

EPISTEMOLOGY IN *MIDDLEMARCH* AND *DANIEL DERONDA*

A SERIOUS HOUSE ON SERIOUS EARTH: EPISTEMOLOGY IN
MIDDLEMARCH AND *DANIEL DERONDA*

By

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ABSTRACT

This work offers a reading of George Eliot's last two novels, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. The thesis challenges the place both Realist critics and post-structuralist theorists ordinarily assign to these two novels in literary history. It does so by locating these works in the context of a number of important contemporaneous developments in pathology, comparative anatomy, evolutionary biology, geology and the philosophy of scientific method. In each of these fields there was a growing sense of the formative and constitutive function of method in any enquiry. This discursive conception of the necessary dependence of the answer on the nature of the question poses a challenge to the purported neutrality and transparency of what has been conceived as literary Realism. I argue here that *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, though they are novels which traditionally have been placed within literary Realism, actually incorporate these contemporaneous developments in epistemology. Though these novels do not eschew didacticism, their awareness of methodological changes in a variety of scholarly fields modifies the nature of narrative authority vouchsafed by making it provisional and historically specific.

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PREFACE

It is axiomatic that George Eliot is the most intellectual of Victorian novelists. Her texts have been widely discussed in relation to such eminent thinkers as Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, François Bichat, Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Claude Bernard, Ludwig Feuerbach, David Friedrich Strauss, William Whewell and, of course, her consort, George Henry Lewes, as well as many others. Her writings deal with widespread Victorian concerns such as individual social responsibility in a society of extreme wealth and poverty, but these concerns are often set in a more specifically intellectual context such as Herbert Spencer's "First Principle" that "every man has the freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not on the equal freedom of any other man" (1851, 103). Explicitly or implicitly, Eliot's texts are concerned with such issues as vitalism (or

associationism) and organicism, geological uniformitarianism, evolutionary biology and the philosophy of scientific method.

Nineteenth-century advances in these domains had a tremendous impact on religion and aesthetic theory too, of course. In part this is because "in the mid-nineteenth century, scientists still shared a common language with other educated readers and writers of their time" (Beer 1983, 6), a language Eliot, especially, knew well. Lyell and Darwin were actually widely read beyond the geological and biological scholarly communities. But, of course, these texts were not read and discussed by non-scientists simply because their language was accessible to the non-specialist. As with Copernicus in the sixteenth century, the substance of nineteenth-century scientific discoveries had clear implications outside their immediate fields. The way one reads Genesis is only the most obvious and celebrated of changes in interpretation wrought by scientific discoveries.

The volume and range of George Eliot's treatment of these matters would seem to absolve one from the need to justify one's interest in the topic, but it also obliges one to define a distinct position within this already extensive body of scholarship. In a rough and ready way one might divide studies of texts-in-their-historical-contexts into two camps. Broadly, and indeed predominantly, the first of these kinds of studies may be described as idealist in its

assumption that knowledge exists in itself; empirical-rationalist in its epistemology; and expressive-humanist in its view that the individual is the author of meaning and that that meaning is anterior to its expression in language.

The other camp may be called archaeological and genealogical. The archaeologist of knowledge, in varying ways following on from, but in some respects reacting to, Hegel, does not seek 'true' knowledge, but inquires into the conditions which determine what is regarded as knowledge and what is not. Because the individual does not stand in a neutral, autonomous relationship with external reality, what one 'knows' depends upon the circumstances, or dominant ideologies, which inform one's view.

Idealist criticism of Eliot's texts-in-their-historical-context, like idealist history and criticism in general, tends to look at the product alone, at what was known at a particular time. Archaeological criticism, by contrast, sees writing as discourse and so as part of a process. The idealist concept of homogenous 'knowledge' is replaced by 'knowledges' because what is regarded as knowledge, not just what is known, changes.

My aim in this study, then, is to examine George Eliot's last two texts, *Middlemarch* (1871-1872) and *Daniel Deronda* (1876), within the epistemology of archaeological criticism. There are four propositions I would offer in

explanation of this choice of what has been labelled a post-structuralist perspective:

(a) its focus is on discourse which includes ways of writing, speaking and thinking. Discourse is not just a vocabulary nexus but a group of assumptions which may remain implicit, and Eliot's last texts will be examined as discourses in this sense;

(b) the post-structuralist notion of 'discursive strategies' or 'practices,' particularly Realism's hierarchy of discourses, is a concept now widely used in English (and other) literary (and other) studies, and worth exploring as a way of contextualizing Eliot's late work;

(c) there are numerous parallels between nineteenth-century challenges to aesthetic empiricism and scientific induction and contemporary challenges to positivism and what in the early Wittgenstein is called the picture-theory of language, and I shall argue that Eliot is an obvious and appropriate locus in which to examine these parallels;

(d) lastly, and generally, this study will seek to illustrate the proposition, as Terry Eagleton formulates it, that "it is most useful to see 'literature' as a name which people give from time to time for different reasons to certain kinds of writing within a whole field of what Michel Foucault has called 'discursive practices', and that if anything is to be an object of study it is this whole field of practices rather than just those sometimes rather obscurely labelled 'literature'" (1983, 205).

Preponderantly, studies of Realist writing which employ post-structuralist theories tend to present Realism as an unselfconscious form. The theoretically-aware critic is therefore apt to condescend to Realist fiction by pointing out Realism's not-quite-sufficiently concealed and incompletely elided assumptions about the productive relations between what is represented and the way in which it is represented. In this study I seek to show that in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, at least, Realism is not so simple nor so naive as many post-structuralist commentators suggest.

INTRODUCTION:

THEORETICAL PRELIMINARIES

. . . criticism is no longer going to be practised in search for the formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to reorganize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method. Archaeological -- and not transcendental -- in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events. And this

critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think.

Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment"

Language is clearly central to the novelist's conception of meaning, as it is to the philosopher's and to the critic's. Humanist beliefs about the existence of human nature imply that universality and normalcy exist innately not through social agreement, so that perception, or "appearances," in Kantian terms, may be at one with reality as it is in itself. It follows that while meaning may be expressed by language, it inheres prelinguistically in the world itself.

Some contemporary theories of discourse, however, challenge these contentions. As Diane Macdonell reminds us, "dialogue is the primary condition of discourse: all speech and writing is social" (1986, 1). Discourse is social in that its vocabulary, register and organization presumes a social group -- plumbers, feminists, academics, sports' fans -- who are so familiar with these assumptions that they no longer

recognize them as such but see them as 'natural' or 'normal' or 'innate.' This is the condition which Roland Barthes calls the naturalized sign, or myth (1972, *passim*), and that Althusser regards as the function ideology (1971, 121-173). Clearly, then, discourse changes with place, time, and culture. From this it has been argued that there is no homogenous discourse.

But discourse is social in a second sense, too. Whatever is said, or written, implies either agreement or disagreement with something that has been said or written, or something else that has been postulated. Accordingly, no text can exist on its own. No reading can be innocent, in the New Critical sense, where meaning somehow inheres solely in the words on the page. A text is intelligible through its relations with other texts: it is this story, not other stories; it is a story, not something else; its literary devices are recognizable by their difference from other devices elsewhere. A text operates 'literarily,' that is, discursively.

Many critics writing on George Eliot -- Henry James, Leslie Stephen, F.R. Leavis, Barbara Hardy, W.J. Harvey and Kerry McSweeney are a few examples -- discuss the discourse of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* largely in expressivist terms. Without wishing to imply that such an approach is of necessity 'wrong' or indeed 'right,' contemporary discourse theory

provides another way of contextualizing the various historical discourses which, virtually all critics agree, inform Eliot's last novels. Indeed, one of *Middlemarch's* central concerns is the way in which new hypotheses may re-define what constitutes knowledge. As Eliot writes:

the conception wrought by Bichat, with his detailed study of the different tissues, acted necessarily on medical questions as the turning of gas-light would act on a dim, oil-lit street, showing new connections and hitherto hidden facts of structure which must be taken into account in considering the symptoms of maladies and the action of medicaments (145-146).

As Michael Mason says, Bichat's "powerful conception actually changed men's interpretation of phenomena to the point where unnoticed details now count as 'facts'" (1971, 161-162). Such a point is worth investigating further for it seems to problematize the nature of what is real in several ways. If "facts" are actually interpretations and if reality is conceived discursively through the relation between observer and observed, then it is difficult to see how Realism could really represent experience accurately by passive reflection.

A second aspect of contemporary literary theory which is especially appropriate to a reading of Eliot is the concept of a hierarchy of discourses. Émile Benveniste (1971, 205-215) distinguishes between what he calls "discourse" and "history," where "history" narrates events without the intercession of a speaker, so that there is, again in Benveniste's terms, neither "you" nor "I." Discourse requires both a speaker and a listener (reader). In discourse, only the speaker has full access to the 'truth': the speech within inverted commas and the reader are subordinated in a hierarchy of discourses. Paradoxically, only by effacing its condition as discourse -- that is, by seeming to be history -- can discourse pretend to authoritativeness. By occluding its own textuality, and thus its 'constructedness,' discourse appears natural, ideologically neutral, impersonal, and so able to promulgate (tacitly) the ideology of the single 'right' interpretation.

George Eliot in particular, and what has been called "classic Realism"¹ in general, are commonly accused (by post-structuralist critics) of the ideological subjection inherent in this hierarchy of discourses I have briefly described:

¹ Classic Realism is, of course, itself a critical construct reified by critics with a view to defining it in such a way that they can control it. Accordingly, in what I say about what has been called classic Realism one needs to maintain a distinction between the characteristics of the original writing itself and the politics inherent in the classification.

"classic Realism is characterized by a . . . *hierarchy of discourses* which [establishes] the 'truth' of the story The authority of this impersonal narration springs from its effacement of its own status as discourse" (Belsey 1980, 70-72). If Eliot is excused from this general indictment of classic Realism, it seems it is only on the grounds that "the frequent overt authorial intrusions and generalizations of George Eliot are much easier to resist since they draw attention to themselves as propositions" (72).

I shall offer the counter-argument here that *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* characteristically draw attention to their textuality and their discursivity, both directly through statements about the fictiveness of beginnings and endings, and metaphorically through images such as that of the microscope. Instead of conceiving "intrusions and generalizations" as foci of contemporary, theoretically-aware, readerly resistance to narrative authority, I shall argue that both texts subvert their apparent authority by de-naturalizing the Realist subject.

A third area in which contemporary theories of discourse may be used to advantage is in relation to the specific scientific and philosophical discourses within which Eliot's last texts were produced. Work by Michael Mason (1971), K.M. Newton (1973-1974), Gillian Beer (1980; 1983), Sally Shuttleworth (1984) and Nancy L. Paxton (1991), has

greatly extended our knowledge of specific medical, philosophical, scientific and social scientific discourses with which Eliot was familiar in the 1860s and 1870s. One thread which may be followed in the substantive and methodological changes in all these disciplines is the question of the relativity of meaning. Mason, Newton, Beer and Shuttleworth all note that in geology, biology, comparative anatomy, physiology and, indeed, in the philosophy of scientific method itself, older accepted notions of an objectivity predicated on an ontological distinction between observer and observed were increasingly called into question. Scientific induction and philosophical empiricism were challenged by Whewell's theory of the hypothesis: "for Mill a hypothesis was a useful guide to experiment, a temporary substitute for a 'complete induction', for Whewell the hypothesizing activity is essential to the whole structure of discovery" (Mason 1971, 158).

As I shall argue later in detail, the scholarship which has already been done has established that in a number of fields there was a "recognition of the difficulties of knowing" (Levine 1980, 3). If one compares the much-discussed image of the pier-glass in *Middlemarch* with this passage from the earlier *Adam Bede* (1859), one sees how much Eliot's epistemology changes:

I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed; the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you, as precisely as I can, what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath (Eliot 1980, 221).

In this passage, knowledge has an independent reality and, more important, that reality is available to the diligent, scrupulous, human mind. Perception, therefore, is a window giving on to the truth rather than a formative, discursive process. In contrast, the way in which knowledge is problematized in the image of the pier-glass has been widely discussed in relation to the various philosophical and scientific discourses with which Eliot was familiar (Feltes 1969; J. Hillis Miller 1974; 1975; Beer 1980; Shuttleworth 1984; McGovern, 1987). In the main, however, these studies have been idealist in that they have concentrated on the author-text relationship, articulating the discourses with which Eliot was familiar and so examining Eliot's writing historically.

This study will use a broader intertextual framework. Theories of linguistic meaning, I believe, justify this

unhistorical method, but this justification requires a short *excursus*. There are parallels between nineteenth-century challenges to empiricism, induction and Realism, and contemporary post-structuralist theories of meaning which, I shall argue, are in themselves striking, and which invite an extended sense of 'intertextuality.' For a critic today, Saussure and Foucault, for example, are as formative intertexts in a reading of Eliot as were Bichat and Bernard for Eliot herself, if one privileges the reader-text relationship rather than the author-text relationship. The question which arises here, of course, is that of authenticity. Is it the aim of good scholarship to define, exactly, what writing meant historically? What is an authentic, historically accurate reading? If, for example, one attends a concert where Bach is performed on original instruments, say, does one hear the 'authentic' Bach? The answer must be 'no.' Even granting the musicians know all about eighteenth-century German musical training and styles of bowing, and are able to reproduce these perfectly, and granting, too, a knowledge and perfect reproduction of the setting and acoustics of the original performances, *still* one does not have the 'authentic' Bach. Whatever else one hears, one hears the differences between this 'authentic' performance and all the other performances one has heard on modern instruments, and that, of course, was no part of what Bach

intended or what Bach and Bach's audiences heard. There is no eternal and fixed Bach, as there is no eternal and fixed George Eliot, inscribed in the musical or literary notation, partly because there is no eternal listener or reader.

The commonsense view of language -- George Eliot's or anyone else's -- is as a label for the things of the world. Words stand for objects and ideas which, plainly, exist in themselves whether one names them or not. Dr. Johnson, no doubt, would agree. To refute Bishop Berkeley's theory of the non-existence of matter Johnson, one recalls, struck "his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, [saying] 'I refute it thus'" (Boswell 1953, 333). To Johnson, empiricism (in this instance, dramatic and painful) suffices. In theoretical terms, there would be nothing problematic about the experiencing subject, about the objects perceived, nor about the relationship between the two so far as the Doctor is concerned. Language labels pre-linguistic reality: the label may differ from language to language -- *equus*, *cheval*, *horse* -- so that one may say that these signifiers are, in relation to their signifieds, 'arbitrary,' but in each language, and in each instance, a name is given to something which already exists in the world.

Indeed, this linguistic model is the basis of Wittgenstein's picture-theory of meaning in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The world, Wittgenstein argues, is

composed of elementary facts which he calls states-of-affairs (*Sachverhalten*). Words, phrases and propositions, if true, symbolically represent these natural *Sachverhalten*. A proposition, however complex, may be broken down into its component parts each of which represents a simple state-of-affairs, and in doing this one may test the truth of the complex proposition: "one name stands for one thing, another for another thing, and they are combined with one another so that the whole group -- like a *tableau vivant* -- present a state-of-affairs^h (Proposition 4.0311). This empiricist view depends upon a conception of the essence of reality in autonomous particles, conditions, states-of-affairs or ideas. The basis of being is innate, discrete essence.

On this empiricist model, the essence of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* would inhere exclusively in those texts themselves, and in their relations with those contemporaneous scientific and philosophical texts which, Mason, Beer and Shuttleworth, especially, have convincingly shown influenced Eliot at that time. But, it is just these very assumptions -- that language expresses pre-linguistic meaning; that object and observer are ontologically distinct; that impersonal, objective experimentation is both possible and is the means whereby one uncovers the material world's innate rationality; that things, including literary texts, are what they are by dint of distinct qualities natural to them -- these are just

the assumptions that are called into question by the discourses which inform and help constitute *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

The scientific and philosophical texts which inform Eliot's last two novels no longer accept that science uncovers 'facts.' What science does produce, in a phrase which George Henry Lewes uses in his *Goethe*, is a theory "which colligates the facts better than any other hitherto propounded" (123). Once said, this seems obvious: the history of science, after all, is not a story of 'fact' succeeding 'fact,' but a story in which new 'facts' show that old 'facts' were not 'facts' at all. The scientific method which William Whewell proposed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and which is offered throughout both *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, is that of the imaginative hypothesis. Whewell contended that scientific laws are concepts which the 'facts,' so far as we know them, fit.

By the end of the century, Whewell's view had become widespread. In his 1884 Address to Harvard Divinity Students, William James argued:

I myself believe that all magnificent achievements of mathematical and physical science -- our doctrines of evolution, of uniformity of law, and the rest -- proceed from our indomitable desire to cast the world into a more

rational shape in our minds than the crude order of our experience The principle of causality, for example, -- what is it but a postulate, an empty name covering simply a demand that the sequence of events shall some day manifest a deeper kind of belonging of one thing with another than the mere arbitrary juxtaposition which now phenomenally appears? It is as much an altar to an unknown god as the one that Saint Paul found at Athens. All our scientific and philosophic ideals are altars to unknown gods (W. James 1956, 147).

By contrast, John Stuart Mill, whose influence one sees in Eliot's earlier texts, contended that natural or scientific laws were somehow 'in' observable facts and that diligence, reason and a neutral, objective mind would uncover them. Theories, or hypotheses, were at best a guide for Mill. For Whewell, "the hypothesizing activity is essential to the whole structure of discovery" (Mason 1971, 158). Scientific laws, like social laws, or like "those less marked vicissitudes which are constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse, and begetting new consciousness of interdependence" (Eliot 1986, 93), are not empirically apparent, in Whewell's view. Without theory, one witnesses phenomena but one cannot even conceive a structure (and certainly not the structure) of laws which the phenomena

manifest. Kant's influence on Whewell's thinking is particularly clear here. But by following a Lockean model of perception, by contrast, one is left like Mr. Farebrother to diligent but pointless taxonomy. Whereas, as George Levine notes, Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda* has the working hypothesis that Deronda is a Jew and tests that hypothesis in whatever ways are available to him: "the hypothesis, meanwhile, helps create the conditions that make it true" (1980, 5).

One reason for using anachronistic structuralist and post-structuralist texts (such as those of Saussure, Foucault and Barthes) in the analysis of Eliot's work, lies in the Whewellian concept of the hypothesis which Eliot herself uses. For Eliot, as for Whewell, the 'facts' of any text, literary as well as scientific, depend on the hypotheses one colligates with those texts, for 'facts' are made so by theories. The meaning of Eliot's texts is not single, unitary and coherent but, as with the meanings under revision in Lyell's geology, Darwin's biology and Bichat's pathology, new hypotheses reveal hitherto hidden connections. As we shall see later, post-Saussurian linguistics, the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, but also Whewell's hypotheses, Bichat's anatomical pathology, and Claude Bernard's physiology, all propose a system of meaning in their respective disciplines which depends, not on individual autonomy, not, as it were, on an 'authentic' Bach, but upon the organic interdependence of

observer and observed, music, musicians and audience, text and reader. Farebrother's patient taxonomy and the defective mirror in *Adam Bede*, are replaced as methods in Eliot's late texts by Claude Bernard's epistemology of physiology which, indeed, Bernard expresses by a linguistic analogy in *Leçons de Physiologie Expérimentale Appliquée à la Médecine*: "le mot lui-même est un élément composé qui prend une signification spéciale par son mode de groupement dans la phrase, et la phrase, à son tour, doit concourir avec d'autres à l'expression complète de l'idée totale du sujet. Dans les matières organiques, il y a des éléments simples, communs, qui ne prennent une signification spéciale que par leur mode de groupement" (II, 12). As Shuttleworth notes, Bernard conceives of the experimental scientist as an imaginative co-creator -- a similar role, indeed, to that which post-structuralists and reader-response theorists assign to the reader -- rather than a passive recorder, in that the scientist "actively engineered the appearance of phenomena" (145). In this sense, then, I am proposing to 'read' *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

Chronologically, and to some extent intellectually, these parallel, though not concurrent, developments in the philosophy of language, in pathology, physiology and literary theory, follow Kant. They do not dispute that the world exists prior to our expressing it, but their concern is with

epistemology, not with ontology. It is impossible to conceive the world without language, for only through language do we know it. The particular way our language differentiates experience into a vocabulary of distinct entities seems to be a description, or rather a transcription, of what already is. But as Saussure points out,

if words had the job representing concepts fixed in advance, one would be able to find exact equivalents for them as between one language and another. But this is not the case. French uses the same verb *louer* (hire, rent) both for granting and for taking a lease, whereas German has two separate verbs, *mieten* and *vermieten*: so that there is no exact correspondence between the values in question. The German verbs *schätzen* ('to value') and *urteilen* ('to judge') have meanings which answer roughly to those of the French verbs *estimer* and *juger*: but in various respects there is no one-to-one correspondence (Saussure 1983, 114-115). (See Culler 1976, 24; Belsey 1980, 39).

Instead of labelling pre-linguistic, autonomous entities, "language precedes the existence of independent entities, making the world intelligible by differentiating

between concepts" (Belsey 1980, 38). Words delimit domains in a continuum, domains which cannot be 'natural.' Like Bernard's experimental scientist, language users (novelists and critics) should be seen as co-creators. Though the text, like the world, exists, it is readers who make it meaningful. If, in the word/world relationship, the sign is arbitrary, then meaning must be socially agreed upon. In any language group, we must all settle on the same word, on 'horse,' say, rather than allowing the individual the right to choose 'cheval' or 'equus' or to vary as whim suggests. That is, only the social group can produce meaning, for meaning is public not private: "an individual acting alone is incapable of establishing a value" (Saussure 1983, 12). Though there is usually only one writer of a text, he or she is not, in this sense, the author of its meaning, for meaning is established by readers who bring with them different hypotheses to test against the text. But that is not, of course, to reduce the writer to Platonic catatonia. Nonetheless, to concede full authority to the writer's reading or to readings which are historically possible in terms of what was known or available at the time, one would have to concede that meaning inheres in the mind, that writing is mere transcription, so that the only

intertexts² could be those which we know the writer had read. Then, of course, the writer and the writer's reading are sole authorities.

But if, as Saussure claimed, meaning is established publicly in the socially accepted sign, then it must be with readers too, not only writers, that the text comes to mean. In turn, there can be no 'right' meaning -- not the writer's, not that of educated contemporaneous readers -- for if meaning is plural and social then different readers at different times from different cultures will produce different meanings in the

² Julia Kristeva uses the term *intertextuality*, which resembles Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic, in *Σημειωτική* in an essay translated and reprinted as "The Bounded Text" in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. In using Kristeva's term I am perhaps prejudging the issue which I am here arguing. Kristeva invents the term *intertextuality* to challenge traditional notions of conscious influence and intentional allusion in literary (and other) works. These embedded ideas are, for her, predicated on unsupportable (tacit) conceptions of the subject's coherence, autonomy and expressiveness. Though writing may, of course, contain both conscious influences and intended allusions, Kristeva contends that it is never merely, or only, a transcription of these states of its author's mind. Instead, Kristeva says that all writing is formed of a myriad unconscious, unintended references to and quotations from other artifacts, so that all writing is really re-writing. Kristeva is largely concerned with the author-text relationship. However, if one employs the notion of *intertextuality* in an analysis of the reader-text relationship, as I do here following Michael Riffaterre and others, it follows that writing is not limited by historical possibilities in the same way as is the author, for the writing is already liberated from the author's consciousness. To adapt Archibald MacLeish's familiar phrase, writing should not mean but be, for it is never merely the sum of what its author could, or did, know at the moment of composition. The writerly reader, to use Barthes' term, will form the novel within his or her own domain of conscious and unconscious influences and allusions.

text. And because one comments on texts (not authors), so-called anachronistic readings which are informed by writings from a later period than that of the text itself, are both inevitable (for later readers) and acceptable. To deny this would be to submit either to authorial authority (where it exists and is accessible) or to the authority of informed contemporaneous readings. In either case one concedes that the 'real' meaning is to be found outside a present reading of the text itself and that the 'real' meaning is single.

This present reading will argue against such a critical stand by using contemporary theoretical texts to discuss in detail the discourses amongst which *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* function. As the various philosophical and scientific discourses which Eliot herself clearly employs have already been extensively discussed (as noted earlier, by Willey 1949; Briggs 1952; Mason 1971; Levine 1980; Beer 1980 and 1983; Shuttleworth 1984; Paxton 1991), I shall do no more than offer brief outlines of what is salient in these studies for this differently intertextual focus. What is important here for my purposes, of course, is not the particularities of nineteenth-century thinking on, say, comparative anatomy, nor indeed the particularities of, say, Michel Foucault's thinking on the conditions which gave rise to the re-definition of the psychiatric clinic in France after the Revolution. A revolution in method in one discipline has implications for

other disciplines as one sees in the much-noted methodological differences between Eliot's early and late novels. Equally, the post-structuralist 'revolution' in literary method has implications for readings of Eliot's novels. My major focus will be on the important parallels in the epistemologies of nineteenth-century philosophy of science and contemporary post-structuralism, parallels which facilitate a new context for reading *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

* * *

Developments in a number of areas of thought shaped important changes in method in Eliot's late texts. Broadly, one might say that these areas are: physiology and comparative anatomy; geology; evolutionary biology; the philosophy of scientific method; and, lastly, linguistics. It is a commonplace that nineteenth-century intellectual circles produced a high cross-fertilization between disciplines, in part because the language of research was accessible to an educated reader. More personally, George Henry Lewes' major project of the last years of his life -- the years when Eliot was writing *Middlemarch* -- was his *Problems of Life and Mind*. It should not need to be said, but of course using Lewes's own

work as one of the contexts for the fiction does not imply that Lewes is the source of Eliot's ideas in the novels.

In "Spiritualism and Materialism," Lewes describes his view of organicism, the topic which lies at the heart of *Problems of Life and Mind*:

organicism is distinguishable by its consistent carrying out of the hypothesis that the organic phenomena grouped under the terms Life and Mind are activities not of any single element, in or out of the organism, but activities of the whole organism in correspondence with a physical and social medium (715-716).

As Shuttleworth notes of Lewes's arguments in *Problems of Life and Mind*, "this guiding principle affects his epistemology, psychology, and social theory" (1984, 18). But the sorts of effects one might foresee depend on one's politics: conservatives stress the rigid inflexibility of the organism in support of their mistrust of change; reformers, on the other hand, interpret this model as one which demonstrates the inevitability and naturalness of the process of change. But in either case, eighteenth-century conceptions of individual autonomy and all that is concomitant with those conceptions, were no longer unchallenged. As we shall see, this has specific implications in regard to narrative structure and

subjectivity: Realist views about mimetic correspondence between experience and representation in art, views which depend on a theory of autonomous entities, are no longer self-evident; character as the author of history³ now seems an

³ The Great Man theory of history is the most familiar of these accounts. Broadly, the Great Man theory interprets historical events as manifestations of the autonomous, individual will. Hegelian and post-Hegelian thinking such as Marxist writing, however, present a history of history. The notion that there is such a thing as the philosophy of history originates with Hegel. What Hegel means by this idea may best be seen by comparing Hegel to Kant in this respect.

Is it a fact of human nature that we are divided between two principles, one rational and the other characterized by animal desires? One familiar picture of the human condition sets us between the angels and the beasts in a fixed, hierarchical cosmology. In this model, humanity partakes properties not just from the angels above us but also from the beasts beneath us, so that while we possess the angelic quality of reason, we also are characterized by bestial desires. Within a number of religions, the good life is one in which we emphasize our angelic faculties and repress our bestial aspects.

The question here, though, is whether these two sides of human beings are innate? For Kant, the answer is that they are. He sees human beings as eternally divided between these contrasting, perhaps opposing, principles. If this is indeed a fact of human nature, to what use can one put such knowledge? Kant would argue that one may see these two forces at work throughout the life of any individual: at one time the rational principle will dominate giving rise to order, harmony and coherence; at another, untrammelled desire will predominate giving rise to aggression, disorder and lawlessness. But this is not restricted to the life of an individual alone. It will equally be true that in history as a whole these two principles may be seen at work. History itself may be interpreted as a contest between these two characteristics, so that at some times rationality and order will characterize social organization, while at other times aggression and desire shape history. For Kant, as for many others, the point here is that if the angel and the beast are always within us, if we as human beings are characterized by these competing forces, then their shaping influence upon individual behaviour and upon history as a whole, have been, are and will always be. It is just these two notions, first, of immutability and, second, that history is the expression or manifestation of this condition, which Hegel

incomplete account, or a less complete account, of events; teleological structures, notably closure, now appear fictive

challenges in *The Philosophy of History*.

For Hegel, human nature should not be conceived outside time. The outline of the human condition I have just briefly described is one which seeks to define humanity as it is in itself. It is not just an account of human beings at a particular point in history within one culture, but rather it claims to show one aspect of the human condition itself, something outside history, religion and culture. Hegel, however, denies that these characteristics have a transcendental existence. To support this contention, Hegel examines human nature in historical terms. He makes the case that the bifurcation of reason and desire as determining principles of the human condition has not always been present in human society, that instead it has historical origins, and that since its appearance it has undergone a number of changes.

In ancient Greece, Hegel contends that there was no conscious division between reason and desire in human thinking or behaviour. Human nature was more harmonious. The sense of oneself as a whole being, as an organic entity, also produces, or is perhaps derived from, a notion of society itself as something organic. People did not conceive themselves as individuals with separate, definable identities independent of society. Instead, one's sense of oneself was derived from one's social relations. In other words, the modern sense of society as formed through a set of agreements between otherwise autonomous individuals has not always been the case. If Kant saw a division between reason and desire in the human condition, and that division had not always been present, then Hegel contends it must have arisen at some historical moment as a result of particular circumstances. That is to say, the division between reason and desire is not innate, not part of the human condition, but a social and historical condition.

Hegel says that the dissolution of the organic society and the breakdown of the organic sense of self appears with the rise of the Protestant sense of individual conscience in a personal relationship with God. If this is so, then the division between reason and desire need not be permanent and certainly is not innate. From these arguments, Hegel develops his dialectical account of history in which two structural forces, the thesis and the contrary antithesis, define the nature of the historical moment. From this conflict resolution eventually appears in the form of a synthesis which, itself, constitutes a new dominant thesis which, in turn, gives rise to a new antithesis. Structure, then, precedes and so forms the conditions which shape the individual, not the other way round as in the Great Man theory of history.

rather than reflective, constructed rather than imitated from the 'real.' Though, of course, Eliot was entirely familiar with Lewes' work (Shuttleworth 1984, 18), one need not, as I say, postulate a chain of 'influence': Eliot, it can hardly be doubted, has a mind of her own. Rather than track down Lewes' 'influence' one may, instead, state that Eliot's own discourses were produced in a number of contexts, one of which is the work of George Henry Lewes.

One of the earliest attempts to revise the earlier conception of the organism as an association of independent, autonomous entities, was that of the French physiologist and comparative anatomist, Marie François Xavier Bichat whom, as we have seen, Eliot mentions by name in *Middlemarch* (145). There are two important ideas about organicism which derive from Bichat that are crucial here. The first -- from comparative anatomy -- is that "organic evolution involves an increasing specialization of parts" (Mason 1971, 155). As organisms -- whether in a living body or in the social body -- become more distinct from one another so, by dint of their specialization, they become more dependent upon other organisms to define their relative functions within the system. Lewes notes this as early as 1853 in his article in *Leader* 4 (1073-1075) and Spencer had made the same point earlier in 1851 in *Social Statics* (442). As we shall see, but as is perhaps already clear, this concept has obvious

consequences for the notion of subjectivity in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

The second important challenge Bichat makes to prevailing theories of the organism is that "organic life is the *relation* between an organism and its environment" (Mason 1971, 154). Herbert Spencer adapts this model for social analysis. In *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, similarly, subjects and epistemology are set in a relative context where each is produced according to its cultural, historical, social, political and linguistic environment. To give one brief example, for Lydgate, in *Middlemarch*, Bichat is 'right,' medical practice 'wrong,' and Lydgate believes he can demonstrate this empirically. His career fails, however, precisely because 'truth' -- the epistemology of 'truth,' not the ontology of 'truth' -- is not empirical, but social and political. In *Middlemarch*, as in *Middlemarch*, 'truth' is not an autonomous entity functioning within the organism of the town. Thus,

results which depend on human conscience and intelligence work slowly, and now at the end of 1829, most medical practice was still strutting or shambling along the old paths, and there was still scientific work to be done which might have seemed to be a direct sequence of Bichat's (Eliot 1986, 146).

But this revised sense of organicism, with its challenge to the concept of inherent autonomous identity, is equally applicable to literary identity: the 'truth' of Eliot's texts themselves, too, is determined within the organism formed and re-formed (and reformed) by both historical intertextual discourses and by the reader/text relationship. There is no autonomous Daniel Deronda as there is no 'true' Bichat. This is, in fact, one of the reasons why it would be apposite to use the language and work of, for example, Michel Foucault -- in addition to that of Bichat, Bernard, Lewes and so on -- as a context for Eliot.

One of Foucault's aims is to historicize and politicize knowledge. Instead of seeing knowledge as neutral and above ordinary systems, Foucault argues that it is enmeshed in the very systems -- or organisms -- it purports to describe. In his debate with Noam Chomsky (Elders 1974), Foucault rejects the idea that knowledge constitutes a way out of prevailing orthodoxy by offering an ideal vantage point. For Foucault, knowledge and power are aspects of the same thing. In these terms, then, one might say that Lydgate fails because he assumes that the knowledge he finds in Bichat is ideal and final. He does not see that what constitutes knowledge -- what is thought to be knowledge -- depends, not on ideal veracity, but on power and its control of knowledge.

Foucault regards disciplines -- the law, economics, psychiatry, literature -- neither as self-evidently 'there' nor as having natural parameters. Instead, he argues that they are created in specific historical conditions which define both their domains and their methods. In the West, in general, we have assumed that these disciplines have an innate identity, that they exist outside other knowledges and outside our awareness of them. By insisting that power and knowledge are not separate, however, in the same way as Bichat insisted that identity and function were not separate, Foucault contends that this discipline-oriented study distorts the character of the discourse of knowledge. If the discipline, as Foucault says, were 'problematized' it follows that instead of studying the 'objective' validity of any truth-claim -- Lydgate's claim for Bichat, say -- one has to examine the social and political conditions in which the discourse of a particular knowledge was endorsed, or, as in Lydgate's case, not endorsed.

As disciplines do not exist naturally, then, intellectual history cannot be seen as a progress towards full revelation, as a sort of strip tease (as Roland Barthes might have it) where successive uncoverings further develop previous discoveries. If what constitutes knowledge changes with the social, political, legal and economic conditions which produce and 'empower' knowledge, development will be characterized by

radical discontinuities, not linear progress. Like Hegel, Foucault historicizes the idea of history. Indeed, Bichat's idea of a fundamental tissue on which the primary organisms are based, the concept which acts like oil lighting on a gas-lit street, has itself undergone a number of radical revisions, as, indeed, has oil lighting. This notion, as we shall see, must and does have a fundamental impact on the Realist convention of final closure.

The 'natural' parameters of narrative are, by implication, also substantially challenged by the geological work of Sir Charles Lyell, and by Charles Darwin's work in evolutionary biology. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the age of the earth was measured in millions of years, not the 70,000 years which Buffon had estimated it to be half a century before. Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-1833) is the classic uniformitarian work. It argues that the physical forces which have shaped the planet's surface are neither occasional nor necessarily moral: the Flood as a serious proposition is stemmed by Lyell. Because geological forces are always present, geological reality is a process of constant change.

The nature and extent of that change is determined by the interrelationship of the forces and the materials acted upon, and the context for the change is time. Eliot was certainly familiar with Lyell's work as early as 1841 (*The*

Letters of George Eliot, VIII, 8). Eliot and Lewes were also familiar with Darwin's work early on. As Rosemary Ashton notes in her biography of Lewes, Eliot's consort was one of Darwin's earliest supporters, a fact appreciated by the biologist (1991, 5). Darwin's evolutionary biology is deeply indebted to Lyell's geological work. Darwin, too, presents reality as a process, a process determined by the interdependence of life-form and environment, a dialectical process related to Hegel's model of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Between them, Lyell and Darwin propose the living and non-living as systems -- or organisms -- where identity is defined within an *unending* process of change. That is to say, there is no closure in nature because nature is not teleological. The traditional Christian cosmology -- hierarchical, ordered, static and innate -- becomes temporal, relative, evolutionary and revolutionary. The earlier stress on endings becomes a new one on beginnings: "every limit is a beginning as well as an ending" (Eliot 1986, 818); "men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning" (Eliot 1984, 3).

These radical changes proposed by Lyell and Darwin have been widely noted as important contexts in which Eliot's writing can be read. But these turns in the intellectual tide, I would suggest, may be seen in a still larger context, the de-centring of the notion of the subject or self, as it is

widely theorized in post-structuralist texts. In the humanist tradition, in which George-Eliot-the-Realist is usually located, Man is the author and centre of meaning. But as Louis Althusser points out,

since Copernicus, we have known that the earth is not the 'centre' of the universe. Since Marx, we have known that the human subject, the economic, political or philosophical ego is not the 'centre' of history -- and even, in opposition to the philosophers of the Enlightenment and to Hegel, that history has no 'centre' except in ideological misrecognition (1971, 201).

Equally, as Jacques Lacan says, one result of Freud's work was that "the very centre of the human being was no longer to be found at the place assigned to it by a whole humanist tradition" (1977, 114).

By accepting Bichat, Lyell and Darwin as intertexts in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, then, one also locates Eliot's discourses in a tradition of radical demystification of the notion of the coherent subject. Copernicus's decentring of the earth implies a plurality of worlds and a plurality of beings. The Reformation, as Hegel argues, replaces the "thesis" of a simple harmony in a single, unified Roman Catholic hierarchy with the "antithesis" of individual

conscience in a plurality of relationships between God and individuals, and may even be said to be responsible for the modern notion of individuality. As I have suggested, the intertexts which are commonly acknowledged hold in common with each other and with the later writings by Marx, Freud, Saussure, Foucault and Barthes, a conception of the subject as always-becoming because always in the process of forming and reforming itself and of being formed and reformed by others (such as readers) through different discourses. By contrast, the humanist tradition, in which Eliot is usually located, is predicated on the Cartesian subject where the body is not just separate from, but controlled by, the mind. Indeed, subjectivity is defined only by the autonomous mind: "this limits me to being there in my being in so far as I think that I am in my thought" (Lacan 1977, 165). Lacan's radical readings of Freud repudiate the whole concept of normative ideals and normative subjectivity which, in Lacan's view, a subsequent conservative tradition has imposed upon Freud. In the chapters which follow, I propose that one may make a similar argument with regard to traditional readings of Eliot.

The common factor in all these various kinds of readings is subversion, or demystification, of apparently 'natural' authority: consciousness, God, the Pope, absolute monarchy, instincts, human nature, class relations, "Man," and, lastly, the author. These are what post-structuralism

calls 'transcendental signifieds.' Here, these are unmasked as anything but transcendent, and revealed as both specific and socially constructed. In the humanist tradition there can be no meaning without the ultimate subject, the guarantee of the stability of meaning. Characteristically, Eliot has been read within this tradition. Yet, if one locates her discourse both with the contemporaneous discourses of Lyell, Darwin, Bichat, and so on, and with those earlier and later discourses which are apposite, then a justifiable proposition may be made that her writing can (not should, necessarily) be read in this other tradition in which what Jacques Derrida has called the metaphysics of presence is replaced by the metaphysics of absence.

Gillian Beer points to another aspect of Lyell and Darwin's work which is significant to Eliot's late texts: "evolutionary theory never relies for meaning upon the single individual or even the single species. This was one of its major narrative challenges to novelists, to whom the life cycle of the individual was a central form of interpreting experience" (1980, 135). It seems today that study, in whatever field, scientific or aesthetic, conducted with the ideological assumptions of discrete autonomous individuality, is no longer allowed to continue unchallenged. Instead of being accepted as a given, identity may now be seen as having a history and a history which neither has, nor need have, an

ending. Equally, the subject as rational actor on the Cartesian model is no longer the 'obvious' author of meaning. As Lewes says, "consciousness is not an agent but a symptom" (1874-1879 3rd Series, II, 365).

By problematizing the 'obvious,' this aspect of Lyell and Darwin's work has important implications for the discourse in which one situates Eliot's texts. Classic Realism, as Belsey reminds us, is "the dominant literary form of the nineteenth century and arguably of the twentieth [It] 'interpellates' the reader, addresses itself to him or her directly, offering the reader as the position from which the text is most 'obviously' intelligible, the position of the *subject in (and of) ideology*" (1980, 56-57). One function of ideology -- indeed the principle function -- is the construction of the individual as a subject, either as reader or character. The success with which this has been achieved may be judged by how odd such a contention initially sounds. Classic Realism does not *argue* that the individual is autonomous and possessed of a unique, individuating consciousness, or subjectivity: rather, that is the tacit assumption on which the work is predicated, tacit because so 'obvious' or 'self-evident.' However, it is precisely the 'obviousness' of this essentialist assumption that there is an innate, autonomous selfhood which transcends history and culture, transcends its function within the organism, which is

meta-linguistic and therefore 'above' or 'outside' discourse; it is just these assumptions which this aspect of Lyell and Darwin's work calls into question. Equally, I would argue, it must at least call into question the 'obvious' inclusion of Eliot's discourses within classic Realism.

To read Eliot from the position that "it is man who makes history" (Althusser 1976, 40) is to concede, perhaps without considering, that this (ideologically constructed) position is 'natural.' My argument here is not that such readings are 'wrong'; rather, it is that such readings, beginning with such a hypothesis, must of necessity reject other ways of reading, ways which seek textual evidence for the constructedness of the subject, for example. It would be naive, of course, to contend that Eliot, following Lewes who, in turn, had been influenced by Lyell and Darwin amongst others, simply accepted the narrative implications of these various scientific discourses and expressed this acceptance in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. But, equally, it is no longer possible merely to assume that these novels are predicated on the humanist credo that the individual is the coherent centre of initiatives, and then proceed to analyse subjectivity from that 'neutral' position. Subjectivity has now become an issue and one's position must be argued.

Althusser's now much-quoted 1970 essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an

Investigation)," proposes, in a phrase reminiscent of Lewes' formulation of consciousness as a symptom rather than an agent, that consciousness is constructed in the material existence of ideologies, and that the function of ideology is to represent "not the system of real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relations of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (155). Without going into the details of Althusser's theory of how ideologies are constructed, one may say, as a general proposition, that he rejects the idea that ideologies merely reflect the interests of one particular class. Instead, he proposes that ideologies are always produced in opposition to some other ideology, so that they are generated dialectically. Their character, therefore, is not determined by some 'transcendental signifier,' such as consciousness or class, but by their relations with other ideologies. In this respect, Althusser's work both derives and diverges from Hegel and Marx, but it may also be compared with those scientific discourses which act as intertexts in Eliot's novels: Althusser, too, decentres the subject by replacing an expressive theory of how ideology is constructed with one modelled, one might almost say, on the organicist theories which inform Eliot's late texts. Again, one must stress that this is not a simple causal argument -- I am not suggesting that, if Althusser seems to follow a similar epistemology to

that of the evolutionary and organicist scientists, then his conclusions must be found somewhere in Eliot. Rather, the similarities invite one, I would contend, to use Althusser, as one uses the contemporaneous scientists, and as one may fruitfully use post-structuralism in general, as a frame of discourses in which to site Eliot and so to pose the hypothesis that subjectivity, for example, is problematized in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

This is an alternative frame of discourses to that in which Eliot is normally to be found, but it is not an alternative to something which might be regarded as a 'neutral' examination of the texts. For example, Matthew Arnold mistrusted any approach to literature other than direct, simple empiricism. In his essay "Shelley" (1888), he laments Dowden's biography of the poet because it molests Arnold's original conception of Shelley. What he most abhors, however, is the critic who approaches the text with a system, as Arnold calls it, already in mind. Arnold argues this in "A French Critic on Goethe" (1878) where he attacks Professor Herman Grimm's lectures on Goethe. Grimm, according to Arnold,

has not really his eye upon the professed object of his criticism at all, but upon something else which he wants to prove by means of that object

He never fairly looks at it, he is looking at something else. Perhaps if he looked at it straight and full, looked at it simply, he might be able to pass a good judgement on it. As it is, all that he tells us is that he is no genuine critic, but a man with a system, an advocate (1960-1977, 8, 254).

Like John Stuart Mill, Arnold takes for granted that 'truth' is apparent to the diligent and 'neutral' eye and available without recourse to a "system." Arnold also takes for granted that the literary work exists in itself, not in relation to other works, for any criticism which positions the work under examination in a dialogue with "something else," in his opinion "never looks fairly at it."

Arnold's views are often taken to represent nineteenth-century methods and beliefs in general. In arguing that Eliot may be read discursively, one certainly adopts the method Arnold specifically rejects. But Arnold's views do not characterize all nineteenth-century thinking about the philosophy of perception or the nature of subjectivity. Eliot, in following Whewell rather than Mill, came to accept what one might now call the discursivity of knowledge.

In the 1840s, Eliot and Lewes were friendly with Mill and, in general, one may say there were broad epistemological

agreements amongst them. By 1865, though, Mill criticized Lewes and, indeed, Spencer for what Mill saw as their lapsed empiricism (1865, 339-405). In the *Aristotle* of 1864, Lewes maintained that the conceived idea, the "system," may be verified by the Whewellian criterion of "necessary truth" (123). That is to say, the laws fit the facts insofar as the facts are known, and these laws successfully predict the results of other observations. But the laws cannot be said to be 'in' the data and cannot be culled from it by induction, for all 'facts' are theory-laden (Burke 1985, 323-324). A fact becomes a fact only when theory makes it so (Passmore 1968, 20-21), so that the fact and the theory are interdependent:

the knowledge acquired through the use of any structure is selective. There are no standards or beliefs guiding the search for knowledge which are not dependent on the structure. Scientific knowledge, in sum, is not necessarily the clearest representation of what really is; it is the artifact of each structure and its tool. Discovery is invention. Knowledge is man-made (Burke 1985, 337).

By contrast, Matthew Arnold's epistemology of science, an epistemology largely akin to the ideology of liberal

humanism with which Eliot is usually associated, is one which is specifically rejected in *Middlemarch* in the figure of Farebrother who, as Handley puts it, "is the attractively fallible, scientific, whist-playing humanist" (1991, 9). In Arnold's view, "one piece of natural knowledge is added to another, and others are added to that, and at last we come to propositions as interesting as Mr. Darwin's" (1960-1977, 10, 64). This is a little like painting by numbers, for Arnold's scientist is a passive consumer of 'truths' rather than a co-creator, as in the Whewellian hypothesis. Against the Lockean and Realist notion of the mind as *tabula rasa*, passively, objectively and indiscriminately recording experience -- a position sympathetically rejected in Farebrother's taxonomy where "small faults are nothing when weighed in the scale of good feeling" (Handley 1991, 128) -- Whewell and Eliot propose that what one already knows, and the hypotheses one forms based on that knowledge, determine what one does and does not see, what is a fact and what is not a fact (Eliot 1986, 145). Given that Eliot herself acknowledges Whewell's dialogical epistemology, it would perhaps be of interest for a commentary on Eliot to adopt a similar method. As Neil Postman puts it,

the concept of truth is intimately linked to the biases of forms of expression. Truth does not, and never has, come unadorned. It must appear in its proper clothing or

it is not acknowledged, which is a way of saying that 'truth' is a kind of cultural prejudice (1985, 22-23).

With Eliot writing in a century of missionaries and imperialist exploitation and colonization, it may seem 'natural' to characterize Eliot-in-the-nineteenth-century as one may be tempted to characterize the century itself, as one where confidence and optimism, perhaps even certainty, dominated, and to reserve for our own century the uncertainties of problematic knowledge. But of course it is not so simple. As Rosemary Ashton notes at the beginning of *G.H. Lewes: A Life*, the opening to Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* compares the dialectical *Zeitgeist* of Victorian England to that of revolutionary France:

it was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way -- in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on

its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only (35).

Nineteenth-century challenges to hitherto accepted methods and models of perception and representation were not restricted to science and literature. In art, as E.H. Gombrich has argued, induction is no less challenged than in science, and painters, for instance, recognized that there could be no simple correspondence between art and life because every creative work has to be an interpretation of experience, an interpretation which has an ideological origin, not just a personal bias or preference:

Constable was convinced Cuyp had made a valid discovery. He had examined Cuyp's rendering of lightning and found it like nature. Not a transcript, of course -- who could transcribe a flash of lightning, and that in oil paint? -- but a configuration which, in the context, became the valid cryptogram for that unpaintable glare The revision I advocate in the story of visual discoveries, in fact, can be paralleled with the revision that has been demanded for the history of science. Here, too, the nineteenth century believed in passive recording, in unbiased

observation of uninterpreted facts. The technical term for this outlook is induction, the belief that the patient collection of one instance after the other will gradually build up into a correct image of nature, provided always that no observation is ever coloured by subjective bias. In this view nothing is more harmful to the scientist than a preconceived notion, a hypothesis, or an expectation which may adulterate his results. Science is a record of facts, and all knowledge is trustworthy only in so far as it stems from sensory data This inductivist ideal of pure observation has proved a mirage in science no less than in art. The very idea that it should be possible to observe without expectation, that you can make your mind an innocent blank on which nature will record its secrets, has come in for strong criticism. Every observation, as Karl Popper has stressed, is the result of a question we ask nature, and every question implies a tentative hypothesis. We look for something because our hypothesis makes us expect certain results (1981, 319-321).

This is a model which historicizes knowledge, which replaces idealist knowledge with dialogical knowledge, and which turns knowledge into a narrative without natural parameters. Each hypothesis begins another chapter but there can never be, in this unidealized knowledge, a final chapter. Each beginning is a question asked rather than a natural or inevitable starting point. The coherence, or not, of the narrative is not 'discovered,' not therefore innately in the narrative, but instead depends on one's hypothesis.

The measure of Eliot's acceptance of Whewell and rejection of her own early empiricism may be seen in the familiar opening epigraph to *Daniel Deronda* just as it may be seen in the beginning of the Finale to *Middlemarch*, and as, equally, it may be seen in the function which Mordecai serves in *Daniel Deronda*. I shall argue in the later chapters through close textual readings that, in the language and representation of the subject, problematized, provisional knowledge is all that is available in these texts. If representations of reality result from hypotheses, then the observer as much as the observed constitute the real:

the main point of the two laboratory metaphors for a social group in *Middlemarch* -- as a water drop and as a galvanized organism -- is that a change in observational

conditions is introduced by the observer, of magnification and of position (Mason 1971, 157).

* * *

One may see something of the revolutionary implications of these ideas for nineteenth-century fiction in general, and for George Eliot in particular, by contrasting them with Henry James's valedictory essay on Trollope. In it, James takes Trollope to task on the ontology of fiction:

it is impossible to imagine what a novelist takes himself to be unless he regards himself as an historian and his narrative as a history. It is only as an historian that he has the smallest *locus standi*. As a narrator of fictitious events he is nowhere; to insert into his attempts a backbone of logic, he must relate events that are assumed to be real When Trollope suddenly winks at us and reminds us that he is telling us an arbitrary thing, we are startled and shocked in quite the same way as if Macaulay or Motley were to drop the historic mask and intimate that William of Orange

was a myth or the Duke of Alva an invention (1984, 1343).

As J. Hillis Miller notes, "the traditional notions of form in fiction, James implicitly recognizes, are displaced versions of ideas about history . . . it is just because a work of fiction is not history that it must maintain so carefully the fiction that it is" (1974, 458-459). The literary implications of Whewell's subjectivist, imaginative hypothesizing are crucial for the authority of the narrator, though in an entirely opposite manner to that which James suggests in his reading of Trollope. It is, of course, far from "impossible" to imagine a role for the novelist other than that of historian: Cervantes, Fielding and Sterne clearly might have provided such models for James, as one might also say, in a very different way, Flaubert did. One may equally imagine a role for the historian other than that of a simple truth-teller, as Hayden White has shown. James's novelist is a Realist writing within Realist conventions which conceal the artifice of creation. Arnold's conception of scientific epistemology, one suspects, owes more to this Realist convention of truth than it does to any experience he, or anyone, might have had in a laboratory. To James, this is the *only* method. Bearing in mind the Althusserian definition of the function of ideology, this is what one might expect James

to say. But Whewell's dialogical scientist moots another function for the narrator, one which Eliot adopts.

If the starting point of any enquiry, scientific or aesthetic, is a hypothesis, then even the narrator cannot pose as passive recorder of external reality, along the lines which Stendhal proposes in his familiar analogy of the mirror (1973, 342). The data one garners, the 'facts,' result from the sort of question one has asked and they exist in a reciprocal relationship with one's hypothesis, so that the narrator and narrative have a reciprocal and relative relationship. If one acknowledges this, one acknowledges just the thing to which James objects in Trollope: that representation is representation because one's dialogical basis is interpretive rather than transcriptive (Mason 1971, 157; Beer 1980, 133). The microscope, one of the central metaphors of *Middlemarch*, may be seen as posing different hypotheses by altering the strength of the magnification. As Eliot writes:

even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a stronger lens reveals to you certain

tinest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom. In this way, metaphorically speaking, a strong lens applied to Mrs. Cadwallader's match-making will show a play of minute causes producing what may be called thought and speech vortices to bring her the sort of food she needed (58-59).

James's confident assertions about the simple reality of William of Orange and the Duke of Alva and the transcriptive function of the narrator/historian, appear less self-evident, less common-sensical, within the problematized (and amusingly expressed) relation Eliot posits between observer and observed, narrator and narrative. As George Henry Lewes puts this point:

the grandest discoveries, and the grandest applications to practice, have not only outstripped the slow march of Observation, but have revealed by the telescope of Imagination what the microscope of Observation could never have seen, although it may afterwards be employed to verify the vision (1874-1879 Part I vol. 1, 315).

I shall argue that Eliot's narrator functions within *this* discursive frame and not the one which James presents as the only, or natural, way. Because writing is interpretation rather than transcription, it cannot pretend to be 'real,' as James would have it, for "historians have always known that history and the narrative of history could never wholly coincide" (Miller 1974, 461). Miller's point would not be unfamiliar to the pre-Socratic philosophers who make a similar argument which distinguishes event from account. In this long tradition, then, the microscope should not be seen only as technology but also as a metaphor: it provides a structure for one's relationship with reality, and one's representations of that relationship, a metaphor which discriminates against empiricism, in a sense, by de-naturalizing it. The idea of directly apprehended experience suggests a unitary reality. By disclosing another reality, no less real though previously unknown and hidden from the experiencing subject, the microscope posits a pluralistic reality. The microscope's metaphor of seen and unseen interactions then becomes a model which functions in other spheres too. What one experiences as reality, then, is not what is there but what one's metaphors lead one to find.

All this, of course, is anti-positivist. The problem for literary Realism, as for inductivist science, is how to warrant one's claims to uncover laws when one may adduce only

finite examples. Eliot's mirror in *Adam Bede* proposes "a faithful account of men and things" (221), for "*un roman est un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route*" (Stendhal 1973, 342). Eliot's last two texts, however, operate among different discourses. Whewell's dialogical theory cannot accommodate the positivist claims of the early Eliot nor those of Stendhal, however ironic Stendhal may have been. What one sees in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* is something closer to Karl Popper's theory of falsifiability. Under the microscope of the narrator's hypotheses, a finite number of observations are made. From these, conclusions are drawn. But though these conclusions are logically able to be proven false, there is no logical way of proving they are true. Only an infinite number of observations produced by an infinite number of hypotheses would guarantee Eliot's early positivist claims that the text is a "faithful account."

Accordingly, neither *Middlemarch* nor *Daniel Deronda* conforms to the Realist convention of closure. The observations one makes from a given hypothesis either do, or do not, attest to the veracity of the hypothesis. One cannot be vouchsafed a final, complete answer, however. The geology which contends that geological change is continuous, not occasional, and Darwin's evolutionary biology make "every limit . . . a beginning as well as an ending" (Eliot 1986, 818) or, as in the title of *Middlemarch's* last book, make

every sunset the prelude to a sunrise, rather than a closure. Accordingly, it seems unsafe to presume that nineteenth-century novelists thought that Realist closure accurately corresponded to experience. However, a commonly and widely-held view was that novels should be structured teleologically, as Henry James notes:

really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so. He is in the perpetual predicament that the continuity of things is the whole matter, for him, of comedy and tragedy; that this community is never, by the space of an instant or an inch, broken, and that, to do anything at all, he has at once intensely to consult and intensely to ignore it The prime effect of so sustained a system, so prepared a surface, is to lead on and on; while the fascination of following resides, by the same token, in the presumability *somewhere* of a convenient, of a visibly-appointed stopping-place (1969, 11).

This view that fictional experience should be coherent, progressive and teleological is challenged in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. The latter is the only one of Eliot's texts which lacks an after-history, and both novels specifically stress what James says should be suppressed, that "relations stop nowhere": "men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning" (Eliot 1984, 3). Such a stress denies Realist expectations, echoing instead the idea that evolutionary theory is both narrative and a process which is not delimited (Mason 1971, 135; Beer 1980, 133). The apparently 'neutral' mirror in *Adam Bede* is now replaced by an epistemology which, explicitly, derives from science: "who that cares much to know the history of man, and how that mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time" (Eliot 1984, 3).

Eliot is situated within the discourses of classic Realism not only by what might be called Realist critics who, in the main, are disinclined to enquire into the ideology of Realism, but also by post-structuralist critics. Colin MacCabe, in *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, argues that

the classic Realist text should not, however, be understood in terms of some homology to the order of things but as a specific hierarchy of discourses which

places the reader in a position of dominance with regard to the stories and characters. However, this position is only achieved at the cost of a certain fixation, a certain subjection. George Eliot's texts provide an example of this discursive organization (15-16).

Yet, as I have been arguing, there are general grounds for locating *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* among specific contemporaneous scientific discourses whose implications for narrative, as we have seen, conflict with some of the crucial tenets of what has been labelled classic Realism. MacCabe contends that the ideology of Eliot's writing seeks to persuade us that "we have finally abandoned forms to be treated to the simple unravelling of the real" (19). For MacCabe, meta-language does not end until James Joyce's *Dubliners*, but I shall argue here that the critique of Realism which post-structuralism has offered is, in large measure, already present in these two 'Realist' texts.

Like Colin MacCabe, Catherine Belsey, in *Critical Practice*, argues that the ideology of Realism 'valorizes' texts in the following way:

common sense assumes that valuable literary texts, those which are in a special way worth reading, tell truths -- about the period which produced them, about the world in

general or about human nature -- and that in doing so they express the particular perceptions, the individual insights, of their authors (2).

As Belsey demonstrates, this 'natural' or 'unideological' way of reading suppresses a number of assumptions: it assumes that 'truth' is unproblematic for one knows what it is or, at least, one may recognize it when it is expressed by the gifted figure of the artist; that 'truth,' and ideas in general, are anterior to the text; that the individual, and especially the gifted individual such as the artist, perceives experience in a unique way; and that art is the expression of these perceptions. The ideology of Realist texts ('creative' as well as 'critical'), then, is effaced by a number of so-called common-sensical ideas:

common sense proposes a *humanism* based on an *empiricist-idealist* interpretation of the world. In other words, common sense urges that 'man' is the origin and source of meaning, of action, and of history (*humanism*). Our concepts and our knowledge are held to be the product of experience (*empiricism*), and this experience is preceded and interpreted by the mind, reason or thought, the property of a transcendent human nature whose essence is the attribute of each individual (*idealism*)

[Expressive Realism] is the theory that literature reflects the reality of experience as it is perceived by one (especially gifted) individual, who expresses it in a discourse which enables other individuals to recognize it as true (7).

By uniting mimetic theories of art, theories which are at least as old as Aristotle, with two key elements of Romanticism -- the individual as coherent subject and structuring principle, and an expressive theory of language -- Realist texts ('creative' and 'critical') propose that art is mimetic; that it deals with weighty matters; that it conveys the artist's personal response; that it instructs its audience; that language 'expresses' these things.

This position is empiricist in that it assumes that experience alone will reveal the facts of nature, and is idealist in that it assumes that the facts of nature are single, that objects in the world have an essence by which they are distinguished. That being so, the language of literary art transcribes a pre-linguistic truth. The Realist novelist simply provides a form for a story, or for his or her own views on particular moral, metaphysical, social or political matters, or for his or her experiences of a variety of matters. It is assumed that all these things already exist in the writer's mind prior to their expression as language.

Because Realism does not *argue* these points -- rather, these are the assumptions from which Realist texts begin -- it represents these presumptions as somehow 'natural' and 'unideological.' The classic Realist text, then, is one which effaces its own assumptions, presenting its discourse as the 'obvious,' 'common-sensical' way of looking at the world. For post-structuralists, such as Belsey and MacCabe, Eliot's texts come into this category.

It is my intention, in the chapters that follow, to contest these post-structuralist readings of Eliot as a whole. In three domains, language, closure and subjectivity, I shall contend that Eliot's last texts may usefully be situated in the contexts of both specific, contemporaneous scientific discourses, and in the context of contemporary post-structuralist discourses. As I have already argued in general terms, one central idea common to nineteenth-century discourses in comparative anatomy, physiology, geology, evolutionary biology and the philosophy of scientific method, is the function of the observer as co-creator rather than passive consumer. The parallels between this idea and, say, Saussurian and post-Saussurian linguistics, are striking. Saussure argues that language is not transparent, not a passive transcription of the author's already existing views. Instead, he argues that language *produces* meaning -- it does not simply *express* meaning -- by imposing parameters on the

continuum of reality. Language does not reflect experience, like the mirrors in *Adam Bede* and *Le Rouge et le Noir*, but, as with Whewellian hypotheses, language functions dialogically. Accordingly, then, I first propose to examine the language of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in the context of post-Saussurian linguistics and post-structuralist discussions of the parameters of expressive Realism. Next, I examine closure, and contend that in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* one may discover an explicitly anti-Realist accent in which the arbitrariness of both beginnings and endings is emphasized. Where post-structuralists tend to characterize Realism (and thus Eliot) as teleological, I shall argue that these texts imply something much closer to Foucauldian discontinuity. And lastly, I deal with subjectivity. At the heart of the post-structuralist critique of Realism is the charge that the function of ideology in Realist texts is to efface the constructedness of the coherent, autonomous subject. I shall examine how far this is true of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. Once more, by situating these texts in contemporaneous and contemporary discourses, I shall seek to demonstrate that in Eliot's last two texts the subject is problematized in ways which are importantly similar to the ways in which post-structuralists problematize the subject.

One of the 'revolutions' which post-structuralism has effected is the change from the indicative to the

interrogative text, to use Belsey's general terms: the reader is no longer a consumer of the text but its co-creator. Consequently, texts are now taken to be plural, not unitary. Readings of texts, then, must themselves be offered in this interrogative context: the reading of Eliot which I offer here is not intended to replace by erasing Realist readings or to be an implied criticism of Realist practice. Rather, this is simply *another* way of reading Eliot: as with Bach, this is intended to be only one performance, not *the* performance.

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT WORDS MEAN

He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe.

Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, II, iv, 72-73.

Implicit in literary Realism is the classical view of language as a vehicle which transports pre-linguistic experience. To distinguish *Middlemarch's* Dorothea's early enthusiasm for Casaubon from her later disenchantment, David Daiches notes that two of the early images which describe her view of Casaubon are those of the "mine" and the "museum." Initially, "'mine' and 'museum' suggest to Dorothea 'the treasures of past ages' and 'mental wealth.' Later, they suggest burial and fossilisation" (Daiches 1963, 19). In Daiches' view, the images function *expressively* for their

meaning *reflects* Dorothea's views of Casaubon, views which exist extra- or pre-linguistically.

One of the central concerns of modern structural linguistics, however, is the way in which language *makes* meaning. Through an arbitrary, but socially agreed upon, system of signs, language can be thought to re-present experience rather than to reflect it, so that all discourses, however 'objective' or scientific, are seen in fact as interpretations which themselves may be further interpreted. According to this argument, language is neither neutral nor transparent but has its own system of organic, discriminating structural interrelationships -- the processes through which tentative, provisional, social agreements are achieved about the nature of reality -- which themselves *create* distinctions between subject and object, observer and observed. Thus, the categories into which one ordinarily divides experience are possible only in terms of function within structure, not in terms of innate being.¹ In "From Work to Text," Roland

¹ In *Structuralism and Semiotics*, Terence Hawkes presents the view I argue here as follows:

the 'new' [structuralist] perception involved the realization that despite appearances to the contrary the world does not consist of independently existing objects, whose concrete features can be perceived clearly and individually, and whose nature can be classified accordingly. In fact, every perceiver's *method* of perceiving can be shown to contain an inherent bias which affects what is perceived to a significant degree. A wholly objective perception of individual entities is therefore not possible: any observer is bound to *create*

Barthes compares this change in the conceived relation between language and what language figures, to the change from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics:

just as Einsteinian science demands that *the relativity of the frames of reference* be included in the object studied, so the combined action of Marxism, Freudianism and structuralism demands, in literature, the relativization of the relations of writer, reader and observer (critic). Over and against the traditional role of the *work*, for long -- and still -- conceived of in a, so to speak, Newtonian way, there is now the requirement of a new object, obtained by the sliding or overturning of former categories. That object is the *Text* (1987, 156).

Consequently, as Terry Eagleton puts it, it may be

something of what he observes. Accordingly, the *relationship* between observer and observed achieves a kind of primacy. It becomes the only thing that can be observed. It becomes the stuff of reality itself. Moreover the principle involved must invest the whole of reality. In consequence, the true nature of things may be said to lie not in things themselves, but in the relationships which we construct, and then perceive, *between* them (17).

impossible any longer to see reality simply as something 'out there', a fixed order of things which language merely reflected. On that assumption, there was a natural bond between word and thing, a given set of correspondences between the two realms. Our language laid bare for us how the world was, and this could not be questioned. The rationalist or empiricist view of language suffered severely at the hands of structuralism: for if, as Saussure had argued, the relation between sign and referent was an arbitrary one, how could any 'correspondence' theory of knowledge stand? Reality was not reflected by language but *produced* by it: it was a particular way of carving up the world which was deeply dependent on the sign-systems we had at our command, or more precisely which had us at theirs (1983, 107-108).

As I suggested in the previous chapter, similar epistemologies may be seen in the scientific and philosophical intertexts of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, epistemologies which foreground themselves, in which the "process [is] made visible" (Hutcheon 1984, 6). What I propose to do in this chapter is to examine the language of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in post-structuralist terms, having first defined a

position within the discourses of post-structuralism. Saussure's work (and that of many who have followed on from that work) has provided a way of examining language which proves to have a number of epistemological parallels with the intertexts of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

It seems common sense to say that a book is the expression of its author's meaning. However, Saussure "proposes that common sense itself is ideologically and discursively constructed" (Belsey 1980, 3). In assuming that the language of a book merely expresses its writer's anterior meaning, one assumes that the individual is the source of meaning. Saussure, and later Barthes, Lacan, Althusser, Foucault and many others in different ways, question not only language but the autonomy of the humanist subject by arguing that language is not transparent, not a passive mode of transcription of the author's already formed, coherent views. By situating Eliot in the critically conceived discourse of classic Realism, one presumes that in her novels language and the world are ontologically distinct: language describes the world without itself being a part of the world it describes. Instead of this humanist view of language as the expressive tool of the autonomous subject, post-Saussurian theory argues that ideas and their expression are not separate, so that there can be no neutral, simple, direct relationship between

the nature of things and the expression of that reality in texts.

Saussure argues that

psychologically, setting aside its expression in words, our thought is simply a vague, shapeless mass The characteristic role of a language in relation to thought is not to supply the material phonetic means by which ideas may be expressed (1983, 110).

If, indeed, language did merely express objects or ideas which exist pre-linguistically and transculturally, then different words -- from the same language or from different languages -- could express exactly the same thing (Saussure 1983, 114-115). One example Saussure gives to counter this essentialist, expressivist theory is the distinction between the French word *mouton*, and the English word, *sheep*. Because English has the additional word *mutton*, neither of the English words may be said to correspond precisely with the French 'equivalent.' There is, in fact, no 'equivalence' because, although each word may have the same referent, its exact meaning is established by differences within the linguistic system within which it functions.

In this respect, Saussure made a radical departure from earlier theories of meaning. If words do not simply

reflect pre-linguistic concepts which occur naturally, and if, instead, meaning is produced within the linguistic sign system itself, then perhaps one should no longer make appeals to such pre-linguistic normative values as human nature, instinct, intuition or common sense as 'natural' standards against which judgements might be assumed to be made. If words no longer reflect reality or express the autonomous mind, then clearly there are fundamental implications for the concept of novelistic mimesis, or linguistic representation, in Eliot's works.

If one reads Eliot's novels with the assumptions of expressive Realism -- that is, if one assumes that the text is an expression of its author's anterior meaning -- then one cannot but assume that language is transparent, for only transparent language could express pre-linguistic meaning. Accordingly, one would have to accept the idealist belief that meaning, though perhaps complex and even arcane, is ultimately coherent:² the language of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*

² From a psychoanalytic or a deconstructionist point of view the language would not, of course, be coherent at all but would be characterized by inconsistencies from which both the deconstructionist and the psychoanalyst would unravel meanings which might be hidden from the author as well as from the first time reader. These (often incompatible) pluralities of meaning can be explored either in the reader/text relationship -- as is often the case with deconstructionist readings -- or in the author/text relationship -- as is more generally the case with psychoanalytic commentaries. But a distinction needs to be made here between coherence and expressiveness, a distinction which throws light on the Realist view of language which many

commentators, I argue, automatically ascribe to Eliot. Though both the deconstructionist and the psychoanalyst argue that language is characterized by incoherence, they reach that conclusion by different routes. For the deconstructionist, language is incoherent because meaning is created in the productive and obviously plural relations between text and readers: meaning for the deconstructionist lies in the relationship between writing and reader. Accordingly, writing can hardly be the expression of any pre-linguistic state of affairs. A psychoanalytic reader, however, is much more likely to see the text's inconsistencies and incoherencies as exactly expressing a pre-linguistic state of affairs for writing, in this type of reading, will often manifest its author's unconscious.

A Realist reader, reading what is taken to be Realist writing, shares the psychoanalytic view that writing is expressive but, unlike the psychoanalyst, believes that it should (with difficulty, perhaps) be resolved into coherence. Such expressive coherence is possible because there is taken to be what Matthew Arnold, in "The Buried Life," calls the "genuine self" by which he means a self which lies deeper than the self one presents to the world at large, deeper than the self one ordinarily conceives oneself to be, but which is always there, whether known or not, and fixed in the sense that it lies deeper than the influences of fluctuating fashions and experiences. In the river imagery of "The Buried Life," this is what Arnold calls the "true, original course." The aim of enquiry for Arnold is not just teleological but also singular because coherent: though he certainly does not minimize the difficulties of both knowing who one really is nor of finding words for that knowledge -- "Alas! is even love too weak / To unlock the heart and let it speak? / Are even lovers powerless to reveal / To one another what indeed they feel?" -- he does believe that there is a single, coherent self there to be found, one which can be expressed in words:

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth forever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

It is Arnold's views about expressiveness and coherence which I wish to challenge in relation to Eliot for I believe it is Arnold's views which, to a significant degree, inform the assumptions of many Realist readers of Eliot's writing.

would only be a guide to their meaning, for their meaning, truly, lies elsewhere, in the author's mind, or in the judgements of contemporaneous (or later) readers. But, as Saussure points out, the relation between the word, the signifier, and the concept, the signified, is structural and so systemic. Words assume their meanings by their differences from other words, not from their correspondences with their referents. Saussure illustrates this point by the analogy of the chess board:

consider a knight in chess. Is the piece by itself an element of the game? Certainly not. For as a material object, separated from its square on the board and the other conditions of play, it is of no significance for the player. It becomes a real, concrete element only when it takes on or becomes identified with its value in the game. Suppose that during a game this piece gets destroyed or lost. Can it be replaced? Of course it can. Not only by some other knight, but even by an object of quite a different shape, which can be counted as a knight, provided it is assigned the same value as the missing piece. Thus it can be seen that in semiological systems, such as languages, where the elements keep one another in a state of equilibrium

in accordance with fixed rules, the notions of identity and value merge (108-109).

Saussure's analogy here shows that linguistic identity is determined by function. One may compare this with Bichat's arguments for organic interdependence as outlined in the previous chapter. Similarly, Whewell's concept of the imaginative hypothesis foregrounds the active role of the means by which observations are made and, by implication, disputes the inductive ideal of transparent objectivity. Saussurian linguistics, equally, foreground the characteristics of the medium, in this case language. What one may see in common among the writings of Bichat, Whewell and Saussure -- and what one may also see in Eliot's writing -- is an awareness of the active function of the medium. In Roland Barthes' sense of the word, their epistemologies are "healthy" in that they draw attention to themselves; they de-mythologise themselves, de-naturalise themselves, and in so doing postulate that their texts are plural because they are processes. Meaning is situated in the interchange between reader and text, for meaning, function and identity, whether in physiology or language, may be understood only within the relativity of structure.

Instead of presuming that the language of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* is the expression of a single, coherent, anterior meaning, alternatively one may begin with the hypothesis that "the meaning of a word is its use in language" (Wittgenstein 1968, 43). And if meaning is linguistic, not pre-linguistic, then texts cannot be autonomous and unitary, but must be plural because readers are plural. Again, in Barthes's terms, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* offer *jouissance*.³

It is a commonplace that both Casaubon and his universalist idea of a "Key to All Mythologies" are treated ironically in *Middlemarch*. But Casaubon is a good place to begin an examination of the text's language for the irony with which he is treated may seem characteristic of conventional Realist practice when, in

³ In both "From Work to Text" and in *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes makes a distinction between what he calls *plaisir* and *jouissance*, a distinction which is really one between two ways of reading, not two types of writing. *Plaisir* (pleasure) is the enjoyment one receives from consumption and so stems from a passive view of the act of reading, a view which derives from a notion of writing as something already complete prior to the reader reading it. *Plaisir* results when reading is ingestion. *Jouissance* (bliss, but in the qualified, post-coital sense that Aristotle has in mind in the phrase *post coitum triste*, and so bliss with a sense of loss) is produced through an exchange between reader and writing, one which Barthes represents through a sexual analogy. The productive interplay between the reader's and the text's discourses in the process of reading generates a pleasure akin to that in sexual foreplay in the sense that it is discursive.

fact, it points not only at Casaubon's limitations but also at those of the narration itself:

poor Mr. Casaubon had imagined that his long studious bachelorhood had stored up for him a compound interest of enjoyment, and that large drafts on his affections would not fail to be honoured; for we all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of them (84).

Initially, this passage may seem written from the perspective of a conventional, omniscient, Realist narrator within a hierarchy of discourses which 'places' the erring, limited vision of a character by means of a language appropriate to that character. By the financial metaphor, the reader is invited to see Casaubon's mistaken notion that there is a positive, causal relationship between past emotional austerity and future emotional plenty. But the narration is also unmistakably self-reflexive; to point out that metaphor may mislead by using one of the novel's central metaphors -- the financial one -- cannot but throw into question the whole idea of money as a neutral, cohering focus for the text's meaning. The language of this novel is, of course, metaphorical, like all language; although the narrative may appear omniscient, if that perspective is linguistically based (as of course it is),

then instead of an omniscient reflection of an objective, external reality, what we have is a linguistic shaping of experience. The metaphor *produces* the meaning rather than simply expressing it.

By equating the emotional life with the financial life through metaphor, Casaubon is mistakenly led to assume that, if the two may be compared in one respect, then one may apply the banker's law to one's marriage. *Middlemarch* as a whole is "concerned with bringing to the surface the implicit values by which people live their lives: within the plot the medium of evaluations is, over and over again, money" (Beer 1987, 48). Interpreting the new inevitably requires one to assimilate it through the old and familiar, so that in describing (and indeed perceiving) the unfamiliar, one may use the bridge of a metaphor between what is familiar and what is strange. Here, Casaubon uses what, to him, is the familiar language of money ("interest" and "drafts") to gain admission to the strange world of marriage. However, the currency is not valid because there is no universal currency, no universal significance to any signifier: "values remain entirely a matter of internal relations" (Saussure 1983, 111).

This problematizes the idea of a metadiscourse, whether it be that of a cohering metaphor or that of narrative perspective. The notion of universality, of Realist conspectus, depends on the neutrality of the measuring

devices: in this instance, *money* would have to function as a constant against which certain variables may be compared. However, if the upshot of the comparison is that *money* is shown to be innately meaningless and only derives its meaning contextually, then clearly it cannot be an objective constant: "signs . . . function not according to their intrinsic value but in virtue of their relative position" (Saussure 1983, 116). Realist conspectus also depends on the ontological distinction between narrator and character, between teller and tale, and that separation may be effected only within a hierarchy of discourses.

A hierarchy of discourses effects authorial authority. Inverted commas distinguish dialogue from the author's (authoritative) exposition of all that lies beneath and beyond the dialogue, of the meaning beyond what is merely apparent. Benveniste's distinction between "discourse" and "history," where history narrates events without the intercession of a speaker, is again useful here for in "history" there is neither "you" nor "I" (1971, 205-215). Discourse, on the other hand, requires both a speaker and a listener (reader), for it is dialogue. In discourse only the speaker has full access to the 'truth': the speech within inverted commas and the reader are subordinated in a hierarchy of discourses. Paradoxically, only by concealing its condition as discourse - that is, by seeming to be history through the means Henry

James proposed in relation to Trollope -- can discourse pretend to authoritativeness. By neglecting its own textuality, and thus its constructedness, discourse appears natural, ideologically neutral, impersonal, and so able to promulgate (tacitly) the ideology of the single 'right' interpretation:

through the presentation of an intelligible history which effaces its own status as discourse, classic realism proposes a model in which author and reader are subjects who are the source of shared meanings, the origin of which is mysteriously extra-discursive. It thus does the work of ideology in suppressing the relationship between language and subjectivity (Belsey 1980, 72).

According to this model, then, the passage I am examining would stop at the semi-colon after "honoured" if it were to conform with classic Realism. If it did, one would have a hierarchy of discourses in which Casaubon's indirect speech, like direct speech, would appear "entangled in metaphors" while the discourse which reports it would masquerade as "history," thereby "suppressing the relationship between language and subjectivity." However, instead of effacing its discursive status, instead of effacing the "you" and "I," the text insists that "we all of us, grave or light,

get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of them." The narrator's discourse and that of Casaubon are not ontologically distinct: both are determined by linguistic structures because both, of course, are language.

This subverts one of the central functions of irony in the Realist hierarchy of discourses for "irony judges The pragmatic function of irony . . . is one of signalling evaluation, most frequently of a pejorative nature" (Hutcheon 1985, 53). Such irony depends on distance from the object of irony, and distinction between the character's discourse and the narrator's history. Here, though Casaubon is the butt of narrative irony, it is an inclusive irony whose purpose not only transcends Realist judgement but subverts the linguistic basis for judgement by exposing, instead of suppressing, the "relationship between language and subjectivity."

The influential American linguist Edward Sapir argues, indeed, that there can be no knowable objective reality and that there cannot be any system of representing reality which cannot itself be interpreted:

human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of

expression of their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community pre-dispose certain choices of interpretation (1949, 162).

The way in which language pre-disposes interpretation in a world in which "space and time is in fact a continuum, without firm and irrevocable boundaries or divisions" (Hawkes 1977, 31) is, overtly, foregrounded in *Middlemarch*:

he [Lydgate] came again in the evening to speak with Mr. Vincy, who, just returned from Stone Court, was feeling sure that it would not be long before he heard of Mr. Featherstone's demise. The felicitous word "demise,"

which had seasonably occurred to him, had raised his spirits even above their usual evening pitch. The right word is always a power, and communicates its definiteness to our action. Considered as a demise, old Featherstone's death assumed a merely legal aspect, so that Mr. Vincy could tap his snuff-box over it and be jovial, without even an intermittent affectation of solemnity; and Mr. Vincy hated both solemnity and affectation. Who was ever awe-struck about a testator, or sang a hymn on the title to real property? (295).

Vincy anticipates Featherstone's "demise." The legal term associatively suggests other legal words, "testator" and "real property." Vincy is neither hypocritical nor avaricious: quite clearly, he does not choose his words to conceal his meaning; his language pre-disposes his interpretation. The words "seasonably occurred to him"; they were not sought. Had the word "death" occurred to him, seasonably or not, the associations would have been different, Eliot implies. Language fashions perception so that the same event may be an occasion for sorrow and reflections on mortality, or a cheering prospect as it is here for Mr. Vincy. The 'true' character of the event does not exist, for the event in question is really linguistic. As Sapir says, "the 'real world' is to a large extent built up on the language habits of

the group" so that language makes the world instead of passively reproducing it. If Sapir is correct in his creative, formative model for the relation between languages, in general, and the world they differently represent, then it may also be true that within a given language register produces meaning rather than echoing it.

Naturally, this applies equally to spoken and written language. As Eliot writes in the novel:

who shall tell what may be the effect of writing? If it happens to have been cut in stone, though it lie face downmost for ages on a forsaken beach, or "rest quietly under the drums and tramlings of many conquests," it may end by letting us into the secret of usurpations and other scandals gossiped about long empires ago: -- this world being apparently a huge whispering-gallery. Such conditions are often minutely represented in our petty lifetimes. As the stone which has been kicked by generations of clowns may come by curious little links of effect under the eyes of a scholar, through whose labours it may at last fix the date of invasions and unlock religions, so a bit of ink and paper which has long been an innocent wrapping or stop-gap may at last be laid open under the one pair of eyes which have knowledge enough to turn it into a catastrophe. To Uriel watching the

progress of planetary history from the Sun, the one result would be just as much of a coincidence as the other (402).

McSweeney finds this passage "arch," "laboured," and "infelicitous" (1984, 126). He regards it as an unsuccessful attempt to obfuscate what he views as the crude, inappropriate series of coincidences which culminates in the note in the brandy-flask which brings Raffles to Bulstrode. In this reading, the unattributed quotation, the reference to Milton's Uriel, and the image of the whispering-gallery, appear merely "factitious," or even "flashy but non-substantive displays of erudition" (1984, 126).

If one agrees with McSweeney that the object of this passage, its referent, is the note in the brandy-flask, then it would be difficult to disagree with him that the tone is, indeed, overblown. But, while accepting that the note is the immediate referent, one need not see it as the only one. The passage represents language in effective, not expressive terms: indeed, the noun "effect" is stressed by appearing twice. The interrogative which begins the passage -- "who shall tell what may be the effect of writing?" -- does, certainly, refer specifically to the power Raffles has over Bulstrode. In that the reader is, as yet, unaware of the earlier relationship between Bulstrode and Raffles, it is

literally true that one is unaware of the eventual effects of the piece of writing which brings Raffles back to Bulstrode.

But the interrogative may have a larger referent, too: the text as a whole. It, of course, is a piece of writing which may "lie face downmost for ages" and which, to later eyes, may have an effect which could not have been foretold at the time of its composition. The Miltonic reference may now seem more apposite. As McSweeney notes, Milton's Uriel, in *Paradise Lost*, is "regent of the sun" (III, 690), and is "the sharpest sighted spirit of all in heaven" (III, 691). One may read the allusion both in terms of the immediate reference to Raffles and Bulstrode, and in terms of the larger textual self-reflexivity.

There is an immediate parallel between the context of the Uriel scene in *Paradise Lost* and this scene in *Middlemarch*. At the end of Book III of *Paradise Lost* Satan, in disguise, asks Uriel where God's new creation, man, is to be found. Not recognizing Satan, Uriel directs him to the Earth. Satan is "the false dissembler unperceived" (III, 681); "the fraudulent imposter foul" (III, 692). Uriel is not blamed for his ignorant trust in his interlocutor:

For neither man nor angel can discern
Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
Invisible, except to God alone,

By His permissive will, through heaven and earth

(III, 682-685)

for "goodness thinks no ill/Where no ill seems" (III, 688-689). The comparison between Bulstrode's dissembling and hypocrisy and Satan's is surely more than coincidence. Equally plain is the difficulty of detecting Bulstrode.

But the allusion to Milton also functions in relation to textual self-reflexivity. *Paradise Lost*, after all, is a piece of writing which has, as its principal intertext another piece of writing, the Bible. Within the Bible, of course, there is a very familiar piece of writing which "happens to have been cut in stone," and the Bible is perhaps the supreme example of the problematic "effect of writing." Milton in his blindness can 'see' what Uriel, from the sun, cannot see and this paradoxical, complex relationship between 'light' and 'knowledge' is one which, as I shall argue later, is taken up in *Middlemarch*. The series of representations within representations, of writing within writing, points to the unavoidability of intertextuality and functions within the general subversion of Stendhalian, Realist reflection in *Middlemarch*. The passage not only looks to the uncertain effects of the note in the brandy-flask, but also to its own uncertain effects as a piece of writing.

The uncertainty depends upon a non-Realist theory of the text. Writing is posited as an effective, and so plural, practice. Contrary to Realist essentialism, and contrary to the notion of pre-linguistic expressivism, the text is here represented as functioning within, not above, subsequent unknown discourses. In Foucauldian terms, there is a genealogy of meaning, for the text is neither expressive nor metalinguistic. Indeed, one might compare this model of complex interdependence with the complex interdependencies which are represented in the novel in the much-discussed image of the "web," as we shall see shortly. Here, I would like instead to focus on one example of the sort of complex chain of social consequences which is also figured in *Middlemarch* as a web.

In *Middlemarch* characters are repeatedly victims or beneficiaries of events whose causes are distant. To say that Mary Garth is spared schoolteaching because Sir James is disturbed about Brooke going into politics makes sense only when one traces the social genealogy. By the device of Celia's indisposition, Sir James lures Dorothea to Freshitt where he tells her of her uncle's schemes and the public humiliation he, Sir James, anticipates for Brooke because Brooke's land has been so badly neglected since Caleb Garth was fired. Dorothea then inveigles her uncle to consider Caleb Garth's employment, a consideration made more urgent by

Mr. Dagley haranguing Brooke. Sir James then writes to Garth offering him the management of his own, and Brooke's estates, which employment relieves Mary of the need to earn £35 *per annum* as a schoolteacher. Written out like this, the plot sounds Jesuitical: in the text it is not only believable but typical of the interconnected social reality of *Middlemarch*.

A complex chain of social consequences, such as this, is of course one of the conventional characteristics of many bulky nineteenth-century novels. What is distinctive here is that this text which describes a web of interdependencies does so self-reflexively. Instead of delineating an inclusive web of complex interdependence from an external metalinguistic position -- an idea which is surely fraught with paradox -- the whole passage, from the opening interrogative -- "who shall . . .["] -- discriminates against the primacy of the singular, expressivist author-text relationship by favouring the plural reader-text relationship. This serves to situate the writing itself in a web of (future) interdependence. In the same way as Sir James cannot foresee the ultimate result of his ploy, so the writer cannot tell "what may be the effect of writing." Or, to use Saussurian terms which again are apposite, the text represents a synchronic web while, itself, anticipates being part of a diachronic web.

But for this diachronic aspect, indeed, it would be difficult to see why the grandiose historical and cosmic

comparisons are there. If the passage simply introduced the epistolary exchanges between Rigg and Bulstrode, the allusions to "'drums and tramlings of many conquests,'" "Uriel," and "planetary history" would indeed be somewhat inappropriate and overblown. But, in the same way that Bichat's work proposes that organic identity is defined by function rather than innately, so one may see here a similar argument about textual identity. This text, *Middlemarch*, traces the uncertain and certainly unintended effects of Rigg's writing: it is not likely that it would, at the same time, assert that its own effects were both certain and intended.

The uncertain effects of writing are similarly presented in *Daniel Deronda* where, appropriately, the distinction between representation and reality is made through scientific and medical metaphors:

perspective, as its inventor remarked, is a beautiful thing. What horrors of damp huts, where human beings languish, may not become picturesque through aerial distance! What hymning of cancerous vices may we not languish over as sublimist art in the safe remoteness of a strange language and artificial phrase! Yet we keep a repugnance to rheumatism and other painful effects when presented in our personal experience (140).

One might say that the literary equivalent of perspective is distancing metaphor. As Peter Brooks argues,

transformation -- a change in a predicate term common to beginning and end -- represents a synthesis of difference and resemblance; it, we might say, is the same-but-different. Now, "the same-but-different" is a common . . . definition of metaphor (1984, 91).

Like perspective, metaphor can be a beautiful thing which makes something picturesque through distance. Equally, it may be a strange language or an artificial phrase. But the resemblances, the sameness and differences, are not simply linguistic. Perspective also enables the viewer to look upon horror which, in reality, would be intolerable, or so it has been argued since Aristotle. Aristotle says that "we enjoy looking at the most accurate representations of things which in themselves we find painful to see" (1965, 35). Aristotle, of course, is discussing the question of representation in general. But representation may be equated with metaphor in the sense that artistic re-presentation is always a repetition of something else, and so to some extent it is the same as something else, but because what is represented is now over and the art is not, to that extent it is different. Again, as Peter Brooks argues, "narrative always makes the implicit

claim to be in a state of repetition, as a going over again of a ground already covered" (1984, 97). This means that the ending must be known before one knows where the narrative begins. But equally,

narrative operates as metaphor in its affirmation of resemblance, in that it brings into relation different actions, combines them through perceived similarities . . . appropriates them to a common plot, which implies the rejection of merely contingent (or unassimilable) incident or action. The plotting of meaning cannot do without metaphor, for meaning in plot is the structure of action in closed and legible wholes (Brooks 1984, 91).

Scientific perspective, like metaphor, is intimately involved in the creation of the truths it expresses, truths which may have a transcendental being certainly, but that transcendental being is not what diligent research discovers. Scientific enquiry, as much as literary enquiry, is shaped by the forms in which it is expressed.

With that in mind, there are four metaphors I should like to examine in *Middlemarch*: fabric, the web, the pier-glass, and the microscope. Each is central to the text's self-reflexiveness, for in each one may see an insistence on the idea that the text is invention rather than discovery.

One already finds something of that idea, indeed, in *The Mill on the Floss*:

it is astonishing what a different result one gets by changing the metaphor! Once call the brain an intellectual stomach, and one's ingenious conception of the classics and geometry as ploughs and harrows seems to settle nothing. But then it is open to someone else to follow great authorities, and call the mind a sheet of white paper or a mirror, in which case one's knowledge of the digestive process becomes quite irrelevant. It was doubtless an ingenious idea to call the camel the ship of the desert, but it would hardly lead one far in training that useful beast. O Aristotle! if you had had the advantage of being "the freshest modern" instead of the greatest ancient, would you not have mingled your praise of metaphorical speech, as a sign of high intelligence, with a lamentation that intelligence so rarely shows itself in speech without a metaphor, -- that we can so seldom declare what a thing is, except by saying it is something else? (1980, 123).

In this passage, there is the Platonic ideal, or perhaps hope, that one should be able to say what a thing is, difficult though that might be. Language, even in this early passage,

though, is not offered as a transparent medium. By representing, one re-presents.

Stendhal's familiar simile of the mirror became a commonplace of the supposedly amoral, passive nature of Realist mimesis. Accordingly, the images of reflection in *Middlemarch* are especially important. Dorothea's friends' unfavourable views of Casaubon as a prospective husband are reflected, in a double sense, by the image of a mirror:

I am not sure that the greatest man of his age, if ever that solitary superlative existed, could not escape these unfavourable reflections of himself in various small mirrors; and even Milton, looking for his portrait in a spoon, must submit to have the facial angle of a bumpkin (1986, 82-83).

Blessington reads this as no more than the narrative's judgement on the small-mindedness of *Middlemarch*, a parochialism which would reduce even Milton to comic insignificance (1986, 30). Engelmeyer, though she reads the portrait in a spoon as a way of redeeming Casaubon, agrees with Blessington that the image presents "small-town limited vision" (1987, 103). While there is, no doubt, something of that sort here, the imagery ("reflections," "small mirrors," "portrait") is also associated with the image of the pier-

glass and the notion of egocentric perspective as an inescapable epistemology, as the close of the paragraph makes still clearer: "Mr. Casaubon, too, was the centre of his own world" (1986, 83). The mirror is at once the way one is perceived by others and, in a literal sense, the medium in which one perceives oneself, as Casaubon's egocentricity shows. The (pejorative) narcissistic associations of the mirror underline the vanity of Casaubon's self-image as the author of the "Key to All Mythologies."⁴ Yet, because those who reflect Casaubon would give even Milton the appearance of a "bumpkin," the apparent objectivity of the reflections is subverted. It is not that the reflections are 'wrong,' because they emanate from a provincial, small town, any more than they are 'right': they are encoded representations of a three-dimensional subject in a two-dimensional reversed image, and so are already an interpretation, not a transcription.

⁴ One reason why Casaubon may be satirized here is that his enterprise is essentially Realist in a tradition going back as far as Plato via the medieval French philosopher William of Champeaux and the Neoplatonist Porphyry. As Betty Radice argues,

Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* . . . raises the question of universals, or general and abstract terms If you and I and all of us are human, i.e. we belong to the human species, does anything exist which is humanity independent of the individuals who belong to the species? . . . William of Champeaux headed the . . . faction known as Realism. Following Plato and the Neoplatonist Porphyry, the Realists believed in the actual existence outside awareness of abstract ideas -- Plato's Forms or Ideas (1974, 12).

The basis of each re-presentation is partiality: for Dorothea, Casaubon is the "occasion which had set alight the fine inflammable material of her youthful illusions" (82); Mrs. Cadwallader views Casaubon's industry as a tacit comment on her husband's fondness for fishing; Sir James sees Casaubon as a rival; to Brooke, Casaubon jealously withholds his ideas, while Celia cannot imagine so unattractive a man as a husband. This far, one might compare the metaphor here with the passage from *The Mill on the Floss*, but where the earlier passage implied that ideal meaning was distorted by metaphor (though of course it could in theory be expressed), the notion of such an accessible ideal is here discarded:

an eminent philosopher among my friends, who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science, has shown me this pregnant little fact. Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles around that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a

concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent (1986, 258).

N.N. Feltes suggests that the "eminent philosopher" may be Herbert Spencer (1969, 70), a view which Paxton follows (1991, 173). Equally, the philosopher may be Lewes himself, as Hilda M. Hulme notes (1967, 123). Spencer, perhaps following Ruskin, discusses epistemological difficulties by using the example of the moon's reflection on water (Feltes 1969, 70). Lewes, in an article on Spinoza, uses a mirror image from Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* to repudiate Spinoza's view that perception and the thing perceived are one:

it is obvious that, to know things which are *beyond* appearances, . . . which transcend the sphere of sense -- we must know them as they are, . . . and not as they are *under the conditions of sense*. Spinoza at once pronounces that we can so know them. He says: whatever I clearly know is true; true not merely in reference to my conception of it, but in reference to the thing known. In other words, the mind is a mirror reflecting things as they are Now this doctrine, forced upon Des Cartes and Spinoza, and implied in the very nature of

their inquiries . . . mistakes a relative truth for a universal one. There can be no doubt that -- *as regards myself* -- consciousness is the clear and articulate voice of truth; but it by no means follows, therefore, that -- *as regards not-self* -- consciousness is a perfect mirror reflecting what it is, *as it is*. To suppose the mind such a mirror, is obviously to take a metaphor for a fact. "The human understanding" as one of the greatest thinkers finely said "is like an unequal mirror the rays of things, *which, mixing its own nature with the nature of things, distorts and perverts them* [Lewes' emphasis] (1843, 398-399).

Lewes is plainly on the same side as Berkeley, Hume and Kant in their varying repudiations of the Lockean model of perception in the *tabula rasa*. In itself, that is not remarkable in the 1840s. What is particularly interesting, in this context, is the way Lewes expresses his view in terms of mirrors and metaphors, for in *Middlemarch* too, Spinoza's view that the means of perception are transparent is rejected. The crucial idea inherent in Stendhal's passively reflective conception of Realism and Realist language is neutral objectivity: like Mill's inductive science and Arnold's ideal reading, Stendhal's Realism transcribes *what is there*. It can do this, of course, because the medium of transcription,

language, is transparent. Consequently, egocentricity as an epistemology must in Realist terms be pejorative, much as Whelwellian hypothesizing is viewed pejoratively by the inductive scientist.

However, that is not the argument presented in the parable of the pier-glass and the candle. Certainly the parable does not doubt that the ideal, perhaps in the Platonic sense or perhaps in Kant's sense, exists ontologically. As both Hardy (1959, 224) and Feltes (1969, 71) note, the 'fact' that the scratches are random is stressed at the outset of the passage. But, I would suggest, ontology is not the issue. Spinoza, Stendhal, Lewes, Spencer and Eliot are concerned with the *relationship* between an assumed ideal reality and the representations of it in discourse. And for Eliot, as for Lewes, "the mind does not contemplate forms as the eye sees them . . . the mind is not *apart* from its perceptions, but that it *is the perceptions* -- that a perception is a *state of the percipient*, and that the mind is the collective unity of these various states"(Lewes 1843, 339).⁵ This being so, to say that perception is egocentric is redundant because it is

⁵ This idea continues to be discovered from time to time. For example, Philip Larkin responds warmly to a similar concept presented by Clive James. Rarely impressed by Eng. Lit. criticism, Larkin singles out James's work in *The Metropolitan Critic* as an exception to the rule: "just now and again James says something really penetrating: 'originality is not just an ingredient of poetry, it is poetry' -- I've been feeling that for years" (1992, 506).

tautological. In the parable of the pier-glass and the candle, it is equally tautological to say that the candle represents an egocentric mind because, unless one accepts Spinoza's view, the congruence of mind and perception necessitates that there must be a distinction between self and not-self.

The mirror, as it is in itself, is distinct from the mirror as it is perceived. This is not an ethical issue to which praise or blame may be attached. The mirror in itself is incoherent and unordered. All minds, it is implied in the parable, naturally impose coherent meaning. David Daiches (1963, 23) and Bernard J. Paris (1965, 129) argue that the mirror is simply an image of egotism. At one level, of course, that is true, but left at that it is also misleading. If one understands this egocentricity simply as the pejorative antonym of objectivity then one must also accept Spinoza's notion that language transparently represents things as they are. If it did, egocentricity would be a misuse of that language. But in the parable, the candle-as-mind always *imposes* a coherent, ordered meaning upon the chaos of the mirror: that is not a choice it makes, not a deliberate act of egocentricity, but a *characteristic* of perception and representation. To say that perception and representation themselves characteristically impose meaning is, of course, quite a different idea from Stendhal's conception of Realist

reflection of innate meaning. As McGovern argues, "we are told the meaning of what we see, but only as the individual persona of the narrator perceives that meaning, and it is the *process* of interpretation, rather than the end result, which seems of most importance to her" (1987, 7).

One qualification should be made, however. *Middlemarch* does not eschew all concern with distinctions between the sort of egocentricity which is the inevitable consequence of the partiality inherent in perception, and an egocentricity which, more conventionally, is simply selfishness. Much of this topic falls under the rubric of subjectivity, and will be discussed later in that context. Epistemologically, however, the distinction between, on the one hand, Rosamond, Casaubon, Featherstone and Bulstrode, and, on the other hand, Mary Garth and Dorothea at the close of the novel, is that the former group (like Spinoza) presumes there is no discrepancy between perception and its object, whereas the latter group (like Lewes) recognizes that mind and perception are one. That is not to say that Mary Garth and Dorothea are objective: there is no other means to knowledge except through the candle's interpreting light. By being conscious of partiality, Mary and Dorothea are not impartial.

The relationship between light and knowledge in the image of the pier-glass functions extensively throughout the

text. Sometimes light is used in a conventional contrast with darkness:

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 (382).

But, as one might expect from the pier-glass image, the confident, simple polarity of this contrast is undermined by less unambiguous collocations of light with knowledge:

since the time was gone by for guiding visions and spiritual directors, since prayer heightened yearning but not instruction, what lamp was there but knowledge? (85).

Quite obviously, this association of light with knowledge, like Farebrother's description of Lydgate as "the new medical light," derives from science's challenge to religion in so many areas of nineteenth-century thought. There is more than a trace of irony in the tone here, partly because the immediate referent is Casaubon, and perhaps in part because Eliot herself (in 1859, at any rate) found some scientific accounts less affective than her earlier sense of enigma: "to

me the Development theory and all other explanations of processes by which things came to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery that lies under the processes" (*The George Eliot Letters* 3, 227). When Eliot first read *The Origin of Species*, as is clear in the above quotation, "she continued to feel a longing, if not for the transcendent, at least for the numinous, the incandescent, the mysterious" (Beer 1975, 91). But in *Middlemarch*, which began publication twelve years later, scientific knowledge itself is problematized and no longer may, simply, be set against the "numinous, the incandescent, the mysterious."

The irony in the light image in the above quotation derives primarily, it is true, from the immediate context: "surely learned men kept the only oil; and who more learned than Mr. Casaubon?" (85). But, as the pier-glass analogy implies, knowledge is not simple, and simple distinctions between right and wrong knowledge, between Bichat and Casaubon, say, would themselves be too simple, as the related light image discussed earlier makes clear: "the conception wrought out by Bichat, with his detailed study of the different tissues, acted necessarily on medical questions as the turning on of gas-light would act on a dim, oil-lit street" (145). It is not the rectitude of Bichat's "conception" which is important, nor its status as absolute knowledge. It is the way the conception acted upon medical

thinking which, truly, constitutes his contribution to 'knowledge,' for knowledge is not represented in terms of propositional logic. In R. G. Collingwood's words: "the meaning of a proposition is relative to the question it answers, its truth must be relative to the same thing" (1978, 33). Bichat's contribution to knowledge is not that he discovered something which is 'true' but that, in Whewellian terms, his hypothesis acted beneficially. Knowledge is thus dialogical for it is a *process*, a process in which the question is part of the answer: "by 'right' I do not mean 'true.'" The 'right' answer to a question is the answer which enables us to get ahead with the process of questioning and answering. Cases are quite common in which the 'right' answer to a question is 'false'" (Collingwood 1978, 37).

This is a much more complex view of knowledge than that inherent in most theories of Realist reflection. The images of light and reflection in *Middlemarch* problematize knowledge in two ways: knowledge is temporalized in notions of development (gas-lit/oil-lit); and knowledge is made specific because dependent on the mind which, candle-like, is not distinct from perceptions which impose, rather than recognize, order and meaning. Knowledge is thus historical, not timeless; specific, not universal. And because knowledge exists only in representation -- which is to say, as language (and so in metaphor) -- then one may say that knowledge in

Middlemarch is presented as a linguistically determined representation of a perception which is partial, a perception of what is taken to be ideal reality. This has obvious implications for the knowledge represented by *Middlemarch* itself. In the image of the pier-glass, knowledge is produced by a particular set of relations. That is, knowledge cannot be understood outside the conditions of its production. Like Whewellian hypothesizing, where one answers a particular question from the partial perspective of a hypothesis, the pier-glass too offers meaning but a meaning contingent upon the candle, the mind of the observer. In this way, the parable offers an image of knowledge as invention rather than discovery, an image far from any conventional Realist doctrine. For the Realist, the observer's function is passive, recording the passing show on Stendhal's country road, never betraying (as Henry James insists) any active function at all. But in this central image of *Middlemarch*, the observer is an overt creator of meaning in a structure of relations which determine knowledge.

This is an idea which, quite clearly, has fundamental implications for such Realist concepts as authenticity, identity and autonomy. The image of "fabric" is one place where one can see some of these implications:

who can know how much of his inward life is made up of the thoughts he believes other men to have about him, until that fabric of opinion is threatened with ruin? (677).

Fabric is created, produced, and its character, or identity -- its texture and strength -- depends on the *relation* of its parts. It is what it is by virtue of those relations. To use the distinction between associationism and organicism which concerned Bichat and Bernard, a piece of fabric is not formed by the association of lots of small pieces of fabric. Rather it is formed of threads -- or, in the medical analogy, the organs are formed of tissues, as Bichat thought -- so that it would be no more sensible to call a thread a small piece of fabric than it would be to call a tissue a small piece of organ. Identity, whether it is Bulstrode's, as here, or in the larger sense of subjectivity, is not, therefore, something to be expressed by an autonomous subject: "the self in *Middlemarch* is not a predefined entity that determines action, but, like the social organism, is only a product of the convergence of forces" (Shuttleworth 1984, 160). But the image of the fabric itself, equally, does not function expressively; it does not just carry the meaning which the reader adduces. The image not only *is* language itself, but refers to language. Like fabric, language is composed, not of

small pieces of language, each of which is meaningful in itself, but of sounds, letters and concepts whose significance is congruent with their function: meaning in language is also determined by virtue of relations. Not surprisingly, then, the image which subverts the idea of meaning as the expression of the coherent, autonomous subject, functions self-reflexively by foregrounding the conditions of its own meaning.

What applies to individual identity also applies to textual structure. The apparent omniscience of the narrator is undermined by metaphors which subvert that omniscience, for omniscience must be predicated on independence, and therefore on coherent autonomy, notions which are themselves problematized in the text. Repeatedly, 'prejudiced' perspectives clash with 'objective' ones. The selection of a Chaplain for the new fever hospital is a case in point. Lydgate has two 'objective' views which are disturbed by this procedure. The first is upset by Farebrother's social gambling which undermines Farebrother's independence, in Lydgate's view. Independence is crucial to the second ideal too, for Lydgate "did not like frustrating his own best purposes by getting on bad terms with Bulstrode" (175). These "best purposes" are his scientific research interests. To Lydgate, these are more important than Middlemarch politics. Quite possibly they may be of more importance to posterity,

too, but they are not more important to those engaged in parochial politics: "for the first time Lydgate was feeling the hampering threadlike pressure of small social conditions" (176). Through this implied metaphor of fabric, subjectivity is continuously determined by the social conditions of its production:

thus it happened that on this occasion Bulstrode became identified with Lydgate, and Lydgate with Tyke; and owing to this variety of interchangeable names for the chaplaincy question, diverse minds were enabled to form the same judgement concerning it (178).

The issue is not the worth of Lydgate's ideals, not in an abstract sense at any rate. His ideals are, in practical terms, worthless if they cannot be enacted, and it is the process (once more) of enacting these ideals, rather than the ideals themselves, which the novel examines. Lydgate assumes that his worthwhile goals have a pure existence, independent of any imperfect manifestation in enactment and independent of their conditions of production. But as one's perception is shaped by one's hypothesis, by the "question we ask nature" (Gombrich 1981, 321), so the questions themselves, the ideals, are products of past interactions between hypotheses and experience, in this case between Lydgate and his reading of

Bichat. The ideals, like fabric, do not spring into fully formed being directly from primordial chaos, but are shaped as much as they shape. As Raymond Williams says:

to discover a network, to feel human connection in what is essentially a knowable community, is to assert (I mean assert creatively, produce as an experience) a particular social value: a necessary interdependence. But to discover a web or a tangle is to see human relationships as not only involving but compromising, limiting, mutually frustrating. And this is of course a radically different consciousness; in fact the first phase of a post-liberal world: a period between cultures, in which the old confidence of individual liberation has gone and the new commitment to social liberation has not yet been made (1974, 72-73).

Williams is more concerned here with the social and political implications of the image than I want to be, for the moment at least. If one 'translates' these concerns into more purely linguistic terms, then the image of the fabric and the image of the web deconstruct the assumed integrity and autonomy of the expressive, enacting subject. The subject is as much determined as it determines, as much produced as it produces.

To give one example, Lydgate's career depends on the quality and efficacy of his skills, of course, on his expressive, enacting qualities. But that is not all. What those skills are, what value they are ascribed, and therefore what good they may effect are not self-evident. They have no autonomous existence, no reality outside the discourse within which they function, and so no straightforward independence by which to enact themselves in expression. Lydgate's career and his medical skills do not exist in a web; that would imply merely a location; it would say nothing of identity. Rather, the web determines identity in much the same way as does fabric: it is what it is by dint of its structure and relations, not through an accumulation of associated small webs. The web is not a conventional expression of frustration where good intentions are caught up in parochial politics:

at the end of his inward debate, when he set out for the hospital, his hope was really in the chance that discussion might somehow give a new aspect to the question, and make the scale dip so as to exclude the necessity of voting. I think he trusted a little also to the energy which is begotten by circumstances -- some feeling rushing warmly and making resolve easy, while debate in cool blood had only made it more difficult. However it was, he did not distinctly say to himself on

which side he would vote; and all the while he was inwardly resenting the subjection which had been forced upon him. It would have seemed beforehand like a ridiculous piece of bad logic that he, with his unmixed resolutions of independence and his select purposes, would find himself at the very outset in the grasp of petty alternatives, each of which was repugnant to him. In his student's chambers, he had prearranged his social action quite differently (176).

In dividing the world into two, on one hand himself and his (innately valuable) purposes, on the other the rest of experience, Lydgate assumes that there is only one-way traffic between these domains: he will make medical discoveries which will have a beneficial effect upon the rest of the world. There is, in Lydgate's view, a hierarchy of innate significance so that the parochial problem of the chaplaincy should not, properly, impinge upon his purposes. Accordingly, he is unprepared for what is happening, for it should not be happening at all, and is thereby reduced to the desperate hope of a *deus ex machina* to extirpate him. That is, Lydgate 'reads' the image of the web simply, and wrongly, as an expression of the petty, bureaucratic, mundane road blocks which frustrate the enactment of good, new ideas, ideas which have nothing to do with this parochial world. In his own eyes

he is an innocent fly inadvertently caught in the world's web. But the web is not an odd aberration in a society which, otherwise, is composed of freely associated autonomous subjects. Rather, the image of the web encompasses both the signifier and the signified, the linguistic web of Saussure and Wittgenstein, and the social and political web of provincial life. As Lydgate wrongly assumes that geographical distance from London will distance him from the web of social intrigues which characterize London, so he also believes that the grammar of the web will not apply to his 'intransitive' medical research. Instead of transcendent subjectivity, the web allows only "the subjection which had been forced upon him." Lydgate's youthful "unmixed resolutions of independence" are liberal fantasies which suppress the constructedness of the subject within a system, or web, of differences.

The processes of being, like the processes of knowing, are represented by the web of complex interdependence. This is true synchronically and diachronically, for the work of both Lyell and Darwin shows history as a narrative without a transcendent subject. Indeed, Darwin himself uses the image of the web to describe this:

we can clearly see how it is that all living and extinct forms can be grouped together in one great system; and

how the several members of each class are connected together by the most complex and radiating lines of affinities. We shall never, probably, disentangle the inextricable web of affinities between the members of any one class (1968, 425).

As Darwin's work shows, the web is not something external to the subject which, if one is unwary, will act as a trap. One is in the web if one is alive, for identity is forever in the process of formation in the dialectic of evolutionary history. The individual is decentered in Lyell's geology and Darwin's evolutionary biology: one is shaped by the structure in which one is produced.

This diachronic process functions synchronically too, for even one's more intimate, seemingly private and personal, 'decisions' are made in the context of the labyrinthine web. Lydgate's feelings for Rosamond, for example, are partly the correlative to Mrs. Bulstrode's hypothesis: "the momentary speculations as to the possible grounds for Mrs. Bulstrode's hints had managed to get woven like slight clinging hairs into the more substantial web of [Lydgate's] thoughts" (294). To paraphrase Terry Eagleton, we do not have love at our disposal, love has us at its disposal:

young love-making -- that gossamer web! Even the points it clings to -- the things whence its subtle interlacings are swung -- are scarcely perceptible: momentary touches of finger-tips, meetings of rays from blue and dark orbs, unfinished phrases, lightest changes of cheek and lip, faintest tremors. The web itself is made of spontaneous beliefs and indefinable joys, yearnings of one life towards another, visions of completeness, indefinable trust. And Lydgate fell to spinning that web As for Rosamond . . . she too was spinning industriously at the mutual web (337-338).

The spontaneity is, of course, illusory. All the descriptive nouns and adjectives subvert the notion of autonomous expression: "undefinable"; "yearnings"; "visions"; "indefinite." Neither Lydgate nor Rosamond spontaneously falls in love. Casaubon, too, loves within the defining context of the web: "suspicion and jealousy of Will Ladislaw's intentions, suspicion and jealousy of Dorothea's impressions, were constantly at their weaving work" (410). At the moment of his ruin, Bulstrode realizes that the minutiae of individual acts cohere into a web: "mentally surrounded with that past again, Bulstrode had the same pleas -- indeed, the years had been perpetually spinning them into intricate thickness, like masses of spider-web" (603).

In his essay "Theory of the Text," Roland Barthes uses just these images of fabric and the web to represent the post-structuralist concept of textuality: "what is a text? It is the phenomenal surface of the literary work; it is the fabric of the words which make up the work" (1981, 32). The materiality of the text and the graphics of its representation, "suggest not speech, but the interweaving of a tissue (etymologically speaking, 'text' means 'tissue')" (1981, 32). Barthes argues that the text is not "a finished structure" (1981, 40), not "a closed object placed at a distance from an observer who inspects it from the outside" (1981, 43), but is "a polysemic space where the paths of several possible meanings intersect" (1981, 37). Instead of regarding the text-as-product, as "the repository of an objective signification" (1981, 37), Barthes contends that all texts are plural because "the signifier belongs to everybody." (1981, 37).

Dante, of course, adapting earlier scriptural scholarship to secular writing, also thought the text polysemous, but the difference between Dante's medieval conception of textual plurality and Barthes's account is twofold. For Dante, textual plurality is the result of the conscious intention of the educated writer, an intention which will be perceived in similar terms by the educated reader; secondly, Dante's polysemous readings are finite and may be

encompassed within the grid of his four levels of meaning -- literal, allegorical, anagogical and moral -- and the six questions to be asked at each level -- what is the subject, form, agent, end, title of book and branch of philosophy? The *poly* in Dante's model actually means twenty-four.

In Barthes' view, however, the text is not a coherent expression of its author's intended message but should be seen as a redistribution of language, the language of other texts which permeate any writing: "any text is a new tissue of past citations" (1981, 39). For Barthes, the metaphors of "fabric" and "web" define just this anti-Realist sense of textuality:

these principle concepts . . . are all concordant . . . with the image suggested by the very etymology of the word 'text': it is a tissue, something woven. But whereas criticism . . . hitherto unanimously placed the emphasis on the finished 'fabric' (the text being a 'veil' behind which the truth, the real message, in a word the 'meaning', had to be sought), the current theory of the text turns away from the text as veil and tries to perceive the fabric in its texture, in the interlacing of codes, formulae and signifiers, in the midst of which the subject places himself and is undone, like a spider that comes to dissolve itself in its own web. A lover of neologisms might therefore define the theory of the text

as a 'hyphology' ('hyphos' is the fabric, the veil, and the spider's web) (1981, 39).

The Realist notion of writing-as-product -- in *this* respect, at least, Dante is a Realist -- depends upon the twin ideas of autonomy and fixity: the writing stands by itself and is intelligible as such. The meanings which the writing expresses transcend history and culture and speak to all readers. But one focus of Lyell, Darwin and Bichat's work is the relocation of the apparently discrete, particular, distinctive, individual entity within a productive process which, historically, determines identity through context. Organicism, evolutionary geology and evolutionary biology not only set the particular in a synchronic fabric or web, but show how those interdependent structures alter diachronically. In the post-structuralist sense of the word, Bichat, Lyell and Darwin 'textualize' their discourses, and it is this 'textualization' which one sees in Eliot's particular use of the images, the sense of being and perceiving as processes. As R.G. Collingwood puts it: "science is less like a hoard of truths, ascertained piecemeal, than an organism which in the centre of its history undergoes more or less continuous alteration in every part" (1978, 2).

Barthes calls this sense of textuality the "science of becoming" (1981, 45). As he says, this Nietzschean idea is

predicated on the illusion of the permanent: our faculties -- the parameters of our sensibility, and the finiteness of our being -- are such that we cannot grasp the subtle but continuous changes and movements which constitute what Nietzsche, in Barthes' quotation, calls "the flow of becoming" (1981, 45). That is to say, all representations are bound by the character of their own limitations. In Eliot's terms, as seen in the last chapter:

even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a stronger lens reveals to you certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom (1986, 58-59).

Again, Lewes uses the same striking image:

the grandest discoveries, and the grandest applications to practice, have not only outstripped the slow march of Observation, but have revealed by the telescope of Imagination what the microscope of Observation could

never have seen, although it may afterwards be employed to verify the vision (1874, 315).

Empiricism cannot be a metalanguage. What really 'is' is not available because, even in laboratory conditions, what one sees is not the object itself but the relationship between the object and one's equipment: better equipment will reveal a different character to any given object but there is no logical ideal equipment which would reveal the 'true' character of what one examines. This image does not oppose faulty, partial, egocentric perception to neutral, objective, impartial perception, where the latter, lacking a "system" and lacking "advocacy" in Arnold's senses, represents reality "as it is." Rather, observation is represented in the image as a discourse with its own defining characteristics, its own structures which impose rather than recognize or reflect or reproduce meaning. One may view this in the context of a deconstructionist reading of Nietzsche, for as Christopher Norris says, Nietzsche argued that

philosophers . . . were the self-condemned dupes of a 'truth' which preserved itself simply by effacing the *metaphors*, or figurative discourse, which brought it into being. If language is radically metaphorical, its meanings (as Saussure was later to show) caught up in an

endless chain of relationship and difference, then thought is deluded in its search for a truth beyond the mazy detours of language. Only by suppressing its origins in metaphor had philosophy, from Plato to the present, maintained the sway of a tyrannizing reason which in effect denied any dealing with figural language (1982, 57).

Similarly, Derrida argues that all language, again including that of philosophy, is characterized by metaphor which, in a positivist philosophy and in literary Realism, is effaced: "the metaphor is no longer noticed and is taken for the proper meaning" (1974, 9).

Eliot's image of the microscope, however, foregrounds the conditions which produce knowledge, and represents knowledge as a process of becoming without any final, logical moment when one would have arrived at the ideal answers. As J. Hillis Miller puts it:

any process . . . is made up of endlessly subdividable "minutiae." Anything that we call a "unit" or a single fact, in social or in mental life, is not single but multiple. A finer lens would always make smaller parts visible. The smaller parts, in turn, are made up of even smaller entities No fact is in itself single, and

no fact is explicable by a single relationship to a single cause. Each fact is a kind of multitudinous node which exists only arbitrarily as a single thing because we happen to have the microscope focused as we do. If the focus were finer, the apparently single fact would subdivide and reveal itself to be made of multiple minutiae. If the focus were coarser the fact would disappear within the larger entity of which it is a part (1974, 133).

The model of representation which the image of the microscope offers has implications for the representation of the social in *Middlemarch*, too. One literary technique which is commonly discussed in relation to this and other so-called classic Realist texts is the presentation of the social in a microcosmic form. The Marshalsea, in *Little Dorrit*, or Chancery, in *Bleak House*, are commonly discussed as emblems in miniature of the larger societies represented in those novels. Similarly, the concerns which agitate provincial Middlemarch may appear as local and domestic manifestations of issues which exercise a whole nation:

while Lydgate . . . felt himself struggling for Medical reform against Middlemarch, Middlemarch was becoming more

and more conscious of the national struggle for another kind of Reform (451).

But this is just the relationship posited by the image of the microscope -- and problematized by that representation. With a coarse setting one sees the Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867. With a finer setting, one sees Medical Reform in Middlemarch. What is the relationship between the two? In the conventional Realist text there is a substantial parallel, an echo of one in the other. But in Eliot's image, a finer or coarser focus is likely to confound or contradict the apparent reality of another focus. Again, one returns to textuality, for the representation is conditional upon the means of representation: "literary language signifies and creates; it does not imitate or even describe" (Hutcheon 1980, 98).

Which is one to 'believe,' then: that there is a direct parallel between provincial and national Reform, as the narrative explicitly states? Or, does one privilege the implications of the image and say that such 'truth' is illusory because it effaces the linguistic conditions of its production by mistaking one perspective, one focus, for an objective, neutral conspectus? But my question itself is predicated on a naturalized assumption, on the ideology that this apparent textual contradiction should be resolved so that the text be made to articulate a coherent, single meaning. In

Collingwood's sense, the question is an aspect of the answer, for it assumes that this novel does, or should, conform to the tenet of classic Realism that "to become a source of knowledge experience needs to be interpreted by a *prior subjectivity*" (Belsey 1982, 124) and that this subjectivity "aims at an ultra-signification" (Barthes 1972, 133). One may read *Middlemarch* in this way, of course, as many critics have successfully demonstrated. The real question is not whether such a reading can be done, however, but whether it really discovers what is 'naturally' there.

According to Mill's empiricist induction, of course, one does indeed uncover what is 'naturally' there.⁶ But Whewell's concept of the hypothesis, like Collingwood's notion of the relative dependence of answer on question or Karl Popper's anti-positivist principle of falsifiability, offers an epistemological model closer to Eliot's microscope in which 'knowledge' is the product of the means of knowing. Mill

⁶ John Skorupski, in Dancy and Sosa (eds. 1992), notes that

the rejection of hypotheses produces a further tension in Mill's naturalism when combined, as Mill combined it, with the thesis that our immediate consciousness is of our own experience alone. For while enumerative induction can establish correlations within subjective experience (granting the epistemic credentials of memory -- a point which troubled Mill) it cannot justify inferences beyond it. Thus Mill arrived at the conclusion that physical objects are knowable only as 'Permanent [ie. 'certified' or 'guaranteed'] Possibilities of Sensation' (281).

presumes his method is transparent. As Barthes says of our assumptions about the medium usually seen as equally transparent -- photography -- "whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see" (1984, 6). If one assumes that this contradiction between the narration's explicit parallelism and the disjunctive image is merely apparent, then one has adopted Mill's method, for one assumes there is a 'natural' hierarchy of discourses which culminates in the expressive author's transcendent subjectivity and thus the writing's transcendent unity. The inevitability of this model and its consequences has, however, been widely challenged (Barthes 1977, 142-148; Derrida 1977; Foucault 1986, 101-120). Reading with the hypothesis of authoritative, transcendent subjectivity is not an invalid way of reading, but it is no more natural or objective a method than one which does not assume that the contradiction here is merely apparent: it is the authoritarianism of the *assumption* that the text expresses the coherent authority of the subject is rejected, not the possibility of the reading. In proposing an alternative reading I do not intend simply to substitute one coherent exclusivity for another: what Docherty calls "the hesitancy of authority" (1983, 60) applies equally to 'critical' and 'creative' texts.

The image of the microscope offers no metadiscourse, no principle of verifiability, only a succession of discoveries where "we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse." This has two important implications: the principle of falsifiability implied in the image contains only negative authority, the power to deny conclusively but not the power of definite assertion; accordingly, each "interpretation" is a dialogue with error, not a communion with truth, and so is itself subject to reinterpretation. Each new interpretation is a text whose intertexts are the foregoing texts of that genre, so that the subject of the discourse, while of course a description of the studied object, is one formed by a delineation of difference from previous discourses. The only authority such a text is vouchsafed is that it is not committing an old interpretation: it cannot but recognize, self-reflexively, that it functions within a diachronic process of difference, and so it subverts the apparent transcendence of its own authority. In novelistic terms, a novel cannot be read as though one had never read any other novels. It cannot be regarded simply as its author's coherent expression of his or her views on 'life' without any regard for the genre's conventions. That is to say, *Middlemarch* functions within the image of the microscope as much as the image does within *Middlemarch*. As Edward W. Said says,

each new novel recapitulates not life but other novels. It is not much to say, I think, that the late nineteenth-century phase of the novel . . . can be characterized as one in which narrative loses the sense of beginnings with which it had commenced. And this is because the author now considers himself as much a creation as his writing (1985, 152).

The issue, then, is how to read the problematized sense of indeterminate, discursive knowledge which is represented in the image of the web, the pier-glass, fabric and the microscope, along with the narrator's frequent, direct explicitness, of which that parallel between local and national reform is but one example of very many. The issue is a central concern for, as McGovern notes, Eliot's narration is commonly characterized as contradictory or, at best, uneasy:

the cause of this narrative unease is usually traced to the inherent contradiction Eliot faces in her attempt to present Realism while being simultaneously aware that any work of art is a distortion of life filtered through the artist's mind (1987, 6).

Once more, however, this sense of ill-aligned aims only arises if one assumes Eliot has Realism as her goal. By approaching

the text through Barthes's contention that it is not "a finished structure" (1981, 40), one may liberate alternative readings of the "contradiction." Belsey argues that "texts are plural, and . . . their meanings are *produced* by bringing to bear on the raw material of the work itself discourses pertinent to the twentieth century" (1982, 130). This opens up a different approach to the apparent contradictions between explicit and indeterminate knowledge in the novel. Instead of seeking to resolve the contradiction or, if that cannot be done satisfactorily, pointing to it as a 'failure' in the novel, I would propose reading it within a discourse which, indeed, is pertinent to the twentieth century.

It is a truism today that post-structuralist criticism characteristically discovers textual contradictions and paradoxes. Far from regarding these as failures, post-structuralist theory sees these irresolutions as an aspect of the non-expressive relationship between author and writing and between writing and reader: meaning is not single, coherent, or independent of the conditions in which it is produced. This reading I offer here, then, is a production of meaning, but only in the sense that all meanings are produced. More specifically, I would like to juxtapose Eliot's image of the microscope with Salman Rushdie's image of the cinema in *Midnight's Children* as a way of defining the parameters of plurality in *Middlemarch*. This is Rushdie's image:

reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems - - but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves -- or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself *is* reality (164).

There are a number of similarities between Rushdie's and Eliot's images. Both represent the idea that "the knower and the known are interdependent" (Collingwood 1978, 45) by foregrounding the productive means of knowing. Both use recent technology-as-metaphor, in Postman's sense (1985, 14-15), and both use the notion of lenses. Rushdie, as it were, moves the vertical plane of the microscope on to the horizontal plane of the film projector. The literal movement towards the object in the cinema is achieved, in *Middlemarch*, by using different lenses. Where, with the microscope, "the apparently single fact would subdivide and reveal itself to be made up of multiple minutiae" (Miller 1974, 133), in the cinema "the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain." There is neither a position in the cinema nor a setting on the

microscope's lenses which is 'right,' which reveals things as they 'really' are. There is neither an eternal object nor an "Eternal Man" (Barthes 1972, 140). There is only a succession of representations, each valid from its own perspective, but none transcendentally 'right.'

Further, both *Middlemarch* and *Midnight's Children* are historical novels and so the relationship between the knower and the known in the two images functions diachronically as well as synchronically. *Middlemarch* represents the period around the First Reform Act of 1832 from the perspective of that just after the Second Reform Act of 1867. The prime focus of *Midnight's Children* is 1947 (and after) to the present of the novel's composition in the late 1970s. As in *Middlemarch*, then, the moment of prime focus is seen from approximately thirty years later. One may also point to a concern in both novels for the relationship between the part and the whole. Each of the images I have examined -- the web, fabric, the pier-glass, and the microscope -- rejects the associationist model of the relation of the parts to the whole in favour of an organicist model. Equally, one aspect of the novel's 'content' deals with the relation of that part of reform which affects Middlemarch within the whole of the national Reform movement. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai is born on the stroke of midnight of August 15, 1947 (the exact moment of India's 'birth' as an independent nation)

so that the development of the child is seen as a mirror for that of the nation as a whole. Or, to be more exact, it isn't, but the potential parallelism functions as an important structuring device (McHale 1987, 95).

In *Midnight's Children*, the implication in the cinema image, that all representations are contingent upon the conditions in which they are produced, is made explicit in the narrative's representation of the whole of recent Indian history from the perspective of that part of it which is Saleem's life. There is no possibility of objective universality, no possibility of, say, an explicit parallel between local and national reform: there is only a figure sitting in the cinema, sitting somewhere and so not anywhere else, sitting, say, in 1980 looking at 1947, or in 1870 looking at 1832. From that seat what is said is 'right,' but seen from somewhere else things appear differently: as Saleem says, "re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time" (Rushdie 1981, 164). Just as there is no single, coherent image on the screen or under the microscope, there is no single, coherent India and no coherent Saleem. In the same way as the image on the cinema screen and the object under the microscope are

composed of infinitely subdividable minutiae, so are there Indias within India which are not miniature reproductions of the whole nation because, as with Saleem's India, even major assassinations happen within personal rather than objective chronologies.

In *Midnight's Children*, then, the observer's experience in the cinema provides a model for the relationship between the part and the whole throughout the novel, and a model both for the author's and for the reader's relationship to the writing itself. The text functions like the image on the screen. It too may be observed from a variety of positions, none of which is exclusively authoritative: "one of the thrusts of postmodernist revisionist history is to call into question the reliability of official history. The postmodernists fictionalize history, but by doing so they imply that history itself may be a form of fiction" (McHale 1987, 96). Accordingly, the author himself or herself, even when willing to provide a statement about the novel's 'meaning,' can only do so from one place in the cinema: "when we speak or write, the words and sentences we choose resonate for our hearers and readers, emitting potential significances which are only partly under our control" (Fowler 1977, 76). Rushdie's text directly acknowledges "the provisional character of [the author's] power to authorize a fiction" (Said 1985, 152).

There is no reason, then, why one should of necessity privilege the narrator's discourse in *Middlemarch*, even if one presumes that the narrator's voice perfectly corresponds to that of the author:

if 'intention' can be successfully translated into stable self-evident words (words whose meaning is, as it were, present to their own orthography), then the writer is not only sure of being 'understood' in a specific way (and thus is assured a place in the community of 'sane' people, according to Foucault), but is also, more importantly, safe from interpretation and from criticism. This 'community' of sane people includes only representations (all, supposedly, identical) of the writer. It is as if both 'speaker' and 'hearer' articulated the words simultaneously: a phenomenological correspondence demonstrating the incipient totalitarianism of such a (vocal) authority model (Docherty 1987, 249).

Middlemarch is not an expression of anterior, coherent, resolved meaning to which the "sane" élite have transcultural and transhistorical access; rather, it is the site of struggle, of contradiction, characterized as much by irresolution as by resolution. The relativity of meaning

within the defining parameters of epistemology, as one sees in the image of the microscope and in the financial metaphor, precludes the possibility of the transcendent authority of any one voice, any single focus of the microscope. The sort of web one sees in the lines of the pier-glass, or in the microcosmic world, are always, as *Middlemarch* demonstrates, "altering with the double change of self and beholder" (93-94). The novel which represents such "endless processes" (141) must itself be a part of such processes which "produce," to use Belsey's word, new perspectives. There is nothing authoritative about the view one has of the period of the First Reform Act from the period immediately after the Second Reform Act: the subsequent Acts of 1884 and 1885 would themselves produce new readings in the same way as a new lens on the microscope would, or as a new position in the cinema would; as indeed a comparison with Rushdie's image might do. In Lyotard's classic definition of current epistemological conditions, the image of the microscope produces an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (1984, xxiv).

* * *

Discussions of language in *Daniel Deronda* tend to be embroiled in debates over the widespread division of the novel into two, unequally successful, parts. Expressivist assumptions about language are certainly not alone in prompting this division, but they do play a significant role. I shall very briefly summarize the critical history of *Daniel Deronda's* characteristic bifurcation before suggesting some of the Realist assumptions about the novel's language which lie within this critical practice.⁷

Henry James, in his review of *Middlemarch* in the March 1873 issue of *Galaxy*, grants that Eliot is "philosophic" (965) in *Middlemarch*, but thinks that this virtue (as he sees it) carries with it some drawbacks:

many of the discursive portions of "Middlemarch" are, as we may say, too clever by half. The author wishes to say too many things, and to say them too well; to recommend herself to a scientific audience "Middlemarch" is too often an echo of Messrs. Darwin and Huxley (965).

The perceived absence of this same characteristic, however, has been used as a criticism of *Daniel Deronda*: Eliot's

⁷ A fuller description of the critical history of *Daniel Deronda* may be found in J. Russell Perkin's *A Reception-History of George Eliot's Fiction*.

"final novel shows less secure intellectual control, for she abandons the philosophical basis of *Middlemarch* and instead builds on Matthew Arnold's distinction between Hellenic and Hebraic strands in western culture" (Skilton 1977, 161). Skilton grants that the novel is anti-positivist but argues that the principle of verification which is transcendent in positivism is here replaced by characters' "intuitions as to their destinies . . . in response to the promptings of racial memory or transcendent influences of some sort" (1977, 162). In Skilton's view, one transcendency has merely been replaced by another: the notion of transcendency itself remains unchallenged. As James puts it, "the 'sense of the universal' is constant, omnipresent" (1984, 974).

The most common criticism of *Daniel Deronda*, indeed, is that the novel too readily divides into Hellenic and Hebraic parts. In his witty "*Daniel Deronda: A Conversation*," Henry James divides the novel into two: a Jewish section and a Gwendolen section. The Jewish section is "addicted to moralising and philosophising" (1984, 980), while its three principal characters, Deronda, Mirah and Mordecai, "have no existence outside of the author's study" (1984, 978). This aspect of the novel is produced by the "artificial" (1984, 985) element in George Eliot: "instead of feeling life itself, it is 'views' upon life that she tries to feel" (1984, 986). By contrast,

Gwendolen's history is admirably typical -- as most things are with George Eliot: it is the very stuff that human life is made of. What is it made of but the discovery by each of us that we are at the best but a rather ridiculous fifth wheel to the coach, after we have sat cracking our whip and believing that we are at least the coachman in person? The universe forcing itself with a slow, inexorable pressure into a narrow, complacent, and yet after all extremely sensitive mind, and making it ache with the pain of the process -- that is Gwendolen's story (1984, 990).

Leslie Stephen follows James's bifurcation of the novel: "the story is really two stories put side by side and intersecting at intervals" (1907, 185), and he evaluates each part much as James does. The Jewish section is marred, Stephen thinks, by its author being a woman: "Daniel Deronda is not merely a feminine but, one is inclined to say, a schoolgirl's hero. He is so sensitive and scrupulously delicate that he will not soil his hands by joining the rough play of ordinary political and social reformers" (1907, 190).

F.R. Leavis, in *The Great Tradition*, also follows in this same path, albeit with a rather more Carlylean vigorous confidence. For him, the book embodies a stark contrast between strength and weakness. Leavis thinks that "the two

[plots] stand apart, on a large scale, in fairly neatly separable masses" (1972, 97). Though he ranks Eliot nearly with Tolstoy, and though he admires her later work more than her earlier, nonetheless, he goes so far in dividing the novel as to suggest that a separate work called *Gwendolen Harleth* should be published. Later, in an introduction to the novel, Leavis reiterates his essential criticism of the relative strengths of the novel's distinct parts, but he does withdraw this radical suggestion to publish a part of it by itself.

These early responses have trickled down so that there has been widespread agreement among critics that the novel is readily divisible into two parts and that the discursive Jewish section succeeds very much less well than does the *Gwendolen* part. Even though Joan Bennett recognizes Eliot's own protest against this division of the novel, she too says that "there is no inevitable connection between the perception of *Gwendolen's* predicament and of *Deronda's* as there is between *Lydgate's* and *Dorothea's*" (1948, 183). Walter Allen contends that the "weakness [of *Daniel Deronda*] is self-evident: it is the clash between the imaginatively conceived character of *Gwendolen Harleth* and the action in which she is centred on the one hand and the intellectually fabricated plea for Zionism on the other" (1958, 229). Deirdre David says that "the novel is fatally, if seductively split, for Eliot is unable to reconcile her fine study in psychological and social

realism with the strange, difficult, and sometimes virtually unreadable *Deronda* narrative of Jewish identity" (1981, 135). Similarly, K.M. Newton argues that "in order to show *Deronda* succeeding where *Fedalma* failed, George Eliot had to sacrifice a good deal of the potential of the character and to protect him by plot manipulation from situations of possibly great dramatic interest. In my view George Eliot had to pay an artistic price for *Deronda's* success" (1981, 170).

These studies, and many others which follow similar methods, have come to form a 'great tradition' of their own in which *Daniel Deronda* is regarded as Eliot's crucially cracked final novel. But this tradition of Realist readings characteristically neglects what post-structuralists regard as the inevitably plural, generative nature of language: the positivist ideal of transcendent induction may have been discarded but, according to these Realist critics, it has been replaced by another transcendence, that of race. In seeking coherent singularity, these readings presume that the novel's language functions expressively to represent this transcendent and anterior meaning, a meaning which is ordinarily located in the author's (remarkably capacious) mind. The success and prevalence of this author-directed method of reading have made its conclusions appear self-evident: "Leavis reads *Daniel Deronda* to find what is 'obvious' in it, the banality of a universe ordered in accordance with poetic justice" (Belsey

1982, 130). However, the novel need not be read within this set of values. If one rejects what Foucault calls "the founding function of the subject" (1974, 12), one is no longer obliged to assign only a passive, transcriptive role to the language of *Daniel Deronda*, no longer obliged merely to replace one coherent signified by another. Instead, one may read the text 'creatively.' That is, one *produces* the text's meaning by accepting that it is a discourse whose meaning is formed by its relations with other discourses.

As with *Middlemarch*, I propose to situate the language of *Daniel Deronda* among contemporaneous discourses and later post-structural discourses. Such a method is meant as oppositional in that it denaturalizes the Realist claim to discover what is innately there in the text. However, it is not oppositional in the sense of replacing Realist transcendency with post-structural transcendency, since "linguistic analysis is more a perception than an explanation: that is, it is constitutive of its very object" (Foucault 1974, 382).

The most obviously constituted object in *Daniel Deronda* is the eponymous protagonist. Like a post-structuralist reader, Mordecai "desires to be an agent, to create, and not merely to look on" (Eliot 1984, 443). He is a writerly reader whose "imagination had constructed another man" (Eliot 1984, 441). Lewes's active scientist follows a

similar method in arguing that the "introduction of Fiction [is] a necessary procedure of Research" (1874-1879, 1, 296). In radical contrast to the implied induction of Farebrother's taxonomy, Mordecai's

inward need for the conception of this expanded, prolonged self was reflected as an outward necessity. The thoughts of his heart (that ancient phrase best shadows the truth) seemed to him too precious, too closely inwoven with the growth of things not to have a further destiny. And as the more beautiful, the stronger, the more-executive self took shape in his mind, he loved it beforehand with an affection half identifying, half contemplative and grateful (441).

Following others, I have argued that one set of *Middlemarch's* intertexts are the writings of Bichat, Bernard, Whewell, Lyell and Darwin. One may see an effect of these intertexts in those of *Middlemarch's* metaphors which I have examined which foreground their "constitutive" function, to use Foucault's term, for the active function of the observer has a parallel in the medium of representation which acknowledges inevitable fictiveness. Realist critics who argue that *Middlemarch's* philosophical basis is abandoned in *Daniel Deronda*, critics such as Skilton, perhaps undervalue

Mordecai's role in the novel. As Levine argues, Mordecai has a hypothesis that Deronda is a Jew and that hypothesis "helps create the conditions that make it true" (1980, 5). In *Middlemarch*, scientific epistemology is explicitly addressed in the difference between Lydgate's professional knowledge and his knowledge of domestic and political matters. Certainly, the philosophy of scientific method is not an overt issue in *Daniel Deronda*. Nonetheless, one may see Whewellian hypothesizing as the epistemological premise from which racial identity is examined. In this way, the co-creative role of the observer can be seen as being as integral to *Daniel Deronda* as it is to *Middlemarch*. The linguistic correlative of that contention is that the central metaphors in *Daniel Deronda* -- metaphors of gambling, horses, music, mirrors and performance -- may be read as the sites of struggle and of contradiction. Traditional expressive-humanist, Realist readings depend upon the notions of primacy and autonomy of the Cartesian *cogito* (Jameson 1972, 135). Characteristically, in these readings, the 'meaning' of a metaphor is not problematic nor (ultimately) unresolvable. The language of *Daniel Deronda* need not necessarily be read in this way, however. As Terry Eagleton argues, "*Daniel Deronda* marks one major terminus of nineteenth-century realism . . . a point at which the problematic *fictionality* of those stolidly self-

confident forms is becoming incorporated as a level of signification within the text itself" (1978, 123).

There are, broadly, three ways in which I shall approach my own hypothesis that, in the language of *Daniel Deronda*, one may see an awareness of fictiveness, an awareness of the "constitutive" role of linguistic representation. The first of these approaches is broadly political, specifically the nature of knowledge and the authority which empowers it and the way in which that power represents itself linguistically. The second approach is epistemological, and the third will be through an examination of a number of the text's central metaphors.

Each of the novel's marriages -- Deronda's to Mirah, Gwendolen's to Grandcourt, and Klesmer's to Catherine Arrowpoint -- is the site of political struggle. The issues are race and class, where race, really, functions within the dominant class ideology. Klesmer's marriage to Catherine Arrowpoint obviously violates prevailing social and racial custom, but social and racial custom are denoted linguistically, not essentially. Naturalized definitions for such ideas as "honour" and "privilege of wealth" are shown to be neither natural nor inevitable. In opposition to the empiricist assumptions of Eliot's earlier manner, these words are not neutral labels for concepts which exist independent of the political culture in which they function. Instead, their

meaning is produced by the dominant order to serve its own ends, as one may hear in the narrator's voice:

to have a first-rate musician in your house is a privilege of wealth; Catherine's musical talent demanded every advantage; and she particularly desired to use her quieter time in the country for more thorough study. Klesmer was not yet a Liszt, understood to be adored by ladies of all European countries with the exception of Lapland: and even with that understanding it did not follow that he would make proposals to an heiress. No musician of honour would do so. Still less was it conceivable that Catherine would give him the slightest pretext for such daring. The large cheque that Mr. Arrowpoint was to draw in Klesmer's name seemed to make him as safe an inmate as a footman. Where marriage is inconceivable, a girl's sentiments are safe (220-221).

The effect of the passage depends on where one locates the narrative point of view. The opinions expressed and the clipped, matter-of-fact tone, coincide with the simple, habitual assurance of rectitude which accompanies 'natural' social superiority. These are hardly represented as opinions at all: they are, rather, incontestable facts. Characteristically, each sentence or clause lacks the

colouring of qualifying adjectives or adverbs: "to have a first-rate musician in your house is a privilege of wealth"; "Catherine's musical talent demanded every advantage"; "No musician of honour would do so." In Barthes's sense, this is myth, or *doxa*. Gilbert Adair, adopting Bathesian terms, defines myth as "signs of the falsely evident, of what-goes-without-saying, of the victory of a (simple and seductive) stereotype over a (complex and daunting) reality" (1986, xiii). This passage, then, is less an argument for, or defence of, the values espoused than an intended statement of plain-as-the-nose-on-your-face fact.

In one sense, the passage's irony is like that of the opening sentence of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.⁸ By formulating and making explicit what is ordinarily tacit and suppressed, the narrative foregrounds the dubiety of the naturalized claim. In *Pride and Prejudice* one asks what truth and universal acknowledgement are, and how they are related. Here, one questions whether money should have the right to buy musical talent, whether there is a natural social position for a musician, and one re-examines the ordinary definition of honour. Wealth, of course, is presented as the transcendental signifier. Love, marriage, honour and musical talent are all

⁸ The opening sentence is, of course: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (1972, 51).

defined within a semiotic hierarchy which supremely privileges cash.

Colin Gordon, in his *Afterward to Michel Foucault's Power/Knowledge*, notes that, for all structuralism's anti-humanism, "its overall effect was emphatically one of reinforcing the implicit claims of the human sciences to constitute something like the self-evident rationality of the age" (230). By contrast, Foucault's post-structuralism seeks "to problematize this universal credo by asking the question: how are the human sciences historically possible, and what are the historical consequences of their existence?" (230-231).

One may see a similar problematizing of the self-evident rationality of the age in *Daniel Deronda's* three marriages, and in the passage under analysis in particular. The key collocation here is that of domesticity with the image of incarceration: "the large cheque that Mr. Arrowpoint was to draw in Klesmer's name seemed to make him as safe an inmate as a footman" (emphasis added). One may fruitfully follow Hugh Sykes Davies' method of reading here. He suggests, in the context of Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, that "one of the most widely used keys to the existence and de-coding of a coded message is the presentation to the receiver of a statement which, if taken to be uncoded, *en clair*, is manifestly incompatible with its context in the rest of the utterance" (1971, 432). The linking of domestic service with

incarceration is the message *en clair* which, because it is incompatible with other messages about honour, the privileges of wealth, and the right to demand every advantage, makes them, of necessity, coded. A similar scene takes place when Mr. Arrowpoint, in seeking to dissuade Catherine from her proposed marriage, asks her to "'think of the nation and the public good'" (229). But Catherine problematizes the words themselves: "'I cannot understand the application of such words'" (229), and this prompts a more direct statement: "'a man like Klesmer can't marry such property as yours. It can't be done'" (229).

The linguistic issue with regard to the three marriages is the way in which racism and ruling class snobbery hypocritically conceal themselves. It is not that language is misused in an intended, deceptive strategy: rather, words themselves are appropriated, much as musicians are, and given a useful role, as Klesmer himself is. As Shuttleworth notes, "words, as Lewes and Bernard demonstrated in their organic analogies, do not hold meaning in themselves; their meaning is dependent on the system of assumptions within which they are employed . . . [so that] rebellion against the dominant social values thus takes the form of a challenge to its language" (1984, 183). The "privilege of wealth" which "demand[s] every advantage" includes, among those advantages, the privilege of empowering linguistic meaning within the system of assumptions

which wealth already controls so that, for instance, it falls within a domain of "honour" that a musician should not marry an heiress.

What one may see here is the "constitutive," rather than the expressive, function of language. As with Mr. Vincy in *Middlemarch* for whom Featherstone's death assumed only a legal character because "the felicitous word 'demise,' . . . had seasonably occurred to him" (295), meaning here is constituted socially and politically. The same process may be seen with Gwendolen's prospective marriage to Grandcourt.

Gascoigne encourages Gwendolen to marry Grandcourt by reference to two concepts whose character he takes to be transcendental: reason and duty. He tells Gwendolen that she has "a duty here both to [herself] and [her] family" (126), and states that marriage is a "question out of the range of mere personal feeling, and makes [her] acceptance of it a duty" (126-127). Of course, historically there is a great deal of truth in this view, as Lawrence Stone's studies of the relations between sex, love and marriage show.⁹ But the issue

⁹ Stone persuasively argues that, in its origins, marriage was both an instrument of social control and fundamentally an economic contract:

in a society almost entirely without a police force, the household was a most valuable institution for social control at the village level. It helped to keep in check potentially the most unruly element in any society, the floating mass of young unmarried males; and it provided the basic unit for taxation Up to the eleventh

here is linguistic, for when Gwendolen reveals that she has not readily returned Grandcourt's initial advances, her uncle asks:

'Will you confide in me so far as to tell me your reasons?'

'I am not sure that I had any reasons, uncle.' Gwendolen laughed rather artificially.

'You are quite capable of reflecting, Gwendolen' (126).

According to Leavis, "Mr. Gascoigne not only has strong family feeling and a generous sense of duty, but shows himself in adversity not only admirably practical, but admirably unselfish" (1972, 109). That estimate presumes that the duty and reason to which Gascoigne appeal are defined by characteristics independent of such things as, say, self- or hegemonic interest, so that they operate extra-discursively and may be appealed to as neutral, authoritative metalanguages. Such an unproblematized reading is difficult to sustain.

century, casual polygamy appears to have been general, with easy divorce and much concubinage. In the early middle ages all that marriage implied in the eyes of the laity seems to have been a private contract between two families concerning property exchange, which also provided some financial protection to the bride in case of the death of her husband or desertion or divorce by him (1979, 28-29).

Gascoigne, after all, has a 'reason' for privileging 'reason' when he urges the match upon Gwendolen:

this match with Grandcourt presented itself to him as a sort of public affair; perhaps there were ways in which it might even strengthen the Establishment. To the Rector, whose father (nobody would have suspected it, and nobody was told) had risen to be a provincial corn-dealer, aristocratic heirship resembled regal heirship in excepting its possessor from the ordinary standards of moral judgement (124-125).

Gascoigne's concealed *petit bourgeois* heritage has bequeathed him the ideology of the essential, inherent differentness of his 'betters' and, in an obvious way, this *produces* for him the character of the prospective union between his niece and the aristocrat. Initially, then, there is cause to question the objectivity and the extra-discursivity, of the Rector's definition of duty.

But the same may be said of his appeal to reason and rationality. Because the marriage appears principally as a public and social event to him -- as the arrival, elevation and acceptance of his family into the aristocracy -- so a discourse appropriate both to that medium and to the attainment of that goal suggests itself to him. So important

a change in the family's standing in the social hierarchy must be contemplated reasonably and rationally: this is no place for the potentially disruptive vagaries of sentiment and emotion. As with Vincy's response to Featherstone's death, the issue is not the indifference, or callousness, of either Vincy or Gascoigne, as though these were simply innate characteristics which their language merely expresses. In fact, in each case there follows from an initial conception a hypothesis, one might say, a discourse whose register is already determined by the formative conception. That is to say, the character of the event is produced by the way it is linguistically represented. This can be so because the event does not have a single, unique, coherent character: what one may see in the representation the Rector gives to Grandcourt's wooing of his niece is a model of the way in which meaning (in general) is produced by bringing other discourses to bear on one's text. Gascoigne's discourse creates the set of assumptions about the privileges and rights to which the aristocracy is 'naturally' entitled and the respect and admiration which is their due. That discourse produces the reading he gives to the text of Gwendolen's prospective marriage.

Accordingly, he inquires about his niece's sentiments but in a way which, otherwise, would be peculiar. He asks first, "'Is he disagreeable to you personally?'" (126).

Having elicited a negative he continues, "'Have you heard anything of him which has affected you disagreeably?'" (126). Again Gwendolen says that she has not. Gascoigne asks this last question in case his niece may have heard some of the gossip which Gascoigne himself knows concerning Grandcourt, in order that he might "endeavour to put things in the right light for her" (126). Reading this *en clair*, it is difficult to see here the "strong family feeling" which Leavis ascribes to Gascoigne. It is surely odd for an uncle to ask his niece if she has reasons for not loving her husband-to-be rather than asking, more simply, if she loves him. Gascoigne looks, not to happiness, but to the absence of unhappiness. But as Gascoigne needs no more reasons why the marriage should take place -- the social benefits of the union determine its desirability -- so his concern is to remove impediments towards that result. It follows, then, that he seeks the rejection of negatives (or impediments) not the affirmation of positives.

This problematizes the notion of the "right light." One may ask whose light is right? That entails examining how things are lighted. For Mr. Arrowpoint, "where marriage is inconceivable, a girl's sentiments are safe" (221). Arrowpoint lights by much the same rules as does Gascoigne. Both privilege the public, social and financial character, the historical marriage Lawrence Stone examines, over the

emotional and private aspects, and their discourse is defined within that tacit hierarchy. As with *Middlemarch*, the distinction made in *Daniel Deronda* within the conventional image of light as knowledge, is not between partial, self-interested knowledge, on one hand, and neutral, objective knowledge, on the other. It is not knowledge-as-product which is evaluated for accuracy. Rather, it is the process whereby knowledges are produced and valorised which one sees here. The question is how it is established as knowledge that "to have first-rate musician in your house is a privilege of wealth" (220), or that some deaths should appear merely as demises, or that heirs to aristocratic titles should be excepted from "the ordinary standards of moral judgements" (125).

This frame of analysis I am using here, a frame which examines the production of knowledge, derives from Foucault's contention that knowledge and power are not separate things. Foucault sees knowledge within, rather than above, ordinary systems. Accordingly, knowledge (whether represented as "duty" or "reason") cannot perform the independent function which Gascoigne ascribes to it and which Leavis takes at face value. In part, Foucault's method is Nietzschean in that it rejects the view that the history of knowledge is a movement away from the empirical beginnings to speculation which is subject only to the demands of reason. What Foucault rejects

is the pre-eminence which, in his view, the West has given to the 'subject': we have studied aspects of knowledge -- legal, economic, philosophical, anthropological, and so on -- in themselves, assuming them to have innate identity. In the West we have assumed they exist outside, or above, other spheres where systems interacting determine the nature of the discourse. By insisting that power and knowledge are not separate, however, Foucault argues that this subject-oriented study distorts the character of the discourse. The process of tracing how a subject comes to be defined and valued as knowledge, the process which leads to the sort of conclusions which Arrowpoint, Gascoigne and Vincy reach, Foucault calls the genealogy of the modern subject.

This is not to say that one cannot legitimately read the passages I have been discussing as condemnations of the specific knowledges produced by these genealogies. Indeed, one may, straightforwardly enough, read *Daniel Deronda* as an anti- anti-Semitic book. The purpose of a Foucauldian reading, however, is not to erase such readings but to liberate the text's plurality by bringing other discourses to bear upon it. Foucault addresses this issue in his Foreword to the English edition of *The Order of Things*:

I do not wish to deny the validity of intellectual biographies, or the possibility of a history of theories,

concepts, or themes. It is simply that I wonder whether such descriptions are themselves enough, whether they do justice to the immense density of scientific discourse, whether they do not exist, outside their customary boundaries, systems of regularities that have a decisive role in the history of the sciences. I should like to know whether the subjects responsible for scientific discourse are not determined in their situation, their function, their perceptive capacity, and their practical possibilities by the conditions that dominate and even overwhelm them (1974, xiii-xiv).

One may legitimately trace the "theories, concepts, or themes" of racism, hegemonic self-interest and *petit bourgeois* acquiescence. These themes are so pervasive that even the largely sympathetic Sir Hugo condemns Mordecai in racist terms (474). Yet the very pervasiveness invites one to go beyond an account of instances, and to read the language as constitutive, not simply expressive. If, say, the anti-Semitism were more restricted, one might see it as limited to one (or to several) sections of society, and read the representation of this view expressively as a reflection of prevailing class sentiment. From that position one might, in fact, make a sort of simple bicameral division -- either anti-Semitic, or not -- without tracing the genealogy of these

categories. But this is difficult to do in *Daniel Deronda*. The tolerant, easy-going Sir Hugo has no quarrel with Jewish marginalisation, and Mrs. Meyrick, an apparent model of motherly beneficence and solicitude, accepts the newly arrived Mirah only on the understanding that she is an exception to the normal rule concerning Jews: "'It seems she is a Jewess, but quite refined, he [Deronda] says -- knowing Italian and music'" (182).

If 'good' people as well as 'bad' people are anti-Semitic, or if 'good' parish rectors urge doubtful marriages for 'bad' reasons, then it is less easy to assume that these statements are, straightforwardly, intended to be read as transcriptions of autonomous minds which, for whatever reason, have chosen to hold these views. Because, by and large, these attitudes sit ill with their respective speakers, there is an impetus to look at the language which empowers these views as being constitutive rather than more simply expressive. Of course, one may say that such opinions are simply characteristic of the age and the class interests of the speakers. But, as Foucault says, "the traditional explanations -- spirit of the time, technological or social changes, influences of various kinds -- [strike] me for the most part as being more magical than effective" (1970, xiii). Here, there is a reason at the level of 'theme' for going backwards from 'themes' as self-evident, innately constituted

domains and for looking at the language which expresses these themes within the parameters of the genealogy of the subject. The subject, in this sense, is defined by Said, following Foucault, as "the thinking subject or the speaking subject, the *subjectivity* that defines human identity, the *cogito* that enables the Cartesian world of objects" (1985, 293).

Politically, the language in the passages I have been examining serves to naturalise the categories it describes and so forestall opposition by denying that there is something which, because created, may be changed. The formative political circumstances, and so the createdness and artificiality of these polar categories -- Gentile / Jew; independent wealth / *petit bourgeois* labour; gentleman / musician -- are masked by the assumption that they may be defined innately because there are specific qualities which, 'naturally,' one finds in the representatives of each group. Thus the "privileges" of wealth, those things which define an independent income, are delineated. As the ranks are inherently separate, so it is not "honourable" for a musician to marry an heiress. And Jews of all sorts, Klesmer, Mordecai and Mirah, are not fit for polite society. This tactic of establishing naturalised groups Foucault calls "dividing practices": "the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the

criminals and the 'good boys'" (1983, 208). In *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish*, respectively, Foucault unravels the conditions which have given rise to the categories he lists here and shows how these categories are produced by specific conditions instead of reflecting something essential and innate in the world. Foucault rejects the idea of natural disciplines -- psychiatry, history, literature, or, indeed, the subjects naturalized by Arrowpoint and Gascoigne -- which exist prior to the institutions where they are studied, or prior to their linguistic representation. Idealist history of ideas, like Realist criticism, presents a narrative of continuous revelation where Man the subject (as narrator or observer) analyses the objects of his research on the assumption that their existence and nature predate his enquiries, and that it is that same nature which he examines. Such research seeks to uncover the essence of what naturally exists, and questions about what constitutes knowledge and how some knowledges come to be validated while others are not, are unproblematical. It is just these questions which Foucault problematizes: "medicine made its appearance as a clinical science in conditions which define, together with its historical possibility the domain of its experience and the structure of its rationality" (1976, xv); "we must try to return, in history, to that zero point in the course of madness at which

madness is an undifferentiated experience, a not yet divided experience of division itself" (1971, xi).

Foucault's method seeks to reveal the conditions -- social, legal, political -- which produce valorised disciplines and therefore knowledges. The methods, domains and privileged ideologies which inform and define these disciplines are equally consequent upon these conditions in which meaning is produced. That being so, the history of ideas and of intellectual inquiry is not one of continuous discovery, not one long strip-tease, because the conditions which produce subjects and methodologies change, thereby changing what is thought of as knowledge. These conditions Foucault calls the *episteme*.¹⁰

The relevance of Foucault's method to an analysis of the politics of language in *Daniel Deronda* may be seen in the nature of the textual opposition to certain structures of normative authority. For example, the power which Grandcourt develops over Gwendolen depends, on one hand, on his wealth and her poverty, and also upon her own sense of having done wrong in marrying him at all. The paradox of Gwendolen's position -- she is free from want but imprisoned in a gilded cage -- is represented by a number of different images which

¹⁰ The *University of Toronto Quarterly* 61, Number 4, Summer 1992, is devoted to this question of the relation between invention and discovery in the creation of knowledge.

I shall address in detail later: horses, gambling, mirrors, music and archery. The Mediterranean yacht is almost an objective correlative of her position: it is luxurious and she is free to go wherever she wishes on it. Yet it is a narrowly confined and confining prison, too. In part this paradox arises because the yacht is Grandcourt's and she must be with him to be on it: only by imprisonment is she free. But the prison is shaped more by language than by money:

to Gwendolen, who even in the freedom of her maiden time had had very faint glimpses of any heroism or sublimity, the medium that now thrust itself everywhere before her view was this husband and her relation to him. The beings closest to us, whether in love or hate, are often virtually our interpreters of the world, and some feather-headed gentleman or lady whom in passing we regret to take as legal tender for a human being may be acting as a melancholy theory of life in the minds of those who live with them -- like a piece of yellow and wavy glass that distorts form and makes colour an affliction (626).

Again, one may read this passage in Foucauldian terms. If there is a "'ground of thought' on which at a particular time some statements -- and not others -- will count as knowledge"

(Macdonell 1986, 87), then the ground here is hypothetical, egocentric, metaphorical and its language inevitably functions constitutively.

Hypothesizing is the model offered here for perception, but of course, hypotheses may be misleading. The inductive model of Eliot's early Realism has certainly disappeared. In the social and domestic realms, the function of the scientific hypothesis still obtains but is acted out by a spouse or companion. The distinction here is not between ideal knowledge and "the melancholy theory of life" which Grandcourt, as Gwendolen's incarnation of a hypothesis, produces. Rather, the passage focuses on epistemology. In place of the model where the discrete subject observes the discrete object, knowledge is produced within the parameters of personal, formative circumstances. Even Grandcourt's death does not alter Gwendolen's epistemology; then she sees "her acts through the impression they would make on Deronda" (627).

One might compare Gwendolen's knowledge here with that postulated in the novel's astronomical images. Astronomy, perhaps of all the sciences, makes the observer appear and feel most inadequate. Astronomical distances and the time-scale involved, together appear to render the human scale hopelessly minute. Yet, in *Daniel Deronda* the astronomical method represented is explicitly personal and requires an oddly egocentric hypothesis: "the best introduction to

astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead" (18). An astronomical image serves to show how meaning, for Gwendolen, is produced only with an active, co-creative observer:

the little astronomy taught her at school used sometimes to set her imagination at work in a way that made her tremble; but always when someone joined her she recovered her indifference to the vastness in which she seemed an exile (57).

Later, when Gwendolen imputes a character and attitude in Deronda (rather as Mordecai does), the image for this personal and private hypothesis is again astronomical:

her anger towards Deronda had changed into a superstitious dread -- due, perhaps, to the coercion he had exercised over her thought -- lest that first interference of his in her life might foreshadow some future influence. It is of such stuff that superstitions are commonly made: an intense feeling about ourselves which makes the evening star shine at us with a threat, and the blessing of a beggar encourage us. And superstitions carry consequences which often verify their hope of their foreboding (302).

Gwendolen's hypothetic invention is the unverified obverse of Mordecai's experimentally demonstrated hypothesis of Deronda. In each case, however, as in the astronomy images, the method is the same, for always the generative hypothesis derives from personal feeling: "the facts of Feeling which sensation differentiates, Theory integrates" (Lewes 1874-1879, 2, 29).

But the hypothesis itself is discursive and has a particular ground. Casaubon, in *Middlemarch*, approaches his impending marriage through the metaphor of money (84). Similarly, Grandcourt acts as Gwendolen's medium because she takes him to be "legal tender." As Casaubon's thoughts are inevitably "entangled in metaphors" (84) which produce his acts and ideas, equally, for Gwendolen, "superstitions carry consequences which often verify their hope or their foreboding" (302). As in *Middlemarch*, the financial metaphor of "legal tender" foregrounds both the formative function of hypotheses and the arbitrary, culturally determined ground by which one hypothesis may appear valid while another is rejected. "Legal tender" is agreed upon politically and obtains within a given culture for a given period until, after a new agreement, a new legal tender is introduced. Accordingly, value is produced and agreed upon not simply reflected because it is not innate. If "the beings closest to us . . . are often virtually our interpreters of the world," that is because the community produces value. In Saussure's

terms, "values have no other rationale than usage and general agreement" (1983, 112).

Language here does not passively describe the world. As different legal tenders alter values so, too, Arrowpoint's appeal to transcendental "honour" is shown to be tautological, for he seeks to uphold the value -- political, linguistic, economic -- of his system by the standards of that same system. Only when one has agreed upon a language and the particular system of value which comes into being therein, may one produce meaning. Without that imposed, arbitrary coherence there is only undifferentiated experience. As Eliot writes:

attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? even when he is presented to us we only begin that knowledge of his appearance which must be completed by innumerable impressions under different circumstances. We recognize the alphabet; we are not sure of the language (98).

Language is not a transparent glass on which meaning is engraved: rather, because meaning is formed within the relations of linguistic structures, the meaning of this human being, too, is found there. Such an argument denies what Hoy describes as anthropologism, "the imperial belief in a

conceptual abstraction called 'man'" (1986, 2). In denying anthropologism one challenges arguments about the 'essential' nature of man and arguments which appeal to such 'self-evident' criteria as "honour," the "privileges of wealth," "duty," and "reason." Each of these, instead of being 'natural,' is textually represented as a product of the signifying system. Each is defined culturally and socially, politically and economically, and all are empowered by Arrowpoint, Gascoigne and Grandcourt in seeking to efface these grounds. Knowledge is valorised only within a hierarchy of discourses for knowledge is produced by power -- Arrowpoint and Grandcourt's fiscal and social power, Gascoigne's ersatz paternal power -- because power delimits domains from the continuum of experience and naturalizes these into (Barthesian) myths.

Foucault's argument that discourses invent their domains by imposing parameters -- a contention which excludes the possibility of knowing the essential, fundamental, autonomous objects of study -- may be used in relation to the word/world 'division' in *Daniel Deronda*. When Deronda first tells Mirah of his visit to the synagogue in Frankfurt, she cannot properly convey her excitement to him because "she could not disentangle her thought from its imagery" (346). Hearing how the visit moved Deronda, Mirah herself is overwhelmed by her own love of her religion, a love which may be expressed

only through the images of the religion. Similarly, when Mordecai tells Deronda the story of his awakening into Judaism he says that although "'English is [his] mother tongue'" (464), he only came to understand his religion in Hebrew when "'the ancient language live[d] again'" (464). Judaism could now be expressed, for when the "'dumb tongue was loosed, it spoke the speech they had made alive with the new blood of their ardour, their sorrow, and their martyred trust: it sang with the cadence of their strain'" (465).

It is clear in these examples that different languages do not describe the same world. If they did, then one could find, not just an equivalence in English for a Hebrew word, but one would find exactly the same (Hebrew) idea encapsulated by another (English) sound. Deronda does not learn Hebrew purely to gain access to untranslated Hebrew texts: like Mirah and Mordecai, he learns Hebrew to enter the linguistic world of Judaism, a world which is different from his own one. One sees here what Foucault calls "the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualization" (1983, 209). This emphasis on the formative function of Hebrew may be contrasted with an approach which defines the parameters and constituents of Judaism. The linguistic emphasis suggests that the domain does not occur 'naturally' but is shaped by, and has no existence apart from, Hebrew.

Shuttleworth notes the work of James Sully, the psychologist and the contemporary and friend of George Eliot, in this connection: "in his discussion of free will, Sully argues that forms of speech that ascribe to a person the act of choosing between contending motives imply 'not only that there exists quite apart from the processes of volitional stimulation some substantial ego, but that this ego has a perfect controlling power over these processes'" (1984, 185). Sully's questioning of the view that volition is an expression of an anterior, autonomous ego, finds an inevitable correlative in the various challenges in psychology and in physiology to the dominant Cartesian model of an independent, controlling *cogito* which stands at the top of the body's hierarchy. If, as Sully and Lewes (among others) contended, the mind was not the rational actor which autonomously controlled the body, then one could no longer presume that speech represented the coherent expression of such a *cogito*.

The problematized nature of speech is certainly overtly thematized in *Daniel Deronda*: "our speech even when we are most single-minded can never take its line absolutely from one impulse" (238-239); "how can a man avoid himself as a subject in conversation? And he must make some sort of decent toilet in words, as in cloth and linen" (260); "suitors must often be judged as words are, by their standing and the figure they make in polite society: it is difficult to know

much else of them" (287-288); "'I wonder whether one oftener learns to love real objects through their representations, or the representations through the real objects'" (393). From no more than these quotations, it seems improbable that one can assume that in *Daniel Deronda* words are passively expressive. Meaning does not somehow inhere in the graphics or the sounds of words themselves, any more than it inheres pre-linguistically in the expressive *cogito*. Without a transcendent *cogito* there can be no transcendent, self-evident meaning. Rather, meaning functions ideologically (in the Althusserian sense), or dialogically (in the Bakhtinian sense). As David Lodge notes,

the work of the Russian literary theorists Mikhail Bakhtin and Valentin Volosinov . . . [has] suggested that it is precisely the dissolution of the boundaries between reported speech and reporting context (i.e. the author's speech) that characterizes the novel as discourse and distinguishes it from earlier types of narrative prose and from lyric verse. Bakhtin characterized the novel as 'polyphonic' and maintained that 'One of the essential peculiarities of prose fiction is the possibility it allows of using different types of discourse, with their distinct expressiveness intact, on the plane of a single

work, without reduction to a single common denominator' (1990, 49).

This is also clearly related to the now widespread sense of the term 'discourse' where discourse is "the interplay of the rules that define the transformations of these different objects, their non-identity through time, the break produced in them, the internal discontinuity that suspends their permanence" (Foucault 1974, 33).

Thus, in *Daniel Deronda*, we read that "all meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation" (51); that "there is no guarding against interpretation" (259); and that "he thought he had found a key now by which to interpret her more clearly" (404). Discarding the model whereby words are names for things which self-evidently exist, one may instead contend (like Saussure) that meaning is established by a system of differences. A thing is what it is, not by dint of some essential, defining attributes, but by virtue of its relative difference from other things. Even in thermodynamics this is so, says Eliot: "heat is a great agent and a useful word, but considered as a means of explaining the universe it requires an extensive knowledge of differences; and as a means of explaining character 'sensitiveness' is in much the same predicament" (57).

Meaning is produced, rather than reflected; it is not self-evident and single, but is developed in a dialogue where its character is invented rather than revealed:

she did not mean to accept Grandcourt; from the first moment of receiving his letter she had meant to refuse him; still, that could not but prompt her to look the unwelcome reasons full in the face until she had a little less awe of them, could not hinder her imagination from filling out in knowledge in various ways, some of which seemed to change the aspect of what she knew. By dint of looking at a dubious object with a constructive imagination, one can give it twenty different shapes (275).

The Cartesian bifurcation of mind and body, like the inductivist distinction between observer and object, has been exploded in much the way that Yeats explodes the difference between the practitioner and art in his images of the tree and of the dancer and the dance in "Among School Children."¹¹ The

¹¹ Labour is blossoming or dancing where
 The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
 Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
 Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
 O chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,
 Are you the leaf, the blossom, or the bole?
 O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
 How can we know the dancer from the dance?

"constructive imagination," like the Whewellian scientist or like Lewes's notion of theory as the hypothesis which best colligates the facts, *generates* "twenty different shapes." It does not mirror them. In the same way as the character of the dance is inseparable from the dancer who acts as its generative hypothesis, or as its active medium, knowledge is inseparable from co-creative imagination.

One means of colligating the passages I have been discussing lies in considering the partiality of the medium. Grandcourt, and then Deronda, are Gwendolen's media. Hebrew is the medium for Mordecai and Mirah, and Deronda recognizes that it must become his medium too. Arrowpoint, Gascoigne, Sir Hugo and Mrs. Meyrick, in different ways, for different ends and in different circumstances, all attempt to efface their media and to represent their judgements as natural, not constructed. Language, for the latter group, is transparent. For the former group, the co-creative role of the observer is represented in the language's self-reflexiveness, its awareness of itself as a medium which produces instead of reproducing.

One might locate this self-conscious position in terms of what Foucault calls "total history" (1974, 13). According to Foucault, the humanist notion of history is predicated on "the sovereignty of the subject" (1974, 12). This view contradicts the decentring of Lyell, Darwin, Marx and Saussure

and tries to show how "all the differences of a society might be reduced to a single form, to the organization of a world-view, to the establishment of a system of values, to a coherent type of civilization" (13). In this argument rationality is extra-discursive and so may be appealed to transcendentally as the characteristic which, by itself, makes us what we are:

to the decentring operated by the Nietzschean genealogy, it [total history] opposed the search for an original foundation that would make rationality the *telos* of mankind, and link the whole history of thought to the preservation of this rationality, to the maintenance of this teleology, and to the ever necessary return to this foundation (13).

But if meaning is produced by the imaginative hypothesis, if the object is generated by the observer, if, indeed, "all meanings . . . depend on the key of interpretation" (51), then meaning cannot but be plural. It is not that Arrowpoint's and Gascoigne's definitions of "duty" and "honour" are 'wrong.' What is wrong is not the meanings ascribed but the tacit claim that these meanings are the only possible ones because they are not produced by interpretation. There can be no *telos* because any object, to be ultimate, must

be single, coherent and independent of signifying systems. In an immediate and obvious way, Gwendolen unravels the *episteme* of the rationality to which Gascoigne appeals, as Catherine Arrowpoint unravels her parents' conception of rationality in her marriage to Klesmer. But one may also see in these children's rebellions the inevitability of plurality, seen epistemologically:

obstacles, incongruities, all melted into the sense of completion with which his [Mordecai's] soul was flooded by this outward satisfaction of his longing. His exultation was not widely different from that of the experimenter, bending over the first stirrings of change that correspond to what in the fervour of concentrated prevision his thought had foreshadowed. The prefigured friend had come from the golden background (460).

It is Mordecai's interpretative hypothesising which generates Deronda's racial identity. In this case, the hypothesis is verified. But not every one can be.

Gwendolen's account of Grandcourt's death muddies the idealist distinction between the actual and the wished for. In trying to decide whether Gwendolen murdered her husband or not, Deronda proposes the hypothesis that "Gwendolen's remorse aggravated her inward guilt, and that she gave the character

of decisive action to what had been an inappreciably instantaneous glance of desire" (649). But it is impossible either to verify or to falsify this. From Gwendolen's account of the event, one cannot conclude a single, coherent reading. Epistemologically, then, Deronda's hypothesis can neither be accepted nor denied. But ontologically the same holds true. Gwendolen's problematic behaviour on the yacht is no more coherent and unified ontologically than epistemologically. Certainly, she did not throw her husband the rope while he was in the water. But why not? Because she wanted him dead? Or, because he sank out of sight below the surface before she could throw the rope to him? Even if, let us say, there were a visual record of the event one could still give no certain answer.

By and large, murder is as unproblematic in Victorian fiction as it is widespread. The difficulties murder poses are positivist: who committed the murder; when, how and why was it committed; and how is the culprit to be apprehended? Though these questions may be difficult to answer, characteristically they not only are answered but, perhaps more importantly, they are unproblematic because they operate in the Cartesian world of agency, cause and coherent expression (or enactment) of that intention. It is within the parameters of these assumptions that Inspector Bucket, the first detective in English fiction, operates in *Bleak House*,

and which Wilkie Collins also employs in *The Moonstone*, the first detective novel in English. In *Daniel Deronda*, too, there is a death in conventionally mysterious circumstances but, in contrast to *Bleak House* and to *The Moonstone*, it is scarcely possible even to formulate these practical questions and no answers are ever offered. Gwendolen's account, like Vincy's account of Featherstone's death, is not an attempt to veil a known (or at least knowable) unproblematic truth. In such a case, language clearly would attempt to express the intention of the autonomous *cogito*. What one may see here, however, in this clear denial or perhaps parody, of Victorian convention, is a problematizing of linguistic causality in terms very similar to those described by James Sully, or indeed in terms similar to Lewes's belief that "consciousness is not an agent but a symptom" (1874-1879, Volume 3, Part 2, 365).

Because linguistic plurality calls into question the concept of the 'natural' or 'right' meaning, it also poses a challenge to the notion of single, coherent, 'right' authority which is expressed through "the power of definition" (Shuttleworth 1984, 182). As Barthes says, "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (1987, 146). In a local sense one may see that

challenge expressed in the arguments about definitions when Catherine Arrowpoint is to marry Klesmer and before Gwendolen marries Grandcourt. But, as with *Middlemarch*, the authority of the narration itself, at least by implication, may no longer be taken for granted:

in a modern print culture the words in question are not 'the author's words' in a strictly possessive sense: the author, at most, 'borrows' the words which the common lexicon is generous or gracious enough to afford to an author. The typographic font is a public fountain, and cannot be drunk dry of potential fluency or meaning as its words are used up or 'possessed' by 'authors' (Docherty 1987, 22).

There is a close historical relationship between the supposed philological hierarchy and the supposed supremacy of the white, Christian, European upper classes which is particularly relevant to *Daniel Deronda*. Said contends that modern Western philology, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, sought the sort of *telos* which Foucault describes as central to the project of 'total history.' That *telos* is the first language from which others descended (1983, 46). Working within this assumed hierarchy of languages, Ernest Renan published his *Histoire générale et système comparé des*

langues sémitiques in 1855. The principal accomplishment of this work, according to Said, is "scientifically to describe the inferiority of Semitic languages, principally Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, the medium of three purportedly sacred texts that had been spoken or at least informed by God -- the Torah, the Koran, and, later, the derivative Gospels" (1983, 46). One may see two important consequences from the arguments Said outlines. The first is that Semitic texts cannot have divine authority: if the languages are inferior they can hardly express the divine word. Secondly, Semitic cultures, expressing themselves in these languages, could now 'scientifically' be regarded as inferior to Indo-European cultures:

the old hierarchy of sacred Semitic texts has been destroyed as if by an act of parricide; the passing of divine authority enables the appearance of European ethnocentrism, by which the methods and the discourse of Western scholarship confine inferior non-European cultures to a position of subordination (Said 1983, 47).

On a substantive level, *Daniel Deronda* plainly contests this 'scientific' proof that Semitic cultures are inferior to Indo-European ones. But there is also a challenge to the linguistic epistemology which underwrites the

assertion. Renan's positivist claim that Semitic and Indo-European languages may be accurately characterized and defined according to essential attributes is at odds, epistemologically, with Whewellian hypothesizing, with the anatomical studies of Bichat and Bernard which define organic character by function, with James Sully's anti-Cartesian psychology, and with George Henry Lewes's Kantian arguments in *Problems of Life and Mind*. The sort of truth-claim which Renan makes -- as distinct from its substance -- Lewes would describe, in a Kantian way, as metaphysical: "to know things as they are to us, is all we need to know, all that is possible to be known; a knowledge of the Suprasensible -- were it gained -- would, by the very fact of coming under conditions of knowledge, only be knowledge of its relations to us, the knowledge would still be relative, phenomenal" (1874-1879, Volume 1, Part 1, 28).

If one accepts Lewes's definition of knowledge, and one defines metaphysics as suprasensible, then there can be no knowledge of the metaphysical. Renan then makes the same sort of claim as do Gascoigne and Arrowpoint: he claims a knowledge which is independent of signifying systems, a knowledge which may be expressed in a transparent medium. This is just the sort of claim which is thrown into question in *Daniel Deronda*.

I have been suggesting so far that the language of *Daniel Deronda* subverts claims and arguments which propose themselves as 'natural' or universal, and that analogies with other discourses -- anatomical, psychological, political -- show that linguistic identity is established by structural relations, not by autonomous correspondence, for "all language . . . is ineradicably metaphorical, working by tropes and figures; it is a mistake to believe that any language is *literally* literal" (Eagleton 1983, 145). Or, equally, "metaphor cannot mediate neutrally between mind and world, since, being language, it is already ineluctably on the side of mind" (Eagleton 1984, 1290). But such a challenge to totalizing systems clearly has a logical difficulty. If one "challenge[s] any aesthetic theory or practice that either assumes a secure, confident knowledge of the subject or elides the subject completely" (Hutcheon 1986, 78), one then runs the risk of questioning totalizing systems by offering the totalizing claim that no such systems exist. The challenge to "the universalizing assumptions of humanism" may turn out to be "just another totalizing narrative" (Hutcheon 1987, 13). And that leads to "meta-narrative one-upmanship" (Hutcheon 1987, 14).

The question arises, then, whether *Daniel Deronda* uncovers the material conditions which fabricate the 'natural' definitions of words such as "duty" from an ideal,

metalinguistic position, or from a position which, self-reflexively, acknowledges the fabric of its own production. That question may be addressed by examining a number of the novel's central metaphors to see whether they seek to function expressively or if one may see in them "the text's constant oblique meditation on its own fictive status" (Eagleton 1978, 123).

Gambling is both actual and metaphorical in *Daniel Deronda*. The prioritized 'message' of the metaphor is the moral, pejorative one that "'our gain is another's loss'" (309). The phrase occurs verbatim repeatedly. Deronda explains his general dislike of gambling, and so his immediate dislike of seeing Gwendolen gamble in Leubronn, by the phrase in this first instance. Gwendolen partly turns the phrase back on Deronda later when she asks if he does not hate people when "'their gain is your loss'" (383). This general condemnation of gambling is given a specific, metaphorical application by Gwendolen who represents her marriage to Grandcourt, and Lydia Glasher's consequent exclusion, in gambling terms: "'you [Deronda] wanted me not to do that -- not to make my gain out of another's loss in that way -- and I have done a great deal worse'" (415). Once more, Gwendolen presents both her regret over the marriage and her sense of being imprisoned by that act, in the same image: "'I have thrust out others -- I have made my gain out of their loss --

tried to make it -- tried. And I must go on. I can't alter it'" (420). Lastly, the phrase reappears as a melancholic coda after Grandcourt's death: "'I meant to get pleasure for myself, and it all turned to misery. I wanted to make my gain out of another's loss -- you remember? -- it was like roulette -- and the money burnt into me'" (645).

There is a good deal of actual gambling in the novel, involving a number of characters. The opening scenes in Leubronn, as mentioned, show Gwendolen playing roulette (3ff.). Mirah's father is first spoken of as being "continually at a gambling-house" (201), a claim later (605) supported by Mordecai. Once he has borrowed money from his daughter, Mirah's father's immediate intention is to gamble it: "the father Lapidoth had quitted his daughter at the doorstep, ruled by that possibility of staking something in play or betting" (719).

Gascoigne characterizes the rumours he has heard of Grandcourt's earlier adventures in a gambling metaphor: "whatever Grandcourt had done, he had not ruined himself; and it is well known that in gambling, for example, whether of the business or holiday sort, a man who has the strength of mind to leave off when he has only ruined others, is a reformed character" (83-84). Gwendolen's failed marriage is "this last great gambling loss" (411) of which she says that she has

"'done worse than gamble again and pawn the necklace again'" (419).

The overtly moralizing tone of these passages may suggest that the metaphor functions within the conventional parameters of didactic, authoritative narration where the Author-God figure, to borrow Barthes' term (1987, 146), catechizes and instructs the reader without ever acknowledging the generative conditions which produced the proffered knowledge. The gain/loss nexus insists that success in gambling necessitates a victim. The sort of people who gamble are characterized as a "dry-lipped feminine figure prematurely old, withered after short bloom like her artificial flowers" (4) or one who may be adequately encompassed by the synecdoche of a hand: "a bony, crab-like hand stretching a bared wrist to clutch a heap of coin" (4). Underneath superficial differences, however, "there was a certain uniform negativeness of expression which had the effect of a mask -- as if they had all eaten of some root that for the time compelled the brains of each to the same narrow monotony of action" (5). The general effect is one of "dull, gas-poisoned absorption" (5).

Gambling is associated with disreputable figures such as Mirah and Mordecai's father; it is used to illustrate a selfish aspect of Gwendolen; and it serves to point up the double moral standard which enables Gascoigne to overlook

Grandcourt's past. With seeming confidence it is represented as the ruin of families. As Mordecai says to his father: "'you absconded with money, leaving your debts unpaid; you forsook my mother; you robbed her of her little child and broke her heart; you have become a gambler, and where shame and conscience were, there sits an insatiable desire'" (722). There seems little distinction between slave trading and gambling: "'you were ready to sell my sister -- you had sold her, but the price was denied you'" (722). The character gambling is given seems as absolute as the condemnation of it:

the gambling appetite is more absolutely dominant than bodily hunger, which can be neutralized by an emotional or intellectual excitation, but the passion for watching chances -- the habitual suspensive poise of the mind in actual or imaginary play -- nullifies the susceptibility to other excitation. In its final, imperious stage, it seems the unjoyous dissipation of demons, seeking diversion on the burning marl of perdition (719).

This may appear, then, to be a conventional Realist judgement of gambling in the terms which Belsey suggests for "the relationship between language and subjectivity" (1980, 72), in these passages, seems suppressed and the nature of gambling appears transcendent and extra-discursive. Yet, as

I have already argued in relation to another type of financial metaphor -- Casaubon's financial representation of marriage in *Middlemarch* -- all speech has a tendency to become "entangled in metaphors," even that which represents itself as metalinguistic.

There are a number of ways in which one may see that the metaphor of gambling is textualized and so denied transcendency. The primary characteristic of gambling is that each gain is another's loss. Gwendolen rebukes herself (with apparent authorial agreement) for entering a marriage which produces just this relationship between herself and Lydia Glasher. The implication is that one should avoid contracts of any sort, whether actual gambling or something which may be analogous to it, in which one's own success or happiness may be achieved only at the expense of someone else's. But it is difficult to see what other sorts of contract are possible:

in the chequered area of human experience the seasons are all mingled as in the golden age: fruit and blossom hang together; in the same moment the sickle is reaping and the seed is sprinkled; one tends the green cluster and another treads the wine-press. Nay, in each of our lives harvest and spring-time are continually one, until Death himself gathers us and sows us anew in his invisible fields (752).

This is a model of inevitable interdependence which may be compared with Bichat and Bernard's anatomical models or with Sully's repudiation of the Cartesian separation between mind and body. Actions are produced by antecedents and themselves produce both gains and losses in a structure, not just of relative interdependence, but of relative definition. In Lewes's phrase, "that Principle [the thinking principle] is not an antecedent but a resultant, not an entity but a convergence of manifold activities" (1874-1879, 1, 1, 144-145).

There is an ethical issue in gambling but there is no alternative to the model in which someone's gain is another's loss. Grandcourt's death, that loss, is Sir Hugo's gain and "we should be churlish creatures if we could have no joy in our fellow-mortals' joy, unless it were in agreement with our theory of righteous distribution and our highest ideal of human good" (663). The most potent instance of the inescapability of the gambling nexus of gain and loss is the final scene between Deronda and Gwendolen. Deronda's discovery of his religion and the consequent enabling of his marriage, mire Gwendolen in an isolation more complete, even, than when she was herself married. Now there is no longer the possibility of future improvement to act as a beacon: "she was the victim of his happiness" (749). Deronda's gains -- his religion and his wife -- cannot be won without this loss

to Gwendolen. In *Middlemarch*, the self-reflexive paradox was that the novel noted that metaphor may mislead by using one of its own principal metaphors. Here, there is an apparently Realist, pejorative judgement against gambling in a work whose most vaunted figure cannot separate his gain from Gwendolen's loss.

This appears to problematize the epistemological basis of the gambling metaphor, for the authority of its pejorative judgement is contingent upon an ontological distinction between the uncontrollable appetite which is gambling, and the disinterested, impartial, objective assessment which is represented by the very existence of the metaphor. There are, certainly, discourses which are represented as partial. Mordecai's indictment of his father has no substantive effect because his words are understood through the interpretive medium of gambling: "he [Mordecai] passed like an insubstantial ghost, and his words had the heart eaten out of them by numbers and movements that seemed to make the very tissue of Lapidoth's consciousness" (724). Similarly, Lapidoth looks for Mirah's pocket change because

the imperious gambling desire within him, which carried on its activity through every other occupation, and made a continuous web of imagination that held all else in its meshes, would hardly have been under the control of a

protracted purpose, if he had been able to lay his hand on any sum worth capturing (732).

But in the pervasive gain/loss nexus there is no easy distinction to be made between 'partial' interpretations, such as Lapidoth's, and an 'objective' conspectus: "who has been quite free from egoistic escapes of the imagination picturing desirable consequences on his own future in the presence of another's misfortune, sorrow, or death?" (659-660). This is the process, once more, which is apparent in Vincy's response to Featherstone's death: the event itself has no single, 'objective,' character which, like Benveniste's "history," one may use to measure the accuracy, or not, of other representations. The interrogative quoted above, like the one which introduces the Uriel passage in *Middlemarch* (402), is inclusive. It is not just 'bad' characters such as Lapidoth who produce linguistic meaning according to "egoistic escapes of the imagination" but also, as here, figures like Sir Hugo. In Saussure's terms, one may explain this according to the contention that linguistic value is not intransitive but is always established by structural relations: "no word has a value that can be identified independently of what else there is in its vicinity" (114).

But if one accepts Saussure's argument, it is difficult to see how the narration itself differs from the

discourses it contains. If Sir Hugo and Deronda, as much as Lapidoth and Gwendolen, function within the productive (as opposed to the expressive) metaphor of gambling, then how can the narration operate extra-discursively or transitively? The narration, too, uses metaphors and they can no more reflect, or express, innate subjectivity than can Deronda's or Lapidoth's. Even if one has the intention of producing a metanarrative, that is no guarantee of achieving it. As Derrida argues, "no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation" (1979, 81).

In this instance, the context of the gambling nexus of gain and loss produces the final exchange between Deronda and Gwendolen. Is this to be seen as a representation of a transcendental, universal truth, or does the metaphor act here, as it did with Vincy and Casaubon, to impose a character? Is the metaphor metadiscursive, reflecting the innate subject, or, as Saussure claims, is "thought, chaotic by nature, . . . made precise by this process of segmentation?" (110).

Specific structural comparisons exist between gambling and linguistic representation. Gambling is an arbitrary but socially agreed system in which meanings (for such concepts as gain and loss) are produced within this structure of internal (not referential) relations. The gains and losses are real, of course, in the sense that money changes hands, but the

means which enable this consequence, gambling itself, is a system of arbitrary signification. This internal arbitrariness has a parallel in the pluralistic representations which gambling, without any apparent irony, assumes socially. Deronda upbraids Gwendolen's gambling and her pleasure in it: "'there is something revolting to me in raking a heap of money together, and internally chuckling over it, when others are feeling the loss of it'" (309). Deronda's argument is the broadly liberal one that, with so many inevitable injustices and so much unavoidable suffering, one should desist from adding unnecessarily to these. However, though he shows no awareness of it, his position is untenable for his own independent means, which enable him to scorn petty money-grubbing in much the way that Lydgate condescends to Farebrother's profitable whist-playing, depend on his income from the stock market. *Daniel Deronda* offers no substantive attack upon that naturalized system of gains and inevitable losses which constitutes Victorian capitalism, yet it too is a nexus like that in Leubronn. One may argue, of course, that this derives only from the narrowness of Eliot's political vision, a vision which abhors obvious gambling while disregarding established, 'respectable' gambling.

But Deronda's income is not unremarked upon. While rowing on the Thames, Deronda's mood is compared to that of other young men in similar circumstances: "that of

questioning whether it were worthwhile to take part in the battle of the world: I mean, of course, the young men in whom the unproductive labour of questioning is sustained by three or five per cent on capital which somebody else has battled for" (169). This narrative irony, however, is not directed against the means whereby this income is (un)earned. Rather, the criticism is of the use to which such an 'unearned' position is put. Gambling *per se* is not condemned, so that one may read in this absence an anti-essentialist view of it which presents gambling's social character in terms reminiscent of its internal character. Gambling as a subject is social and is therefore produced by dialogue, and dialogue is the condition of discourse. Gambling has no innate subjectivity for it is defined by agreed social relations which may, of course, alter. Gambling is not simply the expression of some 'natural' trait such as greed or selfishness. (145) One may see such traits amongst gamblers, of course, but as there is no substantial criticism of Deronda's, or Sir Hugo's, or even of Grandcourt's 'gambling,' or of the social structure built upon respect for such an income, it is difficult to say that *Daniel Deronda* ascribes any single, coherent character to it.

Gambling, then, does not function as a metalanguage any more than the narrative itself functions as a metalanguage. Both are contexts, in Derrida's sense, which

enable a meaning. Indeed, a specific parallel is made between gambling and words as systems of agreed signification. When Lush tells Gwendolen of the changes which Grandcourt has made to his will in favour of his bastard, Gwendolen finds that her humiliation lacks all expression, for the power and effective meaning of words themselves, like the significance of gambling tokens, can never transcend circumstance and setting to enter the metaphysical domain of ultimate significance. Both gambling and words exist within the defining parameters of socially agreed discourse, as the text itself makes clear: "Gwendolen's lips were almost as pale as her cheeks: her passion had no weapons -- words were no better than chips" (558). As Saussure's analogy with the knight on a chess board shows, the object itself -- be it a chess piece, a gambling token, or even a word -- has no significance independent of its function, and that function is produced within a system of structural relations where difference, not essence, is determining.

The metaphors which describe the psychological effects of the gambling metaphor stress the structurally dependent character of the medium. Gambling is the "tissue" (724) of Lapidoth's mind and it forms the "continuous web" (732) of his imagination. As with the "fabric" and "web" images in *Middlemarch*, the nature of tissue and of the web is shaped by the relations of their constituent parts. One may contend,

then, that gambling does not function as "history," transcribing events outside the dialogic or the discursive. By foregrounding its own arbitrariness, its system of internal signification, and by drawing parallels between itself and language as generative, constructive powers, the gambling metaphor insists that it is only one possible context and that "any attempt to codify context can always be grafted onto the context it [seeks] to describe, yielding a new context which escapes the previous formulation" (Culler 1982, 124).

Herein lies the text's self-consciousness, its awareness of its methods. Self-consciousness, as it is discussed with relation to much contemporary, postmodern fiction, often implies a reaction against the dicta of moral criticism which collocate seriousness in fiction with earnestness and solemnity, a confusion which goes back at least to Arnold's comments on Chaucer. As Robert Alter notes, this association of seriousness with solemnity is particularly prevalent in English criticism of the novel where

there has been a recurrent expectation that 'serious' fiction be an intent, verisimilar representation of moral situation in their social contexts; and, with few exceptions, there has been a lamentable lack of critical appreciation for the kind of novel that expresses its seriousness through playfulness, that is acutely aware of

itself as a mere structure of words even as it tries to discover ways of going beyond words to the experiences words seek to indicate (1975, ix).

Self-consciousness in *Daniel Deronda* is not of this playful sort. Rather, it may be seen as a response to the simple, unproblematic and influential distinction Arnold makes between, on one hand, "eccentricity and arbitrariness," and, on the other hand, "see[ing] the object as in itself it really is" (1970, 84). For Arnold, the deficiencies of English literature in the nineteenth century, compared with French and German literatures, may be defined by the word 'criticism': "of these two literatures [French and German], as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a *critical* effort; the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge -- theology, philosophy, history, art, science -- to see the object as in itself it really is" (1970, 84). By contrast, English writers "bring to the consideration of their object some individual fancy" which pollutes "simple lucidity of mind" (1970, 84).

Arnold's confidence in the distinctions between his categories -- partial/objective perception; individual fancy/lucidity of mind -- and his assured presumption that one may delineate the defining characteristics of the methods, are thrown into question by the self-conscious language of both

Middlemarch and *Daniel Deronda*. The pier-glass image in *Middlemarch* suggests that "individual fancy" is inevitable in all perception. Vincy, Casaubon, Arrowpoint, Gascoigne and others, in various settings, demonstrate that Arnold's object may not be defined "as in itself it really is," for language produces the object plurally, giving it various, and not mutually exclusive, characters. For Arnold, "eccentricity and arbitrariness," are aspects of the distorting ego, whereas in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, as Mann argues, "meaning . . . places that ego at its center" (1983, 45). Arnold's idea of criticism is that it should reflect, accurately, lucidly and inductively, what is really there, with the assumption that what is really there exists prior to and independent of, the observer and his/her expression of the object. But the problems inherent in the notion of simple reflection are taken up in that image of the pier-glass and are then examined once more in *Daniel Deronda*. In Eliot's last two texts, as Mann again argues, "the very light that permits us to see is that which limits or even distorts what we do see" (1983, 44). In this context, then, self-consciousness is not playfulness but a way of refusing the natural 'self-evidentness,' the positivist confidence, of Arnold's categories and of his definition of criticism. The mirror images in *Daniel Deronda*, in particular, deconstruct the presumption that the language of criticism describes "the object in itself as it really is."

In representing objects the text also acknowledges the generative nature of its method: "Eliot formulated her novels in such a way as to suggest that the reader was being presented not only with a representation of society but also with the logic of this representation" (Cottom 1987, 52).

In classic Realist texts mirrors are often used to express Narcissus-like vanity.¹² Traditionally, too, representations claim to hold a mirror up to nature. In *Daniel Deronda*, mirrors at first seem to express Gwendolen's vanity. The novel opens with Fanny Davilow's letter to her daughter concerning the family's financial ruin in the collapse of Grapnell and Co. Gwendolen's response is represented using a mirror:

she stood motionless for a few minutes, then tossed off her hat and automatically looked in the glass. The coils of her smooth light-brown hair were still in order perfect enough for a ball-room; and as on other nights, Gwendolen might have looked lingeringly at herself for pleasure (surely an allowable indulgence); but now she took no conscious note of her reflected beauty, and

¹² Though narcissism is commonly used pejoratively in classic Realist texts, Freud, as Hutcheon notes, "confer[es] on narcissism the status of the 'universal original condition' of man, making it the basis of more than just pathological behaviour" (1984, 1).

simply stared right before her as if she had been jarred by a hateful sound and was waiting for any sign of its cause (12).

Similarly, though perhaps more obviously erotically, Gwendolen

had a *naive* delight in her fortunate self . . . [as she] had every day seen a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking-glass. And even in this beginning of troubles, while for lack of anything else to do she sat gazing at her image in the growing light, her face gathered a complacency gradual as the cheerfulness of the morning. Her beautiful lips curled into a more and more decided smile, till at last she shook off her hat, leaned forward and kissed the cold glass which had looked so warm (14).

Examples abound in which Gwendolen's vanity seems to be expressed by textual mirrors: "she [Gwendolen] meant to do what was pleasant to herself in a striking manner; or rather, whatever she could do so as to strike others with admiration and get in that reflected way a more ardent sense of living" (34). Anxiously awaiting her interview with Deronda prior to setting off for the Mediterranean, Gwendolen finds habitual solace in her reflection:

in her struggle between agitation and the effort to suppress it, she was walking up and down the length of two drawing-rooms, where at one end a long mirror reflected her in her black dress, chosen in the early morning with a half-admitted reference to this hour. But above this black dress her head on its white pillar of a neck showed to advantage. Some consciousness of this made her turn hastily and hurry to the boudoir, where again there was a glass (565-566).

In anxious circumstances, Gwendolen's unconsidered, automatic response is to look in a mirror: Gwendolen's "first movement was to go to the tall mirror between the windows, which reflected herself and the room completely, while her mamma sat down and also looked at the reflection" (23); "while Grandcourt on his beautiful black Yarico, the groom behind him on Criterion, was taking the pleasant ride from Diplow to Offendene, Gwendolen was seated before the mirror while her mother gathered up the lengthy mass of light-brown hair which she had been carefully brushing" (274).

Before the interview with Klesmer when she hopes he will commend her musical skills and encourage her in a musical career, Gwendolen once more turns to the mirror:

catching the reflection of her movements in the glass panel, she was diverted to the contemplation of the image there and walked towards it. Dressed in black without a single ornament, and with the warm whiteness of her skin set off between her light-brown coronet of hair and her square-cut bodice, she might have tempted an artist to try again the Roman trick of a statue in black, white, and tawny marble. Seeing her image slowly advancing, she thought, 'I am beautiful' -- not exultingly, but with grave decision. Being beautiful was after all the condition on which she most needed external testimony (233).

As a sort of metaphorical summary of the narcissistic effects of Gwendolen's repeated gazing into mirrors, one is told that "she naturally found it difficult to think her own pleasure less important than others made it" (20).

In Realist terms, it might be argued that these mirrors function to express Gwendolen's innate vanity, selfishness and egocentricity, what Calder describes as Gwendolen's "limited . . . vision" (1975, 154). But there are difficulties with this neutral, expressivist view of the way in which this pervasive image operates. As I have already argued with regard to the mirror and light images in *Middlemarch*, the virtual image one sees in the light reflected

in the mirror is necessarily both egocentric and discursive, in the senses in which I have been using these terms. The passages from Ruskin and Spencer which Feltes notes (1969, 69-70), and which are widely regarded as important in this context (J. Hillis Miller 1975, 138), have in common the argument that what one perceives is not the object "as in itself it really is." Scientists had long known that one does not see an object, one sees the light it reflects. The scenes which Ruskin and Spencer describe explore this idea in a setting which itself is reflective: the sea as seen from the shore in the moonlight. The bar of light which comes from the horizon to one's feet and which moves as the observer moves, has, of course, only a virtual existence. It is produced by the nature of perception itself. From a given position -- actual or intellectual -- one sees light reflected from certain places and not others. On the shore, as Ruskin and Spencer point out, one can only see the reflection from those waves which together seem to form a bar. All the other waves are equally bright but one's position determines what one can see. That is to say, given how one perceives, the medium itself -- in this case the light on a reflective surface -- is an aspect of the object as it appears. The medium of a mirror cannot be neutral: one cannot presume that what one sees in a reflective surface is actually, objectively there.

This context may make it less 'obvious' that Gwendolen's mirrors simply reflect, without in any way shaping, her vanity. One may see here a more complex relationship than that where the medium of the mirror simply transcribes Gwendolen's already-existing, pre-defined vanity. As Belsey argues, "the text . . . presents . . . an account of the social production of femininity" (1982, 132). The mirror operates analogously with the social in that it too proffers identity within a signifying system of relations. The mirror gives a virtual image like that given in conventional social flattery: Gwendolen sees "a pleasant reflection of [herself] in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking-glass" (14). Her "sense of living" is produced "in [a] reflected way" (34). As with the candle and the pier-glass, Gwendolen's vanity exists within a process of relations. In part, the process may be seen in gender terms, as Belsey notes: "Gwendolen identifies with herself-as-spectacle, seeing her image as a source of power" (1982, 132). The mirror does not offer the Realist distinction between a true or authentic self and a false, illusory self which vanity, for example, deludes one into believing to be real. Indeed, the novel specifically disavows the notion of a neutral mirror which could transcribe such a distinction: there is no "magic mirror [which] could [show] Gwendolen her actual position" (411).

These textual mirrors show what Lacan calls the split subject. Lacan argues that the child has no innate sense of identity. Rather, identity is produced by forming distinctions between self and all that is not-self. During what Lacan calls the mirror stage, however, the child can "recognize as such his own image in a mirror" (Lacan 1977, 1). This recognition precipitates a split between the 'I' which perceives and the 'I' which is perceived in the mirror. With the later acquisition of language there is a second parallel split between oneself as speaker/writer and the 'I' in one's speech and/or writing. In Lacanian structuralist terms, there is a contradiction between the subject of the *énonciation* and the subject of the *énoncé*.

While the Lacanian split subject will be more important in the later discussion of subjectivity, what may be seen as significant here to the mirror images in *Daniel Deronda* is Lacan's contention that the image of the self -- either the virtual image in the mirror or the 'I' of speech -- has a mediating role in the construction of the subject. As Smith says, "the dialectic between the 'subject' and language (the field of the Other, as he [Lacan] calls it), is constitutive" (1988, 71). The basic point which one may see in Lacan's sometimes unnecessarily elusive argument is that the subject is the site of struggle and contradiction, not a coherent, non-contradictory, autonomous unity, so that one

need not necessarily read the mirror images as signs which map Gwendolen's changes from one coherent subject-position to another.

For example, the early images of apparent reflection coincide with the period of Gwendolen's confident exercise of social power, a power one sees reflected in her familial, marital and social dominance. One may argue that the delivery of Lydia's diamonds to Gwendolen on her marriage to Grandcourt marks the eclipse of Gwendolen's power. But the transition is made through an image of reflection: "in her movement the casket fell on the floor and the diamonds rolled out. She took no notice, but fell back in her chair again helpless. She could not see the reflections of herself then: they were like so many women petrified white" (331). Later, disappointed in a marriage in which she lacks power, Gwendolen "walk[s] about the large drawing-room like an imprisoned dumb creature, not recognizing herself in the glass panels" (549).

In Realist terms, one might contend that the disappearance of the reflected image expresses Gwendolen's discovery that her early conception of self was illusory and insubstantial, like an image in a mirror. Freed from this fictional, imaginary self -- a character fashioned by vanity -- Gwendolen may now discover her 'real' self, a self distinct from the narcissistically distorted selves seen in the mirrors. But, a number of suppressed assumptions are needed

to accept such an account. The mirrors are given only a neutral, transcriptive function: they reproduce a subject which is assumed to be autonomous and coherent, and they do so objectively and non-constitutively. In this Realist account, Gwendolen travels a familiar road from an initial subject position in which she is vain and selfish, through disillusioning suffering, to another (wiser) coherent subject position characterized by contrition and a more modest estimate of her power and position. Her identity, though it changes, is assumed to be single and transcendent at any given moment. Her development, thus, is linear for she is presumed to exchange one position of absolute, complete, coherent unity for another, and these various mirrors express these changes.

These are assumptions about subjectivity and linguistic representation that are brought to the text and that one tests against it: they are not 'naturally' there. Lacan's arguments are, of course, radically different, but it is no less 'natural' to test them against the text and they are, in fact, no more of an imposition upon the text than are Realist dicta. But they are very different, for Lacan, as Caws argues, "the subject is an activity, not a thing . . . the subject produces itself by reflecting on itself, but when it is engaged on some other object it has no being apart from the activity of being so engaged" (1968, 45). Reflection,

then, is not transcription but production or, as Lacan himself puts it:

we have only to understand the mirror stage as an *identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image (1977, 2).

A reading of these mirror images which privileges the distinction between 'real' and illusory selfhood depends upon what Lacan calls "the unthinkable of an absolute subject" (5). One either recognizes or misrecognizes oneself, for one is an autonomous entity. Lacan contends that the recognition in the mirror is not so simple because subjectivity is neither constant nor coherent but is defined moment to moment within a discursive system of signifying practices so that the subject, instead of simply being (mis -)recognized passively in the mirror, is produced in "the dialectic that will henceforth link the I to socially elaborated situations" (5). That is, "the 'subject's' being [is] subject to the signifier" (Smith 1988, 71), which in this case is the mirror. Instead of ascribing to the individual a history of discrete, coherent subject positions which these various mirrors reflect, one may instead choose to follow Lacan's formulation of the subject as a provisional, momentary creation of the relation between the

individual and specific discourses. In this way these mirrors function within discourses which have an active, constitutive role in the production of Gwendolen, for "meaning can be created only by differences and sustained only by reference to other meaning. Difference is therefore the very basis of the Lacanian definition of the split subject as a meaning-producing entity, itself constructed from a system of differences" (Hutcheon 1988, 65).

As difference precludes transcendence, so the mirror cannot represent that from which it is itself distinct. These mirrors function analogously to the representations which Gwendolen is given in pervasive instances of performance, both actual and metaphorical. In addition to the gambling scenes which I have already discussed, there are performances with horses at hunts and elsewhere; at archery meetings; at musical recitals; as well as performances in a double sense in acting tableaux. These are to be found throughout the novel. As Belsey argues, these performances, like the mirrors, show Gwendolen "posited in the discourses of other characters" (1982, 132). These discourses are not distinct from Gwendolen's individuating, unique subjectivity. They do not represent, accurately or not, Gwendolen as in herself she really is: rather, Gwendolen's subjectivity is produced in the dialectic between the individual and what in *Middlemarch* are called "various small mirrors" (83).

These mirrors uncover the constructedness of representation. Meaning is not simply inscribed in them because meaning cannot be essential. Rather, meaning is produced in a dialectic of difference: "I do not grasp the sense of the sentence just by mechanically piling one word on the other: for the words to compose some relatively coherent meaning at all, each one of them must, so to speak, contain the trace of the ones which have gone before, and hold itself open to the trace of those which are coming after" (Eagleton 1983, 128). Presence may be determined only relatively: that is, presence depends on absence. That is what one may see in the first of the two epigraphs to Chapter 57:

'The unripe grape, the ripe, and the dried.

All things are changes, not into nothing, but into that which is not at present' (650).

In this citation from Marcus Aurelius, these three conditions -- the unripe, the ripe and the dried -- are not essential subject positions but depend for their character upon what they are not, upon absence. This epigraph precedes the last of the mirrors which I shall examine:

Deeds are the pulse of Time, his beating life,
And righteous or unrighteous, being done,

Must throb in after-throbs till Time itself
Be laid in stillness, and the universe
Quiver and breathe upon no mirror more (650).

This second epigraph to the chapter -- this one composed by Eliot herself -- recalls Bichat and Bernard's work in two ways. The metaphor of the body, quite clearly, invites a comparison with Bichat and Bernard's physiological and anatomical work; secondly, the context of the quotation from Marcus Aurelius suggests a specific comparison with their structural contention that function and biological composition may not be examined separately. As time may be measured only through that which it is not, only through deeds, so the universe itself may be seen only in the representation of a mirror, only in that which it is not. In both cases presence depends upon absence. That argument is not only anti-essentialist, it also problematizes the notion of neutral transcription in a mirror, for one possible allusion is to *King Lear*.

The image of breath on a mirror neatly links the metaphor of the living body to the problem of representation in a mirror and the question of ego. Lear, of course, thinks he sees the dead Cordelia's breath on a looking-glass. His ego, candle-like, makes a presence from an absence and he

makes concentric circles, as it were, from the random scratches. Though the conclusion is wrong, the method is not, for there is no transcendent discourse, no representation of the universe as in itself it really is, but only, as here, hypotheses constructed on the dialectic between deeds and time or between the universe and the mirror.

CHAPTER TWO: THIS IS NOT THE END

A beginning gives us the chance to do work that compensates us for the tumbling disorder of brute reality that will not settle down (Said 1985, 50).

Sitting in a pew with my hands over my eyes, I made my own list of wants. I wanted a long letter from home. I wanted calm weather. I wanted something else which I couldn't identify exactly. It was an ending. Not a destination; not the Canal Street wharf in New Orleans. I wanted an ending which was emptier and more open than that. It wouldn't be river and it wouldn't be ocean. It would have no particular colour. It would be somewhere

from which there would be only one place to go, and that would be home (Raban 1981, 471).

I have argued in the preceding chapter that in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* there is an awareness of the constitutive role of language in the formation of meaning. Because language may be seen as a differential system which makes divisions within the continuum of undifferentiated experience, so one may contend that all representations made in that language must be provisional in the sense that they depend upon the assumptions inherent in this arbitrary signifying system. *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* examine methods as much as they make conclusions, for conclusions and epistemologies operate interdependently.

In this chapter I shall examine the related idea of closure. In Saussurian terms, signifiers and signifieds are not natural equivalences. Words are not simply the labels which record linguistically the self-evident ontological distinctness of objects in the world. Rather, because meaning is produced differentially, so parameters are defined linguistically. Saussure's discussion, mentioned earlier, of the distinction between the French noun *mouton* and the English noun *sheep*, or between the French verb *louer* and the German verbs *mieten* and *vermieten*, illustrates this point (1983, 114-115). One may make an analogy, then, between this sense of

the parameters of meaning for the individual word and the parameters of any writing. If the limits of a word's meaning are produced within the discourse of language, then one may ask whether the limits of a text, its points of beginning and ending, reflect 'natural' places -- the innate parameters of an object -- or whether they are produced, like the meanings of the individual words which form the text, discursively. I shall explore that question in relation to *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in three ways. First, I shall offer a definition of closure. Then I shall suggest some of the implications for closure of the scientific discourses of Lyell and Darwin, in particular. This will provide a context to examine in detail the textual limits of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in relation to Eliot's earlier novels.

At a basic level, closure is the restoration of an order which is assumed to have existed prior to the commencement of the plot, an order which was disrupted by some event -- murder, disappearance, war, loss, a journey -- near the beginning of the story. The moment of closure is the moment of intelligibility. Accordingly, such closure presumes that the reader is the coherent source of meaning. Closure depends on linearity and coherence. Implicit is the idea that order is natural and that disorder is an unnatural rupture which must be healed. By favouring the *status quo*, closure therefore tends to be conservative. In a pejorative sense,

action appears disruptive: only reaction can restore 'natural' order.

Classic Realist texts characteristically end with closure of this sort, and so reinstate order and coherent subject positions. It may be a different order to that which was implied prior to the text, or it may be the same one. Deaths and marriages are likely, however, to have redistributed the relationships amongst the subject positions, but closure closes off the threat to subjectivity by implying that the new subject positions will be permanent. One may say, then, that there are three broad functions for closure in classic Realism: reinstating order; making that order static through a kind of epilogue, implicit or explicit; and allaying the threat to subjectivity (including the reader's) by presenting the new subject positions as destinations which have been reached, as journeys concluded. These functions are predicated on the elided illusionist view that the text as a whole is a representation of the world, not a re-presentation of it.

Using Benveniste's distinction between "declarative" and "interrogative" statements, Belsey describes this sort of closure in classic Realist texts as declarative for, in her terms, the declarative text imparts knowledge (1980, 90). The active production of such knowledge is not examined in Realist writing, for it (the knowledge) is represented as revealed

wisdom whose authoritativeness is not at issue. Classic Realism naturalizes normative values by encouraging the reader to identify him- or herself with the position of privileged, 'objective' knowledge of the subject of the *énoncé*. Such knowledge is presented as 'natural' or 'common sensical' or 'obvious' so that the social and political conditions of its production are suppressed.

Closure functions in relation to the *élite* conception of authority upon which this sort of knowledge depends. One familiar structure of the classic Realist text is that in which an *élite* community of narrator and reader -- a community in which knowledge of what is true is self-evident -- tolerantly oversees characters' gropings towards the privileged understanding which both narrator and reader are assumed to have at the outset of the novel. Closure re-stabilizes the new subject positions in relation to this transcendental and unchallenged sense both of what 'right' knowledge is and of who possesses it. Such a structure, clearly, reinforces the *status quo*: the issue is who should be admitted to the privileged *élite* which already exists, and it is the *élite* themselves -- author and reader -- who decide. What is elided in such closure are the issues of how the *élite* came to assume their position, and why self-serving knowledge is taken to be 'natural' and transcendental, rather than

culturally specific to the dominant class. This sort of closure is defined by Barbara Herrnstein Smith:

closure occurs when the concluding portion of a poem [or any text, presumably] creates in the reader a sense of appropriate cessation. It announces and justifies the absence of further development; it reinforces the feeling of finality, completion, and composure which we value in all works of art; and it gives ultimate unity and coherence to the reader's experience of the poem by providing a point from which all the preceding elements may be viewed comprehensively and their relations grasped as part of a significant design (1968, 36).

Where the declarative, classic Realist text, then, is an illusionist narrative leading to closure, the interrogative text, on the other hand, tends to undermine the illusion and to draw attention to its own constructedness, its own textuality: "the interrogative text . . . disrupts the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with a unified subject of the enunciation. The position of the 'author' inscribed in the text, if it can be located at all, is seen as questioning or as literally contradictory" (Belsey 1980, 91). By contrast, closure in classic Realism seeks "equilibrium" and "the sense of stability" so that there are "no loose

ends' to be accounted for" and "everything that could follow is predictable" (Barbara Herrnstein Smith 1968, 34-35).

In classic Realism the reader is said to be wholly interpellated into the text. In the interrogative text the reader is distanced. There is no hierarchy of discourses in the interrogative text as there is in the Realist text, so that there is no metadiscourse. Where Realism resolves contradiction into coherence through closure, and thus asserts a single 'right' point of view, the interrogative text, because it denies the possibility of such a position, presents conflicting systems in unresolved confrontation.

Authority is crucial to closure in classic Realism. The form of Realism implies that there is nothing partial, biased or selective about the reality it presents or the conclusions it reaches. In Stendhal's familiar image of the passive mirror, or in Arnold's equally familiar formulation of Realism's subject matter, Realism merely reflects the world as it is. Nothing less than metalinguistic, transcultural, transhistorical, classless verity is the tacit goal of Realism. The interrogative text, of course, denies that such a statement could be made, for all texts must, like Whewellian hypothesizing, begin from a chosen point and so must reject all other possible starting positions. That starting place is therefore partial, particular and is produced within, rather than outside, such considerations as politics or genre. The

points of closure are thus chosen and are places of inclusion and of exclusion, not natural starting and stopping places. Because they are chosen, these points can always be otherwise: that makes them provisional and arbitrary, not conclusive and final. Unlike the classic Realist text, the interrogative text foregrounds this constructive process.

Though the interrogative text may also be illusionist, its constructedness, or textuality, is always emphasized. In stressing the arbitrariness of beginnings and endings the text emphasizes two other aspects of interrogative discourse: the distancing of the reader and the absence of an authoritative metalanguage. If the points of opening and ending are acknowledged to be produced within specific discourses, then though the text may have authority, it cannot be any single 'right' authority. The mergence of narrator's and reader's discourses at the close must, therefore, be at least more provisional than that assumed in a straightforwardly Realist text because no single point of view can be transcendent in the interrogative text.

Conflict and contradiction are, of course, present in all drama and fiction. That observation is at least as old as Aristotle, and the way in which conflict is represented in the drama of classical Athens is often regarded as crucial in the evolution of ritual into drama (Harwood 1984, 44). Conflict itself is commonly regarded as one of the prime conditions of

drama: "the deeds of these heroes, good or bad, their wars, feuds, marriages and adulteries, and the destinies of their children, who so often suffered for the sins of their parents, are a source of dramatic tension, and give rise to the essential element of conflict -- between man and god, good and evil, child and parent, duty and inclination" (Hartnoll 1968, 8-9).

Instability is as vital to the classic Realist novel as it is to the interrogative text. It is at the moment of closure, however, that the two differ. In the declarative, or Realist work, "the sense of stability is continuously evaded until the end" (Barbara Herrnstein Smith 1968, 35) when it disappears in the merging of the narrator's and the reader's discourses. In the interrogative text contradictions are not merely apparent: there is no acknowledgement of the rightness of any one discourse so that there is no eventual recognition of the 'truth' of one position. Instead, there is the clash of irreconcilable renditions.

Narrative closure in classic Realism proposes itself as the 'natural' culmination, and complete revelation, of what has gone before. It is the end of the double structure of concealment and revelation which underpins the writing, and so appears to resolve mysteries and seeming contradictions. It is not coincidental that Inspector Bucket should appear in 1853 in *Bleak House*, nor that Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*,

should appear in 1868 when Realism is generally said to be the dominant literary form in England and elsewhere. Classic Realist closures are seemingly the most *lisible*, the least *scriptible* (to use Barthes' terms), part of the text, for closure above all offers a product for consumption. In it, all discourses meet in a transcendent, authoritative, unified and coherent metadiscourse.

One may see in the scientific discourses of the same period to which I have already referred, fundamentally differing concepts of closure. Mill's induction, with its claim to uncover the laws which are 'in' observable phenomena, implies that the parameters of a diligent account simply transcribe those of the studied object (for the relationship between observer and observed is not problematic). Whewell's hypothesizing, however, contends that the same diligence will describe only the relation between one's generative theory and the object of study, so that the parameters of one's description are those of that relationship, not of the object as it is in itself. A different initial hypothesis, plainly, would be a different starting point. By accepting Whewell's epistemology one concedes, then, that all beginnings are imaginatively constructed.

The question then arises of how these hypotheses are conceived. Beer cites Kuhn, Bernard and Mackay in support of the contention that science proceeds by revolutionary

challenges to prevailing assumptions, and that these revolutionary hypotheses are conceived imaginatively (1983, 3-4). Scientific theory -- the place where science begins -- is not produced through mechanically logical deductions from neutral, 'raw,' experimental data because experiments are *conceived*: they do not simply exist self-evidently. They are conceived to test a specific hypothesis which, as Beer notes (1983, 3) following Kuhn (1962, 52), arises when existing theory fails to predict an event. The new hypothesis, then, is imaginatively conceived in the context of anomaly, not discovered 'in' coherent data. In following Whewell, one constructs a world which is tested in experience rather than discovering *the* world and its 'natural' parameters. By using this and related theories, nineteenth-century novelists were given "a determining fiction by which to read the world" (Beer 1983, 4).

Bichat's work with organisms equally problematizes the inductive model in which one claims to study an object in and of itself as in itself it really is. As Mason points out, Bichat argues that "organic life is the *relation* between an organism and its environment" (1971, 154). Objects may not be defined according to innate, essential characteristics which, taken together, describe their natural limits, for that would be to ignore function and environment. But if the environment, scientific or artistic, is an imaginatively

conceived construct, then the act of conception too -- the decisions about where to begin and where to end -- must be an aspect of that environment.

An example of how this works in practice might clarify this point. T.S. Eliot, in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England*, argues that "our criticism, from age to age, will reflect the things that the age demands" (141). In Eliot's view, the critic's (or, more generally, the observer's) concerns must differ from age to age because criticism, in the sense of that which is regarded as the proper province of criticism, has no 'natural' domain but is always being re-fashioned in changing environments. As Baldick notes (1983, 7), Eliot argues that Wordsworth's poetical beliefs are intimately related to his political and social concerns. This may seem obvious enough but, if accepted, this argument subverts the assumption that the parameters of poetry too are 'natural.' Rather, they are formed and re-formed by competing discourses. Naive or disinterested criticism, like inductivist science, does not inquire into the factors which, at a given moment, valorize certain limits for the domain of a given discourse. The interrogative text, like Whewellian hypothesizing, or Bichat's model for organic life, foregrounds the active, imaginative and generative role of the chosen points of beginning and ending.

But it is in the work of Lyell and Darwin that one may see the clearest challenge to conventional notions of closure. That challenge takes two forms. Most obviously, Lyell and Darwin's work removed the Biblical parameters for the start and the end of life on earth. But Lyell's uniformitarian geology does not simply alter the date on which life began from Archbishop Ussher's calculation of 4004 B.C., or from Buffon's conjectured 70,000 years. Certainly, Lyell's argument shows that the earth is millions of years old. But from the point of view of closure, Lyell's work challenges the conventional idea of agency. Geological changes, he argues, are not occasional, like the Flood, but are happening continually because they are the result of the interaction of physical forces which have always been present and which always operate. By itself, this argument subverts any natural assumption that closure identifies discrete entities.

But there is also a second challenge to closure. Lyell's theory implicitly questions the belief that stability is normative. Realist closure which restores, in a new set of subject positions, the stability which existed prior to the disruption with which a novel characteristically begins, clearly valorizes stability as the normal (and desirable) condition. But Lyell's uniformitarian theory, as Shuttleworth notes, "undermined ideas of natural fixity . . . which had

sought to reconcile evidence of the earth's changes with ideas of an unchanging natural order" (1984, 14).

Darwin's theory of evolution may be seen, in some respects, as the biological equivalent of Lyell's uniformitarianism. Darwin, too, challenges the notion that fixity and stability are normal. The parameters of a given species, in Darwin's view, are not constant but alter with time. Henry James' metaphor for the Realist text as a journey (1969, 11), depends upon the existence of fixed points of departure and arrival, and it (tacitly) gives these points primacy in the shaping of what falls between them. But in Lyell and Darwin's models dysteleology plays no part. The beginning and end are neither known nor logically determinant in shaping the geological and biological narratives. Indeed, evolutionary theory does not envisage either interruption or conclusion except in the case of extinction, so that points of closure exercise no influence in the evolutionary narrative.

As Beer notes, "one of the persistent impulses in interpreting evolutionary theory has been to domesticate it, to colonize it with human meaning, to bring man back to the centre of its intent" (1983, 10). This attempted hijack in the name of anthropocentric teleology misses a crucial aspect of evolutionary theory: because the evolutionary narrative is not end-directed there is no resolution of its discourses into final coherence and unity, as in Realist closure. The

physical forces which Lyell describes, and the biological forces which Darwin describes, do not function hierarchically as discourses do in classic Realism. Evolutionary theory itself does not privilege the human. Evolutionary changes have no ethical or moral dimension: whatever the reason(s) may be for the disappearance of dinosaurs, one may be sure they did not disappear in order to facilitate the ascent of man. Mankind is no more the 'destination' of the evolutionary narrative than the separation of the continental plates is the 'destination' of uniformitarian geology. Rather, as Marx says of *The Origin of Species* in a letter to Lassalle, "not only is it a death blow dealt here for the first time to 'Teleology' in the natural sciences but their rational meaning is empirically explained" (quoted in Clark 1985, 212).

To the extent that narrative is concerned to represent time and change, these radical developments in nineteenth-century science pose important general challenges to Realist narrative practice. More specifically, as J. Hillis Miller argues, one of the displaced versions of historiography which informs nineteenth-century notions of form in fiction is the question of "origin and end ('archaeology' and 'teleology')" (1974, 459). One may see in that metaphor of the narrative as a journey, some of the ideological implications of Realist closure. The journey presumes coherence, intention, linearity and, perhaps above all, a destination which 'naturally' closes

the journey, but which also gives it shape, purpose and meaning. If Lyell and Darwin are right and geology and biology evolve without intention, linearity, coherence or any destination, then it may appear less obvious and 'natural' that narration should necessarily end with traditional Realist closure.

Rejecting closure, however, requires some fundamental changes to valorized concepts from a number of disciplines. As Lovejoy argues,

there are not many differences in mental habit more significant than that between the habit of thinking in discrete, well-defined class-concepts and that of thinking in terms of continuity, of infinitely delicate shadings-off of everything into something else, of the overlapping of essences, so that the whole notion of species comes to seem an artifice of thought not truly applicable to the fluency, the, so to say, universal overlappingness of the real world (1936, 57).

It is this rejection of the concept of discrete entities (such as classic Realist texts) which one may see in the ways *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* begin and end. Not only are they artifices of thought, what is more important formally is that this is textually acknowledged. The coherence and

linearity of the journey become, now, the discontinuity of unresolved double plots which lack a unifying, transcendent metalanguage which announces final closure.

One may see the relation between the endings of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* and classic Realist closure by first examining the ways in which Eliot's earlier texts conclude. All the earlier novels end with formal Epilogues. These Epilogues (or Conclusions as they are called in *The Mill on the Floss* and in *Silas Marner*) are characterized by four elements: each is set in the future relative to the point where the previous chapter ended; while acknowledging changes, these closures stress fundamental continuity and locate change firmly within this stability; children are used to point forward to a still more distant future and so serve to emphasize the continuation of the stable subject positions established by closure; lastly, the aphoristic 'truths' which generally litter these earlier texts, function to consolidate these same subject positions.

In an immediate sense, the Epilogue in *Adam Bede* is set at the end of the day, so that it may appear that the novel closes as naturally as does a day. The contentment at this closure is expressed by the pathetic fallacy that this particular evening is "mellow" (581). In a larger sense, the Epilogue is set nine years after the previous chapter. Intervening changes, however, have only consolidated the

relationships which already existed nine years previously. Adam and Dinah now have two children, four year old Lisbeth and two year old Adam. Following a decision of the Conference of Methodist clergy and lay-preachers in 1803, Dinah no longer preaches. Adam thinks the decision is the right one but Seth believes Dinah should have joined the Wesleyans who still permit women to preach. This is "a standing subject of difference" (583) between the brothers, but even disagreement, in this instance, consolidates the closing subject positions. It is a difference which is "standing" rather than disruptive or dynamic. The difference is, and will remain, a defining aspect of the unchanging relations between Adam and Seth.

Closure in *Adam Bede* delimits change in two ways: by the presumption of coherent subjectivity, and through end-stopping. Alteration is acknowledged but is restricted within the parameters of coherent subjectivity. Arthur Donnithorne is "'altered and yet not altered'" (582). Though "'his colour's changed'" Adam says he would have "'known him anywhere'" (582). Closure represents the subject as essential and innate, as the core of the true self which remains constant whatever else may change. Arthur asks if Dinah has altered and Adam replies that she is "'only a bit plumper, as thee'dst a right to be after seven year'" (583). On returning Arthur resumes his old position as a pupil of his former tutor, Mr. Irwine. Within the figure whom one has seen alter

in the course of the narrative, there remains Mr. Irwine's pupil, a buried self but one which is recoverable because it is the real, 'natural' self. Closure at the end of Realist narrative is thus a sort of Restoration after an Interregnum: the disruptions during the Commonwealth, as it were, produce enduring changes, but these alterations are delimited by the assumption of coherent subjectivity, an assumption which enables the final order to seem natural and proper.

Change is also delimited by being end-stopped (Beer 1983, 185). The consequences of disruption are cauterized in closure. This is not achieved through improbable erasure, but by the tacit implication that the Restoration, once effected, will be enduring. Dinah is required permanently to abjure preaching, but this complete loss is soothed in aphoristic balm: "'There's no rule so wise but what it's a pity for somebody or other'" (583). Similarly, Hetty's incurable tragedy becomes a pithy beacon which marks a lesson learned as much as continuing suffering: "'There's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for'" (584). Permanent losses are thus turned to some account: Seth's loss of Dinah is presented as his happy acquiescence in his role of uncle to Adam and Dinah's children. In contrast to Lyell or to Darwin's models for geological and biological change, the Epilogue in *Adam Bede* puts a full stop on the changes in subject positions as much as it puts a full stop at the end of the narrative.

The setting and tone of the Conclusion to *The Mill on the Floss* obviously differ, in an immediate way, from those in *Adam Bede*. The domestic contentment in a pastoral setting -- a setting which seems itself a part of the married couple's happiness -- contrasts clearly with the lament for Tom and Maggie's deaths at the close of *The Mill on the Floss*. Nonetheless, the same elements are here as in the earlier book. In *Adam Bede* the Epilogue is set nine years after the final scene. The Conclusion to *The Mill on the Floss* is set five years after the deaths. The mellow evening in *Adam Bede* becomes here "the fifth autumn . . . rich in golden corn-stacks, rising in thick clusters among the distant hedgerows" (459). The natural culmination and destination of a day has been replaced by the culmination of the growing season with all the conventional associations of harvest time.

Because *The Mill on the Floss* ends with deaths, the accommodation of change within the restored continuum is expressed in more sombre tones. The aphoristic solace of the Conclusion's opening -- "Nature repairs her ravages" (459) -- is qualified later by the additional phrase, "but not all." There is "new growth" and the harvest of five autumns, but some losses cannot be replaced:

the uptorn trees are not rooted again; the parted hills
are left scarred: if there is a new growth, the trees

are not the same as the old, and the hills underneath their green vesture bear the marks of the past rending. To eyes that have dwelt on the past, there is no thorough repair (459).

The emphasis on loss and irreversible change is clearly greater here than in *Adam Bede*. But, as with *Adam Bede*, the pastoral provides a structure for, and an expression of, reconciliation and restoration, for loss and repair are located within the stable natural cycle. Tom and Maggie's deaths are not just the end of their lives but also consolidate their permanent reconciliation: "'in their death they were not divided'" (460). Maggie's death indelibly engraves her in relation both to Stephen and to Philip, for each man visits her grave. Philip comes alone, permanently fixed in his relation to Maggie. Through Stephen, Eliot introduces a child into this Conclusion too, thereby implying that Maggie's reconciliation with her brother, as much as Stephen's relation to Maggie, will be recorded in the next generation as well. One sees here an expression of the coherent subject independent of time: Philip and Stephen will always be as they are in the Conclusion; Dorlcote Mill is rebuilt, which implies that it returns to its proper, 'natural' condition which it will retain subsequently; Dorlcote churchyard, too, "recovered all its grassy order and

decent quiet" (459). The point is not that people or places recover from disruption. Often they do not. Rather, closure defines and normalizes their 'true' character and position and, tacitly or explicitly, fixes them there.

Silas Marner concludes with Eppie's marriage to Aaron at an unspecified future date beyond the point at which the previous chapter concludes. Eppie herself is the child in this Conclusion. The end-stopped destination of Silas's life is the child Eppie: the wedding guests have "ample leisure to talk of Silas Marner's strange history, and arrive by due degrees at the conclusion that he had brought a blessing on himself by acting like a father to a lone motherless child" (243). The guests' 'conclusion' is also the novel's Conclusion. One may see this final statement as aphoristic end-stopping in which differences are merged into unity, and disruption concluded by stable, permanent resolution: "all differences among the company were merged in a general agreement" (243). As with the two earlier texts, the weather and the season express the Conclusion's mood and aid in the implication that this boundary is natural. It is the time of year "when the lilacs and laburnums in the old-fashioned gardens showed their gold and purple wealth above the lichen-tinted walls" (241). This golden wealth recalls both Silas's gold and Eppie herself whom Silas initially took for his gold (167). The loss and recovery of the actual gold, the arrival

and full development of Eppie as gold, are verified and finally valorized by this natural golden wealth and the golden sunshine in which the scene takes place (241). The domestic and social world are thereby restored to their proper harmony with nature.

The chronological distance between the last chapter and the Epilogue, the stabilized subject positions and the pathetic fallacy which tacitly naturalizes these positions, all serve to restrict alterations and changes within specific parameters. Characteristically, any changes intervening between the end of the final chapter and the Epilogue, and any implied changes after the Epilogue, only substantiate what one sees in the final chapter and in the Epilogue. In *The Mill on the Floss* when one comes to the Epilogue one learns that "every man and woman mentioned in this history was still living -- except those whose end we know" (459). In *Silas Marner* there are "alterations at the expense of Mr. Cass" to Silas's home but these modifications are within the limits defined by Silas and Eppie's declared intention that "they would rather stay at the Stone-pits than go to any new home" (244). If the Epilogue is a destination reached towards which one's journey was always directed, then having arrived, one remains.

The elements are similar in the Epilogue to *Romola*. Chronological distance is established precisely in the

Epilogue's first sentence. Once more, the season suggests tone: it is late Spring when "overhanging branches" provide shade with "wreaths of flowers" (585), or when Piero di Cosimo and Nello arrive "bringing . . . flowers" (588). As in *The Mill on the Floss*, disillusionment, loss and death are fixed and limited in their destructive consequences by the universal moral lessons which may be learned and which are passed on through children to stable future generations. As with Dinah in *Adam Bede*, time makes Tessa's coherent subjectivity (doubly) substantial: "Tessa's fingers had not become more adroit with the years -- only very much fatter" (585); "she still wore her contadina gown: it was only broader than the old one" (585). Because Tessa remains what she always has been, one may infer that this stability will continue indefinitely: "Tessa never ceased to be astonished at the wisdom of her children" (585); "her rounded face wore even a more perfect look of childish content than in her younger days" (585). Everything is as usual: Monna Brigida is "looking on as usual, and as usual had fallen asleep" (586).

Romola has been changed but she remains recognizably the same person as at the outset of the novel and aphorism pins down this destined self into finality:

an eager life had left its marks upon her [Romola]: the finely moulded cheek had sunk a little, the golden crown

was less massive; but there was a placidity in Romola's face which had never belonged to it in youth. It is but once that we can know our worst sorrows, and Romola had known them while life was new (673).

It is characteristic of Realist closure to represent the self, which a single baptism in one's worst sorrow produces, as both coherent and final. If one knows such sorrow only once, then only once (and so finally) may one be changed by it. But in an Althusserian sense too, one may see in closure that this new subject position seeks to replicate itself in future generations.

The somewhat stiff conversation between Romola and Lillo -- one of the two children in this Epilogue -- seeks to forestall any possible textual plurality by offering a single transcendent meaning which Lillo will carry unaltered into the next generation. Lillo's uncluttered hedonism -- he would be a "great man" who is "very happy besides" and who has "a good deal of pleasure" (587) -- provides the pretext for an aphoristic, end-stopped summary of the text's 'meaning': "it is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves" (587); "if you were to

choose something lower, and make it the rule of your life to seek your own pleasure and escape from what is disagreeable, calamity might come just the same; and it would be calamity falling on a base mind, which is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it" (587). As an event, the consequences of tragedy are end-stopped. But as expression, as writing, the consequences of tragedy are enduring moral, or perhaps philosophical lessons, for it is the linguistic event which Lillo takes with him into the future.

If closure is a sort of Restoration, the disruptions and redistributions of subject positions in the Interregnum are not without value. One model which might be used here is Arnold's description of the self in his undated fragment first printed in *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870):

Below the surface-stream, shallow and light
Of what we say we feel -- below the stream,
As light, of what we *think* we feel -- there flows
With noiseless current strong, obscure and deep,
The central stream of what we feel indeed.

Trilling calls this "Arnold's wistful statement of the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility, of locating the . . . self" (1974, 5). Certainly, Arnold's model is hierarchical and static: the river may flow but the central stream is

constant. The tripartite structure of the fragment suggests the complexity of the hierarchy, while the subordinate clause in the penultimate line imitates the difficult, arcane character of the central stream. But what is most important here for Realist closure, is that this model represents the real as a destination which, though concealed and difficult to ascertain, is nevertheless fixed and permanent. The real is therefore end-stopped: when one discovers the central stream there is nowhere else to go. In this model, the narrative develops by diving first beneath the surface-stream and the diving further beneath the second stream, until, finally, the central stream itself is found.

In the endings I have examined so far one may see this central stream expressed by aphorism. Because the central stream is present at all stages of the river, its significance as the repository of true knowledge is the same no matter where one may be on the river. Accordingly, the 'message' may usefully be imparted to the children in the texts and to the educable reader of the text. *Felix Holt, the Radical* is the last of Eliot's novels which employs this structure in the ending.

The Epilogue to *Felix Holt, the Radical* has many of the same specific elements as are present in the earlier novels. This Conclusion is set in the May following the final chapter. Like *Silas Marner* the immediate setting is a

wedding. As in the Epilogue to *Romola*, here it is late Spring and the season sets the tone of optimistic new beginnings. The marriage of Felix to Esther is represented as an end-stopped destination in the same aphoristic way as in the marriage of Eppie to Aaron, or of Adam to Dinah. Mr. Wace says that "'it's wonderful how things go through you -- you don't know how. I feel somehow as if I believed more in everything that's good'" (398). There are changes consequent upon the narrative's disruptions: Mr. Lyon and Mr. Jermyn both leave Treby Magna, as do Felix and Esther. Again, however, these new subject positions, once effected, are permanent. Other figures remain as they always were: Denner faithfully follows his mistress; Esther never repents her marriage to Felix; "uncle Lingon continue[s] to watch over the shooting on the Manor" (399); and the after-history of Treby Magna characterizes it as continuing as it had done. The child in this Epilogue is a young Felix "who has a great deal more science than his father, but not much more money" (399).

One of the underlying assumptions which enables the sort of closure which delimits Eliot's novels prior to *Middlemarch* is that the observer and the observed are distinct. In John Stuart Mill's inductivist terms, the aim of the observer is to discover what is truly there whether the onlooker is an ancient Greek, a Renaissance Italian or a Victorian Englishman. If objects and observers are distinct,

this distinction must be possible because objects must have always been as they are now. The central stream, that is to say, has always been flowing. If later observers have had to correct the beliefs of earlier cultures that is because life is short, knowledge difficult and errors inevitable. The errors are not consequent upon the different assumptions and expectations of different cultures. In defining the characteristics of an object -- those things which distinguish it as in itself it is -- Mill seeks that which inheres discretely, for the object is separate from its function and from the observer. Consequently, the places where one begins and ends one's enquiry are determined by the object of one's study and may thus be taken to be 'natural.' Applied to writing, this theory absolves the writer from charges of, for example, immorality, for if the writing faithfully reflects the world as it is, one may hardly condemn the messenger for the message. With this set of assumptions, the journey as a metaphor for the text seems apposite: the travelling takes its significance from the points of departure and arrival, places whose location is self-evident.

But I have argued that the changes in scientific epistemology outlined earlier have fundamental implications for such a notion of closure. Whewell's theory of the hypothesis, Bichat's link between identity and function, Lyell and Darwin's respective work which disputes both teleology and

stability as essential principles of nature, together problematize the inductivist concept of discrete identity and natural parameters, or -- by extension -- the Realist doctrine of the passive, neutral representing mirror. If the places where Eliot's pre-*Middlemarch* texts begin and end are represented as obvious, that may be explained by the Realist assumption that the parameters of objects (such as novels) are not open to dispute: doubt persists only about innate, internal characteristics. But both *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* specifically question that assumption: the Prelude to *Middlemarch* begins with a scientific metaphor which represents man as a "mysterious mixture" to be observed in "experiments" (3), while the Finale announces itself as an ending which is both a conclusion and a beginning: "every limit is a beginning as well as an ending" (818). *Daniel Deronda* opens with the claim that its beginning is not a real beginning at all but only a necessary convenience: "men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning" (3), and the novel ends -- uniquely among Eliot's major fictions -- without any formal conclusion or after-history at all.

The Finale to *Middlemarch* has some familiar elements. It does provide an after-history of the central figures; a number of these figures, having experienced a Romola-like alteration, permanently retain their new subjectivity. This is true of Fred, Mary, the Garths, Celia, Sir James, and also

of Lydgate and Rosamond who subsequently live in the shadow of the text's events as though their after-history were no more than the consequence, in the sense of a reverberation, of what happens here. There is a child in this Finale too, born to Will and Dorothea whose marriage is one of three represented at this conclusion. But marriage as a conventional element of closure is not as stable in this instance as in the earlier novels. When one reads the self-reflexive statement that marriage "has been the bourne of so many narratives" (818), one might see this, more particularly, as a reference to *Adam Bede*, *Silas Marner* and *Felix Holt, the Radical*. In those novels, marriage is indeed a bourne, a destination, end point or, indeed, a limit. That is a linear model. Here the model is less coherent and certainly not teleological: marriage is a "great beginning" (818) as well as a bourne. Perhaps the appropriate model for this conception is the one offered in the text: the microscope. As the interpretations one makes about the character of a water-drop depend upon the lens in one's microscope (58-59), so marriage may seem both a bourne and a beginning, as each limit may be both a beginning and an ending.

In this Finale, it is as if the text itself is now under the microscope, one of its own central metaphors. The familiar elements of closure may be there to some degree but a more powerful lens reveals in them a different aspect. Mary

and Fred have three children and Dorothea and Ladislav have a son. But none of these children, unlike their counterparts in the earlier texts, functions as the occasion for aphoristic nuggets. As I have argued, aphorism in Realist closure consolidates in pithy articulation the revealed wisdom which the disruptions in the narrative have uncovered. This moment of revelation inaugurates a future of restored stability predicated on this recognized knowledge. But if that seems the case in this instance because of the apparently familiar elements of closure, the model of the microscope forestalls such an end-stopped reading. Like the creature whose voracity turns from active to passive under a stronger lens, the conclusions of this Conclusion, however valid they may be in these specific circumstances, need not be true under the lens of different conditions: "the fragment of a life, however typical, is not the sample of an even web" (818).

What is important here is not the acknowledgement of fragmentariness but the denial that one may accurately project one's results. The microscope, with its often contradictory images at different levels of magnification, subverts any assurance that specific discoveries made under particular conditions will apply equally and universally. In the earlier closures, aphorism totalises narrative discovery. In the Realist, or inductivist, models such a claim is tenable because one believes that what one sees are the laws which are

'in' one's studied objects. What one sees is uncontaminated by how one sees. But the microscope, with its different lenses, foregrounds the way one sees. The points of closure for each lens -- its power and degree of magnification -- clearly do crucially influence what one sees. The fragment which is *Middlemarch* is thus an examination -- its subtitle is "A *Study of Provincial Life*" (emphasis added) -- conducted with a microscopic awareness of the constructedness of its conclusions within the imaginatively conceived points of closure. The Finale is a limit which thereby offers certain conclusions, but the text acknowledges that it might equally be a beginning, rather as the upper limit of one lens's power might be the start of another degree of magnification in a new lens. Thus, the text which contains a microscope, is under a microscope itself; the text which contains a web, here is represented as a fragment of web itself; and the text which uses words as its medium, is now itself expressed by linguistic laws: "promises may not be kept, and an ardent outset may be followed by declension" (818). In other words, any attempt to define limits -- through a metalanguage, by closing off threats to subjectivity, by restricting the play of meaning, by 'naturalizing' method, by pathetic fallacy -- is itself included within new parameters of context.

Culler, responding to Wittgenstein and following Derrida, argues that there are two ways in which any context

is boundless. First, all "context is open to further description" (1982, 123). Information once thought irrelevant may not always be so, or there may be new information, or a comparison might be made with something else: any of these cases may require one to recontextualize one's studied object. Secondly, Culler argues, "any attempt to codify context can always be grafted onto the context it sought to describe, yielding a new context which escapes the previous formulation. Attempts to describe limits always make possible a displacement of those limits" (1982, 124). To announce the Finale of what is a long book with the sentence, "every limit is a beginning as well as an ending" (818), is to acknowledge limitless displacements of limitations.

Middlemarch employs the conventions of Realist closure only to subvert them. *Daniel Deronda*, more radically, discards a formal epilogue entirely. This is unique among Eliot's novels and unusual in Victorian fiction. There are, certainly, elements of closure here, but only visible as traces. Mirah and Deronda marry and while these new subject positions seem permanent the narrator does not guarantee their fixity by omnisciently gazing into the future. Instead of children in whom the narrative's hard-won wisdom endures, here there is just the "wish" for "offspring" (752), while the Cohens' baby is actually absent from the wedding-feast (753). Whereas most epilogues present the conclusion of a literal or

metaphorical journey, here a journey is promised: "the preparations for the departure of all three [Mirah, Deronda and Ezra] to the East began at once; for Deronda could not deny Ezra's wish that they should set out on the voyage forthwith, so that he might go with them, instead of detaining them to watch over him" (754). But this prospective journey is not undertaken, not with Ezra at any rate, for he dies before it can begin. Instead of dealing with the ramifications of, and lessons subsequently learned from, a death, this final chapter dramatically and emotionally describes death itself.

Because this concluding chapter is not set significantly in the future relative to the end of the story proper, only glimpses of after-histories are possible. Gwendolen's note to Deronda on his wedding-day seems to suggest that she will continue to live according to what she has learned during the course of the narrative so that she may seem, then, to have reached a stable subject position. Yet her note expresses more a hope than a secure resolve so that if one can be certain of anything it is only that Gwendolen's future will be uncertain:

do not think of me sorrowfully on your wedding-day. I have remembered your words -- that I may live to be one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were

born. I do not yet see how that can be, but you know better than I. If it ever comes true, it will be because you helped me. I only thought of myself, and I made you grieve. It hurts me now to think of your grief. You must not grieve any more for me. It is better -- it shall be better with me because I have known you (754).

The only point in the last chapter which suggests the aphoristic quality of closure is the chapter's epigraph, one written by Eliot herself. Instead of substantiating the naturalness of this point of conclusion, however, the epigraph disputes the notion that the character of any moment, any person, any narrative can be resolved into settled singularity and so stable finality. Not even death is a definite point of closure for there, too, spring may succeed winter:

in the chequered area of human experience the seasons are all mingled as in the golden age: fruit and blossom hang together; in the same moment the sickle is reaping and the seed is sprinkled; one tends the green cluster and another treads the wine-press. Nay, in each of our lives harvest and spring-time are continually one, until Death himself gathers us and sows us anew in his invisible fields (752).

In the pre-*Middlemarch* closures, the lofty Olympian, or Arnoldian, perspective gained by a chronological leap forward functions to reveal the true, stable and single character of a landscape which had seemed confused at ground level. To that extent, the relation between the conventional after-history and the rest of the text resembles Benveniste's categories of *discours* and *histoire* where the epilogue is the highest and last example of *histoire* in this hierarchy of discourses. This epigraph is the only moment in the last chapter of *Daniel Deronda* which seems to function in this way, for this passage stands back from the narrative's details seemingly to look at life steadily and see it whole. But like the novel's gambling metaphor which explores the plural character to be found in one person's gain always being another's loss, here too the elevated perspective shows multiplicity not singularity.

This sense of the plurality of any moment's meaning and so of the fictiveness of moments of beginning and ending is also clearly seen in the novel's first chapter:

men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even Science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix a point in the stars' unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is at Nought. His less accurate

grandmother Poetry has always been understood to start in the middle; but on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different from his; since Science, too, reckons backwards as well as forwards, divides his unit into billions, and with his clock-finger at Nought really sets off *in medias res*. No retrospect will take us to the true beginning; and whether our prologue be in heaven or earth, it is but a fraction of that all-presupposing fact with which our story sets out (3).

None of Eliot's other novels has a beginning to compare with this one. All the pre-*Middlemarch* novels begin unproblematically. The beginning of *Adam Bede* may best show the supposedly neutral relationship between text and topic, author and narration:

with a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr. Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799 (49).

This mirror, unlike the one in *Middlemarch*, is represented as ideologically neutral. The allusion to the Egyptian sorcerer normalizes the notion of presenting the past to the present, while the specific starting date implies accuracy. There is nothing here (nor in the openings to the other pre-*Middlemarch* novels) of the fictiveness of beginnings.

The paradox of the beginning of *Daniel Deronda* is that, while no single life, nor any one species, nor indeed the history of the universe, can be said to have a beginning, nonetheless, the act of expression as an essential aspect of the process of understanding requires that one begin somewhere. The moment of articulation in Realist closure is the moment of intelligibility, the culmination of the double pattern of concealment and revelation. But *Daniel Deronda* begins with a *credo* in which comprehension is predicated upon an acknowledged fiction. *Adam Bede*, like Eliot's other early historical novels, implicitly contends that the distance between the time of writing and reading, and the period in which the novel is set, offers a perspective in which the coherence and unity of the earlier period is revealed. Viewed from the late 1850s when *Adam Bede* was written, the story of Adam and Dinah and Hetty is 'obviously' best begun on the 18th of June, 1799. The baggage carried by that assumption is that one will equally 'obviously' uncover, from the same perspective, the true significance of the tale.

Explicitly, the opening of *Daniel Deronda* disputes these implicit presumptions: "no retrospect will take us to the true beginning." Yet, as one sees in the first twenty chapters of the novel, the faultiness of the retrospective method, like the fictiveness of beginnings, cannot preclude its use. Because the make-believe beginning cannot be done without, the first twenty chapters are structured on three retrospectives which seek beginnings for the dramatic scenes in Leubronn which form the first two chapters. Chapters three to fourteen are a retrospective on Gwendolen's life prior to the Leubronn scenes; chapter fifteen, chronologically, is a continuation of chapters one and two; chapters sixteen to twenty look back on Deronda before the Leubronn scenes, while in the last of these chapters, Mirah narrates her story leading up to that same point. Together, these pre-histories form a kind of equivalent to, and subversion of, the conventional after-histories of Realist epilogues. If a limit may also be a beginning, then the full stop which Realist epilogue seeks to place at the end of all the full stops in the text is impossible. Equally, if the text as sentence has no ultimate full stop, no final limit to its play of signification, there may also be no first sentence, no equivalent to the 18th of June, 1799. The search for origins, like the search for consequences, discovers neither a *primum*

mobile nor a final signified for, as in Lyell and Darwin's models, there is process but not teleology.

The authority which underwrites the opening to *Adam Bede* is the author: "with this drop of ink at the end of my pen I will show you" But in *Daniel Deronda* even authoritative scientists need some make-believe to proceed; the author's *imprimatur* is no longer the guarantee of veracity. *Adam Bede* announces "a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God)" (Barthes 1977, 146). The systematic use of the language of science in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* is not simply a displacement of the Author-God. Science is not, in Barthes's phrase, one of the hypostases of God (1977, 147), providing a different metalanguage. Closure in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* does not differ from earlier closures simply by installing science as divinity instead of the author. Rather, the early authoritativeness, predicated on elided method, is replaced by a self-reflexive method which, by the very act of foregrounding itself, both limits and substantiates its own authority. The limitation is that any conclusion is based on a fictional beginning and that each stopping point may also be a starting point of some other enquiry. But the authority is also substantiated because awareness of method and the limitations and assumptions inherent in any method, enables one to define the province of one's authority, the claims it

may make and the claims it may not. The astronomical imagery at the opening to *Daniel Deronda* represents the stars' journey as "unceasing." Yet, at the opening to the third chapter, one reads that "the best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's homestead" (18). That is "the make-believe of a beginning" without which enquiry is impossible; it privileges the personal while recognizing that the author cannot be God. While dependent upon the necessity of starting and closing points, it is only when one insists on their fictiveness and arbitrariness that it is possible to contend that the fragments of lives in a text are not typical of the web as a whole, or to say that marriage has no single significance but may be both a bourne and a beginning, and to argue that the stars of the homestead really journey unceasingly.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE SUBJECT IN QUESTION

I think, therefore I am (Descartes 1968, 53).

Humanism supplies the experience of the subject (who is always given prior to social relations) as a source of knowledge and a place from which truth comes. To show up this subject as an imaginary construct is crucial (Macdonell 1986, 61).

Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not "liberate man in his own being"; it compels him to face the task of producing himself (Foucault 1986, 42).

Although this work grows out of a desire to make the *nouveau roman* and its experimental successors accessible, the theory should also, I believe, supplant existing theories of character in earlier and mainstream Realist fictions. Even the nineteenth-century Realist novel, I am suggesting, has not yet been read; recent experimental writing and the theories of literature and cultural practices which it helps produce (among them this one), can make Balzac, Dickens, Eliot, Hardy, and so on once more available for reading (Docherty 1983, xiv).

Perhaps one might trace the centrality of subjectivity in the post-structural critique of Realism to the centrality of character in Realist writing. Realist criticism, certainly, has often contended that Realist practice is centrally concerned with the delineation of character. Henry James, in "The Art of Fiction," dismisses the distinction between novels of character and novels of incident, and that between the novel and the romance, with a distinction of his own between good novels and bad novels:

there are bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures; but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as

little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture one says of character, when one says novel one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character? (1984, 55).

It is needless and redundant, in James's view, to say that the novel is and should be about character because such a statement is tautological.

In this chapter I shall argue that both *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* problematize conventional Realist conceptions of character such as Henry James's. Once again, this question needs to be seen in relation to contemporaneous and contemporary discourses: paradoxically, many post-structuralist readers follow Henry James in locating George Eliot within Realist assumptions about character. Though *Daniel Deronda* lacks an after-history, and though *Middlemarch* subverts its "Finale," both novels have particularly tenacious *critical* after-histories, especially in relation to the

question of character.¹ It may be true, indeed, that no English nineteenth-century novelist has had her characters so firmly placed within the Realist tradition as has George Eliot. My aim here is to foreground some of the assumptions in this tradition, to present some of the difficulties which arise in locating Eliot's figures within this tradition, and then to offer an alternative view of Eliot's subjects.

Writing about Eliot in general, and *Middlemarch* in particular, F.R. Leavis in *The Great Tradition* says that Eliot's "genius manifests itself in a profound analysis of the individual" (77). W.J. Harvey, writing in *Character and the Novel* in 1965, says that "most great novels exist to reveal and explore character" (23). In Harvey's Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Middlemarch*, published in the same year, one sees an example of this belief. In that Introduction Harvey says:

for Virginia Woolf, *Middlemarch* was "the magnificent book which for all its imperfections is one of the few English novels written for grown-up people." She was, no doubt, thinking of George Eliot's unblinking but compassionate delineation of her characters, of the subtlety of

¹ Once again, J. Russell Perkin's *A Reception-History of George Eliot's Fiction* offers a more complete account of this critical history.

psychological analysis and the maturity of moral comment which underlie this complex and varied novel of English provincial life (7).

More recently, Michael M. Boardman echoes the Jamesian and Leavisian bifurcation of *Daniel Deronda* into two unequally successful parts: "the novel seems to fall into two parts, in a much sharper and more noncoalescing [!] manner than any of her previous fiction" (1992, 107). Alan Horsman advances a similar argument:

the tragicomedy in *Middlemarch* of the limited, ordinary people who did not understand their own actions and the extraordinary people who came to understand their own actions all too clearly was continued in *Daniel Deronda* (1876). It was complicated, however, by a didactic preoccupation with correcting common misapprehensions about the Jews. The result showed a strange contrast between the story of Gwendolen Harleth, with its detailed sequence of inner cause and effect, and Deronda's story, a romance depending on coincidences (1990, 323).

For Horsman, the problem in the Deronda story resides with the author herself: "in the attempt to endow [Deronda] with an inner life there was also much that was doctrinaire, the

product of the author's determined wish-fulfilment" (1990, 323). Similarly, Kerry McSweeney, responding to charges that some Realist critics discuss fictional characters as though they are real figures, argues that many of the dangers inherent in character-based analyses may be avoided if "character is considered in tandem with characterization" (1984, 75). In McSweeney's view,

any adequate consideration of *Middlemarch* must include discussion of the characters in which one's disbelief in their reality is suspended. Not to make this act of fictional faith would impoverish any account of Eliot's novel, one of the most impressive and deeply satisfying aspects of which is the depiction of character. It is here that George Eliot's philosophical, social-historical and moral concerns are fused with her abundant natural gifts as a novelist -- for dialogue and characterization by speech, for social and psychological notation, for the interplay of inside and outside views and the enriching mixture of showing and telling (1984, 75).

Each of these pieces states that 'great' novels convincingly present complex characters as a, or perhaps *the*, centre of their endeavour. The corollary to this view is that, if a novel fails to achieve greatness, or is flawed, the

problem lies, for example, in characters being "wish-fulfilments" of the author and so unconvincing. But these conclusions are predicated on a number of assumptions which remain tacit. Each observation is biographical: Leavis's topic is *Eliot's* "genius"; Harvey's piece addresses *Eliot's* compassion and moral maturity; Horsman looks at "the author's determined wish-fulfilment"; while McSweeney's passage looks to *Eliot's* philosophy, her social, historical and moral concerns, and her "natural gifts as a novelist." This biographical approach is based on a view of the text as a veil whose 'value' is decided by what lies behind the veil. Certainly, the text is seen as an expressive rather than a productive medium so that, for example, linguistic observations about the structures of language itself, or studies of the modes of production in various methods of publication, would each be regarded as secondary concerns. The object of enquiry is the author's mind: the writing is the manifestation of that mind.

Equally, character is not *produced* in the text. Instead, character is *expressed* by the text. Accordingly, character is coherent and expressive: *Middlemarch*, after all, is the manifestation of Eliot's character. Action, or "incident" in James's phrase, is produced by character for the reasons which James gives. Again, this 'self-evident' assumption marginalizes other possible prompts for action such

as social, legal, political, religious or class conditions. These, and other, considerations are taken to be secondary.

Lastly, these examples of Realist criticism are (or, rather, would claim to be) untheoretical. The mimetic theory on which they do operate is not seen as a theory at all. If fiction and reality are ontologically distinct so that fiction simply represents reality, while itself remaining separate from it, then the measure of fiction's success may be judged by comparing it with the anterior reality it represents. What that anterior reality is, is already known to the educated critic and educated reader. As a part of this general view, it is assumed that critic and reader both already know what a character is so that they may judge how successfully a particular character is reproduced in a text. One may see part of this system of assumptions operating in the relation between Harvey's general observation in *Character and the Novel*, and his reading of Virginia Woolf's comment on *Middlemarch*. Harvey approaches Woolf's remark in the same way as he approaches Eliot's *Middlemarch*; it is Woolf's mind which he reads: "she was, no doubt, thinking of" If there is no doubt about the primacy of character in 'great' fiction, no doubt about what character is, no doubt that texts transcribe this anterior reality, and no doubt that Woolf too knew this, then there is no doubt about her meaning.

Alternatively, one may read Harvey's reading of Woolf in the light of his *credo* in *Character and the Novel*.²

I wish to challenge these Realist views and to suggest another way of reading character in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. The cogency of this argument must depend on readings of the texts themselves, of course. However, it may be helpful, first, to situate these readings in the relevant aspects of contemporary theories of subjectivity, and in those parts of nineteenth-century scientific theories which bear upon the concept of identity.

² In "Politicizing Literature," Richard Cronin takes largely accurate aim at critics such as Terry Eagleton, Peter Widdowson and Tony Bennett who, according to Cronin, take the view that "all writing is dependent on the political pressures that produced it" (312). Amusingly and persuasively, Cronin unmasks the quasi-military 'agenda' of these critics -- literary criticism as cultural terrorism, as a continuation of Baader-Meinhof through written rather than actual violence -- while showing that their notions of history and politics derive from universalizing bathetically parochial experience. However, I do differ with him on one point. A characteristic of the more bulldoggedly political of the 'New Accents' critics which Cronin contests, is what he conceives to be their unjust accounts of other critics:

what most enrages unsympathetic readers of this kind of criticism is its insistence on travesty the views of its opponents. We are assured, for example, that the conventional critic values Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* as a transparent medium through which one gains direct access to Sidney's thoughts and feelings (312).

Whether this is or is not true of Sidney's critics, it certainly is the case that many writers on George Eliot, such as those I mention here, have indeed tended to read her writing as the means of direct access to her thoughts and feelings.

Catherine Belsey has argued that "classic realism tends to offer as the 'obvious' basis of its intelligibility the assumption that character, unified and coherent, is the source of action. Subjectivity is a major -- perhaps the major -- theme of classic realism. Insight into character and psychological processes is declared to be one of the marks of serious literature" (1980, 73). In classic Realist doctrine -- because it functioned tacitly, classic Realism is therefore *more not less* of a doctrine -- character is consistent, coherent and psychologically developing, while action appears consequent upon the evident traits of characters. People behave as they do because of the way they are. Where chance or accident substantially influence action, as in Hardy's³ novels for example, or where characters often have little psychological depth, as in Dickens, for example, then *in those respects* Hardy and Dickens move away from the Realist relation between action and character. This system of representation is individualist (Docherty 1983, xii) and it is also rationalist for only in a coherent world may one correlate the causal relations between individual characters and proportionate actions. Thirdly, one may say that this system

³ In *Darwin and the Novelists*, George Levine argues that "Hardy's exploitation of the conventions of coincidence and happenstance to increase not diminish the protagonists' suffering is one entirely legitimate inference from the Darwinian scheme" (1988, 250).

regards the individual consciousness as free and autonomous. As Belsey notes,

the ideology of liberal humanism assumes a world of non-contradictory (and therefore fundamentally unalterable) individuals whose unfettered consciousness is the origin of meaning, knowledge and action. It is in the interest of this ideology above all to suppress the role of language in the construction of the subject, and its own role in the interpellation of the subject, and to present the individual as a free, unified, autonomous subjectivity (1980, 67).

Or, as Colin MacCabe puts it, the Realist text suppresses "the problem that has troubled western thought since the pre-Socratics recognized the separation between what was said and the act of saying" (1989, 135). Classic Realism does not argue that the individual is autonomous and possessed of a unique, individuating consciousness, or subjectivity: rather, that is the tacit assumption on which the work ('creative' or 'critical') is predicated. It is tacit because it is so 'obvious' or 'self-evident.'

The classic statement of this system in which identity is consciousness is made by Descartes:

I became aware that, while I thus decided to think that everything was false, it followed necessarily that I who thought thus must be something; and observing that this truth: *I think therefore I am*, was so certain and so evident that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics were not capable of shaking it, I judged that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking (1968, 53-54).

Thought is the guarantee of being and therefore the thinking self is not only the natural, but the only position from which to comprehend experience:

I, who am certain that I am, do not yet know clearly enough what I am; so that henceforth I must take great care not imprudently to take some other object for myself, and thus avoid going astray in this knowledge which I maintain to be more certain and evident than all I have had hitherto (1968, 103).

For Descartes, selfhood inheres exclusively in the mind: the body, the relation between mind and body, and by implication all other relations, are all separate from selfhood in the sense that, while the self may enter into any or all of these, there is a self prior to such an entry.

This conception, in Ian Watt's view, is central to the rise of Realist fiction. For Watt, the vital notion here for Realist fiction is that Descartes's scepticism offers a way to truth based on individual experience, on empiricism not on tradition and received wisdom: Descartes's "*Meditations* did much to bring about the modern assumption whereby the pursuit of truth is conceived of as a wholly individual matter, logically independent of the tradition of past thought, and indeed as more likely to be arrived at by a departure from it" (1972, 13). Thus, the individual, whether the author, character or reader, has primacy in valorizing the truth of any given statement. That is the individual's right, and the individual is presumed to have the faculties which enable such decisions: the individual is therefore the author of meaning and the 'natural' centre of interest. Watt, like James, Leavis, Harvey and McSweeney, believes that for the novel the "primary criterion [is] truth to individual experience -- individual experience which is always unique and therefore new" (1972, 13).

It has been virtually axiomatic to situate *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in this tradition. Automatically, or deliberately, many commentators have read character (and characterization) in these texts through the system of assumptions which, in part, is outlined above. It should be said, though, that few of these readers would say that there

is any system of assumptions, any theory, intervening between critic and text. It would take a very long time to examine the workings of these assumptions in even a fraction of the critical works on *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in which they are subsumed. Accordingly, I have chosen just one further example here, in addition to those already given, from this huge field. There are, of course, many variations among this group of scholars, and my examples are not intended to demonstrate all the ideological assumptions inscribed in their works. The examples chosen, however, are central to the tradition. None of these commentators is quirky or on an extreme edge of this mode of analysis.

Walter Allen, in *The English Novel*, argues that Eliot's aesthetic and moral beliefs derive from her interest in, and knowledge of, contemporary science. This is the familiar biographical approach. The *credo* which Allen finds in Eliot's novels also seems familiar: "George Eliot believed . . . [that] human beings were made for good or ill by their actions and in the last analysis by their characters" (1958, 220). This formulation, supposedly derived from Eliot's reading of contemporary work in the study of heredity, is, in fact, very close to James's humanist, Realist definition of the (good) novel itself. Allen, continuing to make Eliot's novels conform to James's criteria for the primacy of character in Realist fiction, says that

by placing the responsibility for a man's life and fate firmly on the individual and his moral choices, [Eliot] changed the nature of the English novel. If it is the individual's choice of actions that shape his life, then plot in the old sense of something external to character and often working unknown to it, is irrelevant and unnecessary. Character, in fact, itself becomes plot (220-221).

Accordingly, in following the Jamesian and Leavisian bifurcation of *Daniel Deronda* into successful and failed parts, Allen locates the novel's substantial virtue in the characterization of Gwendolen. The value of the novel as a whole is coterminous with that of Gwendolen:

Gwendolen Harleth is as convincing today as ever she was. She is a magnificent creation She is cold, arrogant, calculating, self-willed And she is realized in all her complexity She is a wonderful symbol of the sacrifice to false gods and its consequences, wonderful because of the greatness of her stature and the complexity of her motives. She will keep *Daniel Deronda* permanently interesting (230).

Whether or not *The English Novel* is widely read now, it does clearly show how Realist critical practice functions with regard to characterization. What is perhaps clearest is the assumption that the text is an expressive veil. By what criteria can Gwendolen be "convincing"? Or, how may one say she is "realized in all her complexity"? This view is possible only if one's conception of who Gwendolen 'really' is derives partly, but not wholly, from the words on the page. If Gwendolen is simply and entirely formed by the words on the page, then to say that she is fully realized would be tautological. But this, obviously, is not Allen's point. For him, the "greatness" of Gwendolen derives from her accurate correspondence to his (already and naturally known) conception of what such a figure is like. Similarly, because incident is the product of character, the Gwendolen plot succeeds because in it the heroine's characteristics which Allen lists are coherently expressed by action which symbolizes "the sacrifice to false gods and its consequences." And lastly, Allen's commentary assumes that character, as he defines it, is at the heart of the text. Of *Middlemarch* he says "characters themselves achieve a new importance in her novels And one of the signs of this new importance of the characters is her relentless and scrupulous analysis of them: when we meet Dorothea, Casaubon, and Lydgate we realize that it is the very thoroughness and intensity of her analysis that creates them"

(234). Both the biographical emphasis and the image of "meeting" the characters, suggest that for Allen -- and, I think one may say, for Realist critical practice in general -- characters are most convincing, most 'themselves,' when one is least aware that they are literary constructs.

In describing classic Realist notions of character and characterization I do not wish to suggest that any discourse within that domain must be wrong. What should be clear, though, is that the sort of approach taken by commentators from James through to McSweeney is not necessarily the 'natural,' obvious, straightforward one. Because the classic Realist conception of character is grounded in a network of ideological assumptions, it follows that a different system of arguments from a different tradition is likely to open the text to alternative readings. No reading is neutral. No reading self-evidently discovers the transcendental kernel. In challenging the primacy and authenticity of the Jamesian and Leavisian tradition one need not -- indeed, one should not -- simply replace one metadiscourse with another, for it is the hypostasis itself which one questions.

In his essay, "Freud and Lacan," Louis Althusser defines an alternative history of the nature and function of character, and of the relations between character and action:

since Copernicus, we have known that the earth is not the 'centre' of the universe. Since Marx, we have known that the human subject, the economic, political or philosophical ego is not the 'centre' of history -- and even, in opposition to the Philosophers of the Enlightenment and to Hegel, that history has no 'centre' except in ideological misrecognition. In turn, Freud has discovered for us that the real subject, the individual in his unique essence, has not the form of an ego, centred on the 'ego', on 'consciousness' or on 'existence' -- whether this is the existence of the for-itself, of the body-proper or of 'behaviour' -- that the human subject is de-centred, constituted by a structure which has no 'centre' either, except in the imaginary misrecognition of the 'ego', i.e. in the ideological formations in which it 'recognizes' itself (1971, 218-219).

Copernicus' decentring of the earth implies a plurality of worlds and a plurality of beings. Following after this, the Reformation replaces the single, static, Roman Catholic hierarchy with a plurality of individual relationships between human beings and God. Freud's displacement of the Cartesian subject, as Lacan argues, poses a challenge to the tradition in which Eliot is ordinarily situated: "it can be said that

as a result of that discovery [Freud's discovery of the unconscious] the very centre of the human being was no longer to be found at the place assigned to it by a whole humanist tradition" (Lacan 1977, 114). Marx, similarly, replaces the notion of an autonomous, economic subject who, as in the Jamesian model, 'illustrates' him-/herself in incident, by a determinant network of productive class relations. In each of these systems (and in many others) the individual's capacity to 'illustrate' him-/herself is fettered by a number of webs (to borrow the metaphor from *Middlemarch*): economic, linguistic, astronomical and psychological. But these systems cannot be regarded as hurdles which the autonomous subject has to overcome, for these models of economic, linguistic and psychological experience also address the production of the subject.

If the principal function of ideology (as distinct from ideologies which express class positions) is the construction of the individual as a subject (Althusser 1971, 170-177), one may argue that post-structuralism challenges the assumption that there is an innate, essential selfhood which transcends history and culture, a subject which is metalinguistic and therefore constituted outside discourse. Where classic Realist critical practice tacitly assumes the idealist conception of discrete essences, post-structuralism conceives identity in differences within a relative framework.

Benveniste contends that it is language which offers the speaker subjectivity by positioning him/herself as the "I" of discourse. By a series of differences where "I" is not "you" the subject is defined. That is, the subject is constituted linguistically and always in a discursive and social context, and so is relative because dependent on difference. The subject exists only specifically, not universally or abstractly. The linguistic "I" is not a transcription of a pre-linguistic subjectivity whose character is merely expressed by language: for Benveniste, "language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse" (225). The corporeal individual exists independent of discourse, of course, but as Saussure's linguistic theory of meaning shows, his or her subjectivity is only available to him or her (as well as to us) through the medium of language. As Althusser says arguing from this, ideology effaces the constructedness of the subject, positing, instead, a subject which seems both autonomous and innately defined (1971, 181).

The common factor in these radical re-readings is subversion, or demystification, of apparently 'natural' authority: consciousness, God, monarchy, and the author. One may compare what Saussure does for language to what Freud does for consciousness: "in revealing language as a system of differences with no positive terms, Saussure immediately put

in question the 'metaphysics of presence' which had dominated western philosophy. Signs owe their capacity for signification not to the world but to their difference from each other in the network of signs which is the signifying system" (Belsey 1980, 136). Before Saussure, words (and thus subjects) were tokens whose value was assured by anterior objects, concepts, truths and essences. There could be no meaning without the ultimate subject, the transcendental signifier. The Realist critical practice which I have already alluded to in relation to *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, is predicated on the metaphysics of presence and praises (or blames) characterization in these two texts within the terms of that discourse. The aim of such writing is to "place a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign" (Derrida 1976, 49). In replacing the philosophy of presence by the philosophy of absence, one contends that "the so-called 'thing-itself' is always already a *representamen* shielded from the simplicity of intuitive evidence. The *representamen* functions only by giving rise to an *interpretant* that itself becomes a sign and so on to infinity" (1976, 49).

These developments in current post-structuralist theories of the subject may be compared, in some respects, to Sir Charles Lyell's nineteenth-century geological work, and to Charles Darwin's theory of biological evolution. Both these discourses, I have already argued, inform *Middlemarch* and

Daniel Deronda. Gillian Beer notes that evolutionary theory is not based upon a study of the individual. Indeed, evolutionary theory casts doubt upon the usefulness (or even the meaningfulness) of the Realist privileging of the particular, individual experience: "evolutionary theory never relies for meaning upon the single individual or even the single species. This was one of its major narrative challenges to novelists, to whom the life cycle of the individual was a central form for interpreting experience" (1980, 135). In Darwin's model, the individual is the site of dynamic struggle without logical conclusion. Evolutionary biology sees the individual as a continuing process, not an autonomous, expressive, coherent entity. For Darwin, the individual -- whether an individual species or one particular living thing -- is not simply buffeted by changes in climate and landscape: the history of these changes produces the very nature of the individual, and this productive process is not finite. The terms of Lyell's geological argument -- albeit in a different discourse -- similarly rebut the notion of expressive individualism in favour of a dynamic model in which any particular phenomenon is the site of complex, non-teleological contests among a variety of forces. In the work of both Lyell and Darwin, agency is structural so that species and individuals are first shaped by events before they, in their more constrained domains, can be shapers of events:

[Huxley and Haeckel] structured their accounts taxonomically, according to the *scala naturae*, or the great chain of being that orders all living things, whereas Darwin deploys a chain of events rather than a chain of beings. His chain is, in fact, a flexible series of jointed elements, each of which has multiple causes and consequences. Each element Darwin describes, even those he acknowledges as not fully understood, is ultimately correlated with every other, if not by natural selection then by other principles. Nor is the story complete without all of them. It is this causal relationship between elements that distinguishes Darwin's account from its predecessors (Landau 1991, 41-42).

In England between 1814 and 1825, as Shuttleworth notes, there was a scientific controversy between John Abernathy and William Lawrence (1984, 16). Following Bichat, Lawrence contended that life fundamentally depended on organization, not innate substance, while Abernathy maintained the older vitalist position. In this debate, too, one may see in Bichat's and Lawrence's arguments a subversion of expressive theories of the subject. Whether in physiology, comparative anatomy, geology, evolutionary biology or, indeed, in literature, study conducted at the level of discrete individuality was questioned because it could not take account

of structural, productive forces which operate discursively, so that what 'is' can only be distinguished by seeing its relationship to what 'is not.' For Bichat, Lawrence, Claude Bernard, Lyell and Darwin, identity is a dynamic relative process. Unlike vitalism, associationism defines the particular within a structure, thereby disputing the Realist novelistic claim that a single life of education and error is a reliable guide to experience. Again, as Beer puts it, "Lyell and Darwin both showed that it was necessary to imagine geological and biological time-spans of immense duration before the coming of man. Man had always been at the centre of fiction, but in their texts Lyell and Darwin showed that it was possible to have plot without man, both previous to man and regardless of him" (1980, 135).

One may see in the early presentations of Dorothea and Lydgate in *Middlemarch* a satire on vitalist assumptions about subjectivity, assumptions which elide the formative function of method. Dorothea and Lydgate are both young, bookish in their different ways, and ardent. Each is full of plans for the world's improvement. Dorothea's theoretic Puritanism -- which is later partially contrasted with Bulstrode's worldly Evangelicalism -- may be seen in her austere longing for a husband whose odd habits, the consequence of special talents, would be bliss to endure. This formulation of the pleasure of pain has a bookish aetiology. Dorothea thinks Casaubon

resembles Monsieur Liret (18), "the portrait of Locke" (20), and she thinks him like "his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology" (20). After several more meetings with Casaubon his scholarly likenesses have increased: he resembles Bossuet and Augustine (24), Pascal (28), and Dorothea envisions that in her marriage she will be as a nun to his Christ, a prospect for which she feels "reverential gratitude" (50).

Dorothea divides the world into the serious and the trivial. Pascal and Jeremy Taylor are serious; concerns with "feminine fashion appear an occupation for Bedlam. She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving eternal consequences, with a keen interest in guimp and artificial protrusions of drapery" (8). Such a division ensures that the only value of pleasure is that it affords an opportunity for self-denial, while marriage is a sort of private school with personal tuition: "riding was an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it" (10). Sir James's verbal tick thus disqualifies him as a potential husband for Dorothea because her paradigms, Hooker and Milton, are really personifications of judiciousness and pity. In seeking these personified ideals, Dorothea does not

distinguish representation from reality: she assumes that the representations of Hooker, Milton and Pascal she has read were produced, as it were, in Stendhal's mirror and are transcriptions of the actual figures. Like Descartes's essentialist, ontologically distinct *cogito*, Dorothea makes the vitalist assumption that subjectivity is innate, not discursive.

If Dorothea sees her husband as a combination of patriarch and encyclopaedia, Lydgate conceives of a wife who resembles a comfortable armchair. Initially he dislikes Dorothea because "she did not look at things from the proper feminine angle. The society of such women was about as relaxing as going from your work to teach the second form, instead of reclining in a paradise with sweet laughs for bird-notes, and blue eyes for a heaven" (93). After the fiasco with Laure, Lydgate resolves to "take a strictly scientific view of woman, entertaining no expectations but such as were justified beforehand" (151), so that his return to the haven of research makes it appear as though he has "two selves within him" (150).

The scientific view Lydgate preaches is Mill's induction, but he practices Whewell's hypothesizing. What, after all, is "the proper feminine angle"? The feminine domain, for Lydgate, is defined by contrast to, and thus in dialogue with, the male domain. The world of work, of

instruction, of rational enquiry and endeavour, is male. The proper feminine angle is established antithetically, and as antithetical domains are restricted by the characteristics of their antitheses, so the feminine does not just contrast with the male, it is inferior because dependent upon it. Lydgate's objection to Dorothea is that her society would not provide a pleasing contrast with his work, and that is the proper feminine angle.

This imposed subjectivity is the product of Lydgate's method of subject formation. His vaunted practice is inductive and predicated upon the tacit notion of the enquiring mind as a *tabula rasa*: strict science has no preconceptions except those which can be justified. Yet, there is no proffered justification for this inscribed feminine subject position, nor even anything to suggest that Lydgate is aware that this is indeed an 'expectation' at all. Eliot's tone, though, is not censorious nor even critical, for no life is lived without expectations. The narration's criticism is less of Lydgate himself than of the preposterousness of the notion that experience might be approached without innate assumptions. As Philip Larkin puts it in "Dockery and Son":

Where do these

Innate assumptions come from? Not from what

We think truest, or most want to do:

Those warp tight-shut, like doors. They're more a style
Our lives bring with them: habit for a while,
Suddenly they harden into all we've got
And how we got it.

On one hand, then, one may see in Lydgate's change of romantic direction a satire on inductive epistemology which presumes to recognize only what is innately there, and to see it as in itself it really is, independent of the observer and the observer's preconceptions. Equally, one may also see this as a satire on the vitalist belief in essential subjectivity. While one need not, of course, subscribe to inductive epistemology even if one is a vitalist, one could not, equally obviously, be both an inductivist and an organicist: "the issue was whether life . . . was dependent on organization, or whether . . . it was an actual principle or substance" (Shuttleworth 1984, 16). Lydgate takes for granted that his acts are produced autonomously. His *cogito* decides. Unlike the speaker of "Dockery and Son," Lydgate confuses his "innate assumptions" with what he "think[s] truest." But, just as he sees science acting upon society whilst, in Cartesian way, being independent of it, so too he conceives his method in seeking a spouse as neutral, rational and autonomously decided. Though it is induction which Lydgate claims to

practice, what he actually does is quite different: he has a hypothesis of what a woman should be, one unconsciously constructed within inscribed, predominant gendered subjectivity.

Surprisingly, W.J. Harvey says that "between 'the social good' and 'the intellectual conquest,' between his medical practice and his private researches, there is initially no divorce for Lydgate. They are tragically sundered by his marriage" (1967, 29). It is true, certainly, that Lydgate's attitude towards medicine is social: to him it presents "the most perfect interchange between science and art; offering the most direct alliance between intellectual conquest and the social good" (142). But Lydgate sees only a one way interchange from science to social good. Socially he sees the diastole but not the systole in which the character, the subjectivity, of medicine, is socially produced.

Lydgate's theoretical ideal of "the most perfect interchange between science and art" is similar to Dorothea's longing for the intellectual gains she anticipates from marriage with Casaubon and her social improvement schemes for Lowick cottages. For Lydgate, flirting with Rosamond was acceptable because it was unconnected with serious matters: "this play at being a little in love was agreeable, and did not interfere with graver pursuits" (261). The mechanistic models of social structure, which enable Dorothea and Lydgate

to compartmentalize aspects of their lives into discrete units, also enable each to view the self as a catalyst for actions, as a figure unmolested him- or herself. They see themselves as Realist narrators independent of, yet fully controlling, the action.

For Lydgate, medicine offers a further attraction beyond the alliance of scientific with social achievement. Once again, he conceives himself as an agent acting outwith the social web:

there was another attraction in his profession: it wanted reform, and gave a man an opportunity for some indignant resolve to reject its venal decorations and other humbug, and to be the possessor of genuine though undemanded qualifications [He would] resist the irrational severance between medical and surgical knowledge in the interest of his own scientific pursuits, as well as of the general advance: he would keep away from the range of London intrigues, jealousies, and social truckling, and win celebrity . . . by the independent value of his work (142-143).

Lydgate's marriage and Middlemarch society certainly provide the *means* to frustrate these ideals, but they do not *cause* the failure any more than Casaubon is the cause of Dorothea's

failure to find her own binding theory. Like Dorothea, Lydgate bifurcates experience: on one side there are "venal decorations," "humbug," the "irrational," "intrigues and jealousies and social truckling"; on the other side, there is the "genuine," "scientific pursuits," "the general advance" and "independent value." Because these two sides are mutually exclusive one of them may have unfettered, uncontaminated dominance over the other: "of course he must be married in a year -- perhaps even in half a year. This was not what he had intended; but other schemes would not be hindered: they would simply adjust themselves anew" (339). This hermetic view allows one to recognize issues or ideas only as isolated phenomena and thus privilege one area of experience as if it had come *ex nihilo*: Lydgate "was no radical in relation to anything but medical reform and the prosecution of discovery" (340). Thus it is that Lydgate believes that by putting some geography between himself and London he will elude the capital's social structures which fetter pure research, as though these structures too were simply isolated, local phenomena.

In her early dealings with Sir James over the cottages, Dorothea, too, assumes that value is innate and discrete: the cottages are a good thing in themselves and may be so estimated by Sir James regardless of his romantic inclinations. Both Dorothea and Lydgate imagine that

experience is composed of ideas and events which exist independent of the people who made them and independent of the social web within which the nature of these events is determined. In these respects, Lydgate and Dorothea straddle both senses of the philosophical concept of idealism: in German classical philosophy at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, idealism was the argument that the characteristics of any given object derive from an essential idea; the more general nineteenth century sense, however, is the ethically ambiguous notion of estimating a given act according to an imaginatively conceived 'ideal' of behaviour.

The difficulties that arise with both these essentialist views may be seen in a number of related discourses. To take one example, Saussure argues that

the arbitrary nature of the sign enables us to understand more easily why it needs social activity to create a linguistic system. A community is necessary in order to establish values. Values have no other rationale than usage and general agreement. An individual, acting alone, is incapable of establishing a value (1983, 111-112).

Put another way,

'value' is a transitive term: it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations, according to particular criteria and in the light of given purposes (Eagleton 1983, 11).

By dividing experience into intrinsic worth and extrinsic prejudice, Dorothea and Lydgate parse 'value' intransitively:

that distinction of mind which belonged to his intellectual ardour, did not penetrate his feeling and judgement about furniture, or women, or the desirability of its being known (without his [Lydgate's] telling) that he was better born than other country surgeons (147-148).

Equally, entering into marriage is not, for Lydgate, a fundamental alteration to the organic nature of his life, for his central impetus towards medical reform and research, being in a quite different category to his marriage, will continue unabated and unaffected. His wife would have but two, discrete functions: as one who "venerated his high musings and momentous labours and would never interfere with them" (344); and as a provider of that "paradise with sweet laughs for bird-notes, and blue eyes for a heaven." (93) Because Lydgate does not view subjectivity within an organic, structurally interdependent whole, he does not consider that

the effect on that part of the organic whole which is his ideal (in both senses) will be quite other than he anticipates:

he did not mean to imitate those philanthropic models who make a profit out of poisonous pickles to support themselves while they are exposing adulteration, or hold shares in a gambling-hell that they may have leisure to represent the cause of public morality (144).

In a pointed piece of parallel structure, Bulstrode, whose monetary "poisonous pickles" entrap Lydgate, holds a similarly essentialist view of the subject to the doctor's:

he remembered his first moments of shrinking. They were private, and were filled with arguments; some of these taking the form of prayer. The business was established and had old roots; is it not one thing to set up a new gin-palace and another to accept an investment in an old one? The profits made out of lost souls -- where can the line be drawn at which they begin in human transactions? Was it not even God's way of saving His chosen? "Thou knowest," -- the young Bulstrode had said then, as the older Bulstrode was saying now -- "Thou knowest how loose my soul sits from these things -- how I view them all as

implements for tilling thy garden rescued here and there from the wilderness" (603).

Though profit and damnation may be messily mixed, Bulstrode's rhetoric insists that his essential being is aloof from his doing. Similarly, Lydgate's "fitful swerving of passion" (148) from Laure to research makes it appear as though he has "two selves within him" (150), just as Bulstrode leads "two distinct lives" (603). Lydgate's simultaneous eagerness for medical reform and ignorance of the necessary domestic reforms, also parallels Mr. Brooke's campaign for political reform while the tenants of his own cottages go wanting. Because Dorothea and Rosamond, in their different ways, compartmentalize discrete experiences, each may conceive a mate abstractly as an independent object to be found in objective reality: Dorothea seeks a husband who is "above [her] in judgment and in all knowledge" (40); Rosamond discovers Lydgate "suddenly corresponding to her ideal" (115). Both have portable models of the essential subject and rummage the department store likeliest to have the best range for the object they would possess, as though a husband were an acquisition through which one might evince one's discrimination. Neither Dorothea nor Rosamond considers that marriage might entail organic reciprocity, that marriage might be a system like any other, including language, in which

meaning and identity are defined and established relatively: Saussure's contention that "no word has a value that can be identified independently of what else there is in its vicinity" (114) applies equally to any subject, including marriage, as one sees when Dorothea and Rosamond discover the error in their vitalist ways.

These hermetic separations of innate subjectivities presume that consciousness is distinct from knowledge and the processes of knowing. If the *cogito* functions above the systems of interdependence which produce experience, it remains pure. *Middlemarch's* challenge to this humanist conception of subjectivity can be seen in relation to Freud's similar questioning. As Belsey puts it,

Freud, in challenging the Cartesian basis of liberal humanism, the concept of personality determined by conscious subjectivity, the transcendent mind of the unique individual, challenged the ideology of liberal humanism itself. In displacing the philosophical *cogito* ('I think therefore I am': consciousness is the guarantee of identity), Freud by implication put in question 'the mirage that renders modern man so sure of being himself even in his uncertainties about himself, and even in the mistrust he has learned to practise against the traps of self-love' (1980, 130-131).

Casaubon-falling-in-love is perhaps *Middlemarch's* wittiest mockery of the equation between consciousness and being:

Mr. CASAUBON, as might be expected, spent a great deal of his time at the Grange in these weeks, and the hindrance which courtship occasioned to the progress of his great work -- the Key to all Mythologies -- naturally made him look forward the more eagerly to the happy termination of courtship. But he had deliberately incurred the hindrance, having made up his mind that it was now time for him to adorn his life with the graces of female companionship, to irradiate the gloom which fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of studious labour with the play of female fancy, and to secure in this, his culminating age, the solace of female tendance for his declining years. Hence he determined to abandon himself to the stream of feeling, and perhaps was surprised to find what an exceedingly shallow rill it was. As in drougthy regions baptism by immersion could only be performed symbolically, so Mr. Casaubon found that sprinkling was the utmost approach to a plunge which his stream would afford him; and he concluded that the poets had much exaggerated the force of masculine passion. Nevertheless, he observed with pleasure that Miss Brooke

showed an ardent submissive affection which promised to fulfil his most agreeable previsions of marriage. It had once or twice crossed his mind that possibly there was some deficiency in Dorothea to account for the moderation of his abandonment; but he was unable to discern the deficiency, or to figure to himself a woman who would have pleased him better; so that there was clearly no reason to fall back upon but the exaggerations of the human tradition (62).

Casaubon's anticipation of a return to scholarly work after courting Dorothea, more starkly and comically reveals the same division between work and play, seriousness and frivolity, definiteness and vacillation, which one sees in Dorothea and Lydgate. The attributes which Casaubon seeks in a wife -- "the play of female fancy . . . the solace of female tendance" -- differ little from Lydgate's ideal who "venerated his high musings . . . in a paradise of sweet laughs." Like Lydgate too, Casaubon views his prospective wife as an expression of innate selfhood: "it was now time for him to adorn his life with the graces of female companionship." The metaphor of the woman as adornment presumes that Casaubon's subjectivity is essential: adornments may be added without disturbing his coherent, independent being. And like Rosamond, for whom Lydgate "suddenly corresponded to her ideal," Casaubon "was

unable to . . . figure to himself a woman who would have pleased him better." Again, Casaubon's view is vitalist for the woman gratifies what he is and will always be: the organicist possibility that the subject exists in discourse -- in this instance with a potential mate -- and so is incoherent, inessential and always in the process of becoming, is not one that occurs in Casaubon.

As well as being vitalist, Casaubon's self-image is Cartesian and Realist. The passage subverts these assumptions by yoking familiar notions of rational, discriminating, objective independence of thought, to romance and passion. This particular marriage of domains wittily mocks and unravels Casaubon's conventional beliefs.

Much of this unravelling is achieved through the passage's point of view and through its metaphors. The narrator's language crucially shades into Casaubon's own register. The extended analogy of the stream of feeling, with its forced historical detour into droughty regions, is as stuffy and as marginally apt as is Casaubon's own scholarly work in mythology. Vocabulary and sentence structure are equally fustian and clumsy: "the hindrance which courtship occasioned to the progress of his great work"; "the happy termination of courtship"; "he had deliberately incurred the hindrance, having made up his mind that it was now time for him to adorn his life with the graces of female companionship,

to irradiate the gloom which fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of studious labour with the play of female fancy." By transferring the point of view from the narrator to Casaubon the passage more readily achieves its ironic tone. The metaphors are also appropriate to Casaubon while, again subversively, they suggest associations with the novel's more pervasive metaphors of the web and of the systole and diastole. Casaubon's language here is characteristically financial: he "*spent* a great deal of time at the grange"; "*termination* of courtship"; "*to secure* in this"; "possibly there was some *deficiency* in Dorothea *to account* for"; "he was unable to discern the *deficiency*, or *to figure* to himself." Casaubon becomes a banker in the metaphor, estimating the character of a prospective investment: just as the nature and eventual worth of a particular investment is distinct from the nature and worth of the banker himself, so from Casaubon's point of view the metaphor is apt. In the larger context of the whole novel, of course, the metaphor revealingly associates Casaubon with Bulstrode.

But what is salient in the passage is Casaubon's belief in his own complete mastery, a mastery which the passage mocks. Casaubon approaches marriage with the same verve as he approaches manuscripts. He is hardly transported for he "*made up his mind*" to marry, a ceremony which is a "*hindrance*" -- a term, like "*deficiency*," which appears twice

-- to his serious work. Far from being heady, this is done "deliberately." The comedy is at its height when Casaubon, in solemn scholarly contemplation, gravely considers whether or not there may be some shortcoming in Dorothea to account for what is beautifully described as "the moderation of his abandonment." Deciding against this, Casaubon thinks that poets' praise of love must have been exaggerated, this being the only "reason" he could fall back on.

This passage does more than establish Casaubon's incapacity for self-knowledge and self-criticism. In this early part of the novel Dorothea, Lydgate, Rosamond, Mr. Brooke, Bulstrode and Casaubon all equate consciousness with being in their assumption that subjectivity is innate and independent of organic, discursive interdependences. With that set of assumptions, each believes he or she may be the Realist narrator of his or her life, standing apart from its events, and recognizing the essential, and so true, character of every object, idea or person. Casaubon, and perhaps Bulstrode, are but the most extreme variations of the model. As one may see in this passage, Casaubon functions to ironize the primacy of the self as author of personal history. Such author(ity), of course, is predicated on just the sort of power and control which Casaubon imagines he has even in relation to love and marriage. Through its comic exaggeration, this passage also helps to define, early in the

novel, a major concern in the text with the way in which subjectivity is established. As Alfred North Whitehead puts this general issue:

the misconception which has haunted philosophic literature throughout the centuries is the notion of 'independent existence.' There is no such mode of existence; every entity is to be understood in terms of the way it is interwoven with the rest of the universe (cited in Culler 1976, 115).

The irony of Eliot's passages points up the inconsistencies in inductive epistemology and in vitalism. Each of Eliot's differing figures is variously indebted to the Cartesian subject, able to observe while participating, acting without being acted upon, producing yet not produced, conscious of self, for (paradoxically) consciousness both is self and may examine and recognize self. Dorothea, Lydgate, Casaubon, Bulstrode and Rosamond would all, in these early stages, agree with the Jamesian and Leavisian traditional, Realist conception of the expressive relation between character and action. But the text's ironic, distancing tone prompts a reader's doubting questions.

These non-Realist accounts of subjectivity may also be seen in the way subjectivity is explored in relation to the

notion of 'value.' In *Middlemarch*, money functions as a metaphor in a novel of analogical plots through which relations are established. But it is also a subject itself, one which plainly provokes questions about 'value.' Money does not operate expressively as a transcendental, neutral referent against which 'objective' comparisons may be made. Instead, one may 'read' money as a further exploration of the ruptures in vitalist subjectivity, so that money as a subject itself is investigated.

It is the expectation of, and then disappointment of, an inheritance which shapes Fred Vincy, and it is seeing Lydgate gambling which finally secures Fred from self-indulgence. Farebrother's shortage of money leads him to play whist and, paradoxically, this need for more money is cited against him when the opportunity for extra income arises at the new hospital. Bulstrode's money, made through dealing in stolen goods and augmented by a marriage made under false pretences, ultimately leads to his ruin. Ladislaw is intimidated by Dorothea's wealth, even before he learns of the codicil to Casaubon's will, and so he feels he cannot profess his love without first becoming financially independent. One aspect of money's subjectivity is seen through the two wills, Casaubon's and Featherstone's. Both men try to extend their powers beyond the grave, the former by a codicil, the latter

by installing Rigg in Stone Court where Featherstone expects Rigg will tyrannize in the same style as his benefactor.

Behind the *Volpone*-like scenes in Stone Court when the hopeful legatees crowd optimistically round this particular fox, there is another power struggle between Featherstone and Mary Garth. To Featherstone, money means not only the sadistic pleasure he derives from having power over others, it also means freedom. By repeating the same phrase, Eliot shows this belief changing from arrogant assurance to helpless desperation:

"I've made everything ready to change my mind, and do as I like at the last Now you do as I tell you I tell you, I'm in my right mind. Shan't I do as I like at the last? . . . look here! take the money -- the notes and gold -- look here -- take it -- you shall have it all -- do as I tell you I shall do as I like I shall do as I like Take it and do as I tell you" (308-310).

And Mary "never forgot that vision of a man wanting to do as he liked at the last" (310).

Like the other figures I have examined so far, Featherstone too has a privileged domain which he assumes exists outside and above structural interrelatedness. But the

money which he privileges, to which he ascribes a subjectivity which is single, coherent, expressive and outwith discourse, and which he believes grants him both power and the right to power, nonetheless exercises its power over him, for Featherstone's life is determined by the expectations he has of money and the rights he claims through it. Money shapes him, not he it. Of all his relatives the one with whom he is least at ease is Caleb Garth:

the old man [Featherstone], on the other hand, felt himself ill at ease with a brother-in-law whom he could not annoy, who did not mind about being considered poor, had nothing to ask of him, and understood all kinds of farming and mining business better than he did (251).

His death scene is almost a didactic tableau whose terms are reminiscent of *Silas Marner*: "Peter Featherstone was dead, with his right hand clasping keys, and his left hand lying on the heap of notes and gold" (311). Money's power is not only finite in that it cannot forestall death, but money is also seen within a structural system of interdependence imprisoning Featherstone as much as he imprisons others: the gaoler too is gaoled. Money cannot be omnipotent because it does not have "independent value."

There is, certainly, a conventional purpose to this scene which one might describe as the nineteenth-century equivalent of the medieval *radix malorum est cupiditas*. Without underestimating the importance of that ethical commentary, one might, as readily, read the scene in epistemological terms. Paper money, and currency in general, lacks innate value: money is worth what it buys and that is established, and altered, by social agreements. One cannot ascribe a value to a given sum of money on one's own: only the society in which one gets and spends can do that. Money's 'meaning,' then, is social not individual. This is very much the point Saussure makes about linguistic value and so linguistic meaning which, he says, is defined by the community of users not by the individual alone (1983, 112).

A second aspect of money's 'meaning' may be seen in synchronic and diachronic terms. The value of a dollar in Tokyo differs from its value on the same day in Mexico City. The value of a dollar last year differs from its value this year in the same place. In these terms, what this death scene presents is Featherstone's synchronic misconception that value is trans-social, that a dollar is worth the same in both Tokyo and Mexico City. Because Mary Garth's social context differs from Featherstone's, she values money otherwise, as do Caleb Garth and Rigg. Featherstone cannot do as he likes in the end because that licence assumes the congruence of Featherstone's

valuation with that of his victim. Epistemologically, Featherstone sees money as a subject independent of discourse, as a fixed 'given' prior to entry into the social. In refusing Featherstone's demands, Mary Garth does not simply reject his metadiscourse only to replace it with one of her own: her denial is of the possibility that there is any metadiscourse, that money could ever have innate value.

Money does not grant freedom, then; nor does it have the authority and power of innate value. Featherstone and Casaubon fail to continue their influence after death. The former fails because his power over Rigg lasts only as long as he can promise the legacy. Once Rigg has it, Featherstone's power is completely gone. (Parenthetically, one should note that the reverse happens with Raffles, whose power over Bulstrode increases after his death.) The failure of Casaubon's codicil results from his complete misreading of Dorothea, for in appending the condition to her inheritance that she would lose it on marrying Ladislaw, he loses just the things which would have prevented that marriage, her respect and sympathy for him. Like Featherstone, Casaubon mistakenly gives money pre-eminence whereas the actual consequences of his action are produced within the structure of interdependence. Or, to return to Benveniste's terms, Featherstone and Casaubon conceive money as "history" whereas it is really "discourse."

If *Middlemarch* delineates the upper limits of money's power, it does not deny that money is essential. Not only the general good is lost because Lydgate cannot conduct his research, but his wife, family and furniture are all endangered. These, of course, are the things to which his distinction of mind did not extend. The irony of Lydgate's nice qualms about Farebrother's whist is made by pointedly juxtaposing these reservations with mention of the Green Dragon to which Lydgate himself eventually sinks:

Lydgate felt certain that he [Farebrother] would have played very much less but for the money. There was a billiard-room at the Green Dragon, which some anxious mothers and wives regarded as the chief temptation in Middlemarch. The Vicar was a first-rate billiard-player and though he did not frequent the Green Dragon, there were reports that he had sometimes been there in the daytime and had won money. And as to the chaplaincy, he did not pretend that he cared for it, except for the sake of the forty pounds. Lydgate was no Puritan, but he did not care to play, and winning money at it had always seemed a meanness to him; besides, he had an ideal of life which made this subservience of conduct to the gaining of small sums thoroughly hateful to him (209).

Fred Vincy hopes that the buoyant optimism which led him into debt will also help him save his reputation with the Garth family when Caleb has to make good on the bill for £160. Though he does recognize that his debts not only damage his own reputation but appear to ruin the Garths' plan too, only when Fred sees an image of himself in Lydgate's ferocious, hypnotic, intense play in the billiard room does he finally abandon the life which led him into debt. Hitherto, Fred's sense of shame had been egocentric: he believed he had really let himself down. He recognized the effect on what, for him, was pre-eminent, but neglected what one might call any 'structural' consequences:

curiously enough, his pain in the affair beforehand had consisted almost entirely in the sense that he must seem dishonourable, and sink in the opinion of the of Garths: he had not occupied himself with the inconvenience and possible injury that his breach might occasion them, for this exercise of the imagination on other people's needs is not common with hopeful young gentlemen. Indeed we are most of us brought up in the notion that the highest motive for not doing a wrong is something irrespective of the beings who would suffer the wrong. But at this moment he suddenly saw himself as a pitiful rascal who was robbing two women of their savings (281).

Only by recognizing a replication of himself in another does Fred realize the consequences of his actions upon others. Only when he sees his actions within a structure does he remedy them, for meaning is suddenly established within a relative framework, not innately.

Because the novel so clearly disavows simplistic notions about pure virtue or pure vice, it also disavows the *deus ex machina*, the Amy Dorrit figure, who inexplicably transcends the otherwise irresistible forces of circumstance and effects miraculous salvations. As discrete conceptions of experience are invalid, it is appropriate that Mary Garth's goodness should be less effective in discouraging Fred's gambling than is the sight of Lydgate at billiards.

Dorothea's money too functions within a structure of unforeseen consequences. It does give her the means to enact many of the schemes of which she had long dreamed. She can contribute extensively to the fever hospital and she is able to lend Lydgate enough money to allow him to separate himself from Bulstrode. In these instances it gives her the freedom and power to enact her best inclinations. But this liberty has its limitations. Her wealth makes her a type, the young, rich widow, and therefore the object of clichéd speculations; the increased income of itself divides her from Ladislav; and, of course, the codicil puts Dorothea and Ladislav in nearly impossible, humiliating positions. In fact, in one respect,

the marriage to Ladislav at the end is a release from restrictions which wealth imposes. The financial nexus, then, reinforces the ideas that simple divisions of experience are impossible because meaning, and so subjectivity, is not private. There is no innate correspondence between money and value, only that which is socially agreed upon. Because the meaning of money is constructed its function varies, and its efficacy as the expression of individual will depends entirely upon the agreed, constructed meaning.

It is this idea of innate meaning and ultimate 'knowability' which *Middlemarch* challenges:

against the notion of a work of art which is an organic unity and against the notion that a human life gradually reveals its destined meaning, George Eliot opposes the concepts of a text made of differences and of human lives which have no unitary meaning Such lives have meaning not in themselves but in terms of their influence on other people, that is to say, in the interpretation which other people make of them (Miller 1974, 468).

The analogies amongst characters and plots explore the inescapability of perspective and the partiality of all views. The implication is that reality as we may know it is composed, not of arcane but objective truths, but of an infinite number

of subjective perspectives, all of which influence the others and each of which is influenced by all others. At the level of individual identity, character is presented as a linguistic process on two levels: character -- like linguistic meaning -- is modified by the processes of new contexts; and character is always being redefined in one's creative self-representation. The former process is apparent in the first meeting between Lydgate and Bulstrode:

one of Lydgate's gifts was a voice habitually deep and sonorous, yet capable of becoming very low and gentle at the right moment. . . . Mr. Bulstrode perhaps liked him the better for the difference between them in pitch and manners; he certainly liked him the better, as Rosamond did, for being a stranger in Middlemarch. One can begin so many things with a new person! - even begin to be a better man (152-153).

The point here is not only the conventional one that people become better or worse as a result of this or that influence, but that there is no essence of selfhood, no destined meaning, which experience does, or does not, bring out. There is no journey towards revelation but only a series of structural interdependences, constant processes, which instead of being

the route to a destination are themselves the route and the destination.

The second process, that of creative self-representation, is of course concurrent with the first process and may be seen in the way that Bulstrode's final ruin is effected:

who can know how much of his most inward life is made up of the thoughts he believes other men to have about him, until the fabric of opinion is threatened with ruin? (677).

The element of unconscious fictiveness in one's own sense of identity is not presented as self-delusion, as it might be in a conventional Realist novel. One may mistake what others think, as Bulstrode does above, but the fictiveness is not produced by the discrepancy in perceptions; that would imply that congruent perceptions would not be fictive. There is no reason to suppose that if the individual accurately perceives what popular gossip says, then the conceived self will be the less fictive. Because identity is a continual creative process, it cannot but be fictive. Authentic identity is not a matter of aligning what gossip says with what one thinks gossip says, but of recognizing that the self cannot but be formed through the imagination, one aspect of which is what

one imagines others imagine about oneself. The metaphor Eliot uses, "fabric," appropriately emphasises the relative nature of identity.⁴ This throws conventional notions about 'objective' and 'prejudiced' perception into question.

Dorothea and Rosamond present a juxtaposition of seemingly 'objective' and 'prejudiced' views. Superficially, the distinction between Dorothea and Rosamond appears to be in terms of egoism: Dorothea becomes conscious of "the largeness of the world" (777), whereas for Rosamond "her little world was in ruins" (769); though "it was not in Dorothea's nature, for longer than the duration of a paroxysm, to sit in the narrow cell of her calamity, in the besotted misery of a consciousness that only sees another's lot as an accident of its own" (776), Rosamond "had been little used to imagining other people's states of mind except as a material cut into shape by her own wishes" (766). Ladislav, too, may be seen in similar terms of egoistic self-absorption, for his anger towards Rosamond is based in his sense of having lost Dorothea irrevocably, and even when Lydgate tells him that his name too has been linked with Bulstrode's, Ladislav's response is governed by the same single sense of having lost Dorothea: "he was thinking, 'Here is a new ring in the sound of my name

⁴ See Chapter 1 above.

to recommend it in her hearing; however -- what does it signify now?" (771).

However, a Realist reading of this section in which one distinguishes Rosamond's egocentric, or subjective, perspective from Dorothea's growth into a neutral, or objective, conspectus, raises problems. In classic Realist terms, this should be the moment when the discourse of the novel's central character coincides with the narrator's metadiscourse in which authentic, true subjectivity has always resided -- outside, or prior to, articulation. It should be the moment when Dorothea achieves insight through experience and suffering. The true nature of things, known from the outset to narrator and reader, should now be recognized by Dorothea too. This transcendent knowledge, outside and above discourse, operates in Realist writing as the scale against which erring, striving characters are judged and evaluated. Bernard J. Paris sees the novel's conclusion much in these terms. He argues that Dorothea's

personal disappointment did not, however, result in feelings of isolation and alienation, for she had been educated through her material experience to an awareness of the interior lives of others Dorothea, like Maggie Tulliver, was motivated at her moment of great moral crisis by her past experience and by the vision and

sympathy which that experience had nurtured in her . . . she transcended the limits of self and of her individual lot by identifying self with the world (189-190).

Paris does not mention that, in this climactic moment, the "awareness of the interior lives of others," which Dorothea's education and marriage had nurtured in her, could not be more mistaken: she assumes, without question, that Rosamond and Ladislav are having an affair, and that false assumption is the basis of her subsequent action. It is only because Dorothea does not transcend "the limits of self and her individual lot" that she realizes, for the first time, that she loves Ladislav: "she discovered her passion to herself in the unshrinking utterance of despair" (775). The source of her vision of life as "labour and endurance" (777) is not metaphysical but mundane, personal and egocentric.

Rosamond's loss of selfhood is, in fact, the only 'accurate' perception any of the four characters involved has: "Rosamond, while these poisoned weapons were being hurled at her, was almost losing the sense of her identity" (768). Her self-conceived subject position is destroyed when Ladislav acts out of the character into which she has cast him. Because Rosamond is no longer the omniscient narrator of the fictional relationship between herself and Ladislav, her "identity" is lost. This is not a conventional awakening from

illusion into reality, for no such simple distinction can be made. As we have seen already, fictionalizing selfhood is as central as it is inescapable in personal identity. Each figure here fictionalizes self and circumstances: Lydgate conceives a new relationship between himself and his wife as a result of Dorothea's visit which "involved some new turning towards himself" (770) on Rosamond's part; Ladislaw regards Rosamond as the "woman who had spoiled the ideal treasure of his life" (768); and Dorothea bases her subsequent action on the belief that Ladislaw and Rosamond are lovers and she herself the victim of a wanton deceit. No essential distinction may be made amongst the characters on the basis of subjectivity and objectivity (in this Realist sense) for the constructedness of each figure's reality cannot but have an egocentric, fictional origin. Nor is there a simple, direct correlation between the 'accuracy' of the subjective hypothesis which forms the interpretative premise of action, and the validity of that action, as Dorothea's 'right' conclusion based on a 'wrong' premise again shows.

The process of interpretation, however, is the same for each figure. An objective conspectus is impossible for any of the characters because the observer cannot but alter the nature of the thing observed, as the metaphors of the water drop and the electric battery demonstrate (58-59; 389).

This is implicit, too, in Dorothea's revised view of the structure of interdependence:

she was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining (777).

She is 'a part' rather than 'apart.' When the narrative tells us, then, that Dorothea tried "to live through that yesterday morning deliberately again (776), we know that the attempt to be a spectator, to be 'apart' from a scene where she acts, is impossible. All Dorothea can do, as, for example, Roland Barthes does in his 'autobiography,' is re-write the scene and the selves involved in a way which acknowledges that the 'I' who does and the 'I' who writes of what was done cannot ever be the same. To tell is to invent. This is ironically acknowledged in the narration:

all this vivid sympathetic experience returned to her now as a power: it asserted itself as acquired knowledge asserts itself and will not let us see as we saw in the day of our ignorance (776).

Dorothea, of course, has only exchanged one sort of ignorance for another, one sort of knowledge for another. She does not have "the truer measure of things" (846). Hers is no metadiscourse, as in a conventional classic Realist text it would be. Here, the distinction between the real and the articulated, especially in a diachronic sense, remains. The distinction which can be made between Dorothea and Rosamond is in terms of omniscient narration, for Rosamond's "sense of identity" depends upon her full control of the narrative, whereas Dorothea discovers there is no such "luxurious shelter." Rosamond cannot accept a discursively constructed subjectivity, whereas Dorothea discovers there is no possible alternative.

Dorothea does, however, recognize that her own jealousy and disappointment are not the only emotions in the scene. The narrative emphasizes this because, before we read of Dorothea's response, there are two chapters giving Rosamond's and Ladislav's reactions. Dorothea's discovery that no scene, no relationship, no life exists as a single, unhistorical meaning is expressed in 'light' images:

it had taken long for her to come to that question, and there was light piercing into the room. She opened her curtains, and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond, outside the entrance-gates.

On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving -- perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance (777).

The conventional association of dawn with renewal and hope is fundamentally modified because Dorothea's discovery is based on error. The link with Bichat is obvious, for there too the erroneous idea of a fundamental tissue led to the discovery of cells. The revelation itself has important connections to the pier-glass as an image of the partiality of coherence. Even in her heightened susceptibility, Dorothea's 'own' feeling, the private conclusions she reaches about the two figures she saw, is mistaken. She has arranged the scratches on the pier-glass according to the candle of her own emotions.

In part this is anticipated in Dorothea's honeymoon in Rome. Because of the novel's organicist readings, when Dorothea is in Rome, history is a direct experience, massively, inescapably disillusioning to "a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principle" (188). Rome, however, cannot be assimilated: it is "unintelligible Rome" (188) and the splendour of its immense incomprehensibility is a synecdoche of the

relationship between individual consciousness and the history of the production of meaning. In the eclipse, demise and plundering of imperial Rome, Dorothea first sees herself as "a part" of history and experience, pusillanimous against the vastness of their meaning. The unintelligibility suggests Mordecai's 'untranslatable' Hebrew writings in *Daniel Deronda*. In the movement towards discovery, solution and resolution, a movement which characterizes the structure of the classic Realist text, all discourses must be placed within the hierarchy at whose summit there is the language which claims to be no discourse at all. But this 'untranslatable' discourse explodes the possibility of inclusiveness and so subverts the notion of extra-discursivity itself.

As all the characters are encompassed by the candle and the mirror, so the movement away from pure egoism is a refinement of error not a discovery of true, authentic subjectivity. Refinement of error depends upon language and as language is ineluctably metaphorical, so language too is always partial (mis-)representation. The nearest one comes to a revealed truth is the potency of Mary Garth's love to reform Fred. As Knoepfmacher notes, "in the hands of a lesser writer, Fred's redemption by Mary and her honest father could easily have degenerated into a mawkish homily on the powers of true love and of practical hard work" (1971, 177). That Eliot permits the happy ending at all implies a varied vision. The

subtlety of the redemption is that it is not accomplished by the Garths alone. The decisive turning point in Fred's change of heart comes when he sees that image of himself, a reflection, in Lydgate at billiards. Equally, Farebrother's self-forgetful tutoring of Fred and the vicar's own failure with Mary contributes crucially. There is no simple pattern of goodness redeeming idleness in a closed system of concrete values. Fred and Mary's happy ending depends upon the failure of two other figures.

As with money, love is acknowledged to have a certain power, but, again like money, its power is circumscribed. At the very time Dorothea develops a realistic understanding of, and sympathy for, Casaubon, he dies and dies without any knowledge of Dorothea's new feeling. His disappointed expectations of marriage are unaffected by Dorothea's new love. While Mrs. Bulstrode can console her husband privately after he is exposed, her selfless love is powerless against public calumny, for devotion is a force not a panacea in a reality without the *deus ex machina* of destined, metalinguistic, innate subjectivity.

* * *

In "The Spoiled Child" and "Meeting Streams," the first two Books of *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen Harleth is introduced to the reader through a series of performances. Conscious of a stranger's gaze in the novel's opening scene in the casino at Leubronn, Gwendolen conceives herself as a performer before this unknown audience. Later, at a dinner party at Quetcham Hall, Gwendolen first meets Klesmer and performs a Bellini aria. In the following chapter, there is a charade in which Gwendolen plays Hermione, from *The Winter's Tale*. At the hunt, Gwendolen once more performs for an audience, and with some success for Lord Brackenshaw himself escorts her home. The archery meeting is another performance, this time with Grandcourt as audience.

In these performances, Gwendolen assigns herself the role of enchantress. In the opening scene, she is figured both as a Nereid and as Lamia. At the archery meeting, she is figured as another enchantress, Calypso. But as Barbara Hardy remarks in her edition of the novel, "Gwendolen's resemblance to Lamia is pathetically incomplete; she is not to win the scholar from the power of reason and the wise old tutor, and is indeed to find herself in the serpentine toils of Grandcourt, often described in reptilean [*sic*] images"

(886). In the Realist novel, as MacCabe, Belsey,⁵ Macdonell and others conceive it, one might read the narrative irony in these opening scenes as signalling a hierarchical distinction between the omniscient narrator's metalanguage and Gwendolen's limited vision. This distinction would serve in developing Gwendolen as a character, a development in which her initial, faulty conception of self as an enchantress would, through experience and suffering, gradually be corrected until Gwendolen discovered her 'true' self -- Arnold's buried, central stream -- the self which the narrator and the reader knew all along.⁶

In *Daniel Deronda*, this sort of reading might seem to be supported by the way in which Gwendolen is introduced through a succession of performances -- through a series of false selves from which she progresses. Indeed, for many post-structuralists such as MacCabe, subjectivity in Realism

⁵ Like Raymond Tallis in *In Defence of Realism* (50), I would not want my specific disagreements with Belsey's arguments to detract from either the extent of my debt to her work, or from my admiration for the lucidity of her thinking.

⁶ This method of narration is one Colin Macabe describes particularly clearly in the film *Klute*: [the central character Bree] gain[s] insight through the plot development and like many good heroines of classic realist texts her discourse is more nearly adequate to the truth at the end of the film than at the beginning. But if a progression towards knowledge is what marks Bree, it is a possession of knowledge which marks the narrative, the reader of the film and John Klute himself (1989, 137).

is presented as though it were innate, and the primary function of experience in a Realist text -- the experience of reading or the experience of the characters themselves -- is to show characters either discovering, or failing to discover, what the narrator and reader always knew, a knowledge already 'possessed' by the narration and by characters such as John Klute.⁷ Certainly, post-structuralists view the Realist

⁷ In post-structuralist accounts of the relationship between the reader and writing in Realism, the reader's role is said by post-structuralists to be passive; one ingests the text's truths and is nourished by them. My argument here is that in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, at least, the reader's relationship to the writing is less placidly inert. One danger in this too ready, too sweeping account, on one hand of the populace's docility, and on the other of the success of hegemonic conspiracies, is to be seen outside literary analyses in the politics of both the authoritarian left and the authoritarian right. For example, a group called the Situationists offers a variation of this argument in more specifically political terms. As Neal Ascherson puts it:

'The Spectacle has effectively suppressed all genuine play. The desire to play . . . is returned to us as sport, toys, gambling and competition.'

So runs the argument of a pamphlet called 'The Bad Days Will End' For 'play' one can roughly read 'free and spontaneous behaviour.' The authors are Situationists, members of a perky old sect which . . . supplied a lot of intellectual ammunition for the 1968 students' revolt. They believe -- roughly, again -- that States maintain their power by mesmerizing people with an endless parade of changing 'Spectacle.' Politics become a variety of entertainment, which offers the individual a completely false picture of what is really afoot. 'The Spectacle' tells him what to think and -- above all -- trains him to loll back and watch the show rather than to take part in it (1988, 83).

Post-structuralist accounts of Realism might, not unreasonably I think, be read as an aspect of this more general analysis in which the population is conceived as the passive but complicit and willing victims of a grand conspiracy theory, a theory which is apparently remarkably successful. The argument I

subject as proposing itself to be ultimately knowable in the sort of terms which E.M. Forster suggests in *Aspects of the Novel*:

we cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly, and, apart from the general pleasure of reading, we can find here a compensation for their dimness in life And that is why novels, even when they are about wicked people, can solace us: they suggest a more comprehensible and thus a more manageable human race, they give us the illusion of perspicacity and of power (1974, 44).

Once more, I shall raise some difficulties with these post-structuralist views of the Realist subject in relation to *Daniel Deronda* and offer another opinion of this novel's account of subjectivity.⁸ In these performances, Gwendolen's

offer here aims to show that in Eliot's last two novels a less simple process is at work.

⁸ Though I do not share Penny Boumelha's aims, she too challenges the ways in which some post-structuralist, Marxist and feminist theorists have read Realism:

the problem is that many, or most, politically orientated theories of realism have tended to argue (or on occasion

script is certainly faulty but the dramas reveal miscasting rather than a distinction between the 'genuine' -- something innate and so lacking all need for performance and a relation with an audience -- and the phoney. Later in the novel, Deronda himself is 'cast' as a Jew by Mordecai (Levine 1980, 5; Carroll 1992, 295),⁹ a role Deronda fulfils successfully. 'Casting' is a sort of hypothesis, in Whewell's terms, or a question we ask nature, in Sir Karl Popper's terms. Methodologically, it makes no difference whether the question is answered positively, as in Deronda's case, or negatively, as with Gwendolen, for either way the knowledge one is vouchsafed is discursive: identity is imaginatively and provisionally constructed in a dialogue.

In *Silas Marner*, by contrast, Eliot is concerned with a straightforward distinction between true and false identity, for the narrative 'uncovers' Dunsey's true self beneath his public mask of false or acted selves. The model for identity

to assume) that realist texts can only be read productively by contestatory or oppositional criticism in so far as they are disrupted by other modes of writing; that is, that we can only value a realist text for those moments when and where it shows the traces of other modes" (1992, 320).

The point is not that Realist readings of so-called Realist writing are really 'right' after all. Rather, the issue is the ways in which some post-structuralist writers reify and simplify Realism into adult spoon-feeding.

⁹ See Michael York Mason, "*Middlemarch* and History," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 25 (1971): 422 for a different account of method: Mason argues for pure empiricism.

in this earlier novel is akin to that used in detective fiction where the villain's problem lies in concealing the truth, not in knowing it. In *Daniel Deronda*, however, Gwendolen's public self is not a mask (conscious or not) cloaking her 'true' self; it is a part of her 'forming-self,' so that these *performances* can be understood etymologically as 'effecting' or 'bringing about through time' the figure of Gwendolen Harleth. Subject formation in *Daniel Deronda* is not simply a matter of diving down through experience to the always-present central stream of authentic being: Gwendolen's subjectivity, like that of the other figures, lies in her being subjected to, and the subject of, these performances: "Gwendolen had not considered that the desire to conquer is itself a sort of subjection" (Eliot 1984, 95).

Here, as in other aspects of Eliot's work, work in contemporaneous science, social science and philosophy has been important. In broad terms,

in the later eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century, marked changes developed in what, in a very inclusive sense, can be called the theory of human nature. One such change consisted in a series of challenges to the widely held assumption that human nature is constant [One thread common to various challenges to the conception of a constant human nature

was] the purely negative thesis that there are no specific ways of thinking and acting which are so deeply entrenched in human nature that they cannot be supplanted either by the effects of the circumstances in which men are placed or by means of man's own efforts. This view was held in many forms and became a pervasive assumption within nineteenth-century thought (Mandelbaum 1971, 141).

More specifically, as Gillian Beer argues, nineteenth-century biology moved from ontogeny, the study of individual life spans, to phylogeny, the study of the development of species (1983, 15f.). In literary terms, similarly, there were grounds to suggest that the individual phenomenon was best understood within the structural process of a large, formative context, a context at once synchronic and diachronic. As specific biological forms develop their identity from historical interactions and interdependencies, so the human subject too, biologically, socially, religiously and psychologically, is the product of historical structure rather than conscious choice.¹⁰

Instead of reading Gwendolen's acting as the beginning of a drama of concealment and eventual revelation within a

¹⁰ Beer also notes the speed with which evolution was accepted and explains this by the diversity of its implications: inclusiveness; simplicity; and dependence upon profusion.

hierarchy of discourses, I propose reading it in a Cartesian¹¹ context, for Gwendolen conceives power struggles as a contest between coherent, autonomous wills. There is, for her, a subject prior to the entry into the social or into language so that she views these sites at which performances are given as no more than the scenes of battle between subjects whose characters and strengths are previously established. One might represent this view as Cartesian for three reasons: being and acting (in both senses of 'performing' and 'doing') are conceived discretely; the relation between these separate domains is hierarchical, for one's being controls one's actions; and there is an expressive relationship between self

¹¹ Sally Shuttleworth argues that a liberal delimitation of individual free will of the sort Herbert Spencer makes in *Social Statics* or which Gwendolen presumes at the outset of *Daniel Deronda* presupposes a Cartesian psychological theory which views "society as a mechanical association of autonomous, rational actors" (1984, 186). As Shuttleworth also argues, the nineteenth-century psychologist James Sully unmasks the conventions of language which had previously suggested that the subject of a verb is the full and adequate causation of the verb's action. This had commonly led to the view that there was an autonomous ego which arrives at decisions and conclusions independent of the processes by which such conclusions are expressed. George Henry Lewes, too, "challenged conceptions of individual autonomy and the dualism of subject and object, self and other. His theories also undermined the Cartesian division of mind and matter, which had sustained the identification of the self with conscious thought" (Shuttleworth 1984, 186). One might compare these readings to Foucault's analysis of Marx and Nietzsche as figures who subvert the "sovereignty of the subject" (1974, 12) by decentering rationality and focusing instead on the relativity of, say, the means of production or of Nietzschean genealogy. The work of all these men challenges vitalism and notions of Cartesian autonomy.

(seen as consciousness) and manifestations of self in action. Gwendolen's notion of subjectivity, then, is Realist but the novel as a whole challenges this essentialist account and offers, instead, a discursive version of the subject.

Eliot approaches the question of subjectivity through the language of Matthew Arnold, in particular his account of "doing as one likes" in *Culture and Anarchy*:

Gwendolen enjoyed the riding, but her pleasure did not break forth in girlish unpremeditated chat and laughter as it did on that morning with Rex. She spoke a little and even laughed, but with a lightness as of a far-off echo: for her too there was some peculiar quality in the air -- not, she was sure, any *subjection* of her will by Mr Grandcourt, and the splendid prospects he meant to offer her; for Gwendolen desired every one, that dignified gentleman himself included, to understand that *she was going to do just as she liked*, and that they had better not calculate on her pleasing them. If she chose to take this husband she would have him know that she was not going to renounce her freedom, or according to her favourite formula, "not going to do as other women did" (emphases added) (116-117).

As with Peter Featherstone's death in *Middlemarch*, the Arnoldian phrase is crucial:

even in Gwendolen's mind that result was one of two likelihoods that presented themselves alternately, one of two decisions towards which she was being precipitated, as if they were two sides of a boundary-line, and she did not know on which she should fall. This *subjection* to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and terror: her favourite key of life -- *doing as she liked* -- seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment *she might like to do*. The prospect of marrying Grandcourt really seemed more attractive to her than she had believed beforehand that any marriage could be: the dignities, the luxuries, the *power of doing a great deal of what she liked to do*, which had now come close to her and within her choice to secure or to lose, took hold of her nature as if it had been the strong odour of what she had only imagined and longed for before (emphases added) (121).

Gwendolen has already described those who would frown on her gambling as "Philistines" (7), but the distinction between

liberty and licence which Arnold is at pains to make escapes her at this stage of the novel.

Arnold sees the sort of freedom Gwendolen believes in as leading to anarchy:

the central idea of English life and politics is the *assertion of personal liberty*. Evidently this is so; but evidently, also, as feudalism, which with its ideas and habits of subordination was for many years silently behind the British Constitution, dies out, and we are left with nothing but our system of checks, and our notion of its being the great right and happiness of an Englishman to do as far as possible what he likes, we are in danger of drifting towards anarchy (1960-1977, 5, 117).

For Arnold, there is no belief in England comparable with the European or classical sense of the state as "the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals" (1960-1977, 5, 117). Opposed to self-interested individualism is "the idea of public duty and of discipline, superior to the individual's self-will" (1960-1977, 5, 118).

Arnold represents anarchy as a condition in which each individual fully envisages him- or herself prior to, and apart from, their entry into the social. His view of culture is one in which the individual subject is defined by social relations and commitments. These arguments -- arguments not unfamiliar to post-structuralists -- also place Arnold at the centre of the nineteenth-century scientific, and social scientific, debates between vitalism and associationism:

in social philosophy, theorists of the French Revolution employed the principles of association to explain the composition of society. The idea of association implies the coming together of separate parts and, for the Ideologues, society was just a collection of separate individuals, an artificial structure which, they believed, could be transformed by the rational action of men. The physiological and social principles of organic life first formulated in the last decades of the eighteenth century explicitly challenged this belief. In 1790 Kant proposed in *Critique of Judgement* the now-classic definition of the organism as a whole in which each part is reciprocally means and end (Shuttleworth 1984, 2-3).

These issues and arguments are central in *Daniel Deronda* and constitute one of its principal sources of dramatic tension. At the close of the novel Deronda commits himself to the establishment of a Jewish state, and he so far subsumes his individual will as to define himself as a subject of this cause. He does not express an already complete self in this cause, as Gwendolen believes she expresses herself in the opening performances; his engagement is part of the discursive process of subject-formation. By contrast to this "cultured" view of the subject, Gwendolen's subject position is "anarchic." Or, to change from Arnold's language to that of contemporaneous science and social science, *Daniel Deronda* opposes Gwendolen's anthropocentric teleology to Deronda's Kantian organicism.

These views of the subject are juxtaposed in the novel's exploration of music in both actual and metaphorical terms. According to Beryl Gray, "nowhere in George Eliot's fiction is the pattern of musical allusion more delineated . . . than in her last novel" (1989, 100). In the scene at Quetcham Hall Gwendolen sings a Bellini *aria*. The amateur guests are impressed by her performance but Klesmer, a professional musician, criticizes both her singing and her choice of song. As a boy, Daniel is asked by Sir Hugo if he would like to be a singer when he grows up. As this is hardly an appropriate occupation, even for the natural son of a

baronet, Deronda "reddened instantaneously" (154), for singing "he knew very well was not thought of among possible destinations for the sons of English gentlemen" (154). Later, as a man, Deronda is in London rowing on the Thames, quietly singing to himself the gondolier's song from Rossini's *Otello*. Sitting on the bank is Mirah Lapidoth who, on the point of suicide, subliminally hears Deronda's song. Her half-conscious, sung echo attracts Deronda's notice in return and he sees "a figure which might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to" (171). It turns out that Mirah had been brought up in New York where she had shown promise of becoming "a great singer" (196). Later, when Deronda returns from the European trip where he meets Joseph Kalonymous in Frankfurt, he goes directly to the Meyricks' house in Chelsea where he listens to Mirah's singing. He at once realizes and also resists his growing love for her. Mirah, however, says that she has "often fancied that heaven might be made of voices" (343) when she recalls her mother's voice.

Deronda and Mirah, of course, eventually marry. Music also brings another couple together, for Klesmer and Catherine Arrowpoint confess their mutual love prompted by, and in the setting of, music. Klesmer's music lessons had earlier brought them together; through music they fell in love; Bult's contempt for music triggers Klesmer's angry retort and thereby

his expression of love for Catherine; and it is with folio sheets of music manuscript between them that she returns his sentiment.

Lastly, music also functions in relation to filial as well as to sexual love, for music expresses the reunion of Mirah with her brother Mordecai:

"Ezra," she said, in exactly the same tone as when she was telling of her mother's call to him. Mordecai with a sudden movement advanced and laid his hands on her shoulders. He was the head taller, and looked down at her tenderly while he said, "That was our mother's voice. You remember her calling me?" (541).

The function of music in *Daniel Deronda* has been widely read in conventionally Realist, or expressivist, terms. To give just one example, Gray argues that

music is to measure the extent of Gwendolen's futile vanity and hollow ambition, not only in the hope she exposes to Klesmer (whose own musical genius and reverence excuse his social arrogance) when she appeals to him for advice, but in her subsequent refusal (later revoked) to sing even for private pleasure. It offers the most telling contrast between her egoism (which

desires public acclaim for her limited talents) and Mirah's talented modesty and unaffected professionalism (1989, 100).

Gray's reading conceives the pervasive presence of music in the novel as an objective standard, or scale, against which different characters may be measured in such a way as to uncover their essential qualities. The Realist, mirror-like passivity and neutrality of the medium is such that it even allows one to distinguish the essential qualities, and so the essential differences, between a character in this novel, Gwendolen, and Rosamond in *Middlemarch*:

although George Eliot's moral placing of Gwendolen is judgemental, it is also sympathetic, and she endows her with a degree of musicality which precisely corresponds to this placing. In contrast to Rosamond Vincy (with whom, as critics have often noted, she otherwise shares many characteristics), Gwendolen is given the capacity to develop and a soul worth saving, and so -- unlike Rosamond -- she is to be musician enough to recognize that others possess gifts greater than her own, and generous enough to acknowledge it (Gray 1989, 100).

Music here is a sort of litmus test which reveals otherwise concealed, innate properties. It is not simply that the characteristics of the figures themselves exist fully formed prior to their entry into music, but also that the qualities of music too are innate and distinct from the singer or the piano player or, indeed, the occasion. The union of the performer, moment and medium is read as an association of fundamentally separate, vital organisms and their conjunction is merely revelatory, not productive or formative.¹²

Broadly, one might think it unlikely that in her last novel Eliot would revert to a simple conception of music as a metalanguage which, from the top of a hierarchy and extra-discursively, iterates the truth already 'possessed' (pace MacCabe) by narrator and reader. Given that in *Middlemarch*,

¹² Music, certainly, has long been conceived either as dangerous or as liberating (depending on one's point of view and one's concerns) because it has been given just this expressivist quality of unshackling what is ordinarily repressed, or more simply hidden, but undoubtedly innate. On one hand, Plato sees music as dangerous in that it encourages listeners to give way to the lachrymose, weak part of their souls. Accordingly, bearing Plato's social, military and broadly affective concerns in mind, he approves only of martial music which would strengthen one's resolve. On the other hand, though through a set of rather similar assumptions, E.M. Forster sees music as positive in revealing what normally is concealed. Lucy Honeychurch's playing of Beethoven, in *A Room with a View*, and the performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in Chapter Five of *Howards End*, serve to uncover hidden, essential qualities of a number of characters. Similarly, Philip Larkin, when a student, thought that jazz was a manifestation of the unconscious so that, by nature, it had to be improvised (Motion 1993, 57).

through the images of the pier-glass and the microscope in particular, Eliot so carefully explores the dialogic relationship between knowledge and the means of knowing, and that elsewhere in this novel Mordecai's hypothesis is represented as producing, not simply recognizing, Deronda's identity, one might instead look for a more provisional, specific and discursive function for music as a characteristic means to knowledge in *Daniel Deronda*.

I propose that the novel's musical scenes provide characteristic and pervasive examples of the way in which *Daniel Deronda* juxtaposes Realist, expressivist views about subjectivity with Darwinist, dialogic accounts of the history and production of the self. Once more, Darwin's argument -- in this respect he differs from Huxley and Haeckel -- that the history of the human subject has been shaped by events that produce evolutionary forms, not by *beings* who, extra discursively, effect the history of events, is important to keep in mind (Landau 1991, 41-42). Eliot, too, is at pains to show how such varied conditions as architecture, or social custom, inform the production of the subject.

The first of these musical scenes appears within a series of retrospectives which introduce the novel as a whole. One important function this pre-history serves is to challenge conventional Realist delineations of the subject. There are four reasons for this distinctive structure. Most

immediately, at the moment when Gwendolen is about to come back to Offendene, and to lose it, we return to the moment when the family first moved there. The poignant, dramatic effect of the juxtaposition is obvious enough. Secondly, the retrospective method through which Gwendolen, Daniel and Mirah are introduced, associates them initially in a general way in the reader's mind. Thirdly, as I have already argued, in her last two novels Eliot acknowledges the fictiveness of points of closure, so that, while all lives are bound to their beginnings, any search for the zero point, the point of undifferentiated experience as Foucault might have it, can never go back far enough. Though the present can never be understood without seeing its organic relation to the past, the past itself exists dialogically both with a prior time and with what we, now, know it to have produced, so that beginnings, like accounts of 'essential' nature, are imaginatively constructed. The retrospectives, then, suggest that *Daniel Deronda* opens with a beginning, not *the* beginning, a beginning which therefore gives an account of the subject rather than *the* account.

The fourth function for this Russian doll of an opening more narrowly concerns the novel's presentation of the subject. As Joan Bennett points out, "there are no explanations of [Grandcourt's] moral nature comparable with those about Tito Melema in *Romola*" (1948, 190), and Bennett

goes on to support this view by quoting the introduction of Grandcourt at the opening of Book Two:

attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? even when he is presented to us we only begin that knowledge of his appearance which must be completed by innumerable impressions under differing circumstances. We recognize the alphabet; we are not sure of the language (98).

The flashbacks are a partial enactment of a familiar logical problem with empiricism. There is an unproved assumption in inferences about universal conditions, or essential identity, from even a large number of specific observations, for any number of instances, no matter how great, cannot but be finite and, as such, do not necessarily lead to universal, and so infinite, conclusions: to be 'complete' the impressions would have to be 'innumerable.' Accordingly, accreting impressions under differing circumstances over time (either backwards as at the outset of the novel, or forwards, as later in the novel) takes one to invention rather than to discovery. Some inventions work, of course, such as Mordecai's invention of Daniel; others do not, such as the self Gwendolen conceives in the novel's first musical episode.

In the first of these musical scenes at Quetcham Hall, Catherine Arrowpoint and Klesmer play a four-handed piece on two pianos and then Gwendolen sings the Bellini aria accompanied by Klesmer. The introduction to these performances emphasizes some of the ways subjectivity is discursively shaped. As *Middlemarch* explodes Lydgate's vitalist presumption that his scientific work both is, and will be perceived as being, essentially separate from town politics, so here the customary distinction between, on one hand, social recreation as an escape from worldly concerns, and on the other hand, political contingency and strategy, is blurred: "hostesses who entertain much must make up their parties as ministers make up their cabinets, on grounds other than personal liking" (37). Politics is not a given as a domain of certain activities distinguishable from other domains and other activities. It is not restricted to the theories and machinations of government or of professional life in general, but may be read here as the art of the possible within the parameters of perceptions which are open to manipulation, but open to more than one person's manipulation.

The narrative explores both conscious and less articulated attempts at subject-imposition and does so under this broad umbrella of politics. This musical scene shows (and subverts) Gwendolen's tacit conception of herself as

omniscient, authoritative, Realist narrator, a conception in which consciousness is taken to be congruent with being; it also explores the infiltration of specific and fictive elements into her continuous process of self-creation; and it equally presents the diastolic effects of others' relative representations of Gwendolen beside her own systolic account.

The relative dependence of answer on hypothesis, or of diastole on systole, informs the drama of Gwendolen's arrival at Quetcham Hall. She intends to *express* a self in this new social *milieu*, one which at once flatters her self-conception and facilitates certain desired results: she has a hypothesis of self which she proposes to test (or perhaps seeks to impose) in this new experience. Yet, as the narrative shows, others are at least as responsible for the character given Gwendolen as she is herself for she is formed discursively in relation, initially, to Miss Lawe and to Miss Arrowpoint who, in turn, are specifically conceived and defined by their momentary relation to Gwendolen:

it was rather exasperating to see how Gwendolen eclipsed others: how even the handsome Miss Lawe, explained to be the daughter of Lady Lawe, looked suddenly broad, heavy, and inanimate; and how Miss Arrowpoint, unfortunately also dressed in white, immediately resembled a *carte-de-*

visite in which one would fancy the skirt alone to have been charged for (38).

"The long suite of rooms adorned with light and flowers" (37) acts like a hypothesis to Gwendolen who answers their question, as it were, with a notion of herself as one who rightly, naturally, belongs there: "she had never had that sort of promenade before, and she felt exultingly that it befitted her" (37). Once again, as with the pier-glass and the microscope in *Middlemarch*, the narrative stresses that there was someone there who, in point of fact, did indeed belong in such surroundings, but distinguishes this absolute knowledge (Kant's noumena) from ordinary processes of perception (Kant's phenomena) through which subjectivity is formed:

any one looking at her for the first time might have supposed that long galleries and lackeys had always been a matter of course in her life; while her cousin Anna, who was really more familiar with these things, felt almost as much embarrassed as a rabbit deposited in that well-lit space (37).

Within the proscenium arch, as it were, of this succession of rooms, the "youthful figure[s]" (37) (both in the sense of

'characters' and in the sense of 'appearances') are relatively established, for in the organism which is Quetcham Hall identity is shown in terms of the Kantian simultaneous means and ends, not as the aggregate of the organism's coherent and fundamentally separate parts.

As Docherty argues, "according to established criticism, the human's adjunctive environment exists solely to illuminate the human, and conversely, character in fiction comes to exist at the level of the character's 'property' or 'properties'" (1983, 3). But here, by contrast, Gwendolen's environment does not passively illuminate the innate figure. Instead, her figure is formed, or produced, by the momentary relationship between herself and the long suite of rooms which make her "visible at first as a slim figure floating along in white drapery" (37). Similarly, the systolic process through which Gwendolen successfully defines her relative superiority to Catherine Arrowpoint and Miss Lawe, brings about an unsurprising diastolic reaction from Mrs. Arrowpoint: "in fact, Gwendolen, not intending it, but intending the contrary, had offended her hostess, who, though not a splenetic or vindictive woman, had her susceptibilities" (38). Whether the "adjunctive environment" is the fall of light, a long suite of rooms, or the appearance of one woman beside another, in no case is context merely illustrative.

Both by its place within the opening series of retrospectives, and through its immediate context which also emphasizes the dialogical process of subject-formation, one might anticipate that Quetcham Hall's musical interlude would develop these relative accounts of the subject. Yet, the "width of horizon" (43), which the terms of Klesmer's criticism of Gwendolen's singing reveals, might be read in Realist terms as a just commentary on Gwendolen's vanity and imperiousness. This reading is Realist in so far as music is conceived as an actual, innate domain which Klesmer's knowledge and, as the narrative says, his "Genius" (41) give him the right to command. Klesmer, then, becomes like John Klute in MacCabe's rendering of *Klute*, a Realist figure in Realist writing who, like the narration itself, 'possesses' the truth which, as yet, Gwendolen does not but which a Realist reader uses to measure her progress.

But this account makes music a real not a "make-believe" unit. As the regularly cited epigraph to Chapter One suggests, science, like art, "is obliged to start with a make-believe unit and must fix on a point . . . when . . . [it] shall pretend that time is at Nought" (3). To conceive Klesmer in the same terms as John Klute is to mistake a pretence for reality. An important role for the triple retrospectives at the novel's outset, and for the emphasis on discursive subject-formation in the introduction to the

Quetcham Hall musical performances, is to emphasize by example what the opening epigraph makes explicit. Music is indeed a unit which, again indeed, enables enquiry. But it is also, methodologically, a necessary fiction, a make-believe, "a fraction of the all-presupposing fact with which our story sets out" (3), which is that there are beginnings against which, therefore, change may be measured and so time invented.

Instead of reading *Daniel Deronda's* musical scenes as a metalanguage, one might see them as another enabling supposition, a dramatic and discursive proposition through which further dialogues of the sort which open the chapter, are initiated. Just as the circumstances of Quetcham Hall effect a momentary, and sometimes unexpected, figure for Gwendolen, so the conjunction of Gwendolen's singing and Klesmer's critical appraisal similarly provoke some unexpected accounts of character: "the trying little scene at the piano had awakened a kindly solicitude towards her [Gwendolen] in the gentle mind of Miss Arrowpoint" (45). And Klesmer's rebuke also initiates a new set of hypotheses for Gwendolen herself:

Gwendolen, in spite of her wounded egoism, had fullness of nature enough to feel the power of this playing [Klesmer's], and it gradually turned her inward sob of mortification into an excitement which lifted her for the

moment into a desperate indifference about her own doings, or at least a determination to get a superiority over them by laughing at them as if they belonged to somebody else (43).

This is a generative rather than a passively revelatory moment. Experience does not simply coax what is present, but latent, into consciousness, for the subject which is formed is formed by relation to the questions which are asked. As Shuttleworth puts it,

in portraying Gwendolen, and the conflict and contradiction that characterize her psyche, George Eliot . . . challenges the dominant social conception of the rational actor, and the theory of causality upon which it is based. As the fragmented narrative form suggests, Gwendolen, with all her conflicting impulses, is not a unified character, the sum of her previous experiences. Her history cannot therefore be represented through a simple temporal sequence of cause and effect (1984, 177).

Gwendolen's musical wounding here is echoed when Sir Hugo asks Daniel if he would like to be a singer when he grows up. Again, music sparks a hypothetical self, for Daniel imagines the question confirms the widespread suspicion that

he is Sir Hugo's bastard. Though that turns out not to be the case, a negative answer, as Lewes said, can be as revealing as a positive answer. A richer, more rewarding hypothesis is formed by Daniel's half-conscious singing while rowing on the Thames. Rossini's setting of Dante's *Nessun maggior dolore* prompts Deronda to speculate on the dissolution of individuality and the absorption of the self into the natural world: "he [Deronda] was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape" (173). Having "such wide-sweeping connections with life and history" (172), Daniel conceives himself as part of history and of suffering *per se* so that the pathetic, weeping figure on the bank seems really part of his extended self.

Initially, this may sound very similar to Matthew Arnold's Hellenistic (and Realist) ideal. The Realist aspect to Hellenism lies in its presumption that it is both possible and desirable to stand outside the colloquy of history and so to see "things as they really are" (Arnold 1960-1977, 5, 165) not as they appear at the conjunction of specific discourses which constitute a personal, or a historical, moment. Arnold's Hellenism is thus metalinguistic for the Hebraism/Hellenism antinomy is posited on the idealist

assumption that disinterestedness is possible. But Deronda does not imaginatively and disinterestedly enter another consciousness from an initial separateness: such a leap would indeed reinforce the concept of coherent subject-positions for it would depend upon the idea of conscious, rational imagination. Deronda does not vacate his own subject-position for another, the landscape, which is equally coherent and autonomous. The reverse, in fact, occurs for the apparent coherence and separateness of the two positions dissolves: instead of a Hellenistic "spontaneity of consciousness" (Arnold 1960-1977, 5, 165), a vault out of one consciousness into another, Deronda discovers that consciousness as ordinarily conceived, like all such subject positions, are illusory for "his own personality [is] . . . no less outside him than the landscape" (173).

David Carroll sees in this "the pathology of sympathy . . . [for] it negates character because it denies relationship" (1992, 287). In a Realist sense of character, this is true. But the relationship of character to relationship is itself in question: is character simply expressed in relationships so that the course of a relationship (personal or historical in the sense of a relationship with the environment) reveals the development of character; or, is character (again, personal or historical in the sense of the character of a species or race) produced by

formative relationships or, as Darwin puts it, events? In *Daniel Deronda*, surely the latter obtains. Here, even at this moment of imaginative sympathy when, in a Realist reading, ones sees the manifestation of Deronda's native compassion, narrative irony suggests that more is at work. All his speculations, idly indulged while lazily rowing on the Thames, are possible only as a result of his good financial fortune:

he [Deronda] was in another sort of contemplative mood perhaps more common in the young men of our day -- that of questioning whether it were worth while to take part in the battle of the world: I mean, of course, the young men in whom the unproductive labour of questioning is sustained on three or five per cent on capital which somebody else has battled for (169).

In her last novel, Eliot seems to employ music as a Realist *Leitmotiv* to uncover the essential characteristics of a number of figures by comparing them within the frame of a stable entity whose own characteristics are evident. Yet, as I have argued, closer reading suggests that music poses a series of questions which generate a variety of answers, some mistaken, others leading on to further questions. Instead of functioning at the top of a stable hierarchy, music enables the formation of the subject. Instead of acting as a beacon

which beckons erring characters towards their true selves, music operates like a Whewellian hypothesis because the organism which is society in *Daniel Deronda*, like any organism, is not formed of ultimately coherent and separate units.

A STOPPING POINT ALONG THE WAY

Are *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* Realist works? Are they Realist works in the sense that Realist critics suggest? Are they Realist works in the sense that post-structuralist writers mean? The term Realism is so slippery and broad that even a rudimentary, quibble-free definition has never been agreed upon. For a term in such general use, this is both odd and unsatisfactory. The only self-consciously Realist group are those who stand behind Champfleury's *Le Réalisme* (1857), yet few have read their work and fewer think it integral to an understanding of this non-movement as a whole.

Were the question only taxonomical, perhaps few other than Mr. Farebrother might be concerned. But this is more than a question of classification for, as John Locke argues in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, "the ideas we receive by sensation are often, in grown people, altered by the judgement" (1959, I, 185-186). In distinguishing Realism as

a practice from the Realist critical tradition I have sought to suggest two things: that one cannot assume that Realism as a practice possesses the same qualities which the Realist critical tradition ascribes to it; that the strength and breadth of the Realist critical tradition is such as to create a potent set of expectations in readers about what they will find (and not find) in Realist writing. Reading through the lenses of this critical tradition one is liable to ascribe to "sensation" those qualities within Realist writing which, in fact, arise in "judgement[s]" formed by expectations shaped by critics from Henry James through to figures such as Kerry McSweeney. In making the ideology of the Realist critical tradition overt, I have tried to point to the tacit assumptions that lie in what Locke calls "settled habit" (1959, I, 188). By raising these suppositions into consciousness one therefore provides conditions in which other readings are at least possible.

A more recent scholarly school which has addressed Realism is post-structuralism. In noting and agreeing with some of the ways in which post-structuralists critique Realism, I am also struck how frequently post-structuralists take what Realist critics say about Realism to be at one with Realism itself, particularly in regard to the supposed transparency of Realist method. To me, this is the single clearest weakness in post-structuralism's critique of writers

such as George Eliot. In his re-examination of Realism in the light of post-structuralist challenges to it, John Rignall argues that Realism as a practice tends to be more conscious of the formative function of frames of reference than some post-structuralist commentators suggest it is:

Eliot ... attempts to make the frame of *Middlemarch* as inclusive as possible; yet any frame excludes, just as all seeing is partial. The point is famously illustrated by the parable of the candle and the pier-glass, which demonstrates the distorting effect of egoism on the way any individual sees the world. This insistence on the relativity and partiality of all vision does not exactly undermine the novel's own project. Unlike Flaubert, with his negative conviction that there is no truth, only ways of seeing, Eliot invokes the authority of science as a model for a kind of seeing that seeks objectivity and verifiable truth. However imperfect it may be, human vision can properly aspire to objectivity, as does *Middlemarch* itself in its attempt at a typically realist comprehensiveness. Nevertheless, the central awareness of relativity does establish a problematic relationship between frame and vision; and this ultimately raises questions about the limits of realism itself (1992, 100-101).

Rignall's view is closer to my own than are the views of critics in the Realist tradition or those post-structuralist critics who make little or no distinction between the practice of Realism and the Realist critical tradition. However, though Rignall acknowledges the self-consciousness of the pier-glass image (and of the other similarly self-aware images), nonetheless he holds both that there are things such as "comprehensiveness" which are "typically realist" and that they are still present in *Middlemarch*. Rignall's readings are, perhaps, more New Critical than anything else in that he sees tension -- that key New Critical quality -- between the tenets of Realism and the new arguments in the philosophy of scientific method as a characteristic of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.

But the ideology of Realism is an invention of the Realist critical tradition -- that is, it is a way of reading, an interpretative hypothesis through which one asks certain questions of the art -- not a code of aesthetic conduct which Eliot kept on her desk and which, even under duress, she felt obliged to include in her fiction even when all her other ideas and images take contrary paths. To seek "the correspondence theory of realism" (Grant 1970, 13) either in the language of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* or in any simple correspondence between the provincial part and the universal whole experience of the human condition, is really

still to assume that the Realist critical tradition is the natural starting place for a study of George Eliot. And this is so no matter how much one recognizes that, as I have argued, in her last two novels there is a clear awareness of the formative role of method in shaping answers which must, accordingly, be both methodologically and historically specific.¹

In suggesting some of the dangers lurking in an equation between Realist practice and Realist critical history, I do not wish to imply that my own study is somehow more neutral and objective. The sorts of questions which arise in the Realist critical tradition do offer rewarding answers when addressed to Eliot's pre-*Middlemarch* novels. But the Realist critical tradition should be seen only as one hypothesis not as the natural entry route into Eliot's early writings, for as Marxists, feminists and post-structuralists have shown, other sorts of questions can also generate useful answers in these works. One conclusion of this study is that the Realist critical tradition is noticeably less satisfactory as a way of reading *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* than it is in relation to the pre-*Middlemarch* work.

¹ Some recent feminist studies read Eliot's analysis of gendered subjectivity in similarly historical and specific terms. See Karen Chase's *George Eliot: Middlemarch*, 61-85, and Kristin Brady's *George Eliot*, 159-190.

In the above quotation, Rignall contends that despite Eliot's concern with the constitutive role of method in forming 'truths,' nonetheless "Eliot invokes the authority of science as a model for a kind of seeing that seeks objectivity and verifiable truth" (1992, 101). I have argued, instead, that Eliot's last two novels challenge clear distinctions between objectivity and partiality by showing how, for example, Mordecai in an important sense creates Daniel and how all enquiry, like that through the microscope, depends on one's ways of seeing. Instead of verifying truths, one checks specific answers to particular questions.

I do not, however, wish to imply that Eliot changed overnight from a vitalist, an essentialist and a Realist (in the sense that the tradition has created), into a writer who anticipates Albert Einstein, in her sense of the interrelatedness which constitutes identity, and Werner Heisenberg, in the ways in which she explores the dependence of what we know on the conditions in which we know it. I do not seek to supplant the coherent, transcendent George Eliot of the Realist critical tradition with another equally coherent but wholly different figure. Instead, I would say that historical changes in the philosophy of scientific method and current post-structuralist theories together generate questions which appear particularly apt to Eliot's late work

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and usefully open *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* up to new readings.

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