The Myth of George Eliot

How Marian Evans Invented the Victorian Novelist

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The Victorian Knight

> Now their separate characters are briefly these. The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle, – and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise; she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation.
>
> (Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies*, 2007, 77)

"Looking at the Middle Ages," writes Umberto Eco, "means looking at our infancy" when the Western tradition became self-conscious, reappropriated antiquity as its legitimate inheritance, and started on the endless process of renegotiation, which Eco calls a "pervasive Medieval nostalgia" (Eco 1986, 65–66). Ariosto's knights and Tasso's crusaders are already revisitations, of course, and Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605–1615) marks the boundary between romance and the novel, instituting, in the contrast between the paradigmatic knight's fantastic visions of chivalry and his squire Sancho Panza's common sense, the contradiction of the modern age. Dreaming of the Middle Ages acquires an actively political function during the Enlightenment and around the French Revolution, when the Gothic movement in art, architecture and literature offered the British aristocracy political asylum, a place in the collective imagination which allowed them to distance themselves from the morally suspect continental aristocrats, and to reimagine the nation's origins, protestant traditions and foundational values.[1]

The medieval knight in his Victorian reincarnation, crystallised by Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present* (1843), provides a national and

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autochthonous model to counter the alienation determined by industrialisation and political unrest in the 1840s, a model which easily morphed into that equally protean entity that is the English gentleman. The popularity of Richard Smiles's *Self-Help*, published in 1859, proves the great demand for definitions and instructions to guide the man who would like to be taken for a gentleman without having been born to the part. Smiles assures his readers that "[r]iches and rank have no necessary connection with genuine gentlemanly qualities. The poor man may be a true gentleman – in spirit and in daily life" (Smiles 2009, 564). The qualifying traits include "true courage and gentleness" (569) and a stalwart dedication to truth, but there is a principle distinguishing characteristic, the one test

> that never fails – How does he EXERCISE POWER over those subordinate to him? How does he conduct himself towards women and children? How does the officer treat his men, the employer his servants, the master his pupils, and man in every station those who are weaker than himself? . . . Gentleness is indeed the best test of gentlemanliness.
>
> (Smiles 2009, 573, caps in original)

The gentleman is, by definition, in a position of social power. The code of chivalry provided the norms of conduct for men sanctioning Victorian gender practices with the triple authority of tradition, history and religion. This, of course, places a lot of pressure on men, who must have the personality and the character to live up to the model, knowing that their success or failure will be sanctioned by the community and ratified by science, as it becomes a universalising model, the epitome of civilisation justified by progress and evolution in his position as master. This was a properly unifying myth, shared by the "Whig historians [who] perceived a gradual, progressive unfolding of England's liberal institutions, beginning with the Anglo-Saxons and continuing to the present day" and the "Tory medievalism [that] imagined a largely static feudal order shattered by the onset of modernity" (Matthews and Sanders 2021, 10).

But the question of appearance over essence remained unresolved. The strictest observance of Smiles's manual would be insufficient to claim the status of gentleman without the validation of the community: if it was not acquired by birth and backed by wealth, it could only be attributed, and revoked, by the social group. The idea of the gentleman remained an obviously hierarchical and exclusive model. To include the meritorious lower classes, the model had to become entirely separate from privilege and based exclusively on character. The tension between the concepts of "gentlemanliness" and "manliness" stages a conflict of mythical interpretations operating within the boundaries of common sense between the

ruling group and the group aspiring to rule, as Elizabeth Gaskell's character John Thornton in *North and South* (1855) explained.

> I take it that "gentleman" is a term that only describes a person in his relation to others; but when we speak of him as "a man," we consider him not merely with regard to his fellow men, but in relation to himself, – to life – to time – to eternity.
>
> (Gaskell 1975, 158)

Manliness, according to Thornton, is a universal and eternal character trait, while he dismisses "gentleman" as "the cant of the day." And yet, Victorian manliness is merely a more socially inclusive definition of the same basic character; like the gentleman, the manly man is constructed in opposition to a feminine 'other,' with each sex being defined by negative stereotypes of the other" (Tosh 2002, 466). The radical distinction between men and women, enforced through different systems of education, rigidly separated spheres of action and a strict distinction between masculine self-control and feminine emotivity served, like the idea of chivalry, to reassure and protect the social order in a period of permanent transition. A man, whoever he might be, was not a woman. As these narratives permeated common-sense perceptions of gender, the separate spheres became more rigidly normative, backed by science. The Victorian man is the autochthonous character defined by Englishness and the common sense that is his birth-right. Women are increasingly excluded from this ancestry and from social activity, prisoners in their homes as they had been in Athens.

> In its androcentric perspective, did the foundation myth of Attica and the Athenians find purpose in rendering women invisible, once again? Does the story of Erichthonios' autochthonous birth signify that "from the very start, in producing a child, the Earth dispossesses all Athenian mothers?" By eliminating reproduction, "by doing away with women's maternity," by denying the "female womb," does the "myth of autochthony," with its apparent masculine structures, use the figure of the Earth to "rid the Athenians of the other sex and its reproductive functions?" To the question "is one born (at Athens) from the earth or from women," the answer seems to be clear: "There is no first Athenian woman, there are no Athenian women, nor will there ever be."
>
> (Calame 2011, 1)

Exploding the myth of the knight – showing the destructive, violent, predatory, and self-serving myths and practices that constitute the narrative, Evans shows how the new myth of Victorian manliness has adopted and perpetuates the same attitude towards women, while renegotiating the

social position of the lower middle classes. The compromise between gentlemanliness and manliness is reinforced by "scientific" evidence of sexual differences produced by Darwin and Herbert Spencer (Paxton 1991), which further radicalises the distance between men and women and validates the subjection and social dependence of women. Common sense, that practice of compromise, comes to the rescue of endangered masculinity.

Men in Evans's fiction range across this spectrum of masculinity, from the self-confident manliness of Adam Bede to the cruel tyranny of Henleigh Grandcourt. The man who believes in his own superiority primarily exercises it in relation to the women around him. He is particularly the antagonist of the woman who questions the limitations of her social role. The reinforced effort to isolate, contain and control the rebellion of these women is staged as taking place under the validating cover of gendered distinctions, revealing the oppressive fantasy of chivalry. The feudal structure of the gentry and the aristocracy has the political function of crystallising male power and is validated by social consensus.

The Common Sense of Social Compromise

> If you feed your young setter on raw flesh, how can you wonder at its retaining a relish for uncooked partridge in after life?
>
> (AB 6:76)

Adam Bede was the best loved of the novels by George Eliot. The Victorians always regretted she had left off writing about what she knew best, by which they meant what they knew best. The loving portrait of a tight-knit community, executed with such skill as to be entirely convincing, was perfectly suited to the collective nostalgia for the lost golden age of what, in memory, was a barely industrialised world, where farmers and craftsmen took pride in their traditional occupations and everything was clean, well-kept and healthy. The emotional journey of the handsome, intelligent and deeply moral carpenter met with immediate and enduring success – a success that is also the effect of the novel ending in social compromise and the taming of rebellious women. This isn't exactly how the reviewers put it, but it is not far off. E.S. Dallas, the author of the unsigned review that pronounced the novel a success ("There can be no mistake about *Adam Bede*. It is a first novel, and its author takes rank at once among the masters of the art"), explains its enduring popularity. This new novelist has found a way to access the "secret heart" of the reader and place there the "idea" that there is but one common humanity, and that there is "a remnant of Eden in us." This vision of social unity, that there is "not the mighty difference which is usually assumed between high and low, rich

and poor, the fool and the sage, the best of us and the worst of us," is comforting and reassuring in its effect. Dallas doesn't include women in this common humanity: Hetty is a "fair example of the truth of Pope's very unjust saying, 'Most women have no characters at all,'" and the "utmost importance" of Hetty and Dinah is that "they supply the motives of all the action in the novel" (Carroll 2009, 77–84). The readers can readily infer from this review that the novel confirms what they want to believe: that Adam will rise socially and Arthur can be forgiven.

Arthur Donnithorne is Evans's critique of the Victorian reconstruction of masculinity through medieval romance; the Arthurian knight, kind, generous, loyal, natural leader and natural lover is an erotic object of desire not only for Hetty and the Hayslope tenants but also for the reader who is encouraged to fantasise about meeting him abroad and being quite seduced by the mixture of well-bred Englishness and potential manly force (should it become suddenly necessary to strike someone down).

> The young gentleman was Arthur Donnithorne, known in Hayslope, variously, as 'the young squire,' 'the heir,' and 'the captain.' He was only a captain in the Loamshire Militia; but to the Hayslope tenants he was more intensely a captain than all the young gentlemen of the same rank in His Majesty's regulars – he outshone them as the planet Jupiter outshines the Milky Way. If you want to know more particularly how he looked, call to your remembrance some tawny-whiskered, brown-locked, clear-complexioned young Englishman whom you have met with in a foreign town, and been proud of as a fellow-countryman – well-washed, high-bred, white-handed, yet looking as if he could deliver well from the left shoulder, and floor his man.
>
> (AB 5:68)

The imagined foreign setting of this encounter serves to reinforce the common Englishness of Arthur and the reader. Arthur is well-groomed and highbred – like the horses and dogs that are his main interest – but he is not well-educated – another failing of his tutor Irwine.[2] He is unable to interpret the ominous literary allusions he himself introduces: he sees himself as a Sultan and of Adam as his grand-vizier (AB 5:72),[3] he offers the newly published *Lyrical Ballads* to his godmother because she loves "queer, wizard-like stories" on the strength of the "strange, striking [and incomprehensible] thing" that is "The Ancient Mariner," and he dismisses as "twaddling stuff" (AB 5:72) the other poems in the collection, including, of course, Wordsworth's "The Thorn"[4] – "thorne" being part of Arthur's own name. Evans satirically constructs the character of Arthur in imitation of Thackeray and Swift (as contemporary reviewers notice), commenting ironically that "candour was one of his favourite virtues, and

how can a man's candour be seen in all its lustre unless he has a few failings to talk of?" Side references to the vicious character of Zeluco[5] in the novel Arthur is reading on the day he first kisses Hetty, or to the womaniser Macheath from John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, whose song "When the heart of a man is oppressed with care," is "not an heroic strain; nevertheless Arthur felt himself very heroic" (AB 12:135), are strengthened by the implied comparison of his class to Olympian deities who sport with the lives of humans. He thinks of himself as the "model of an English gentleman" (AB 12:136), but his bonhomie conceals a brutality of mastery which only appears momentarily when he is dealing with his valet or stable groom, and is not the dominant trait of his character. The narrator assures us that Arthur needs to think well of himself and needs others to do the same, and this is a powerful check on his character: he may go wrong out of egoism and self-indulgence, but he will never be that rare individual the "courtier of Vice [who wears] her orders in his button-hole" (AB 12:137). When Arthur, disgusted at the management of his stables, in a fit of temper and sexual frustration takes a "few bushes and ditches" in the attempt to "exorcise a demon," the narrator suggests that if it had been that easy, "the Centaurs, with their immense advantages in this way" would not have "left so bad a reputation in history" (AB 12:140). Arthur's friend Gawaine never makes an appearance, but his name reminds readers of the recently rediscovered and extremely popular Middle English Arthurian romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in which that honourable knight's trial consists in resisting seduction by a beautiful lady three times. Literary tropes of seduction transform into narratives of rape in a reference to Io in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* (AB 16:291), and bowers of bliss morph into groves of the suicides: Arthur's attempt to forget the imbalance between himself and Hetty is violent from the start.

And yet George Eliot overtly excuses Arthur based on his looks and social status, providing an economic assessment of him as a good investment: "a seaworthy vessel that no one would refuse to insure," despite the risks involved in any hidden "flaw in their construction." Arthur shares this common-sense estimation of himself: he thinks it unlikely he should do anything disreputable and accepts "his own bond for himself with perfect consequence" (AB 12:139).

George Eliot prepares the reader to be very well disposed towards this fine specimen of the English gentleman, and, as the reviews show, the readers are quite happy to accept Arthur as a realistic portrayal of a young man who, like many other young men before him, had been naturally tempted to flirt with the beautiful dairy maid, unable to accept the consequences – including biological consequences such as pregnancy – as the likely outcome of such an excusable lapse. The mock pastoral idyll of the tryst in the enchanted grove is set in juxtaposition to the georgic style

in which the artisans and farmers of Hayslope are always represented at work. Arthur has visions of himself as a modern and lay reincarnation of his mythical namesake: a gentleman king under whose benign and munificent rule the picturesque parish of Hayslope will know a new millennium of plenty and enlightened reform. It is unthinkable to him that this, which is his manifest destiny, prophesied by all around him, should not come to pass because of one highly common and generally forgiven mistake. Just as it is impossible for him to believe that semi-industrial Stoniton is more likely to be the future of the nation than rural Hayslope. Even as he travels from Liverpool to Hayslope, returning from the military oppression of the Irish rebellion of 1798, he sees nothing but more or less picturesque market towns and villages.

Readers of Evans's later novels will learn to pay attention to these "spots of commonness" (M 15:149) that, forgivable as they seem when the narrator first mentions them, will certainly derail the lives of many people. These spots of commonness, the unchallenged beliefs held by characters about themselves and human nature, are the inheritance of a culture where men are predators and women are prey. If Arthur thinks of himself as the model of an English gentleman, the narrator does not contradict him but only presents that model as a dangerous and destructive force built on ideas of predation and appropriation.

The novel investigates the reluctance of all the characters including Arthur himself – and anticipated in the readers – to accept that he, and by extension his class – is no more than "a selfish, light-minded scoundrel!" (AB 27:326). Not even the change in perspective by which the gentry becomes the object of observation of the people of Hayslope, and Arthur's actions are measured against the town's ethics, is sufficient to make this fact real. The traditional story of the aristocratic rake reformed by the moral integrity of the humble maiden object of his desire, treated realistically and narrated from the point of view of Hetty and her family appears drastically different: the girl is not pursued against her will nor is she a model of impossible purity, while fantasy of himself as a knight and a saviour turns into the scornful parody of an ending in which Arthur as "a horseman cleaving the crowd at full gallop" comes to Hetty's rescue as she is about to be hanged for murdering their child "carrying in his hand a hard-won release from death" (AB 47:503). From Adam Bede's perspective, Arthur's frolic should only be legible as the violent act of a feudal overlord who doesn't imagine his tenants as anything more than mirrors reflecting his social privilege. And yet this is not how Adam sees him.

The separation between the gentry and the residents of Hayslope is still as deep as the "sunk gate . . . dividing the lawn from the park" (AB 25:197) "temporar[ily] bridged" only for the day of Arthur's coming of age fête,

feudal celebrations with games and prizes which occupy the whole of the third book in the novel, as Raymond Williams points out.[6] Five chapters of minute reciprocal observation of the gentry and the peasants, stimulated by the distance between them, which prevents them from knowing, or even seeing much of each other: their acquaintance is narrative, they mostly only hear stories about each other, and for their relations to change new narratives are required. The Hall Farm, home of the hardworking Poyser family, is a metaphor for the gradual transition that allows for social change without drastic interruption.

> It was once the residence of a country squire, whose family, probably dwindling down to mere spinsterhood, got merged into the more territorial name of Donnithorne. It was once the Hall; it is now the Hall Farm. Like the life in some coast town that was once a watering-place, and is now a port, where the genteel streets are silent and grass-grown, and the docks and warehouses busy and resonant, the life at the Hall has changed its focus, and no longer radiates from the parlour, but from the kitchen and the farmyard.
>
> (AB 6:79)

The house, and the town, are still in their original shape, all the more interesting and picturesque as an illustration of a healthy and thriving economy emerging from that feudal past without shock. The irony of the text, however, shows that what appears to be a natural evolution is in fact the result of a constructed social alliance which preserves aristocratic privilege as an aspiration for the middle classes, as will be more evident in the character of Stephen Guest in *The Mill on the Floss*. It is an alliance whereby the lower classes adopt the narratives of their historical rulers confirming their own subordination as a class, while allowing for the gradual improvement of their living conditions and the gradual extension of their civil rights. The "word 'gentleman' had a spell for Adam" (AB 16:179), which retains all its power, despite Arthur's actions, even as Adam rises socially and prepares the way for his own son's further social ascent. The "legitimation of 'modern' class and gender arrangements is something that takes place on firmly male-homosocial terms," according to Eve Kofosky Sedgwick: "it is a transaction of honour between men over the dead, discredited, or disempowered body of a woman" (Sedgwick 2016, 137). In the words of Raymond Williams, "even the changed, repentant Arthur is more important than the girl whom the novelist abandons in a moral action more decisive than Hetty's own confused and desperate leaving of her child" (Williams 1975, 173).

However, this is not the act of the novelist: it is the community that accepts Hetty's scapegoating. George Eliot's narration comforts the reader with a story of reconciliation because no social change can take place unless

new stories are imagined that are as powerful as a revolution, and no such revolution takes place in England, prevented by the agreement between Adam and Arthur, sanctioned by Hetty's exile and the silencing of Dinah. The writer can devote two chapters to Hetty's silent, uncomprehending wandering across the nation, thinking of suicide and ending with the abandonment of her child, but she can do no more for her, and even this is too much for the reviewer who is disturbed by this "literature of pregnancy" (Carroll 2009, 76).[7] For the community and Arthur to acknowledge their own responsibility in Hetty's tragedy would require an external force:

> Nemesis can seldom forge a sword for herself out of our consciences – out of the suffering we feel in the suffering we may have caused: there is rarely metal enough there to make an effective weapon. Our moral sense learns the manners of good society and smiles when others smile, but when some rude person gives rough names to our actions, she is apt to take part against us.
>
> (AB 29:340)

Arthur briefly finds this external force in Adam's suffering, "the discovery that Adam loved Hetty was a shock which made him for the moment see himself in the light of Adam's indignation" (AB 28:328), but until he is deprived of his reputation, Arthur cannot conceive the extent of the damage he has caused. The structure of the novel makes space for Hetty's suffering and punishes Arthur with harsh relish, keeping him in entire ignorance of all events already known to the reader and the other characters, allowing him to indulge in his self-excusing internal dialogue and to fantasise about his future rule, devoting an entire chapter to his dreams of accession to power after his grandfather's death (AB 44 "Arthur's Return") before exacting retribution from him in the only way he is able to feel it, by showing him his real aspect reflected in the mirror of his tenants' minds.

But the characters in the novel forgive Arthur, and George Eliot is mostly noncommittal, and certainly very supportive of Adam Bede. Mr Irwine, who is also a magistrate, never really sees Arthur as guilty: he sees him above the law that doesn't consider Arthur as responsible as Hetty and does "not attempt to add by one word of reproach to the retribution that is now falling on you" (AB 44:483). Even at this point in the story, Arthur is believed to be good enough to feel his wrong without formal punishment, but the reader, who has access to Arthur's thoughts, is shown that the only force that acts on him is public exposure.

It is Adam himself, as the new moral centre of society, who sanctions Arthur's forgiveness and his right to return as squire. Actually, it is Adam who twice apologises to Arthur, accusing himself and taking a share in

the responsibility. The first time in chapters 27 and 28, the second time in chapter 68, which frames the forty chapters of Hetty's tragedy.

Chapters 27 and 28 fall at the centre of the novel, and in the non-narrated space between them opens the possibility of an alternative development which would have made for a very different novel: what if the irrevocable act that shattered the Hayslope idyll had been Adam's sin, rather than Arthur's? If Adam had killed Arthur in their fight in the woods after he first saw him kissing Hetty, Hetty's experience of prison and trial and hanging, or transportation, would have been Adam's, and the final reconciliation between "gentleman" and "man" would have been impossible.

But Arthur revives, and the irrevocable act that will change the course of the novel from a pleasantly nostalgic idyll into the story of Adam's (not Hetty's) regeneration through suffering and consequent social elevation is Hetty's seduction.

Both chapters 28 and 68 take place in the woods and in the Hermitage, both are accidental meetings, and both times Adam is thinking with affection or regret about Arthur. Adam apologises to Arthur the first time for judging him and reacting violently.

> [P]erhaps I judged you too harsh – I'm apt to be harsh; and you may have acted out o' thoughtlessness more than I should ha' believed was possible for a man with a heart and a conscience. We're not all put together alike, and we may misjudge one another. God knows, *it's all the joy I could have now, to think the best of you.*
>
> (AB 28:334–335, my emphasis)

On this occasion he also reminds Arthur that the difference between them is only social: "I don't forget what's owing to you as a gentleman; but in this thing we're man and man, and I can't give up" (AB 28:337). The whole question of Hetty's seduction is resolved here between the two men, the one who "robbed" the other of Hetty being obliged to make restitution by writing a letter where he renounces her – after which they can make their peace. But "Adam was deceived . . . in a way Arthur would have resented as a deep wrong if it had been practiced on himself" (AB 29:344).

The second time that Adam apologises to Arthur, there has been a power shift: everything is known, and Adam has been irretrievably deprived of his bride. Adam has gone to the grove to try to control his rage towards Arthur, and he feels "a stirring of affection at the remembrance of that Arthur Donnithorne whom he had believed in" (AB 68:506). When they meet and return to the Hermitage where Hetty is still represented by her pink silk handkerchief. Arthur offers to make himself into a penitent exile

in exchange for Adam and the Poysers staying in Hayslope, keeping the community together with the prospect of a new owner: "If I die, my cousin Tradgett will have the estate, and take my name. He is a good fellow." And Adam is moved, recognising "the honest, warm-hearted Arthur whom he had loved and been proud of" (AB 68:509), the Arthur of his feudal imagination. Finally, Adam speaks:

> It's true what you say, sir: I'm hard – it's in my nature . . . But *feeling overmuch about her* has perhaps made me unfair to you. I've known what it is in my life to repent and feel it's too late . . . I have no right to be hard towards them as have done wrong and repent.
>
> (AB 68:510–511, my emphasis)

And then he offers to shake hands with Arthur.

> As soon as the door was closed behind him, Arthur went to the waste-paper basket and took out the little pink silk handkerchief.
>
> (AB 68:513)

By means of this signifier of Hetty's violation, that has been in the waste-basket in the Hermitage all along, Evans undermines the narrative of comparatively peaceful replacement and forgiveness, showing that Arthur was and remains potentially dangerous and essentially the same as ever; his mindset is deadly and so are the members of his class: Mr Irwine is ineffectual, old Mr Donnithorne is criminally miserly and self-serving, and the unmarried and sickly sisters are a reminder of the collective infertility of this class, which has dwindled down to one scion and which nonetheless retains power, authority, and the respect and affection of the rising lower classes. In *The Mill on the Floss* Evans will ridicule the social aspirations of those who mimic the ways and customs, literary customs included, of the aristocracy. But in *Adam Bede* there is no real middle class, and the gap, as represented by the sunken gate at Arthur's fête, is precariously bridged. Adam doesn't imagine himself similar to Arthur in any way, nor does he think of himself as morally superior, though he makes it quite clear that he has the physical strength to overthrow him if he chooses. But the social compromise they reach is to Adam's benefit and allows him to preserve his reverence, at the cost of interiorising the violence of the model, sanctioned by Hetty's exile and the silencing of Dinah.

The Violence of Common Sense

> Do you call this acting the part of a man and a gentleman, sir?
>
> (MOF V, 5:280)

In *The Mill on the Floss* Evans ridicules the "vulgar folly" (VI, 8:345) of the middle classes, starting with Mr Stelling, Tom's tutor, who is compared to an empty barrel, with his "true British determination to push his way in the world" (MOF II, 1:112) and whose educational method is to make Tom feel "all wrong somehow" (MOF II, 1: 113).

Mr Stelling's recipe doesn't fit Tom, who will tell Mr Deane he has no desire to be a fine gentleman (MOF III, 5:186) and is willing to forget his education. Mr Stephen Guest, the scion of a successful commercial enterprise, on the other hand, "will have nothing to do but sign checks all his life, and may as well have Latin inside his head as any other sort of stuffing" (MOF III, 5:190). Stephen is expected to take the next step in social ascension and become a member of parliament, sanctioning the legitimacy of the aspirations of all the young men in the novel, struggling in this historical moment where ability and adaptability can make the difference between economic failure or success, from the journeyman Bob Jakin to Tom Tulliver. Stephen is merely inheriting, not making his fortune, and it is not entirely clear what, beyond money, he is inheriting and from whom. His father doesn't appear in the novel at all, and Stephen takes no interest in the family business, nor does the prospect of running for parliament come with the certainty of a seat which is guaranteed to Arthur.

The Mill on the Floss is a novel about inheritance, or rather about the impossibility of the younger generation to inherit the traditions and values of their fathers; but while the men struggle with alternative narratives available to them, there is no imagined plot for Maggie, and to the expansion of social options created by capitalism and industrialisation corresponds a shrinking of the role of women who are being enclosed in their gilded drawing-rooms, reduced to obedient passive figures of endurance without agency, illustrated in the transition from Aunt Glegg to Lucy Deane. Even Bob Jakin makes a home in which to keep his tiny wife and gigantic mother. Tom's manliness and dedication to fulfil his "duty as a son and a brother" are explicitly predicated on Maggie's submission to his will, which Tom requires in recognition of the real efforts he is making to pay his father's debts and recover the Mill. Tom sees his duty as protecting his sister by saving her from herself, and when Maggie tells him he is not prevented from acting in the world, as she is, "[b]ecause you are a man, Tom, and have power, and can do something in the world," he tells her "Then, if you can do nothing, submit to those that can" (MOF V, 5:282). It is clear that Tom's hardness drives Maggie towards two lovers she wouldn't otherwise have chosen, and she is "conscious of a certain dim background of relief in the forced separation from Philip" (MOF V, 5:283) after Tom makes her swear not to see him again. She will have to make the decision to separate from Stephen on her own.

Arthur and Stephen are Victorian fantasies, translating vague imagination and desire into an actual possibility for Hetty and Maggie; versions of the knight who will save them from the drudgery of their existence, in the same way as Maggie and Hetty are different versions of male erotic fantasies, the dairy maid and the goddess. Hetty cannot resist Arthur's power any more than Io could resist Zeus, or Tessa will think of resisting Tito in *Romola*. But Maggie is very aware of the strength of the temptation and the price of indulgence. Maggie doesn't really, rationally or emotionally, consider the relationship with Stephen possible or even probable, but she is driven along by her body, by her physical need for pleasure and by her emotional starvation.

When Leslie Stephen described Maggie's lover in *The Mill on the Floss* as a "hairdresser's head," he was voicing the collective disappointment expressed since the novel's publication, the implication being that Steven's unmanliness was due to Evans's own femininity. As readers we have the choice of considering this an error of characterisation or giving the writer credit and taking Stephen Guest as the successful realisation of a superficial and unsubstantial character, the fantasy of an ideal man popularised in the Lady's periodicals of the day: the male lover as a commodity in himself. The alternative, expected ending to the plot, instead of being merely implied as it was in *Adam Bede*, is spoken by the chorus of the World's Wife, who, as Evans had anticipated in the character of Lady Cheverel, are the women who have learnt to live in a world of men. In the chapter titled "St Ogg's Passes Judgement," the world's wife lays out the common-sense outcome of Maggie's story.

> If Miss Tulliver, after a few months of well-chosen travel, had returned as Mrs Stephen Guest, with a post-marital trousseau, and all the advantages possessed even by the most unwelcome wife of an only son, public opinion, which at St. Ogg's, as elsewhere, always knew what to think, would have judged in strict consistency with those results. . . . [T]he world's wife . . . would have seen that two handsome young people – the gentleman of quite the first family in St. Ogg's – having found themselves in a false position, had been led into a course which, to say the least of it, was highly injudicious, and productive of sad pain and disappointment, especially to that sweet young thing, Miss Deane. Mr Stephen Guest had certainly not behaved well; but then, young men were liable to those sudden infatuated attachments; and bad as it might seem in Mrs Stephen Guest to admit the faintest advances from her cousin's lover (indeed it had been said that she was actually engaged to young Wakem, – old Wakem himself had mentioned it), still she was very young, – "and a deformed young man, you know! – and young Guest so very fascinating, and they say, he positively worships her (to be sure, that can't last!),

> and he ran away with her in the boat quite against her will, and what could she do? She couldn't come back then; no one would have spoken to her; and how very well that maize-coloured satinette becomes her complexion! It seems as if the folds in front were quite come in; several of her dresses are made so, - they say he thinks nothing too handsome to buy for her. Poor Miss Deane! She is very pitiable; but then there was no positive engagement; and the air on the coast will do her good. After all, if young Guest felt no more for her than that it was better for her not to marry him. What a wonderful marriage for a girl like Miss Tulliver, – quite romantic. Why, young Guest will put up for the borough at the next election. Nothing like commerce nowadays! That young Wakem nearly went out of his mind; he always was rather queer; but he's gone abroad again to be out of the way, – quite the best thing for a deformed young man. Miss Unit declares that she will never visit Mr and Mrs Stephen Guest, – such nonsense! Pretending to be better than other people. Society couldn't be carried on if we inquired into private conduct in that way, – and Christianity tells us to think no evil, – and my belief is, that Miss Unit had no cards sent her."
>
> (MOF VII, 2:397)

The world's wife believes in the patriarchal wisdom Maggie has been fighting throughout the novel. The words spoken by the chorus express Tom's thoughts (his first fear on hearing the news being that Maggie would not return as Mrs Guest), and even Dr. Kenn shares the "idea of an ultimate marriage between Stephen and Maggie as the least evil" (MOF VII, 2:402). The chorus mimics Stephen's own attempts to persuade Maggie, and they explain the predatory and bullying logic of his actions: unable to sway Maggie in any other way, Stephen places her in a situation where he believes she will be coerced to act as he wishes – not through her love for him but crushed by the pressure of public opinion enacting the patriarchal logic that a man must have what he wants.

Stephen's lack of credibility derives from the precariousness of his social status in a rapidly changing world: he can act the leisured gentleman, but he is not supported by the gallery of paintings, a stately home that was once an abbey, and the feudal loyalty of tenants, the objective correlatives of the power of the Cheverels, Donnithornes, Chettams and Mallingers in Evans's fiction. The political problem posed by the threat of revolution and the advance of democracy is resolved in *Adam Bede* through a compromise which leaves Arthur's social predominance intact so long as he makes space for Adam's social rise. In *The Mill on the Floss* the middle classes have sufficient economic solidity to work on the myths to imagine new social possibilities for themselves, but they are shown to be bent on passive mimicry of the traditions of the gentry. Stephen is determined to justify his right

to belong to the upper-classes, and Maggie, surprisingly, is the token that ratifies his status: if Maggie is the best woman and Stephen deserves the best, Stephen must have Maggie. If he cannot have her, maybe he is not the best after all. The implication of Stephen's obsessive passion for Maggie is the need to prove his patriarchal right by conquering her. As a superficial dandy, he has already won his decorative – and unchallenging – bride in Lucy but is irresistibly drawn by the struggle to force Maggie into submission and violation of herself. If she is Medusa, he is Perseus: his object is to use her chthonian power for his own ends. In this light, that Stephen is actually no better than a "hairdresser's head" is not Marian Evans's failure; it is her triumph.

Evans never allows the reader to forget that Stephen's social role is superficial and imitative. He is insecure in his performance of the well-groomed gentleman, *l'homme à la mode*, and he is separated from the other male characters in the novel, who are strongly connected to the prosperity of the town. To mark this distance, George Eliot uses the mock-heroic style of Pope's *Rape of the Lock* to introduce Stephen ironically, framing him with the paratext of the titles of book, "The Great Temptation," and chapter, "A Duet in Paradise," where Paradise is the middle-class drawing room, Eve is that "neat little lady" Lucy Dean and Adam is that "fine young man" Stephen Guest, playing the game of courtship to the accompaniment of Haydn's "Creation." Beryl Gray[8] reads this irony as gentle, the "trivial actions . . . do not trivialise the feelings" and even the "confrontation" between Stephen and Lucy's spaniel, which "transforms Stephen into Hercules" and the spaniel into "the Nemean lion," is taken as an indulgent portrait (Gray 1989, 19). But the undercurrent Swiftian tone with which Stephen is scrutinised and is shown in his true social position is sarcastic and scornful, starting with the comment on his odour.

> Mr Stephen Guest, whose diamond ring, attar of roses, and air of nonchalant leisure, at twelve o'clock in the day, are the graceful and odoriferous result of the largest oil-mill and the most extensive wharf in St. Ogg's.
>
> (MOF VI, 1:293)

Readers of *Mr Gilfil's Love Story* will be reminded of Anthony Wybrow, the cruel fop who also spends much of his time smelling of roses in drawing rooms, waiting for his chance to inherit. The reader is drawn into the scene and praised for "your discernment" in understanding the "apparent triviality" of a courtship scene (MOF VI, 1:293). In this first introduction it is made clear that Stephen prefers his lovers to be pretty silly little things like Lucy, with pretty silly little cares that he need not concern himself with. He speaks of "feminine tyranny" and appears to admit to Philip's accusation that he prefers women to be "insipid" (MOF VI, 1:294); he displays

"supercilious indifference" towards Mr Tulliver as one of the "faces in the neighbourhood [he knows] in that detached, disjointed way" (MOF VI, 1:295), and openly ridicules Mrs Tulliver's "conversational qualities" (MOF VI, 1:295). In fact, he is condescending and dismissive of the entire Tulliver family and of their troubles, though he betrays his insecurity about his social role and his education in the way he speaks of Philip and Tom, dismissing the former as "so sensitive" and the latter "as proud as Lucifer," and belittling Tom's achievement in helping to clear his father's debts.

> Oh, ah; I've heard about that. I heard your father and mine talking about it a little while ago, after dinner, in one of their interminable discussions about business. They think of doing something for young Tulliver; he saved them from a considerable loss by riding home in some marvellous way, like Turpin,[9] to bring them news about the stoppage of a bank, or something of that sort. But I was rather drowsy at the time.
>
> (MOF VI,1:296)

Stephen doesn't know it yet, but he is the love rival of both these young men; Tom is in love with Lucy, and Philip, of course, with Maggie. Thus, the question of why he is favoured by both women is reinforced – what is it that makes Stephen so attractive? Is it his wealth? Is it his leisure? Is it sexual attraction? If it is common sense to assume that Stephen is preferable, the text undermines that conclusion with determination: intimations of ridicule follow Stephen, who commands Lucy to sing "the whole duty of woman, – 'And from obedience grows my pride and happiness,'" while he himself sings the part of Adam – which Lucy doesn't think suits his voice – in falsetto. George Eliot perversely suggests that music – this music (Haydn's Creation) in particular which Philip despises for possessing "a sort of sugared complacency and flattering make-believe in it, as if it were written for the birthday fête of a German Grand-Duke" (MOF VI, 1:297) – provides the appearance of perfect accord, which "is likely enough to supersede any immediate demand for less impassioned forms of agreement," especially in the musically deprived "provinces . . . where music was so scarce in that remote time, how could the musical people avoid falling in love with each other" (MOF VI, 1:297). Lucy's "little triumphant flutter of her girlish heart at the sense that she is loved by the person of chief consequence in her small world" (MOF VI, 1:298) comes at the end of a paragraph describing the limitations of Lucy's life and her options. But Stephen's own reasons for intending to marry Lucy are given at greater length through free indirect discourse.

> Was *not* Stephen right in his decided opinion that this slim maiden of eighteen was quite the sort of wife a man would *not* be likely to repent of marrying? – a woman who was loving and thoughtful for other

> women, *not* giving them Judas-kisses with eyes askance on their welcome defects, but with real care and vision for their half-hidden pains and mortifications, with long ruminating enjoyment of little pleasures prepared for them? Perhaps the emphasis of his admiration did *not* fall precisely on this rarest quality in her; perhaps he approved his own choice of her chiefly because she did *not* strike him as a remarkable rarity. A man likes his wife to be pretty; well, Lucy was pretty, but *not* to a maddening extent. A man likes his wife to be accomplished, gentle, affectionate, and *not* stupid; and Lucy had all these qualifications. Stephen was *not* surprised to find himself in love with her, and was conscious of excellent judgement in preferring her to Miss Leyburn, the daughter of the county member, although Lucy was only the daughter of his father's subordinate partner; besides, he had had to defy and overcome a slight unwillingness and disappointment in his father and sisters – a circumstance which gives a young man an agreeable consciousness of his own dignity. Stephen was aware that he had sense and independence enough to choose the wife who was likely to make him happy, unbiassed by any indirect considerations. He meant to choose Lucy; she was a little darling and exactly the sort of woman he had always admired.
>
> (MOF VI, I:299, my emphasis)

The negative construction reveals Stephen's unconscious doubts, and he will shortly find himself contradicting every point in his argument for Lucy as a wife. His attraction to Maggie is principally determined by her rarity and exceptionality, and he is captivated by Maggie's exotic qualities: she is tall and dark and mysterious, she is independent, she is not ashamed of her own poverty and hardship – she is the unknown, the uncharted, "more unlike other women even than she had seemed at first" (MOF VI, 2:306). The mock-heroic tone and the sarcastic free indirect discourse condemn Stephen with his own words and thoughts in the same way as Arthur's internal dialogue did, and reveal the insecurity that motivates his frantic desire for Maggie, contrasting sharply with the careful observation of her own struggle between desire and devotion to her original affections.

Stephen's interior monologue reveals how he denies to himself that he is in love with Maggie, "such passions are never heard of in real life" (MOF VI, 2:309), and evaluates the safety from which he can admire this "peculiarity . . . of a superior kind" without being "obliged to marry such women" (MOF VI, 2:309), as he would admire an exotic commodity he has no intention of buying. On their first encounter, Stephen sets the pattern of their future interactions: he tries to get Maggie to look at him, to notice him, to touch him: "let him have one long look into those deep

strange eyes of hers, and then he would be satisfied" (MOF VI, 7:328). When he succeeds he is excessively kind and chivalrous. When he doesn't he loses his temper and either reverts to "a boyish state of mind for an accomplished young gentleman" (MOF VI, 7:329), giving her "vexed, complaining" looks of "beseeching discontent" (MOF VI, 7:330), or indulges his mad fancy through denial of his desire "she would make a sweet, strange, troublesome, adorable wife to some man or other . . . Did she feel as he did? He hoped she did – not" (MOF VI, 7:331). He is seized by jealousy – a "savage resistance," a "shuddering repugnance" at the idea of Philip and Maggie, while "devouring Maggie" with his eyes (MOF VI, 10:356). He resorts to open imploring "Are you angry with me? What have I done? (MOF VI, 9:351) or loses all restraint and takes physical possession of her: "A mad impulse seized on Stephen; he darted toward the arm, and showered kisses on it, clasping the wrist" (MOF VI, 10:358).

The vacuity of his personality is underscored by satire – he thinks of himself as a sentimental hero, but the text denies him this role – allowing him at most analogous to the violent Bilfil in *Tom Jones*[10] – juxtaposing the heightened melodrama of his obsessive feelings to his lack of real understanding of Maggie's nature. Stephen's "monomania" (MOF VI, 6:328) for Maggie is a form of radical egoism; he is the sweet-smelling but morally void result of the hard work and upwardly rising enterprise of the town, an imitation of upper-class gentility and romantic masculinity which at best is unproductive, at worst destructive and which Evans always condemns. Stephen, as a model of performed gentility for the new middle classes, is a lost opportunity to work on inherited myths: a new incarnation of patriarchal violence, lacking even whatever historical justification may furnished by a tradition which he appropriates without providing it with new content and which contemplates no new role for women. Stephen is supported by the common opinion of the men and women of St. Ogg's, an opinion he fully understands and shares, and which he uses to try to control Maggie. He is as stubborn as the town will prove to be in rejecting any belief but his own; he follows the example of the people of St. Ogg's, who adjust their beliefs of right and wrong to "what satisfied their own egoism" (MOF VII, 4:409).

Even though Maggie has told him she "would rather die than fall into that temptation" of marrying Stephen (MOF VI, 11:363), he argues they are forced to break off all of their previous ties by the "natural law that surmounts every other" (MOF VI, 14:385) and tells her that "everything has come without our seeking – in spite of all our efforts" (MOF VI, 13:377), making his egoism into a law of nature. He can't fool her ("you have wanted to deprive me of my choice"), so he tries to overpower her when he realises "Maggie had entirely lost her passiveness" (MOF VI, 14:383), involving her in a responsibility which is exclusively his, and using the "force" of common sense.

> Is it possible you don't see that what happened yesterday has altered the whole position of things? . . . You *are* mine now – the world believes it – duty must spring out of that now: in a few hours you will be legally mine, and those who had claims on us will submit – they will see that there was a force which declared against their claims.
>
> (MOF VI, 14:387)

But Stephen, and common sense, are defeated by Maggie: "among her thoughts, what others would say and think of her conduct was hardly present" (MOF VI, 14:388).

The Champion of Common Sense

> Oh, rescue her! I am her brother now,
> And you her father. Every gentle maid
> Should have a guardian in each gentleman.
>
> (Middlemarch, 7:61. Epigraph)

After the overtly historical and political novels of *Romola* (1863) and *Felix Holt* (1867), in *Middlemarch* Evans embeds the political events connected to the passing of the First Reform Bill deep in the text where they take "their natural place in the lives and actions of the characters" as a counterpoint to the Middlemarchers' focus on the affairs of the town and on local gossip (Beaty 1957, 177). The novel opens in 1829 with references to Peel and the Catholic Question and ends when "the Lords had thrown out the Reform Bill" in May 1831 (M 84:813), and Evans's method of "subtlety and indirectness" (Beaty 1957, 177) allows the reader to forget the historical significance of the extension of suffrage and the real national unrest that surrounded it. The text constructs an analogy between Dorothea's choice of husbands and the political events through a repeated scene in which Sir James visits the Cadwalladers and the political events of the day are briefly mentioned, only to be waved aside, as less urgent matter than the nonsensical behaviour of Dorothea.[11] Even the overtly political narrative of Mr Brooke's acquisition of the radical newspaper *The Pioneer* and his short-lived attempt to run for Parliament are treated as comedy culminating in his public humiliation when he and his effigy are pelted with rotten eggs at the hustings. Mr Brooke withdraws from the election, but his attempt has brought revolution in a different shape to Middlemarch: having hired Ladislaw as an editor and electoral agent, Brooke has provided this allochthonous character with a legitimate reason to stay in the town, leading to his professional vocation and his marriage to Dorothea.[12]

In fact, Dorothea's choice of husbands is political, as befits a woman of strong opinions who believes "we deserve to be beaten out of our beautiful

homes with a scourge of small cords – all of us who let tenants live in such sties as we see around us" (M 3:31). Dorothea takes what actions she can in an environment where "opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them" (M 1:9), and her nemesis is Sir James Chettam, who feels the pressure of change as a threat to the establishment without properly being able to articulate his fears or take any countermeasure. His politics are firmly conservative, entirely passive and antithetical to everything Will Ladislaw stands for.

Opposing Ladislaw to Sir James, Evans restages the conflict between Adam and Arthur, or Tom and Stephen, and shows how the political tension between those who have inherited leisure and those who have to make their way in the world acts on the private lives of the characters, as the country comes to terms with the urgency of electoral reform by imagining a compromise that will not threaten the social order. The social distance is very great between Arthur and Adam, and is almost entirely performative between Stephen and Tom, but the gulf between Sir James and Ladislaw cannot be bridged: they belong to different worlds that coexist in the same space but embody mutually exclusive ideologies. Lydgate is the missing link connecting them, well-born, but on the wrong side of wealth, making his way in the world with his abilities, but retaining forms of entitlement. Lydgate, as the reviewers and readers understood, and Mrs Cadwallader explicitly says (M 62:629), could easily be assimilated into Sir James's class, as a new form of professional gentleman. Henry James declares him

> the real hero of the story . . . a really complete portrait of a man . . . a vividly consistent, manly figure – powerful, ambitious, sagacious, with the maximum rather than the minimum of egotism, strenuous, generous, fallible, and altogether human.
>
> (Carroll 2009, 356–357)

Surely here is the future of the nation, a manly gentleman, combining intellectual ambitions with high birth, always acceptable in county drawing rooms, whose desire for reform is limited to medicine and science, and who retains the common-sensical belief that a clever woman is a contradiction in terms. As a hypothetical husband for Dorothea, he would provide enough passion and intellectual ambition to control her nonsensical rebellion and confirm her subjection.

Will Ladislaw, by contrast, is undefinable. The object of Casaubon's charity, confirming his obscure birth and foreignness by pursuing the "anomalous course of studying at Heidelberg" rather than at an English university, he has "no special object, save the vague purpose of what he calls culture, preparation for he knows not what. He declines to choose a

profession" (M 9:81). He is popular with the Middlemarchers and would have remained entirely unknown to the gentry if he had not happened to be Mr Casaubon's cousin.

The common-sensical conservatism of the "amiable baronet" Sir James Chettam is treated with gentle irony by George Eliot, and his ineffectiveness is narrated with affectionate humour. He understands the social obligations that come with his status, and his instinctive feudalism makes him susceptible to Dorothea's plans for architectural improvement, accepting the logic that his tenants' duty and affection towards him would be strengthened if they were better off for living on his land. Diffident and of uncertain opinions, he finds it difficult to assert himself by speech or action but has an unshakeable faith in the solidity of his rank and finds enough "gum or starch in the form of tradition" to support his limp personality. He is aware that "his talents, even if let loose, would not set the smallest stream in the country on fire" and, rather like Mr Craig in *Adam Bede*, he likes the idea of marrying an intelligent woman "who could help her husband out with reasons, and had the property qualifications for doing so" (M 2:21).[13]

He is fascinated by Dorothea and even though she is often rude to him and finds him generally rather ridiculous, "[h]e thought it probable that Miss Brooke liked him, and manners must be very marked indeed before they cease to be interpreted by preconception" (M 2:21); he is not concerned about the possible "predominance of this handsome girl, in whose cleverness he delighted," reassured by the inherited knowledge that a "man's mind – what there is of it – has always the advantage of being masculine . . . and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality" (M 2:21). When Mrs Cadwallader warns him that Dorothea is going to marry Mr Casaubon, he is relieved to have been spared the humiliation of a rejection and easily transfers his affections to the reasonable Celia. But the absurdity of Dorothea's decision provokes in him "a disgust which he held warranted by the sound feeling of an English layman" (M 8:71) and yet he can do nothing: "clearly, there would be no interference with Miss Brooke's marriage . . . and Sir James felt with some sadness that she was to have perfect liberty of misjudgement" (M 8:71). It is clear that he doesn't believe women, even intelligent women like Dorothea, should have such liberty, since they evidently don't know how to use it. He really doesn't believe anyone should be free in this way. Sir James is the champion of common sense, so he cannot fathom why Dorothea would not do what everyone expects and what is "suitable and according to nature" (M 8:67). At the same time, since, as George Eliot repeatedly points out, in taking a wife Casaubon was doing "nothing but what society sanctions" (M 29:278) and his "behaviour about settlements was highly satisfactory" (M 9:73), no common-sense objection

could be raised against the match. In any case, though he continues to feel it "was wicked to let a young girl blindly decide her fate in that way," Sir James's imagination is limited to two kinds of women, brides and saints, and consequently he marries Celia and canonises Dorothea in his mind,

> [H]is heart was satisfied with his engagement to Celia, but he had a chivalrous nature (was not the disinterested service of woman among the ideal glories of old chivalry?) his disregarded love had not turned to bitterness; its death had made sweet odours – floating memories that clung with consecrating effect to Dorothea. He could remain her brotherly friend, interpreting her actions with generous trustfulness.
>
> (M 29:186)

It is Dorothea's second suitor who properly challenges the status quo. Sir James first meets Will Ladislaw when he fails to stop Mr Brooke's misguided political activities. Sir James has "been talking to this young Ladislaw [. . . who] seems clever enough for anything" (M 38:378) and has found a new source of vexation in "the stories going about him as a quill-driving alien, a foreign emissary, and what not," which are confirmed by there being "some foreign blood in Ladislaw" (M 38:379). Ignoring Mrs Cadwallader's comment that Ladislaw is "an amorous conspirator" (M 38:380), Sir James objects to this man being considered a family connection, and his main fear at this moment is that Brooke's political adversaries are drawing attention to his hypocrisy in standing for reform, as a "philanthropist" who "shrieks at corruption, and keeps his farms at rack-rent" (M 38:383). Sir James means to protect himself from similar accusations by hiring Mr Garth to manage his land and by delegating to Dorothea the duty of reining in Mr Brooke, thus precipitating a meeting between Dorothea and Ladislaw, which will lead to their discovery that they agree rebellion might be necessary in the pursuit of what is right and good (M 39:392).[14]

Ladislaw is not objectionable only to Sir James, however. Henry James considers him an "eminent failure," which he attributes to Evans's excessive fondness for his character: "a masculine intellect of the same power of George Eliot's would have not conceived him with the same complacency; he is . . . a woman's man" (Carroll 2009, 353). James considers this a failure of characterisation, but Will *is* a woman's man. His life and social status have been defined by the choices made by his grandmother and mother rebelling against their families, which has excluded him from inheritance and made him financially dependent on Casaubon's generosity but has also liberated him from the obligations of rank and common sense. As Henry Staten suggests, "the substance of Ladislaw is . . . the political energy that

he manifests" (Staten 2000, 999), making him an English equivalent of Stendhal's Julien Sorel and Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré. Staten is developing Raymond William's point that:

> Ladislaw is a free man in the way the others are not; a free mind with free emotions; a man who is wholly responsive . . . since unlike Lydgate he can accept poverty, he is not frustrated, is not corrupted, does not become resigned. Coming from "nowhere," belonging "nowhere," he is able to move, to relate and so to grow in ways that others are not. . . . This is George Eliot thinking beyond, feeling beyond, the restrictions and the limitations she has so finely recorded; thinking into mobility not as dislocating but as liberating; . . . following a thread to the future . . . a single thread that has come loose from the web, but which she insists is there, running beyond Middlemarch . . . a responsiveness and a courage to live in new ways, under the weight, the defining weight, of a limited and frustrating world.
>
> (Williams 1970, 93–94)

In this he is a direct opponent and a threat to Sir James, who embodies an inherited tradition so strong as to exclude the need for him to develop a personality. Sir James' function is confirmed by the epigraph to chapter 38:

> C'est beaucoup que le jugement des hommes sur les actions humaines, tôt ou tard il devient efficace.
>
> (Guizot 1846, 364)

This sentence is drawn from François Guizot's *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, from the "Lesson on Chivalry," in which Guizot explains the social function of medieval knights as guardians of morality. Guizot points out the difference between conduct and principles or beliefs, claiming the latter to be far more significant than the former in shaping public opinion.

> And beware of believing that, because it did not immediately govern actions, because practice constantly and strangely contradicted theory, the influence of theory was null and worthless. The judgement of men on human actions means a great deal; sooner or later it becomes effective . . . a bad action can remain isolated; a bad principle is always fruitful; for, after all, it is the mind that governs, and man acts according to his thoughts much more often than he himself believes. Now, in the Middle Ages . . . principles were worth infinitely more than actions. Perhaps never, for example, were the relations of men with women more licentious, and yet never was honesty of morals more recommended and described with more respect and charm. And the poets were not alone in

> celebrating it; it was not only a matter of praise and song; we recognise, by a host of testimonies, that the public thought as the poets spoke, and made, on this kind of actions, the same judgement.
>
> (my translation)

Arthur Donnithorne is a "knight" of the kind described by Guizot, one whose conduct contradicts the values he stands for. Sir James, on the other hand, is too unimpassioned to act unreasonably. Though Sir James's feelings are not his own, and he has not made any effort to find out his own religion like Dorothea (M 39:392), he holds by the traditions he inherited with his land, obeying them to the letter: allowing his sister-in-law to act in defiance of those principles would be unconscionable. Finding his power of influence extremely limited, he resorts to the exchange of "judgements" with his neighbours to quietly reassert the value of the dominant ideology. Gossip in Middlemarch may not be poetic, but as an oral narrative it does shape opinion and hinders change by validating common-sense interpretations. Gossip is a political force, and Sir James's opinions strengthen the shared intuitive belief in a clear distinction between right and wrong. His horror at Casaubon's codicil, which disinherits Dorothea in the event of her marrying Ladislaw, dismisses any other interpretation than the suspicion that Dorothea was having an affair. Sir James does not believe this of the woman he has sanctified, but he imagines what the world will suppose: "that she gave him some reason, and that is what makes it so abominable – coupling her name with this young fellow's" (M 49:484).

Sir James is not wrong in his inferences. Like Tom Tulliver, he has a limited imagination that only allows him to understand the superficial, visible part of the narrative, never suspecting the complexities of human emotions the novel goes to such lengths to reveal; as a lowest denominator common sense must fix on the most obvious, generally conceivable conclusion, even when it is difficult to square it with the personality of the people involved.

But Dorothea is not common sensical. She never does interpret events like everyone else and always reaches her own conclusion by the direct means of asking questions, nor can Sir James conceive how the conclusions drawn by the world will affect Dorothea. When Celia passes on Sir James's interpretation that the codicil forbidding her marriage "is as if Mr Casaubon wanted to make people believe that you would wish to marry Mr Ladislaw" and "to hinder Mr Ladislaw from wanting to marry you for your money," Dorothea, who had never consciously thought of the possibility that he could be her lover feels "a sudden strange yearning of the heart towards Will Ladislaw" (M 50:490). In fact, by thinking what Dorothea would not have conceived, Sir James liberates her from the "pledge given from the depths of her pity" to her husband (M 50:493) and makes her marriage to Ladislaw a possibility.

On the other hand, Chettam's soft influence also acts as an obstacle.

> Sir James was a power in a way unguessed by himself . . . he was an incorporation of the strongest reasons through which Will's pride became a repellant force, keeping him asunder from Dorothea.
>
> (M 54:546)

The relationship between Ladislaw and Dorothea can only flourish outside of the imagined collective narratives. So long as Will tries to avoid being cast as an amorous adventurer plotting to seduce a wealthy widow and Dorothea accepts he might be having an affair with Rosamond, they are divided by common sense. Will Ladislaw is so aware of this power that, even in his ignorance of Casaubon's damning codicil, he determines to leave Middlemarch and work hard to earn his right to declare his love to her. But first he tries to direct the gossip to signal his dignity – and respect for chivalric conventions – to Sir James, by announcing his departure to the Casaubon's butler " 'I am only come to say good-by, Pratt,' said Will, who wished even the butler to know that he was too proud to hang about Mrs Casaubon now she was a rich widow" (M 54:541). Will, however, is no match against common sense, and the servants are perfectly aligned with their masters in their ideology. As Dorothea's maid tells the butler,

> Your master was as jealous as a fiend – and no reason. Madam would look higher than Mr Ladislaw, else I don't know her. Mrs Cadawallader's maid says there's a lord coming who is to marry her when the mourning's over.
>
> (M 54:541)

By means of hints and innuendoes, which Dorothea strenuously resists, Sir James tries, like Stephen Guest but far less directly, to force Dorothea into submission. When he feels that the influence of his "judgements" is not working as desired, Sir James resorts to the violent stratagem of forcing onto Dorothea his vision of Ladislaw as "slight, volatile, and likely to show such recklessness as naturally went along with a position unriveted by family ties or a strict profession" (M 62:627). He acts indirectly, as usual, via Mrs Cadwallader, who is only too happy to tell Dorothea that

> Mr Orlando Ladislaw is making a sad dark-blue scandal by warbling continually with your Mr Lydgate's wife, who they tell me is as pretty as pretty can be.
>
> (M 62:628)

Dorothea's experience of the power of common sense is crushing, but she succeeds in trusting her own religion, actively searching for the truth and countering all Sir James's efforts: she frees Lydgate from the suspicion of having accepted Bulstrode's bribery, she helps Rosamond to a momentary understanding of her husband's point of view, and she saves herself by rejecting the judgement of the world against Ladislaw. When Sir James hears she is going to marry Ladislaw, his "white anger" breaks out. Dorothea is

> degrading herself by marrying him . . . I cannot bear to see her again; it is too painful. It hurts me too much that a woman like Dorothea should have done what is wrong . . . I think that Dorothea commits a wrong action in marrying Ladislaw.
>
> (M 84:817)

Celia's version of Sir James's horror is extenuated by her love for her sister whom she calmly informs

> you always were wrong, only I can't help loving you . . . but it would be much better if you would not be married . . . then there would be nothing uncomfortable. And you would not do what nobody thought you could do.
>
> (M 84:821)

The distance between common sense and private affections will allow for a reconciliation, but, as the champion of inherited traditions, it behoves Sir James to ensure that the public opinion continue to consider Dorothea's marriage wrong, since "a bad action can remain isolated; a bad principle is always fruitful" (Guizot 1846, 364). The shared common sense which aligns the gentry and the town will reinforce the ideological impossibility of this marriage, which allows foreign ideas legitimacy, lest other women take Dorothea as a dangerous precedent of a woman who "acts as she likes" (M 84:815). Sir James's opinions radiate through the town, and his opinions are not as amiable as himself: the distaste he feels for Dorothea's two marriages will become the official version of her story:

> Sir James never ceased to regard Dorothea's second marriage as a mistake; and indeed this remained the tradition concerning it in Middlemarch, where she was spoken of to a younger generation as a fine girl who married a sickly clergyman, old enough to be her father, and in little more than a year after his death gave up her estate to marry his cousin - young enough to have been his son, with no property, and not well-born. Those who had not seen anything of Dorothea usually

> observed that she could not have been 'a nice woman,' else she would not have married either the one or the other.
>
> (M *Finale*:837–838)

The Masque of Common Sense

> One feels, I think, that Grandcourt was drawn by a woman; but a sort of voluptuous enjoyment of malignant tyranny is unfortunately not confined to either sex.
>
> (Stephen 1902, 186)

> *Non est potestas Super Terram quae Comparetur ei. Iob. 41. 24.*[15]

Grandcourt is an exceptional character in Evans's fiction, in the same way that *Daniel Deronda* is an exceptional novel, proof of Evans's determination, at this point in her career, to defy the expectations of her readership.[16] The extent to which the form of realism depends on the readers' consensus, and the degree to which this consensus is based on common sense, is explicitly addressed in *Middlemarch*, but only *Daniel Deronda* narrates what the Victorian reader will find it impossible to believe, at the risk that the whole text be rejected. And indeed the controversy over the unity of *Daniel Deronda* and the attempt to separate the English and Jewish plots has been a focus of scholarship on Evans's last novel since its publication in 1876.[17] The apparent organic form and internal coherence provided by the unity of place and the voice of common sense in the previous novels is here completely abandoned for a stark juxtaposition of world views, a centrifugal impetus imposed by characters pulling in different directions, and a fragmentation of linear narrative time into a series of isolated events, reordered in explicit contradiction of cause and effect as the "present causes of past effects" (DD 52:539). The English and the Jewish plots appear to fall apart and develop in different directions, despite the organic connections of the narrative threads through the secondary characters: the social separation between the English (autochthonous) characters and the Jewish (allochthonous) ones and the lack of a centre provided by place are too strong.

In *Daniel Deronda* Evans treats an explicitly mythical character (the Messiah, the fulfiller of Mordecai's prophecy, the heir of Zionism, the new Moses raised by Egyptians and Gwendolen's conscience) through the medium of high realism, on the model of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. Including the doubting characters of Sir Hugo Mallinger and Hans Meyrick to point out at the same time the possibility and implausibility of the central fact of Daniel's story: that he finds he is a Jew and, consequently, can accept Mordecai's

inheritance and marry Mirah. On the possibility that characters like Daniel can be narrated as existing in reality depends, in Evans's terms, the future of the world, not because he rejects Englishness and Christianity but because he makes an evaluation of society, imagines an alternative and makes a choice based on his conclusions which form a new belief, and the premise for a new political vision and new institutions. For this character to be realistically narrated, a historical group is required, and the intertextual references to the Italians seeking national unity with Mazzini[18] suggest a possible alternative model. Zionism, as a historical movement, offers the advantage that it is both entirely allochthonous to the English reader, while also familiar as the source of Christianity and Victorian social practices: making Deronda a Jew gives him the freedom to choose whether to assimilate or separate.

In stark contrast, the perfectly realistic character of Grandcourt, someone entirely credible and familiar to the readers, is narrated as a myth: the embodiment of the violence, arrogance and moral void at the heart of the English social contract. The previous novels had shown common sense as a shared national myth, validating the ideology of the ruling classes and naturalising it into a norm and model for the aspiring middle class. Turning her attention for the first time squarely onto those ruling classes, Evans investigates their own relationship with this ideology, particularly through the character of Sir Hugo Mallinger, an older version of the amiable baronet, who displays a mixture of scorn and respect for the necessity of a unifying myth. As a member of the priestly caste defending common sense, Sir Hugo recognises its constructedness and its political value, as a version of Plato's noble lie, and endorses it as the best possible system of social control that will lead to the best possible political results, even when it disinherits his own wife and daughters.

Sir Hugo Mallinger tells Daniel that youthful opposition to "the massive sentiment – the heavy artillery of the country" (DD 33:321) is excellent practice and preparation for a political career, providing the opportunity to "display himself [. . . and] make an impression" (322), so long as he doesn't take it too seriously and respects it as a useful tool of social control.

> The business of the country must be done – her Majesty's Government carried on. . . . And it never could be, my boy, if everybody looked at politics as if they were prophecy, and demanded an inspired vocation . . . a man who sets himself against every sort of humbug is simply a three-cornered, impracticable fellow. There's a bad style of humbug, but there is also a good style – one that oils the wheels and makes progress possible. If you are to rule men, you must rule them through their own ideas; and I agree with the Archbishop at Naples who had a St Januarius[19] procession against the plague. It's no use having an Order in

> Council against popular shallowness. There is no action possible without a little acting.
>
> (DD 33:322)

Politics in the late Victorian era is not a question of faith or truth and requires no radically new ideas, relying on tradition to guarantee the stability of the status quo. Daniel opposes this ideology of British supremacy and will have to carry his political enthusiasm to other shores. The distance between the landowning autochthonous power of the English cosmopolitan aristocracy and the landless wandering Jew allows Evans to broaden the narrative horizon far beyond the claustrophobic pond of *Middlemarch*, to trace the parallels between the inherited myths and traditions that ratify the subjection of women in England and the oppression of exploited or excluded people around the world. The English gentleman is the self-serving beneficiary and agent of this system in Britain and across the British Empire who "mistakes [his] own success for public expediency" (DD 33:322).[20] The novel shows the destructive effects of this deadly narrative by representing its shaping power on Gwendolen and Daniel, in the embodied form of Heinleigh Grandcourt, who is the morally void product of Sir Hugo's politics of compromise. This ideology is attacked by Evans with unprecedented violence, nothing extenuating, from the comparison to Governor Eyre to the analogy of Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651).

Grandcourt is cast as the antagonist of the Messiah in the Jewish tradition, the Leviathan on whom, as Hans Meyrick conveniently reminds Daniel, "the chosen and the righteous" shall feast.[21] A mythological interpretation of Grandcourt legitimises a mythological interpretation of Daniel, their significance entirely transcending the small life of Gwendolen Harleth and the neighbourhood of Diplow, acting out an eternal struggle. By comparison to Evans's usual balancing act of realistic description and mythical connotation, however, Grandcourt is almost an empty signifier, who can carry any meaning the observer places on him so long as he is associated with power and wealth. He is the economic stimulus for the whole class of traders and workers who cater to the nobility; he is the embodiment of the laws of inheritance for those whose property he will absorb; he can also be seen as an unimpassioned knight errant who comes to save the impoverished princess; and, for one reviewer at least, he can be a perfectly reasonable, though not particularly nice husband frustrated by the hysterical antics of his wife.[22]

More clearly than ever before in *Daniel Deronda* Evans shows that the detainers of power are very few and the excluded are too many and can only be kept at bay by a powerful ideology, especially one that is disbelieved by its own priestly caste. Grandcourt brings this information to the surface of the novel, like the momentary rising of the Leviathan above

water, completely changing the significance of the text, before sinking again below the waves, having exposed the violence of the social contract,[23] the monstrous system that rules Britain in the 1870s.

Daniel Deronda is set in Vico's stage of the barbarism of reflection, characterised by radical individualism and social decay. Grandcourt has no residual fear, and thus no religious instinct, thinking himself to be entirely safe from nature and men: he is unable to imagine any stronger power than himself that could effectively contrast his one appetite, the will[24] to dominate and to crush any fantasy of rebellion, or even passive opposition against him. Driven by Spinoza's sad passions, he shows the poisonous effect of an unchallenged narrative that transparently incarnates the economic and patriarchal system in place while presenting as the only reasonable form of social control, cruel in proportion to the nonsensical rebellion of his subjects.

In this way Grandcourt completes the demythologisation of the English gentleman as morally justified. A compound of all the deadly associations of that figure, Grandcourt has very little humanity, and uncharacteristically George Eliot gives the reader limited insight into his personality, declining to make space in the text for the internal dialogue of the character with himself. And yet Grandcourt is well within the rather broad pale of Victorian gentlemanly society. Since every man in the novel has heard some gossip about his past relation with a married woman, and nobody thinks this is a good reason to stop Gwendolen from marrying him, not even her respectable uncle Gascoigne, George Eliot offers no apology for him. It is not quite as generally known that Lydia Glasher is the mother of Grandcourt's four illegitimate children, as the question of illegitimacy directly challenges the foundations of this society. Effectively, Grandcourt's reasons are, as the epigraph to chapter 25 warns the reader, unfathomable because they are unmoored to any system beyond the will to exercise power.

> How trace the why and wherefore in a mind reduced to the barrenness of a fastidious egoism, in which all direct desires are dulled, and have dwindled from motives into a vacillating expectation of motives: a mind made up of moods, where a fitful impulse springs here and there conspicuously rank amid the general weediness? 'Tis a condition apt to befall a life too much at large, unmoulded by the pressure of obligation. *Nam deteriores omnes sumus licentiae*, saith Terence; or, as a more familiar tongue might deliver it, 'As you like it' is a bad finger-post.
>
> (DD 25:233)

Quoting from Terence that "we are all the worse for licence," Evans introduces a reference to the Latin poet's play *The Self-Punisher*[25] about fathers punishing sons for marrying against their will. While in Terence's play the commercial motives for matrimony are openly investigated, in Victorian

society there is a double standard of morality that creates monsters like Grandcourt, a handsome, indolent, violent Hyde, wafting a scent of attar of roses like Arthur and Stephen. Like the insurable Arthur, Grandcourt is "registered as seaworthy as ever" even after he has "disentangled himself from" the connection to a woman who is no more talked of than "the victim in a trial for manslaughter ten years before" (DD, 30:283). The Rev. Gascoigne channels the moral standpoint of the world around him:

> He held it futile, even if it had been becoming, to show any curiosity as to the past of a young man whose birth, wealth, and consequent leisure made many habits venial which under other circumstances would have been inexcusable. Whatever Grandcourt had done, he had not ruined himself . . . we can hardly pronounce [Mr Gascoigne] singular in feeling that a landed proprietor with a mixture of noble blood in his veins was not to be an object of suspicious inquiry like a reformed character who offers himself as your butler or footman.
>
> (DD 9:77)

Evidently, the point is here not a moral one; George Eliot is not shocked that the power and wealth of Arthur and Grandcourt place them beyond ordinary morality, but she requires the readers to draw conclusions from this fact to very explicitly assess the social repercussions of the empty performance of decency on the lives of women – repercussions which she dramatises for the reader. In this capitalist society which is gradually progressing towards universal suffrage and democracy, set at the same time as the end of the American Civil War and during the process of unification of Italy and foundation of the German Empire, Grandcourt's explicit function is the preservation of feudal hierarchy: with his petrifying serpentine stillness and determination he keeps the (now very fragmented) community focused on him, mesmerised in the impossibility of imagining alternatives. He is a spectacle; like a pageantry of wealth he moves through England and Europe – and beyond. With Gwendolen, as the best "outward equipment" (342) in terms of wife, Grandcourt's "empire of fear" (358) begins with their marriage and consists in the necessity to perform, in near silence and pure hatred of each other, the role of the ideal couple.

> The notion that the great leviathans of wealth, who had for so long been accustomed to taking first place in a nation of snobs which contrived simultaneously to accept, admire, envy, and criticise their opulence, might actually become impoverished, first began to gain some currency [only] in the 1890s.
>
> (Thompson 1991, 1)[26]

But in the late 1870s, these Leviathans were unthreatened in their power. The significance of the pageantry is varied, and changes proportionately to the distance from which it is observed, though for everyone it attests the continued value of the social contract. For this reason Lush is willing to be kicked, and the Rev. Gascoigne is willing to be humiliated: Grandcourt (and Sir Hugo) still own the land and the wealth that makes them safe in their power and makes everyone else dependent on them.

> It is true that Grandcourt went about with the sense that he did not care a languid curse for any one's admiration: but this state of not-caring, just as much as desire, required its related object – namely, a world of admiring or envying spectators for if you are fond of looking stonily at smiling persons – the persons must be and they must smile . . . Grandcourt, in town for the first time with his wife, had his non-caring abstinence from curses enlarged and diversified by splendid receptions, by conspicuous rides and drives, by presentations of himself with her on all distinguished occasions.
>
> (DD 48:493)

Grandcourt is the object of a darker collective desire than Arthur was: while the future squire of Hayslope shocked Adam by proving he did not live his life by the rules that he embodied, the community still had some form of power over him since he could be humiliated by the public revelation of his predatory instincts. But Grandcourt's fearlessness makes him apparently unmanageable: he is the Philistine in both the Old Testament meaning and Matthew Arnold's.[27]

Grandcourt is mostly compared to reptilians. He is "a handsome lizard of a hitherto unknown species" (DD 13:113) as "neutral as an alligator" (DD 15:130), "a sleepy-eyed animal on the watch for prey" (347). In him Gwendolen "had found a will like that of a crab or a boa-constrictor which goes on pinching or crushing without alarm at thunder" (DD 35:357). Appropriately, Grandcourt is first introduced into the novel as a rumour "which touched all classes" in the explicit anticipation, parodying Jane Austen's truth universally acknowledged, of commercial opportunities under which heading, George Eliot points out, falls also marriage, which combines the pleasures and the business of life (DD 9:75). The reader will learn that Grandcourt never does anything by accident, staging his entrances and exits with as much deliberation as any consummated actor: the doubt about his arrival, and where he will appear, and what he will look like, coupled with the certainty that he will be a baronet and the possibility that he might be a duke, sets the stage for all eyes to be focused on him when he does finally appear at the Archery Meeting.

The first insight into Grandcourt's real nature is given in private scenes of interaction with his long-time hanger-on Thomas Lush, and with his former lover Lydia Glasher, where his pleasure in retaining people under his control, holding power over them because he has helped them to spoil their lives, is dramatised. That these characters even exist is already sufficient indictment of Grandcourt's character, but Sir Hugo Malinger and Mr Gascoigne, in their different ways, consider these "entanglements" forgivable in a future peer, useful and even entertaining information: Sir Hugo calls this "good-humoured scandal" *traits de moeurs* but "was strict in keeping such communications from hearers who might take them too seriously" (DD 25:235). This pact of secrecy, which keeps women, and Daniel, in ignorance of what to expect from marriage, reinforces the dominion of the husband.

Grandcourt is stimulated by Gwendolen's obvious resistance to his will, in the full knowledge that it falls out of common sense.

> "Damn her!" thought Grandcourt . . . He was not a wordy thinker, and this explosive phrase stood for mixed impressions which eloquent interpreters might have expanded into some sentences full of an irritated sense that he was being mystified, and a determination that this girl should not make a fool of him.
>
> (DD 13:109)

Like Stephen, Grandcourt is driven by a desire to conquer and his power tells also on the narrator: George Eliot's refusal to act as the "eloquent interpreter" (DD 13:109) and Gwendolen's inability to understand him, and growing awareness that he produces a feeling of "constraint" and is "a charm in more senses than one, and was slightly benumbing," are at once signs of a new treatment of character, and throwbacks to Stephen Guest's instincts of violence (unconfessed even to himself) towards Maggie, and the feeling of numbness that pervades her when in his company. Maggie's drug is unusual pleasure, Gwendolen's is unusual uncertainty: faced with a man she cannot understand, she is under his control.

In fact, Grandcourt's mind is entirely common sensical in that he assumes the least imaginative and cynical conclusion to be true, especially when it tends to lower the general conception of human goodness: egoism is more likely than empathy, fear is more dependable than faith and more likely than courage, hate is more powerful a stimulus than love. The information that Gwendolen has seen Lydia acting as a stimulus – it "hardens his determination" and generates a vivid curiosity to "master this girl" who seems to have some residue of independent morality which he is eager to crush. Because Grandcourt likes "drama" and life played as a game of chess, nobody could be as satisfactory an adversary as a wife who feels she has done wrong in marrying him.

Thus, Grandcourt behaves privately in the way the class he stands for governs public life, and he serves to bring to the surface of the text, for the reader to see, the reality of the surveillance and ideological violence with which the nation and the Empire are mastered:

> If this white handed man with the perpendicular profile had been sent to govern a difficult colony, he might have won reputation among his contemporaries. He had certainly ability, would have understood that it was safer to exterminate than to cajole superseded proprietors, and would not have flinched from making things safe in that way.
>
> (DD 48: 500–501)[28]

Grandcourt is not a public man; he can't be bothered with running for election, but in his marriage he demonstrates how to gain and keep control using the practices of common sense as a strategy and a form of oppression: "within his own sphere of interest [he] showed some of the qualities which have entered into triumphal diplomacy of the widest continental sort" (DD 48:492). In his determination to control his wife, he misses nothing and makes sure that she feels as much his captive as if he had placed her in a "hand-cuff." She must be aware "that her inclination was helpless to decide anything in contradiction with his resolve" (DD 48:492). What their relationship shows is that this kind of power is violent, and must become more tyrannical the more its victims imagine new ways to freedom. Grandcourt cannot control Gwendolen's imagination, because he cannot understand it, just as he underestimates the power of Lush, whom he considers "as much of an implement as pen and paper," or the poisonous fury of Lydia Glasher. "His object was to engage all his wife's egoism on the same side as his own," but "there is no escaping the fact that want of sympathy condemns us to corresponding stupidity. Mephistopheles thrown upon real life, and obliged to manage his own plots, would inevitably make blunders" (DD 48:503).

Grandcourt's blunder is that he doesn't understand how, by leaving all his property to his illegitimate son, and thus advertising the fact the British upper classes were studiously trying to conceal, thinking himself to be above even the common sense he exploits, he is liberating rather than humiliating Gwendolen: "Tell Mr Grandcourt that his arrangements are just what I desired" (DD 48:507). In the same way that Casaubon's codicil forbidding her marriage to Ladislaw liberates Dorothea, Grandourt's attempt to publicly humiliate Gwendolen frees her conscience.

Gwendolen's struggles are not ended here, but Grandcourt's power is changed for her. She is now free to despise his limitations, even though she is still subject to his tyranny: she begins to hate her "vantage ground, which yet she dared not quit" (DD 48:511) and starts thinking of Grandcourt's death as release.

Notes

1 "During the Age of Reason, while the circle of the French *Encyclopédie* was seemingly fighting the final battle against the remnants of the Dark Ages, these Dark Ages started charming the aristocrats, with the Gothic novel an early Ossianic Romanticism. . . . Soon Chateaubriand was to celebrate the rise of Gothic cathedrals under the trees of the Celtic forest, while, thanks to Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, and the restoration of Violet-le-Duc, the whole nineteenth century would dream of its own middle Ages, thus avenging the enlightened gesture of Napoleon, who cut the tympanum of Notre Dame to allow his imperial cortège to enter the cathedral" (Eco 1986, 67).
2 "Such men, happily, have lived in times when great abuses flourished, and have sometimes been the living representatives of the abuses" (AB 5:77).
3 "I used to think if ever I was a rich sultan, I would make Adam my grand-vizier. And I believe now, he would bear the exaltation as well as any poor wise man in an Eastern story" (AB 5:69).
4 In which story of Martha Ray and her dead child is told through the gossip of the community.
5 *Zeluco: Various Views of Human Nature*, by John Moore, published in 1799, whose main character is a vicious Sicilian libertine.
6 See Williams 1970.
7 Unsigned Review. 1859. "Adam Bede." *Saturday Review*. 26 February, vii, 250–251.
8 "The scene with Lucy recalls Pope's The Rape of the Lock: it is full of trivial actions (but which do not actually trivialise the feelings) performed with a playful solemnity that is informed by classical allusion in the Popian mode, and accompanied by appurtenances which include busy scissors, and an indulged and omnipresent King Charls spaniel – ludicrously, considering his gender, called Minny. A confrontation between Stephen and Minny transforms Stephen into Hercules, which, by extension, casts Minny as the Nemean lion. Stephen goes so far as to hazard a guess that Minny's diet is "three ratafias soaked in a dessert-spoonful of cream daily," appropriate nourishment, surely, for Belinda's lapdog" (Gray 1989, 19).
9 Dick Turpin, a highwayman hanged in 1739, is the protagonist of Rookwood, 1834, in which his character is romanticised and popularised for the Victorian readers. Rookwood, by William Harrison Ainsworth, 1834.
10 "[H]e recommended to her consideration the example of that most charming heroine, Miss Sophia Western, who had a great 'respect for the understanding of men.'" MOF VII, 6:327. Reference to *Tom Jones*, book 17, chap. 3, in which Blifil declares his intention to persevere in his attempts to persuade Sophia Western to marry him despite her disinclination.
11 See *Middlemarch* chapters 6; 8; 38; 62; 84.
12 Chapter 51, where Brooke's pelting at the hustings is narrated, is framed by Will's thoughts about Dorothea now that she is a widow, and by his determination to avoid suspicion of being an adventurer after her wealth. The chapter ends with Brooke dismissing Ladislaw more in obedience to Sir James than as a consequence of the failed political campaign. (M 51:508).
13 Mr Craig claimed to "like a cleverish woman – a woman of sperrit – a managing woman" (AB 53:572).
14 Will and Dorothea discuss the creeds they have found out for themselves and find they have a lot in common. Dorothea's belief "that by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what

we would, we are part of the divine power against evil – widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower" can be compared to what Antonio Gramsci calls "good sense" (Gramsci 1971, 628). This belief, as Dorothea points out to Will, only implies submission to "what is good."

15 "There is no power on earth that can be compared to him." Motto of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan (1651)*.

16 "I expected more aversion than I have found. But I was happily independent in material things and felt no temptation to accommodate my writing to any standard except that of trying to do my best in what seemed to me most needful to be done" (GEL VI:301–302).

17 The public disappointment generated at least two "sequels [as] reproach" (Picker 2006, 363) instead of the more customary form of sequel as homage: an anonymous "Daniel Deronda vol. IX," which appeared in Punch's Pocket Book for 1877 and *Gwendolen; or Reclaimed. A Sequel to Daniel Deronda by George Eliot* (Picker 2006, 374). These sequels anticipate Henry James's version of Gwendolen's plot in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880–81) and F. R. Leavis's astonishing attempt to publish an abridged version of the novel to be called *Gwendolen Harleth*, where the Jewish plot has been completely excised (Picker 2006, 362). Picker identifies Alfred Thompson as the author of the *Punch* sequel, and Anna Beecher Clay as the author of *Gwendolen*. In these sequels, the Jewish characters are killed off, allowing Daniel to resume the character of an English gentleman and marry Gwendolen, thus continuing to oppose in England the legacy of Heinleigh Grandcourt. In 1859 *Punch*, taking part in the controversy over George Eliot's incognito, had used a common sense argument to sanction the quality of Adam Bede and satirise the attempt to bank on that novel's success by publishing *Adam Bede, Jr.* In 1877 it is George Eliot who is the object of *Punch's* common-sense satire, as John M. Picker points out: "There is a subtler element of parody, or precious deflation, in the very form in which the sequel appeared: the eight books of Eliot's final tome, massive in length and weighty in ideas and ideals, are answered with a diminutive Book IX included in the Punch publication intended for a more businesslike, commercial audience. The kinds of readers consulting the Pocket Book, that is, were more closely identified with the English Philistinism Eliot was satirising and ultimately turning her back on with, and within, Deronda itself" (Picker 2006, 370).

18 In chapter 42 Daniel listens to a debate at "The Philosophers" club organised by Mordecai. Reference to Italian Unification on p. 452.

19 St. Januarius (San Gennaro) is the patron saint of Naples. Three times a year, a religious celebration renews the bond between the city and the saint through the miracle of the liquefaction of his blood.

20 See Nancy Henry 2002.

21 The only explicit mention of the Leviathan is made by Meyrick in chapter 52: "[I]t is a constant wonder to me that, with all his fiery feeling for his race and their traditions, he is no straight-laced Jew, spitting after the word Christian, and enjoying the prospect that the Gentile mouth will water in vain for a slice of the roasted Leviathan, while Israel will be sending up plates for more, ad libitum" (DD 52:540).

22 George Saintsbury. *The Academy*. 9 September 1876. X:253–254. "The husband is almost equally admirable; indeed, one's admiration is here increased by the perception that the hand which is so faithful is distinctly unfriendly, and that the author would like us to detest Grandcourt. Yet there is not the slightest

exaggeration in the portrait, as he appears before us, acting with strict politeness to his wife, in no way violent towards her (if we except the occasional use of somewhat forcible language), and employing, for the purposes of his refined tyranny, nothing stronger than the methods of 'awful rule and right supremacy.' If he should appear to anyone all the more detestable, it may be suggested that it is difficult for any husband to extricate himself handsomely from the position of being hated by his wife and having that hatred confirmed by a bewitching rival" (Carroll 2009, 372).

23 The contractual nature of Gwendolen's marriage is clear to her from the beginning, and is part of the common sense – a truth universally acknowledged. "Grandcourt might have pleaded that he was perfectly justified in taking care that his wife should fulfil the obligations she had accepted. Their marriage was a contract where all the ostensible advantages were on her side, and . . . her husband should use his power to hinder her from any injurious self-committal or unsuitable behaviour" (DD 64:363).

24 For a reading of Grandcourt as Evans's response to Schopenhauer, see Raina 1985.

25 Line 483. The play is best known for line 77: "homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto" (I am a man; I don't regard any man's affairs as not concerning me). *Terence, the Comedies*. Edited by Peter Brown, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2007.

26 See also Rothery 2007. "The slow and gradual decline of landed elites along with their fluid relations with new aspirants to elite society helps explain, it has been argued, the smooth and evolutionary nature of modernisation in Britain. In particular, the gentry provided an important safety valve for any possible social tensions arising from industrialisation, urbanisation, democratisation and the development of meritocracy." (Rothery 2007, 251)

27 Epigraph to chapter 13: "Philistia, be thou glad of me" is an unusual version of the line from Psalms 60:8, which, read out of context, seems to anticipate that Grandcourt will make the Philistines proud. Psalm 60 is David's prayer to God to empower Israel and defeat his enemies.

28 Reference to the violent governor of Jamaica, Edward Eyre. John Stuart Mill set up a "Jamaica Committee" to demand his prosecution (see *The Times*. 25 January 1867, p. 3), while Thomas Carlyle instituted the "Governor Eyre Defense and Aid Committee." As "According to Bernard Semmel, author of the standard work (1962) on the Governor Eyre controversy, 'the essential question was whether a nation could long maintain two contradictory policies, democracy at home and repression and terror abroad.'" (Arthur 2001, 49).