DIGNITY THROUGH DUTY FOR THE "HOMELY AND RUDE": THE PASTORAL TRADITION OF WORDSWORTH AND GEORGE ELIOT

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PREFACE

As a student in Linda Austin's Nineteenth-Century Fiction course, I became infatuated with the works of George Eliot and fascinated with the artist, her life and her mind. I came to admire George Eliot's strength of intelligence, but also her creative spirit. Impressed with the "rare precious quality of truthfulness" she saw in Dutch painting and her insistence that there should always be a place in art for the "faithful representing of commonplace things," I, under the guidance of Linda Austin, studied all of George Eliot's novels, and researched her life for an oral presentation on the men in George Eliot's life. The summer following the nineteenth-century British novels course, I took a course in lyric poetry of the nineteenth century with Dr. John Milstead and Nineteenth-Century Aesthetics with Dr. Linda Austin. In both courses, the emphasis on Wordsworth and his love of the common man which often revealed truth in common language, seemed in line with what I had seen in George Eliot's novels. I saw characteristics of Romanticism in George Eliot and hints of Realism in Wordsworth. I wondered what influence Wordsworth had on the novelist and how this influence manifests itself in her works. The purpose of this paper is to explore the pastoral tradition and to note how it changes drastically when it gets to the

nineteenth century with William Wordsworth as the impetus and George Eliot as the perpetuator of the "naturalized pastoral."

I wish to thank Dr. Linda Austin, not only for her constant encouragement and steadfast belief that I could complete this task, even with all my other obligations, but also, for her guidance. As I floundered in trying to connect the Romantic tradition with George Eliot, Dr. Austin suggested focusing only on the pastoral. Because I teach full time and commute, I could not be on campus during her regular office hours, so Dr. Austin unselfishly stayed later or visited with me by phone in the evening. But most of all I want to thank her for her inspiration and for exposing me to the work and thought of Marian Evans, the study of which broadened my literary knowledge-base and profoundly affected me personally. Leading, not pushing, gently coaching, constantly encouraging and praising--these are what mentorship is all about and you do it so well. Thank you, Dr. Austin.

I would also like to thank other members of my committee for their helpful comments: Dr. William Pixton and Dr. Jeffery Walker.

My husband, Jack and my children Leah and B.J., I thank you for your unwavering belief in me and constant support of my pursuing this degree even if it meant no clean socks and only cold sandwiches for supper. And yes, kids, someday you will appreciate all those hours you had to spend at the library with me because you now have library skills beyond

most college freshmen. Most of all, thank you for your patience whenever mine grew thin. And to my mom, thanks for instilling in me the importance of education a long time ago and for encouraging me to put this project first, even when it took away some of our leisure time together.

Thanks to all these people, especially to my family for your sacrifice, understanding, and encouragement that helped me achieve a goal that is very important to me, completion of this degree and its culminating project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

I. INTRODUCTION 1

The Nature of the Pastoral 4

II. THE CLASSICAL PASTORAL TRADITION 7

Pastoral Beginnings 7
The Renaissance Pastoral 11
The Critical Tradition of the Pastoral in the Eighteenth Century 14

III. THE WORDSWORTHIAN PASTORAL 18

Wordsworth's Influence on George Eliot 30

IV. GEORGE ELIOT'S PASTORAL VISION 32

Conclusion 47

WORKS CITED 50

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ambrose Philips in the Preface to his pastorals in 1708 stated:

> There is no Sort of Poetry, if well wrought, but gives Delight: And the Pastoral perhaps may boast of this in a peculiar manner, For, as in painting, so I believe, in Poetry, the Country affords the most entertaining Scenes, and most delightful Prospects . . .

Philips acknowledges the early masters in this genre: "Theocritus, Virgil, and Spenser are the only writers, that seem to have hit upon the true Nature of Pastoral Poems. So that it will be Honour sufficient for me, if I have not altogether fail'd in my attempt" (3). Philip's grounding in the classical tradition is clear: he sees the country setting and rustics as objects with which to ply his art, vehicles by which to make his poetry "entertaining" and "delightful." He is convinced that Theocritus, Virgil, and Spenser understood the essence of the pastoral. Perhaps what he saw were similarities that appeared because of imitation. Virgil patterned his *Eclogues* after Theocritus' *Idylls*, and Spenser emulated Virgil. From the Renaissance on, however, the pastoral has expanded into sub-modes

designed to serve varying purposes. Milton employs the pastoral elegy to lament the premature death of Edward King, and Sidney creates a pastoral romance, Arcadia that mocks an unjust ruler, while dramatists such as John Fletcher and Milton created pastoral plays and masques for entertaining the aristocracy. The neoclassicists revived the pastoral in imitation of a classical mode, but certainly with no real passion for the rural subjects treated in the genre.

Thomas Gray's famous pastoral elegy written around 1742 relates the almost ignorant bliss of "The rude forefathers of the hamlet":

> Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
> Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
> How jocund did they drive their team afield!
> How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!
> (lines 25-28).

Gray's exclamatory emphasis to the rustics' happiness and the image of them as conquering masters that nature "yields" and "bows" to is not convincing as a depiction of rural life. The stilted, artificial language and style is perfectly poetic by neoclassical standards, but seem inappropriately elaborate for the lowly subject. The poet's attitude toward his subject verges on patronizing as he imagines what greatness they might have known had they not been so ignorant and poor. Speaking generally about "Some mute inglorious Milton" and "Some Cromwell," Gray does not seem to really know the rustic folk he eulogizes. These

churchyard corpses seem only to provide a means by which the poet can show off well-turned phrases and an elevated style. However, Gray's poem seems a perfect model of the classical pastoral tradition, the literary authority that William Wordsworth questioned.

Wordsworth reacted against what he called false diction and wrote in what he called "real" language. By naming and individualizing them, he makes his characters more believable; as a reader I see and feel I know Wordsworth's Michael, Simon Lee, Lucy and Margaret. Not only do I find them credible, I am convinced that Wordsworth knew as he said: "the shepherds, dwellers in the valleys," as "men whom I already loved" ("Michael" lines 23-24). He seemed to sympathize but what is more important, to empathize with them. Lucy is one who lived "unknown" like the rustics buried in Gray's churchyard, but unlike those rustics whose death had no emotional impact on the narrator personally, when Lucy died, the narrator implies intimacy as he expresses his pain: "oh, / The difference to me!" ("She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" line 12). Wordsworth's rustics are real people he seems not only to know and understand, but also to respect. His Michael does not flute all day in the field nor challenge other shepherds to singing matches; he lives a "life of eager industry" (line 122). He toils in the field all day, and even when he returns home his "labour did not cease" (line 98). The world Wordsworth shows us in "Michael" and "The Ruined

Cottage" is not a leisurely, idyllic, jocund pastoral world. With Wordsworth, the mythical shepherds, the carefree, inhabitants of a never-never land who seem to have no troubles and few responsibilities are given dignity as real people who feel a sense of duty to family and work and who endure hardship in a less than ideal world. It is this Wordsworthian pastoral vision that surfaces in the novels of George Eliot. But her real pastoral characters who live in a real world are not shepherds; they are farm laborers, artisans, and middle class people who, because they live close to the land, value work and duty. Thus, the pastoral is inverted in the nineteenth century when realism, labor, and the middle class invade the genre. With work, hardship, and unadorned language, Wordsworth strips away pastoral artifice, making the rustic and his world more believable and granting him newfound dignity. Influenced more by Wordsworth than the classical tradition, George Eliot confirms the pastoral is no longer an exercise in artifice for escapism to an idyllic world but rather a depiction of work and responsibility in a less than ideal world.

The Nature of the Pastoral

In the modern era the meaning of the pastoral has become so dissipated that great disparity develops as to what constitutes "pastoral." W. W. Greg asserts that a constant element in the pastoral is "a contrast, implied or expressed, between pastoral life and some more complex type

of civilization" (7). Frank Kermode agrees that the pastoral "depends upon an opposition between the simple, or natural, and the cultivated." He notes that the bulk of pastoral poetry "assumes that natural men are purer and less vicious than cultivated men and that there exists between them and Nature a special sympathy" (19). W. W. Greg says that "the pastoral, whatever its form, always needed and assumed some external circumstance to give point to its actual content. The interest seldom arises directly from the narrative itself" (67). The most general definition I found was that of William Empson who identifies the pastoral process as "putting the complex in to the simple" (230). Rosenmeyer points out that Renato Poggioli also provides great latitude for the genre, but that both he and Empson regard social criticism, obvious or hidden, as an important element in the pastoral (Rosenmeyer 6). In _The Green Cabinet_, one of the most noted modern studies on the pastoral, Rosenmeyer suggests that the pastoral has become "a kind of anatomy" (6).

As Paul Alpers struggles to synthesize the many characteristics of the pastoral in "What is Pastoral?", he concludes that a definition must give "a coherent account of its various features--formal, expressive, and thematic--and second, provide for historical continuity or change within the form" (441).

What, then, are these features that emerge as chief characteristics of the pastoral? Most critics agree that it

concerns an emphasis on nature and what is natural which is generally found in the innocence of those places and in those people removed from the city. But that is not to say that pastorals are not about urban life; indeed, the presentation of the rustic way of life is carried out in order to negatively show its antithesis: sophisticated, urban civilization. This tension between the two settings, and to an extent, between its subjects is the most important feature of the pastoral. It is through and because of this tension that nostalgia often arises in the pastoral, because the poet who is generally removed from the setting he describes longs for it or for perhaps a more peaceful time in his own existence that is brought to mind by the innocence of the setting he describes. And even though this innocent, natural setting brings happiness, it also, because of the nostalgia, brings a sense of sadness that often accompanies a longing for something one cannot have or experience. Hence, pastorals must include rural landscapes and inhabitants, but the essence of the pastoral is this tension.

CHAPTER II

THE CLASSICAL PASTORAL TRADITION

Pastoral Beginnings

This ever important tension between town and country, nature and culture, was present from the inception of the pastoral. As W. W. Greg indicates, the forces of childhood recollections of life in the Sicilian uplands collided with the crowded social and intellectual city-life of Alexandria to give birth to the pastoral (Greg 5). Supposedly the first pastorals were songs that tried to recapture the Golden Age; they "sprang from the yearning of the tired soul to escape, if it were but in the imagination and for a moment, to a life of simplicity and innocence from the bitter luxury of the court and the menial bread of princes" (Greg 6). Frank Kermode points out that this degeneration of man because he fell into a life of sin away from nature seems to be an important feature of the pastoral from the beginning (14).

The use of rustics seemed a logical vehicle by which to point up this degeneration. Because of their simplicity and coarseness, they have a way of life that is natural and recalls the Golden Age, a life without the evils of the money-grubbing city. The shepherd in particular leads "a

deliciously idle life and whiles away the time playing a pipe" (Greg 16). His is a "life of the healthy countryside, with its simple manners, natural flowers, and rude pipings" (Kermode 17). Time and time again throughout Theocritus's Idylls "violets blossom," "fair white jonquils wave," and shepherds converse about goats, heifers, barley-cakes, love, and song competitions. Indeed life seems pleasantly carefree and uncomplicated as "bees hum sweetly round the hives." A place where "The birds are twittering on the bough" offers the degenerate soul respite and renewal. The link between the rustics and nature surfaces early in the Idylls. The First Idyll celebrates the death of the shepherd Daphnis which in folklore represented the death of nature itself.

Thus, Theocritus began the pastoral with the glorification of the peaceful, idyllic rural life and its closeness to nature. Because he was not rustic himself, he established an important tension in the genre: that of country folk being described by a courtly gentleman, using their dialect, but in a highly artificial poetical metrical mode of relaxed hexameters for an aristocratic audience. Frank Kermode indicates that Theocritus did not do much in the way of refining the poetic-philosophic potentialities of the pastoral, nor did he invent the themes he used. Themes like gift-bringing and song-contests originated in the sheep pastures of Sicily (20). But he did establish a long-

standing model that was emulated for centuries. Hallard hails him the father of the pastoral:

> Greek bucolic poetry, as we know it, begins, if it does not end with Theocritus. No doubt a certain body of popular country-songs existed in his time, but how much they were used, polished and improved by Theocritus is hard to say. But if Theocritus had no ancestors, he has had an enormous progeny (1).

Most of the poets who followed him did not use him as a guide to explore the genre; they imitated. Virgil, though he modeled Theocritus, is perhaps the most important poet in the remaining European bucolic corpus with his ten eclogues published in 39 B.C. Frank Kermode points out that Virgil's work

> is pastoral poetry which, for the first time, complicates the simple town-country contrast with serious reflections upon that contrast which cultivates simplicity in decorated language; and which used the country scene and rustic episode for allegorical purposes (25).

In Theocritus' pastorals, there is harmony between man and nature that we do not see in the Eclogues. As Paul Alpers points out about the First Eclogue, two herdsmen have both shared a tie to the land, but now one flees; the idyllic landscape "represents a fantasy that is dissipated by the recognition of political and social realities" (451).

When Meliboeus says, "We flee our country's borders, our sweet field, / Abandon home," it is clearly evident that shepherds' well-being is dependent on political power (Alpers 451). Here and in others, Virgil uses the pastoral for political criticism. Kermode emphasizes Virgil's allegorical use of the pastoral when he surmises that "the lament for the dead Daphnis in Eclogue V may be about Julius Caesar; both were gods, and both were shepherds--Caesar of his people. To adherents of Octavian, Caesar was also a savior" (26). Still another example of the allegory or symbol that Virgil imposed on the pastoral is his famous Fourth Eclogue, sometimes called "The Messianic Eclogue." The child in this poem could be the son awaited for by Anthony, or possibly Octavian since both were expecting children. Or perhaps, as some believe, Virgil was prophesying the coming of Christ. Virgil's eclogues illustrate Kermode's label of the pastoral as a "leveller" because it puts the complex in the simple as Empson indicates (Kermode 26, Empson 23).

Paul Alpers emphasizes that Virgil's allegorical use of the pastoral song to present social and political conditions of Rome illustrates how the pastoral historically transforms and diversifies itself (455). His setting is the remote Arcadia which is rugged and unparadisical compared to Theocritus's Sicily, and the purpose for which he uses the pastoral mode is different from his mentor's pattern.

Virgil may well deserve the title which Kermode gives him, "the liberator of the Pastoral" (27).

The Renaissance Pastoral

With only a few imitations of the Virgilian pastoral in the Middle Ages, the pastoral nearly died. However, there is enormous influence of Virgil on the Renaissance pastoralists, especially in the use of allegory. George Puttenham remarks in The Arte of English Posie that the purpose of the eclogue was not "to counterfait or represent the rustical manner of loves and communication: but under the vaile of homely persons, and in rude speeches to insinuate and glaunce at greater matters" (38-39). The allegorical tradition of the pastoral continues with Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene and The Shepheardes Calender.

While Kermode sees Spenser bringing to the pastoral tradition the influence of every great pastoral poet of the past, from Theocritus to the modern French poets (30), Nancy Jo Hoffman argues that Spenser "invented a new pastoral language and moral landscape that could portray, not just pastoral life, but the human condition" (Preface x). W. W. Greg agrees that Spenser had an impact on and helped shape the pastoral tradition as one of the "first of a series of English writers who combined the traditions of regular pastoral with the wayward graces of native inspiration" (84). Greg also acknowledges that it is with Spenser that the pastoral loses its earlier spontaneity and passes into

the "realm of conscious and deliberate art" (84); this forced artificiality will last throughout the seventeenth and even to the close of the eighteenth century.

Literarily, with The Shepheardes Calender, Spenser brought a new unity to presentation of the pastoral with his serial plan, and he introduced a new type of language. Spenser was criticized by Jonson and others for his archaic language which he said was closer to rustic speech than the literary language of his own day (Greg 94). That Spenser saw literary language as different from the language of the rustics was important; however, his solution to the dilemma took him further from authenticity than closer to it.

Not only did Spenser popularize the genre and create an adaptation of the English form, he also influenced the elegiac strain of pastoral poetry with Daphnaida, an elegy in pastoral form on the death of the Earl of Northampton's daughter. Astrophel, an elegy in memory of Sir Phillip Sidney, perhaps inspired a similar passage in Lycidas:

> Ah, where were ye this while, his shepherd peares?
> To whom above was nought so deare as hee:
> And ye, fayre Mayds, the matches of his yeares,
> Which in grace, did boast you most to bee!
> And where were ye, when he of you had need
> To stop his wound that wonderfully did bleed!
>
> (lines 145-150).

It is with elegiac elements predominating over the bucolic elements in the pastoral tradition that the seventeenth century ends. Milton's Lycidas is the last and

perhaps the most influential pastoral of the English Renaissance. His firm grounding in the classical tradition is evident from his use of the pastoral conventions such as the laurel that must be plucked before it is ripe symbolizing Edward King who drowned before he matured as a clergyman. And just as the nymphs failed to watch over the dead Daphnis in Theocritus's "Lament for Daphnis," so have they failed to watch over Milton's friend. The loss is so great that all of nature, "the Woods, and desert Caves, / With wild Thyme and the gadding Vine o'ergrown, / and all their echoes mourn" (lines 39-41). Further emphasizing Lycidas' close relationship with nature, Milton metaphorically compares the shepherd's death to the rose being blighted by the canker and the flowers' succumbing to the frost. Throughout the poem, Theocritus' and Virgil's influences are evident, especially in the names: "Arethuse," originally a nymph, but also a fountain in Sicily; "Minicus," a river in Lombardy associated with the pastorals of the two masters; "Amaryllis" and "Neaera," conventional names for shepherdesses.

For all its greatness, the poem has been criticized for inaccuracy in the depiction of nature and a lack of unity. As Marion Bragg points out, the flowers that Milton commands for the hearse could not be gathered in August when King died nor in November when Milton wrote the poem (30). This seems not so much an error on Milton's part, but an intentional employment of classical convention. Merritt Y. Hughes finds the same explanation for Milton's digression in

the last stanza to criticize corrupt clergymen which has been condemned as a structural flaw (117). Perhaps Milton was simply imitating Spenser who digresses to satirize the clergy in The Shepheardes Calender. Yet, in spite of these so-called limitations, Lycidas remains perhaps the best pastoral of the English Renaissance.

Emulating the classical tradition, the English Renaissance pastoral included lovely natural settings, simple shepherds and characters from Ovidian myths, the omnipresent song, and the steadfast contrast between city life and country life with the city dweller longing to put aside commerce for the leisure of rural life.

The Critical Tradition of the Pastoral in the Eighteenth Century

From the publication of Lycidas (1638) until after the Restoration (1660), neither individual poems nor poets had much influence on the tradition. Far more important were two French critics, P. René Rapin and Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle. But also making important contributions to the pastoral tradition during the eighteenth century were Alexander Pope, Ambrose Philips, and Dr. Samuel Johnson.

In 1659 P. René Rapin published "Dissertatio de Carmine Pastorali" which became the chief document of neoclassical pastoral theory. With his definition of the pastoral as "the imitation of the Action of a Sheapard, or of one taken under that character," he clearly shows allegiance to Virgil. He continues with the idea that the characters

should be such who lived in the "Golden Age" (Rapin 67). The rest of his rules dictated that shepherds must discuss rustic affairs that are mean and humble, not lofty: innocent, pure love is a suitable subject. There must be simple, singular narratives. The poem may begin with an invocation, followed by alternate singing. Smoothly flowing passions and short, concise descriptions are essential (Rapin 64-68). Rapin's ideas on what he calls expression - verse, language, style - rest on the assumption that the pastoral should reflect the simplicity and innocence of the Golden Age and are for the most part, derived from the practice of Virgil. With Rapin, the neoclassicists had a set of guidelines grounded in the classical theory.

Alexander Pope, perhaps the most eminent spokesman of the neoclassicists, clearly holds the ancients as the authorities on the pastoral. He declares in his "A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry" that the modern writers who have the greatest success are those "who have most endeavor'd to make the ancients their pattern" and he argues that Theocritus and Virgil are "the only undisputed authors of Pastoral" (6). This theory is readily apparent in Pope's four pastorals, which form a series according to the seasons, an idea he probably borrowed from Spenser. That "Spring is a singing match and "Winter" an elegy further links him to the ancient models.

As the neoclassical movement developed, the rules became more rigid and inflexible, indicating that the pastoral was to be simple and should reject the use of

allegory. They severely restricted the subject matter to only shepherds who herd sheep and cattle. From Pope's "Discourse" we learn that the diction is to be "pure" and the style must be "elegant" and "neat." And the essential elements of the pastoral are "simplicity, brevity, and delicacy" (4). The Golden Age eclogue and the Virgilian pastoral came to epitomize the neoclassical concept of the genre.

The second group of writers and critics to be concerned with the pastoral in the eighteenth century can best be described as the rationalists. Fontenelle's "Discours" (1688) which was translated into English under the title "Of Pastorals" in 1695 serves as the foundation of this school of thought and answers Rapin's treatise by denouncing the objective standards of the ancients and by depending solely on "the Natural Light of Reason" (qtd. in Congleton 302). Tranquility, laziness, and love are essential elements in the pastoral according to Fontenelle.

Dr. Johnson is perhaps the most influential and representative of the rationalists, who are not concerned so much with the pictorial element of the scene, but are more concerned with the subject. They reject the Golden Age shepherd. In his Rambler essay No. 37, Johnson argued that all ranks of people are appropriate for the pastoral, and he acknowledges anything that happens in the country is suitable as the subject of pastoral poetry (282). Caring little about verse and form, the rationalists show even less concern about style and qualities of the pastoral.

The conflict between these two groups is in part over who and what constitutes the authority in producing pastoral poetry: those who favor the ancients and the "rules" comprised of imitating them, or those who favor more freedom and less objectivity in the pastoral. Probably due to the forceful voice of Dr. Johnson, the rationalists seem to triumph. And when the rationalists abandon the authoritative, objective criteria, they open the way for a poetical doctrine based on individual feeling and experience: the Romantic theory. There was a new freedom and its accompanying realism that came with the Romantic school in poetry. Varying meters and stanza forms replaced mythical beings from a mythical Golden Age. As Marion Bragg indicates, this sometimes grim and sordid realism "swept away the propriety, the 'simplicity' and the pseudo-innocence of the Vergilian tradition" (87).

CHAPTER III

THE WORDSWORTHIAN PASTORAL

William Wordsworth must have known the arguments for and against Virgil and Theocritus as models for writers of pastoral poetry to imitate, for these arguments ran through nearly all eighteenth-century writings on the pastoral. Undeniably Wordsworth was influenced by the classical writers. According to Annabel Patterson, if one looks at Wordsworth's boyhood translations from the Georgics, his attempt in the 1820's to translate the Aeneid, and the influence of Virgil in "Intimations of Immortality," he can see much stronger evidence of the Virgilian pastoral on Wordsworth than most recognize (271). The influence of Theocritus is evident in The Prelude, Book X:

> Child of the mountains among shepherds rear'd,
> Even from my earliest school-day time, I lov'd
> To dream of Sicily (lines 1007-1009).

In a letter dated February 27, 1799, Wordsworth praises Theocritus along with Shenstone and Burns as painters of humble manners, "manners connected with the permanent objects of nature and partaking of the simplicity of those objects" (Letters 255). Though Wordsworth may have assimilated that trait into his pastoral poetry, little else is similar to Theocritus' works. Virginia Ireys, who calls

Wordsworth's "a pastoral of feeling," finds his allusions to the classical tradition as one of four characteristics she assigns to his pastoral, but one that is not always present (388). Patterson argues that "Wordsworth deliberately discarded the Classical pastoral for himself and effectively buried a tradition that was already discredited" (269).

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Wordsworth was probably familiar with and hence influenced by Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric which had become the standard text for those critics and poets who called for a new kind of pastoral that offered accurate portrayals of common life. Blair argued against the earlier belief that pastoral poetry could only imitate local manners as opposed to the universal passions great poetry imitated. In Lecture 39 he said, "Human nature and human passions are much the same in every rank of life; and wherever these passions operate on subjects that are within the rural sphere, there may be proper subject for Pastoral" (Blair 346). Wordsworth was also influenced by Burns and his ability to present patterns of feeling and behavior through simple surfaces of life and to find the universal in the local (Parrish 167-68). This objective to locate "elementary feelings" in the "manners of rural life" was to propose a tradition of pastoral that broke with that defined by the critical authorities of his century.

Wordsworth wrote about the land and rustics, but in The Recluse, "Home at Grasmere," he called for a pastoral

poetry that improved upon the classical tradition:

> is there not
> An art, a music and a strain of words
> That shall be life, the acknowledged voice of life,
> Shall speak of what is done among the fields,
> Done truly there, or felt, of solid good
> And real evil, yet be sweet withal,
> More grateful, more harmonious than the breath,
> The idle breath of softest pipe attuned
> To pastoral fancies (lines 401-409).

This passage clearly reveals the changes Wordsworth introduces to improve, or make more realistic, the pastoral genre. In these lines is an authoritative voice that knows what is done in the country, implying perhaps that others have written about the fields, not truly knowing of life there. In his pastorals, Wordsworth presents labor, not leisure, because truly the rustic's life is often hard, even tragic; it was not always pleasantly idyllic, but living close to the land provides a moral stability for those in harmony with nature. Indeed, most of the rustics Wordsworth describes are "harmonious" with their surroundings and in depictions of their existence comes "the voice of life," a deeper understanding for the reader of human nature revealed through these lowly people.

From the Preface to <u>Lyrical Ballads with Pastoral and Other Poems</u> (1802), Wordsworth made clear his beliefs on the

subject and language of poetry:

> Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended; and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature (239).

Thus, the country became more than just a backdrop; it became an environment which would foster "elementary feelings." For Wordsworth the land was more than a setting, a device of artifice for the pastoral; the land embodied the stability and values that held the community of man together. In the nineteenth century, these values are being threatened by urbanization. In "Michael, A Pastoral Poem," Luke, Michael's son, goes to the city to earn money to save the patrimonial lands. (Ironically it is the industrialization of the city that will provide the money to save the

land.) However, Luke, removed from the stability of the land, forgets the values they represent and falls into laziness and wickedness, and consequently abandons the land, never to return.

Neither were Wordsworth's characters mere objects of artifice. Michael is humanized. He is one of a group of men the narrator has known in his childhood and feels a community with because of their tie to the land; he was one "Of [the] Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men Whom I already loved;--not verily / For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills / Where was their occupation and abode" (lines 23-26). Michael lives "till his eightieth year was past" (line 61). Michael works: "The father and son were come home, even then, / Their labour did not cease" (lines 97-98). Michael loves:

> the Boy. . . did Michael love,
> Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
> To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
> Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
> Under the large oak (lines 159-165).

And Michael grieves when Luke falls to the corruption of the city. Though the old shepherd is bowed with grief and disappointment, his inveterate filial love helps him endure because "There is a comfort in the strength of love; / 'Twill make a thing endurable, which else / Would overset the brain, or break the heart" (lines 448-450). It is through his passion that he is made human, and it is through

his strength and suffering that he is ennobled. Wordsworth's Michael is a very different shepherd from those of Arcadia. He feels what we feel, but what is more important is that he elicits our compassion. We can sympathize and empathize as the narrator draws us closer to Michael's strife through his personal association with the old shepherd:

> I have conversed with more than one who well
> Remember the old man, and what he was
> Years after he had heard this heavy news.
> His bodily frame had been from youth to age
> Of an unusual strength (lines 451-455).

Another rustic Margaret in "The Ruined Cottage" is also humanized through suffering and elicits our sympathy. She struggles when war devastates the economy, compounded by her husband's illness, inability and later unwillingness to work, and his consequent departure. Additionally she suffers the mental torment of not knowing if her husband is alive or dead. Finally she is left totally alone with the death of her child. There is no leisurely life of piping and pleasure for Margaret; there are only tears and "a sad time of sorrow and distress" (line 138). But Margaret is elevated by her suffering because "gladly reconciled / To numerous self-denials, Margaret / Went struggling on through those calamitous years / With chearful hope" (145-148). There is dignity in the strength of the human spirit, whereas there is none in carefree, irresponsible whiling

away of hours in the shade of tree on a grassy knoll. Margaret is more believable to me than the jocund shepherds of Arcadia. I have known Margarets, but I have known no likenesses of the Golden Age shepherds.

Both Michael and Margaret suffer from poverty and hard work in a natural world whose forces are sometimes less than idyllic--none of which is found in the traditional classical pastoral. There is economic hardship caused by Michael's facing sale of part of the family farm or foreclosure. These patrimonial fields were more than just land; they were part of Michael's lineage, more important to him than everlasting peace. He tells Isabel,

> I have been toiling more than seventy years,
> And in the open sunshine of God's love
> Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
> Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
> That I could not lie quiet in my grave
> (lines 228-232).

Wordsworth wrote a cover letter for one of the complimentary copies of the 1800 Lyrical Ballads sent to a Whig statesman, Charles Edward Fox, and made an emotional appeal on behalf of "small independent proprietors of land here called statesmen, men of respectable education who daily labour on their own little proprieties. . . which have descended to them from their ancestors" (Wordsworth, Letters 314). In this letter, Wordsworth was speaking against the reorganization of society, especially against welfare

measures which existed then, because he felt these measures would weaken "the spirit of independence" by a "rapid decay of the domestic affections among the lower orders of society" (314, 313). Wordsworth saw economic independence as the essential foundation of moral strength (Metzger 147). In the letter to Fox, Wordsworth continued that the small landowners' "little tract of lands serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances when they would otherwise be forgotten" (315). Michael's little tract of land is a symbol of hope that the human community can endure beyond a single life, and Michael's Evening Star is a symbol of a long family tradition (Metzger 147).

Ironically in Wordsworth's pastoral, the land which provides moral stability also buffets its inhabitants with dangers and hardships in a real place, the Lake District not Arcadia. "Michael" opens with "the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll" and a path that is a struggle to climb for someone coming into the valley. But for someone there, there is a bond of love. For the shepherd,

> green valleys, and the streams and rocks. . .
> and those fields, those fields. . . had laid
> Strong hold on his affections, were to him,
> A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
> The pleasure which there is in life itself
>
> (lines 63-77).

The hills impress upon Michael's mind many incidents "Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear; / Which like a book, preserved the memory" (lines 69-70). He and his son with two sheep dogs were "tried in many a storm" (line 91). Their life was one of "endless industry" (line 95). Wordsworth's shepherd must muster all his strength to survive. But nature provides comfort in its enduring steadfastness. Even after Luke has nearly broken his father's heart, it is as if the old shepherd finds the will to go on in nature:

> Among the rocks
> He went, and still looked up to the sun and cloud,
> And listened to the wind; and, as before
> Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep
> (lines 455-58).

At the end of this era and after the old man's death, "great changes have been wrought / In all the neighborhood:--yet the oak is left" as is "the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll" (lines 478-482).

Also at the end of "The Ruined Cottage," we are reminded of the permanence of nature; it remains though Margaret is gone. The garden-plot is "wild" with "mated weeds," the spear grass surrounds the cottage, and "A linnet warbled from those lofty elms, / A thrush sang loud" (lines 531-532). The old Man informs the passer-by of the sympathy nature feels for man as a result of the bond shared. He

grieves about the loss of Margaret and feels that nature does also:

> Beside yon spring I stood
> And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel
> One sadness, they and I. For them a bond
> Of brotherhood is broken: time has been [when
> Margaret was alive]
> When every day the touch of human hand
> Disturbed their stillness, and they ministered
> to human comfort (lines 82-88).

Implicit in the old Man's comments, too, is the reverence man should have for nature and its tranquility and restorative power, but in the "weakness of humanity," we have turned "our hearts" "from the natural wisdom." "To the natural comfort" we have "shut our eyes and ears" (lines 194-96). In the Wordsworthian pastoral, nature is much more than a lovely idyllic scene for the shepherds and their singing matches; it is powerful force capable of interacting with, comforting, and instructing man.

Although pastoralists have traditionally dressed their shepherds in false finery and given them a false language, Wordsworth again breaks with tradition. In his letter to Charles James Fox, Wordsworth commented that "Michael" and "The Two Brothers" were written to "shew that men who do not wear fine cloaths can feel deeply" (Letters 315). Wordsworth, then, creates a style in line with his philosophy stated in the 1802 Lyrical Ballads that poetry

should be in "language really spoken by men" (Preface 248) and appropriate to his interpretation of the pastoral as depicting rural life based on labor.

Not only is the diction in "Michael" primarily one and two syllable words, but it also refers to objects and events the common laborer would know and use on a daily basis. Isabel

> was a woman
> Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
> Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
> That small, for flax (lines 81-84).

When the day's labor was finished,

> all
> Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there
> Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk
> Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
> And their plain home-made cheese (99-102).

After eating the evening meal, there was still more work to be done at the fireside:

> perhaps to card
> Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
> Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
> Or other implement of house or field
> (lines 106-109).

Judith Page discusses Wordsworth's style in "Michael," contending that several Old English techniques such as the use of compound nouns, balanced, alliterative phrasing, and

the use of the verbal prefix "be" emphasize that the simple, stark quality of the poem has roots in an Old English past and in a way of life that Wordsworth conservatively celebrates (631). Page also points out that Wordsworth developed a discursive blank verse for "Michael," "The Two-Brothers," and Book VII of The Prelude (632). Since blank verse is the meter closest to human speech, again, we can see how Wordsworth's style imitates what he called "the real language of men."

John Jordan in Why the Lyrical Ballads discusses the debate over Wordsworth's simplicity and declares "What Wordsworth does is deny the trivially simple, but value the essentially simple" (98). To Wordsworth, simplicity had a positive value--it was "the permanent, the real, the durable, the essential" (Jordan 99).

In the Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1802), Wordsworth makes clear why "he [the poet] must express himself as other men express themselves" (255). He wanted "to excite rational sympathy" (255). The poet speaks to men in their language for moral enhancement; he binds "together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time" (253). Wordsworth recovers and regenerates original impulses of the pastoral, the rural characters and natural setting, but by emphasizing labor instead of leisure, he lends dignity and credibility to the common rural folk. Through them Wordsworth shows how nature comforts men who live close to

her and how domesticity roots itself in the land. Furthermore, Wordsworth insists that rustics, in their essential simplicity, are capable of touching the souls of all men, especially with their "real" language. He shows us how literature, specifically the pastoral, can put man in touch with what is essentially and eternally important: enlarging the soul with deeper understanding of and hence, greater sympathy for, fellow man.

Wordsworth's Influence on George Eliot

It is this Wordsworthian pastoral tradition more so than the classical tradition that toward the middle of the century fused with the early novels of George Eliot. Possibly the similarities we see are evidence of the Romantic impulse in George Eliot or foreshadowings of the Victorian spirit in Wordsworth, but whatever prompts these likenesses, they link George Eliot and William Wordsworth in their pastoral visions.

Wordsworth's influence on the nineteenth-century novelist surfaced early and endured throughout her life. J. W. Cross, husband of Marian Evans Cross, remarked that the novelist's early burst of enthusiasm for the poet "entirely expresses the feeling she had for him up to the day of her death" (<u>Life</u>, I, 49-50). Looking at the forty-one years of sustained interest in Wordsworth's poetry that manifests itself mainly through her letters seems to confirm Cross's statement (Pinney 21).

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After reading three volumes of Wordsworth's poetry and looking forward to the remaining three, Marian Evans, on her twenty-first birthday, wrote in a letter to Maria Lewis: "I have never before met with so many of my own feelings, expressed just as I could [wish] like" (George Eliot's Letters, I, 34). One of those feelings seemed to be a love of rural people and rural landscapes. In 1841 she moved to Coventry after having spent 22 years in the country with rural people providing the stability of her youth. Although she remained in the city much of her life, the "yearning for hedgerows and spring flowers, for an orchard heavy with ripe fruit, for a farm resting beneath a bright sky haunted her imagination" (Squires 53). She wrote in "Looking Backward," from Theophrastus Such: "Sometimes when I am in a crowded London drawing-room . . . quick flights of memory take me back among my father's parishioners . . . But my eyes at least have kept their early affectionate joy in our native landscape, which is one deep root of our national life and language" (qtd. in Squires 53). Once saying of Silas Marner that its substance would not interest anyone but herself "since William Wordsworth is dead" (George Eliot's Letters, III, 382), she was emphasizing her sense of their shared interest in rustics and rural life as subjects. Thus her own tie to the country landscape and life plus the powerful influence of Wordsworth directed George Eliot towards the pastoral novel.

CHAPTER IV

GEORGE ELIOT'S PASTORAL VISION

Perhaps one reason for the closeness in thought between Wordsworth and George Eliot was that in some ways he anticipated the Victorian mindset, especially in his emphasis on work and duty. In the last stanza of "Ode to Duty," Wordsworth calls upon duty to be his guide:

> I call thee; I myself commend
> Unto thy guidance from this hour;
> Oh, let my weakness have an end!
> Give unto me, made lowly wise,
> The spirit of self-sacrifice;
> The confidence of reason give;
> And in the light of truth thy Bondsman let me
> live! (lines 50-56).

V. S. Pritchett remarks that the importance of work and duty in George Eliot's novels, what he calls her "peasant sense of law," was encouraged by her rural childhood (92). She once explained that living "among people more or less commonplace and vulgar," she had "come to the conclusion that human nature is lovable" (Pritchett 92). In 1859 she published Adam Bede which is the first important novel to deal largely and realistically with rural life. She did not plan to invent ideal characters but rather "to give a

faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind" (Adam Bede 150). She continues to reveal her didactic purpose:

> . . . these fellow mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are . . . these people . . . it is needful you should tolerate, pity and love: it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire (151).

Later, she adds a biographical tie, "The way in which I have come to the conclusion that human nature is loveable---has been by living a great deal among people more or less commonplace and vulgar" (Adam Bede 157).

Adam Bede opens in the village of Hayslope on the eighteenth of June, 1799, in the sunny workshop of Jonathan Burge where five workmen can be heard singing above the sound of plane and hammer. These carpenters are happy in their work and set great store in producing quality craftsmanship. Barbara Hardy says of Adam, "In him the life of the good man is very largely identified with the life of a good workman, and his moral training, his terminology, and his refuge and strength, are found in his carpenter's trade (33).

George Eliot shows a preoccupation with work. Besides Adam and Seth in the workshop, Hetty works (though she doesn't like it) in the dairy; Mrs. Poyser works in her kitchen as does Lisbeth Bede work in hers; and Dinah is busy

preaching on the Green. The Poyser family with their dedication to the daily labor at Hall Farm exemplifies the harmony that can exist between man and the soil when they are bonded by work. Linked to John Ruskin's concept of work, George Eliot values perseverance, accomplishment and the useful employment of a man's time, but above all, an honest enjoyment that is the end in and of itself of work (Squires 71). For example, Adam can not tolerate seeing men put their tools away "the minute the clock begins to strike, as if they took no pleasure i' their work, and was afraid o' doing a stroke too much" (<u>Adam Bede</u> 10-11).

Indicating her Victorian approval of the moral value of work, strong characters like Adam find satisfaction in their work; weaker characters do not. For example, Hetty dislikes the Poyser children and wishes not to work, mainly because it interferes with her vanity. She was vexed because her wrists "were coarsened by buttermaking, and other work that ladies never did" (<u>Adam Bede</u> 129). Arthur does not work; he rides, hunts and has secret meetings with Hetty. On the other hand, Adam, Dinah, and the Poysers are devoted to and absorbed in their work; it is a source of pride and pleasure for them. For them work is tied to duty as a moral obligation. As Adam says after Hetty's trial, "But tomorrow . . . I'll go to work again. I shall learn to like it again some time, maybe; and it's right, whether I like it or not" (<u>Adam Bede</u> 388).

There is this same moral obligation in Wordsworth's Michael who toils endlessly in order to hang on to the patrimonial farm and in Margaret who struggles to keep her household together, even after her husband's departure. However in Theocritus's Idyll X, Boucaeus, who has been in love for ten days, feels no such noble sense of responsibility where work is concerned. He says, "My kitchen garden's unhoed and all gone to seed" (line 14). The nineteenth-century emphasis on moral strength and dignity associated with work is a significant change in the world of the pastoral. So work, not leisure, becomes therapeutic in George Eliot's pastoral. It is that saves Silas Marner's sanity. The toilless bower of the traditional pastoral is gone. So are the shepherds.

Eliot's artisans and workmen show her sympathy for the common people like Wordsworth's. But the men of Hayslope are not shepherds; they are farm laborers and they are virtuous. They are "painstakingly honest men with the skill and conscience to do well the tasks that lie before them" (Adam Bede 182). George Eliot stresses that Adam was not an average man; he is one of a type of men who

> are reared here and there in every generation of our peasant artisans--with an inheritance of affections nurtured by a simple family life of common need and common industry, and an inheritance of affections nurtured by a simple family life of common need and common industry,

> and an inheritance of faculties trained in skilful courageous labour (181).

The respect for these artisans and laborers that shines through the passage above coupled with, perhaps, her own associations with this type of people from her childhood helped George Eliot to present them as honestly and accurately as her perceptions would allow. The characters in The Mill on the Floss belong to Warwickshire as Wordsworth's belonged to the Lake District. They were associated with "real" people. The Dodson sisters were quickly recognized about Nuneaton as George Eliot's aunts, the Pearsons who were a quite respectable family (Haight 340). Haight praises her realistic depictions: "Unlike the 'originals' sometimes dragged into novels for rarity or comic relief, the Dodsons are an integral part of the carefully studied background of provincial middle-class society against which Maggie's tragedy is acted" (340). Contributing to her sincere characterization was her love of humanity as revealed in her statement that "Individuals are precious to me, in proportion as they unfold to me their intimate selves" (qtd. in Stone 182). It is her deep abiding respect for and understanding of humanity as well as her dedication to a realistic depiction of rural life that validate George Eliot's pastoral.

She values the common man and his work with the soil because it results in creation of beauty, the meaningful use of time, and direct communication with the natural world"

(Squires 104). The beauty of the natural world and communion with it, intrinsic elements in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," are readily evident in George Eliot's pastoral. For example, the beauty of the area where Dinah preaches is reminiscent of the lushness of the green surrounding the banks of the Wye:

> near the Green he [a traveler] had before him in one view nearly all the other typical features of this pleasant land . . . this region of corn and grass . . . greenish sides visibly specked with sheep . . . the parting crimson glory of the ripening summer sun . . . hanging woods, divided by bright patches of pasture or furrowed crops . . . Then came the valley where the woods grew thicker, as if they had rolled down and hurried together from patches left smooth on the slope . . . (Adam Bede 16-17).

The Mill on the Floss opens with details of natural beauty of the land surrounding the Floss: "rich pastures," "tender-bladed autumn-sown corn," "last year's golden clusters of beehive ricks rising at intervals beyond the hedgerows" (7). George Eliot's novels are full of external views of nature, of landscape descriptions of brooks, fields, woods, sun and sky. Chapter 12 of Adam Bede entitled "In the Wood" captures the mystical, untamed beauty of the Fir-tree Grove:

> It was a wood of beeches and limes, with here and there a light, silver-stemmed birch--just the sort of wood most haunted by the nymphs; you see their white sunlit limbs gleaming athwart the boughs, or peeping from behind the smooth-sweeping outline of a tall lime . . . They make you believe that their voice was only a running brooklet . . . It was not a grove with measured grass or rolled gravel for you to tread upon, but with narrow, hollow-shaped, earthy paths, edged with faint dashes of delicate moss--paths which look as if they were made by the free-will of the trees and underwood, moving reverently aside to look at the tall queen of the white-footed nymphs (111).

Almost every page of The Mill and Adam Bede include such descriptions which have authenticity because they have details like references to domestic animals proper to the setting and to other details which show George Eliot's close observations, creating what Michael Squires calls "concreteness for the locality" (75). Though pastoral scenes of George Eliot and Wordsworth may echo the lush, flower-filled bowers from Theocritus or Pope, they are drastically different in purpose. The idyllic country setting is a mere convention in the classical and neoclassical pastoral, but it is much more in the nineteenth-century pastoral. George Eliot conceives of nature only as it relates to human life (Squires 68). She,

like Wordsworth, sees peasantry as close to nature and hence to the moral norm of human behavior (Stone 178). Maggie seems to have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch pines; she becomes one with them as she "enters the Deeps by a narrow path through a group of Scotch firs" (The Mill 299). Phillip acknowledges her closeness with the trees in the Deeps when he says she looks "like a tall Hamadryad [tree nymph], dark and strong and noble, just issued from one of the fir-trees (326-27). Other Eliot pastoral peasants who enjoy a oneness with nature are Adam and his trees, and Eppie with her garden. Metaphors often reinforce man and nature's close relationship. Adam is likened to his dog Gyp (Adam Bede 10), Dinah to a hen (27), people to sheep, Will to a cow (51) and folks to poultry (67).

The characters who are in tune with nature gain strength from it and are generally rewarded for this allegiance with a harmonious, happy, peaceful existence. For example, as Maggie stands under the Scotch firs in the Red Deeps, she gains the strength to stand up to Tom by meeting Philip Wakem. Eppie comments that "I don't think I shall want anything else when we've got a little garden." And the narrator tells us "that people in humble stations are often happier" than those who are brought up in luxury" (Silas Marner 202). John Paterson, in the introduction to Adam Bede, acknowledges Adam's and Dinah's goodness and thus harmony with nature: "If Adam and Dinah prevail over the unlucky chances of life, it's in part at least because the

natural world they live in is just about as disembodied, as spiritual, as they are themselves" (xxvi).

Even though nature can be spiritual and outwardly beautiful in George Eliot's novels, it can also be indifferent, even malevolent at times. It can reclaim those who corrupt the pastoral community or bring suffering upon it. In Silas Marner, the wealthy, materialistic Casses, who do not live close to nature, are not happy. Dunstan, of course, dies with his greed and stolen gold. Though he is not as morally bankrupt as Dunstan Cass, Tom Tulliver, who lacks affection for daisied fields and "capricious hedgerows" and for his sister, is drowned in the raging flood at the end of The Mill. As Michael Stone points out, Hetty Sorrel's unforgivable offense is her refusal to submit to the idyllic way of life that George Eliot celebrates in Adam Bede (208). She makes Hetty appear repulsive with her overwhelming vanity and the murder of her own child in order to "deny the reader any chance to feel sympathetic toward her, since sympathy for Hetty, paradoxically, would explode the moral basis of the book" (Stone 209).

The dichotomy of those in harmony with nature and those who are not in the country widens to the dichotomy between country and city, one of the chief characteristics of the traditional pastoral. Not only is pastoral man in tune with nature, he has chosen country life over an urban existence so he can live in peace and free from corruptness. When Silas was living in the town, he was falsely accused of a

crime and alienated; his life begins when he joins the pastoral world. Dinah Morris admits the appeal of Methodism is strongest in Leeds where the soul is "hungry" and the body is "ill at ease" among "those high-walled streets where you seem to walk as in a prison yard" (Adam Bede 80). Hetty Sorrel and Godfrey Cass both fail when they are exposed to the lures of the city as Wordsworth's Luke did.

A new development in the country/city dichotomy of George Eliot's pastoral is the realistic acknowledgement of evil in the country. Silas Marner is robbed of his wife, his reputation and his faith in the industrial world, and in the rural world, he is robbed of his gold. John P. Bushnell does not see the river as the cause of Maggie and Tom's death, but rather the machinery from St. Ogg, the industrial center that represents evil in the rural setting (379). In the classical age, industrialization did not threaten the country as it does in the nineteenth century when factories were invading and violating the lush fields and rural hamlets with machinery, steel and smoke. George Eliot is simply showing a reality, the insidious cancer of the English countryside: industrialization.

In spite of the growing threat of industrialization, or perhaps because of it, George Eliot clings to the value she sees in the rural setting and its inhabitants, at least the ones who are at one with their natural surroundings. It is there and with those people that she found the "elementary feelings" as Wordsworth called them which "germinate" from

rustic manners. In the commonplace Wordsworth and George Eliot found what they believed to be universal feelings. George Eliot once said that the "only effect I ardently long to produce in my writings is that those who read them should be better able to imagine and to feel the pains and joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being a struggling erring human being" (George Eliot's Letters, III, 111). Making an impact on the reader's feelings was one, if not her chief, motive in writing. Her proclamation to Charles Bray that "if Art does not enlarge men's sympathies, it does nothing morally" is a reiteration of what Wordsworth said in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads, that the "purpose" of poetry is moral, the expansion of the reader's sympathy. So with Wordsworth and George Eliot, the pastoral is charged with promoting compassion.

The characters in George Eliot's novels who err generally do so because of their deficiency of feeling. As Adam Bede tells us, "It isn't notions sets people doing the right thing--it's feelings" (Adam Bede 154). Weak, vain, unsympathetic, self-centered characters like Hetty Sorrel are so wrapped up in themselves that "they are isolated from all appeals by a barrier of dreams--by invisible looks and impalpable arms" (Adam Bede 87). Thus Hetty Sorrel and Arthur Donnithorne are presented as morally inferior to Adam and Dinah who are humble and constantly show a concern for others. At the birthday feast when Arthur toasts Adam and

bestows upon him the manager of the woods position, Adam is "a good deal moved by this public tribute, but . . . not being troubled with small vanity or lack of words; he looked neither awkward or embarrassed" (<u>Adam Bede</u> 227). Arthur, on the other hand, loved it when the people stood up as he entered the room, because "he liked to feel his own importance" (<u>Adam Bede</u> 223). Arthur had good will towards the people only because he was fond of thinking they had a special regard for him. Nor is Arthur capable of enjoying poetry of feeling; he dismisses Wordsworth's <u>Lyrical Ballads</u> as "twaddling stuff" (57). There is no room for Hetty Sorrel in a "pastoral of feeling" so she is made to seem unnaturally hard-hearted; even her love for Arthur is without passion. Hetty's dislike of family, in a particular, emphasizes her lack of feeling for others. At the birthday feast, she was quite out of patience with Tottie, who in her typical childish concern with the whereabouts of the plum pudding, accidently interfered with Hetty's vanity by pulling her feet up on the bench, an action which threatened to mess and soil Hetty's pink and white frock. In their self-centeredness, Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty Sorrel feel no sense of responsibility to others, no sense of duty to anyone but themselves.

Stone acknowledges that Tom Tulliver has something of "the stoical Wordsworthian commitment to duty, but his actions are directed by the Dodson family attachment to things rather than sentiments, by a sense of honor that

concerns itself with financial rather than emotional debts" (214). Maggie is the character of feeling in The Mill. She is sympathetic and sensitive to others. Though a character must feel, he must not give in to gratification of his personal feelings, lest he may be led toward anti-social behavior. Here again, Stone argues George Eliot shows Wordsworthian influence (133). She does not allow Maggie to give in to Stephen Guest's argument that they must yield to their heart's impulse even though they have obligations to others. Sometimes Maggie's super sensitivity and imagination cause her to suffer in dealing with a world that is unsympathetic and unloving; what is worse she often feels cut off from a world that is hurtful but of which she wants to feel a part.

Though Maggie remains a sympathetic, feeling individual to her death in trying to save her brother, she is especially so early in the book, when she is a child. George Eliot, like Wordsworth, associated spontaneity of compassion with childhood. Basil Willey notes that for Eliot as for Wordsworth, "the heart in her was kept alive by the recollections of her early life, and of the scenes and people associated with the feelings of childhood" (215). She probably drew heavily on these experiences for the first two books of The Mill. As Haight says, "the episodes of the doll, the dead rabbits, the fishing, the jealous impulse to push innocent little Lucy into the mud seem too convincing to have been invented" (340). In her first published essay,

George Eliot declares "true wisdom consists in a return to that purity and simplicity which characterize early youth, when its intuitions have not been perverted " (qtd. in Stone).

The classical pastoralists often looked to the past longingly, wishfully wanting to recapture the Golden Age. For George Eliot the Golden Age was often childhood; she uses the pastoral as a vehicle for recapturing the simpler, wiser time of childhood. She employs memory as Wordsworth did before her, to preserve and unify this golden time. Just as the narrator in "Michael" preserves shepherds like Michael, known in his childhood, so does Maggie preserve her past by clinging to her earliest memory of "standing with Tom by the side of the Floss, while he held my hand" (307). Donald Stone sees The Mill as George Eliot's most Wordsworthian novel "in which the heroine is paralyzed by a myth of the past and a myth of her own childhood" (194). With a pervading sense of nostalgia, The Mill opens "one February many years ago" (9) and the narrator never comes out of the past. Thus the entire novel is a memory, an attempt to unify and preserve a better, happier time and place.

Michael Squires grants that George Eliot looks with nostalgia in the traditional pastoral sense toward a time when life was simpler "and where an integrated community, a unified culture have not been displaced" (85). Perhaps she was concerned, as Wordsworth was, about the disruption

industrialization was causing not only in the naturalness of the countryside, but in the domesticity of the people whose way of life, home and community was tied to the land. In Adam Bede the old leisurely, uncomplicated way of life is contrasted with the hurried, complex, new way of life: Old Leisure was when "Life was not a task" "but a sinecure"; it was a time when man was "contemplative" and "fond of sauntering by the fruit-tree wall, and scenting the apricots" or "sheltering himself under the orchards bough at noon when summer pears were falling" (428-29). In Silas Marner when Eppie and Silas return to Lanturn Yard, Eppie remarks that she'd glad he doesn't live there anymore because it's a dark, ugly place where factories hide the sky and cold, indifferent faces crowd the street. By making the reader aware of the rural-urban contrast, and by looking back at a less complicated time, George Eliot launches a rather subtle attack on the evils of industrialization: a beast that destroys nature and the good nature of people.

The sense of family and community provided one of life's basic avenues for happiness in George Eliot's pastoral novels. For example, Michael Squires notes that she makes the Bedes and Poysers gregarious in order to emphasize that "interchange and connections between individuals binds them into cohesion" (84). And this cohesiveness of community allows them to "create happiness out of their immediate surroundings" (Squires 84). For George Eliot ties with and love of family provide the root

of all affection so when Maggie succumbs to egoism in "The Great Temptation," she is forced to live disconnected from her community (Fambrough 47). Of course, at the end of The Mill, Maggie dies trying to save her family, but at least she is connected to them once again: "in their death they were not divided" (522).

Conclusion

George Eliot assigns dignity to her pastoral characters who are not shepherds but laborers and artisans by giving them moral strength that comes from work and a sense of duty. This influence is, to an extent, Wordsworthian, but perhaps the times in which she lived also brought this idea to her pastoral.

Enclosure acts between 1700 and 1760 forced out some smallholders but facilitated more effective use of arable land and encouraged improved breeding by segregation of livestock. These improvements, as well as new techniques of cultivation, land usage and management, created an agricultural revolution which sustained and encouraged the Industrial Revolution by providing food for the nonagricultural population and supplying capital for industrial expansion. The agrarian society of eighteenth-century England dissolved as manufacturing began in the cotton and iron industries and spread to coal and pottery. With the industrial movement came wealth for some Englishmen and poverty for many others. Adding to the urban problems was a

tremendous population growth; English population more than tripled between 1700 and 1821.

The growth of industry and towns created a serious psychological problem in addition to the social, economic and political ones. The way of life governed by the seasons, sun, and moon, and the weather gave way to the discipline of the clocks and the rhythms of the machines. In addition to the physical adjustment, people had to make mental and moral adjustments to a new way of life.

Religion probably offered less consolation to the laboring poor and the paupers than some might like to think. The churches did not deal adequately with problems arising from new urban and industrializing trends, so many turned to the religion of work. Michael Squires confirms several sources for the Victorian Gospel of Work: The religious atmosphere, the economic atmosphere that demanded an individual develop himself and contribute to society, and a sense of doubt behind the rapid change (72). Walter Houghton offers the explanation that for many Victorians adherence to a faith in labor was a means of resolving intellectual confusion and psychological depression, or it may have been a means of "exercising the mood of ennui and despair which so often accompanied the loss of faith" (242, 251). Or perhaps this creed of work, especially work with the soil, served as a means for man to in some way compensate for his alienation from nature, or perhaps it merely represented a struggle to find that closeness again.

No matter what prompted it, man's preoccupation with work in George Eliot's pastoral serves to point up the tension between city and country and between the past and the present. The leisurely past has been replaced with the hurried present that is complicated by industrialization and its consequent social problems.

Thus, George Eliot, like William Wordsworth, calls for an earlier time when the rhythm of life was slower and allowed man to be more subservient to nature. Like Wordsworth she emphasizes the lush, peaceful, restorative power of the natural setting, but she also shows an indifferent, even cruel, manifestation of this powerful force when man forgets or chooses not to be in harmony with Her. Morality and a sense of goodness becomes attainable by living close to and in harmony with nature and by having a sense of duty to the land and to work. Hence, Wordsworth and George Eliot give dignity to the "Homely and Rude" through labor. And the pastoral is forever altered. Nature's harshness, labor and hardship, and the middle class invade the leisurely idyllic pastoral world of shepherds with artificial names to make what was once idealized, natural and realistic.

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