George Eliot's treatment of sin

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GEORGELIOT’S TREATMENT OF SIN

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This thesis is a study of George Eliot's treatment of sin in eight of her most important novels: Scenes of Clerical Life, Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, Silas Marner, Romola, Felix Holt, Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda. Through a study of her own personal experiences and the disturbing conditions which existed in England during the nineteenth century, the writer purposes to show why she treated the problem of sin as well as how she treated it.

Chapter I treats Eliot's religious, intellectual, and philosophical background in relation to the historical background of her time and reveals the reasons for her preoccupation in her novels with the evils of England as they were mirrored through people of her time. Chapter II sets forth the categories of sin that are employed by Eliot. Here an attempt is made to classify the sins that are exhibited through her characters in the novels mentioned above. In Chapter III is found her delineation of the roles played by the various characters of vice and virtue and the effect of both upon society. And in Chapter IV Eliot's idea of retribution is made known through an analysis of her treatment of guilty and virtuous characters.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ........................................................................................................ 11

CHAPTER

I. ELIOT'S BACKGROUND: THE PROBLEM OF SIN................................. 1
   Early Religious Beliefs
   Intellectual Background
   Preoccupation with Ethical Teachings
   Punishment for Moral Violations
   Belief in Retribution

II. THE CATEGORIES OF SIN................................................................. 14
   Sins of the Mind
   Sins of the Flesh

III. ELIOT'S DELINQUENT OF SIN.................................................. 32
   Delineation of the Sins of the Mind
   Delineation of the Sins of the Flesh
   Magnification of Sin Through Contrast

IV. THE WAGES OF SIN........................................................................ 66
   Worthy and Ultimate Punishment of Vice
   The Role of Virtuous Characters

CONCLUSION............................................................................................ 97

BIBLIOGRAPHY....................................................................................... 100
Novelist George Eliot (Marian Evans Cross) was born near the beginning of the nineteenth century, when England and the rest of the world were disturbed by confusing and perplexing problems. There were social and economic problems which grew out of invention and the Industrial Revolution. There were labor problems which developed into uprisings perpetrated by the working classes, who advocated political and social reforms. The Reform Bill agitation of 1832, and its consequences gave impetus to bitter conflict. There were political intrigues in which the conservative Tories exhausted every political scheme to prevent the progressive Whigs from gaining the upper hand in Parliament. Then, there was the conflict between religion and science, which left deep impressions upon the minds of most of the people.

1 George Trevelyan, British History of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1924), p. 122.

2 Ibid., pp. 234-42.


5 The Victorian Age began with an evolutionary doctrine which rejected the orthodox religion or any form of metaphysical theorizing or supernatural authority as empirically unverifiable. Edwin Burtt, Types of Religious Philosophy (New York, 1939), p. 172.
Even as a little girl George Eliot had been concerned with these problems. Growing up among miners and factory workers, she had obtained first-hand information on the actual sufferings of overworked, underpaid men, women, and children, and this knowledge greatly disturbed and alarmed her. She was just as gravely concerned about the vices indulged in by all classes of English people, rich and poor alike; and her anxiety to help them led her to engage in the charitable work of soliciting funds and organizing clothes clubs to alleviate the sufferings of the poor in order that the urge for vice or crime might be lessened or eradicated altogether. At twenty-one, she wrote religious verse for the Christian Observer in an effort to inspire people whose doubting minds sought reassurance from everywhere. 1 She was affiliated with the Church of England, but served also in leading prayer meetings in the Baptist school at Coventry, where her hearers were encouraged to have faith in God. She taught them to believe that the pursuit of pleasure was a snare; that dress was vanity, and that society as England recognized was dangerous.

Eliot's absorption in religious and even ascetic ideas was intensified by the influence of a Methodist preacher aunt, a disciple

of John Wesley, whose self-sacrificing devotion to the Wesleyan Creed left an indelible impression upon her. Being intensely interested in religious literature, she read Froude’s *Nemesis of Faith* and, feeling that much could be learned from ancient classics if she knew classical languages, studied Greek and Latin in order to read and translate Aeschylus. She learned French, German, Italian, Spanish, and even acquired some knowledge of Hebrew to facilitate her reading and translations. A translation of Spinoza’s *Ethics* and Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity* followed. However, before she thought of making literature out of her impressions of life in the Midlands, she had been for years an earnest student of philosophy and psychology, and later exhibited an interest in contemporary science. She was a friend and collaborator of the leading thinkers, and was a writer on philosophical and social subjects. Psychological studies sharpened her insight into the inner sphere of man’s life and activity, and an interest

1 John Wesley, a devout Christian and organizer of the Methodist Church, felt that a spiritual revival was necessary, since the prudential ethics and rational orthodoxy inculcated by supposedly divine men of the eighteenth century had not survived the period. Common people, he believed, had to be appealed to by means of the supernatural and the spiritual, by fervid, evangelical exhortation. Thus, he began a great revival in the latter eighteenth century, and by the nineteenth century one of the greatest of sects was created in England. Arthur Cross, *A History of England and Greater Britain* (New York, 1924), pp. 793-94.


in morals fixed her eye on the mental processes by which evil acts are engendered.

People of marked spiritual or philosophical affinities are bound to meet some time or other if they remain in the same country for any length of time. It was not surprising that Eliot met Charles and Rachel Bray. Rachel was a gifted German woman and Charles was a wealthy rubber manufacturer. Both were engrossed in religious and metaphysical speculation as well as in politics and social questions. It was while Eliot lived with the Brays at Coventry that she met and became acquainted with other notable thinkers. Among them was John Chapman, editor of Westminster Review, who published the periodical as an organ of advanced theological and philosophical thought, with the teachings of Comte predominating. Chapman influenced her greatly, and she became co-editor of this periodical. Similarly, Charles Bray published the Philosophy of Necessity which exercised considerable influence on Eliot's young mind and caused her to become even more interested in philosophy than before; and about the same time he wrote his philosophic work, Auguste Comte published his Positive Philosophy; Buckle published his History of Civilization; and Herbert Spencer, Eliot's good friend, published his Sociology and Social Statics, all of which were centered around the theory that

1 Melinda Blind, George Eliot (Boston, 1889), pp. 32–3.
"man was as much subject to fixed laws as any of the other entities in nature." The ideas embodied represented some of the most vital thought of the age and contributed not a little to the formation of Eliot's skeptic views.

Her intimacy with the Brays began about the time that these new doubts were beginning to ferment in her. However, Charles Bray's speculations, which led him to inquire into the dogmas that formed the basis of his belief, did not stand the test of reason. This reversie of belief coming from such a close friend, strongly affected George Eliot.

She felt her faith giving way to doubt, and when Charles Hennel, a Unitarian and author of "An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity," persuaded her to translate "Leben Jesu" by Strauss, she began the translation with the hope that constant work on the religious classic might restore her faith. With a crucifix placed before her eyes, she attempted to dispel "doubt and difficulties" by sowing "good seeds of faith in the Almighty." As she worked she prayed fervently that the translating of Strauss's "Leben Jesu" would "stir her soul and make it shake its wings toward a good and noble flight." But even though the scholarly translation of the life of Jesus, documented by scores of
explanatory footnotes in Latin, Greek, German and French, inflamed her soul to burning ecstasy at times, she found that doubt continued to prey as a parasite upon her faith. When the work was completed, it was published anonymously, for she refused to be known as the translator.

She admired and drank deeply of Rousseau because he could wring eloquence from woe; he could make madness beautiful; he could throw enchantment over passion. Especially did Rousseau's "Les Confessions" make a forceful impression upon her, and her knowledge of French made the reading of his works enjoyable. Carlyle's French Revolution appealed to her very strongly, and the novels of Charles Kingsley attracted much of her attention.

Then suddenly and unexpectedly Darwin's Origin of Species, published in 1859, shocked the nation into the realization that the old theory of evolution was not only probable, but that an empirically verified hypothesis was given which substantiated all preceding evidence of evolution. Skepticism invaded and apostatized the whole nation, and
George Eliot, stunned by agnosticism, dazed by failure to get answers to her own pleading prayers, confused by the failure of the Oxford Movement to accomplish its aims, searched the Bible, the Apocrypha, and every possible source where truth on the matter might be found. But the Bible did not establish the proof she sought, and her faith became so eclipsed with doubt that a dreadful shadow was cast over her life.

Once convinced that she had been duped by a foundless faith, with nothing whatever as proof or evidence, there was no pretext in her attitude toward religion. She not only renounced her faith, but she rejected the Church and the gospel. The universe, which had appeared to Eliot as the outspreading smile of a loving father, now forced her to say, “God is unthinkable” and “immortality is incredible.” Her


2 John Cross, op.cit., p. 117.

3 Not only Eliot but literary and Biblical scholars plunged into a systematic study of the Bible to extract from its books an exact meaning. Edwin Burtt, op.cit., p. 316. A Presbyterian body also made a conscientious examination of the main questions of evolution and adopted the chief points of its doctrine. White, op.cit., p. 84.

ostensible atheism resolved itself into a blind theism, disclosing an inward vital connection with the esoteric truth of all great religions. Ames says that though Eliot's faith in Christ was gone forever, religious faith itself did not die; that it only retreated into the inner citadel of her soul, beyond the shafts of logic, and spoke through conscience and reason. In all probability Ames was right in his belief, for Eliot manifested a strong religious faith which reflected itself through her novels and later operated in her treatment of sin.

Having declared her stand against the Church, Eliot also defied conventions of society. She went to London to assist in the editing of the Westminster periodical and met George Lewes, a free-lance journalist, with whom she became closely connected. Struggling long and truly against the flesh, yet dallying with foul temptation till the flesh prevailed, moral and spiritual death was swept into oblivion, and George Eliot fell victim to a great sin. Defying every convention of society,

1 Thesism was a popular doctrine of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Its purpose was to test traditional doctrines of religion through the light of empirical evidence. John S. Mill, Three Essays on Religion (New York, 1924), pp. 125–57.

2 Charles Ames, op.cit., xviii.

3 George Lewes, a married man with three sons, seems to have been happily married for a time, but marital difficulties arose when his wife proved unfaithful by giving birth to Thornton Huft's illegitimate son. George Eliot figured in the final break. She advised him to "quit a household which had broken bounds in every direction." Anne Mitchell, George Lewes and George Eliot (New York, 1933), pp. 141–62.

she eloped to the continent with Lewes and lived with him out of wedlock until his death twenty years later. Kitchel says that in Eliot's search to find her own happiness, she forgot that the rest of the world existed.

Eliot's happiness as Lewes' mistress was short lived, for society made her see that she had forsaken all the decencies of life, that her very life was a lie, a deception. Wherever she went, hard staggering remarks, spoken in frigid, contemptuous tones by unkind people, sent her home with terrible headaches. The loss of her only sister's affection was an agonizing pain that never ceased, and her brother's silence toward her was like a piercing dart through her heart. Friends forsok and avoided her and she shrank from crowds and displays. Being deserted by her family and forsaken by friends, Eliot was made to realize that


2. Kitchel, holding Eliot responsible for the alienation of the Lewes family, says that Eliot, in defending herself for destroying the family ties, states that "not only was Lewes' previous life irrevocably spoiled," but that his home had been wholly broken up two years before she knew him. Anna Kitchel, op.cit., pp. 181-55.


her own happiness should not have been her highest aim; that the
conscious pursuit of happiness had inevitably degraded and enslaved her.
Extrication from her family brought greater pain than the severance of
friendly connections, and the lonely, unhappy women was dreadfully
nervous and always depressed.

Eliot could never believe again in the immaculate conception of
Christ, being disinclined to invest her spiritual capital in the
questionable sonship of God; but her suffering drew her toward the cross
of Christ. Every act He did, every word He spoke, every pain He bore,
gave her to know that He was self-sacrificing. He sought not His own
happiness, nor did He act to please Himself. His was a life of sacrifice.
Hence, she recognized His cross as a power on earth, and she revered
His name, and considered the principles for which He stood as measuring
sticks for good and evil.

1 "My life is a perpetual nightmare," she wrote, "I have of late felt
a depression that has disordered the vision of my mind's eye and made me
alive to what is certainly a fact, that I am alone in the world. I have
no one who enters into my pleasures or my griefs, no one to whom I can
pour out my soul." John Cross, op.cit., pp. 64-65.

Eliot and her father were reconciled before his death, and she
nursed him during his lingering illness until his death in 1849.
Ibid., pp. 73-75.

3

George Lewes' habitus illness, worry over finances for their own
support and the support of Lewes' wife and children, kept Eliot under a
"lashed pressure." Anna Ritchel, op.cit., pp. 228-33.

John Brown, op.cit., p. 3.
1. Her own happiness should not have been her highest aim; that the conscious pursuit of happiness had inevitably degraded and enslaved her.

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2. Eliot and her father were reconciled before his death, and she nursed him during his lingering illness until his death in 1849. Ibid., pp. 73-126.

3. George Lewes' habitual illness, worry over finances for their own support and the support of Lewes' wife and children, kept Eliot under a "leaden pressure." Anna H Ritchel, op.cit., pp. 238-33.

4. John Brown, op.cit., p. 3.
hearts of her fellow men and to sprinkle some precious grain."

With the cross of Christ ever in mind, Eliot resolved to write novels, not just fiction for enjoyment, but novels of truths as measured by the cross, with a central aim to teach the truth of Christianity, to fight sin which she felt existed everywhere, to show that the highest life of man only begins when he accepts and bears the cross. Writing became a part of her religion, and she "wrote no word that was not prompted from within." Her doctrine of the cross was not a theological formulation, but a consciousness of an inner reality, a symbol of that spirit and law of self-giving or self-sacrifice which merges the individual life in universal ends. A certain Puritanism, a certain worship of duty, a certain turn of fate, can be traced throughout each of her novels, and her workmanship sings an almost identical song to nineteenth century society:

1. Ibid., vii-viii.

2. It was through Lewes that Eliot received inspiration to write novels, and each of her novels was written during her life with Lewes. Because her real name was subject to ridicule and censure, she chose the pen-name George Eliot. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. VI, pp. 216-21.


Leaveth health be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear;
For God's all-seeing eye surveys
Thy secret thoughts, thy works, thy ways.

Thus, in Eliot's novels there is a passion for truth, which is her guiding motive as she lashes the evil doings of the everyday man of the street, the clergy of her own parish, and the aristocrat and the peasant of England.

2 Johnson Wylie, "Introduction", Adam Bede, xvii.
Most of the novels of the nineteenth century were politico-social novels which were concerned with problems that directly affected the life of the nation. During this period England was terribly vexed by industrial upheavals which created social and economic problems all over the country, and the nation was disquieted by the evil practices of factory systems which employed women and children for cheaper labor. From rural England and other European countries came an influx of laborers for factory employment, which brought about a concentration of people in certain areas. In such densely populated districts all kinds of vice—gambling, stealing, fornication, and drinking—were bound to exist. The loss of religious faith helped to lower moral standards to the extent that many people lost much of their fidelity and integrity, and they ceased to adhere to the Christian principles which they had been accustomed. Thus, writers of this period wrote for the specific purpose of attacking and correcting evils over England. Dickens and Thackeray, universally recognized as the greatest novelists of the age, wrote novels exposing the social corruption of England. Dickens' novels were concerned with the working classes, with the cheap press, with trade unionism, with democratic politics, and with the cinema. He proposed Christian charity as a solution to the problems. Thackeray's

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novels were concerned with snobbish, un-Christian-like manners of the
period. Charles Kingsley, Disraeli, and Mrs. Gaskell grappled with
social and economic problems in their novels.

George Eliot differed from other nineteenth century novelists
in that she was concerned with political and social issues only in
such ways as they affected the morals of society. Her paramount interest
was in mankind and her main purpose was to moralize and to attack the
sins of her fellow-countrymen through fiction in order to purge
England of its wickedness. Her novels, based on her earliest experiences
in England and the critical views of man and society, which had by
this time formulated themselves in her mind, are novels of purpose.

They are, as it were, biographies of people struggling with the forces
of evil; but the struggle is usually an internal struggle against an
opposing environment, and the conflict is always a moral one of good
and bad egocentric impulses. The antagonistic forces take many forms.

In Eliot's treatment of sin she writes for the avowed purpose of
exposing these evils as they actually exist, and she hopes for results.
The sins she categorizes in her novels are sins that she sees all over
England; and in her effort to expose these sins, in her great desire to
spread Christian charity, in bursts of human sympathy, in tenderness to
all human frailty that is not vitally base and self-seeking, she

Vol. 10, p. 222.

2 Ibid., p. 231.
capitalizes on expressions of self-sacrifice and unselfishness, for she believes that England is devoid of the true meaning of both self-sacrifice and unselfishness. She sees English people as selfish and self-pleasing. "Self-pleasing" then, under one form or another, is the essence of her conception of evil and sin. Under this one head, self-pleasing, Eliot uncovers the sins of deceit, revenge, hatred, jealousy, pride, idolatry, lust for power, adultery and inebriation.

She portrays all her worldly male characters as handsome, accomplished and gentlemanly, loving and lovable, finding the keenest enjoyment in the happiness of others, irreprouachable in outside life, and free, so they believe, from everything bearing the semblance of vice. Yet, in their own lust for self-pleasing, they scatter desolation and crime in every path. In an effort to "please themselves" the villainous characters are impelled to stand in favor with everybody. Thus, we find them kind, genial, yet weak and vacillating in struggles against temptations. To gratify their own whims they deceive and lie like cowards.

The true law of life is the quest of the ages, yet Eliot's worldly characters know no truth. Truth, according to Ames, should be affirmed and reaffirmed in order to make it stick in the hearts of men. Corroborating Ames, Mill says that truth can never be confirmed enough, though

1 Johnson, op. cit., xvii.
2 John Brown, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
3 Charles Ames, op. cit., viii.
In George Eliot, truth is a doctrine and a conviction to which she holds with religious devotion. No amount of confirmation or affirmation of the truth could ever have taken hold in the minds and hearts of Eliot's characters of deceit. They are incapable of knowing the truth. They are hypocrites of the lowest order and they live in lies and deceit. Tito Melenia, the priests, and Tessa of Romola, Godfrey and Dunstan Cass in Silas Marner, Anthony Wybrow in Scenes of Clerical Life, Captain Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede, Rev. Casaubon and Bulstrode in Middlemarch, are all characters of deceit. Eliot fills with fury as she describes these guilty creatures.

There is Tito Melenia, the beautiful, smiling, innocent-looking, well-learned, violeasant Greek-hero of Romola, who comes to Italy to live. No human being so vitally debased, no nature so utterly lost, no soul is so hopelessly lost as is the deceiving, scheming Tito who would stop at nothing to attain his goal. Tito is the very emblem of deceit. His god is self; his law is self-pleasing. Long before his end comes we feel that he is a lost soul, for in his heart there is no place for repentance. Like Tito, Godfrey Cass in Silas Marner is a symbol of deceit. He is the son of the rich Squire Cass of Reveloe. He is wild, spoiled by luxuries, sought after by all types of women. Self is the

1 Ibid.
3 John Brown, Or.Cit., p. 41.
main object of regard. He has no depth, no truth, no steadfastness, no discipline. No futurity can ever turn him away from the accursed evil of self-centeredness. His irreversible part of self-worship precludes the highest and broadest achievement of life and destiny.

Then there is Anthony Wybrow, the hard, cold, callous, self-centered, spoiled son of Sir Christopher in "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" from Scenes of Clerical Life, who plays with and deceives Caterina Sarti, a beautiful innocent orphan who believes in him and trusts him. Anthony Wybrow is not in love with Caterina, but he is so concerned with his own selfishness that he is ready to deprive Mr. Gilfil of his only joy in life—Caterina. In Adam Bede there is Captain Arthur Donnithorne, rich young squire and land owner, well-groomed and handsome, conniving, deceitful, and self-seeking, who leaves the society of his own noble rank to seek his lustful pleasures among his peasant tenants. And Hetty Sorrel, vain, morrow, also deceptive in nature, suspects deception in her lord, yet allies herself with his scheme to deceive Adam for the sake of self-pleasing. In Middlemarch there is the Reverend Casaubon, whose ultra-academic pedantry and archaegelical method of exposition is mistaken for real superiority. He is outwardly calm, serene, saintly. His very life is consecrated to serve his people. Yet

2 ____________. Scenes of Clerical Life (Boston, 1909), pp. 155-58.
3 Adam Bede, p. 117.
in his heart there is deceit of the most malignant order. It is deceit into writing calls by false interests and charitable purposes, a deceit that kills the spirit and soul. In Middlurbrough, the seditious ones are, the hypocrite even to himself, in his double role of vice and virtue, is the emblem of deceit. He lives to deceive and his whole life and status in society are shadowed in his deceit. Dunstan Case, brother to Godfrey Case in Silas Marner, rich, wild, selfish is a victim of deceit. He is the only one who knows about Godfrey's secret marriage to a peasant girl and he decides to capitalize on that knowledge. He has something to hold over his brother's head which will bring Godfrey to his knees at his mercy. Then there are the priests of Romola, described by Eliot as "loud barking hounds of the Lord", who are deceitful, crafty and untrustworthy. Eliot characterizes his believers in Christ as "insect swarms of besotted fanatics or howling hypocrites, who live in his deceit and his whole life and status in society are shadowed in his deceit. Middletown, the seditious ones are, the hypocrite even to himself, in his double role of vice and virtue, is the emblem of deceit. He lives to deceive and his whole life and status in society are shadowed in his deceit. Dunstan Case, brother to Godfrey Case in Silas Marner, rich, wild, selfish is a victim of deceit. He is the only one who knows about Godfrey's secret marriage to a peasant girl and he decides to capitalize on that knowledge. He has something to hold over his brother's head which will bring Godfrey to his knees at his mercy. Then there are the priests of Romola, described by Eliot as "loud barking hounds of the Lord", who are deceitful, crafty and untrustworthy. Eliot characterizes his believers in Christ as "insect swarms of besotted fanatics or howling hypocrites, who
renounce all that makes life precious for other people.” And there is Tessa, a beautiful Italian peasant girl of Romola, who tells her sins at confession, who does not like to work, who craves idleness, but most of all, is a deceiver, for she tells lies to escape punishment from her parents.

Another phase of self-pleasing is categorized by George Eliot as revenge. Eliot feels that revenge, which lurks and lingers in the heart and mind of man, is one of the worst sins. She labels Baldassaree, Tito’s father in Romola, Molly Farren, Godfrey Cass’s wife in Silas Marner, and Mr. Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss, as characters of revenge and portrays them in their true colors. Baldassaree, captured in Antioch during the Grecian War and held for ransom by French soldiers, has been reared in Greece to believe that wickedness should be avenged—revenge in unconquerable hatred and triumphant vengeance. When Tito escapes from Antioch into Italy he carries with him the jewels of Baldassaree, which would have bought the aged Greek’s freedom. With the indoctrination of revenge for wrong doings well-founded in his heart, Baldassaree vows that if he ever escape his chains of slavery, he will find his son and revenge the deed. Eliot terms this passionate desire for vengeance as one of the greatest of sins. Also guilty of revenge

1 Ibid., p. 66.
2 Ibid., p. 429.
3 Ibid., p. 264.
is Molly Farren, Godfrey Cass’s peasant wife. Godfrey, in a fit of passion, has told Molly that he would sooner die than acknowledge her as his wife, and her heart and mind vow to revenge the terrible hurt and humiliation he has caused her. Then there is Mr. Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss, who hates Lawyer Wakem because he cheated him of his property. Mr. Tulliver vows to avenge the loss of his property by retaliating in some evil manner to the lawyer held responsible for his loss. Taking his Bible into his hands, he commands his son Tom to write in it to revenge the deed of Lawyer Wakem against him, and Tom writes in the ancient book that the act will be avenged.

Closely associated with the sin of revenge is the sin of hatred and jealousy, for one of these sins is usually concomitant with the other. In this group of sinners we find William Dane in Silas Marner, Mr. Tulliver and his son Tom in The Mill on the Floss, and Mrs. Transome in Felix Holt, who are polluted by hatred and jealousy. William Dane is in love with the girl whom Silas is to marry. Hatred for Silas and jealousy of the girl possess him. Both, working together, are so strong that he is capable of any malefaction. Then there is Mr. Tulliver, owner of Dorcote Mill on the river Floss, who believes that rats, weavils, and lawyers are made by the devil. He hates lawyers with a hatred that is too fierce to be quenched, but what is worse, he is forever in need of

1 Silas Marner, pp. 158-60.
22

A lawyer, for he is often in lawsuits for one thing or another. His opposing lawyer, Mr. Waken, leading lawyer of St. Oggs, always represents his opponents and wins over Mr. Tulliver. Thus, Mr. Tulliver hates him with every fibre of his being. His son Tom, a hard, cold, stern, harsh, healthy, self-willed young animal and desperado, inherits his father's hatred, and the inheritance proves embarrassing and harmful to him, making him hate everything and everybody. His motto is to "get the best out of life at any expense, which is the plain duty that everyone owes himself and the world."

Of all the examples of jealousy and hatred, Eliot shows that a mother's hatred for her own child is at the top of the list. Mrs. Transome in Felix Holt, the strong, determined, self-willed wife of Mr. Transome, her childish, timid, indecisive wreck of a husband, who is utterly incapable of solving the ordinary problems connected with the management of the property, loves her younger son Harold because he is strong like herself; but she hates her older imbecilic son because he inherited his father's notorious weaknesses of mind and body, and none of her strength and fortitude. She has despised him from birth, but she hates him even more because he is the older of her two children and is, according to English law, the sole heir to the large Transome estate. Harold, whom she loves, is left penniless so that he has to toil for himself to earn a living. The mother's hatred increases as

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1 The Mill on the Floss, pp. 302-46.
2 Ibid., pp. 44-59.
she thinks about the cursed situation and she despises the weakling she brought into the world, and curses the day in which he was born.

In addition to the sins of deceit, revenge, hatred and jealousy, Eliot categorizes another dangerous sin of the mind, a sin which destroys and devastates both mind and soul. It is the sin of pride, the first of the seven ancient deadly sins. Pride inebriates; pride obscures one's vision for human sympathy and justice; pride makes one indifferent to human suffering; pride promotes self-centeredness and selfishness; pride creates and inspires lust for power—financial power, intellectual power, social and political power. In Romola, the priest and prophet, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, is inebriated with pride and lust for world power. He is intoxicated by praise of his people for his divine inspiration, for his spiritual virtues. He is self-centered and noble in his own sight. Then there is Romola's father, Baldino de' Baldi, like Savonarola, who is drunk with pride. Living amid human sin and misery caused by the plague, unconscious of the suffering of the peasants, he cares only that his name be immortalized in literature. He is pagan in moral precepts, and he craves classical learning as a vital need of life. Fame and learning are the goal toward which he aims. He cares for nothing else. Daniel Deronda, in the novel which bears his name, is possessed with pride also. He is reared in the atmosphere of an English

2 ibid., p. 209.
3 ibid., p. 156.
gentleman; he is rich in material wealth and social prestige, and, as many rich socially prominent English gentlemen are, he is a prig at heart. He feels superior to the average man of society and he looks down upon young men about him with snobbish condescension.

Also proud and selfish is Grancourt in Daniel Deronda, the presumptive heir to the baronetcy of Sir Hugo Mellinger, whose children are all daughters and whose position must fall to some near male kin. Grancourt is a good looking gentleman of sound constitution, but he is portrayed as a villain of concentrated pride and selfishness. He never for a moment falls from that calm dignity of pride and self-isolation. He never for a moment softens into respect for anything outside himself. Without exception he is consistently imperturbable in his self-containedness, and he ruthlessly crushes all things from dog to wife, under his calm, cold, slighting contempt. He is the embodiment of pride and the devil represented by human self-love.

One of the proudest, narrowest of all sectarians is Mr. Tryan in Scenes of Clerical Life, whose proud heart has neither time nor patience with charity. He is proud, vain, self-centered. He loves to be flattered.

1 See Thackeray's novels, The Newcomes (New York, 1910) and The History of Henry Esmond (New York, 1908), for descriptions and details of England's society prigs.


and idolized by men. Falling into this same category of pride is Gwendolen Harleth, attractive yet repellant, fascinating yet hard, cold, worldly-minded, bewitching because of her beauty, grace and accomplishments, yet a superficial and seemingly heartless coquette. She presents a combination of some of the meanest qualities of womankind.

Her hardness toward her fond, doting mother, and her contempt for her sisters are conspicuous almost from her first appearance. Her arrogant defiance of Deronda in the gambling house and the fierce revulsion of pride with which she receives the kindly return of her pawned necklace, are entirely in keeping with her characteristics; and the news of the reduction of her family to utter poverty awakes no emotion save on her own behalf alone. She is proud, haughty, and vain.

After categorizing the sins of deceit, revenge, hatred, jealousy and pride, Eliot points out the sin of idolatry, another sin of the mind. Under idolatry she portrays the love for world-power, for jewelry and fine clothes, for money, and for gambling. Bulstrode, the Middlemarch banker, is hungry for financial power. His self-centeredness, inevitably associated with and accruing from self-pleasing, is, according to Eliot, the very essence of all evil and sin. But the galaxy of characters in Middlemarch represents men and women whose prototypes every reader of George Eliot might claim personal acquaintance. To an extent, each character, with the exception of Dorothea Brooke, is guilty of the great


2 Daniel Deronda, pp. 2-14.
The antagonistic principle of human life—lust for power. Also guilty of the thirst for power is Mordecai, a consumptive, long-suffering, patient, threadbare, Jewish idealist, who thirsts for the power to secure Jewish restoration of Palestine. Mordecai's classical training in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, has been grasped for one specific reason—to help the Jews to regain their lost power in the holy land. The desire for this power becomes an obsession to him and he lives only to see the day come when such power will be his.

Just as people sin who lust after world power, the author feels that people sin who lust after beautiful clothes and fine jewelry. Even as a child Eliot believed that ornate dress was vanity, and she does not fail to stress this sin in each of her novels. In Romola she shows that jewelry and fine wearing apparel are against the teachings of the monasteries which advocate that they should be sold and the money given to the poor. Donna Brigida, a dashing widow of Florence, wears fine jewelry which helps to corrupt her mind and soul. Eliot characterizes Hess in Adam Bede as a street man who wears large earrings and fine clothes. The Methodist woman preacher, Dinah Norris, brands her an evil creature and commands her to discard the jewels or
or be subject to God's wrath. And Dorothea Brooke, innately good, is afraid to wear jewels. She gives the beautiful gems of her legacy to her sister Celia, for she will have no part of such vanity. Guilty also of the sin of idolatry is Miss Barton, the minister's wife, in "The

Sad Fortunes of Rev. Amos Barton", from Scenes of Clerical Life. She is a slave to her husband and six children; she is a tiresome worker who darns old clothes to keep herself pretty and attractive. She is a good woman, but she has one great sin; she is vain and she idolizes pretty clothes with stiff balloon sleeves and all the frills and ruffles that vain women crave. Then there are Glegg and Pullet, the beautiful, proud daughters of Mr. Tulliver in Mill on the Floss, who hold commanding positions among people of vanity. Glegg's clothes are second to none, and Pullet dresses even more elaborately than Glegg. Her fashionable attire is usually decked with ribbons and feathers. Both she and Glegg are vain and proud, self-centered and selfish.

Just as women love and idolize clothes, Eliot shows that men love and idolize money. Poor mishapen Silas Marner in the same titled novel, a member of a dissenting sect, jilted by the woman he loved, deceived by his best friend who betrays him and steals his girl,

loses faith in mankind, in God, and in everything else except money.

1. Adam Adam, p. 20.
Money is his life, his love, his all. His love for money becomes a lust. He cannot always for thinking of it. He cannot work for looking at the heaps of gold and silver which he keeps buried in iron pots under the floor. Money is a god which he idolizes, hoards and counts over and over again. He wants and craves only money. Falling into this same idolatrous class is Reverend Amos Barton, in Scenes of Clerical Life, curate of Shepperton Church, and a dabbler in drugs, who loves money and feels that people are only stewards of their possessions and should give heavier subscriptions to the church of Shepperton for the glory of him and God.

Eliot next points out with much disdain the love for gambling, which she classifies as a sin of idolatry. Gwendolen in Daniel Deronda, once a proud, spoiled, wealthy heroine, is a lucky gambler who spends most of her time at the gambling tables where her daring bets, her reckless spirit, her confidential attitude, and her magnetic beauty lure men's eyes from the cards to her own person. Taking advantage of their weakness for her feminine charms, she holds them spellbound while she wins their money. Also in Eliot's gambling class is Ezra Cohen, an inimitable, shrewd, self-approving trader, a gambler, a thief, deserter of his family.
squanderer of his family's hard-earned money, who lives only to gamble. His whole heart, mind and soul combine to lust in the terrible sin. He does not gamble to win money necessarily; he gambles for the pure love of the game, and Eliot brands him a weak, idolatrous sinner.

Just as Eliot points out the sins of the mind, which are conceived in one's own evil thoughts, she also designates sins of the flesh which are phases of self-pleasing. Acts of adultery and fornication bring about certain gratifications of the flesh, and she terms those acts sin of the body, for they are acts of self-pleasing. She plays up this sin, for the morals of England during this era had sunk to a low ebb. Prostitution was practiced in all classes even though the Victorian veneer made it seem otherwise. Thus, we find her lashing at the evils of adultery and fornication by portraying adulterous characters in each of her novels.

Hester Sorrel, the peasant beauty, and Arthur Donnithorne, her lord, both characters in Adam Bede, violate the seventh Mosaic Law when they engage in mysterious night jaunts in the orchard. Tito Melema and Tessa of Romola violate the seventh commandment when they spend pleasant evenings in the peasant shack. Rosamond Vincy, Dorothea Brooke's
The garden, a charming place to hide from the eyes of the world so that they might lose themselves in lechery and lasciviousness.

Maggie Tulliver, the half-dreaded and feared "brown-skinned-like-a-mulatto" daughter of the Tullivers, in The Mill on the Floss, is brilliant but cunning. She lusts for men; she hunts for love; she becomes an adulterer by indulging in the sin of the flesh. Maggie is also a Pagan, and Eliot pours into this creature all her poetic freedom that renders Maggie the most magnetic of all Eliot's adulterers.

The last phase of the self-pleasing of the body is that of drunkenness, drunkenness caused by alcoholic drinks or by narcotics, which makes wicked, self-pleasing characters drown out their sorrows and responsibilities. This is the deed in Adam Bede, an habitual drunk, not a man enough to face his cares and obligations which require work and worry on his part. His desire for self-pleasing urges him to seek the easy way out and he drenches his gluttonous stomach with liquors by the hour and loses himself in pleasing forgetfulness.

Drunkenness was one of the social evils of George Eliot's time. Coffee Houses were gathering places where one could drink to their fill.

Coffee houses were not merely places where men drank to their fill. They were of the world, and of the world's life. They were the scenes of much of the business of the day, and of the business of the world.
Narcotic inebriation is also a phase of bodily self-pleasing and Molly Farren, peasant wife of Godfrey in Silas Marner, is guilty of the sin. In her desire for the exhilaration of the body and mind she becomes a slave to opium. She lives to enjoy the effect of the poisonous dope.

Thus far the writer has shown how Eliot categorizes and exposes through the portrayal of her characters the most prevalent sins of her native land. Having classified the various phases of self-pleasing into the categories of deceit, revenge, hatred, jealousy, pride, idolatry, lust for power, adultery and inebriation, she proceeds in the next chapter to show these sins at work as they cast their evil spell upon the English nation and scatter desolation in every path.

1 Alcoholics were not the only intoxicating pleasures. Opium was a common intoxicating narcotic which Coleridge, DeQuincey and others used in excess. See Craig and Thomas, "Coleridge", Prose of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1924), pp. 7-8, and also Leslie Stephen, "DeQuincey", Hours in a Library (New York, 1917), p. 271. Eliot shows the usage of such drugs in her portrayal of Molly Farren. Silas Marner, p. 159.
CHAPTER III

ELIOT'S DECLARATION OF SIN

The deceit, revenge, hatred, jealousy, pride, idolatry, adultery, and inebriation exhibited by George Eliot's characters symbolize the people of England who are basically interested in self-pleasing.

She delineates them through her characters, following each wicked creature through the various paths of life, keeping record of every deed that is done as if her eyes are the eyes of God, and noting every joy that is bought at the expense of others. She records with an angry protest the woes and sorrows which evil characters spread on others as they go in search of their own selfish desires.

In delineating the sins of the mind the author's sphere is the inner man. All individuals are masters or victims of the fate of moral causation which they bear within them. The characters are not simply passive. They do not stand still. All of them, continually changing and developing, or degenerating as their motives issue into acts, make their own history, and their acts become a part of the circumstances that condition motive and purify or demoralize the will.

"Our deeds determine us as much as we determine our deeds", philosophizes the author; and she rationalizes life and character, bringing the obscure into clear daylight. With her seal for truth, she applies the most rigorous logic to the resolution of each problem, working it out with accuracy and solemnity appropriate to a judicial inquiry and issuing verdicts as irrefragable as the results of a scientific
She paints pictures of sinful thoughts with words, and traces evil actions through the perpetration of crimes which wicked characters impose upon society. Such psychological analyses show her power to see through sham and pretentious airs or the reserve of modest worth to the real truth of things, of revealing what ordeals and agonies are ranking in the hearts of those who show an impassive exterior or are too narrow to open their bosom to the world for service. She even shows the sufferings which result from such crimes executed by evil minds. She sees everything. Nothing escapes her.

Having categorized deceit as a phase of self-pleasing, Eliot proceeds to delineate the works of this sin. She magnifies and amplifies each little deceitful act, showing that every sinful deed injures and brings suffering upon others. Tito of Romola, being the worst of all the deceivers, is considered first, and Eliot delineates his works in detailed form. She shows him beginning his deceit by lying to the holy monk when he vows but fails to sell his father's jewels to pay for the aged Greek's ransom from captivity where he has been taken in war and held prisoner. As Tito practices deception, Eliot shows that it becomes easier and easier for him until the
"little lies" which he tells with difficulty at first grow into "big lies" which not only appease anger but affect lives. Becoming betrothed to Romola, he is aware of the fact that Romola's brother, Fra Luca, the saintly monk, knows the scandalous secret of his rich gems which he refuses to sell for his father's freedom. Desiring to escape her accusing eyes, he seeks Tessa's company that he might find pleasure in her innocent love. It occurs to him that he might possess the beautiful, ignorant peasant girl as a mistress and at the same time marry Romola. He leads Tessa through a mock-marriage, hides her away in an abandoned shanty and lustfully consummates the mock-marriage ties. His marriage to Romola is also consummated, and without diminution in his happiness with Romola, he carries on the dual affair. However, it is easy for Tito to play such a game and to lead such a deceitful life, for the principle of duplicity is a part of him. Romola, associating only with the highest element of society, and Tessa, starving in the peasantry of rural Florence, are kept far apart, making Tito's life about perfect. His role as deceiver never enters Tito's mind. The thought of Romola's or Tessa's position does not worry him. It is something he wants, and he gets it at the expense of the two women who love him dearly.

1 Romola, p. 152.

2 Ibid., p. 198.

3 Tessa's life with Tito without legal marriage ties is, or seems to represent, Eliot's life in disguise.
Tito is not only deceptive in his domestic life, but he stoops in politics. He is emissary to Rome and Milan, and at the same time he is serving as political secretary to Florence. He knows all political secrets, which he sells for a price, regardless what the outcome will be. He serves as spokesman and undercover men in each political party without the other's knowledge of his connection. Everybody trusts him. Nobody suspects. For a price he plots and conspires against his friend, Giroloma Savonarola. His policies of betrayal lead to the wholesale massacre of party leaders, prominent citizens and priests, but his own safety is always won by treachery. His motives for such betrayals of friends or foes into enemy hands are outgrowths of self-pleasing—getting out of his way certain obstacles which hinder his advancement. He cares not what becomes of the parties whom he betrays, and it matters not to him how they might suffer.

Godfrey Cass in Silas Marner shows his deceit by secretly marrying a girl of the servant class while on one of his sprees and then deceiving her, his father, and all his friends. He continues his deceit by open denial of his marriage to the pretty peasant wife, Molly Farren, whom he regrets having married. He denies that he is the father of her little daughter Eppie. Living in deceit, he spends his time taking draughts of forgetfulness in the sweet presence of Nancy Lammeter, a

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1 Romola, p. 466.
2 Ibid., p. 474.
3 John Brown, op.cit., p. 44.
member of his own circle, posing as a single man, leading Nancy to feel that any day he will offer her marriage, pretending to his father that he is the fine specimen of a son his father always wanted, while his peasant wife and child fight against poverty and want, unknown and unheard of by her husband's social circle. Through a turn of fate, Godfrey finds the way open, for his peasant wife dies and leaves him free to marry Nancy. Rejoicing in Molly's death, ignoring and disrecognizing the beautiful little girl Eppie, who is his and Molly's, Godfrey remains quiet while Molly is given the burial of a pauper. He shrinks back in secret fear as Silas Marner agrees to take the child; then in his deceit he marries Nancy and looks forward to the time when children are born to them that he might lavish his wealth and affection upon them.

In *Middlemarch*, Eliot shows the extent and endurance of deceit through the treacherous Rev. Casselbon, who, playing the role of the perfect saint, takes his parishioners' money, misappropriates the money of the parish, preaches his fine sermons, and convinces everybody of his divinity. Yet, in his home he abuses his wife Dorothea; he crushes her spirit, and robs her of all peace of mind. In his deceitful role, he brings suffering upon Ladislaw, his cousin, whom he works as a slave, while in the public's eye he is kind and fatherly to the orphan lad. It matters not to the deceitful minister that if his deception is once discovered it will destroy the Christian faith of his followers.

1 Silas Marner, pp. 31-36.

2 Ibid., pp. 170-77.
It matters not that his wife's faith in him is destroyed. The suffering of Ladislaw does not matter to him. He has set his goal for certain things in life, and neither church, wife nor orphan will hinder him.

In other delineations of deceit among the clergy, Eliot portrays in *Romola* priests who accept bribes from confessors, who abuse their positions by taking advantage of trusting souls. They use the church as an establishment for the few who are lucky or wise enough to reap the advantages of human folly. Lying, treachery, oppression, and murder are carried on behind the sacred doors of the church by the ordained saints of the Lord. Many of the evils of the period are introduced by these saintly hypocrites, who claim dozens of stray boys in the neighborhood as their nephews only because they dare not admit that they are their sons.

Further delineation of deceitful characters is found in *Bulstrode*, the banker in *Middlemarch*. He lives a lifetime deceiving Ladislaw on patrimony which was entrusted to his care while he served as secretary to the boy's parents. He had promised the dying parents that he would turn over the patrimony to Ladislaw as soon as he became of age. Instead, he had severed connections with the orphan and had confiscated the money for himself. And Bulstrode, who knows about the terrible fraud, capitalises on his knowledge by blackmailing Bulstrode of much of his illicit wealth and living in the public's eye as a righteous man. This is shown in the delineation of the character of Bulstrode.

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1 *Middlemarch*, pp. 71-100.
2 *Romola*, pp. 200-08.
3 *Middlemarch*, p. 117.
terrible deceit on the part of the banker brings much suffering to the legal heir Ladislaw, who, poor, hungry, and friendless, slavish for Rev. Casaubon, whose contempt for the orphan boy is almost unbearable. Mr. Bulstrode is so inebriated with the desire for social and political power that it matters not to him whether his own doctor Lydgate and his family gradually starve while serving the Bulstrode family. Though Bulstrode has money to waste, he turns a deaf ear to Lydgate when he appeals to him for a "loan". Bulstrode's conscience does not bother him as he lives his luxurious life on Ladislaw's money. He has abused his conscience so long that wrong seems right to him now. He passes the "orphan bum" on the street without a backward glance or a contrite heart. Similarly, Raffles is too busy collecting "hushmouth" money from Bulstrode to think much about Ladislaw. He feels that the boy should be told about his misappropriated fortune and he intends to tell him sometime when he feels that he himself is rich enough to live independently of the orphan's fortune. But once Ladislaw is told, his own income from the fortune will stop and he, Raffles, will suffer. Thus, for the sake of self-preservation, he deceives; he closes his eyes to the truth of the situation and lives in comfort and plenty. The wilful, deceitful Bulstrode feels that the enmity between himself and Raffles makes it necessary that he dispose of Raffles before he reveals Bulstrode's secret; and the influence of deceit helps him to weave plan after plan for the riddance of Raffles. Raffles, however, is acquainted with schemes and conspiracies, and his intuition leads him to suspect foul play on Bulstrode's part. Fearing that he might be
annihilated before Ladislaw finds out the truth, he makes one more audacious demand on the banker, then secretly tells Ladislaw the whole thing.

Dunstan Cass's role as deceiver in *Silas Marner* is well-played, for he feigns brotherly love for Godfrey in the presence of the Squire and gains much respect from his father. The father feels that Dunstan loves his young brother Godfrey and watches him closely to guide the young boy through proper channels of life. He does not know that Godfrey flees in terror from Dunstan as the deceitful villain smiles and slaps him on the shoulders in the presence of the father, while he secretly blackmails him for everything that Godfrey has. The Squire does not know that Dunstan presses Godfrey for money; neither does he know that his tenants are paying their rent to Godfrey, which Dunstan takes, and dares Godfrey to tell the father that the rent has been paid. The father does not know that while Dunstan loves Godfrey openly Godfrey runs under Dunstan's threats of exposure of his marriage to the peasant girl, and steals, begs, and borrows to pay the fiendish brother whose demands for money increase. To meet Dunstan's demands, Godfrey sells everything he possesses, even Wildfire, his valuable race horse. Dunstan all but drives Godfrey to distraction as the harassed victim decides that nothing can be more terrible than the constant fear that he lives in under Dunstan's threats. However, Dunstan's role as deceiver does not stop

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with his brother. Knowing that Silas Harmer has money, he goes to the miser's cottage and artfully steals the pots of gold while the hermit walks in the woods, and escapes with his stolen loot tied fast to him. He is not concerned with Silas's reaction to such loss. His concern is the gold. The suffering incurred as result of the theft is of no consequence to him.

In Scenes of Clerical Life, Anthony Bybrow's deceptive nature is seen at work in his false role as Caterina's lover when he is engaged to another. For the pure joy of being loved by a chaste creature, he promises marriage and even makes plans for the future when all the time his marriage to Miss Assher is approaching. Miss Assher is a society bell of London and an accomplished owner of a pretty estate. She is the epitome of his desires. Still playing his role of deceit, he misleads Caterina up to the very day that he unexpectedly brings Miss Assher to the house and presents her to Caterina as his future wife. His self-centeredness and deceptive nature blind him to the fact that he inflicts terrible mental agony on Caterina, who grieves her heart away for his love. He thinks only of himself, and even when Miss Assher becomes suspicious of Caterina, he tries to force her to deceive his fiancée by denying that they were once sweethearts. In deceit, he lulls the suspicion of his betrothed by insinuating that Caterina Sarti entertains a hopeless passion for him which he has never encouraged.

Angry because the wounded Caterina fails to receive his fiancée

Ibid., pp. 51-7.

wholeheartedly, Anthony secretly compels his father to negotiate plans by which Caterina is constrained to accept marriage with Mr. Gilfil, whom she does not love, in order that Miss Assher's suspicions about the two might be satisfied and put at ease.

Having delineated the roles played by deceitful characters, Eliot traces and exposes the roles played by revengeful characters. She shows through Baldassarre in *Romola* how fortune often plays into the hands of wicked creatures to help them with their crime.

*Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul;*  
*There! mid the throng of hurrying desires*  
*That trample on the dead to seize their spoil,*  
*Lurks vengeance, footless, irresistible*  
*As exhalations laden with slow death;*  
*And o'er the fairer troop of captured joys*  
*Breathes pallid pestilence.*  

While the French army parades the streets of Florence, after Florence's surrender to the king, Tito's father, among three other slaves driven in chains by the inhumane soldiers who beat them and compel them to beg the pedestrians for ransom money, manages to escape from his bonds and flee to safety. Fate leads him to the church steps where Tito and other political cabinet members seek refuge from the mass uprising that takes place between soldiers and pedestrians. The two men stare into each other's eyes; the aged man clutches the arm of the young man, and Tito, white with fear, aware that all eyes are upon him, cringes in

1 ibid.


3 *Romola*, p. 217.
hopeless despair, shakes himself free and cries weakly, "He's a mad man."

The heart of the vengeful old man fills with more vengeance. He lives day and night through hunger and cold to avenge the evil accorded him by Tito. Hatred shakes his emaciated form, but passion embues him with the necessary strength to go on. Trailing Tito day and night is endless torture for Baldassare. He is always tired, hungry, cold, weak, but thirst for revenge keeps him steadily plugging on. When he blunders upon Tessa and her two children in the shanty, she shares her meager fare without knowing the beggar's identity. Romola gives him money for food when she passes him in the streets without suspecting who he really is. The old man smiles grimly:

Food from his mistress to nourish the arm that will grasp the weapon which will kill him; food to nourish the body which is the temple of vengeance. Money from his wife to buy the dagger which will pierce his heart. His food and his money and his life, And Tito, knowing and fearing the vengeful nature of his father, dreading society's discovery of his own treacherous self, fearing Romola, fearing Tessa, fearing his social position, lives in a torture brought on by the vengeance of his father that is worse than the vilest life or the most painful death. He flees when no one pursues. His father's vengeance causes him to die a thousand deaths daily. His entire body is covered with a steel armor to protect himself from Baldassare, but as he falters under the heavy weight, he still fears.

1 Ibid., pp. 200-209.
2 Ibid., p. 422.
3 Ibid.
Every breath he inhales or exhales is in fear of impending danger, fear of something or of somebody, and Baldassare never lets up. His thirst for vengeance drives him on and on.

Molly, Godfrey Cass's wife in Silas Marner, is also a victim of revenge, for she has vowed to "get even" with her socially prominent husband for denying her as his wife. Eliot's penetrating eyes see this evil as it grows and grows in Molly's heart, overshadowing all reason.

To Molly retaliation is the only way to relieve the passion for revenge, and Eliot shows her striving to humiliate Godfrey as he humiliated her in denying their marriage. Molly, once as handsome as the most, but now a faded, ragged, revengeful woman, looks her worst as she takes her child in her arms and trudges through the snow toward her rich husband's home, where a New Year's party is in progress. She plans to present herself and her child Eppie to the Squire as his son's neglected wife. She intends her revenge to be in the form of utter humiliation; for without attempting to make herself presentable, she means to disgrace the high man's position by looking as awful as she can. The trip is a premeditated one, for vengeance has long lived in her heart.

In The Mill on the Floss, Mr. Tulliver is possessed with a desire to revenge the theft of his property by Lawyer Wекem. The revenge is so strong that he does not follow Lawyer Wекem about to retaliate for his evil deed. Working for the man who took his property from him, hating him with a terrible hatred, Mr. Tulliver attempts revenge by meeting...
the lawyer in the street and beating him savagely with his riding whip. Every brutal blow that cuts into the lawyer's flesh gives a sadistic satisfaction to the avenger. He smiles in contemptuous glee as the attorney falls under the cutting lash of his whip. The blood runs freely, and the wounded man cries out for mercy; but the whip continues to rise and fall upon the man until he is beaten to unconsciousness, and Mr. Tulliver's strength is exhausted and his vengeance is satisfied.

Hatred and jealousy are closely akin to revenge and Eliot shows hatred and jealousy at work through William Dane, in Silas Marner, who is so blind in sin that he loses sight on all that is good and right. He plots and perpetrates certain acts which bring Silas Marner to ruin so that he himself might win the hand of the maiden whom Silas has pledged to marry. Hatred forces him to tell lies on Silas. He accuses Silas of communing with the devil in prayer meetings when he pretends to be visited by the holy spirit. When the girl's love remains constant, William Dane's jealous mind seeks to degrade Silas socially. His opportunity comes when the senior deacon of the church becomes ill and Silas and Dane agree to watch through the night with him. Dane fails to appear; Silas falls asleep by the sick man's bedside; the deacon dies, and same thief purloins the church money from the deacon's drawer. The thief incriminates Silas by leaving Silas's knife in the drawer and placing the empty money purse in his

1 The Mill on the Floss, pp. 510-71.
3 Silas knows that the jealous Dane is the guilty one. He knows that Dane has borne false witness to his own crime, but the deed has been done, and Silas is ostracized from society while Dane marries his girl.

2 Eliot regards hatred as a great sin, and she exposes traces of hatred through many of her characters. Mr. Tulliver's hatred for Lawyer Wakens frustrates him to madness. His angry passion overpowers reason.

1 Unmindful of the adage that "whom the gods destroy they first make mad", Mr. Tulliver grows into a mad frenzy and makes one desperate attempt to silence his foe forever, by entering into a bitter lawsuit which he hopes will destroy Lawyer Wakens's influence once and for all. It is not enough that Mr. Tulliver's hatred cast its evil web over his enemies. It has to poison his son in such a way that Tom hates too.

He hates his own sister Maggie because she loves Lawyer Wakens's son Philip, the hunchback, and he contributes countless sorrows to her lot. He discovers that the two share secrets, and his hatred for her makes him threaten to expose her to their father. He makes Maggie's life miserable and unhappy. His hatred even Irvine Maggie from the splendor of society, a punishment that subjects the girl to a double torture, filling her brain with hot rage and her heart with humble and bitter grief which makes her guilty of sin. Tom's hatred follows him to
school, where he and the son of Lawyer Wakem, his father's enemy, clash in bitter hatred and jealousy. Philip Wakem's deformity is not a congenital ailment, but a deformity resulting from a childhood fall, and he is sensitive and conscious of his deformity. Tom, hating him as he hates all Wakems, makes him wince when he purposely boasts of his own physical prowess in order to humiliate and embarrass Philip. With his hatred growing by leaps and bounds, Tom settles by the river in order to make money so that he can own the mill again and buy or take his father's lost possessions from Lawyer Wakem in any manner that he can. Working through hate, he manages to save adequate funds to purchase the mill; but when Wakem refuses to sell the mill at any price, Tom's mind is made up. He knows no compromise, for he must have the mill. Ruthlessly he rides himself of Wakem and owns the mill at last.

Then Eliot shows the hatred of a mother's heart. In Felix Holt Mrs. Transome's hatred for her elder son lasts throughout his entire life. It lasts during his illness, when she refuses to minister unto him. It is vanquished only when the weakling dies for lack of attention, leaving the heritage of the estate to Harold, the younger brother, whom Mrs. Transome worships. Eliot's delineation of pride shows that it weaves a rugged row and leaves gloom and despair in its trail. The suffering it heaps upon unfortunate victims goes unheeded as the deadly sin casts its evil

1 The Mill on the Floss, pp. 16-45.
2 Ibid., pp. 430-58.
spell upon the heart and mind of the proud. Included in this list are Fra Girolome Savonarole and Erdo de Hardi of Romola, Daniel Deronda, Grancourt, and Gwendolen Harleth of Daniel Deronda. Fra Girolome Savonarole's pride has made him so blind that he cannot see the sins of the flock of his charge. He is blind to the sins of the cardinals and prelates who traffic in the inheritance of the church to satisfy their lust in material gains. He is too blind to these things, seeing only himself as the leader of Florence and thinking of himself as the voice of the people. He preaches against wrong, yet he fails to see his own short comings. He predicts the fall of Italy because of its sins, and when the plague reaches the city from surrounding towns he accepts the blame from others, the praise for having prophesied. The Florentines, without considering the feasibility of a Florentine invasion of the contagious germ, feel that Savonarola's prophecy is divinely revealed, and Girolome Savonarola gains his wish to become the judge of Florence.

Eliot shows how the city depends upon the judgment and sagacity of this proud, lofty monk. The fate of the city hangs on his advice. It is to him that the government appeals for wisdom when the French king and his troops enter Florence. The monk, sure of himself and certain that his prophecy is from the very mouth of God, admonishes his believers to surrender to the French by the will of God that the city might be saved of its heathen-ness, the state purged of its sins, and restored to Christian principles

1 Romola, p. 209.

2 Ibid., p. 124.
by surrender to the good French king. Eliot shows him as an arrogant proud monk, lusting for power of self, lusting for praise as prophet, saint, and mighty preacher, who fights sin by fighting people against whom he thinks God's wrath is kindled. He has preached that peace, charity, and obliteration of political differences would result from signing the treaty. Eliot shows that he preaches as if divine inspiration or revelation comes to him from above, when he can see, as every intelligent man can see, the near triumph of the French delivery.

Even while the victorious army marches through the streets of Florence his prayer is:

Repeal and forsake evil; do justice; love mercy; put away all uncleanliness from among you, that the spirit of truth and holiness may fill your souls and breathe through your streets and habitations, and then the pestilence shall not harm you and the sword shall pass over you and leave you unhurt.

Library are the two ways by which a man can be immortalized. Then after making the assurance of God's deliverance from the pestilence, he offers a doubtful prayer, beseeching God to save Florence and prove his prophecy true. His prophetic teachings continue as his voice commands the state.

1. Ibid., p. 260.
2. Ibid., p. 160.
3. Ibid., p. 227.
4. Ibid., p. 228.
Leaving Savonarola, the author shows the pride of Bardo de Bardi at work. Too proud to acknowledge his son Luca who has become a monk, the proud old aristocrat disinherits that son, who rejects aristocracy and classical learning except for their usefulness in applying them to life in order to crush worldly ambition and fleshly lusts. The one thing that Romola’s father, Bardo de Bardi, has lived for is to immortalize his name in literature; but blindness has prevented such accomplishment, for he cannot write books successfully without the help of others. As a second choice, he requests that his very splendid library remain the Bardi Library to be used, not by monks in a monastery, but by Florentines. He is too proud to care for monks or to help to educate the poor that they might enjoy the luxury of reading. He is concerned only with the perpetuation of the Bardi name; and he feels that literature and a library are the two ways by which a name can be immortalized.

Eliot delineates the works of the proud Daniel Deronda, whose

1. Ibid., p. 150.

2. It was the custom of England during this time to confiscate the library of a wealthy man at his death and give it to a monastery, but if proper negotiations could be made with authorities by the family of the deceased, the state would erect a monument to the memory of the dead man by naming a library to his memory. Ibid., p. 125.

3. Up until the Reform Act of 1832, the poor could not read at all. The middle class was barely literate. But the Reform Act of 1867 changed conditions for lower classes. One of the most important innovations was the educational metamorphosis which took place gradually during this time. The middle classes were becoming more and more literate, and the lower classes were learning to read. E. H. Young, *Early Victorian England* (London, 1954), p. 3.
pride constrains him to hate everything common. In defiance he acknowledges his hate for the stage which his foster parent, Sir Hugo Mallinger, directs him toward, even though he possesses a lovely voice similar to the voice of his actress mother. He refuses to condescend to any status less than that of an English gentleman. He craves and gets education at Eton and Cambridge that he might take his place in Parliament along with other gentlemen. His head is held so high that he does not see beneath the pseudo level which he has improvised for himself. He is an English gentleman who does not bend to common things or to common people. He does not see the sickness of the poverty of suffering humanity as he travels the road of life.

In Daniel Deronda there is the proud Grancourt, who feels that he is worthy of anything he wishes. His wish happens to be the lovely Lydia Glesher, the wife of another man. Grancourt, proud and handsome, influences her to leave her husband to become his mistress. After she bears him two sons he tires of her and leaves her. His duty is to Lydia and her children, but his pride causes him to desert them and marry Glendolen, who is younger, unfaded, fresh. Lydia's suffering does not worry him. The cries of his children only annoy him. His interest in them is dead, and he has nothing more for them to do.

1 Daniel Deronda, pp. 240-79.
2 Ibid., p. 215.
3 Ibid., pp. 495-500.
In Daniel Deronda Gwendolen Harleth's pride assuages her conscience and condones her acceptance of Grantham in marriage. She does not love him, but struggles with her baser self, and the recalcitrance of the world serves as an admixture to encourage her acceptance of the man merely as a quick, half-conscious gesture to secure her own deliverance from poverty and attainment of the higher external enjoyments of life which she conceives herself worthy. In her pride she entertains no thought of relieving the wants or needs of her mother and sisters whom she mistreats terribly. She deems herself born for dominion over every heart, male or female, and she internes for Grantham to be her slave.

After revealing the inner workings of the minds of the proud, Eliot discloses the evils wrought by men who crave power. In Daniel Deronda Eliot introduces the Jewish element and gives the core of Judaism in one sentence: "Hear O Israel! The Lord thy God is one Lord!". She attempts to show that one of the most profound and cumulative influences of Judaism is the intense indestructible nationality of the race. She shows that eighteen centuries have passed since they became a people, "scattered and peeled", their "holy and beautiful house" a ruin, their capital a desolation, their land proscribed to the exiles' feet. She shows that during these centuries deluge after deluge of so-called barbarians has swept over Asia and Europe and had disappeared or merged with the works of previous ages. Ideology for lesser, time smaller, in the race they overran, conquered and devastated. Through these centuries the Jews alone have remained Jews, proscribed, persecuted.


hunted more than tiger or wolf, yet as vividly defined and as unchangeably national as when they stood alone without and beyond the despised and hated Gentiles. Eliot shows that this intense and conservative nationality springs out of the central conception of Judaism, "God is one", which is a selfish motive for self-preservation. Never once does the Jew think of God as being a "God of love", only a "God of one".

On this accusation Eliot builds up Mordecai, the Jew, an intense enthusiast, absorbed with ardent aspirations and fervent hopes for Judaism, and interested only in the Jews. He cares not what becomes of other races or sects; he is interested only in the "lot of Israel," which includes Jews only. His motto is "glory through grief--flame through smoke," and he teaches that the grief and smoke are only the necessary stepping stones to reach the glory and power which must be inevitable for the Jews. Unmindful of suffering save only among his kind, Mordecai supplies inspiration to the poverty-stricken Jew of the neighborhood. He spends his years creating a patriotism in the Jews which will prove their salvation to the Jewish race. In his lust for power, he inculcates the idea that idealism is the Jews' soul, that despite difficulties which Jews face the spirit of sublime achievement must reign in the minds of Jewish people until Palestine is restored.

Eliot is as much preoccupied with the works of idolatry as she is with the works of previous sins. Idolatry for jewelry, fine clothes,
money and gambling receive much of her critical attention. While Monica
Brigida in Romola and Bess in Adam Bede spend their surplus money on
fine jewelry and clothing, Eliot shows beggars asking alms for food
and crawling about on the streets like animals. Their undernourished
bodies are diseased and emaciated, and because of hunger, they lack
strength to stand on their feet. Yet the glamour girls, richly attired
in silk and lace, with diamonds flashing from their fingers, necks
and ears, do not see the dirty, ragged human beings whose bony hands
pull at their skirts for attention. They are too vain to hear the small
boys whom Eliot pictures carrying baskets along the streets, after
having dedicated their services to the church of the Holy Mother,
asking them to sacrifice their jewels to be burned in "the holy bonfire
of vanities."

Sister, you carry your jewels about you. Yield them
up to the blessed Jesu and he will adorn you with the gems of
his grace. 1 O sister, the blessed Jesu commands you to give
up your jewels that they may be sold and the money given to
the poor.

But they turn a deaf ear to these pleadings, for they idolise
their vanities. They care only for themselves. And so they live to
look beautiful while others suffer.

In The Mill on the Floss Glegg's and Pullet's love for beautiful
clothes and fine jewelry makes them vain and self-centered. They see
fault in everybody save themselves. Glegg's bitter tongue never suffers
for lack of systematic exercise. Vanity makes her and Pullet militant,

1 Romola, p. 426.
2 Ibid., p. 431.
and they generate or affect an atmosphere of fear upon people wherever they go. They are not concerned with the feelings of people. They are interested only in themselves.

In addition to the love for clothes and jewelry, Eliot points out and follows the lovers of money. Silas Marner's preoccupation with money forces him to live frugally, to hoard up coins which he earns as a result of laborious weaving of linen, coins which should be in circulation. This preoccupation makes him unmindful of the economic conditions of the poverty-stricken people who hunger for want of food or who freeze from lack of clothes or fire. He has no sympathy for crying babies or homeless orphans. He has no time to render service to suffering humanity. He is too busy making and hoarding money. And while he stores up his wealth in pots and glories in their growing heaps as he buries them underneath his tent, unfortunate peasants starve and die all around him unnoticed and unseen by the idolatrous miser and hermit.

In Scenes of Clerical Life there is Rev. Amos Barton, who loves money so much that he is blind to human sympathy and understanding. After expounding on the "Significance of love, hope, charity" in his pulpit, he takes a good collection and prepares to leave his church. Suddenly he sees poor Mrs. Brick, sick and hungry, rubbing her withered forefinger round and round her little snuff box, seeking in vain for the fraction of a pinch of snuff. "So your snuff is all gone, eh?"

1 The Mill on the Floss, pp. 76-90.

asks the Rev. Barton, and Mrs. Brick's eyes twinkle with visionary hope that the good person will replenish her box or give her a small coin with which to buy more. But the money-loving preacher sprinkles no small portion of his Scotch high-dried into her empty box. Instead, he says as he hurries on:

"Ah, well! You'll soon be going where there's no more snuff. You'll be in need of mercy then. You must remember that you may have to seek for mercy and not find it, just as you are seeking for snuff."

In evaluating himself the Rev. Barton says that he never comes near a vice. His one fault, he says, is "middling". He feels that he is surpradive in everything and that it is not in his nature to be classed as a middling, the "quintessential extract of mediocrity."

In Eliot's contemptuous delineation of the money-loving preacher, whom she has painted as the lowliest, the most prosaic, the least attractive person with the most tragic dignity, she shows that he, so vaguely conscious that he has risen into aristocracy by claiming close connection with Countess Czeralski, and so overtly apologetic to his middle class parishioners with whom he associates only in a pastoral and parenthetic manner, admits the countess into his own home where his gentle wife Milly waits on her like a servant week after week and month after month, sharing with her the best of their meager fare without complaint. In Amos Barton's love for money, in his desire to rise above

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1 "Rev. Amos Barton", Scenes of Clerical Life, pp. 36-7.
2 Ibid., pp. 67-8.
3 Ibid., pp. 66-72.
the "middling class", he is too complacent and too obtuse to see through the wiles of the pampered foreign countess who sponges on his over-worked wife. Because of his love for money he causes his wife to slave and pinch for him and the children until she wears herself to the grave. But he is too blind to see. Money and aristocracy are in his eyes. He cannot see anything else.

While many of Eliot's characters love jewelry, clothes, money, and lose sight on the rest of the world, Ezra Cohen, the Jew in Daniel Deronda, loves gambling. Love for this game of chance influences him to steal, and he pilfers and pawns whatever he sees of value in order that he might have more with which to gamble. Because of his love for gambling, he forces his daughter, Mirah, to help support the family so that his own wages might be spent in the game. He even takes her money and squanders it away on games. He drives his son Mordecai away from home because the boy will not share his earnings, and he is cruel to Mirah and his wife. His love for gambling lures him away from home, and his wife grieves, suffers, and dies in despair.

The sins of the body are as grave as the sins of the mind, and Eliot shows that in both cases one works in cooperation and co-ordination with the other. When sin is conceived in the mind, the body volunteers to assist the mind in carrying out its plan. When the body lusts for sinful acts, the mind ceases to fight against bodily desires and yields up control of the body. Thus, the body and mind, both willing, yield

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1 Daniel Deronda, pp. 313-39.
to temptation. The sin of adultery is a sin of the body inflamed and encouraged by the mind, and Eliot brands it a terrible sin. She traces the adulterous acts of her characters and records them in her book of memory as great sins, for they are not only acts of self-pleasuring, but they are acts which affect and bring suffering upon others. In Adam Bede Hetty Sorrel brings ruin upon her family, upon the family of Adam Bede whom she betrays, and upon the illegitimate child of Arthur Donnithorne whom she brings into the world. Hetty cannot have her pleasures jeopardized by the burden and responsibility of a baby; she feels that she can avoid and shirk the disgrace of bearing a child out of wedlock by killing the new-born babe. Thus, in her adulterous guilt she snuffs out the life of the little child and hides its body in thick brush. She feels free now to live on as she has lived, finding pleasure where she will or may. Hetty’s co-partner, Arthur Donnithorne, knows that his debauchery and adultery with Hetty has resulted in a nameless shame for the girl, but he feels no compunction for this sin. Yet, when he faces Adam, whom he has unwittingly wronged, he shuffles and lies like a knave because he dreads losing the good will and esteem of others. He has no intention of marrying the peasant girl although she carries his unborn child. He leaves town, for he really loves himself too well to marry the foolish peasant.

In The Mill on the Floss is another adulterous character, Maggie

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1 Adam Bede, pp. 60-117.

2 Ibid.
Tulliver, whose hunger for love induces her to engage in secret meetings in the woods with Philip the hunchback. The poor, sensitive, deformed man grieves his heart away over Maggie, for he loves her and he knows that she is only taunting him. Through adulterous acts Maggie lures Stephen Guest, tall, clever, accomplished, and handsome, away from her innocent cousin Lucy, to whom Stephen is engaged to be married. It matters not that Lucy loses faith in mankind and prays to die as she learns that Maggie and Stephen have gone away together. It matters not what people say about her spending days at a time with him. Her hunger for bodily satisfaction subordinates everything, and she satisfies that hunger by committing adultery. How other people react to the affair is not her concern.

Milton believes that the sin of inebriation is no less diminutive than that of adultery, and she scornfully points out and trails the characters of this sin with much indignation. Thias Bede in *Adam Bede*, Heffles in *Middlemarch*, Janet and Dempster in *Scenes of Clerical Life* and Molly Farren in *Silas Marner* are all guilty of this sin. Thias Bede drinks away his self respect, his sons’ earnings, and the prestige and influence of his family. Once loved and respected by his wife and children and by the community in which he lived, he is now a drunk whom nobody loves or respects. But Thias’s love for liquor makes him indifferent to what people think. He knows that his family needs what he can work and make, but drinking is more pleasant than working. So, no

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1 *The Mill on the Floss*, pp. 150-77.
matter how much suffering or humiliation he may cause his family or friends, he will not give up the habit, for drinking alcoholics is his life, his love. He would rather die than to give up the habit. Then there is Raffles in Middlemarch, who resorts to liquor to drown out his fears, to stupefy his restless expectancy with intoxicating drinks while he presents himself before Mr. Bulstrode and demands money. He is not fearless or bold until he is intoxicated. And there is Janet, brutally treated by her husband, Dempster, who hounds her almost to suicide when he is under the influence of whiskey. In her despair Janet also becomes a drunkard. In Silas Marner, Molly's enslavement to the demon opium causes her to lose interest in her child; she neglects herself and her family; she takes the money her husband Godfrey gives her and buys the habit-forming dope. By spending all of her money on opium she brings on economic corruption and insecurity in her home and reduces herself and Eppie her child to starvation and rags. Her love for the drug brings much suffering upon her home and causes Godfrey to disclaim her as his wife.

In portraying the worldly characters who represent the hard, callous, unpenetrable incarnation of self-inclusion and self-pleasing, the author contrasts them with moral characters who represent the

1 Adam Bede, pp. 35-50.

2 Middlemarch, pp. 257-311.

3 "Janet's Repentance", Scenes of Clerical Life, pp. 139-180.

highest ideals of Christianity. Self-sacrifice is their divine law of life, and its only true fulfilment; self-sacrifice, not in some ideal sphere sought out for themselves in one vain spirit of self-pleasing, but wherever service can be rendered to humanity. Every virtue which her base, despicable, worldly characters lack, her virtuous characters possess. Tito Melema, Hetty Sorrel, Bulstrode, Rev. Casaubon, Rosemond Vincy, Grencourt, Anthony Wybrow, Godfrey and Dunstan Cass and Tom Tulliver are incapable of one thought or emotion that rises beyond self. They are dead of soul. They insist on their own petty claims and ambitions to the exclusion of all others. They achieve by persistence, concealment, and fraud.

In contrasting these worldly characters with Romola, Dinah Morris, Dorothea Brooke, Mirah Cohen, Felix Holt and Adam Bede, who represent the ideal side of life, she shows that each one has a lesson to teach. By sheer antagonisms they arouse some readers from dreams of selfish vanity and corruption and corruption and awake within the soul some urge for a better and purer element of life. Through them she reveals the broad catholic truth that irrespective of all former professions or creeds voluntary acceptance of a higher life than one's own interest, pleasure or will is life's best and highest fulfilment, a higher life which follows Him who pleased not Himself as the Light and the Life of the world, but who died for the world even though it may not acknowledge or receive Him. Of utter unselfishness John Brown, op. cit., pp. 31-2.

1 John Brown, op. cit., pp. 31-2.
Everything fair, bright, and high in womanhood seems to combine in Romola, the heroine of the novel Romola. Eliot’s own atheistic qualities are mirrored in the young heathen classicist who passes imperceptibly into the “visible madonna” through trials and tears of disillusionment with Tito. Dinah Morris, the Methodist preacher of Adam Bede is neither mantled with a conscious saintship nor is she charged with denunciatory bitterness. Unconscious of her serenity, unaware of her delicate beauty, she is a symbol of radiating love. Dorothea, wife of Rev. Cassaubon and heroine of Middlemarch, is fairer and more attractive than Romola de Bardi or Dinah Morris. Without conscious blemish or selfish intention she aims always toward the highest good of others. Self has no place in her thoughts. Her primary aim is to relieve the suffering of people around her. She goes about her consecrated duties, unconscious of self-satisfaction or vainglorious self-estimation. She lives for others. Mirah Cohen, the Jewess in Daniel Deronda, exhibits a delicate ethereal purity, a tender meekness, an humble sadness, a self-sacrificial attitude which represent virtues in their purest form. In Scenes of Clerical Life the quiet unselfish love of Milly Barton, wife of Rev. Amos Barton, is so touchingly free and full that it never recognizes itself as self-devotion at all. In the same work Mr. Gilfil’s love for Caterina in “Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story” is unselfish, and his willingness to offer upon the altar of duty the only joy of his life reveals a spirit of utter unselfishness. Adam Bede, the dominant character of the novel by the same name, differs in every way from his master Arthur Donnithorne. No handsome or lovable epithet could be applied
to him. Hard almost to cruelty toward his habitually drunken father, Thias Bede, contemptuously hard toward his fond, foolish mother, bitterly hard toward his deceitful master Arthur, savagely vindictive and almost un forgiving where wrong is accomplished, he seems to be remote from Christian ideals. Yet, in his heart is a love, a tenderness indescribable. The hardness is against wrong doings, not against the doer.

Just as the outward appearance of Adam fails to compete with the external attractions of Eliot's self-pleasing characters, so does Maggie Tulliver, who is representative of the struggle between good and evil. Eliot does not wish to impress her readers that characters of virtue are not tempted to do evil, but she shows through Maggie that good and evil characters face temptations and that only through fortitude and self-sacrifice can temptations be overcome. She shows a dual spirit in Maggie, a spirit of the cross and a spirit of the world. Her life is the field upon which we see the great conflict waging between the elements of spiritual life and spiritual death, swaying amid heart-struggle and pain, now toward victory, now toward defeat until at last all seems lost. Chilled and thrown back by neglect and refusal, when she craves sympathy and love, she is threatened with hardness and self-inclusion. A stern conflict between pleasure and right, sense and soul, and the world and God is fought within her. Then, at one strong rebound the spirit recovers itself. Fleeing from the wrong, she sacrifices her love for Stephen Guest; she takes up the full burden of the cross; she accepts the present right, though her heart is breaking, and
bears her sorrows briefly. "One is not censured so much for falling," says Brown, "but one is blamed for lying there after the fall."

In contrasting Maggie with the weak characters who yield readily to temptations without making an effort to see the right through the wrong, Eliot shows that the imaginative aspirations of the soul never abandons one who wills to do right, but, if needed, they will fortify that soul against hopeless battling or prostrating collapse by steering it toward fulfilment through the purifying influence of self-sacrifice.

In order that individuals might remain virtuous or return to virtue after straying from the narrow path, Eliot presents an hypothesis which ascribes certain manifestations of character as necessarily present in the individuals. In order for a higher nature than their own to appeal to them, there must remain the capability to recognize that right is greater than success or joy and the moral power of will to act on that recognition. Such is the contrast in Felix Holt and Harold Transome of Felix Holt. Felix, the glorious old dissenter, son of a quack doctor, is interested in true reform for England—reform which is not found in any particular measure, whether the measure is called a Reform Bill, People's Charter or whatnot—but in reform that lies in the resolve of the masses, the working classes and the aristocracy to learn, to think, and to act for themselves. But Felix has no property qualifications which entitle him to vote, yet he wants to help improve the conditions of the working people, for he believes that his mission in life is to

Ibid., p. 22.
right the abuses of the common man. He resolves to make life less bitter for all concerned by stopping abuses and labor disturbances, but he is mistaken as a mob leader and is imprisoned for two years. His patience, his virtue, his conscientious scruples soon win favor with officials who liberate him. Unlike Silas Marner or Baldassare or Mr. Tulliver, he leaves the prison without bitterness, without hate or revenge in his mind. He has, as it were, a greater determination than ever to Christianize people so that they may live brotherly with one another. Harold Transome proves his virtue in the case of Felix Holt by choosing the right which imperils his own interests, but, because it is the right, he can set his back on the wrong. He is not a handsome man like Tito or G rantcourt. At first sight there is nothing of that uncompromising sense of right which characterizes Adam Bede. He seems clear-headed, hard, shrewd, successful, greatly alive to his own interests and importance. Yet, when two paths lie before him, he chooses

1 Under the old regime prior to the Reform Bill of 1832, only landowners had been entitled to vote; the Commons had recognized only the privileged class. Between 1804-69 the common man gradually won away the control of the nation from the landlords. The Reform Bill of 1832 opened the door by giving the franchise to every male householder whose tenancy was worth at least ten pounds a year. The Bill of 1867 went further and virtually introduced manhood suffrage, with the exclusion of farm laborers and miners. The Bill of 1864 admitted these classes to the ballot box. Snyder, and Martin, A Book of English Literature (New York, 1952), p. 310.

2 The riots in Felix Holt were the riots Eliot saw following the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832. John Cross, op. cit., p. 20.

the truer and better of the two. By allowing the trial and sentence of Felix Holt to take their course, Harold could have strengthened the possibility of his marriage to Esther just as William Dane did toward Silas Marner. But Harold testifies in the accused Felix’s favor, throwing blame upon himself for he rather chooses to hurt himself than to hurt others.

Thus, in contrasting the strong characters with the weak, in delineating the kind, generous acts of virtuous characters in opposition to the crimes instigated and perpetrated by the wicked, Eliot sets forth the fact that individual characters are responsible for their own thoughts and deeds and must reap according to what they sow. While wicked, self-pleasing characters have been concerned only with themselves, the good, self-sacrificing characters have denied themselves in order to make life pleasant for others. Eliot has followed all of them closely; she has recorded their acts against their names; she knows how well each one has played the game of life, and her philosophy is that as a man sows he must reap.
CHAPTER IV

THE WAGES OF SINNER

Just as George Eliot followed the course of the actions of her sinful characters, keeping record of each trespass against society, she metes out compensation or retribution on the basis of the service they rendered to mankind. Her desire to treat sin as she does may be an outgrowth of two important influences: first, her own personal experiences in committing sins which constantly reminded her that the wage of sin is death, death not only of the physical body but of the spirit and conscience; second, her evangelical sympathies and the searching anxiety she feels toward the great needs of mankind. Eliot reveals certain characteristics and qualities of a naturalist as well as a fatalist in believing that all mankind is basically sinful.

She shows that whatever man's struggles in life are, the reward is always punishment. The wicked suffer, but the virtuous suffer too, for none are really good. The code of her peasants is "Sin that's hidden is half forgotten", but Eliot forgets not the minutest detail. She plays up incident as well as character as sinful.


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George Eliot is not concerned so much with the Son of Man whose rebuke for repentant sinners is no harsher than "Go in peace and sin no more". In her determination to fight against self-righteousness, deceit, revenge, pride, selfishness, idolatry, adultery, inebriation, and vanity of the human race, she thunders, "Go unto you hypocrites", and relentlessly she grinds, trails and hounds each vain, selfish, pleasure-loving character to the very end, until each one pays in suffering and death for his sins. Eliot does not believe so much in punishment after death. Thus, her characters endure their retribution here on earth, while they live to feel the pain. She uses death only as a means of cutting them down when she feels that they are too sinful to be listed among the living.

To Eliot the wage of sin is death—the death of pride and pleasure, of selfishness and self-righteousness, and of all other sins that relate to "self-pleasing". The sins Eliot delineates are sins of the mind and body, so she punishes with mental and physical suffering. She takes special care to show in Romola the terrible punishment of fear which has habitually mastered Toto's deceiving mind and destroyed his peace and happiness as he literally runs from his father, Baldassaree, as well as from himself and his sins. She makes special effort to show Baldassaree's suffering as he lives through the humiliation of an

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insane asylum which Tito subjects him to; but she also shows that the 
lust for revenge is ever in his heart despite his suffering. Tito, 
having executed his last plan for betraying friends and enemies as well 
as priests and politicians in order to pave his own way to a rich, 
perfect future, hurries from his deserted home toward the exit of 
Florence where he plans to escape from the city. His riches bulge in 
his pockets; Tessa and her babies await him at the gate of Florence; 
only a short distance stands between him and happiness. In a few 
minutes he will be at the exit, for he sees the gate which leads 
away from the metropolis. But fate reveals itself here in the dis-
ruption of Tito's plans, for hiding on the bridge by the river is the 
frenzied mob with whom he conspired to trap Savonarola the priest and 
other victims of his band. After imprisoning Savonarola, the mob has 
discovered that their own political party has been sold to another party 
by Tito and they wait to deliver to him his just reward. As Tito 
advances they pounce upon him with the intention to kill, but in the 
excitement over his money, which they divide among themselves, Tito 
leaps into the river and escapes. As he swims toward the shore, he 
remembers that he is not penniless, for he has already sent money ahead 
to Milan where political connections have been bought. His only worry 
is to reach the shore. His breath grows short, and by the time he 
gains the shore he is in a state of semi-consciousness.

1 Ibid., pp. 290-510.
2 Ibid., pp. 400-480.

Ibid*, pp. 400-510.
Luck plays into Baldassaree’s hands, for as he sits by the river watching the water, Tito’s dazed semi-conscious body rides the waves to the shore and lands helplessly at Baldassaree’s feet. Tito wears no armor, but neither has Baldassaree his dagger. The revenge will not be so sweet, for Tito, seeing the vengeful eyes stare at him, yet believing that his father is still institutionalized in the asylum, wonders if he, Tito, is alive, while Baldassaree, fearing that Tito will escape him if he regains consciousness, clamps his bony fingers around the pretty young neck and chokes the breath out of him. With the fulfilment of revenge, the passion in the avenger dies and the strength which subsisted from the passion dies with it. With his bony fingers locked in a death-like grip which could not be broken, Baldassaree breathes his last. "Justice," says the author, as the dead Tito is borne past, still locked in the deathclutch of the human avenger, "justice is like the kingdom of God; it is within us as a great yearning."

In Silas Marner the deceptive Godfrey Cass is also rewarded by the author. Eliot does not issue a verdict of death upon him, for repentance comes to Godfrey before it is too late for ultimate punishment to be withheld. Repentance comes through the silent ministration of a purer and better nature than his own, but the self-pleasing of the past has brought about that which no repentance can fully reverse or restore. The evil, so long fostered within him, is too firmly rooted

1 Ibid., pp.450-460.

2 Ibid.
for repentance to blot out entirely. The suffering which Eliot inflicts upon him is all mental. For sixteen years he and Nancy pray for children, but no children are born to them. Godfrey becomes obsessed with the desire, but the desire remains unfulfilled. Everywhere he goes he realizes that the pain of watching his own unclaimed child, Eppie, grow up under Silas Marner's guidance is more than he can bear; and realizing now that he and Nancy will never have children, he decides to give an account of his sins, confess everything about his first marriage to the peasant Molly, and then claim his baby. He goes first to Nancy and makes a clean breast of his earlier marriage. Then the two of them go to Silas to get Eppie, but both are stung by her refusal to leave Silas. Godfrey threatens by law to compel her. He has money, while Silas is poor. He has so much more to offer her. He is her father. But Silas and Eppie show that money cannot buy happiness, that no law could force her to live with Godfrey after sixteen years have passed without his claiming her as his child. As Godfrey turns away from the miser's cottage, heart-broken and sad, he says to himself, "I wanted to pass for childless once... I shall pass for childless now against my wish." Life suddenly becomes empty, futile, unbearable for him; and he prefers death to life, but Eliot leaves him to suffer in his disillusionment.

Eliot makes sin the agent of its own chastisement, not allowing any of the escapes or alleviations which circumstances often provide in distress. Then feel it:

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Ibid., pp. 239-54.
the actual world. She hounds the sinful souls to the bitter end. In Middlemarch Rev. Casaubon is another of her deceitful victims whose position as a professed disciple of Christ, whose responsibility of leadership which he has abused in God's house, make him more guilty of sin than a non-confessed sinner. He must suffer the ultimate penalty of mental torture and physical death. His deceitful heart can no longer hide his wickedness, for suspicion and jealousy of his young wife burn continuously within him. Dorothea, tired of his abuses, has transferred her love to Ladislaw. All the riches Rev. Casaubon has swindled from his parish give him no happiness as his weak heart, aware of the gradual loss of its love, Dorothea, beats more faintly each day with disillusionment and grief. Hounding him continuously, Eliot will not let him escape, for his sins are great. His health fails and he loses his parish. His jealousy for his wife tears the mask from his true self, and his friends see him for what he is, a deceitful, conniving sinner, who has used the Church and its faithful followers for material gains. With death staring him in the face, he makes one desperate attempt to disinherit his wife so that if she marries Ladislaw they will have to live in poverty. But the hand of retribution is upon him. He has caused enough suffering, and death hovers over him. Unfathomable death checks his evil doings before he finishes his will.

Raffles, the deceitful blackmailer in Middlemarch, makes his last threat to Bulstrode. Then fear for his own dastardly deeds causes him

Middlemarch, pp. 650-740.
to live in anguish for his life, and he cringes from death, which hangs over him. Sick and suffering, he goes to Bulstrode to see Dr. Lydgate, and the doctor warns him that another drink of alcoholic beverages will kill him. He becomes delirious and calls for drink. Bulstrode, happy to rid himself of the pest, obliges him with a drink which proves fatal to the blackmailer. Thus, Raffles pays for his deceit with his life. Eliot's wrath is wrought into fury over hypocrisy, and she robs the deceitful, fraudulent banker, Bulstrode, of his happiness and peace of mind just as he has deceitfully robbed Ladislaw of his fortune. The luxuries which he possesses are no comfort when Raffles' threats to expose him to Ladislaw have to be silenced by large sums of his precious money and with condescension on his part to plead with him to keep quiet about the whole thing. Eliot punishes him mentally and physically. His constant fear is worse than death, for night and day he, too, lives in anxiety. After his exposure public scandal is more than Bulstrode can bear, and he frantically makes preparations to escape further punishment by leaving town. Eliot has compassion on Bulstrode's wife, who believes in and venerates him. Her pathos is concentrated in the woman who must share the dishonor of his exposure, but compassion is impossible for Bulstrode. She grants society permission to punish Bulstrode, for after Ladislaw is legally established rightful heir to the Bulstrode wealth, Bulstrode loses his social position, his pride, his power, his name, his reputation. With the death of all the things

1 Ibid.

2 Ibid.
he loves, physical death could not be worse.

The wage of sin is death, and the deceitful Dunstan Cass, whose whole life has been spent deceiving and hurting people, is guilty of sin and worthy of punishment. He has deceived his father; he has wrecked his brother; he has robbed Silas of his gold; yet, even with Silas's money laden on his back, he plans further destruction of Godfrey. He moves away from Silas's cottage as rapidly as his weight of stolen goods will allow him, all the while planning his course of mischief as he moves along. Eliot's wrath is upon him. She clouds his mind so that he does not notice the stone quarry through which he weaves his way toward his home. He hears too late the terrific avalanche of loose boulders as they tear themselves free from other stones; and he is crushed into eternal blackness underneath the huge stones. The stolen gold remains fast about his neck. Sixteen years later, after Dunstan Cass disappears, the stone quarry is drained, and there between two huge stones is the skeleton of a man whose watch and seals reveal his identity. With him is the weaver's money, rusty and worn.

The author has no patience for the deceptive Anthony Wybrow, for he too, plans further hurt and humiliation upon poor suffering Caterina, who is gradually grieving her heart out for the man who has made her love him. Eliot feels that she can not spare him further space among the

1 Ibid.
2 Silas Marner, pp. 234-36.
living, lest greater evils be committed by his deceitful soul. Thus, when the young man sees everything he has ever craved within his grasp, when his wedding is set for the morrow when he will be the most envied man in all London, Eliot acuates a heart attack which snaps away the young life in sudden, painful death.

Having inflicted ultimate punishment on deceitful characters, Eliot's indignation over vengeful souls reaches its breaking point. She has already brought death to Baldassaree, and she deals just as firmly and unrelentingly with Mr. Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* and with Molly in *Silas Marner*. Because of his spirit of revenge, Mr. Tulliver must be punished, and Eliot's retributive justice aims directly at the thing Mr. Tulliver loves most—his possessions. Dorloote Mill has been in the Tullivers' hands for generations. It is his pride, his livelihood, his life. But the author wrestles the mill away from him and suffers his foe to come into possession of it. The proud, stubborn, revengeful man who knows hate for what it is, is ruined. Riding home after his world has crashed about him, he suddenly falls from his horse in an apoplectic fit and becomes insensible to all else. Paralyzed, half-conscious so that he feels every excruciating pain, he lies there two months while his lands are sold from under him. The author feels that death for Mr. Tulliver following his financial downfall would be too good for him; therefore she tortures him further by having him recover.

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from his illness only to find that his enemy, Wakem, is the owner of his mill, and that he, Tulliver, must operate the mill under Wakem's dictation. The thought makes him more vengeful than ever, and he finds it almost impossible for human nature to bend his neck to such a hated yoke. Nevertheless, weakened by illness, overcome by his love for the old mill where Tullivers have lived for generations, heavily in debt, hungry and penniless, he has no alternative. He pays mentally and physically for his sins. Each minute, each hour, each day of his life he pays as he labors for his enemy, and Wakem pays him only thirty shillings a week. But despite his troubles Mr. Tulliver is not penitent. Revenge for Lawyer Wakem's evil deed is still uppermost on his mind. He gets his chance at revenge in the horse whipping that he gives the lawyer. The excitement Mr. Tulliver experiences after beating the lawyer unmercifully incurs a stroke on the avenger. This time Eliot recompenses the miller with crucial, painful death.

Nemesis must be meted to every sinner, and according to Eliot, Molly Farren must not escape, although her lot has been no easy one. Molly's desire to ruin her husband through revenge is a sin. Vengeance belongs to God only, and one oversteps his bounds when he attempts to take matters into his own hands. Thus, Molly must pay, for she is guilty of revenge. She first undergoes mental suffering. Then she learns what physical torture is as she ploughs through the snow and finds that she

1 Ibid., pp. 381-445.
2 Ibid., pp. 511-51.
can go no farther. Eliot feels that this act of revenge must never be perpetrated. Chilled to the bone, aching and numb, dazed by overdoses of opium, with her child weighing her down like lead, Molly sinks down into the snow. Revenge is still strong within her, but she is too ill to rise; and Eliot seals the evil impulse as the cold glues together the frozen lips in hideous, grotesque pain. Molly's child, with whom the vengeful woman means to taunt her husband, frees itself from the frozen clutches of its dead mother's arms and toddles toward the light which blazes in Silas Marner's cottage. The old grim shawl in which Molly has wrapped it, trails behind; the little queer bonnet dangles at Eppie's back, drops unnoticed on the snow as the child crawls through the open door and falls before the fire in fatigue.

After satisfying her wrath upon the characters of revenge, Eliot considers the creatures of wrath. Wrath is one of the seven deadly sins, and Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* is guilty of the sin. Not only is he guilty of wrath, but he is filled with hatred. Tom's hatred, his conniving, and his ruthlessness finally catch up with him. They overtake him just as he acquires what he most wanted. His mill is a reality; he actually owns it again; he is rich; he has everything to live for, but Eliot decrees that he must not enjoy these things which were bought with the price of blood. He is not worthy of the goods. Sudden death, however, is too good for Tom. His coveted possessions

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must torture him before he reaps his final reward. Thus, Eliot permits the floods to come. Waters rise on the river Floss and cover Tom's mill. Waters rise around his house, and Tom is stranded with no way to escape. He is frantic and his suffering is terrible. The black, threatening waves rush up at him; the strength of the waters measures the old house which trembles and cracks from the terrifying pressure. Any minute he expects the house to give way to its foe and lurch forward into the sea. Then he hears paddles from a canoe; he sees his sister, Maggie, whom he turned out of doors, coming to rescue him. He gets into the boat, feeling almost safe again as they paddle away. But a blinding crash of wood and steel hurl high into the air and settle about them as the great house and mill crumble. Tom experiences one minute of wild terror which seems to last a lifetime; then the boat in which he rides lurches forward and sinks into oblivion as Tom pays the fatal price for his sins.

William Dane of Silas Marner finds that hatred and jealousy pay dividends only in tears, and he pays dearly for his acts of hatred and jealousy in both physical and mental pain. The wife whom he falsely wins from Silas never gives him her love; she denies him physical gratification, for she never consents to the consummation of the marital relationship.

Dane's suffering is great. His mind and body hunger for unfulfilled love, and he spends his years longing for what he never gets.

In Felix Holt Mrs. Transome's hatred for her son is on Eliot's record, and only suffering and death can clear the slate. By planting

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2 Silas Marner, pp. 250-60.
a seed of bitterness in Harold's heart against the evil principles of his mother, Eliot punishes Mrs. Transome through her son whom she worships. He chills her very heart when he opposes her plans for him to become a Tory in Parliament, and, to refute and defy her, he becomes a radical candidate instead. He chills her further by a hardness of manner toward her ideas, and she finds herself more unhappy in loving him than she found bitterness in hating her elder son. Defying her still more, Harold places under surveillance her secret lover, Lawyer Matthew Jermyn, who has helped her with her domestic burdens. Paying no attention to her plea to forgive his transgressions since he had saved their estate from the ancient claim of the Eycliffe family, Harold enters an investigation with a determination to correct the wrongs executed against the estate by the lawyer. He scoffs at his mother's suggestion of extenuation circumstances, and the wicked mother cringes before the strength and determination which she had loved in her son. As a final punishment, the author causes Harold to fail at the poles, even though he has campaigned for his candidacy to Parliament by treating the voters to beer during the canvass. Then Esther, known as the daughter of Rev. Lyons, but who is really a Eycliffe and legal heir to the Transome disputed estate, is discovered just as Harold compels restitution from Lawyer Jermyn for his many peculations. Bringing further proof, the author also focuses on the use of free beer at the poles to be a common practice in politics during George Eliot's time. The purpose was to intoxicate common people, who had no vote because of property laws, so that they could make a noise and terrify the voters at the poles with disorder and dangerous threats. *Ibid.*, pp. 290-310.
hurt and punishment upon Mrs. Transome, the ruthless lawyer announces that Harold is not a Transome at all, but that he is his own illegitimate son, Mrs. Transome's precious bastard. The shame wrecks Mrs. Transome. She gives up in despair and longs to die, but death does not conveniently come. The Transome estate is not hers any longer, and she cannot hide there and wait for death. Harold seeks an interview with Esther in order to arrive at an agreement without litigation, but the estate is lost to them forever. Nothing else remains, for her honor has been stained; Harold knows her for what she really is; her property has been returned to the rightful owner, and everything in life that means anything to her is sacrificed on the altar of retribution. Living on the charity of Esther Eycliffe, who refuses to press charges against her, Mrs. Transome hides herself from the eyes of society and lives out her years in remorse and humiliation. Thus, in rewarding the characters of hatred and jealousy, Eliot preaches a gospel of love. She shows that when hate takes the place of love, a sin has been committed and the sinners must pay.

Eliot also focuses her attention on the creatures of pride. In Romola Fra Girolomo Savonarola, the saintly monk who lives a seemingly spotless life with an unshakeable faith, is not spared Eliot's lash, for he is too proud, too powerful, too sure of himself. Brown says that he sacrificed himself to the cause of humanity by denying himself of earthly pleasures. Even so, according to Eliot, he possesses traits of Bible, Jeremiah 51: 5.

1 Felix Holt, pp. 418-37.

sin which do not exonerate him from Eliot's punishment. He has played an important part in politics and has become connected with conflicting political parties. His partisan spirit overshadows the purity of the patriot so that he contracts and abases the wide aim of Christianity. Substituting a civil law of right to suit the interest of his party, he modifies the absolute and unconditional law of God. In his most powerful sermons he had preached that God willed that he, Savonarola, would redeem the country, purge it of sin, and make it a fit country for God's people. "The day of vengeance is at hand", he preached as French soldiers marched over Florence; but repercussions to his predictions of French surrender are anything but peaceful, and the predictions prove false. Political intrigue as well as terrible economic and social injury are wrought, and national hostility is attacking the prophet on every hand. The public is also tired of enemy soldiers promenading the streets and devouring the best foods. The purging of men who love avarice and lechery, which Savonarola predicts, has not begun. In fact, the conquering French king shows more interest in graft than in Christianity. The proud old monk is accused of deception, and the public demands proof of his divine connections with God. Then Savonarola refuses to walk

1 Romola, p. 436.
3 Holy Bible, Jeremiah 51: 6.
4 Romola, p. 430.
through a burning fire to test God's strength, the frantic people become skeptical, and the proud head bends with humiliation as he carries the public's hisses and jests upon his drooping shoulders. Because of Tito's treachery, he is a prisoner of the state and is put on trial for his life. The day of the people's vengeance is really at hand, and Savonarola's faithful followers are still hopeful that the God-fearing priest will speak some parting word or give some sign to show that he has been with God. But the priest, sad and self-sacrificing, marches to the gallow's with his head humbly bowed on his breast and with fear in his eyes. His followers wait for him to speak while the angry crowd jeers, but the monk passes into eternity silent and afraid. Even his memory is besmirched. Rumors circulate after his death that the priest, found guilty of fraud and treachery against the people and the Church, confesses that he possessed no divine powers of prophecy and that he retracted all prophetic claims.

Eliot's reward for another character of pride is the thwarting of hope in Bardo de Bardi, whose one wish is the immortalizing of his name in literature and a library. Eliot prohibits the request, for one must never accomplish or retain the things which one craves most. Thus, she endows Tito with the will and audacity to sell the Bardi library

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1 Ibid., p. 21.
2 Ibid., p. 21.
3 Ibid., p. 563.
immediately following Bardo de Bardi's death, and he sells it to the very institution which Bardi has requested it not be sold—to a monastery for the hated monks. Bardi has no sons through which his name might live. The aristocrat dies and is soon forgotten, for he has done no works which will live after him.

Continuing to mete out punishment upon her characters of pride, Eliot selects Daniel Deronda, whose pride for his position of an Englishman brands him guilty of sin and makes him worthy of Eliot's wage. After his university training at Cambridge he suddenly discovers that he is not an Englishman at all. He is only a Jew, the son of a common opera singer. His chest falls as his great pride is wounded with the startling news. He is stunned, and his little world crashes about him.

Then there is the proud Dweddlen who wilfully injures another woman and is punished by the natural consequences of the act. Marrying Grancourt for the sake of pride and knowing that it is duty is to his mistress Lydia and to his sons, she enjoys little happiness from her marriage. On her very wedding night Lydia thwarts her happiness with a pathetic note which kills her happy spirit:

I am the grave in which your chance of happiness is buried, as well as mine... The galling wrong you have done me will be your curse...

That is only the beginning of the proud girl's punishment. All through her relations with that magnificent incarnation of self-isolation and

1 Daniel Deronda, pp. 323-40.
2 Ibid., p. 611.
self-love, Gwendolen is compelled to cover before her cruel, proud husband. Again and again she attempts to turn, only to be crushed under his heels. She would kill him, but she is too afraid. Grancecourt gets his reward on a day when they go sailing. The wind flaps the boat sail against him and he is thrown into the water. Gwendolen refuses to stretch out her hand to save him and rejoices when he drowns in the water. Still proud, the brilliant, self-confident girl feels that with her husband out of the way she will be free to marry Daniel Deronda, but Eliot turns Daniel against her, for Gwendolen must suffer more. She is not worthy of happiness. Eliot crushes her pride in poverty, and the girl finds life unbearable as she lives against her will.

Mr. Tryan, in Scenes of Clerical Life, is the last of the proud characters. He bases his life on the principle laid down by the great Evangelist who said: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal." But Mr. Tryan, an erring man, loves his soul, and according to the code of Christ, he must lose it. Because of his self-centeredness and narrowness, Mr. Tryan becomes ill and cannot recover. With the love of Janet for him in sight, nemesis visits that he shall not marry her nor be given another chance to live down the contempt and the opposition which confront him in the town. Neither can he become the respected influential incumbent that he hopes to be. Instead he dies and loses all the worldly things which he has

1 Daniel Deronda, pp. 987-1020.
worked and aimed for in life.

There is also the lust for power which has to be recompensed. In Daniel Deronda Mordecai the Jew has craved power to restore Palestine to the Jews, but the author's anger is kindled against Mordecai. She shows that in a world of many races, no one race is destined to rule, that all races and all classes, in fact, all peoples everywhere, must be considered. Mordecai, then, is guilty of a grave sin, and the wage of sin is death. Eliot first strikes him with tuberculosis, but his great mind is too free to be bound and hindered by the deterioration of the body caused by the deadly disease. Through his sickness he has patience, and he continues to teach, to exhort his people to recapture the ancient holy country of Asia. So Eliot cuts him down in death in order that the threat to suppress other races might be ended forever.

The wage of sin is death for idolators, too, and Silas Marner cannot escape the nemesis for his sin. His love for money isolates him from the rest of the world, and people flee in terror when he approaches. The villagers where he lives in Raveloe are superstitious of the queer, solitary man, and they believe he has an evil eye which can dart almost any ailment into a victim. Thus, Silas suffers in loneliness, for no one pays the least attention to him. Aside from mental torture, retributive justice calls for greater punishment. Loneliness for idolatry is not sufficient. The gold which Silas cherished must be touched, and Dunstan Cass does not only touch the gold, but steals


2 Daniel Deronda, pp. 964-1000.
the last shilling, so that nothing is left on which Silas might subsist.

As Elliot strikes at the miser we can hear his say, "Store not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths corrupt and where thieves break through and steal." Silas becomes frantic; he suffers from epileptic fits; he knows not whom to blame; he literally dies a thousand deaths in anguish and despair and lives for sixteen years in poverty, repeating for his foolish lust before his money is found and restored to him. In the end Elliot takes pity on him, for his love for gold has really injured no one but himself. Because he is penitent, he suffers Molly's little Eppe to bring comfort to him. Eppe banishes his selfishness, widens his view on life, sweetens his temper, and creates a sympathy and kindness in Silas which he has never known before. He feels that the child is sent to him from afar, and he dedicates his life to the rearing of the child in Christian virtues.

In Scenes of Clerical Life there is Rev. Amos Barton, whose love for money and whose strong desire to be counted among England's aristocracy must be reckoned with. The author feels that his position as a minister places him in a greater capacity of responsibility; therefore, his punishment is greater. His wife dies and leaves him with six babies for whom he has to provide; his parochial duties as curate of Shepperton Church are taken from him, for his parishioners, whose

1 Holy Bible, St. Matthew 6: 19-20.
2 Silas Warner, pp. 60-6, 60-6.
3 Ibid., pp. 160-200.
faith is greatly diminished because of him, realize that the clergyman needs their material aid more than they need his spiritual aid. Broke and penniless, he has no way to support his family. The love for money and aristocracy fades, and his concern now is for bread. His conscience torments him because of his ill treatment of his wife, Milly, and he cannot get the dead wife out of his mind. Day and night he walks the streets in rage and mental torture as he cries, "Milly. I didn't love thee enough... I wasn't tender enough to thee... I am miserable for it all now."

The main women who love jewelry and fine clothes must reap their just reward just as all the other sinners do. Millo deals with them one by one, for she is never lenient where sin is concerned. Sin must be recompensed by suffering and death. Milly's suffering comes in hard labor and self-sacrifice against her wishes. She slaves for her husband, for her children, and even for the alien Countess Czordeski, whom her husband brings into her home. Her final retribution is in premature death, and the young woman goes where she will cherish clothes no more. In Adam Bede Bess loves fine clothes and jewelry, and her love for such leads her to the house of prostitution, where she becomes infested with a social disease. In Romola Monna Brigida is punished by early widowhood and by her failure to get married a second time. She lives the

1 Scenes of Clerical Life, pp. 65-6.
2 Ibid., pp. 103-11.
3 Ibid., pp. 101-2.
life of a lonely old woman. Beautiful clothes and fine jewelry do not
help her. In The Mill on the Floss, Glegg's husband divorces her because
of her idolatry and extravagance, which have brought on a financial ca-
tastrophe. The dissolution of their marriage brings on much suffering
for the woman. Her sister Pullet suffers too, for her husband
cesses to be attracted to her, despite her clothes and jewelry, and
showers his attention on every pretty girl whom he meets. Pullet's life
is miserable, but she can do nothing about it. The wage of sin is
death, not necessarily physical death, but death of pride, death of
social prestige, death of peace and happiness.

The last of the idolatrous characters to be observed is Ezra Cohen
in Daniel Deronda. He loves gambling. His youth is lost around the gambling
houses, and he is no longer able to work. He is hungry and homeless; he
has no place to stay but the streets. He can no longer gamble, for he
has no money on which to stake his bets. He is penitent and he cries for
his wife and children, but he knows not where they are. Eliot leaves him
to suffer in the cold as he wanders aimlessly about in the streets.

Eliot not only inflicts punishment upon the characters who sin
through the faculties of the mind. She passes judgment upon the characters
who are guilty of the sins of the body. She is oppressed by a sense of
her responsibility, and the consciousness of such responsibility forces
her severity in applying the law of moral retribution, the reiterated
doctrine that sins bring their wages.

1 Daniel Deronda, pp. 312-400.
2 Ibid.
Nemesis is lame, but she is of colossal stature, like the gods; and sometimes while her sword is not yet unsheathed she stretches out her huge left arm and grasps her victim. 1 This is one of Eliot's proleptic hints of fate lying in ambush, like the allusion to the "malignant destiny" which prepares to upset the wicked characters of adultery. She proves that "no man liveth to himself nor dies to himself." One either aims toward the true and good and pure, or becomes the slave of self. One lives and dies in God or in the devil.

In Adam Bede her all-seeing eyes see Hetty and Arthur as they commit acts of adultery. She knows that Hetty buries her little bundle of human flesh in the brush after taking its life, and her fury is raised against the girl who commits adultery and destroys the evidence. The body is found hidden in a shallow grave of leaves, and Hetty is brought to trial for murder. When Arthur hears that Hetty is to die by electrocution for the murder of her infant babe, he is not utterly lost, for repentance comes to him. It comes when the whirlwind of anguish sweeps over him, scattering all the flimsy mists of self excuse in which self love has sought to veil his wrong-doings; and it bows him to the dust. He realizes that he has lost the affection of his fellowmen; he sorrows to the extent that self loses its ascendancy; and he is willing to face the punishment. All thought of self goes as he thinks of the date of Hetty's electrocution. He offers no excuse for his own sins as he hurries home to plead for her life. He still has no intention of marrying her, but

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1 ibid., pp. 399-400.
2 Earnest A. Boker, op.cit., p. 232.
3 Adam Bede, pp. 133-192.
he feels that it is his moral obligation to save her life, even at his own expense. But public scandal does not satisfy Eliot's demand for retributive justice. She allows Arthur to save Hetty from death through his social and political affiliations. The death verdict is changed to excommunication or transportation for life. Thus, Hetty the deceitful adulterer, is banished from her country forever. No one ever hears from her again. But Arthur is guilty of the greater sin. His deception caused Hetty to fall to temptation, and Eliot sees fit to inflict greater punishment upon him. Having lost prestige among his friends and family, he leaves home of his own accord and goes into a far country; but sickness wages his body and living is only a torture. Years later, he returns home broken in health, torn by war, and finds peace only in death.

In addition to Hetty and Arthur, there is Maggie Tuliver in The Mill on the Floss who comes home after an indulgent vacation with Stephen Guest, and is turned away from her home by her brother Tom. She is hissed at and snubbed by society; she hears wagging tongues as she slaves in the factory for a living. Her beauty fades and her youth grows to age. She feels responsible for the wrecked lives of Lucy and Phillip as they pine their years away, and she cries, "Oh God! is there any happiness in love that can make me forget my pain?" Eliot shows that Maggie, though penitent and sorrowful at heart, deserves greater punishment than

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
that which she now receives, for she has not only ruined her life, but has ruined the lives of others. The ultimate wage for adultery is death, and Maggie finds death as she tries to rescue Tom from the flood. "Woe unto you hypocrites", cries the avenger as Maggie sinks with Tom beneath the angry tides.

The wheels of retribution grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine. In Middlemarch the adulterer Rosamond Vinny has destroyed her husband. He is a weak man, but tries to live ethically. Rosamond's fraudulent acts have led him through embarrassment, through bankruptcy and social slander, and her obdurate temperament has caused him to become an accessory to murder. "You harlot", cries Eliot, as she dooms Rosamond to a sad end, and the wicked girl pays the bitter price of shameful death.

The wage of sin is death for the drunkard also. In Adam Bede Thias Bede's self-pleasing intemperance finally overtakes him. Drunk with the intoxicating liquids of his choice, he struggles toward home, where his wife and children are waiting. The board which serves as bridge across Willow Brook is narrow even for a sober man, but Thias is drunk, and the board plays tricks on him. It narrows as he steps, and, instead of one board, there are many boards dancing crazily up at him. They grow

1 The Mill on the Floss, pp. 807-900.
2 Holy Bible, Isaiah 3:15.
3 Middlemarch, pp. 416-45.
narrower as he walks across the brook. Not able to distinguish the false from the real, he loses his footing and goes down into the water to drown in the shallow creek.

Thus, Eliot's characters, who commit sin of the mind and sin of the flesh, all die. They die in the crises of their lives, and though few of them have done some good, they have done much wrong for which they must pay. In their death there is something deeper and more earnest than any mere artistic trick of pathos, far more real than the very commonplace suggestion of immortality as the completion and elucidation of earthly life; far more profound and single too, than the only less trite commonplace of hinting to us the mystery of God's ways in what we call untimely death.

After releasing and exhausting her fury upon the various phases of sin, after bringing death to the characters of deceit, revenge, hatred, jealousy, pride, lust for power, idolatry, adultery and inebriation, Eliot searches the record of virtuous characters in order to find their true role in life. The good characters know that they cannot live for themselves without first living for others. When wrong is triumphant in high places, when fellow citizens suffer from want and squalor, Eliot shows that everybody must be concerned. The problems of one sufferer are society's problems.

Eliot's conception of virtue or righteousness is quite apart from

1 Adam Bede, pp. 50-6.
2 Romola, p. 426.
all consideration of compensation. Goodness is not paid off in any form of external advantage, for it ceases to be goodness when it has respect to recompense. Furthermore, man cannot be really good, since man is basically evil. Thus, the virtuous characters must suffer; but their sufferings can be borne, for she endows them with patience and endurance. And in the end, she grants them peace of mind, which is about the extent of happiness in this world.

Happiness in Eliot's novels is not found in personal enjoyment or personal affection. Many of her characters reveal this fact. Fra Luca, Romola's brother, lives a spotlessly pure and clean life, but he lives a life of misery and suffering. His only recompense is a clear conscience and an internal peace of mind. Eliot shows that a "peace of mind" is richer than any material goods. Romola, morally good though Pagani, suffers the worst disillusionment. Her marriage to Tito is everything. Fra Luca's heavenly warning predicts it will be. Tito's selling of her father's library, his betrayal of friends into the hands of enemies, Baldassarre's confidential talk with her of Tito's treachery with him, of his mock-marriage to Tease and of Tease's illegitimate children, all come down upon her at one time, and she flees from her husband in hurt, pride, and repulsion. Confessing her trials to Savanarola, she cries.

1 Charles d'Amo, op. cit., viii.
2 Romola, p. 284.
3 Ibid.
"I cannot bear my bonds." And Savonarola turns her back toward home.

He tells her:

One's life is not chosen no more than one's birthplace or parent. Life has its bitterness but you cannot flee from God. Fate is a river that flows from the foot of the Invisible Throne and man cannot choose his duties.

Eliot pictures the Pagan girl in obedient acquiescence, answering,

"Father, I will be guided. Teach me. I will bear my crosses!" Romola knows now that there is no complete happiness in life except in doing for others, and to this one and she dedicates her life. Reaching a Mediterranean village she finds an epidemic of the plague and unprofitable of her own safety she works fearlessly among the sick and dying until the sick are well and the dead are buried. Then Romola brings hungry Tessa and her half-clothed, starved babies from the gate where they wait in vain for Tito and shelters them from the outside world. Without letting Tessa know that she is not Tito's lawfully wedded wife, Romola dedicates her life to their care in order to atone for her husband's wrong rather than to appease her own conscience. Aside from the joy in caring for Tessa's children, Romola finds that the Church,
which she has never believed in, furnishes the immediate satisfaction for moral needs which all the previous culture and experience of her life have left hungering.

In Adam Bede Dinah Morris, who is morally good and ecclesiastically conscious, suffers restrictions imposed upon her as she preaches the word of God. She also learns that happiness comes only in doing for others, as her love for Seth Bede has to be sacrificed for her duties to Christ. Dinah turns down the love of Seth as an act of self-denial. She feels that God wills that she should live only to serve his people.

Preaching at night, working in the mill during the day, she is willing to give up worldly pleasures that souls might be saved for God. In the end Eliot grants her the privilege of consummating marriage, and she and Adam Bede are joined together in holy wedlock.

In both Romola of Romola and Dinah in Adam Bede there is a trace of the social reformer, the philanthropist, the benefactor of the poor, the wretched, and the fallen. But these traits are not found in Dorothea of Middlemarch. She thinks not at all of her self or of the good she does for others. As a reformer or benefactor she does not exist. She is conscious only of the sufferings of people. Her concern for Bulstrode's disgrace is not in terms of censure, but of sympathy. No matter what

2 *Adam Bede*, pp. 539-63.
evil he has done, she does not feel free enough from sin to cast stones at him. The financial embarrassment and social ostracism of Dr. Lydgate and his family move her unconsciously to benevolent action. Lonely though she is and deserted by family and friends because of her marriage to Ladislaw, who is thought to be of low birth, she is too busy doing for others to think about herself. Dorothea has been less self-centered than either Romola or Dinah, and the author deals most kindly with her. Dorothea comes into full possession of Rev. Casaubon's fortune, and almost simultaneously Ladislaw's patrimony is restored to him. But money is of no particular importance to her except to be used to alleviate suffering among the poor. The sneers from her family and friends turn into admiration and blessings since Ladislaw's identity with nobility has been established; but neither snobs nor cheers mean anything to her. She feels that society as English people regard society is a dangerous thing, and she is not interested in such. Both she and Ladislaw see life from the same point of view, and both of them plan to continue to serve humanity. In serving others they hope to find happiness for themselves.

As a reward for Felix Holt's goodness the author grants him the privilege of marriage with Esther, the heiress. Felix has already converted Esther to Christian ways of life, and she has joined him in campaigning for the improvement of England's working classes. Esther

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1 "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." *Holy Bible, John 8:7.*

and Felix refuse to extricate or evict Mrs. Transome from Esther's estate, and the two live in self-imposed poverty, in which state both vow to dedicate their lives to the cause of Christ. The principle which animates their lives, which raises them above the littleness of life, and makes them witnesses for God and Christ, is self-sacrifice.

Thus, by Romola and Dinah, by Porthea and Adam, by Felix and Esther, Eliot proves that the only true worth and greatness of humanity lies in its pursuit of the highest truth, purity and right, irrespective of every issue and in exclusion of every meager aim; and that the true debasement and hopeless loss of humanity lies in the path of self-pleasing.

She also shows that the Church, amid all its actual corruptions, stands forth a living witness by its rituals and sacraments to the fundamental truth of the cross. From the deepest degradation of the cross some figure bends under its burden, some Christ-like figure, some Fra Luca, some Savonarola, some erring figure; but some self-denying figure, who will go through the darkness of death and hell to seek and hold on to the truth. The author shows that only in the earlier dawn of this higher life of the soul, either among the races of men or in the individual man, only in the days of the Issacs and Jacobs of our young humanity, though not with the Abrahams, the Moses or the Joshuas; only when the soul first begins to apprehend that its true relation to God is to be realized through the cross, is there conscience and "habitual respect unto recompense" of any reward.

Felix Holt, pp. 442-44.
CONCLUSION

After making a study of George Eliot's novels, the writer feels that the true worth of her treatment of sin rests on grounds higher than any mere perfection of artistic writing. In the first place, her resolution to write novels is an outgrowth of serious meditation and conflict—conflict between the soul and the evils of the outside world. The conflict was many-sided because it involved science and religion, reason and faith, materialism and spiritualism, romanticism and realism.

In the second place, Eliot is prepared to treat sin from a psychological point of view, for she is a philosopher, a psychologist, an investigator of human nature. In other words she knows herself, and she knows and understands people. Having lived virtuously and wickedly herself, Eliot is cognizant of sin. She knows that self-pleasing is not a solution to England's problems. The solution, she feels, lies in the indoctrination of a moral concept. Thus, her philosophy is simply a moral philosophy which deepens her sense of responsibility and introspection. As a subtle and profound commentator, she stands out as the deepest, broadest and most catholic illustrator of the true ethics of Christianity. Through wicked characters she delineates the various categories of sins which are contrary to Christianity; she shows the effects of these sins upon the nation and, finally, she offers a solution to the problems of sin by bringing misfortune and disaster to the wicked and by rewarding virtuous souls with the desired things of life.

She maintains her place as an earnest and persistent expositor of
of the true doctrine of the cross. Holding to the principle that man is
born for and should live for something higher than the love of happiness,
she proves that the divine spirit works in man and is manifested through
man's own response to its call if it is not crushed and inhibited by the
sin of self-pleasing. She leaves no room for illusion, but reveals
all nature with uncompromising directness. She shows that if man's
desire for good is stronger than this desire for evil, he can resist
temptations through self-denial and self-sacrifice.

In her treatment of sin she does not have an aristocratic sense of
form or an aerial quickness of play and magic which enabled other
novelists to ripple lightly and humorously at intervals. Having broken
with formal religion and formal marriage, and having suffered immensely
from society and her own conscience, she could not resort to the French
art of fiction. She is too sober in thought to be a Botticelli, but
she is a Savonarola. And yet, because of her solemnity, because of her
full belief in the modern gospel of work, because of her sternness with
characters who sported too much, and because of her sense of God as
a chartered accountant, she is realistic and typical of the true
Victorian adherents who strove to find the best in man despite man's
basic evil.

The thing which distinguishes her from the majority of her Col-
feering, earnestly ethical, richly emotional kind, is her mental
endowment, which endowed her with the faculty to disentangle herself
from conventional England and fight the evils of the period with fictitious
literature. Steeped in philosophical and psychological phenomena and
Comlil sociolgy, she is often over-cruil, over-thoughtul, over-
critical, but she brings to the novel the attitude and attainments
of a systematic thinker, of a rationalist saved from abstractions
which commonly incapacitate many novelists. Her intense human
sympathies, her rich fund of experience, and her sense of philosophical
humor are all fused in her great novels, rendering her the most pro-
found moralist of the age.
### PRIMARY SOURCES

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eliot, George</td>
<td>Adam Bede</td>
<td>Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

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*The novels are arranged chronologically.*

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*Note: The table shows a list of Eliot's works and their publishers, along with other literary works related to the author.*


Books


Articles
