that was reposed in him, that he might keep himself safe and get rich and prosperous. Yet calamity overtook him (675; epilogue).

Winnett comments on this passage," We are meant, I think, to mark the discrepancies between Eliot's narrative and Romola's; we are challenged to reread the novel in the light of the lesson Romola has learned and the way she has chosen to teach it" (515). While Winnett is speaking of the structure of the novel's narrative, in terms of content too it is clear that Romola is consciously separating the content of her narratives and setting them apart, even in opposition to the male narratives generated by Tito, Savonarola, and her father, in order to delineate what she understands to be her own perspective.

While Romola explores the failure of the oppositional dialogue and its narrative consequences, in Daniel Deronda , Eliot's last novel, the narrator steps aside to let the

major characters engage in the dialogue on their own. The narrator, however, does use the relationships between characters as test cases or meta-texts to reveal the problematics of his own relationship with the narratee.

II

In Daniel Deronda the dialogic narrator/narratee gradually give way to central characters who take on the function of the narrrator by embodying negotiations between opposing impulses and principles. Their lives in effect become dialogues between opposing impulses, and the task of the narrator becomes one of bringing together these characters so that each is able to react, reinforce, oppose, or sympathize with the other. The narrator also reveals to the narratee the hidden springs of impulse within each principal character by detailing his or her personal and psychic history. In the prologue to chapter 16, for example, the novelist's conception of the narrator is laid out:

> Men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible history. The astronomer threads the darkness with strict deduction, accounting so for every visible arc in the wanderer's orbit; and the narrator of human actions, if he did his work with the same completeness, would have to thread the hidden pathways of feeling and thought which lead up to every moment of action, and to those moments of intense suffering which take the quality of action - . . .(164;ch.16)

The narrator performs this function by detailing the inner history of aspirations and disappointments that mark the two principals, Deronda and Gwendolen. This and not much else is the domain of the narrator; the other important functions that the narrator has taken in the previous novels are now handed over to principal characters. In this context, Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of the author's position in a "polyphonic" narrative are relevant.

According to Morson and Emerson, Bakhtin implies that "polyphony demands a work in which several consciousnesses meet as equals and engage in a dialogue that is in principle unfinalizable. Characters must be '*not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse*' (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics 7). The direct power to mean, which in a monologic work belongs to the author alone, belongs to several voices in a polyphonic work" (Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics 238 - 239). This shift entails a shift in the role of the narrator . In other words if "a polyphonic work is to embody dialogic truth by allowing the consciousness of a character to be truly 'someone else's consciousness' " (239) the authority of the omniscient narrator has to be curtailed and other characters have to emerge as independent sources of consciousness. In Daniel Deronda some preliminary steps in this direction are taken by the author's limiting the role of the narrator early in the novel.

Thematically this novel has a much broader view of the individual versus community issue that is a common thread in Eliot's novels. For one thing, the novel is a major essay on the Jewish question in England and Europe of the nineteeenth century. Deronda's character acts as the means by which the novelist explores a range of questions regarding the Jewish people, their aspirations, their frustrations, and their encounters with the sister religion of Christianity in nineteenth century upper-class England. This project expresses itself through multiple voices who have different notions about the relationship between individual choice and communal decision-making. As Morson and Emerson point out in their explication of Bakhtin's idea of the "polyphonic" work, "The polyphonic author, in short, necessarily plays two roles in the work: he creates a world in which many disparate points of view enter into dialogue, and, in a quite distinct role, he himself participates in that dialogue" (239). Eliot provides these "disparate views" in actual debates between the various characters. The author's own viewpoints are expressed through the central characters such as Daniel and Mordecai.

The basic impulse to pursue the Jewish theme was probably the old non-conformist roots that informed Eliot's early upbringing. She had read deeply in the Bible and hymns, the history of the Jews. Her interest in the subject was further fuelled by friends such as Charles and Caroline

Bray, Sara Sophia Hennell, and the minister John Sitree. In Charles Christian Hennell's Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity (1838) she was introduced to specific Jewish post-biblical schools of interpretation of the Old Testament as well as to Judaism, Jewish suffering and the long traditions of Jewish hopes for a return to Zion(Shalvi 47-63). Her inherent attraction to the outsider and the neglected, reinforced by the particular experiences of her youth, forms a major part of this fascination with the Jewish question.

The dialogue between the individual and the communal translates into cosmopolitanism and nationalism when the theme shifted to the relationships between a minority race and the larger majority in both The Spanish Gypsy and Daniel Deronda. George Eliot's exact attitude to these issues is difficult to chart, and critics such as Frederic Harrison who tried to pin her ideas down according to particular Positivist doctrines were understandably frustrated (Semmel 103 - 132). Comte had depicted the contemporary West as lacking the certitudes of an organic society -- such as the feudal Middle ages had possessed or as a future Positivism would restore. The present was a period of transition in which nothing was sure and men faced a multitude of choices all apparently valid. This could lead to profound inner struggle and in national political terms to anarchy and revolution. What became attractive in looking back might be

life in a well-ordered, fifteenth-century organic society, whether founded on a Spanish , or a Gypsy, or a Jewish national base.

While in The Spanish Gypsy Fedalma's decision to abandon individual desire and commitment in favor of the communal allegiance to her father and her nation seems unnatural in its suppression of an innate individualistic impulse, Eliot made the issue more complex in Daniel Deronda.

Eliot, while working on Daniel Deronda, wanted to modify an insistence on race and instead to emphasize the individual. In a letter to John Sibree written in 1848, the author had strongly objected to Disraeli's insistence in Tancred that Europe owed her commerce, arts, and religion to the Jews: "My gentile nature kicks most resolutely against any assumption of superiority in the Jews" (Haight 1:246). She does acknowledge however that it is possible for particular races to assume important roles that benefit the common mind of humanity. And it is in this capacity that she perceives Jews in Daniel Deronda: "For Eliot, I suggest, Jews came to represent conscience, moral judges who might on occasion be unpleasantly censorious: if the Gypsy and the Christian were the id, the Jew was the superego" (Semmel 121).

The dialogue that emerges from this conception of Jews and Judaism in this last novel is two-fold. At the centre of

the novel lie the dialogues between Mordecai, Deronda , and other members of the Jewish and Christian communities which focus on the Hegelian discussion of what will keep Judaism alive, religion or politics. By "religion" is meant the knowledge of God and the maintenance of laws which safeguard ethical conduct. Israel, the political and national state, is the factual embodiment of the religious monotheistic idea. The question is, can the Jew remain fulfilled with the conception of his God as supreme, or is the achievement of political sovereignty necessary to the realization of this end? In exile, if the Judaic spirit is a cohesive force against the pressure towards the disintegration of the population amongst the Gentiles, what are the ramifications for a European nationalism which has housed the exiles for thousands of years? More importantly, what are the implications for an as-yet unknowing Jewish hero who has been brought up as a Gentile?

The second dialogue that develops out of Eliot's conception of Judaism particularly as perceived in the Kabbalah is based on the idea of the transmigration of the soul. This is depicted in the personal relationship between Deronda and Mordecai and the idea of one soul needing another which reverberates throughout the novel's character relationships: in Gwendolen's need for Deronda, as well as in the peculiar character of Deronda who is so sympathetic to the needs and plights of others that he almost loses a

sense of self. Eliot examines this idea of soul needing soul closely through the coalescence of the narrator and Deronda and in the correspondence between the dialogue of Deronda-Gwendolen and that of the narrator and narratee relationship in the earlier novels.

Chapters 41, 42, 43 are dialogic in an obtrusive way in that the Judaic issues of the novel begin to get sorted out through the different spokesmen or "philosophers" at the club Mordecai takes Deronda to. These gentiles and Jews are representative of various attitudes about the Jewish question and as they present their ideas, Mordecai responds to each with his own version of the Jewish solution. His idea seems to unify the Positivist notion of an organic nation of Jews with an individualistic sense of purpose that is unique to the Jews. Deronda is at the receiving end of these dialogues, which for the most part are his first exposure to the Jewish issues as perceived by Mordecai. One might say that in these chapters Mordecai and his fellow debaters take on the task of the narrator and Deronda becomes the narratee, one who is almost convinced of the veracity of Mordecai's sense of purpose, but doubts how he himself will figure in this ambitious plan of Jewish nation-building since he thinks himself a non-Jew.

The club's members -- four Jews, a Scotsman, an Irishman, and three Englishmen -- are discussing the law of progress in terms made familiar by H. T. Buckle's then well-

known History Of Civilization (1857). Pash, a Jewish watchmaker, scoffs at the reactionary idea of nationality that he finds gaining influence. He believes the feeling of nationality to be dying an inevitable death, but Deronda is convinced that the sentiment might again "revive into strong life". Deronda goes on to say that "Nations have revived. We may live to see a great outburst of force in the Arabs, who are being inspired with a new zeal" (525;ch.42).

In response to the English copying-clerk Lilly, who merges the idea of progress with that of the laws of development, as Buckle had in his work, Deronda denies the equation that change necessarily means progress; further, he rejects the idea of fatality that haunted Buckle's work in favor of a role for free will:

> There will still remain the degrees of inevitableness in relation to our own will and acts, and the degrees of wisdom in hastening or retarding; there will still remain the danger of mistaking tendency which should be resisted for an inevitable law that we must adjust ourselves to, - which seems to me as bad a superstition or false god as any that has been set up without the ceremonies of philosophising (526;ch.42).

Deronda's ideas find inevitable support in Mordecai's, and the dialogues in these chapters help these two men to hone their sense of communion by airing ideas that both feel to

be congruous. They both want a middle path: a so-called progressive cosmopolitanism need not inevitably triumph, nor is the sense of nationality inescapably doomed; all that is needed is for men to have the will to revive a nationalistic spirit, which if done correctly, would not conflict with any cosmopolitanism.

In Mordecai's ideas about Jewish nationalism, many of the author Eliot's ideas find expression. Combining free will and the rich heritage of the past, Mordecai's ideal Jew would freely choose to take on himself the obligations of his family's and nation's inherited past. There is enough learning, and talent, and wealth "to redeem the soil" of Israel and to found a "republic where there is equality of protection"; this Jewish republic could then plant "the brightness of Western freedom amid the despotisms of the East" (535;ch.42).

The ideas on Jewish nationalism stress a combination of responsible free will and a strong and honest adherence to tradition and the bonds of the past. These are the same truths that the narrator uses to organize the other half of this novel, namely the Gwendolen Harleth story. This story is introduced by the author in one of her epigraphs where she points out that Romantic love as envisaged in most ancient literature gives way to a much larger cosmic scope and has endless possibilities:

Yet all love is not such, even though potent; nay,

> this passion hath as large scope as any for allying itself with every operation of the soul: so that it shall acknowledge an effect from the imagined light of unproven firmaments, and have its scale set to the grander orbits of what hath been and shall be. (360;ch.32)

This epigraph opens the chapter which begins the development of Deronda and Gwendolen's relationship. The author signals to the reader that he should not expect a conventional romance. It is also a preview of the dialogic relationship between Daniel and Gwendolen.

The first time readers are introduced to Gwendolen, they see her through the eyes of Deronda who is a detached though curious spectator in a gambling hall where she is riding lady luck at a gambling table. The scene could not have been more emblematic of the courting of danger and exercise of free choice that mark her character. It is made clear to the readers that winning the money is unimportant to Gwendolen, though from what they are told of the finances of her family it is also clear that she could use some of her winnings to help out her mother. Instead, she plays to challenge herself by raising the stakes higher and by betting all her winnings to test the endurance of her luck as well as her courage in the face of loss. She is the author's portrayal of the ultimate egoist, detached from any context, communal or sexual.

Gwendolen exists at the spiritual level as a dialogue between two extreme possibilities: " the self is everything" and "the self is nothing". The particular situations in which she finds herself because of her failing family finances force these two sides of the dialogue to the fore in an uneasy psychomachia, and help create the complexity of her responses. For example, she gambles at Leubronn both in order to fulfill her egoistic desire to win and to retrieve some of the family fortune her mother has lost. Again, she agrees to marry Grandcourt from an impulse born from both of these extremes. On the one hand, there is the egotistic desire to be mistress of all that comes with Grandcourt's wealth and position, even though she is aware of its severely compromised moral status which her interview with Mrs Glasher has revealed. On the other hand, there is the supreme sacrifice of her happiness in agreeing to enter a loveless marriage to retrieve some of the respectability that her mother has lost from her reversal of fortune. Carroll points out that Deronda and Grandcourt seem to be in conflict with each other over the two sides of the soul of Gwendolen. In his words,"Which guiding spirit will triumph in Gwendolyn's psychomachia?This is the struggle for the soul of England that Deronda and Grandcourt are engaged in at the centre of Daniel Deronda, and the answer is to be found in the typologies the two men embody, express, and use to influence and control the heroine" (297).

In Deronda the narrator seems to envision latent energy that has the potential to infuse with morality what is negative in Gwendolen. She is herself able to recognize this quality in him, and this accounts for the unspoken understanding on her part especially that he will be there for her as a mentor and confessor. But before Deronda can come into her life in a significant way, she is redirected into the meshes of Grandcourt's life of aristocratic posturing and quiet repression.

Her courtship with Grandcourt is mainly negative . He is proud, stiff, and totally self-centered. This is, of course, why Gwendolen in her refusal to be coerced by the world finds him acceptable and draws her fatal conclusion:" (Pause,during which Gwendolen thought that a man of extremely calm, cold manners might be less disagreeable as a husband than other men, and not likely to interfere with his wife's preferences.)" (113;ch.11) Her desire to exert power makes him a desirable spouse because his apparent lack of engagement with life convinces her that he would have no demands on her. He, on the other hand, finds her attractive because of her wilfulness and her desire to be free of submission. For him an added piquancy is that he gets to subdue this power-seeking beauty: "At that moment his strongest wish was to be completely master of this creature - this piquant combination of maidenliness and mischief: that she knew things which had made her start away from him,

spurred him to triumph over that repugnance; and he was believing that he should triumph" (ch27 301). Their proposal scene seems to be based on negatives: Grandcourt offers himself by proposing to leave ("Do you command me to go?) and Gwendolen accepts him with a "no."

Paradoxically in spite of her egotistic perception of the world and perhaps because of it, Gwendolen has an extreme sensitivity to the world and to people, especially when they do not echo her consciousness. This sensitivity opens up a sense of the unknown, which in her half-awakened conscience she experiences as spiritual terror. One striking example of this is when she is startled by the picture of the dead face during her acting of charades. Further because of her inner sensitivity, she is able to respond to Deronda's judgmental gaze. She establishes an unspoken communion with him at first which, through the course of the novel, develops into an absolutely necessary dialogue. This dialogue is about her perception of herself in the wake of her decisions, especially her decision to marry Grandcourt in spite of Mrs Glasher's claims on her. The dialogue ends with the drowning of Grandcourt which she thinks she has actively willed. The despair and self-hate that follow from these decisions lead her to question her relationship with the world around her and her anchorless moral position. Deronda's end of the dialogue consists mainly of a restorative concern that helps Gwendolen to regain her moral

bearings and brings her back from the brink of despair. He is consistent in judging her when she takes dubious decisions; he is also consistent in restoring her sense of moral ethics when she feels she has completely given them up.

After she is married to Grandcourt, her relationship with her husband is marked, as their courtship was, by a lack of dialogue. In fact, her principal aim from the first day of marriage is to conceal from her husband the extent to which she knows about his relationship with Mrs Glasher. She wants also to conceal the promise she had not kept to Mrs Glasher when she married Grandcourt. But with Deronda she finds an outlet which helps her to confess and then examine the repurcussions of the decisions. Dialogue between Gwendolen and Deronda works here as a source of strength for her; and he on the other hand uses the dialogue to give himself confidence to minimize personal uncertainties of birth and heritage in order to determine his goal in life. His side of the dialogue, paradoxically, leads him away from Gwendolen.

There is something that makes Gwendolen to solicit Deronda's opinion on her gambling whether at roulette or with her own life. In one of their earliest encounters her use of these dialogues is made clear:

> Deronda ended by going to the end of the small table, at right angles to Gwendolen's position,

> but before he could speak she had turned on him no smile, but such an appealing look of sadness, so utterly different from the chill effort of her recognition at table, that his speech was checked. For what was an appreciable space of time to both, though the observation of others could not have measured it, they looked at each other -- she seeming to take the deep rest of confession, he with an answering depth of sympathy that neutralised other feelings. (411;ch.35).

The two seem to create a space that is their own independent of any conventionally defined relationship. The need for such a space is felt urgently on the part of Gwendolen because of the claustrophobic relationship she is forced into in her marriage with Grandcourt. For her these dialogic spaces with Deronda are a rest from the fevered pitch of constantly keeping up with her pretentious marriage and the consistent domination of her husband. These dialogues are also confessional for Gwendolen. These spaces with Deronda allow her to examine the actions that result from either her wilfulness or her circumstances -- being poor and ambitious simultaneously. In making these confessions to Deronda she forces herself to confront the implications of her actions.

But because dialogue implies a dual conversation, what does Deronda get out of them? First of all, he can act

rather than observe. Secondly, his role as a participant in the dialogue prepares him to understand the narrative his biological mother tells him of her life and its choices. There is a similarity between the narratives of Gwendolen and the princess, Deronda's mother. The one is a preparation for the other, and saves him from being totally judgmental of both. He is in anguish at his mother's betrayal of his Zionist past as well as her abandonment of all maternal instincts towards him, but his role as Gwendolen's confessor helps him to understand these "unnatural" and egotistic decisions of the princess. The narrator at the end of chapter 35 intervenes, unusually, to point out the implications of this dialogic space for both Deronda and Gwendolen:

> It is one of the secrets in that change of mental poise which has been fitly named conversion, that to many among us neither heaven nor earth has any revelation till some personality touches theirs with a peculiar influence, subduing them into receptiveness. . . Deronda had lit up her attention with a sense of novelty: not by words only, but by imagined facts, his influence had entered into the current of that self-suspicion and self-blame which awakens a new consciousness. . . . Without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, her feelings had turned this man, only a

> few years older than herself, into a priest; . . . But the coercion is often stronger on the one who takes the reverence. Those who trust us educate us. And perhaps in that ideal consecration of Gwendolen's, some education was being prepared for Deronda (430;ch.35).

What was closed and solipsistic in Gwendolen is made receptive in her dialogues with Deronda. Also for her this is the beginning of spiritual introspection. The lack of ceremony in her approach to Deronda marks a level of honesty that organized religion may not have been able to offer her.

On the other hand, by appealing to his ready sympathy and responding to his words of guidance positively, Gwendolen forces a new element of complexity in Deronda's perspective on things. It is no longer possible for him to condemn her or his mother as the antithesis of what he thinks ideal in woman, namely Mirah. Deronda is isolated because his parentage is unknown. He suspects illegitimacy and abandonment which made him uneasy about the English upper classes and their women. He has been the outsider, the by-stander looking in, the observer, and in some cases the judge. Gwendolen's unstinted need for his sympathy persuades him to become a participant as well as an observer because in spite of himself he is drawn into a commitment that his all-encompassing sympathy has promised her.

If, as suggested earlier, the actual function of the narrator is taken over by Deronda in crucial parts of the novel, then the narrator-narratee relationship posited for the earlier novels seems to be simulated in the Gwendolen-Deronda relationship. The role of Deronda as a mentor resembles closely the role of the narrator in other novels in that there is a similar assumption of superiority over the "narratee" Gwendolen. As the relationship progresses, Gwendolen provides more information about her personal and spiritual life than Deronda does. She is at the giving end of information and at the receiving end of advice from him. He is willing to share her personal trials with crucial decisions, but until the absolute end he never reveals his own spiritual quest for his roots both familial and religious. In other words, it is an unequal relationship. Gwendolen puts Deronda on a pedestal and expects him to become the priest to her soul; he rises to the occasion. But for himself, the period is marked by changes outside Gwendolen: the re-discovery of a Jewish heritage, a lost mother, a lost grandfather, and a burgeoning love with Mirah. Paradoxically, in his encounter with his mother, Deronda clarifies the issues of his superiority in his dialogue with Gwendolen by attacking his mother for witholding much as he has withheld from Gwendolen:

> 'Mother, don't say that I feel myself wise. We are set in the midst of difficulties. I see no other

> way to get any clearness than by being truthful - not by keeping back facts which may - which should carry obligation within them - which should make the only guidance towards duty' (663;ch.53)

In an acute reading of the passage on Deronda's education Bodenheimer points out some of the implications of the "education" Deronda is supposed to receive through this mentoring experience with Gwendolen:

> What exactly is the education prepared for Deronda? Unlike other educations in George Eliot novels, it is never named, only experienced. A short answer might go something like this: "This is what happens when you put yourself in a position of moral superiority and wisdom and someone takes you up on it." What happens includes the horror of having to hear unwelcome confessions, the helpless frustration of seeing that wise words are useless to help another person, the acknowledgment that it is not the words and the voice but the person himself who is needed, the necessity of acting more sympathetic than one feels, and finally, the recognition that the superiority of the confessor is a form of deception, a self-witholding which allows others to make mistaken projections of their desires. This is the education through which George Eliot

> brings the ultimate value of sympathy into serious question. . . . Although George Eliot attempts to persuade us of Gwendolen's internalization of Daniel as a "standard," she is more intent on scrutinizing the contradictions of a position that resembles the one she had acquired when "George Eliot" became a person as well as a voice (259 - 260).

The authority that comes along with the role of author is fraught with contradictions in Mary Ann Evan's own consciousness as witnessed in her letters. While she has structured the role of the narrator along the lines of a wise, powerful, and sympathetic persona, in the figure of Deronda, she is able to explore some of the weaknesses of this all-powerful position. "Self-witholding" by the narrator in an effort to present a persona that the narratee wishes to see appears both in Mary Ann's letter-writing as well as her later stature as a novelist who is despite an unconventional personal life, the embodiment of Victorian moral and ethical codes.

Bodenheimer points out the unconscious power-play of a sympathetic gaze and spirit. Deronda is caught in this play both as the perpetrator and a victim. Daniel's gaze, the narrator explains, is simultaneously responsible for and unimplicated in creating Gwendolen's response: his eyes "seemed to express a special interest in every one on whom

he fixed them, and might easily help to bring on him those claims which ardently sympathetic people are often creating in the minds of those who need help. In mendicant fashion, we make the goodness of others a reason for exorbitant claims on them" (332;ch 29). There is a tension in Deronda's witholding himself and giving himself completely in the mentoring he gives to Gwendolen:

"He had never throughout his relations with Gwendolen been free from the nervous consciousness that there was something to guard against not only on her account but on his own - some precipitancy in the manifestation of impulsive feeling - some ruinous inroad of what is but momentary on the permanent chosen treasure of the heart - some spoiling of her trust, which wrought upon him now as if it had been the retreating cry of a creature snatched and carried out of his reach by swift horsemen or swifter waves, while his own strength was only a stronger sense of weakness" (621;ch.50). Deronda here walks an ethical tightrope between personal involvement in her emotionally and a dispassionate yet sincere participation in a mentorship that does not take advantage of her vulnerability. The fact that he has to examine and re-examine his relationship with Gwendolen makes his commitment to the dialogues evident; like the narrator he has to bear in mind the effect of his pontificating voice on his narratee. Thus we see here that Eliot perceives the role of

the narrator as one that involves a balance between detachment and involvement with the narratee's lot. The difficulty is not to compromise the sympathy and advice that the narrator exhibits by the vested interests of the narrator.

The dialogic structure puts Deronda at its centre not the narrator. In the first half of the novel the Jewish issues of assimilation and/or separation seem to occupy its centre with Mordecai as narrator and Daniel as narratee. But while Mordecai is not challenged as "narrator", in the second half of the novel, when Deronda assumes the role of the narrator/mentor to Gwendolen's narratee, the narrator becomes the object of scrutiny and examination. Through Deronda, Eliot examines the role of the narrator of the previous novels. But Eliot leaves us ambivalent about the omniscient narrator.

George Eliot places Deronda in positions of authority vis a vis Gwendolen, but these positions have been solicited by Daniel through his attitude, tone, and demeanour, a mixture of superiority and sympathy. There is both coercion and persuasion in them. Deronda has solicited Gwendolen's confidence: "His eyes had a peculiarity which has drawn many men into trouble; they were of a dark yet mild intensity, which seemed to express a special interest in every one on whom he fixed them, and might easily help to bring on him those claims which ardently sympathetic people are often

creating in the minds of those who need help" (332;ch.29). The author seems to be impartial as to who is victim and who is perpetrator in the exchange between Deronda and Gwendolen. While Deronda's compelling gaze has more promise than he can fulfil, Gwendolen's need makes him want to promise more and to feel guilty about this. In this simulation of the narrator-narratee relationship the author seems to suggest that the mentoring narrator is also shaped by the encounter.

Gwendolen's growth as a character is intricately linked to the extent she is able to force Deronda to fulfil his role as a confessor. One of the dangers that this exposes her to is the confusion of Deronda's person and his message. The author warned us of this danger in the previously quoted epigraph on the limits of romantic love. The most dangerous point for her is after Grandcourt dies: " She had flung herself into [Deronda's] opened arms and clung about his neck that he might carry her into safety. She identified him with the struggling regenerative process in her which had begun with his action" (771;ch.65). While the first sentence suggests romantic love, the second denies it but it shows how developed Gwendolen's conscience has become.

For his part, Deronda is trapped by his sensibility and his inability to deliver the full quota of what that sensibility promises. The narrator in his relationship with

the narratee understands this and points out the dual nature of the impulse Deronda is experiencing:"What position could have been more difficult for a man full of tenderness, yet with clear foresight? . . . He could not reconcile himself to the cruelty of apparently rejecting her dependence on him; and yet in the nearer or farther distance he saw a coming wrench, which all present strengthening of their bond would make the harder" (771-772;ch.65).

What is true of Deronda is true of the narrator too. His perspective is marked both by tenderness and the honesty necessary to admit that he cannot do all, that there has to be dis-engagement with the narratee once the narrative is over. The strange relationship between Deronda and Gwendolen defies all expectations of romantic conventions and becomes a way of understanding the narrator-narratee relationship. By putting the narrator's position into fiction through the character of Deronda Eliot makes the inadequacy of his role inevitable. The narrator cannot do everything; sympathy has limits; perspectivism does not necessarily bring happiness; dialogue does not always resolve problems. Thus in this last of the author's work there is an acknowledgment that there is a point beyond which dialogue, empathy, and perspective may not work and that point is "real life". The narrator must let the narratee go into actual life after the fictive world of the novel is over.

ENDNOTES

1."Tito, appropriately enough, breaks in on Bardo and Romola just after they have read a passage from Nonnos's *Dionysiaca*, a book that concentrates heavily on Dionysus's destructive nature -- especially his conquest of India -- and that presents him as 'an utterly detestable character.' Self-indulgence and destruction, two of Bacchus's characteristics, are gradually revealed to be Tito's as well." (153).

2.Wiesenfarth remarks on the influence of the Bacchic image in the characterisation of Tito: "Tito's gradual slide into the destructive side of the Bacchic role shows Eliot working out her doctrine of consequences: the movement from the love of one's self to the destruction of others" (155).

3.David Carroll has read this interaction in terms of the larger historical forces at play in Florence. He also places this interaction of narratives in the Victorian context of gender narratives and their interactive dynamics:

> Romola . . . has to reconcile the deities [Bacchus and Christ], the vital forces from the past reborn into the present. She must pass through and beyond metonymy, synechdoche, and metaphor - three of the four master tropes of historical reconstruction, as they have been called - to the final trope of the dialectical, and this grand, comprehensive recuperation must be experienced as a form of historical knowledge and

> development. For this purpose George Eliot deploys that characteristic Victorian version of the eternal triangle she used in 'Janet's Repentance', where the heroine is first appropriated by her mentors and then appropriates them in her turn. In this scheme of things which so preoccupied the Victorians, the heroine represents a form of wholeness which the male characters seek to appropriate, coerce, or destroy. . . Romola, too, allows herself to be appropriated - by pagan god and Christian prophet - before rebelling and moving beyond them to the future. . . She represents a form of essential being which both predates and postdates Renaissance Florence, and upon which the forces of history act to elicit and articulate what is already there (184).

This reading of Romola's character takes as the basic assumption a dialogic relationship with the other narratives of other characters representing different value systems relating society to the individual. Carroll ,in other words, supports a dialogic interpretation of the character.

4.In "Romola and the Myth of the Apocalypse" (A.Smith 83-84), Janet Gezari points out that, historically, Savonarola did not have the opportunity to influence the Bernardo verdict. This underscores Eliot's purpose to posit the oppositional dialogue between the two characters. Andrew Sanders sees a parallel between the "pleading" scene and the debate between Angelo and

Isabella in Measure for Measure (179).

CONCLUSION

George Eliot's narrator is a creation of the author's vision of a dialogic narrative between the narrator and the narratee. Most often this dialogue is conceived in oppositional terms with the narrator anticipating a narratee whose queries, comments, and presumptions need to be addressed. In fact, these oppositional terms are responsible for moving the narrative from one point to the next. At times the narratee's stance is not strong enough to be oppositional but in these cases the narratee is naive and needs to be educated on the art of critical reading and appreciation. In these terms, the narrator asserts the importance of multiple perspectives and himself practises the multiple perspective as a moral attribute and a narrative strategy dedicated to truth-telling.

At still other times, the narrator relinquishes the dialogic conversations with the narratee to distribute the thematic dialogues among specific characters who carry on the conversation. This gradually becomes the norm towards the end of the writer's career, and her last novel further begins to critique the implications of the omniscient narrator with total control over the narratee's reading of the novel. Daniel Deronda questions the validity of an all-knowing narrator through the figure closely resembling him, namely, Deronda. The Deronda-Gwendolen relationship reflects the narrator-narratee relationship at its best and weakest.

The eventual withdrawing of Deronda from the affairs of Gwendolen, as well as the unequal distribution of information and power between the two, are reflections on how problematic the relationship between the narrator and narratee can be.

As for the use of multiple perspective both as a technique of presenting characters and a theme itself, the narrator's effort to educate the naive narratee is concentrated on making the narratee more receptive to these multiple perspectives. Not only has the narratee been persuaded to develop a sensitivity to multiple perspectives, he has also been asked to evaluate characters based on whether they exhibit a multiplicity of perspectives themselves. Thus having multiple perspective is almost akin to having a superior ethical and moral vision of the world. Anything that is narrowly one-sided becomes ground for condemnation.

This ability to view events, themes, and characters from several different and even opposing perspectives is a quality that Marian Evans cultivated assiduously in her personal life and correspondence. Charles Bray wrote of Marian Evans, "She saw all sides, and there are always many, clearly and without prejudice" (75). The uniqueness of her multiplicity is that it is not merely impartial but passionate too. In other words, she does not merely report all sides as a duty, but gets so involved in them that her

heart is also in the depiction of all of the various perspectives. As a result, her narrator sees each side with the passion of a partisan. For example, the actual reader may feel that the narrator, when writing from Dorothea's viewpoint, is genuinely resentful of Casaubon; but when writing from Casaubon's, the narrator, we feel, wants the narratee to be fearful of Dorothea's effect on him. Similarly, the antagonism of equally valid claims in The Mill on the Floss is argued from both sides, as is the antagonism between Savonarola and Romola.

Rosemarie Bodenheimer's study of George Eliot's narrative practise as well as biographies such as Ruby Redinger's The Emergent Self indicate autobiographical underpinnings of the use of multiple perspectives. Thus in the characterizations of Maggie and Dorothea the author criticizes her own love of worship; in Savonarola she criticizes her own tendency towards a martyr's pride and self-love; and in Mrs Transome she criticizes her own self-hating egoism. In other words, multiple perspective is the first indication of the self-dividedness, the personal and fictional heteroglossia of George Eliot. It is a logical extension to see the narrator-narratee relationship from different perspectives as well, and this is exactly what the last novel does.

I began this dissertation with the premise of a dialogic and frequently oppositional relationship that I

posited as essential to the craft of George Eliot's novels. The communication model that I envisaged focused mainly on the two-way relationship between the narrator and the narratee. The thrust of my argument in discussing this relationship was how this dialogic relationship helped the author communicate major themes and moved the plot from the beginning to the end.

The importance of dialogue links Eliot to Bakhtin. The position of a narrator who is both involved and detached from the text is a logical extension of the dialogic communicative world expressed by Bakhtin: "In order to understand it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding - in time, in space, in culture" (qtd. in Rudnik-Smalbraak 501). The narrator in George Eliot practises this himself and also inculcates this dialogic engagement of the outsider with the object of his understanding in the narratee.

The theme of the individual in relationship with the community also marks all of the novels I have discussed. This theme is singularly appropriate for creating dialogic contexts and multiple perspectives. In Mill on the Floss the theme revolves around the choices Maggie and Tom Tulliver make between familial loyalty and personal fealty. In Adam Bede communal responsibility and personal pleasure are opposed to each other in the figures of Hetty and Dinah as

also is the realistic representation in art that the author perceives as part of her vocation as a novelist. In Middlemarch the public and the private clash in the several protagonists' lives as they negotiate between their personal aspirations and public responsibilities. In Felix Holt the question revolves around individual motives and public representation in the workings of the government. Romola is the first novel that moves to another time period to examine the validity of this opposition between individual choices and their communal responsibilities. Finally, in Daniel Deronda the protagonists experience the full extent of a life lived purely for self as opposed to that lived for altruistic purposes. In this last novel the narrator creates an alter ego in the protagonist Daniel who becomes everything that the narrator has persuaded the narratee to think of as desirable and ideal in a character and whose confessional relationships with other characters brings to the fore a discussion on the appropriate position for a narrator vis a vis others.

Thus dialogue in the Bakhtinian sense appears in the novels of George Eliot on different and simultaneous levels - between and among characters, between the narrator-narratee, between Eliot and her actual readers, and globally between the polyphonic voices that find expression in the treatment of various themes in the novels.

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