LET'S HEAR WHAT WE CAN SEE

by

NANCY R. GIBBS

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
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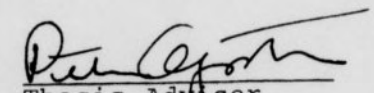
Approved by



Thesis Adviser

GIBBS, NANCY R. Let's Hear What We Can See.
(May, 1972) Directed by: Peter Agostini pp.2

In my thesis, I chose to approach a visual concept of art with a basis in sound. I have combined auditory and visual elements for the express purpose of stimulating perception through the senses of hearing and sight.

This thesis was exhibited in the Weatherspoon Gallery, University of North Carolina at Greensboro from April 30 to May 6, 1972.

Color slides representing the exhibit are on file at the University of North Carolina Library in Greensboro, North Carolina.

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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I would like to express my deep gratitude to Phillip Nelson for his invaluable advice and technical assistance throughout this project, and to Dr. John Eccles, through whose kindness I was able to obtain the recorded sound of a living brain cell from a cat's cerebellum.

Appreciation is also expressed to my thesis adviser, Peter Agostini, and to Dr. Arthur Hunkins, Walter Barker, Andrew Martin and Joseph Crivy who served as committee members.

"LET'S HEAR WHAT WE CAN SEE"[1]

I began with the investigation of sound, especially in relation to the writings of John Cage, and decided to explore the creative relationships of aural and visual perceptions possible through the use of electronic sound and light. It was my intention, through this combination of aural and visual media, to create an environment - one in which the participant would be more aware of what he saw because of what he heard.

The physical structure consists of a floating 4'x4'x20½" wood base, and sixteen colored plexiglass cubes on the top, that are internally lighted. The light in each plexiglass cube is wired to respond to high, medium and low frequencies received from the sound source.

The tape I am using is a thirty minute continuous loop cartridge. Through experimentation, various electronic sounds and combinations of sounds were selected.

I wanted the main emphasis to be on the sound, and as such, to be the controlling factor in the chromatic dispersion of the light. I did not want the sounds to be identifiable, and therefore subject to the emotional responses

[1]Edmund Carpenter, Eskimo (Toronto, Canada: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1959.)

that follow recognition. John Cage wrote in his book Silence, "Sounds should simply be themselves rather than vehicles for man made theories or expressions of human sentiments."[2]

I agree with this statement, especially in relation to my work. For this reason, I used only sound generated electronically. The generative sources were a sine/square wave audio oscillator, a Moog Theremin and an electronic organ. The sounds were recorded on Ampex 350-1 (monaural), Ampex 300-2 (stereophonic) and Ampex 800-4 (½inch 4 channel) tape recorders. The recorded sounds were augmented and re-processed by graphic equalizers, keyable expanders, pulse generators and tape recorder head feedback. These sounds were then remixed from the ½ inch tape 4-channel master to a 2-channel "Dolbyized"[3] master tape.

The visual play of light and color is, of course, the result of the aural stimulus, but both aspects, the lights and sound, share a common denominator of rhythm.

In conclusion, I chose to approach a visual concept of art with a basis in sound. I have combined auditory and visual elements for the express purpose of stimulating perception through the senses of hearing and sight.

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[2]John Cage, Silence (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1961.), p. 10.

[3]Tape processed through the Dolby system of noise reduction.

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Cage, John. Silence. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961.

Carpenter, Edmund. Eskimo. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1959.

FOUST, CHERYL ELAINE. Determinism in The Mill on the Floss. (1972) Directed by: Dr. Randolph M. Bulgin. Pp. 95.

This paper discusses George Eliot's treatment of the philosophy of determinism in her novel, The Mill on the Floss. In it I consider the impact of that philosophy on the novelist's life and her affirmation of the necessity of human moral responsibility. I discuss biographical circumstances which may have influenced the formulation of the novelist's unique qualification of the philosophy of determinism. I have investigated writers and philosophers whose works may have contributed to her understanding and evaluation of philosophical determinism as revealed in the novel.

My purpose was to discuss the manner in which determinism is implicit in the narrator's analysis of characters and events and in her use of imagery in the novel. The importance of environmental forces in personality development and behavior has been stressed.

I have concluded that the novelist's understanding of these environmental pressures compels her assertion of the need for tolerance in human relationships. While admitting that determinism limits our ability to act morally, the novelist makes us intensely aware of the need for personal responsibility in a complex world of interdependent forces and events. She

asserts the value of education and experience in understanding the limitations and responsibilities of life.

George Eliot's emphasis on morality in spite of her admission that each of us is governed by impersonal forces beyond his complete understanding and control is an important qualification of the doctrine of determinism, similar to that espoused by John Stuart Mill in his Autobiography. Her assertion of the necessity of an attempt to act morally is inconsistent with the theme of determinism in the novel. It is, however, a conscious, deliberate contradiction of that philosophy which reveals the deep feeling of the novelist that human values of morality and responsibility are more important than the cold logic of science. Thus the novelist intentionally presents a qualified view of determinism, which is contradictory in logic, but is deeply compelling in its assertion of human values. The novelist realizes that moral accountability or blame is a philosophical problem whereas human suffering is a much more immediate problem which should be averted whenever possible.

DETERMINISM IN THE MILL ON THE FLOSS

by

Cheryl Elaine Foust

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I would like to express my appreciation to my adviser, Dr. Randolph Bulgin, for his guidance in the preparation of this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Arthur Dixon and Dr. Robert Watson for their assistance. In addition, I would like to thank the university for the financial support which made my graduate study possible.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to study the influence of the doctrine of determinism on George Eliot as reflected in The Mill on the Floss. A complex qualification of that doctrine, the novel dramatizes the crucial problem of man's responsibility in a deterministic world. For most critics, this problem is not adequately resolved.

In order to understand the operation of determinism in the novel, I would like to first consider the biography of George Eliot, her own peculiar circumstances which served as antecedent causes for the novel's evolution in such a distinctive manner. We realize that the novelist herself was molded by specific natural, social and psychological forces which determined her own peculiar response to the world. I am particularly interested in the forces which contributed to the development of the author's moral bias and the concern for humanity which motivated her to renounce the most demoralizing effects of the doctrine of determinism. Also, I would like to discuss those writers and philosophers who most influenced and reinforced her thinking on the subject of determinism.

I plan to discuss character development in terms of the environmental forces which influence mental and physical re-

sponses. I want to emphasize the novelist's understanding of the complexity of mental response, which I feel makes free moral action impossible within a deterministic universe. Also, I want to discuss the manner in which the novelist portrays the characters, who are all limited by circumstances of heredity and environment or education and experience. I want to emphasize the basic humanism of the novelist, who asserts that real moral vision must be accompanied by understanding of human limitation and tolerance for others.

In my discussion of the action of the novel, I will emphasize the manner in which one unfortunate event after another is responsible for the frustration of the characters. I would like to emphasize that their tragedy results from impersonal causes rather than moral failure. Therefore, no one character can be held accountable for consequences which are beyond his control. The novelist has made this perfectly clear.

In my discussion I will also emphasize the refusal of the novelist to reconcile Maggie's renunciatory behavior with her deterministic scheme. This qualified view of determinism destroys the unity of the book. If the novelist would admit that Maggie's action is just as much a product of determinism

as every other event and act in the novel, the novel would be unified. Her praise of Maggie's act for its heroism runs counter to the theme of determinism.

I plan to discuss an article by John Hagan that illustrates this moral bias of the author which provides the crucial conflict in the novel. The novelist's understanding of the doctrine of determinism and her fear of its most depersonalizing effects are responsible for this conflict. We will see how her treatment of Maggie in an attempt to resolve this problem is undermined by the flood, which so dramatically reveals the inadequacy of her assertion of the power of the will to escape deterministic forces.

CHAPTER I

DETERMINISM AND GEORGE ELIOT'S LIFE

George Eliot's life and works were greatly influenced by the philosophic doctrine of determinism. Her belief in determinism with its "invariableness of antecedent and consequent" and her attempts to renounce its most demoralizing and depersonalizing effects provide the crucial conflict in many of her novels.[1] This conflict is most evident in The Mill on the Floss, where the heroine struggles to preserve her own sense of morality and individuality against impersonal forces of determinism.

I would like for us to first consider general biographical facts which should give us insight into the novelist's intellectual and moral development. Then we will discuss the specific writers whose works contributed to the formation of her opinions on the subject of determinism. I believe this will help us to understand the inconsistencies in the novel resulting from her moral and humanistic bias which could not accept rigid, abstract systems of thought as the sole reality.

We realize that the novelist herself was molded by specific natural, social and psychological forces which determined her own peculiar responses to the world.

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[1] George Levine, "Determinism and Responsibility in the Works of George Eliot," PMLA, 77(1962), 269-70.

Among her natural characteristics, both assets and limitations, the biographer Gordon S. Haight notes George Eliot's great intelligence and her lack of physical beauty. These two facts, in view of the social and economic expectations of her day, were definite obstacles to matrimony, which was considered the most advantageous position and certainly the most sensible, natural and moral one for a woman.[2]

After the death of her father, whom she had cared for during his illness, Marian Evans was forced to find work to support herself. She could never let herself be dependent on her brothers and sisters. Haight describes her situation, "She would be thirty in November. She had never been good looking, had none of the superficial charms that attract young men." He continues, "She was reduced to the only career open to respectable women, teaching. She had once contemplated it during the conflict with her father. At best it was a dreary life for bare subsistence. If she prepared herself with special lessons, she might find a place in some school where her irregular religious opinions would make less difficulty. Or could she earn her living as a writer?"[3]

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[2]Gordon S. Haight, George Eliot (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

[3]Haight, p. 71.

The dearth of respectable careers open to women definitely encouraged George Eliot to become a writer but, importantly, her relationship with John Chapman, editor of the Westminister Review, was another determining factor.

Haight tells us that John Chapman was a notorious philanderer and that Marian and he were probably guilty of some indiscretion. He says, "To his pervasive masculine attraction, which few women could resist, Marian's yearning for affection, the stronger for lying behind a plain exterior, made her doubly susceptible. When her father died she had had her vision of becoming earthly, sensual, devilish. Did John Chapman help her realize it?"[4]

Haight continuously emphasizes Marian's "absolute need for some one person who should be all in all to her, and to whom she should be all in all."[5] We can see this facet of her personality reflected in her works. Her own deeply passionate need to be loved and admired for herself and for her intellectual powers was responsible for her decision to live, out of wedlock, with George Henry Lewes and inspired the creation of a character such as Maggie Tulliver. The need to reconcile deep personal feelings with a sense of personal integrity and

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[4]Haight, p. 86.

[5]Ibid., p. 5.

responsibility for the welfare of others motivated her decision to live with Lewes and formed the crucial problem for the heroine, Maggie, in The Mill on the Floss.

In her personal life, George Eliot was able to justify her defiance of contemporary marriage laws by the realization that her action did not interfere with, nor was it detrimental to, the lives of others. In this particular situation, the advantages of living with the person she loved and needed, who also loved and needed her, outweighed any sense of responsibility to Lewes's wife. Although Lewes's wife had been flagrantly unfaithful to him for many years, the antiquated divorce laws prevented their divorce since Lewes had given his name to one of her illegitimate children. It was obvious that his life with Marian did not harm Lewes's legal family, particularly as he continued to provide financial support for them.

The most crucial problem for Marian was that of public opinion. Her friends and family disapproved of her actions; but as time went on, they became more tolerant. Marian Evans had faith enough in her own personal integrity to feel that her action harmed no one. She was willing to accept the inevitable blows to her pride and reputation from this decision to live with Lewes; she never regretted this decision. Their relationship, which was emotionally fulfilling, lasted until Lewes's

death. We should not minimize the effect of Lewes's support and confidence on George Eliot's creative achievement.

From her own life story, we can see that the author of The Mill on the Floss was deeply concerned with the problem of individual responsibility for one's actions. At the same time, she was extremely intellectual. Her highly analytical mind, her excellent education, as well as the uniquely sophisticated circle in which she moved--all of these contributed to her artistic achievement.

The age in which Marian Evans lived, with its extreme growth in social consciousness, its revolutionary scientific and philosophical predispositions, the growing disparity between religion and science, and its great technological advances, contributed to the unique development of her life and work.

Thus we can view the author of The Mill on the Floss as a product of her age, a compendium of the most liberal intellectual tendencies of her time. With these materials, she allowed her creative will and imagination to mold her most strong feelings and beliefs into artistic forms.

George Eliot's strong feelings about her own passionate need for love and recognition are reflected in her sympathy for the wayward passions of her characters, particularly

Maggie Tulliver, and form the basis for the strong vein of humanism in her works, a force which runs counter to her emphasis on determinism. This positive assertion of the power of the will, the passionate need of the individual to fulfill himself, is a romantic force in George Eliot's novels which would seem to counteract the depersonalizing implications of determinism. This effect has been described by Laurence Lerner in his book, The Truthtellers.[6]

We will see, however, that this need is frustrated in Maggie Tulliver who renounces her lover and is made unhappy by a society which does not understand and accept this behavior, which is actuated by her finer instincts.

Here is another example of the many ambiguities inherent in George Eliot's assertion of moral responsibility for our deeds and their consequences. Levine has isolated what he feels is George Eliot's position: "that the world is rigidly determined even in cases of human choice, but that man remains responsible for his actions." He argues perceptively that this idea "causes most of the logical difficulties, and it is the position which, I believe, George Eliot shared with Mill."[7]

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[6]Laurence Lerner, The Truthtellers (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), pp. 281-291.

[7]Levine, p. 269.

Levine tells us that George Eliot's views on determinism were influenced by her reading of the works of Auguste Comte, Charles Bray, Herbert Spencer, and John Stuart Mill. He argues that, like Mill, she came to feel that the philosophy of determinism was too depressing in its most extreme, fatalistic assumptions. She was too concerned with the progress of humanity, the sympathy of people for each other, to approve of a philosophy so negative in its treatment of the human element in life.

A good example of her emphasis on human sympathy and progress is found in Cross's collection of her letters. In an article written for the Westminister Review in 1851, which Cross includes, George Eliot wrote, concerning Mackay's "Progress of the Intellect":

> It is Mr. Mackay's faith that divine revelation is not contained exclusively or pre-eminently in the facts and inspirations of any one age or nation, but is coextensive with the history of human development, and is perpetually unfolding itself to our widened experiences and investigation, as firmament upon firmament becomes visible to us in proportion to the power and range of our exploring-instruments. The master-key to this revelation is the recognition of the presence of undeviating law in the material and moral world--of that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still perversely ignored in our social organization, our ethics, and our religion. It is this invariability of sequence which can alone give value to experience, and render education in the true sense possible....every past

> phase of human development is part of that education of the race in which we are sharing; every mistake, every absurdity, into which poor human nature has fallen, may be looked upon as an experiment of which we may reap the benefit.[8]

She goes on to say that "in this view religion and philosophy are not merely conciliated, they are identical..."[9] We will see that this view informs the novelist's understanding of the importance of education and experience in developing a sense of moral responsibility in The Mill on the Floss. This is the way that she reconciles determinism with a sense of moral responsibility. This fact has been pointed out by Levine, as has its contradictory relation to that philosophy.[10]

A letter written by George Eliot to Charles Bray on November 15, 1857, concerning her reading of his book The Philosophy of Necessity describes her agreement with and primary objection to his treatment of that philosophy:

> In the fundamental doctrine of your book (the philosophy of necessity)--that mind presents itself under the same conditions of invariableness of antecedent and consequent as all other phenomena (the only difference being that the true antecedent and consequent are proportionately difficult to discover as the phenomena are more complex)--I think you know that I agree. And every one who knows what science means must also agree with you that there can be no social science without the admission of that doctrine. I dislike extremely a passage in which you appear to

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[8]J. W. Cross, ed., George Eliot's Life (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884), I, pp. 184-5.

[9]Cross, p. 185.

[10]Levine, pp. 268-279.

> consider the disregard of individuals as a lofty condition of mind. My own experience and development deepen every day my conviction that our moral progress may be measured by the degree in which we sympathize with individual suffering and individual joy. The fact that in the scheme of things we see a constant and tremendous sacrifice of individuals, is, it seems to me, only one of the many proofs that urge upon us our total inability to find in our own natures a key to the Divine mystery.[11]

Here is a similar argument for the greater importance for human feeling over philosophical abstractions.

In a footnote to his article, Levine points out that although George Eliot's ideas reflect her knowledge of contemporary science and philosophy, "her position was probably not so much caused by them as refined by them." He defends this position by quoting a statement from George Eliot to the effect that although she had read Mill's books and profited from them, she had "no consciousness of their having made any marked epoch"[12] in her life.

I agree with Levine that George Eliot's philosophical position in regard to determinism is not very different from that of John Stuart Mill. She does, however, argue from a more humanistic standpoint.

Although Mill argues in "On the Logic of the Moral Sciences", that "the law of causality applies in the same

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[11]Cross, p. 339.

[12]Levine, p. 270.

strict sense to human actions as to other phenomena", he finds that such a view is somehow "inconsistent with every one's instinctive consciousness, as well as humiliating to the pride and even degrading to the moral nature of man."[13]

Mill argues that human actions are never so irreversible as has been argued because of a certain element of choice which all of us believe ourselves to have. He feels that the term Necessity is inappropriate because "it implies irresistibleness." He argues that human actions "are never (except in some cases of mania) ruled by any one motive with such absolute sway that there is no room for the influence of any other."[14]

Mill argues that the doctrine of fatalism does not necessarily follow from that of determinism. Instead he argues that a man does have the power to alter his own character:

> He has, to a certain extent, a power to alter his character. Its being, in the ultimate resort, formed for him, is not inconsistent with its being, in part, formed <u>by</u> him as one of the intermediate agents. His character is formed by his circumstances (including among these his particular organization); but his own desire to mould it in a particular way, is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential.

He writes: "We cannot, indeed directly will to be different from what we are." However, he argues, neither can anyone

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[13]John Stuart Mill, <u>A System of Logic</u> (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1900), p. 581.

[14]Mill, p. 583.

make us what we are without some action of our own will. Moreover, "If they could place us under the influence of certain circumstances, we, in like manner, can place ourselves under the influence of other circumstances. We are exactly as capable of making our own character, if we will, as others are of making it for us."[15]

He admits that our will is a product of our experiences but argues that the very fact of our wanting to change means that we have some capability of altering our character and we should act optimistically for best results.

In his Autobiography, John Stuart Mill describes his efforts to overcome the demoralizing, depressing effects of fatalism:

> I felt as if I was scientifically proved to be the helpless slave of antecedent circumstances; as if my character and that of all others had been formed for us by agencies beyond our control, and was wholly out of our own power. I often said to myself, what a relief it would be if I could disbelieve the doctrine of the formation of character by circumstances...[16]

He describes his resolution of the problem:

> I saw that though our character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances; and that what is really inspiriting and ennobling in the doctrine of free-will, is the conviction that we have real power

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[15]Mill, p. 584.

[16]John Stuart Mill, Autobiography (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1873), pp. 168-9.

> over the formation of our own character; that our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing. All this was entirely consistent with the doctrine of circumstances, or rather, was that doctrine itself, properly understood.[17]

In her letter to Mrs. Henry Frederick Ponsonby, December 10, 1874 George Eliot describes her feelings on the subject of fatalism:

> As to the necessary combinations through which life is manifested, and which seem to present themselves to you as a hideous fatalism, which ought logically to petrify your volition--have they, in fact, any such influence on your ordinary course of action in the primary affairs of your existence as a human, social, domestic creature? And if they don't hinder you from taking measures for a bath, without which you know you cannot secure the delicate cleanliness which is your second nature, why should they hinder you from a line of resolve in a higher strain of duty to your ideal, both for yourself and others? But the consideration of molecular physics is not the direct ground of human love and moral action, any more than it is the direct means of composing a noble picture or of enjoying great music. One might as well hope to dissect one's own body and be merry in doing it, as take molecular physics (in which you must banish from your field of view what is specifically human) to be your dominant guide, your determiner of motives, in what is solely human. That every study has its bearing on every other is true; but pain and relief, love and sorrow, have their peculiar history which make an experience and knowledge over and above the swing of atoms.[18]

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[17]Mill, pp. 169-70.

[18]Gordon S. Haight, ed., The George Eliot Letters (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 98-9.

George Eliot explains in this letter what is her real concern, her pre-occupation with the alleviation of the sufferings of man:

> With regard to the pains and limitations of one's personal lot, I suppose that there is not a single man, or woman, who has not more or less need of that stoical resignation which is often a hidden heroism, or who, in considering his or her past history, is not aware that it has been cruelly affected by the ignorant or selfish action of some fellow-being in a more or less close relation of life. And to my mind, there can be no stronger motive, than this perception, to an energetic effort that the lives nearest to us shall not suffer in a like manner from us.

She tells Mrs. Ponsonby that progress of the world can only come through modification of human behavior. She argues that this can best be effected by a willful attention and devotion to that end. One should tell himself: "There is an order of considerations which I will keep myself continually in mind of, so that they may continually be the prompters of certain feelings and actions."[19]

She concludes her letter with a revealing statement:

> Difficulties of thought and acceptance of what is without full comprehension belong to every system of thinking. The question is to find the least incomplete.[20]

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[19]Haight, p. 99.

[20]Ibid., p. 100.

We will now discuss the manner in which George Eliot's attitudes concerning the problem of determinism are portrayed in The Mill on the Floss. We should not be surprised to find that the inconsistencies in her treatment of determinism are a result of her conscious effort to dramatize her deep conviction that this doctrine does not sufficiently come to terms with human needs and aspirations.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTER AS DETERMINED BY ENVIRONMENT

Any discussion of the effect of determinism upon moral development in George Eliot must necessarily emphasize the intricate relationship between character and plot in The Mill on the Floss. The concept of character development as an unfolding or revelation of one's psychological predispositions through interaction with objects in the environment is central to the theme of the novel and is a tenet of the philosophy of determinism. Determinism, in its emphasis on antecedent causes for every human action, cannot minimize the importance of a single minute cause in the formation of personality. Determinism tries to explain the factors involved in human responses, especially those of the mind and imagination. It considers the phenomenal process by which man receives and interprets nerve impulses according to culturally determined norms, selecting judgments and responses from the dark, muddled recesses of a mind where conflicting images and symbols advance and recede with frightening rapidity. Realizing that these responses are motivated by associations so intricate that they are often beyond human comprehension and control, the determinist,

nevertheless, attempts to ascertain these causes of human behavior.[1]

While we cannot minimize the complexity of psychological forces in the theory of determinism, we must now discuss the manner in which George Eliot's novel explains and illustrates for us this complexity. Lerner tells us that George Eliot's works reflect her "belief that personality is built with something of the slowness of rocks, and something of the same inevitability."[2] We will first discuss the social, psychological, and cultural material out of which Maggie Tulliver's personality was formed.

The peculiar geographic and social setting of Maggie's world is St. Oggs, a town near the river Floss. It is a town that is narrow-minded and traditional in its view of life; its values are materialism and conventional moral behavior. The people concentrate on the pragmatic effects of behavior rather than on morality. It is a sordid, unimaginative kind of life. George Eliot tells us:

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[1]The ideas enunciated in this paragraph come from the following sources:

George Levine, "Determinism and Responsibility in the Works of George Eliot," PMLA, 77 (1962), 268-79.

Laurence Lerner, The Truthtellers (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), pp. 112-32.

[2]Lerner, p. 237.

> Here, one has conventional worldly notions and habits without instruction and without polish--surely the most prosaic form of human life: proud respectability in a gig of unfashionable build, worldliness without side dishes. Observing these people narrowly, even when the iron hand of misfortune has shaken them from their unquestioning hold on the world, one sees little trace of religion, still less of a distinctively Christian creed. Their belief in the Unseen, so far as it manifests itself at all, seems to be rather of a pagan kind; their moral notions, though held with strong tenacity, seem to have no standard beyond hereditary custom. You could not live among such people; you are stifled for want of an outlet towards something beautiful, great, or noble...[3]

She goes on to describe one of the purposes of the novel:

> I share with you this sense of oppressive narrowness, but it is necessary that we should feel it if we care to understand how it acted on the lives of Tom and Maggie, how it has acted on young natures in many generations that in the onward tendency of human things have risen above the mental level of the generation before them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the strongest fibres of their hearts (p. 287).

Her environment is a major cause of Maggie's dilemma.

Bernard J. Paris, in "Toward a Revaluation of George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss," writes:

> The central action of The Mill on the Floss arises out of the mutual incompatibility of Maggie Tulliver and her environment. Maggie's nature demands spiritual, intellectual, and physical gratifications which the materialistic, aesthetically barren community of St. Oggs is unable to provide. This situation is further

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[3]George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss (New York: New American Library, 1965), pp. 286-7. All subsequent references to the novel will be based on this edition.

> complicated by the fact that Maggie cannot break away from her environment in order to seek a more congenial atmosphere; she is bound emotionally (by her overpowering need for love) and spiritually to her family and the home of her youth.[4]

Paris discusses George Eliot's treatment of the influence of social and cultural values on personality development. He writes:

> Society for George Eliot is organic; its body stretches not on the horizontal level of the present time, but vertically through all of man's history. Since society is organic, nothing is lost; the thoughts, feelings, and actions of all men of all ages are ever with us in the present, if we care to heed them. The past is a shaping influence upon the present...[5]

Paris states that George Eliot's works reflect her belief that character development is more dependent upon basic human feelings and needs transmitted to us from the past than upon specific codes or institutions. Paris goes on to make us aware that the human personality cannot disregard the unique limiting factors of its own past without detriment to itself. He states, "The chronological span of a human life, too, is organic. The moral and spiritual experiences and ties of our past life become an integral part of our total being and we cannot sever ourselves from them. To disregard our past is to

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[4]Bernard J. Paris, "Toward a Revaluation of George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 11(June, 1956), p. 19.

[5]Paris, p. 23.

partake of a form of self-destruction."[6] Thus we see how the future of an individual is determined not only by his past experiences but by the history of all the generations that have preceded him.

Joan Bennett, in George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art, analyzes the effect of social environment on George Eliot's characters. She tells us that George Eliot's novels resemble those of Jane Austen in their emphasis on the importance of social environment as well as character in determining their history. Joan Bennett states, however, that George Eliot's portrayal of the social environment is more comprehensive and more conscious of a diversity of dynamic social and economic forces that exert pressure on individual characters, drawn from many different social levels. She explains:

> Jane Austen took her social milieu for granted; its manners and traditions were, for her, as little open to question as the laws of nature. George Eliot was aware of the ethical, religious and social conventions of the world she paints as a product of history, evolved in time and changing with time. She was consciously interested in the pressure all these exert on individual lives and in the existence of a problem concerned with resisting or succumbing to that pressure.[7]

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[6]Paris, p. 24.

[7]Joan Bennett, George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 101.

Joan Bennett says that George Eliot was more modern in her conception of man in a society that is changing and developing. She writes:

> Consequently, the organic form of her novels--an inner circle (a small group of individuals involved in a moral dilemma) surrounded by an outer circle (the social world within which the dilemma has to be resolved)--is more significant than in any preceding fiction. Furthermore, her perception of human beings is more complex than that of her predecessors. She never suggests a simple division of characters into good and bad. The individual, like the environment, has evolved and is evolving; his or her behaviour at any given moment is the inevitable result of all that has gone before; therefore, while the action can itself be judged, both in relation to its consequences and to its aesthetic beauty (an action that pleases or displeases) the doer is not presented judicially but compassionately.[8]

The novelist's compassion for her characters is a result of her understanding of the part environmental forces have played in determining their behavior. This means that actions may be judged according to their consequences or aesthetic value but the actor cannot be judged morally.

The novelist's treatment of Maggie's childhood is certainly motivated by her desire to increase our understanding and sympathy for her problems, which grew out of ties formed in her childhood. George Eliot realizes that our perception of our environment and its importance for us is dependent on

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[8]Bennett, p. 101.

our childhood experiences. F. R. Leavis in The Great Tradition emphasizes the realistic nature of this vision of Maggie's childhood:

> The fresh directness of a child's vision that we have there, in the autobiographical part, is something very different from the "afternoon light" of reminiscence. This recaptured early vision, in its combination of clarity with rich "significance", is for us, no doubt, enchanting; but it doesn't idealize, or soften with a haze of sentiment (and it can't consort with "art").[9]

George Eliot depicts Maggie's childhood realistically. She makes us aware of Maggie's natural capacity for intense emotion and how easily it is frustrated. We see how important it is for her to love and be loved. She is such a passionate child that clashes with her environment seem inevitable. The novelist makes us aware that Maggie's reaction to her mother's family, the Dodsons, is vital to her character development; the Dodsons come to represent for her a force that would restrain her display of strong feeling and imagination. From the beginning Maggie is a volatile, expressive, and rebellious child. Her personality is shaped by the conflict of her passionate nature with the repressive social values of the Dodsons. Leavis points out, "the presentment of the Dodson clan is of marked sociological interest--not accidentally but

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[9]F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (New York: George W. Stewart, 1948), p. 38.

because of the intellectual qualifications of the novelist."[10] The Dodsons are representative of the narrow values that characterize Maggie's social environment.

The Dodson clan is presented unattractively and yet with a satire that is quite humorous. We find that they epitomize solid, bigoted middle-class life. A materialistic family, devoted to duty and practicality, they contrast markedly with the rash and impulsive Tullivers, who have a reputation for ruining themselves. At one point Mrs. Glegg, the older sister who most completely embodies Dodson ideals, asserts, "There was never any failures, nor lawing, nor wastefulness in our family--nor dying without wills--" (p. 477). She goes on to say "But Tom had the Dodson skin...", thus identifying him with that prudent and rational family rather than with the romantic and impulsive Tullivers (p. 477).

Maggie identifies herself with her father's people. As a child she looks more like them. Her dark, unmanageable hair is a trait inherited from the Tullivers. Her intellect sets her apart from her brother, Tom, who looks and acts like the Dodsons. We find that "Tom had very clear prosaic eyes, not apt to be dimmed by mists of feeling or imagination" (p. 291). Maggie, by contrast, feels deeply that "conflict

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[10]Leavis, p. 39.

between the inward impulse and outward fact, which is the lot of every imaginative and passionate nature..." (p. 290).

Maggie's impulsive nature exhibits certain weaknesses, most of all an ambivalence about her actions. After impulsively cutting off her hair to make herself more beautiful and acceptable to the family, she repents, feeling "that bitter sense of the irrevocable which was almost an everyday experience of her small soul" (p. 73). The novelist explains:

> for Maggie rushed to her deeds with passionate impulse and then saw not only their consequences but what would have happened if they had not been done with all the detail and exaggerated circumstance of an active imagination. Tom never did the same sort of foolish things as Maggie, having a wonderful instinctive discernment of what would turn to his advantage or disadvantage; and so it happened that though he was much more willful and inflexible than Maggie, his mother hardly ever called him naughty (p. 73).

It seems that Maggie can never please her mother and the Dodsons. She is not a pretty child and she has none of the personal qualities they value so highly. This knowledge frustrates her because she wants so much to be loved and appreciated. Or perhaps it is because she is not appreciated by them that she develops such a great need for love. Tom never feels out of place as Maggie does. He has all the acceptable, conventional qualities.

George Eliot describes the difference between Tom and Maggie thus: "A character at unity with itself--that performs what it intends, subdues every counteracting impulse, and has no visions beyond the distinctly possible--is strong by its very negations" (p. 325). Much of the tension in Maggie's personality is caused by her impulsive temperament and her extremely sensitive intelligence.

Maggie is unlike Tom, who has only "a tinge of Tulliver blood" (p. 325). We are to realize that inherited biological factors are important in determining her personality. She refuses to be directed by the Dodsons' limited view of the world. She becomes egoistic about her own intelligence and her own ability to understand the world. Rejected by the Dodsons, she realizes she is quite different from them and continues to assert her independence. Her father defends and supports her, overlooking many of her most passionate actions because of his love for the clever "little wench." Irrational himself, it was easy for him to love someone so much like himself. Maggie comes to think of herself as passionate, wayward and impulsive. We are made to feel that this temperament is at least partially a result of her conflict with a hostile social environment.

Tom is very critical of Maggie's behavior. He accuses her of lack of resolution and at times "a sort of perverse

self-denial." Maggie tells herself that he is unjust: "that he was below feeling those mental needs which were often the source of the wrong-doing or absurdity that made her life a planless riddle to him" (p. 411).

The novelist presents Maggie sympathetically, as a character actuated by deep needs resulting partially from her extreme intelligence in conflict with a repressive social and intellectual environment. Maggie's memories of her childhood, particularly of her early attachment to her father and brother, are vital in determining her later actions. Her feelings and remembrances of ties from the past influence greatly her decision to reject Stephen. Through her analysis, George Eliot makes us aware of the intricate manner in which one responds to objects and forces in his environment, on the basis of memories and values resulting from past experiences. She writes:

> There is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in those scenes where we were born, where objects became dear to us before we had known the labour of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of our own personality; we accepted and loved it as we accepted our own sense of existence and our own limbs.

Recognizing that it is the nature of man to strive to improve his life she adds, "But heaven knows where that striving might lead us if our affections had not a trick of twining round those old inferior things, if the loves and sanctities of our

life had no deep immovable roots in memory" (p. 164). Thus the novelist makes us aware of the way Maggie is bound to her past.

Laurence Lerner discusses the quality of romance in the novelist's treatment of Maggie, which he says is so passionate that it precludes any judgment of her in morally objective terms. He explains that this treatment leads us "into a very deep identification with her. Identification like this does not speak in moral terms."[11]

While it is true that our emotional identification with Maggie is so complete that it is difficult for us to judge her morally, the author's emphasis on determinism is partially responsible for producing this feeling of tragic sympathy for Maggie in an alien world. The novelist makes us aware that Maggie is in conflict with impersonal forces in her environment which determine her plight. Although many of the characters, such as Tom and the Dodsons, are hostile to her from time to time, Maggie's difficulties are caused by a multitude of seemingly arbitrary forces. While we feel sympathy for Maggie, it is difficult to judge her morally because her every action is a product of determinism. None of the other characters possess half the charm of Maggie. If the novelist had treated Maggie

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[11]Lerner, pp. 271-2.

with the impersonal, scientific objectivity most in keeping with the theme of determinism, our interest and understanding would be greatly diminished. Understanding is often enhanced by emotional identification with a person. This motivates us to concentrate more completely and sympathetically on the behavior of the person. Although George Eliot presents the other characters with less emotion, she does treat them with sympathy and objectivity because of her understanding of their limited capabilities for moral action.

Examination of the other characters in the novel should make us aware of their function as moral forces in Maggie's environment. Tom is perhaps the most interesting because he functions simultaneously as an object of attraction and repulsion. At the same time he is a product of determinism. We are made to feel, with Maggie, that Tom's moral vision is more limited than hers, particularly in his attempts to exact retribution. In his treatment of Philip Wakem is reflected his blindness to this realistic and painful truth:

> So deeply inherent is it in this life of ours that men have to suffer for each other's sins, so inevitably diffusive is human suffering that even justice makes its victims and we can conceive no retribution that does not spread beyond its mark in pulsations of unmerited pain (p. 258).

Tom does not realize that men are interdependent and must be careful that their actions do not cause suffering to others.

He does not realize how easy it is for men living in a deterministic universe to cause unnecessary and undeserved pain. He does not comprehend that his attempt to be an agent of retribution will not produce perfect justice. We must feel, however, that his lack of vision is a product of determinism. The novelist describes Tom ironically, as "a boy made of flesh and blood with dispositions not entirely at the mercy of circumstances" (p. 184). The irony is that he has an inflexible will which will not allow itself to be educated by circumstances. A further irony is that his will is itself a product of circumstances.

Tom incorporates the ideals of the Dodson clan. He is a product of his environment; "a proud sense of family respectability was part of the very air Tom had been born and brought up in" (p. 203). Thus we can see why he feels responsible for Maggie, punishing her and criticizing her when he feels she is wrong.

The novelist makes us aware that Tom has the kind of mentality that is susceptible to the narrowness of the Dodson ideals; she emphasizes the limitations of Tom's mind, stating that, to him Latin was "a kind of puzzle that could only be found out by a lucky chance" (p. 179). We realize that his lack of understanding of his own foibles is partially a result

of the limitations of his intelligence. He is incapable of the fine moral distinctions that Maggie and Philip make. Therefore he is not completely to blame for his shortcomings. Still, we cannot help feeling that he could be tolerant of others. He has inherited some of his father's willfulness without his father's intelligence. His ineffectual mother has also probably encouraged him to assert his willfulness, particularly when it would support those ideals of her family which she so blindly venerates.

We are told of the mental images which influence Tom's actions; they are only remnants of the dreams of his childhood. Among the goals which he has preserved is that of retribution; "he was particularly clear and positive on one point--namely, that he would punish everybody who deserved it: why, he wouldn't have minded being punished himself if he deserved it; but then he never <u>did</u> deserve it" (p. 45). This, in addition to his pride and his old repulsion for Philip, motivates him to humiliate Philip.

George Eliot reminds those of us who would blame Tom too harshly: "Tom, like everyone of us, was imprisoned within the limits of his own nature...if you are inclined to be severe on his severity, remember that the responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision" (p. 523). To

criticize Tom too severely would be to place one's self in the ranks of the intolerant, who, unable to understand the complexity of man's life, act out of a false sense of justice.

Maggie's parents are characterized in a manner which emphasizes their own similar lack of broad moral vision. Like Tom, they cannot be held accountable for an inability to transcend their limitations.

Mrs. Tulliver is portrayed as good-natured, placid and not overly bright. Born into a prosperous family, she has always enjoyed good health and beauty. Circumstances have done little to threaten the security of her childhood. She has maintained a mild temperament. George Eliot describes her effect on the children:

> Mrs. Tulliver was what is called a good-tempered person--never cried when she was a baby on any slighter ground than hunger and pins; and from the cradle upwards had been healthy, fair, plump, and dull-witted; in short, the flower of her family for beauty and amiability. But milk and mildness are not the best things for keeping, and when they turn only a little sour, they may disagree with young stomachs seriously. I have often wondered whether those early Madonnas of Raphael, with the blond faces and somewhat stupid expression, kept their placidity undisturbed when their strong-limbed, strong-willed boys got a little too old to do without clothing. I think they must have been given to feeble remonstrance, getting more and more peevish as it became more and more ineffectual (p. 19).

Thus we are made aware of Mrs. Tulliver's limitations in raising her children. She becomes more ineffectual as the family

fortunes worsen. Her happiness is threatened as never before. She is unable to cope with the loss of her household goods; so important to the Dodson tradition, these epitomized the passing of security from her life. The author exclaims:

> Poor Mrs. Tulliver, it seemed, would never recover her old self, her placid household activity; how could she? The objects among which her mind had moved complacently were all gone...and she remained bewildered in this empty life (p. 291).

Mrs. Tulliver exemplifies the effect of extremely materialistic ideals on a literal-minded person. She does, however, have the imagination to feel that she should try to alleviate the financial problems of her family. Unfortunately, she does not have the capacity to do so. Her limited ability to understand and to influence her husband is mirrored in the image of the goldfish repeatedly bumping against the side of the bowl in its efforts to swim in a straight line:

> Mrs. Tulliver had lived thirteen years with her husband, yet she retained in all the freshness of her early married life a facility for saying things which drove him in the opposite direction to the one she desired. Some minds are wonderful for keeping their bloom in this way, as a patriarchal goldfish apparently retains to the last its youthful illusion that it can swim in a straight line beyond the encircling glass. Mrs. Tulliver was an amiable fish of this kind, and after running her head against the same resisting medium for thirteen years, would go at it again today with undulled alacrity (pp. 84-5).

Mrs. Tulliver is so limited by her intelligence that she cannot learn from her mistakes. Although she cannot comprehend relationships sufficiently to manipulate her environment, she is too good-natured to give up trying. Her actions demonstrate the effect of determinism.

By contrast, Mr. Tulliver is too proud to make a real effort to understand the relationship between cause and effect. The tragedy is that he is completely unaware of his own lack of humility. George Eliot emphasizes his inability to understand the world. His frustrated recognition of the complexity of the world and the elusiveness of its meaning causes him much pain and ill-fortune. Still, he continues to attempt to solve the riddle with impetuosity. He realizes that he is limited by a poor education but he will not let that stop him. He is determined, with his egoistic sense of his own intelligence, to take the world by the horns and impose his own will on it. He does not understand that the world is a mechanistic system of cause and effect which cannot be explained in simple terms of good and evil; hence he considers all lawyers agents of the devil. He needs to face the world on its own terms, instead of trying to impose his values on the world. He needs to be more pragmatic.

George Eliot makes us aware of Mr. Tulliver's lack of prudence when she describes him as one "who, in the maze of this puzzling world, laid hold of any clue with great readiness and tenacity" (p. 79). Web imagery is often used in relation to Mr. Tulliver. This deterministic image reminds us of the three Parcae who, according to Greek mythology, weave the web of fate for man. The novelist describes Mr. Tulliver's efforts to unravel that web:

> Mr. Tulliver, when under the influence of a strong feeling, had a promptitude in action that may seem inconsistent with that painful sense of the complicated, puzzling nature of human affairs under which his more dispassionate deliberations were conducted; but it is really not improbable that there was a direct relation between these apparently contradictory phenomena, since I have observed that for getting a strong impression that a skein is tangled, there is nothing like snatching hastily at a single thread (p. 85).

Thus the novelist finds a cause for Mr. Tulliver's painful awareness of the world in the worsened consequences of his own impetuous efforts to wrestle with it. If he were not so suspicious and defensive and could act coolly and calmly, his difficulties would be lessened.

There is a sense of helplessness in Mr. Tulliver's struggle with the world. His character and circumstances are treated with extreme irony. Most of his difficulty results from his passionate temperament. In this he is like Maggie, who is unable to conceal her strong emotions. Lawyer Wakem's

evaluation of Mr. Tulliver elucidates his character. Wakem views Mr. Tulliver as "a hot-tempered fellow who would always give you a handle against him." His temperament is compared to that of Hotspur. We see how the "proud, confident, warm-hearted, and warm-tempered Tulliver of old times" becomes through his impulsive behavior and the irony of circumstance "that pitiable, furious bull entangled in the meshes of a net" (p. 267). This deterministic image implies that Mr. Tulliver is trapped by circumstances beyond his control. We are made painfully aware that Mr. Tulliver's tragedy results from a clash of his inner nature with the circumstances of the external world.

Lawyer Wakem's character contrasts sharply with Mr. Tulliver's in that he is unscrupulous and coldly deliberate in his actions, all the while rationalizing them to himself. George Eliot tells us, "He was one of those men who can be prompt without being rash, because their motives run in fixed tracks and they have no need to reconcile conflicting aims" (p. 266). Unlike Mr. Tulliver, Wakem is a cool and calculating person who is not plagued by any altruistic or ethical leanings which would conflict with his pragmatic ends. He obviously has the temperament and education to act in his own best interests. We wonder what environmental forces made him that way.

While treated somewhat as a caricature, Bob Jakin is presented as a warm-hearted, impetuous person who is more kind and capable of understanding Maggie than is her brother Tom. Bob is often "under the consciousness that his tongue was acting in an undisciplined manner" (p. 299). He, too, is easily overcome by strong feeling. At one time he refers to himself as a tilted bottle that cannot stop once it begins. He is perceptive and analytical about other people. He tells us, "when I've left off carrying my pack, an' am at a loose end, I've got more brains nor I know what to do wi', an' I'm forced to busy myself wi' other folks's insides" (pp. 407-8). His language suggests a feeling of compulsion to acts which are beyond his better judgment. He feels unable to control his feelings and his actions as he should. He, also, is restricted by economic and educational factors. Obviously intelligent, he does not have enough interesting work to occupy his mind. Therefore, he spends time analyzing others.

The character of Philip Wakem is portrayed with much sensitivity. We are made to feel that the melancholy aspect of his personality is a product of his infirmity. We are told:

> But he was not always in a good humour or happy mood. The slight spurt of peevish susceptibility which had escaped him in their first interview was a symptom of a perpetually recurring mental ailment--half of it nervous irritability, half of it the heart-bitterness produced by the sense of

> his deformity. In these fits of susceptibility every glance seemed to him to be charged either with offensive pity or with ill-repressed disgust; at the very least it was an indifferent glance, and Philip felt indifference as a child of the south feels the chill air of a northern spring (pp. 179-80).

We can see that conflict with Tom is inevitable, particularly when Philip is conscious of his own mental superiority.

The novelist describes the passionate motive which compels Philip to persuade Maggie to meet him in the Red Deeps against her father's wishes:

> His longing to see Maggie and make an element in her life had in it some of that savage impulse to snatch an offered joy which springs from a life in which the mental and bodily constitution have made pain predominate. He had not his full share in the common good of men; he could not even pass muster with the insignificant, but must be singled out for pity and excepted from what was a matter of course with others. Even to Maggie he was an exception; it was clear that the thought of his being her lover had never entered her mind. (p. 347).

George Eliot is clearly sympathetic to Philip, who feels so painfully the unfortunate circumstances which set him apart from other men.

Philip's personality is also determined by his home environment. His need for love has been deepened by the circumstances of his family. He was deprived of his mother's love by her death. Despite his sense of his father's affection, he feels a certain antipathy for the man because of his

father's faults. Perhaps if he had not been deformed, he would have become just as calculating and unscrupulous as his father; but his special circumstances have made him very sensitive. Philip's actions are definitely determined by his environment. We feel that his deformity and his unhappy home life are directly responsible for his sensitive, often morbid, nature. We cannot help feeling pity for him, as did Maggie.

George Eliot emphasizes the differences between Lucy and Maggie. We are told:

> It was like the contrast between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten. Lucy put up the neatest little rosebud mouth to be kissed: everything about her was neat--her little round neck, with the row of coral beads; her little straight nose, not at all snubby; her little clear eyebrows, rather darker than her curls, to match her hazel eyes, which looked up with shy pleasure at Maggie, taller by the head, though scarcely a year older. Maggie always looked at Lucy with delight. She was fond of fancying a world where the people never got any larger than children of their own age, and she made the queen of it just like Lucy, with a little crown on her head and a little sceptre in her hand...only the queen was Maggie herself in Lucy's form (p. 69).

As a child Lucy was always well-behaved and socially acceptable. She was a smugly pretty child with a compliant personality. Very sweet, she always did "what she was desired to do" (p. 103). She was loved and admired as long as she did exactly what was expected of her. She always pleased people without any real effort and never had to worry about her independent or impulsive actions.

Lucy, the young woman in love, is not so much different from the child. She is thoughtful and considerate of others. The novelist suggests that this action may be prompted by her vanity, but that it is concealed in a harmless sweetness. She explains:

> And Lucy had so much of this benevolence in her nature that I am inclined to think her small egoisms were impregnated with it, just as there are people not altogether unknown to you whose small benevolences have a predominant and somewhat rank odour of egoism. Even now that she is walking up and down with a little triunphant flutter of her girlish heart at the sense that she is loved by the person of chief consequence in her small world, you may see in her hazel eyes an ever-present sunny benignity in which the momentary harmless flashes of personal vanity are quite lost..." (p. 385).

We can see that Lucy's benevolence is accompanied by a sense of complacency. Her impeccable actions are motivated by personal vanity. As long as she acts in a manner which is acceptable to those she loves, she is content. She never feels a compulsion to defend herself and her actions. She lacks the imagination and intensity for the real egoism that Maggie displays. She has no subtle intelligence to chide herself for her little shortcomings.

The author admires Lucy's unselfishness. Perhaps there is a tinge of sarcasm, also, in her statement:

> Was not Stephen Guest right in his decided opinion that this slim maiden of eighteen was quite the

> sort of wife a man would not be likely to repent of marrying, a woman who was loving and thoughtful for other women, not giving them Judas-kisses with eyes askance on their welcome defects, but with real care and vision for their half-hidden pains and mortifications, with long ruminating enjoyment of little pleasures prepared for them? (p. 386).

Lucy can be so nice because her vanity has never really been threatened by others. Rather, her thoughtfulness of others is motivated by a perception of their sufferings, however real or petty, and her own vain consciousness of superiority.

We cannot help feeling there is a certain frivolity, an insipid quality to her personality. The novelist makes it perfectly clear that one of the reasons Stephen Guest plans to marry her is the fact that she is not extraordinary. She is pretty, gentle and affectionate--"exactly the sort of woman he had always most admired" (p. 387).

Most critics agree that the character of Stephen Guest is portrayed with little depth or magnetism. Laurence Lerner tells us that any attraction Stephen holds for the reader is a result of the fact that he has already identified so closely with Maggie by this time. He comments:

> Hence we share her attraction to Stephen--or rather, the reason we don't share it is that Stephen is such a dummy. What we share is the yearning that takes her to Stephen, the need that causes her to see so much in him. George Eliot understood this: she meant us to share the yearning, whatever our reservations about

> Stephen (and she knew well enough what a provincial dummy Stephen was, "with his diamond ring, attar of roses, and air of nonchalant leisure, at twelve o'clock in the day").[12]

While it is true that Stephen's character is not presented with any real depth, the novelist does make us aware of his narrow self-conceit. He appears to be a shallow person. We wonder how much of this is intentional on the part of the novelist. We feel that she should have given him a few more redeeming qualities. Her concentration on Maggie's psychology makes Stephen remain a "dummy," an object or moral force to be chosen or rejected by the heroine. If Stephen had been presented with real sympathetic intensity, we would have become so enamoured with him that the author's purpose would have been undermined.

Stephen is depicted as a rather provincial, narrow gentleman. He enjoys a sense of independence and superiority. The only son of a socially prominent man, he does not like to be dominated by women. He has the traditional qualities of gentlemanly conceit and pride and does not like to be outdone. Perhaps this is the reason he is so attracted to Maggie. Her natural beauty and charm are far greater than he had anticipated. She is a challenge to his rather narrow egoistical personality and to his masculine pride. We realize that his superiority in St. Oggs has never before been questioned. He had been

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[12]Lerner, p. 273.

regarded as one of the most eligible men because of his father's wealth and social position. We can see that his actions are determined by social, financial, and psychological factors.

The novelist gives us some insight into Stephen Guest's psychology when she describes his response to Maggie's beauty:

> Had he fallen in love with this surprising daughter of Mrs. Tulliver at first sight? Certainly not. Such passions are never heard of in real life. Besides, he was in love already, and half engaged to the dearest little creature in the world; and he was not a man to make a fool of himself in any way. But when one is five-and-twenty, one has not chalk-stones at one's finger-ends that the touch of a handsome girl should be entirely indifferent. It was perfectly natural and safe to admire beauty and enjoy looking at it, at least under such circumstances as the present. And there was really something very interesting about this girl, with her poverty and troubles...(pp.398-9).

We can see that Stephen is not averse to using common gentlemanly opinions to rationalize and explain his own actions. He shares this quality with quite a few of the characters in the novel. Here is another illustration of the novelist's understanding of the ways in which cultural and social values influence behavior, often by providing easy excuses or defenses for actions which we know very well we should not attempt because the consequences could be disastrous. At this point Stephen is probably aware that he has fallen in love with Maggie; but he rationalizes, saying such things only happen

in books. So he decides to go on seeing her because of the novelty of social intercourse that she provides. This is another example of the author's awareness of the subtlety with which people make decisions and value judgments. She shows us how easy it is to clothe our selfish motives in socially acceptable explanations. Throughout the book the novelist expresses an almost complete diffidence in the truth or actuality of any character's explanation for his behavior. This is because of her belief that the process of human choice is actuated by forces of great complexity, perhaps greater than man will ever be able to comprehend fully.

Thus we are made aware that these characters are limited in their ability to act morally. Often they lack awareness of the complexity of their motivations for action. They are unable to understand their responsibilities within a deterministic world. Part of this lack of understanding is due to their insufficient intelligence or experience. As such, they can hardly be held completely responsible for their own shortcomings.

The Mill on the Floss emphasizes the manner in which circumstances of birth and environment influence human development and response. The novelist makes us aware of the complexity of forces which cause any human act. She describes the manner in which characters, through the exercise of their

imagination and feelings, influence the lives of others, often tragically. She makes us intensely aware of the interdependence of people within the social environment. She encourages us not to blame any of the characters too much for their shortcomings since it is the responsibility of those with the wider vision to be more tolerant of the actions of others.

We should by now realize that the achievement of a broad understanding of others, this wider moral vision, is one of the novelist's primary objectives in The Mill on the Floss. Only through education and experience can we learn to act with any understanding of the probable consequences of our actions or understand the limited choices available to us.

CHAPTER III

DETERMINISM AS SEEN IN ACTION

There is a tone of heavy irony, a terrible sense of uncanniness, in the movement of plot in The Mill on the Floss. Circumstantial events are so unfortunate that at times they seem to verge on melodrama. At the same time there is a certain realism in the narrator's calm and intelligent analysis of the action in the novel. She makes us aware that each event is due to the action of a multiplicity of impersonal social and psychological forces. The novelist achieves a balance between exposition and dramatization which keeps the action under the rational control of the narrator. Another factor is the characterization of Maggie, who commands too much of our admiration and sympathy to be considered anything less than tragic or pathetic.

A study of the structure of the novel will reveal the novelist's intention that the novel should be considered a sympathetic view of Maggie's life. The novel is divided into seven books: (1) Boy and Girl, (2) School-Time, (3) The Downfall, (4) The Valley of Humiliation, (5) Wheat and Tares, (6) The Great Temptation, and (7) The Final Rescue. The titles of many of these books, as well as those of individual chapters, are heavily ironic and symbolic of the complexity of Maggie's

fate. They are ludicrous when one considers the unfortunate juxtaposition of events in the novel.

Book One introduces the Tulliver family. In an impersonal, almost sociological manner George Eliot describes the river town of St. Oggs, adding her impressionistic vision of the surroundings. Then she narrows her imagined cinematic sweep to focus upon the little girl standing upon the bridge at Dorlcote Mill.

The narrator then tells us, "Before I dozed off I was going to tell you what Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver were talking about as they sat by the bright fire in the left-hand parlour on that very afternoon I have been dreaming of" (p. 13). This dream-like quality of her introduction makes us aware, not only that the characters are imaginary, but also of their transiency within the sweep of history.

The novelist narrows in, depicting Mr. Tulliver, with his usual blind resolution, endeavouring to do what is best for his son, Tom. He wants to send Tom to school so he can learn some legal sense that will enable him to protect the family's interest in the mill.

Mrs. Tulliver, characteristically, is concerned about what her family, the Dodsons, will think of this design; but Mr. Tulliver, of course, has made up his mind.

Mr. Riley, an auctioneer and appraiser, is asked his opinion of a good school. He recommends, without any real

knowledge or expectation of gain, the name of a clergyman friend, Mr. Stelling. George Eliot comments on Mr. Riley's action:

> It is easy enough to spoil the lives of our neighbours without taking so much trouble; we can do it by lazy acquiescence and lazy omission, by trivial falsities for which we hardly know a reason, by small frauds neutralized by small extravagancies, by maladroit flatteries and clumsily improvised insinuations. We live from hand to mouth, most of us, with a small family of immediate desires; we do little else than snatch a morsel to satisfy the hungry brood, rarely thinking of seed-corn or the next year's crop (p. 31).

Thus she describes how easily a person, involved in his own narrow self-interests, can by laziness and failure to consider the consequences of his everyday actions, spoil the lives of his neighbors. She writes, "Mr. Riley was a man of business, and not cold towards his own interest, yet even he was more under the influence of small promptings than of far-sighted designs" (p. 31). The novelist does not blame Mr. Riley too severely for she believes the rest of us are guilty of similar faults. She shifts some of the blame to Mr. Tulliver's credulity and also points an accusing finger at the rest of the world. This is typical of George Eliot's broad view of the motivations of human actions and failures. She considers the probable causes of Mr. Riley's behavior, emphasizing their intricacy and multiplicity:

> Besides, a man with the milk of human kindness in him can scarcely abstain from doing a good-natured action, and one cannot be good-natured all round...If Mr. Riley had shrunk from giving a recommendation that was not based on valid evidence, he would not have helped Mr. Stelling to a paying pupil, and that would not have been so well for the reverend gentleman. Consider, too, that all the pleasant little dim ideas and complacencies--of standing well with Timpson, of dispensing advice when he was asked for it, of impressing his friend Tulliver with additional respect, of saying something, and saying it emphatically, with other inappreciably minute ingredients that went along with the warm hearth and the brandy-and-water to make up Mr. Riley's consciousness on this occasion--would have been a mere blank (pp. 32-3).

Thus we see how Mr. Tulliver is led to select Mr. Stelling for Tom's schoolmaster. We come to realize that his legal pursuits are probably motivated and directed by similar advisors. Painfully aware of his own lack of formal education, rather than forego matters of which he has no real knowledge, he impetuously grabs at the first straw. He is too independent to admit that he cannot do whatever he sets his mind to. His rather heavy-handed treatment of Mrs. Glegg causes her to demand payment of the money he owes her.

Mrs. Glegg is persuaded by her husband to relent, magnanimously declaring to Mrs. Pullet that Mr. Tulliver can keep the money. When it seems that reconciliation is about to be effected, Mrs. Tulliver makes the fatal mistake of telling her husband of the fact. George Eliot tells us that with her

usual optimism she thought this would cheer him up. Unfortunately, she should have realized, from her past experiences with her husband, that such a response from him was very unlikely. The novelist explains, "It was poor Mrs. Tulliver who had hastened this catastrophe, entirely through that irrepressible hopefulness of hers which led her to expect that similar causes may at any time produce different results" (p. 141). Thus we see how characters with distinct modes of behavior interact with results so inevitable they are ironic.

George Eliot describes the method by which "Mr. Tulliver Further Entangles the Skein of Life":

> Mr. Tulliver's prompt procedure entailed on him further promptitude in finding the convenient person who was desirous of lending five hundred pounds on bond. "It must be no client of Wakem's," he said to himself; and yet at the end of a fortnight it turned out to the contrary, not because Mr. Tulliver's will was feeble, but because external fact was stronger. Wakem's client was the only convenient person to be found. Mr. Tulliver had a destiny as well as Oedipus, and in this case he might plead, like Oedipus, that his deed was inflicted on him rather than committed by him (p. 143).

Thus Mr. Tulliver is depicted ironically, as a person whose eventual fate is beyond his control. We realize that his stubborn independence and bull-headed ignorance of his own limitations contribute to the sense of inevitability in the family's downfall. Too proud to accept normal human limitations, he often tries to transcend normal relationships of cause and

effect, which he cannot do. Much of his difficulty results from his attempts to impose his ego upon the world without realizing the necessity of prudent, subtle manipulation of forces, as does Wakem. In this particular case, however, Mr. Tulliver is prudent enough to realize that he should not obtain a loan from a client of Wakem. Unfortunately, no one else could be found. Thus his ultimate destiny is determined by forces beyond his power to control.

Throughout the novel there is a realization that Mr. Tulliver never comes to understand himself or the world. He dies without ever having solved the riddle of the puzzling world. He tells us, "This world's been too many for me" (p. 278). We sympathize with Mr. Tulliver and we feel that he is a pathetic figure who, ignorant of his own shortcomings, is unable to deal with the complexity of forces in a deterministic universe.

The melodramatic treatment of the family's misfortune enhances our sense of pathos. Maggie comes to Mr. Stelling's to tell Tom that their father has lost the "long-threatened lawsuit" and that the family will be bankrupt (p. 200). Moreover, their father has suffered an accident. George Eliot dramatizes:

> "He's at home," said Maggie, finding it easier to reply to that question. "But," she added

> after a pause, "not himself....He fell off his horse....He has known nobody but me ever since.... He seems to have lost his senses....Oh, father, father..." (p. 204).

We can see how this terribly ironic accident coupled with the circumstances of the family's bankruptcy makes their life so unbearable. George Eliot describes the mental blow to Mr. Tulliver in a manner that shows him completely at the mercy of physical circumstances. She writes:

> The days passed, and Mr. Tulliver showed, at least to the eyes of the medical man, stronger and stronger symptoms of a gradual return to his normal condition; the paralytic obstruction was little by little losing its tenacity, and the mind was rising from under it with fitful struggles, like a living creature making its way from under a great snowdrift that slides and slides again, and shuts up the newly made opening (pp. 257-8).

This image evokes a sense of helplessness.

Mrs. Tulliver's inability to alleviate the family's predicament is satirically treated by the novelist. Although a good-natured woman, she is so dependent on Dodson ideals that she can never forget the loss of her household goods, which symbolizes for her the entire bad fortune of the family. She is ineffective as a helpmate for the depressed Mr. Tulliver and as a mother to her children. Nevertheless, she attempts to modify the family's circumstances and in the chapter "How a Hen Takes to Strategem" demonstrates her complete lack of tact and business knowledge in an attempt to conciliate Mr. Wakem, which only determines him to further humiliate the Tullivers.

George Eliot analyzes the difficulty between Tulliver and Wakem. She emphasizes Mr. Tulliver's defensiveness and his complete lack of understanding of his own foibles. We can see that he is an egoistic person who must interpret every single event in relation to himself. She writes:

> It is clear that the irascible miller was a man to interpret any chance-shot that grazed him as an attempt on his own life, and was liable to entanglements in this puzzling world, which, due consideration had to his own infallibility, required the hypothesis of a very active diabolical agency to explain them. It is still possible to believe that the attorney was not more guilty towards him than an ingenious machine which performs its work with much regularity is guilty towards the rash man who, venturing too near it, is caught up by some fly-wheel or other and suddenly converted into unexpected mincemeat (pp. 262-3).

We could argue that this deterministic imagery precludes any moral judgment of Wakem, but we must remember that he is a man and not a machine. He should exercise moral judgment and try to avoid hurting Mr. Tulliver.

The heavily ironic scene in which Mrs. Tulliver's visit gives Wakem the idea of buying the mill, a possibility which he had not previously entertained, makes us aware the lawyer is capable of great wickedness, with sufficient provocation. He is one of those who can subtly rationalize himself into deeds, knowing full well they may hurt others. The narrator's analysis of his response makes us aware how unscrupulous he is: "Wakem's conscience was not uneasy because he had used a few tricks

against the miller; why should he hate that unsuccessful plaintiff--that pitiable, furious bull entangled in the meshes of a net" (p. 267). The image of the net implies that Mr. Tulliver is trapped by circumstances beyond his control. It is obvious that Wakem feels no responsibility for Tulliver's fate. He merely sees the direction in which Mr. Tulliver is headed and has no qualms about taking full advantage of his situation.

George Eliot defends Wakem somewhat by reminding us that Mr. Tulliver has openly slandered the lawyer and that most of us cannot help being somewhat pleased to see those who have offended us humiliated. Thus Wakem decides to buy the mill and have Mr. Tulliver run it for him, a decision that he well knows will cause the miller further humiliation by placing him under a sense of obligation to himself. The novelist explains that there is "a sort of revenge which falls into the scale of virtue, and Wakem was not without an intention of keeping that scale respectably filled" (p. 268).

Moreover, Wakem knows that Mr. Tulliver will run the mill to his advantage; for "Tulliver was known to be a man of proud honesty, and Wakem was too acute not to believe in the existence of honesty. He was given to observing individuals, not to judging of them according to maxims, and no one knew better than he that all men were not like himself" (p. 269). Wakem is

an acutely intelligent and unscrupulous person who is fully capable of using others for his own benefit. He lacks a sense of humanity and moral responsibility. Of course we must realize that he is just as much a product of cause and effect and cannot be held morally accountable. The author does not give us enough insight into his psychology to show us how he became so unscrupulous.

In attempting to influence Mr. Wakem, Mrs. Tulliver has again demonstrated her own ineptness. George Eliot explains the cause of Mrs. Tulliver's failure, her lack of understanding of Wakem:

> These were the mental conditions on which Mrs. Tulliver had undertaken to act persuasively and had failed, a fact which may receive some illustration from the remark of a great philosopher that fly-fishers fail in preparing their bait so as to make it alluring in the right quarter for want of a due acquaintance with the subjectivity of fishes (p. 269).

In this image the novelist makes us acutely aware of the relationship between cause and effect. To catch a fish one must use the proper bait. Unfortunately, Mrs. Tulliver does not know Mr. Wakem well enough to know what kind of bait to use.

Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver's fate is brought about by their lack of understanding and ability to control their environment, as well as the culpability of Wakem, who does not hesitate to take advantage of their circumstances in order to further humiliate them.

We can see how one event causes another. Mr. Tulliver's response to Wakem's action causes him to make Tom swear that he will exact revenge on Wakem. This promise and Tom's sense of responsibility for keeping it limits Maggie's friendship with Philip.

The novelist makes us aware that the social and religious tradition of St. Oggs was partially responsible for Mr. Tulliver's decision to record his hatred of Wakem in the family Bible. She says the religion of the town is "religion with the very slightest tincture of theology" (p. 287). She writes, "The religion of the Dodsons consisted in revering whatever was customary and respectable..." (p. 288). She concludes that "we need hardly feel any surprise at the fact that Mr. Tulliver, though a regular church-goer, recorded his vindictiveness on the fly-leaf of his Bible" (p. 289).

Furthermore she makes us aware that Mr. Tulliver's nature has never been very receptive to religious ideas. She writes, with sarcasm,

> Certain seeds which are required to find a nidus for themselves under unfavorable circumstances have been supplied by nature with an apparatus of hooks so that they will get a hold on very unreceptive surfaces. The spiritual seed which had been scattered over Mr. Tulliver had apparently been destitute of any corresponding provision and had slipped off to the winds again from a total absence of hooks (p. 290).

Obviously there are some things in Mr. Tulliver's nature that have never been compatible with religion. Apparently he is so egoistical that he has never felt the need of religion.

The chapter entitled "The Torn Nest is Pierced by the Thorns" describes the depression and unhappiness of the Tullivers caused by their misfortunes. The novelist utilizes mechanistic imagery:

> When uncultured minds confined to a narrow range of personal experience are under the pressure of continued misfortune, their inward life is apt to become a perpetually repeated round of sad and bitter thoughts; the same words, the same scenes are revolved over and over again, the same mood accompanies them, the end of the year finds them as much what they were at the beginning as if they were machines set to a recurrent series of movements (p. 295).

This image of people as machines programmed to perform the same operations over and over again reiterates the theme of determinism. We realize that the imagination is limited by experience.

Maggie's efforts to overcome the limitations of her environment are supported by the re-entrance of Bob Jakin into their lives. Bob brings Maggie books. One of these, Thomas a Kempis, becomes extremely important to her at this vulnerable time in her life. It teaches her the value of renunciation and encourages her to repress her own passions and forget her sufferings so she can attain inner peace. She becomes very religious and learns to restrain her desires. This philosophy of renunciation influences greatly Maggie's rejection of Stephen.

Bob Jakin influences the Tullivers in another important way. He persuades Tom to make an investment which finally enables him to repay the family's debts. Tom's success in business ventures reinforces his sense of family responsibility and makes him the more determined to keep his promise of revenge to his father.

Book V of The Mill on the Floss, entitled "Wheat and Tares," describes the meeting of Maggie and Philip in the Red Deeps which leads to the renewal of their friendship. The title is ironic for it reminds us that circumstances require Maggie to give up Philip, whom nature has rendered unfit, in Tom's eyes, to be Maggie's lover.

The chance meeting between Maggie and Philip occurs at a time when Maggie's spirit is subdued by circumstances to a point that she desperately needs friendship and happiness. The novelist describes Maggie's response on seeing Philip for the first time since he and Tom were schoolmates at Mr. Stelling's. Maggie fears that Philip is changed and is no longer interested in her friendship; however she finds him little altered. George Eliot writes, "there was the old deformity to awaken the old pity, and after all her meditations, Maggie felt that she really should like to say a few words to him. He might still be melancholy, as he always used to be, and like her to look at him kindly" (p. 312).

The novelist also describes Maggie's appearance to the external observer at this time:

> With her dark colouring and jet crown surrounding her tall figure, she seems to have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch firs at which she is looking up as if she loved them well. Yet one has a sense of uneasiness in looking at her, a sense of opposing elements, of which a fierce collision is imminent; surely there is a hushed expression, such as one often sees in older faces under borderless caps, out of keeping with the resistant youth which one expects to flash out in a sudden, passionate glance that will dissipate all the quietude, like a damp fire leaping out again when all seemed safe (pp. 313-4).

We see that Maggie's attempt to rationalize and accept the limitations of her life has resulted in a precarious balance of forces which threaten insurrection. That her nature will finally rebel from this repression seems inevitable to the novelist.

Maggie cannot transcend her sensitive, demonstrative nature. We can see this in George Eliot's description of her response to Philip: "She put out her hand and looked down at the deformed figure before her with frank eyes, filled for the moment with nothing but the memory of her child's feelings, a memory that was always strong in her" (p. 314). She tells Philip that she has never forgotten how good he was to Tom and her long ago before the family's financial troubles began.

Maggie asks Philip if she is like what he had expected her to be. The novelist tells us that this is not coquetry,

explaining, "She really did hope he liked her face as it was now, but it was simply the rising again of her innate delight in admiration and love" (p. 315).

Maggie tells Philip that circumstances have made it necessary that she part with many of the things she had as a child. She tells him that she must also part with him because of her father's hatred for his father.

Philip's argument is vital to our understanding of the novelist's views on determinism and moral responsibility. He tells Maggie:

> it is not right to sacrifice everything to other people's unreasonable feelings. I would give up a great deal for my father, but I would not give up a friendship or--an attachment of any sort in obedience to any wish of his that I didn't recognize as right (p. 316).

Maggie finally agrees to continue to meet Philip, despite her better judgment, but their clandestine meetings are stopped by Tom's interference. Tom has been working very hard during this time to improve the family's finances, and he claims a certain right on that account to prevent Maggie from seeing Philip again.

Although Tom does manage to repay the family's debt, the Tullivers' fortune seems doomed to failure. For the very day on which the debt is repaid is the day Mr. Tulliver has his ironic, dramatic encounter with Wakem. The tragedy is provoked

by Mr. Tulliver's usual pride, made more volatile by alcohol. The facts of Mr. Tulliver's death are ludicrous, particularly in their timing. It almost seems that a malignant fate is at work here to plague the family. Mr. Tulliver's untimely death creates a heavy sense of irony that makes us feel Maggie is limited severely by external circumstances. Maggie is forced more and more to search within herself for peace and happiness at a time when she should be making contacts with the outside world. We cannot help feeling sympathy for her.

In our discussion of the plot it is interesting to note that the novelist has named Book Six "The Great Temptation" and Book Seven "The Final Rescue." It is clear that she would have us recall the temptation of Adam and Eve, since the chapter dealing with the love relationship of Lucy and Stephen before the entrance of Maggie as the tempter, is called "A Duet in Paradise." At the time we cannot help thinking of Maggie as both tempter and tempted. Our sympathy for her is increased by our realization that her life up to this point has hardly been an Eden.

The manner in which the love conflict is presented is quite subtle and psychologically true. It is perhaps more realistic than all that has preceded. Although up to this point our identification with Maggie has been almost complete,

with her re-introduction and the presentation of the love triangle, the author achieves a certain analytical detachment by not revealing at once what is going on in Maggie's mind. She does make us aware, however, that this is the same Maggie who is yet unable to control her feelings.

At first we are not made completely aware of Maggie's motives in regard to Stephen. Perhaps this is because she is not exactly sure what she feels or should feel about Stephen. She knows she feels pleasure at his admiration but feels too much guilt to admit it to herself. She is torn between conflicting images of what she should feel. This ambivalence in her concept of herself is reflected in her actions. We are never sure exactly what she feels at this point. She has much sympathy for Philip, whom she likes very much. She feels a certain responsibility for his happiness. Yet we are never made to feel that she loves him romantically because she is too aware of his deformity. Although this is never explicitly stated by the novelist, Maggie's need for acquiescence to the wishes of her brother and her father precludes further speculation into her feeling for Philip. There is, however, an exception to this statement.

After Tom has gone with Maggie to meet Philip in the Red Deeps and has so cruelly embarrassed Philip about his qualifications as a lover for Maggie, George Eliot writes: "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 because the sense of a deliverance from concealment was welcome at any cost" (p. 366). One wonders if Maggie is being quite truthful with herself. We must remember that she is never tempted to forsake her principles for love of Philip as she is for Stephen. The interlude with Stephen is the real temptation of her life and the reader shares it with her.

After meeting Stephen, Maggie becomes very unhappy and disturbed. The novelist describes her state of mind on the boat with Stephen and Lucy: "She felt lonely, cut off from Philip, the only person who had ever seemed to love her devotedly as she had always longed to be loved" (p. 399). This describes the attraction that Philip has for her. His love and sympathy for her have always been generous and lasting. He has never withdrawn his love as her father and Tom did. Yet we cannot help feeling that this is a one-sided love. Maggie does not love Philip in the same way.

In the boat Maggie also acknowledges the effect that Stephen's presence has on her. The novelist writes, "It was very charming to be taken care of in that kind graceful manner by someone taller and stronger than one's self. Maggie had never felt just in the same way before" (p. 399).

Again George Eliot describes the manner in which Stephen Guest appeals to the susceptible Maggie:

> In poor Maggie's highly-strung, hungry nature--just come away from a third-rate schoolroom, with all its jarring sounds and petty round of tasks--these apparently trivial causes had the effect of rousing and exalting her imagination in a way that was mysterious to herself. It was not that she thought distinctly of Mr. Stephen Guest nor 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 of all the poetry and romance she had ever read or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries (pp. 401-2).

Again we are made aware of the multiplicity of causes for an emotional response. We see that Stephen has become symbolic, for Maggie, of all the beauty in life which she feels she has missed. Very perceptively the novelist analyzes the effects of romantic love on the heroine. There is much egoism in this love.

With the awakening of her romance with Stephen, Maggie begins to regard Philip differently. We find that Philip has now "become a sort of outward conscience to her that she might fly to for rescue and strength." George Eliot explains:

> Her tranquil, tender affection for Philip, with its root deep down in her childhood and its memories of long quiet talk confirming by distinct successive impressions the first instinctive bias--the fact that in him the appeal was more strongly to her pity and womanly devotedness than to her vanity or other egoistic excitability of her nature--seemed now to make a sort of sacred place, a

> sanctuary where she could find refuge from an alluring influence which the best part of herself must resist, which must bring horrible tumult within, wretchedness without. This new sense of her relation to Philip nullified the anxious scruples she would otherwise have felt lest she should overstep the limit of intercourse with him that Tom would sanction; and she put out her hand to him and felt the tears in her eyes without any consciousness of an inward check (pp. 429-30).

Here the novelist makes it clear that Maggie's feeling for Philip is based on pity and womanly devotion rather than on egoism or vanity. We note that she cannot help adding Lucy's response to the scene between Maggie and Philip:

> The scene was just what Lucy expected, and her kind heart delighted in bringing Philip and Maggie together again, though even with all her regard for Philip she could not resist the impression that her cousin Tom had some excuse for feeling shocked at the physical incongruity between the two...(p. 430).

Certainly Maggie is aware of this incongruity of appearance. After greeting Philip Maggie wonders if she has been too friendly and demonstrative toward him. The novelist tells us, "She wished she had assured him more distinctly in their conversation that she desired not to renew the hope of love between them, only because it clashed with her inevitable circumstances" (p. 437). George Eliot's emphasis of the "only" makes us aware that Maggie is not being quite honest with herself about her feeling for Philip. She likes Philip but I do not think she could ever love him romantically because of his deformity.

There is obviously a large amount of egoism and pride in Maggie's love for Stephen, who is very handsome and would be regarded by the world as a good match for her. Maggie, although innocent to the probable reaction of public opinion to her renunciation of Stephen under such "scandalous" circumstances, is probably not oblivious to what the "world's wife" would have said if she could have gotten around her own conscience and found circumstances against marriage to Stephen less formidable. George Eliot describes the probable reaction of the world to such a marriage dictated by prudence in the midst of compromising circumstances:

> If Miss Tulliver, after a few months of well-chosen travel, had returned as Mrs. Stephen Guest with a post-marital trousseau and all the advantages possessed even by the most unwelcome wife of an only son, public opinion, which at St. Ogg's, as elsewhere, always knew what to think, would have judged in strict consistency with those results....Poor Miss Deane! She is very pitiable; but then there was no positive engagement; and the air at the coast will do her good. After all, if young Guest felt no more for her than <u>that</u>, it was better for her not to marry him. What a wonderful marriage for a girl like Miss Tulliver--quite romantic (pp. 512-13)!

We can understand some of the needs that might encourage Maggie to marry Stephen. She has always desired to have a life of beauty and self-fulfillment; this desire has always been frustrated. She is also painfully aware of her economic circumstances. She fears having to leave her family and earn her

own living again. We can sympathize with all these factors which would motivate her to marry Stephen. When she finally tells Stephen that the two of them must reject this temptation to betray earlier commitments, we cannot help wishing she had not had to renounce Stephen. We wonder what part Thomas a Kempis' ideal of renunciation had in this decision. We wonder if there is a certain perversity in her renunciation of the fulfillment offered by Stephen for a higher principle.

Yet the novelist treats Maggie's renunciation so heroically that we cannot help praising her for this attempt to act morally despite circumstances which would compel her to marry Stephen. The chapter "Borne Along By the Tide", most dramatically portrays this struggle in Maggie's soul. As the chapter begins, Maggie and Stephen have already agreed that they must renounce each other. Maggie is to go away soon to a new position. They will not, however, deny themselves the opportunity to be together as much as possible for these last few days.

The battle in Maggie's soul is presented dramatically:

> Maggie all this time moved about with a quiescence and even torpor of manner so contrasted with her usual fitful brightness and ardour...But under this torpor there was a fierce battle of emotions such as Maggie in all her life of struggle had never known or forboded; it seemed to her as if all the worst evil in her had lain in ambush till now and had suddenly started up full-armed with

> hideous, overpowering strength! There were moments in which a cruel selfishness seemed to be getting possession of her; why should not Lucy--why should not Philip suffer? She had had to suffer through many years of her life, and who had renounced anything for her (p. 480)?

In this passage the novelist uses deterministic images which portray Maggie as a victim of strong emotions, feelings so powerful in intensity that they threaten to overcome her previous resolve to renounce Stephen. These images evoke a sense of Maggie as a spectator watching, without any ability to control, a drama unfolding in her own mind. She is subject to powerful forces within her own nature which threaten to destroy that precarious balance which she had formerly achieved by renunciation.

The novelist describes the ideals which come to Maggie's consciousness to counteract these deep desires:

> 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 to hope to enjoy an existence in which she set out by maiming the faith and sympathy that were the best organs of her soul. And then, if pain were so hard to her, what was it to others? "Ah, God! Preserve me from inflicting, give me strength to bear it" (p. 481).

The novelist's rendering of the complex motives which would urge Maggie's renunciation is ambiguous. Here again, we have the image of Maggie as a subject, observing events in her own mind. Among these images which promote conflict in her, is the memory of her early striving, the affection of her childhood, and her belief in a sacredness of life which is above mere personal enjoyment. The novelist makes it clear that these values are determined by Maggie's past experiences, "nurtured in her through years of affection and hardship" (p. 481). Another image is her conception of herself as a martyr, one whose beautiful soul has the strength and capability to forsake happiness rather than hurt others. This is in keeping with the egoism which Maggie has shown throughout. The novelist makes us aware of the complex nature of Maggie's motivation to renounce Stephen.

I do not think we can deny that Maggie's decision to renounce Stephen is just as much a product of determinism as the passion which motivated her to consider marriage to him.

It is, however, this fact which the novelist denies. George Eliot's treatment of Maggie's renunciation is so sympathetic, as indeed has been her portrayal of Maggie throughout, that she wants us to feel Maggie's act is, indeed, a moral one--or at least an effort at morality. This is the crucial problem of the novel. Within a deterministic universe, such as the

novelist surely depicts, free moral action is impossible. For, even an emotional prompting to act morally is determined by factors of heredity and environment.

Yet the author presents Maggie's renunciation as an effort to overcome the limitations of her nature and her environment in order to act morally. This is especially noticeable in the scene between Maggie and Stephen on the boat. To support our theme of determinism, we must again realize that the circumstances for their being alone together were, in a sense, beyond their control. The boating trip had been planned by Lucy to include Maggie and Philip. Lucy, however, had decided to be cupid and stay away so Maggie and Philip could go alone. In the meantime, Philip becomes ill and sends Stephen in his place. Stephen persuades Maggie they should go since they have so little time left together.

The description of the boating incident is permeated with imagery of determinism. The novelist tells us,

> And they went. Maggie felt that she was being led down the garden among the roses, being helped with firm tender care into the boat, having the cushion and cloak arranged for her feet and her parasol opened for her (which she had forgotten)--all by this stronger presence that seemed to bear her along without any act of her own will, like the added self which comes with the sudden exalting influence of a strong tonic--and she felt nothing else. Memory was excluded (pp. 486-7).

This chapter emphasizes Maggie's sense of being carried along passively without any active resistance of her will. The gliding imagery of the boat increases this sense of submission to deterministic forces. In the boat they feel a sense of dreamy enchantment, a detachment from the reality of the conflicts and recriminations they had previously experienced. They are so caught up in the beauty and reverie of the moment that they fail to note landmarks.

Then Stephen puts down the oars and allows the boat to drift without any effort on his part. This is a very symbolic gesture. At this point, Maggie realizes they have gone past their destination and becomes alarmed. Stephen tells her they have come a long way and begs her not to go back until they are married. He argues that they have been compelled to this decision by forces beyond their control. He tells her, "See, Maggie, how everything has come without our seeking--in spite of all our efforts. We never thought of being alone together again; it has all been done by others" (p. 488).

Maggie's response is interesting for it delineates the nature of her struggle:

> Stephen spoke with deep, earnest pleading. Maggie listened, passing from her startled wonderment to the yearning after that belief that the tide was doing it all, that she might glide along with the swift, silent stream and not struggle any more. But across that stealing influence came the terrible

> shadow of past thoughts; and the sudden horror lest now, at last the moment of fatal intoxication was close upon her called up feelings of angry resistance towards Stephen (p. 488).

She turns on him, accusingly: "You have wanted to deprive me of any choice. You knew we were come too far..." (p. 489).

Thus we see the crux of the problem for Maggie. Her renunciation is symbolic for it represents an effort to escape the intoxicating effect of the river, a symbol of determinism. The effect of the river is analogous to the current of passion which led her to Stephen. Though Maggie is tempted to yield to influences so compelling, she resists these forces which threaten to control her.

Stephen, hurt by her accusations, tells her she does not love him enough. The novelist tells us that Maggie is paralyzed by his accusation. This is another deterministic image. She explains: "He had called up a state of feeling in which the reasons which had acted on her conscience seemed to be transmuted into mere self-regard" (p. 489). Thus she is tempted to yield, always conscious of her motives and their morality. The novelist explains, "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 existence" (pp. 489-90).

Here the novelist makes us aware of Maggie's preoccupation with morality, a value for her which supersedes all others.

It is very important for her to act morally. This is one reason she criticizes Stephen for depriving her of a choice. Without a choice, a free will, she cannot act morally. She feels she must resist circumstances which threaten to deprive her of this will to act morally.

This gliding on the river, in sympathy with Stephen's suffering and its moral claim, becomes, for her, symbolic of yielding to temptation. The novelist explains:

> All yielding is attended with a less vivid consciousness than resistance; it is the partial sleep of thought; it is the submergence of our own personality by another. Every influence tended to lull her into acquiescence: that dreamy gliding in the boat, which had lasted for four hours and had brought some weariness and exhaustion, the recoil of her fatigued sensations from the impractical difficulty of getting out of the boat at this unknown distance from home...(p. 490).

Thus Maggie feels subjected to forces beyond her immediate desire or will to resist. She realizes, however, that this feeling is only temporary. She knows:

> that the condition was a transient one and that the morrow must bring back the old life of struggle--that there were thoughts which would presently avenge themselves for this oblivion. But now nothing was distinct to her; she was being lulled to sleep with that soft stream still flowing over her, with those delicious visions melting and fading like the wondrous aerial land of the west (p. 493).

In this image of Maggie being overcome by sleep and the next chapter, "Waking," we can see that for Maggie, the idea of

being passive is synonymous with acquiescence to forces which threaten to control and hence, determine her. For her, active resistance to those forces is an attempt to control them.

What Maggie does not understand and the author refuses to consider is that her efforts of renunciation are just as much a product of determinism as would be her acquiescence. Certainly her will, that force in her which admonishes her to resist, is a product of determinism. It is determined by values resulting from past experiences.

It is important for Maggie that she maintain her striving because it gives meaning to all her former strivings for the highest and best. She admits to herself that

> Her life with Stephen could have no sacredness; she must forever sink and wander vaguely, driven by uncertain impulse, for she had let go the clue of life, that clue which once in the far-off years her young need had clutched so strongly. She had renounced all delights then, before she knew them, before they had come within her reach (p. 494).

Now she has come to know the true meaning of renunciation. Realizing the pain she will give to Stephen and the difficulty of renouncing this powerful attraction, she decides that it is the only way. She cannot allow herself to be driven chaotically by emotion. She feels she must preserve her old visions of beauty and goodness.

I cannot help feeling there is a certain egoism in this rejection of Stephen. Her renunciation is almost inevitable

when we consider her as she always was, the beautiful soul with "visions beyond the distinctly possible" (p. 325). For her to have married Stephen would have been to accept mundane reality. She is a person who must preserve her vague, elusive ideals of sacredness and beauty above all else. This is one reason she chooses renunciation. Another reason may be that hers is a personality of habitual strife rather than acquiescence to other people's values and opinions.

I do not know how well the novelist understands Maggie. She is a very complex character and probably has much of George Eliot's personality. It is therefore possible that the novelist, though she portrays Maggie faithfully and consistently, does not understand all the forces that have determined Maggie's renunciation. In any event, she praises Maggie's action.

The crucial question of the novel is the value which the novelist has placed on Maggie's efforts at renunciation. it is here that she undermines all her arguments about determinism. We understand and sympathize with Maggie's attempts to act morally. Yet we find the novelist's analysis of her action inconsistent with the theme of determinism. I do not see how, within a deterministic universe, morality is possible. We cannot help feeling sorry for Maggie, as a victim of forces beyond her control, even those that compel her renunciation on the grounds of morality.

CHAPTER IV

DETERMINISM AND MORALITY

I am now going to discuss a recent article by John Hagan, which I believe is very useful in defining the major critical problem of The Mill on the Floss.[1] Hagan discusses the polarity that has resulted from two conflicting readings of the novel in regard to the novelist's view of Maggie's renunciation. Hagan's primary problem, like that of most critics, is relating the renunciation to the theme of determinism in the novel. I do not believe his conclusions are altogether true. His discussion does, however, elucidate many of the problems of the novel. It particularly points out the need for a synthesis of an apparent contradiction in the novel, the author's reverence for Maggie's renunciation in the face of repressive circumstances. Hagan is right in telling us that the central conflict in the novel results from the inevitable clash of two different types of characters but he does not argue sufficiently that the essential problem for the novelist is her understanding that the characters themselves are products of determinism and cannot be held morally responsible for their actions.

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[1]John Hagan, "A Reinterpretation of The Mill on the Floss," PMLA, 87(1972), pp. 53-63.

Perhaps Hagan does not push this theme of determinism further because he cannot reconcile it with his conviction that the novelist views Maggie's renunciation of Stephen, in her desperate circumstances, as a moral act. This is the crucial problem for Hagan and it is caused by the qualified determinism of the novelist.

Rather than consider the conflict in the novel a product of impersonal forces, Hagan, like Mr. Tulliver, feels compelled to consider some characters flawed. This is perhaps because of his recognition of the novelist's moral bias, a force that runs counter to the essential theme of determinism which pervades the novel.

In his article, Hagan has attempted to dissolve the polarity which has resulted from two conflicting readings of the novel, those who assert that Maggie's renunciation of Stephen is bad because it represents a regression to childhood sympathies and a rejection of the needs of adult life and those who feel that her strivings for fulfillment were egoistic and immoral. Hagan has attempted to resolve the problem by placing the blame for Maggie's dilemma squarely on the flawed characters of Tom and Mr. Tulliver, whom he says are unable to understand Maggie and reciprocate her love for them.

Hagan feels the actions of Tom and Mr. Tulliver create the circumstances which frustrate Maggie's quest for self-fulfillment:

> Maggie's frustration and her struggles to endure that frustration by means of renunciation are the direct consequences of Tom's and Tulliver's failure, at this stage in her life, to perceive, to understand, and to reciprocate her love. Were they to respond to her now as they did in her childhood, Maggie's happiness would be restored, and any futile attempts to deny her need for happiness would therefore no longer need to be made. But such a response has become impossible for them: their mutual hatred of Wakem, their acute sense of disgrace, and their grim determination to restore the family fortunes imprison them in a world of gloomy obsessions from which Maggie is wholly excluded.[2]

Hagan's argument is good in so far as it makes us aware that Tom and Mr. Tulliver's failure to reciprocate her love contributes to Maggie's unhappiness. He does not, however, realize that these characters are no more capable of controlling their "flaws," than is Maggie.

Hagan rightly emphasizes the inevitable nature of the conflict between the two types of natures represented by Maggie and Tom, the conflict which forms the subject matter of the entire novel. He describes the differences between:

> two radically different kinds of characters: on the one hand, the large-souled, who, like "all of us" (as George Eliot puts it in Middlemarch, Ch. xxi), are "born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves," but

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[2]Hagan, p. 59.

> are sensitive and imaginative enough ultimately to transcend this limitation and see that others possess "an equivalent center of self," and, on the other hand, the narrow-souled, who are incapable of this kind of vision, and remain permanently trapped in the confines of the egoistic self.

Hagan discusses how this conflict between the two kinds of characters becomes the "novel's central tragic issue."[3] He is right in feeling that this conflict is inevitable but he does not emphasize that this inevitability is due to forces of determinism that are beyond human control. Hence the characters cannot be judged morally for their limitations.

Hagan describes the nature of the conflict of these two types of characters. He discusses her father and brother's response to Maggie's relationship with Philip Wakem. He argues:

> Her need to love and to be loved by her father and brother and to win their approval remains as compelling and legitimate as ever; she continues to be bound to them by "the strongest fibres" of her heart. But now, partly because Tom and Tulliver continue to frustrate her demand, and partly because Maggie is going through a natural process of maturation, which, in accord with "the onward tendency of human things," enables her to rise even farther "above"... their mental level" than previously, this need is balanced by an equally strong, legitimate, and autonomous desire to find additional fulfillment from sources beyond them. Both kinds of fulfillment have become essential to her. Yet, because of the "moral stupidity" of Tom and her father,

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[3] Hagan, p. 59.

> she will get neither. This is the basic tragic situation of the novel which now definitely takes shape.[4]

Hagan feels that the best solution to Maggie's problem would be to marry Philip since she has kissed him and told him she loved him, confessing that "she has found in him the greatest happiness in her childhood since Tom" and would marry him if it were possible. Hagan continues:

> But the crux of the situation is precisely that there <u>is</u> an obstacle...Superficially, of course, that obstacle is in Maggie herself--in her profound attachment to her father and brother, both of whom oppose not only marriage but even friendship between Maggie and Philip because of their long-standing hatred of Philip's father. If Maggie's attachment to them were not so deep, she could disregard the voice of her guilty conscience which urges her to renounce Philip, defy their ban, and find an escape from her frustration.[5]

Hagan devotes much of his discussion to his attempt to ascertain and defend the legitimacy of both of these claims on Maggie, her love for her family and her desire for greater fulfillment outside the family. I agree with him in his conclusion that the novelist felt both of these claims were morally legitimate. Yet within the deterministic world, the morality of these claims is not so important as the fact that they are viewed by Maggie as possible alternatives for action, thus promoting conflict within her.

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[4] Hagan, p. 59.

[5] Hagan, p. 59.

Hagan's discussion is prompted by his realization that the novelist presents Maggie's renunciation as an heroic, moral act. This treatment of Maggie reflects a moral bias that is incompatible with the philosophy of determinism.

Having defended Maggie's desire for fulfillment outside her family, Hagan writes:

> The real obstacle to her fulfillment lies...in the flawed characters of Tom and Tulliver, whose opposition to Philip springs from their narrow prejudice against Wakem and their complete failure to appreciate the depth of Maggie's need for a fuller life. The most active opposition comes, of course, from Tom, who cruelly forces upon Maggie an absolute choice between Philip and himself. Were it not for Tom's fanaticism, Maggie could be loyal to him and marry Philip at the same time; in themselves both goals are completely compatible and completely desirable. The necessity of choosing between them is an artificial one forced upon Maggie by Tom's insensitivity.[6]

As I said earlier, I do not feel that Maggie really believes that marriage to Philip would provide for her the type of emotional fulfillment that Hagan is describing. In any event I do not think that she wants to marry Philip although she does feel a certain amount of pity and responsibility for him. The novelist's ambiguous treatment of the relationship between Philip and Maggie makes us wonder if Maggie would have married him if Tom and her father had not protested.

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[6]Hagan, pp. 59-60.

Although the actions of Tom and Mr. Tulliver definitely frustrate Maggie, they are not primarily to blame for her difficulties. We must remember that they are just as much products of heredity and environment as is Maggie or Hamlet. The difference is one of focus. Like Shakespeare, the novelist has concentrated on the one attractive, intelligent, contemplative character but that does not mean that there is no pathos in the lives of the other characters such as Ophelia or Mr. Tulliver, both of whom go mad as a result of circumstances. While our emotional sympathies are with Maggie, we cannot overlook the fact that the other characters are entrapped within their own particular circumstances.

I do not agree with Hagan's analysis of the relationship between Maggie's frustrated love for Philip and the intensity of her feeling for Stephen. Hagan states that this frustration is directly responsible for her inability to avoid an entanglement with Stephen. Hagan does admit a fact that would undermine his argument:

> By the middle of Book VI, however, the situation has been complicated by an additional factor: Maggie is reluctant to marry Philip not only because of Tom's continued opposition, but because of her growing attraction to Stephen Guest...The two things with which Stephen is most frequently associated--music and the river--come to epitomize the irrestible force of the intoxication which she increasingly feels in his presence.

Hagan admits that this attraction of Stephen is much stronger than her feeling for Philip has ever been but he argues that "both her involvement with him in the first place and the great intensity of that involvement are direct consequences of the earlier renunciation of Philip which Tom virtually forced upon her."[7]

Again, I cannot agree with Hagan on this point. I am not so certain that Maggie does not, deep down, welcome the chance to renounce Philip, who does not fulfill her romantic expectations of a suitor. I think the temptation to marry Stephen is greater than the temptation to marry Philip, even though, to her sense of honor the obstacles in both cases are large.

Hagan describes the difference which Maggie attributes to her renunciation of the two suitors. He writes, "Maggie gives up Stephen, not (as in Philip's case) because she is intimidated into doing so and wishes to avoid betraying Tom and her father, but because of her own free choice and her desire not to betray Philip and Lucy, to whom she and Stephen are tacitly engaged."[8] Although Maggie and Philip may be tacitly engaged, the novel gives no indication that Maggie ever intends to marry Philip.

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[7]Hagan, p. 60.

[8]Hagan, p. 60.

Hagan emphasizes rightly the greater significance George Eliot attaches to Maggie's renunciation of Stephen. He writes:

> Maggie's renunciation of Stephen is climactic: uncompelled by anything but the voice of honor and conscience, and carried out in opposition to the strongest, most sensual passion for love and a rich life she has known, it represents the moment in the novel when her success in living by Kempis' philosophy is most complete.

The novelist makes us aware that the temptation to marry becomes greater for Maggie as the circumstances are altered. Public opinion makes her realize the imprudence of her return, unmarried, to St. Oggs after leaving with Stephen. The reaction of the town, and particularly of Tom, contributes greatly to Maggie's frustration. Hagan discusses Tom's response to her rejection of Stephen:

> Yet the point of the first four chapters of Book VII is that if Maggie's self-discipline has reached its height, so too, in ironic counterpoint, has Tom's blindness and opposition. The heroism of her renunciation of Stephen, instead of at last winning her brother's understanding, respect, and love, as it should, is powerless against the alienation of his sympathy which has been caused by the river journey itself. Completely oblivious to the moral grandeur of that renunciation, he rejects her more brutally than ever before, and Maggie, of course, is crushed.[9]

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[9]Hagan, p. 61.

Hagan discusses the fact that other characters in the novel respond to Maggie with greater sympathy. This reinforces our sense of Tom's injustice. Among these more sympathetic characters are Bob Jakin, Philip, Lucy and even Aunt Glegg. Hagan writes:

> Especially important is the contrast between Tom and Dr. Kenn. Whereas the latter can appreciate Maggie's spiritual conflicts because he is a man of "broad, strong sense" who can "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..."[10]

We can see here the basis of the novelist's concept of morality. Her refusal to accept the limitations of general rules, or maxims, is probably the primary reason for her assertion of the morality of Maggie's renunciation. She cannot allow herself to accept a rigid philosophical system, such as determinism, whole-heartedly. To do so would be to limit one's self.

Hagan describes the "man of maxims", which receives its ultimate illustration in Tom:

> a representative of all those "minds that are guided in their moral judgment solely by general rules, thinking that these will lead them to justice by a ready-made patent method, without the trouble of exerting patience, discrimination, impartiality--without any care to assure

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[10]Hagan, p. 61.

> themselves whether they have the insight that comes from a hardly-earned estimate of temptation, or from a life vivid and intense enough to have created a wide fellow-feeling with all that is human." This passage, echoing the earlier one on Tom as a man of prejudice, emphatically defines the crucial distinction between the two types of human character which underlies the tragic contrast and conflict between Tom and Maggie herself.[11]

Thus Hagan reads the entire novel in terms of its revelation of the differences of these two types of characters. He writes:

> The ultimate importance of the entire affair with Stephen which constitutes Book VI is not that it brings to a climax Maggie's efforts to live by Kempis' philosophy (though this does happen), but rather that it brings to a climax Tom's failure to understand his sister's needs and reciprocate her love.

It is interesting to note that Hagan, despite his emphasis on the morality of Maggie's action, finds the true center of the novel not in her heroism but in her tragic frustration. Instead of allying this frustration explicitly with determinism, Hagan blames Tom and Mr. Tulliver for Maggie's dilemma. In this way, he can use them as counters to Maggie's heroic, moral nature. He explains:

> Each of her three vitally necessary quests for love and a wider life, which were originally incited by the alienation of her father's and

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[11]Hagan, p. 61.

> brother's love at the time of the family downfall, and were later broadened and intensified by the natural process of her maturation, has ended in failure. And the failure in each case is related in some vital way to the flawed characters of Tom or Tulliver or both, who are far inferior to Maggie in spiritual sensitivity, but to whom she is nevertheless bound by the noblest feelings of loyalty and devotion.[12]

Hagan's argument that the flawed characters of Tom and Mr. Tulliver provide the major frustrations that are finally responsible for Maggie's tragedy ignores the complexity of George Eliot's vision. Hagan's analysis overlooks the one basic idea that lends pathos to the entire situation, the realization that these characters are just as much the product of circumstances as is Maggie. The tragedy is that Maggie is bound to these insensitive people by fatal ties of kinship and love that are so pervasive she feels she cannot sever them.

Moreover, in dramatizing Maggie's plight, the novelist has emphasized with much irony the inevitability of actions and deeds, the multiplicity of causes, which have effected Maggie's tragic end. One thing after another, like grains of sand running through an hourglass, has contributed to her eventual downfall.

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[12]Hagan, pp. 61-2.

Maggie's efforts to live nobly and honestly have been thwarted many times but the novelist has continually praised these attempts to act morally in the face of unfortunate circumstances. This is probably the reason Hagan has been led to a reading in terms of character flaw. If we assume Maggie's character is moral and heroic, rather than merely a result of impersonal forces of determinism, we also feel obliged to assume that other characters, especially those who would frustrate her, are somehow immoral.

We must realize, however, that Maggie's attempts to act morally are limited by factors in her environment and are actually themselves products of circumstances beyond human control. Personality development is determined in a manner that would preclude the possibility of moral freedom of choice. The problem however, for Hagan and for George Eliot, is that they can never quite admit this.

Although we admire Maggie's attempts to act morally, it seems doubly ironic that she should finally succumb to natural forces so obviously beyond her control. Hagan's analysis of the importance of the flood to the message of the novel is quite helpful in achieving a perspective of this most difficult problem of the relationship between determinism and morality. Hagan writes:

> As is well known, this part of the novel has given critics more trouble than any other; there is almost universal agreement that for one reason or another it is unsatisfactory. That the action is melodramatic and indeed almost comic in its foreshortening and fortuity; that it is sentimental in the abruptness with which Tom at last awakens to Maggie's nobility and in the description of their death embrace; and that it has the effect of imposing a somewhat mechanical finality, a formal "ending," upon a struggle in Maggie's soul which, as long as Tom's opposition exists, can only remain inconclusive--all are points that can be conceded at once.

Hagan discusses the relevance of the flood scene to the central theme of the novel. He discusses the means by which the flood reunites Maggie and Tom. He argues its import:

> That the "something" which Maggie had earlier hoped would "soften" Tom has finally occurred, so that he begins to awaken to her greatness of soul and to reciprocate her love, accentuates the momentous significance of his earlier blindness and spirit of opposition; that this awakening occurs only because Maggie is sacrificing herself to save him highlights the importance of his selfishness; that now it comes too late to alter Maggie's destiny confirms our sense of the decisive difference for the better it could have made earlier; that she and Tom are killed by floating "machinery" symbolizes how destructive have been the effects on her of her father's and brother's prosaic materialism; and finally, that their epitaph reads "In death they were not divided" comments definitively on how much Maggie and Tom were divided in life.[13]

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[13]Hagan, p. 62.

Hagan's argument is a laudable attempt to reconcile the inconsistencies in the book. It does not take into account, however, the importance of determinism to the novel's theme. If we consider Hagan's interpretation in relation to the novel's emphasis on determinism, we will see that this is, as Lerner has suggested, George Eliot's "most subversive book."[14] Although the reader admires Maggie's efforts to live morally, we are so emotionally involved with the heroine that we feel acutely the lack of justice and order in Maggie's world. The novelist has undermined the possibility or value of moral action by this impersonal, terrifying deus ex machina. By allowing the frustrated heroine to die in the arms of her beloved brother, the novelist merely emphasizes the pathetic tragedy of Maggie's life. The fact that "in their death they were not divided" is a happy circumstance of irony, certainly not a result of any Providential action.[15] The novelist has merely added a sentimental touch to her primary argument that men are determined by forces over which they have little control. The fact that Maggie's ultimate end is due to cosmic forces of such magnitude as the flood and the specific force of the floating machinery of the town merely reinforces our sense of the pathos of her situation.

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[14]Lerner, p. 281.

[15]Eliot, p. 547.

The flood scene makes us acutely aware of the theme of tragic separation which pervades the novel. It is ironic that the forces of nature have brought Tom and Maggie together at the end. We feel deeply the insignificance of these characters within the stream of time. We realize that what separated Tom and Maggie all along was just as arbitrary as the events of their death. All of the characters in the novel are just as much products of cause and effect, of an unfortunate juxtaposition of events, as is the death of Tom and Maggie, which the novelist has so ironically termed "The Final Rescue." Even the large-souled Maggie is defeated by the circumstances of her environment. The flood scene makes us aware that, inevitably, all of us are at the mercy of natural forces.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the importance of determinism within George Eliot's novel, The Mill on the Floss. We have considered the relevance of this philosophy for the novelist, who, with her essential moral and humanistic bias, has difficulty accepting it fully. We have found that this philosophy influenced greatly her works, prompting her to reject its most dehumanizing assertions.

We have discussed the manner in which determinism is implicit in the portrayal of character and action in The Mill on the Floss. We have seen how the novelist reveals her understanding of the factors of environment that determine personality development and human behavior. Economic, social, and psychological determinants have been discussed in relation to character, action and imagery in the novel.

The novelist has emphasized the complexity of psychological factors which influence human behavior in such an intricate manner that characters are unable to understand fully their motivations for action. This limits their ability to act morally, as do other circumstances of heredity and environment.

Yet the novelist asserts that we should all be tolerant of others because of our understanding of the complexity of forces in a deterministic world. She makes us intensely aware

of the interdependence of people and their responsibilities to each other. The novelist has continually asserted the importance of education and experience to our understanding of the limitations and responsibilities of life.

We have detected a moral qualification in the novelist's view of determinism. She has emphasized the importance of individual responsibility for actions even with her knowledge that each person is governed by forces beyond his complete understanding and control. This is particularly evident in the novelist's treatment of Maggie.

Our discussion of determinism in the action of the novel has emphasized the unfortunate juxtaposition of events, caused by the operation of impersonal forces, which have contributed to Maggie's dilemma. We have noted the multiplicity and complexity of these forces and events. At the same time we have seen the author's sympathy and understanding of the other characters, who are products of determinism.

We have become aware of the novelist's reverence for Maggie's renunciation of Stephen, her attempt to resist those forces which would compel her to act in a manner that she feels is immoral. Moreover, we have discussed the complex values which prompt Maggie to renounce Stephen and have attempted to show how they are related to the development of her personality and, hence, are products of determinism.

We have recognized, however, the novelist's refusal to consider Maggie's renunciation anything less than heroic. We have argued that the novelist's praise for these attempts to act morally form the essential critical problem of the novel. Thus the novelist reveals a moral bias which is inconsistent with the theme of determinism. This inconsistency has led to many difficulties in understanding the novel.

I feel, however, that the novel's inconsistencies are intentional and that the novelist consciously presents a qualified view of determinism which reveals her own deep feelings on the subject. Her emphasis on the need for morality is a deliberate contradiction of that philosophy which is deeply compelling in its assertion of human values. The novelist realizes that moral accountability or blame is a philosophical problem whereas human suffering is a much more immediate problem which should be averted whenever possible.

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