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Addiction and Recovery in *Silas Marner*

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Bridgewater State University

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Depending on the historical period, culture, and available knowledge, addiction has been defined and theorized in numerous ways. Approaches to solving the problem of addiction have been similarly diverse. Medical knowledge is still fairly limited, and the debate still continues to this day on whether or not addiction is a moral choice. During the nineteenth century various forms of addiction including but not limited to opium and alcohol had reached epidemic levels. Consequently, the subject of addiction is a major theme in many Victorian novels. In the nineteenth century, Susan Zieger explains, the word “addiction” was used to describe a “devotion, pursuit, penchant, or fondness” (Zieger). She adds that it was not until later that the definition included drugs as the “penchants and pursuits,” showing that addiction had not always been linked specifically with substance abuse (Zieger). Zieger states that discourses revolving around addiction typically had to do with “materialism, physicalism, and evolution” and notes that while scientists attributed the disease to heredity, others “argued that individuals ultimately retained control of their own wills, desires, habits, and impulses; by choosing a bad habit, they committed a sin or harmed themselves” (Zieger). She notes, however, that psychologist William B. Carpenter held the slightly more advanced theory “that repetitiveness could form habit,” which might “lie beyond the will’s power to check it” (Zieger). The dominant scientific theory of addiction in nineteenth-century Europe was degeneration theory, which “defined degeneration as the progressive accumulation of disabilities, such as epilepsy and imbecility over generations, leading toward extinction” (London 100). Theorists suggested that “substance abuse could trigger this condition and so harm both the nation and its progeny” (100).

Although some Victorian writers glorified substance use as a means of inspiration, most held the belief that drug habits actually worked to “imprison the finer sensibilities and divide the self” and considered the highs of substances to be a veil from the “truth[s] of experience”

(Zieger). In this way intoxication was thought to be “inauthentic,” and the “pleasures, sensations, and perceptions” gained through intoxication “were not really” the writer’s “own” (Zieger).

Writers who subscribed to this notion considered any creative work that had been inspired through an intoxicated state to be deceptive and therefore contrary to “truth” (Zieger).

Furthermore, during the Victorian era it was commonly accepted that the abuse of substances was both destructive and dangerous. Zieger notes that “the temperance movement and teetotal movement” had been founded in attempt to target these issues (Zieger). While the temperance movement argued for “moderation,” the teetotal movement advocated for complete abstinence (Zieger). Mervyn London explains that the teetotal movement formed a “brotherhood” of “those who had personal experience of the damage wrought by alcoholic drinks,” welcoming “inebriates” who “had previously been written off as a lost cause” (98). Zieger suggests that both these movements are founded on the belief that “diseased addicts can cure themselves” (Zieger), but London’s observation that the teetotal movement was founded as a “brotherhood” would seem to invalidate this claim (London 98).

A “brotherhood” is defined as a “community of people linked by a common interest, religion, or trade,” and whose purpose is “to provide mutual support or protection” (“brotherhood”, n.l.a). In this case, the members of the teetotal movement would be inextricably linked through the common struggle of addiction. Zieger makes clear that the members would surround themselves with the “better” influence of the group, taking part in “community meetings” in which members would share “their personal stories” or narratives of “confession” (Zieger). In this case, these narratives would not only work as a “confession” for the speaker (Zieger), as Zieger states, but would simultaneously cause the listener to become aware of his or her own issues through identification rather than condemnation. In this type of

active conversation, both the speaker and listeners gain a sense of correspondence with each other, and thus, all are able to escape the loneliness of what would have felt like personal sin. Since this is so, Zieger forgets that the sobriety success of the teetotal members would only be able to be accomplished through each member's individual participation in a collective group, meaning one would not simply be able to "cure" oneself through means of individual "willpower" (Zieger). Therefore, even though the teetotal movement did not have much medical knowledge on the subject, it seems to have been moving toward the more productive model of a community-based program of recovery. Zieger suggests a link between temperance, teetotalism, and twentieth-century Twelve-Step recovery programs, all of which emphasize the importance of "a community of like-minded fellows, ritual pledging, and submission to God or a Higher Power" (Zieger). Although Zieger is right to make this connection, she states that the teetotal and temperance movements are based on the theory of addiction as a "moral failing" rather than a "disease" (Zieger). This is not so in the "Twelve-Step descendants" that she speaks of (Zieger).

The teetotal and temperance movements had been most popular in the early nineteenth century and both specifically "targeted alcohol because drug use was not yet a problem" (Zieger). London explains that opium had been "restricted to the medical arena," but as time went on, doctors were "under pressure from unorthodox practitioners" who offered "scientific interventions" such as "homeopathy," an umbrella term that includes various natural remedies (London 98). In order to keep a larger wealthy client base, physicians "shifted toward managing symptoms" rather than curing them, resulting in increased opium prescriptions (98). Eventually, the "medical profession lost monopoly control" and a "lucrative market emerged in proprietary medicines," enabling drugs such as opium to be "purchased directly from chemists and even grocers" and resulting in a drastic increase in opium imports in the mid-nineteenth century (98).

Therefore, during the mid-nineteenth century, opium addiction began to infiltrate Victorian culture and Britain became a major world supplier of narcotics (98). Pain medication became an industry in itself. Mark Redfield and Janet Farrell Brodie discuss Mark Seltzer's assertion that the "notion of the 'addict' pathologizes the predicament of the normative subject of late capitalism" (6).

Many Victorian writers, including George Eliot, actively voiced concerns about alcoholism and opium addiction. Eliot is notably interested in the subject of addiction and intoxication, openly discussing the experiences of opium- and alcohol-addicted characters in several of her works, including her short story "Janet's Repentance" (from *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 1857) and in her novels *Silas Marner* (1861) and *Middlemarch* (1871-72). In *Silas Marner*, she clearly voices her disapproval of intoxicating substances, as her narrator explicitly argues that "the abundance of spirituous liquors" pitch "mental originality into the channel of nightmare," and furthermore, she notes sarcastically, act as "great preservatives against a dangerous spontaneity of waking thought" (67). *Silas Marner* is not typically recognized by critics as a novel about addiction because Silas does not use drugs or alcohol, but I would argue otherwise. Eliot represents Silas as having an addictive personality. His repetitive weaving and hoarding of gold are behaviors that make clear thinking and other important human qualities inaccessible to him, and he relies on these behaviors to escape and hide from a traumatic experience in his past. Therefore, for Silas, these linked behaviors function similarly to a substance. Moreover, Eliot depicts Silas's recovery in terms that prefigure the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, a system that was created in the United States many decades later, in 1935. At least one critic has noted Eliot's foresight about this issue. In "Janet's Repentance," Robyn R. Warhol notes, the similarities between "Janet's process of recovery and the Twelve

Steps is striking” (Warhol 101). However, critics have not considered how *Silas Marner* can also be read as a parable for addiction and recovery. In some ways, Eliot’s portrayal of Silas’s character predicts A.A.’s method of recovery, and her representation of addiction aligns with a more modern theory of addiction than the theories that existed during the Victorian era. The modern definition of “addiction” given by the American Society of Addiction Medicine is as follows: “a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory, and related circuitry. Dysfunctions in these circuits lead to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors” (ASAM). Although Silas is not typically considered as an addict Eliot portrays him to have an addictive personality and portrays his actions to be out of his control.

Eliot’s depiction of Silas shows how fear and doubt cause him to lose faith in all humanity, isolate himself and fall victim to the behavior of weaving and hoarding. She also suggests, anticipating later theories of addiction, that a “dysfunction” in “memory” (ASAM) plays a key role in Silas’s predicament. Furthermore, Eliot’s representation of Silas’s predicament is synonymous with her other representations of other minor addicted characters: opium addict Molly Farren and alcoholic Dunstan Cass. Eliot shows that that all three subjects “pathologically pursu[e] reward and/or relief” (ASAM). Furthermore, all three characters’ addictions are depicted as being beyond their individual control.

Silas’s compulsive behaviors of weaving and hoarding gives him both “reward” and “relief” and therefore, by today’s standards, he would be diagnosed with the “chronic disease” of addiction (ASAM). Silas does not have a chemical dependence on a substance, and nowhere in the novel does it mention him drinking or taking drugs. But Eliot's representation of these

behaviors suggests that his brain is wired the same way as an addict's, implying that if he did drink or take drugs, it would likely have the same effect. In the case of chemical dependence, nowadays a patient would have to be hospitalized in order to detox the body and safely withdraw before entering into a recovery program such as A.A.

By viewing Silas's behavior as addictive, we are also able to see what Eliot portrays as the social aspects of the disease. She begins the novel by illustrating a cultural disconnect between the rural villagers and the itinerant weavers, then goes on to provide Silas's individual history in order to lay the groundwork for his physical and temperamental vulnerability. Silas's individual condition of exile is, at least in part, related to the broader social marginalization of the suffering and poverty-stricken weaver community. Eliot demonstrates the pain Silas endures because of his Otherness and by doing this, she shows the consequences of perceived Otherness on a larger scale. According to nineteenth-century science, Silas would be diagnosed as a degenerate due to his cataleptic condition and his addictive nature. Silas's cataleptic condition causes him to enter trance-like states that mimic drug-induced states in which he temporarily loses consciousness and control of his limbs. Silas's physical disease creates an added layer of difference between him and his community, resulting in further isolation. His sickness eventually leads him to be judged as a criminal, and his subsequent moral degeneration is a result of his misguided belief system and this traumatic experience. The internalization of this experience triggers Silas to be reactive to circumstances and to adopt damaging thoughts and feelings manifested through his addictive behavior. Eliot does not make clear whether or not Silas was an addict from birth, but she suggests that the narrow sect in which he was raised, and his experiences in it, trigger his later addictive behavior. In this way, Eliot challenges the

assumptions of degeneration theory by focusing on the role of experience, rather than heredity, in addiction.

Silas's catalepsy, together with his self-doubting temperament, make him an easy target when his best friend William Dane frames him for theft. This event results in his excommunication from the religion of Lantern Yard, which up until this point had been his means of participating in and belonging to a community. Through his subsequent, self-imposed exile in a new village called Raveloe, Silas's isolation becomes complete, enabling his addiction to take control of his life. It is here that he becomes obsessed with weaving and hoarding gold. Eliot represents Silas as powerless over this behavior and suggests that he uses this habit as a form of unconscious escapism in order to mask a void that previously had been filled with religion, purpose, and human connection, suggesting that she agrees with other Victorian writers of her time about the deceptive effects of addictive behavior.

I would argue that many Victorian writers and readers would have interpreted Silas's behavior as a form of intoxication because it works to veil the "truth" of real "experience" (Zieger). Any creative work inspired through an intoxicated state would be considered to be deceptive and thus run contrary to "truth" (Zieger). This notion that addiction mars creativity can be applied to life more generally. Humans are inherently creative beings and simply through living, humans are granted limitless opportunity to create in ways such as making choices evident through communication, and expression. Therefore, living itself can be inspired by either "truth" (Zieger) or deception. Intoxication via substances, according to most Victorian writers, including Eliot would be a tool of this deception. According to Oxford dictionary, intoxication is defined by "the action or power of exhilarating or highly exciting the mind; elation or excitement beyond the bounds of sobriety" ("intoxication,"n.2.b). In 1835 the word was used in the context

of “wealth and power, in which men forget their weakness and mortality” (“intoxication,” n.2.b) and later in 1875 it was used to describe “a great thought” causing one to “go out of his” [or her] “mind” (“intoxication,” n.2.b). Needless to say, the term has not always been used in connection with drugs or alcohol but rather to describe multiple forms of vice. The commonly held Victorian view was that intoxication limits human morality (Zieger). In this sense, developing human morality is similar to developing one’s artistry of living, where one learns to enjoy life and be present. In order to develop this, one must live a life based in “truth” and one must “experience” life as it is, without the veil of intoxication (Zieger). In order to do this one must be present and make decisions that contribute to the betterment of life. Silas’s weaving prevents him from doing this, and he begins to create only for personal gain, which may seem to serve him temporarily but also keeps him from experiencing joy.

Silas’s progression of addiction is halted when his gold is stolen, an aspect of the plot that suggests that Eliot is familiar with the role that crisis plays in inciting and promoting individual change. For Silas this crisis causes him to come face to face with the reality of his solitude and emptiness, forcing him to reach out to his neighbors for help. It is shortly after this that a child, whom he later names Eppie, crawls into his cottage and onto his hearth, replacing his gold. Silas makes the decision to take care of her, and through her arrival, he reconnects with old memories and regains his spiritual belief in goodness. Eppie acts as a bridge between himself and others and restores his relationship with his community and his larger collective purpose. John Mullen explains the “mythical aspects” of Eliot’s “fairytale realism,” arguing that “Eliot has been very careful to make the events probable, but she wants us to see how things can appear marvelous too” (Mullen). While there are tragic elements in Silas’s story, Eliot emphasizes that there are marvels that happen in real life through spiritual transformation. In the narrative of *Silas Marner*

she represents a healing process that is extremely similar to real accounts of recovery that appeared much later in *The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Silas's neighbor, Dolly, aids him in taking care of Eppie, but she also plays a crucial role in his recovery as she helps him to come to terms with his past and reintroduces him to a communal tradition. In this way Dolly, although not an addict herself, resembles a sponsor figure in A.A., whose job is to serve as a mentor without asking for anything in return, and who guides the sponsee through the Twelve Steps. Silas proceeds through a condensed version of almost all of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous nearly a century before these steps came into print, demonstrating George Eliot's early awareness that a spiritual process and shift in perception are needed to free those in the grasp of addiction.

Alcoholics Anonymous, also known as A.A., is the foundation upon which all other Twelve-Step programs are built, including but not limited to Gamblers Anonymous, Adult Children of Alcoholics, and Overeaters Anonymous. The Twelve Steps are essentially a guide of suggested actions that put one on a path toward recovery through self-analysis, amends, and a relationship with a "Higher Power." Alcoholics Anonymous is an extremely successful program founded in the United States in 1935 by two seemingly hopeless alcoholics, stockbroker Bill W. and surgeon Dr. Bob. These two "had been in contact with the Oxford group, a mostly nonalcoholic fellowship that emphasized universal spiritual values in daily living" (Alcoholics Anonymous).

The Oxford Group was formed by in 1931 Dr. Buchman, "Doctor of Divinity" and a "Doctor of Law" whose life had been transformed after hearing "a woman speak" of "the Cross of Christ" at a "country chapel" in England (Moral Re-Armament 2). He states: "I had entered the little church with a divided will, nursing pride, selfishness, ill-will, which prevented me from

functioning as a Christian minister should” remembering “the deep experience of how the love of God in Christ had bridged the chasm dividing me from Him” (2). The “experience” caused him to gain a “new sense of buoyant life” (2), prompting him to acknowledge his “sin” and write letters of apology to all he had held resentments against (3). Once he started to “listen” to and obey “God,” he declares to have witnessed “miracles” (3). Although Dr. Buchman was originally born in Philadelphia, his work spread worldwide. The group that formed as a result is known today as The Oxford Group in which “men and women who were changed and trained in Oxford” devoted their lives to the development of the “global work of Moral Re-Armament” (3).

Bill W., who had been deemed a hopeless drunk, was contacted by a member of the Oxford Group and was able to have a similar spiritual experience and achieve sobriety inspiring him to not only form the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous but also to write and compile the book *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have recovered from Alcoholism*. This book outlines the Twelve Steps of recovery and includes the stories of the first alcoholics who got sober within the program. The book’s introduction contains a section called “The Doctor’s Opinion” written by Dr. Silkworth, who was a “Medical Director” for “one of the oldest hospitals in the country” that sought to treat “alcoholism and drug addiction” (*Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story* xxvii). In this section, he states: “We doctors have realized for a long time that some form of moral psychology was of urgent importance to alcoholics, but its application presented difficulties beyond our conception” (xxvii). He suggests that “the scientific approach” left doctors unequipped “to apply the powers of good” adding that this power lies beyond “synthetic knowledge” (xxvii). Admitting his own “inadequacy” as a doctor, he explains that after his observations, “one feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change” (xxix). Bill W. summarizes Dr. Silkworth’s

statement in the same section, asserting that alcoholism as a disease in which “the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind” (xxvi).

The structure of the program and the Twelve Steps, however, cater to people who struggle with both chemical and behavioral addictions. This is because, if practiced correctly, the program specifically attacks the root of the problem: the thinking patterns that lie underneath. This why the solution calls for a complete “psychic change” (xxix) in order to break free from the imprisonment of addiction. This is done through practicing spiritual principles and developing a relationship with a “Higher Power,” which can be any “Power that is greater than” oneself (Alcoholics Anonymous).

The program requires lifelong dedication and involves practicing spiritual ideals in day to day activities, elements that Eliot also emphasizes in Silas’s story. Bill W. states from experience in *Alcoholics Anonymous*: “we are not cured of alcoholism” but instead need to practice “a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition” (85). Therefore, most successful individuals in A.A. suggest that members join a group, attend meetings, get a sponsor, complete the Twelve Steps, and go on commitments to other A.A. meetings in order to tell their stories. Taking these actions holds members accountable and ensures repetitious practice, which helps to rewire the cognitive process. In taking these actions, members learn to align their will with the will of a Higher Power or God, striving for qualities such as “patience, tolerance, kindness and love” (Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story 83). In most cases this continues on for life. Recovery is a progressive uphill journey from self-centeredness and self-centered thinking, to God-centeredness and living for others. Silas’s narrative does not involve these exact rituals and commitments, but he does dedicate his life to taking care of Eppie, and he does engage in communal rituals such as Eppie’s baptism in the

Anglican church. Although Eliot was recognized as an agnostic (Everett and Landlow) by the time she wrote *Silas Marner* and therefore was not religious, in her writings she frequently explored spirituality and its importance in the lives of individuals. The healing power of spirituality is a major theme in *Silas Marner*, as Silas must undergo a change in all his thoughts and feelings.

Silas succumbs to addictive behavior after his best friend, William Dane, betrays him. Silas reacts by exiling himself, leaving his urban home in Lantern Yard and settling in the rural village of Raveloe. When he leaves Lantern Yard, Silas has already internalized the belief that nothing good can happen to him now, and that “there is no just God”: “Poor Marner went out with that despair in his soul—that shaken trust in God and man, which is little short of madness to a loving nature” (Eliot 11-12). We see that Eliot portrays this behavior as seeking “relief” and “reward” (ASAM), similar to the other addicted characters, Dunstan and Molly. Eliot uses the motif of exile and lays out Silas’s particular history of exile in order to humanize the weavers that would otherwise have been disregarded as The Other. Through this motif she shows that exile happens both individual and culturally, and she demonstrates that isolation both causes and exacerbates the social aspects of addiction. Yet, Eliot does not simply state the problem. She also proposes a solution, arguing that change is possible through bridging this disconnect with sympathy. She demonstrates how isolated addicts can recover through reintegration into a healthy community and by developing a spiritual life. The combination of these two factors work together to re-establish life’s purpose for the individual, which is carried out through acts of altruism directed toward others. Moreover, Eliot shows the crucial role of a mentor, represented though Dolly, who exemplifies a moral view that is spiritual but not necessarily religious, aiding Silas to examine his past and to see the role that he himself has played in it. This process is

extremely similar to the process outlined in Alcoholics Anonymous, which leads one to face past conflicts, recognize flaws of character, take responsibility, and apply different actions in the future, resulting in sobriety and personal transformation. Eliot's depiction of both the problem and solution anticipates later understandings of addiction.

Eliot begins the tale with an illustrative description in order to sympathetically show the predicament of the weavers as a demographic:

In the days when spinning-wheels hummed busily in the farm houses—and even great ladies, clothed in silk and thread-lace, had their toy spinning wheels of polished oak—there might be seen in the districts far among the lanes, or deep in the bosom of the hills, certain pallid undersized men, who, by the side of the brawny country folk, looked like the remnants of a disinherited race. (Eliot 3)

Eliot portrays the weavers as having not only an “undersized” physical appearance in relation to the “brawny country folk” but also describes them as sickly and “pallid” (3), insinuating that the weavers suffer from malnourishment and disease due to their poor living and working conditions. The distinction here is between healthy, settled rural peasants and homeless weavers who must travel by foot through the countryside to sell their services. Essentially, the weavers are segregated due to their trade and suffer ill health and likely ill will due to their relative poverty and the fact that they do not belong to any particular community.

When Eliot refers to the weavers as “the remnants of disinherited race,” (3) she is invoking the fairy lore of the British Isles, in which the fairies are creatures who have dwindled in size over time because they have been driven into hiding by humanity. John Mullen states, “These are the hand-loom weavers, and the novel both sees how they might have been shaped by their labor and imagines them as mythical creatures out of a folk tale” (1). Eliot's fairy lore

language works to reveal the reality of social displacement, specifically with the weaver group. In doing this she exhibits that the weavers are discriminated against, abandoned, and pushed out of the circle of society. Groups that are isolated such as this often suffer from higher rates of issues such as substance abuse. Eliot begins with a meditation on the conflict at large before mentioning Silas's specific dilemma, suggesting that this story represents a larger social issue.

In nineteenth-century scientific terms, the weavers would be considered to be a generation of degenerates. Dr. Earnest Abel summarizes the influential theory of degeneration put forth by psychiatrist Bénédict Morel in 1857, just four years before the publication of *Silas Marner*, describing “progressive generational degeneration starting with neurosis in the first generation, mental alienation in the next, and imbecility in the third, culminating in sterility in the fourth and final generation” (Abel). According to Morel, this genetic process is inevitable and irreversible. Howard Padwa explains French researcher Comte de Buffon, who hypothesized “that species could degenerate—become smaller, weaker, or sterile—over time” theorizing that this “resulted from creatures living in environments that were not well suited to them” (124). The weavers’ “undersized” and “pallid” appearance lines up with this description (Eliot 3).

Although Eliot makes it clear that weavers suffer from poor living and working environments, she also addresses the error in such generalizations about degeneration. By describing how the “alien-looking” weavers appear to the peasantry, Eliot emphasizes the point that the weavers would be *classified* as degenerative, not that they necessarily are degenerative. Eliot reveals the villagers’ flawed judgment by stressing that Silas’s physical appearance “would have had nothing strange for people of average culture and experience, but for the villagers near whom he had come to settle it had mysterious peculiarities which corresponded with the exceptional nature of his occupation, and his advent from an unknown region” (Eliot 5). In

stating this she shows that the weavers are associated with the criminal behavior just because they are wandering “emigrants” (4) shedding light on a stigmatized and general conception of who they are.

By illustrating the weavers in this way, Eliot also links the weavers with homelessness and minority groups. Although these groups often tend to be plagued with what would be labeled in the Victorian era as degenerate symptoms, by making the surrounding circumstances clearer, Eliot suggests the symptoms are caused by social marginalization and prejudice. If groups such as these are especially susceptible to physical disorders, she suggests that lack of morality comes from a lack of connection to the community. Although the degeneration scientists theorize degeneration to be purely genetic, Eliot disagrees. She attributes loss of morals to social isolation and ignorance. In effect, these weavers work tirelessly, isolated from the communities that they provide for but do not belong to.

Eliot uses the motif of exile to humanize the weavers. Isabel Alvarez Borland reflects on Cuban Exile literature, and quotes William Gass’s lecture in which he breaks down the stages of exile: “birth is your first experience of exile, the Greeks maintained. That’s why a child bellows when it is born...the second exile is never really to belong...and in the third exile is to forget the enormity of your loss” (94). Borland explains that “exile literature has always been intimately related to history because the banishment of the writer is usually caused by some historical event beyond his or her will” (94). In *Silas Marner*, the narrator refers to the weavers as “emigrants” who are “regarded as aliens by their rustic neighbors” (Eliot 4). As a result, they contract “eccentric habits which belong to a state of loneliness” (4). Eliot suggests that it is the isolation itself which perpetuates deviant “habits” (4).

Eliot goes on to address Silas's personal history in order to illustrate Silas as one of many who has entered into a state of exile. According to Borland, the historic circumstances of exile usually contain specific patterns. She elaborates on these patterns evident in writings by Cuban exile Guillermo Cabrera Infante, who expresses his "resentment for lack of sympathy shown to Cuban exiles abroad, as well as his feelings of alienation" (95). She later discusses how often exile narratives "reflect themes of treason, betrayal, and solitude by means of a tragic discourse of lamentation and denunciation" (95). Borland expands upon Gass's lecture, observing that "in its first stages exile writing relates mostly to the politics that originated the condition in the first place. In its middle stages this writing has to do with resistance against the erosion of identity as related to the new space. In its last stages, exile transforms itself into ethnicity as it confronts issues related to assimilation and heritage" (94). Through identifying the themes of exile literature, we are able to better understand the complexity of Silas's personal tragedy. In the beginning, Eliot addresses Silas's particular history, in the middle she describes his resistance to the facts of his history which he deals with through addictive behavior, and at the end we see his transformation. Although the events that make up Silas's story are obviously different than the events of the Cuban exile narratives, it is evident that the broad narrative pattern is similar. By giving Silas a history, Eliot humanizes the weaver group who is dehumanized by the new community that they travel to and in doing so she evokes sympathy for alienated social groups, advocating for an overall change in social attitudes toward marginalized groups. This change would entail a shift in perception from judgement and assumptions to acceptance and understanding.

Eliot's emphasis on exile defies the assumptions behind the degeneration theory of her time, because she stresses personal history over heredity. Laura Otis states: "Two primary

premises underlay Morel's hypothesis: first, that evolution could create harmful as well as beneficial traits; second, that physical and moral life and development were inseparable" (49). In using an exile story, Eliot demonstrates that she disagrees with this assertion and proposes that resistant and deviant behaviors stem instead from isolation and trauma. Otis notes that Morel argued to "improve working conditions, diet, and living space" (50). Likewise, Eliot clearly acknowledges the poor living and working conditions which likely account for physical sickness, but she also demonstrates that the degeneration theory is missing the ways in which a sympathetic community can rehabilitate an alienated individual.

The country folk's suspicion of the weavers as a mysterious demographic group, particularly their assumptions about the weavers' degeneracy, in some ways resembles eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British stereotypes about racial groups such as the Chinese. Brodie and Redfield note "In Britain the emergent discourse of addiction was associated [...] with the foreign—especially Asian— 'Other,' and with a feminized or otherwise 'degenerate' nation" (3). Although the weavers are not Asian, they are similarly considered "Other" and "degenerate" by the villagers (3). Moreover, Barry Milligan explains the commodity relationship with the British and Chinese, arguing that this relationship was based on the Chinese supplying the British with "exotic commodities such as teas, silks, and spices" (18). The weavers share a similar commodity-based relationship with the townspeople in the sense that these two groups had no relational basis to meet other than this exchange.

Silas is considered Other because of both his profession and origin, but he is Silas is further stigmatized because of his catalepsy. Editor Juliette Atkinson defines catalepsy as "a disease characterized by seizure or trance, lasting for hours or days, with suspension of sensation and consciousness" and notes that "contemporary doctors often classified catalepsy alongside

hysteria and epilepsy” (*Silas Marner* 185 n9). Silas’s catalepsy throws him into trance-like states that appear to be a “supernatural manifestation” to the villagers of Raveloe. An example of this is when Jem Rodney finds Silas during one of his fits saying his “eyes were like a dead man’s” (6). Because of this, Silas neither asks for help from his neighbors nor seeks to be a part of the community, “as if he hears” the villagers say that they will not engage with a “dead man come to life” (6). Lack of medical knowledge causes the villagers to mythologize a very real health condition. Silas’s condition provides the townspeople with an excuse to unconsciously rationalize the rejection of what is divergent or Other. By associating Silas with superstition, the villagers are instantaneously provided with the opportunity to disassociate from him and in doing so they attempt to disassociate themselves from any undesirable behavior that they see in him. In essence, the townspeople are in a state of denial. For Silas, the medical condition creates an added layer to his individual vulnerability. He is portrayed to be hyperaware of his Otherness and feels alone in his shame about his cataleptic episodes.

Silas’s catalepsy also further links him to the degenerate. Laura Otis explains Morel’s claim that “heredity and environment” [...] “were causing a progressive, cumulative degeneration of humanity as demonstrated though the high incidence of alcoholism, syphilis, epilepsy, hysteria, criminality, and idiocy” and points out Morel’s conclusion that “all patients were essentially suffering from the same disease” (49). According to this statement, Silas would immediately be associated with criminal behavior, simply because of his medical condition that he is powerless to control. According to degenerative science, Silas would be doomed to further decline due to this hereditary misfortune.

It is important to note that Eliot uses Silas’s catalepsy not as a means to suggest his degeneration, but rather to explore the condition as a cause of his isolation from the community.

After describing Silas's alienated existence in Raveloe, Eliot narrates Silas's history in his previous community Lantern Yard, a community located in a large manufacturing town. The narrator states: "Marner was highly thought of in that little hidden world, known to itself as the church assembling in Lantern Yard; he was believed to be a young man of exemplary life and ardent faith; and a peculiar interest had been centred in him ever since he had fallen, at a prayer-meeting, into a mysterious rigidity and suspension of consciousness" (7). The "hidden world" of Lantern Yard is depicted to be utopian, almost Edenic. Innocent Silas "[fall]s" during a "prayer meeting" (7) when the group comes together to celebrate a common spirituality. Although the community is celebrating religion, the importance lies in the nature of the ritual. It is an opportunity for gathering in which the members celebrate a common idea; an occasion for each member to be a part of something that is larger than themselves. It is exactly during this time where Silas "fall[s]" causing him to become the "cent[er]" (7) of attention. It is here that Silas essentially becomes self-conscious and recognizes his own separation. This moment foreshadows his exile and alienation. In this moment he becomes an Other within his native community. Therefore, Silas's self-consciousness symbolizes his personal tragedy and "fall" (7) from grace. The condition itself is medical, but the consequences of it are social. Furthermore, while the science at the time would demonize his condition, and associate it with criminal activity, this nonconformist Protestant sect in Lantern Yard idealizes it, believing it to be a symbol of "light and fervour" (8). Eliot demonstrates both of these radical extremes to isolate him within the group by marking his bodily difference in a spiritual gathering.

Silas is scarred by his upbringing in the radical religious community of Lantern Yard. Silas's mother taught him about "medicinal herbs," and he takes great pleasure in having received this "little store of wisdom" from her: "[B]ut of late years he had had doubts about the lawfulness

of applying this knowledge, believing that herbs could have no efficacy without prayer, and that prayer might suffice without herbs; so that his inherited delight to wander through the fields in search of foxglove and dandelion and coltsfoot, began to wear on him the character of a temptation” (Eliot 8). Eliot emphasizes that in Lantern Yard, science and faith cannot exist together. It is not Silas’s herb seeking which is the problem. The belief surrounding this behavior becomes the source of Silas’s discomfort. The “character of temptation” (8) creates a sense of spiritual “disease” for Silas, defined as the “absence of ease; uneasiness, discomfort; inconvenience, annoyance; disquiet, disturbance; trouble” (“disease”, n.1). As a result of this radical religion, Silas begins to internalize what the culture regards as sin and begins to perceive himself as having a tendency toward evil. Adopting this negative self-perception staggers his ability to develop autonomy and emotional maturity. He demonizes himself while he idealizes others, causing him to seek approval from others.

This warped way of thinking is evident in Silas’s codependent relationship with his best friend, William Dane. The narrator describes, “Marner had one of those impressible self-doubting natures which, at an inexperienced age, admire imperativeness and lean on contradiction” (8). Silas depends on William for direction. The townspeople call them “David and Jonathan” (8) referring to the biblical allusion in which it is stated that “Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt” (ESV 1 Samuel 18:1). Eliot includes this Biblical allusion in order to show how Silas has lost his own sense of identity, depending on William to feel whole, because he does not feel whole on his own. He regards William as the highest and himself as the lowest and in doing

this Silas, though unaware, has placed himself in an extremely vulnerable position where he is susceptible to anything William claims to be true.

Unsurprisingly, William's view is not a dependable one. William believes in "assurance of salvation" (8). That is, he claims that he has been "chosen" by means of predestination (8). Juliette Atkinson notes that Lantern Yard is a "Calvinist sect which believed in original sin, 'a state of corruption or sinfulness, or a tendency to evil, supposedly innate in all human beings and held to be inherited from Adam as a consequence from the fall'" (185 n8). William believes he is exempt from this sinfulness, and Silas believes him. Atkinson notes: "On 26 December 1860, Eliot wrote to her friend" saying that though she felt "sympathetic to those who turned to 'forms and ceremonies' for comfort, 'the highest "calling and election" is to *do without opium* and live through all our pain with conscious clear-eyed endurance" (185 n8). Therefore, Eliot shows religion itself to have an intoxicating effect, and in this way, her view aligns closely to Karl Marx's argument that "religion...is the opium for the people" (Harvey 618). Eliot believes that religion itself can intoxicate like a drug. Therefore, according to Eliot, even at the point of his early life, Silas is not sober. The intoxication of Lantern Yard's radical religion further stunts Silas's ability to emotionally mature and grow.

This leads him to become extremely reactive to circumstances and others. When William likely frames Silas of theft, Silas does not plead innocent, and stubbornly concludes "God will clear me" (Eliot 11). When he is later found guilty through the drawing of lots he asserts: "there is no just God that governs the earth righteously, but a God of lies, that bears witness against the innocent" (11). According to Anna Neill, Silas "is unable to distinguish human passions from divine action" (940). But there is more to it than this. Eliot suggests that at this point, Silas is a product of his environment. His reaction reflects the imbalanced ideas that his society is built on.

The narrator elaborates on how this phenomenon occurs and attributes Silas's reaction to "the untaught state of mind in which the form and the feeling have never been severed by an act of reflection" (12). Since Silas has not yet achieved autonomy, he cannot separate himself from his circumstances and think for himself. The narrator goes on to lament about "the sorrows that spring from false ideas for which no man is culpable" (12).

This does not mean that Eliot is suggesting that Silas is completely blameless. The reader, too, may consider Silas to be *completely* innocent in the events of his betrayal. And this is exactly Eliot's intention. The sympathy one feels towards Silas causes one to interpret the situation from his point of view, failing to see that he actually plays a part in it. But he does play a part in it. He blames God for being dishonest when in fact he himself withholds the truth of his memory to those who "inquire" and stubbornly expects that "God will clear" him (11). Thus, Silas projects his unconscious awareness of his own dishonesty and forges a resentment against God and others. Although Silas is demonstrated to be partly at fault, Eliot maintains that he is not responsible for the fault until he is conscious of it. He still, however, suffers the consequences of his mistake. He is found guilty, excommunicated from the church and eventually leaves his hometown.

Silas's exile marks his journey into isolation. The narrator explains how Silas is like others who find themselves "suddenly transported to a new land, where the beings around them know nothing of their history and share none of their ideas" (13). The narrator suggests that "minds that have been unhinged from their old faith and love have perhaps sought this Lethian influence of exile" (13). Eliot suggests that self-exile is a limbo-like state of mind in which the individual no longer believes in reality. In self-exile, one builds a self-constructed prison that shields oneself from connections to others and the past, and it is suggested that Silas seeks this

illusory state for safety. Paradoxically, at the same time, he is also further removed from “faith and love” (13) through this mechanism because he forgets all previous encounters that he has had with these feelings. In this way, Silas’s exile works as a further form of intoxication for him, but unlike his religious intoxication in Lantern Yard, this form of intoxication cuts him off from others completely.

Silas’s weaving is represented as a coping mechanism that helps him forget. Eliot explains, “His first movement after the shock had been to work in his loom; and he went on with this unremittingly, never asking himself why” (14). Weaving diverts Silas’s attention from thoughts of the past and feelings of discomfort. It becomes his solution. Yet by engaging in this to drown out reality, the weaving itself then works to keep him stagnant and makes him incapable of change. Silas’s work becomes an “end in itself, to bridge over the loveless chasms of life” (14). Borland suggests that exile brings with it a “new space” (94). In Silas’s case, the “new space” (94) is also representative of an empty space within him that used to be filled with connection and love for others. This creates an empty void that Silas fills the only way he knows how.

It is in his new location of Raveloe that Silas starts to display extremely addictive behavior. He works “unremittingly” and “far into the night” (14). Silas’s weaving depicted by Eliot is obsessive and abnormal. What was once simply his trade now consumes his entire life. The narrator describes that “He hated the thought of the past; [...] for there was no Unseen Love that cared for him (14). If Silas felt a connection with love, he would be able to face his past and see his place in it but the inability to feel a connection with a higher love and his fellow man causes him to adopt a victim mindset, feeling as though all forces work against him rather than for him. Because he is filled with resentment toward the past, he is incapable of letting love

guide him through it. Since Silas does not feel “cared for” (14), he feels he has to take care of himself, in fear that others will hurt him again. Therefore, he takes control over his situation this best he can through weaving.

Weld and Brody point out that the contemporary definition of addiction “signifies a compulsive attachment to a behavior” (2). Given the “compulsive” (2) manner in which Silas weaves, Silas would be diagnosed with addiction according to this definition. Weld and Brody also note Eve Sedgwick’s notion that “any substance, any behavior, even any affect may be pathologized as addictive. One can become addicted to food, to the refusal of food, to exercise—to health itself” (4). Eliot addresses this when the narrator explains that Silas’s “life had reduced itself to the functions of weaving and hoarding” and acknowledges that “the same sort of process has perhaps been undergone by wiser men, when they have been cut off from faith and love—only instead of a loom and a heap of guineas, they have some erudite research, some ingenious project, or some well-knit theory” (Eliot 18). Through this, Eliot refers to any isolated behavior that exists without connection to others. In this sense, she demonstrates how addiction progresses in isolation. Without love, she suggests, there is not a stable relationship between individual and action and the action becomes solely a means of control. In this sense, one uses one’s gifts and talents to pursue different forms of satisfaction in order to gain the illusion that one has control over one’s own life. Eliot suggests that in this isolated condition, the individual is past the point of choice.

Weld and Brodie quote Eve Sedgwick who states that “addiction [...] resides only in the structure of a will that is always somehow insufficiently free, a choice whose voluntariness is insufficiently pure” (qtd. in Weld & Brodie 4-5), meaning that although she accounts for multiple behaviors in her definition of addiction, she does not account for the physiological

components of the disease. She suggests that addiction is *only* a disease of the will. In contrast, The American Society of Addiction Medicine suggests that: “Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry. Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social and spiritual manifestations. This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors” (ASAM). In this sense, the behavior or the substance seeking are the results of “brain circuitry” (ASAM) rather than the “structure of a will” (Weld & Brodie 4-5). Yet, Sedgwick’s interpretation is understandable because although addiction is a chronic disease, it is a disease that unquestionably has an effect on the will. Untreated addiction lies outside of individual willpower. Eliot does not state clearly whether or not addiction is a chronic disease, but she does emphasize that addiction leaves the subject powerless, and she makes clear that social isolation can eventually lead to full-fledged addiction.

Katherine Brandt discusses Eliot’s realist approach to addiction in the novel *Middlemarch*, arguing that Thomas Trotter’s 1804 essay on addiction is ahead of its time because it not only addresses the “physical and mental components” of addiction but also accounts for “the soul ... [which] has received impressions that are incompatible with its reasoning powers” (10). Eliot’s representation of Silas is similar, because he does not have the “reasoning power” (10) to “question the validity of an appeal to the divine judgement by drawing lots” (Eliot 12). According to this view, the radical religion of his native community prohibits the development of Silas’s soul. Eliot’s narrator later compares his soul to a “shrunken rivulet” (77), showing that she recognizes the spiritual component of the disease.

Eliot also illustrates similarities between Silas and other addicted characters. She illustrates opium addict Molly Farren as having a festering resentment toward her husband

Godfrey Cass, from whom she is separated. The narrator describes Molly as “enslaved, body and soul” to “the demon Opium” (96). Before she takes the drug, Molly is portrayed to be in a limbo-like state as well: “She knew this well; and yet, in the moments of wretched benumbed consciousness, the sense of her want and degradation transformed itself continually into bitterness toward Godfrey” (96). Eliot clearly addresses the physiological component of Molly’s chemical dependence on the drug, but she also depicts the drug itself as having a mystical and controlling power over her, causing her to experience a mental battle between awareness and denial. Furthermore, this battle is represented as a mental effect of withdrawal. Essentially Molly cannot recover because the addiction itself prevents her from admitting her disease. Therefore, resentment and blame are not necessarily coming from Molly herself, but rather they are shown as manifestations of her addiction.

Molly also demonstrates relief-seeking behavior in her last moments before dying: “She needed comfort, and she knew but one comforter—the familiar demon in her bosom; but she hesitated a moment, after drawing out the black remnant, before she raised it to her lips. In that moment the mother’s love pleaded for painful consciousness rather than oblivion [...]. In another moment Molly had flung something away, but it was not the black remnant—it was an empty phial” (Eliot 97). This scene represents how powerless Molly is over a disease that is physiological, mental, and spiritual. Her last moments characterize an inner struggle within herself, and Eliot demonstrates that although everything in her wants to say no, Molly is powerless to resist. The narration skips from a maternal monologue to an empty phial insinuating how impulse cuts through an attempt to reason. During this scene, Molly’s death prevents her from achieving her goal of confronting Godfrey, and her addiction prevents her from having even a chance of being integrated into Red House society.

Although Molly's behavior is substance related and life threatening, Eliot shows that Molly and Silas both seek comfort in their addictions. Just as Silas takes "refuge from benumbing unbelief on his loom" (12), both are demonstrated as seeking relief from feelings of discomfort and resentment. Brandt explains addiction as "dis-ease": "dis-ease occurs long before the actual manifestation of the disease itself" with "feelings of restlessness and discomfort" (14). Both characters experience restlessness and discomfort, turning to their addictions to drown out these feelings. Both Molly and Silas's addictions create further "dis-ease," because the addiction itself prevents both from achieving any meaningful social integration.

Eliot portrays both Molly and Silas as isolated. Just as Molly's opium is "familiar," Silas's "gold coins [...] become his familiars" (Eliot 97, 17). In both cases the object and substance become substituted for human connection. This leaves both characters with the inability to escape the confines of themselves and their own subjective points of view. For example, as he weaves, Silas "look[s] toward the end of his pattern [...] til he for[gets] the riddle, and everything else but his immediate sensations" (17). Similarly, before Molly's death, she feels "nothing but a supreme immediate longing that curtained off all futurity" (97). Both drug and behavior cause one to lose sight of the meaning of life, seeking a reward for themselves because they have nobody else.

The alcoholic Dunstan Cass, who steals Silas's gold to pay his debts, is described in a similar way. He is shown to "care more for immediate annoyances than for remote consequences" (Eliot 31). Eliot gives us three characters who seek instant gratification in order to feel in control. Drinking alcohol ensures getting drunk. Taking opium ensures getting high. Weaving ensures Silas will collect gold. These are all "reward[s]" (ASAM) that are sufficient for their isolated needs. The illusion of personal control prevents each from seeing the greater whole

and seeing consequences of their actions on a larger scale. As a result, they satisfy their own needs rather than seeking help. All three characters are trapped within the confines of their own addicted selves.

Eliot meditates on Silas's behavior to in order to explore the cause of his addiction and show its cyclical nature:

Do we not waste away moments of inanity or fatigued waiting by repeating some trivial movement or sound, until the repetition has bred a want, which is incipient habit? That will help us to understand how the love of accumulating money grows an absorbing passion in men whose imagination, even in the very beginning of their hoard, showed them no purpose beyond it. (Eliot 17)

This passage demonstrates Eliot's underlying argument that humans are created for a "purpose" (17). This purpose entails human relationships and love for others, and a love for life itself. Yet she also makes it clear that "purpose" can only flourish through a healthy "imagination." Silas's "solitary imprisonment" causes his imagination to become blocked (16). A lively imagination requires at least some degree of openness to the world around you. But the imagination that is deadened through addiction traps the individual so that there is nothing left but "trivial...want...[and] habit" (17). The mind begins to work like a spinning mechanical gear and loses the ability to form new ideas or embrace new concepts.

Because of Silas's fear of people, he lives in a self-constructed prison and uses his energy to fulfill his own basic needs and his desire, which is focused solely on the gold coins. This selfish and uneven relationship creates only an illusion of "satisfaction" (17). Since "satisfaction" itself is fleeting, it "breeds a new desire" (17). Lasting fulfillment lies in contributing to life's purpose through serving the living. Therefore, Silas's attempts are futile. In

this way, Eliot demonstrates that Silas's isolation both causes and exacerbates his "habit" (17), leading him to be a slave to himself and his own desires and resulting in a completely self-centered life. In *Alcoholics Anonymous* this inability to see beyond the narrow desires of the self is referred to as "self-will" (62). Interestingly, the Victorians also used the term "self-will," which the OED defines as a "determined, obstinate, or unreasonable pursuit of one's own desires, inclinations, or opinions" ("self-will," n.2). In 1860, the term "self-will" was often used synonymously with "idolatry" ("self-will," n.2). In Silas's case, the gold is his idol that represents his self-willed desires, indicating that he places his faith in objects rather than in God or humanity.

The act of weaving and the love for material objects work together to strip Silas of his humanity. In *George Eliot and Intoxication: Dangerous Drugs for the Condition of England*, Kathleen McCormack argues "repetition without variation is both cause and effect of intoxication" (105). Silas uses "repetition" (105) by "repeating some trivial movement or sound" (Eliot 17). The key, here, is that resorting to the "trivial" and constant motion of weaving is enough to stop Silas from thinking as well. While he uses spinning to temporarily save him from confronting the lack of meaning in his life, at the same time it prevents him from being able to recognize this lack of meaning. Furthermore, the repetitive action makes Silas similar to a machine. The narrator says that Silas has a "mechanical relation to the objects of his life" (18). Neill describes this aspect of the novel, arguing that "the effect of this almost complete severance of sympathetic attachment to any other living being [...] create[s] another kind of de-animation, as solitude makes Silas increasingly less like a human being and more like a thing" (Neill 952). Here we see the reverse end of what Mark Seltzer calls "machine culture" (Weld & Brodie 5) on an individual level. Thought and sympathy, which a machine does not have, can connect humans

back to “purpose” (17) and life. In his machine-like state, Silas essentially has lost his human identity.

Furthermore, Eliot demonstrates her knowledge of this self-will through the way she presents Silas. She explains that Silas has “to provide his own breakfast, dinner, and supper, to fetch his own water from the well, and put his own kettle on the fire; and all these immediate promptings helped, along with the weaving, to reduce his life to the unquestioning activity of a spinning insect” (Eliot 14). This emphasis on repetition accentuates Silas’s self-dependency and seclusion, directly contrasting against his previous trust in others. The narrator notes that he weaves like a “spider, from pure impulse” to show that Silas’s self-dependency is mere survival (14). “Spider[s]” are insects of prey. They spin webs simply to catch pray and to feed themselves. While a spider is an insect that is self-sufficient, by comparing Silas to a spider Eliot suggests that this self-sufficiency is abnormal for the human. Humans, unlike spiders, thrive off connection with others. Eliot argues that when humans do not have this, they become reduced to a lower life form. In this “insect” life, there is no thought of the past or of the future (14). In this way, Silas’s self-will serves only his most basic survival needs.

While Silas spends years reduced to this lower form of existence in which memory does not seem to play a part, Eliot emphasizes the role of memory in bringing about his condition: “He hated the thought of the past; there was nothing that called out his love and fellowship toward the strangers he had come amongst; and the future was all dark, for there was no Unseen Love that cared for him” (Eliot 14). Silas “hate[s] the thought of the past,” but Eliot demonstrates earlier that the past is also inaccessible to him when she states that in Lantern Yard he does not have “independent thought” in order to “reflec[t]” (12). Silas’s response to trauma shows he suffers from the same disease as the culture he was raised in. The religious ideology of Lantern

Yard hinders Silas's brain development and his ability to achieve autonomy. Although Eliot does not mention that he had been addicted from the start, given the research we have now, the narrative suggests that the trauma of betrayal triggers an addiction that may have already lain dormant. The American Society of Addiction Medicine stresses that addiction is a "chronic disease" of many aspects including "memory and related circuitry" ("addiction," ASAM). Eliot underlines the crucial role that memory plays in Silas's predicament. Lack of memory prevents Silas from gaining the "split consciousness" that allows "two conflicting views to exist simultaneously" that Ermarth suggests is necessary for him in order to gain Eliot's idea of "sympathy" (361). According to Eliot, the "Unseen Love" (14) provides the individual the ability to sympathize and obtain balance. Eliot reveals, however, that the ability to feel "Unseen Love" can only come through accessing the past, and in doing so she demonstrates the intensity of Silas's dilemma. Because he is isolated, he simply cannot access his better memories, such as his love of his mother and little sister, which would allow him to feel the "Unseen Love" that would both bring him back to life and set him free (14). The "Unseen Love" is only able to develop and grow through connection with the past and others. In Silas's past he had human relationships and he had faith in God, meaning he had a relationship with what A.A. would call "a Power greater than" oneself (Alcoholics Anonymous). Although his previous faith was not a healthy or supportive one, he still shared a common belief with other members of his community. He alone was not the center of his own life. In order for Silas to transform, Eliot would suggest, he needs to reconnect with his previous *feelings* of faith, security, and connection, and assimilate these feelings with trust in a new community.

In this way, Eliot attacks the thought processes that lie underneath addictive behavior and stresses the need for faith. It is exactly this belief in "Unseen Love" that would allow Silas to

step forward from doubt into trust (Eliot 14). Only this transition can begin to restore his relationship with himself, others, and the world around him. The “Unseen Love” itself is the binding force that connects all life. In order to tap into this force, however, one first has to accept the truth of its existence. Yet Eliot demonstrates Silas as physically incapable of this action because the channel that she suggests communicates love—memory—has been cut off. Hence, his shattered will works to satisfy his own finite needs, as demonstrated in the non-living gold, rather than toward the will of the infinite—toward love and collective life.

Sarah Wadsworth discusses the theory of Victorian duality, or the “divided self,” and quotes Anya Taylor, who argues that addiction exposes “a monstrous aspect of human nature” but also “provides access to an inspired, perhaps divine state of being” (Wadsworth 43). Through Silas’s experience, Eliot suggests that the “divided self” (43) ultimately comes down to the split between the isolated self and a view of the self in relation to a greater whole. We know that Silas’s isolated self brings out his “monstrous” characteristics (Wadsworth 43), as Eliot compares him with a “spider” looking out for “no other man” (Eliot 14-15). But Silas’s other side, or nature before exile, was one that served. We see this in his medicine work, as he cures the cobbler’s wife, Sally Oates, of a “heart condition” out of a “rush of pity” (Eliot 16). Although Eliot shows that Silas could have made “a profitable trade” from this herbal healing, “money on this condition was no temptation to him” (16).

Furthermore, through Silas’s folk healing, Eliot also critiques pharmaceutical medicine at the time for fostering addiction to painkillers. Silas is said to be a “person of the same sort” as the “Wise Woman” with his “occult” practices (Eliot 15). London points out that during the nineteenth century, the “medical profession was also under pressure from unorthodox practitioners [who offered] homeopathy” (London 98). While homeopathy would attack the

problem at the root, doctors sought to simply make the pain unnoticeable by prescribing opium (98). Basically, by taking opium, one forgets the pain but does not get rid of the source of the problem. During this time, Silas would have been considered one of these “unorthodox practitioners” (98), given his knowledge of herbal remedies. Although London notes that doctors sought to “manage symptoms” by prescribing pain medication, Eliot makes it clear that Silas actually cured them by using what appeared to the villagers as “occult” or magic practices (Eliot 15). The narrator tells how Dr. Kimble’s “physic [...] ha[d] an effect,” but Silas’s medicine “worked wonders” (15). This aspect of Silas’s characterization suggests that Silas does indeed have access to a “divine state of being” (Wadsworth 43) to cure others from disease. Silas’s knowledge of natural remedies has also been “inherited from his mother” (8), and so his work is deeply aligned with communal and familial bonds. In contrast, the respected Dr. Kimble would stand above and apart from his patients, administering addictive substances that could potentially turn those same patients into isolated addicts. Eliot proposes local, traditional forms of healing instead, a relationship that is based in reciprocity: each person involved is both the healer and the healed. This is clear when she states that Silas’s service: “might have been the beginning of his rescue from the insect-like existence into which his nature had shrunk” (15). Yet, Silas quickly feels overwhelmed when his neighbors bombard him with demands for his help, and he reverts back into feelings of “repulsion” (15). At this point, he is not yet ready to be an active part of the community.

Eliot suggests that crisis is necessary for communal relations to be restored. Ironically, the alcoholic Dunstan Cass is the one whose action prompts this eventual restoration. Eliot demonstrates that by stealing Silas’s gold, Dunstan inadvertently brings Silas to his rock bottom and his saving grace. When Silas comes home to see that his gold is gone, he is faced with “the

terrible truth” and cries out in “desolation” (Eliot 38). Essentially, the “terrible truth” represents the truth of Silas’s solitude. This is the moment when Silas finally comes face to face with himself, without any activity or desire to distract him from who he is and who he has become. Wadsworth quotes Mariana Valverde, who explains that by being deprived of “freedom,” one is “given the opportunity to regain it” (49). Wadsworth suggests that Valverde “explores th[e] paradox of restricting a person’s liberty in order to free him or her from an enslavement of the will” (49). When Silas’s gold is stolen, he is faced with his powerlessness and finally recognizes that he does not have control over the circumstances in his life. The loss of the gold smashes Silas’s illusion of control and “restrict[s]” his “freedom” (49), and he has no choice but to take a new and different action. This does not suggest that Silas suffers from a disease of the will, but given the fact that crisis takes away the ability to choose, the will in this sense does play a role. In A.A., admitting “powerlessness” and that life has become “unmanageable” is the first step (Alcoholics Anonymous). The crisis of the stolen gold forces Silas to embark on a journey toward the other steps, and through this he unknowingly begins his process of recovery. Although his initial crisis in Lantern Yard causes a disconnect between him and his community, his second crisis provides an opportunity for reconnection with the community in Raveloe.

When his gold is stolen, Silas is forced to reach out to the community, and his action contributes to his healing. After Silas bursts into the local tavern, The Rainbow, to get help, the narrator observes: “This strangely novel situation of opening his trouble to his Raveloe neighbors, of sitting in the warmth of a hearth not his own, and feeling the presence of faces and voices which were his nearest promise of help, had doubtless its influence on Marner [...]. Our consciousness rarely registers the beginning of growth within us” (Eliot 50). Silas’s “growth” lies in the act of putting his pride down and admitting that he needs help. He is at once humbling

himself and conquering his fear. Silas has no idea what could be waiting on the other side.

“Opening” (51) to others entails “opening” to the unknown: it demands courage. When he “feels the warmth of a hearth not his own” he enters an unfamiliar place, with unfamiliar people, but somehow in this place of mystery, he gains the impression of feeling at home (51). This is the very moment where Silas enters a place outside of himself, and thus, he begins his journey out of exile.

Furthermore, this distraught condition surpasses the supernatural beliefs of the others toward Marner, and they feel naturally inclined to help (53). His neighbors believe that he is “telling the truth” and eventually conclude an “ill turn had been done to Marner” (51). Before this, when Silas was the center of his own universe, he mistakenly thought that all other humans were out to get him. Now he realizes that this is not so, in fact it’s quite the opposite. His fellow humans become the “nearest promise of help” (50), signifying the beginning of Silas’s psychic change. Since he is powerless over his situation, he has no choice other than to depend on their “goodwill” (68). Suzanne Graver discusses how Eliot advocates for a community that is “open to tolerance, acceptance, and understanding of others” and suggests that her work brings a “fellow feeling” that contributes to “development and moral evolution” (34). This “opening” to his fellows is “the beginning of” Silas’s “growth” (Eliot 50) and therefore, the start of his “moral evolution” (Graver 34).

Eliot demonstrates the important role of community, but she suggests that community without faith is not enough. Silas must regain his belief in goodness and hope. After Silas loses his gold, he begins to “contrac[t] the habit of opening his door and looking out from time to time” (Eliot 98). But this time his “habit” requires looking outside rather than staying inside of his own home. He searches out of “yearning and unrest” (98). Here one could argue that Silas is

going through craving and withdrawal after the loss of his gold, not necessarily a bodily withdrawal but a feeling of withdrawal nonetheless, in which a “supremely loved object” has been removed (98). At this point, Silas is in a state of grief due to the fact that the object to which he directed his love, both his relief and his reward, is gone. Therefore, Silas’s feelings of love have no direction or aim. Suddenly, as he goes to “close” the “door,” he is “arrested [...] by the invisible wand of catalepsy [...] holding open his door, powerless to resist either the good or the evil that might enter there” (99). It is while Silas is unconsciously holding open his door that Eppie wanders in. Silas’s physiological disease is exactly what allows magic to happen: his curse is portrayed as his blessing. His catalepsy makes him susceptible to the unknown, which Eliot argues works mysteriously for good. The belief in a mysterious force which works for good is absolutely essential in Silas’s recovery.

Eppie unlocks Silas’s memories, and thus “Unseen Love” re-enters into his life (Eliot 14). Shortly after Eppie comes through his door and Silas holds her in his arms, he is reminded of “his little sister whom he had carried about in his arms for a year before she died when he was a small boy” (99). Peter Simpson proposes that Eliot’s beliefs parallel those of Wordsworth, who believes that “‘the hiding-places of man’s power’ lie in the “memory of childhood” (Simpson 107). Although this is evident, Silas’s memory isn’t just any memory of childhood. Eppie’s arrival provides him with the memory of caring for and protecting a loved one, which opens up in him the sense of caring for someone other than the self. Through this memory, Silas receives “old impressions of awe at the presentiment of some Power presiding over his life” (Eliot 100). As Silas is reminded of what it is like to care for another, he instantaneously gains the feeling that he, himself, is also being cared for. It is through this process that he is able to assimilate his past and present experiences.

Eliot's portrayal of Silas's transformation demonstrates that faith is necessary for human evolution: science and spirituality have to be connected. Neill discusses the relationship between the known and the unknown and quotes Eliot's response to Darwin's theory of evolution. Eliot said she admired the "clearness and honesty of the theory," but "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" (Neill 939). Eliot acknowledges science but also recognizes its limits by itself. Eliot valued the "mystery" of human existence, which we might connect with her emphasis on faith and the need to believe in an "Unseen Love." In order to experience the mystery, one needs to *believe* it in it first, and *believe* in its goodness. In Silas's case this newfound faith triggers a paradigm shift in which he suddenly experiences feelings of being in sync, balanced, and at peace with the world around him: no longer guiding himself, but rather being guided. This sudden change in perception signifies what A.A. would classify as a "spiritual experience" (Alcoholics Anonymous). It's here that Silas begins to form a relationship with a "Higher Power" (Alcoholics Anonymous). By feeling and believing in this presence, Silas has moved through Step Two: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity" (Alcoholics Anonymous). This belief does not result in immediate recovery, but it does enable Silas to be open to change, which makes his recovery possible.

As many critics have noted, Eppie replaces Silas's addiction to the gold. There is a danger, then, that he could shift his obsessive, antisocial behavior to his role as her father. McCormack notes that Victorian literature often uses "intoxication" as a "metaphor [...] for romance" (McCormack 41). Although Silas's relationship with Eppie is not a romantic one, the intoxication parallel is relevant here because he does not want to share her with anyone. Silas's

kind-hearted neighbor, Dolly Winthrop, must teach him how to have a healthy relationship with the child. When she first comes over and offers to babysit the child, Silas is uncomfortable and “hesitating” (Eliot 109). He responds “uneasily, leaning forward to look at Baby with some jealousy [...], ‘But I want to do things for it myself, else it may get fond o’ somebody else, and not fond o’ me. I’ve been used to fending for myself in the house—I can learn, I can learn”” (Eliot 109-110). Silas’s love is still based in his feelings of solitude and selfishness and the need for control. Dolly responds by comforting Silas, telling him “you’ll have a right to her, if you’re a father to her, and bring her up according” (111). Though she agrees that he should be able to take care of Eppie, she insists that he must “bring her up like christened folks’s children, and take her to church” (111). She warns, “For if the child ever went anyways wrong, and you hadn’t done your part by it, Master Marner—’noculation, and everything to save it from harm—it ’ud be a thorn i’ your bed for ever o’ this side of the grave” (111). She explains to Silas that he has to put Eppie’s needs before his own. Silas surrenders his self-will when he vows to Dolly, “I want to do everything as can be done for the child. And whatever’s right for it i’ this country, and you think ’ull do it good, I’ll act according, if you’ll tell me” (112). With this declaration, Silas frees himself from the “bondage of self,” meaning he is willing to let go of control and surrender his will over to a “Higher Power” (Alcoholics Anonymous). This statement aligns with step three of Alcoholics Anonymous, which states: “Made decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*” (Alcoholics Anonymous). This way, he able to start developing a relationship with Eppie that is based in selfless love rather than on control and addiction.

The act of doing what is right for the child frees Silas from exile, and he is able to be fully reintegrated into the community. The narrator states that Silas “appeared for the first time

within the church and shared in the observances held sacred by his neighbors” (112) and because of this experience he learns to “vibrate with sympathy, rather than by a comparison of phrases and ideas” (113). Although the people in the church all have different histories, Silas gains the ability to sympathize and identify through common feelings rather than direct experiences, which provides him with a sense of connection to others, showing that he is no longer considers himself above or below anyone else but stands next to them as an equal. Through doing the right thing for the child and bringing her to church, based on the fact that it is morally right, Silas gains a sense of balance with others.

Silas’s love for Eppie opens up the “eternal,” which signifies here the circle of collective life (77). Graver quotes Eliot who states: “our civilization, considered as a splendid material fabric, is helplessly in peril without the spiritual police of sentiments or ideal feelings” (qtd. in Graver 77). Silas reawakens “ideal” feelings via memory but Eppie’s arrival allows him to put them into practice. Eliot appreciated the ideas of Auguste Comte, a nineteenth-century thinker behind Altruism, the philosophy encourages “living for others” and “opposes selfishness and egoism” (Graver 56). The needs of the ego in the case of addiction, represent the isolated self-will, while “living for others” represents living for a higher purpose, in accordance with the greater whole. Under this definition, A.A.’s recovery program could be said to follow the doctrine of Altruism. Bill Wilson says, “Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of all our troubles,” elaborating that “we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness [...] or it will kill us. God makes that possible” (Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story 62). Bill W. talks in terms of “we” in order to position himself equally as another person who is afflicted signifying that this process is a communal one. Although Silas addiction would not “kill” him physically, it would leave him spiritually dead. Eppie’s arrival allows Silas to leave his self-centeredness and

be symbolically reborn into “eternal” life because she connects him with all life (77). Therefore, he regains his human identity by participating and contributing to life’s purpose by taking care of Eppie.

Silas’s initial exile has a role in his transformation as well. Eliot suggests that Silas’s inward life is indeed “a history and metamorphosis” which eventually brings promise (Eliot 7). Silas’s journey is similar to Bahr’s interpretation of exile: “The sun, the light of hope and comfort, at its mystical point emerges from its opposite,” and “the evil world is saved” by “just men who are unknown and not even aware of their own mission” (Bahr 157). In this case “the end becomes a new beginning; the hidden God returns from exile, sickness leads to clear vision, and treasures come to light in the barrenness of exile” (157). Ultimately, Silas’s journey into exile and addiction causes him to reach a place where he experiences a clearing of old beliefs and ideas that had been holding him back, allowing him to experience freedom and love that would not be complete, and likely taken for granted, if he had not endured the pain along the way. In order to feel connected to the world around him, he first has to feel his separateness. Despite Silas’s history of social isolation and addictive behavior, what Eliot ultimately emphasizes about him is his deep capacity for love.

Although she does not struggle with an addiction herself, as an A.A. sponsor would, Dolly Winthrop resembles a sponsor because she voluntarily helps Silas sort through his past. Even before Eppie arrives, after Silas’s gold is stolen Dolly visits him often and attempts to comfort and cheer him. Eliot also depicts a sponsor-like relationship in her short story “Janet’s Repentance” from *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857) in which she shows a deeply sympathetic view toward the main character, Janet, who suffers from alcoholism, and shows that Janet is able to heal through a sponsor-like relationship when she confesses her sins to Reverend Tryan. Janet is

set free from the solitude of her sin when the clergyman identifies with her, revealing his own personal experience of past weakness. Once Silas has a “sense of presiding goodness” and “human trust” he is able to search for “some error, some mistake, which had thrown that dark shadow” (Eliot 127) over his life. Dolly “he gradually [tells] her all that he could describe of his early life” (127). The process is similar to Step Four in Alcoholics Anonymous which is stated as: “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves” (Alcoholics Anonymous). Eliot describes it as “a slow and difficult process” (127). In A.A. one completes this step with the help of a sponsor, reflecting on each resentment specifically looking to see where one has been “selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened” (Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story 68). Rather than pointing fingers at the other, one instead is directed to turn the mirror inward.

Silas needs Dolly in order to make sure that he doesn’t get caught up in old ways of thinking. Her external point of view is necessary in this process. She works to help Silas see the situation differently, revealing past “mistakes” and “errors” so that Silas is able to walk out from “the shadows” into the light (Eliot 127). Reflecting and becoming aware of past “errors” makes it possible for Silas to prevent future “errors” (127). In doing so he breaks down all the barriers that he had built against love. The presence of another is necessary to help one step out from a one-sided view of reality. Eliot demonstrates that one needs to be open to the point of view of another in order to gain the “split in consciousness” necessary for sympathy (Spillman 361).

Dolly’s analysis of Silas’s history demonstrates Eliot’s moral view. After Silas confesses his history to her, telling her about the drawing of the lots and his exile, she tells Silas: “There’s things I don’t know on” (128). But then she continues to tell Silas:

[T]here’s things we can never make out the rights on. And all we’ve got to do is to trusten, Master Marner—to do the right thing as fur as we know, and to trusten. For if us

as knows so little can see a bit o' good and rights, we may be sure as there's a good and rights bigger nor what we can know—I feel it i' my own inside as it must be so. And if you could but ha' gone on trustening, Master Marner, you wouldn't ha' run away from your fellow-creatures and been so lone. (Eliot 129)

Within this simple statement, Dolly breaks down Silas's entire dilemma and attributes it to lack of faith, otherwise known as doubt. Having faith demands that one continues to “trusten” (129) through pain and sorrow. Even if the results are not shown immediately, it depends on believing that they will come. Dolly suggests that we have to give up our desire for revenge; give up the urge to teach others a lesson; give up resentments; and give up all other mechanisms we rely on in an attempt to have absolute control over our immediate circumstances. Above all, even if we do not physically see the direct result of our chosen actions, we have to trust in the outcome.

Forgiveness is also hidden within Dolly's premise. Dolly's words suggest that humans have limited perceptions of why things happen and why others act the way they do. Her speech suggests that, no matter how certain we may be about our perception of events, we often overlook our own role in bringing them about or making them worse. Accepting this statement entails acting with humility, admitting that we “don't know” (129) and courageously responding with love nevertheless. Bill W. promotes a similar kind of humility, arguing that above all else, we have to treat others with “patience, tolerance, kindness, and love” (Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story 83).

Dolly acknowledges the difficulty of telling Silas this truth. She neither pretends to understand how Silas feels, nor points a finger at him, saying “things are easier said nor done; and I'm partly ashamed o' talking” (129). Through Dolly's acknowledgment of the fact that it is

easier to give this advice than to follow it, Eliot suggests the kind of understanding and compassion that is necessary to help those who are afflicted by their personal history. At the same time, Dolly is firm: Silas must “trusten,” or he will not be released from his suffering.

When Silas is able to accept Dolly’s statement, he is able to cultivate gratitude. Even though Silas says “that ‘ud ha’ been hard to trusten then”, he later admits “you’re i’ the right, Mrs Winthrop” (129), exclaiming: “There’s good i’ this world--I’ve a feeling o’ that now; and it makes a man feel as there’s a good more nor he can see, i’ spite o’ the trouble and wickedness. That drawing o’ the lots is dark; but the child was sent to me: there’s dealings with us—there’s dealings” (129). This admission is profound and vital, as it represents the exact moment when Silas gives up questioning the events of the past, admits his inability to have complete control over his world, and lets go of his resentment for the inhabitants of Lantern Yard. Dolly offers him a gift of wisdom but Silas has to receive it in order for it to be integrated into his own life. When he says, “there’s good i’ in this world,” it doesn’t mean that Silas no longer believes bad things can happen, but he does recognize that his perception of what is bad is evidently flawed. He sees that the world has good and bad and accepts both. Silas’s ability to accept Dolly’s statement grants him the gift of sympathy. The ability to sympathize allows him to receive a sense of gratitude for his past, and a sense of hope for the future. By exclaiming this he also clears Step Five, which is stated as “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs” (Alcoholics Anonymous Forth Edition).

Dolly’s character also shows the important role that religion can play in the betterment of humanity. In Leslie Stevenson’s article “Atonement in Theology and Literature,” she explains that the highest form of love is called “*Agape*” which means wanting the very best for all, “include[ing] the unattractive, the dis-eased, the disabled, the tiresome, the neurotic, the senile,

the outcast, the foreigner, and the criminal” (61). This exists “independent[ly]” beyond “any relation [...] or any particular feelings that one may have toward” another individual (61). Stevenson argues that Dolly “offer[s] it to Silas after his great loss” with her “understanding and compassion, and practical help where possible” (61). Since Silas alone does not have the tools for change, Dolly exemplifies these tools *without* “bustling instruction,” but instead through *actions* of selfless love, by following the teachings of her simple faith (Eliot 108). Dolly personifies a pure and sympathetic version of the Christian religion she practices because she lives her life as a demonstration of her faith and leads by example. With this human approach, Silas becomes more willing to accept her morals, ideas, and traditions. Dolly is also there to help Silas as she helps him take care of a toddler and gives him her own children’s hand-me-down clothing. These simple acts of sympathy are conducive to Silas’s development, suggesting Eliot’s appreciation and approval for what Dolly’s religion brings.

Eliot widens the access of religious ideas through Dolly’s character. It is Dolly who instills in Silas the moral teachings and values of Christianity, guiding him to participate in ritual traditions such as “christening” (112). Graver quotes Richard Simpson: Eliot speaks “as if she had faith” and attempts “to capture [...] the forms of belief” which characterize “the past and present communities” but also attempts to “create new forms of belief” (Graver 260). He claims that Eliot’s creation of belief lacks “truthfulness” and implies an “absence of organic unity” (261). I disagree with Simpson’s critique of Eliot’s use of religion in *Silas Marner*. Eliot secularizes religion, but by doing this, she expands the confines of religious ideas to make these ideas available to a wider audience, similar to the recovery method of A.A. Dolly’s religion offers Silas access to recovery that doesn’t require belief in particular doctrines. Dolly helps Silas to recover the healthiest and most vital aspects of his lost faith. Therefore, Eliot suggests

the responsibility of the individual to practice ideals from religion with “sympathy” (113) rather than arguing over doctrinal disputes. It is evident that Eliot does not agree with the dogmatic and radical notions of religion in Lantern Yard. Through Silas’s story, she shows that faith is vital in his recovery.

At this point, Silas’s recovery is dependent on giving back what he has received. Once Eppie is eighteen, a mature enough age to understand, Silas talks with her of “the past” and how his life changed through her arrival (Eliot 129). In this way, Silas shares his “experience, strength, and hope” (Alcoholics Anonymous) with Eppie, which is the format in which members share their stories at AA meetings. This process helps both characters. Silas’s story allows Eppie to learn from her father’s experience so that she does not have to make the same mistakes. At the same time it helps Silas by enabling him to keep his past experiences in direct consciousness, preventing him from falling back to old behavioral patterns. Eliot describes the father-daughter relationship as having “perfect love” and states that Eppie has been surrounded by a “breath of poetry” ever since “she followed the bright gleam to Silas’s hearth” (130). McCormack argues that Eliot “demonstrates a model of responsible parenthood whose rights come to outweigh those of the biological parent” and notes that “Silas replaces” Godfrey’s fatherhood, which is “fractured” (95-96). In telling his story, and taking care of Eppie, Silas also completes Step Twelve in Alcoholics Anonymous, which is carrying the “message” (Alcoholics Anonymous).

Furthermore, through the relationship between Silas and Eppie, Eliot shows that spiritual ideals can play a vital role in healing addiction, a representation that contradicts nineteenth-century degeneration theory. Eppie comes from a family line in which addiction is pronounced. Her genetic mother Molly Farren is an opium addict, and her genetic uncle Dunstan Cass is an alcoholic. Although Godfrey, her father, is not as extreme in his addiction as Dunstan and Molly,

he is described as having “foolish habits that were no pleasures, but only a feverish way of annulling vacancy” and that he might “take to going along the same road as his brother. According to degeneration theory, Eppie would undoubtedly suffer from both physical and moral disease simply due to her heredity. Yet, Eliot demonstrates that through Silas’s nurturing—his “perfect” or selfless “love”—Eppie does not grow up to have a disorder, but instead grows up to be a kind and loving young woman (130). Through this, Eliot suggests that morality is gained through example, not heredity. She also suggests that what would have been seen as a degenerate condition can be reversed and overcome through love and sympathy.

Throughout Silas’s story, Eliot explores various components of addiction. By writing *Silas Marner* as a parable of addiction and recovery, Eliot underlines both the social and individual aspects of the disease. In depicting Silas as an addict, Eliot reveals that she has a more advanced view of addiction than many of her contemporaries, emphasizing the role that thoughts and feelings play in the disease. Although she recognizes the difference between physical dependence and addiction itself, she does show how behaviors can be addicting as well and does not limit addiction to substance abuse. Regardless of the substance or behavior, Eliot attacks the root of the problem, which she suggests is both the emotional life and cognitive patterns of the afflicted person; by understanding the core issue, she is able to propose a solution.

I am not arguing that Eliot’s model of addiction recovery is identical to Alcoholics Anonymous’s advanced and structured program. For example, Eliot does not include a community of people who are also struggling with the same problem, which A.A. insists is necessary to recovery, and she does not show the extensive work that goes into getting through each step. Nevertheless, Eliot’s representation of Silas’s path to recovery bears a resemblance to the spiritual experience gained from working through the Twelve Steps, showing that Eliot’s

understanding of recovery anticipates this later approach. She emphasizes that recovery is a long and complicated process in which a spiritual experience is central. This experience consists of a shift in thoughts and feelings in which fear and doubt are replaced by faith and love. Her representation of recovery is also similar to A.A. because she widens the scope of religious ideas by secularizing religion while still emphasizing a need for a belief in a Power greater than oneself. This widened perception allows for an individual interpretation of spirituality. Eliot also defies the dominant science of addiction during the mid-nineteenth century, representing an addicted character who is not degenerate and doomed but rather who is deserving of the reader's sympathy. She even shows the importance of a sponsor figure as demonstrated through Dolly Winthrop, who displays selfless love for Silas. Her character makes it possible for Silas to reflect on his past, admit his fault, regain trust, and let go of resentment. Through doing this, Silas is able to provide a healthy environment for Eppie.

Similar to the Bible and other religious texts, Eliot suggests that through trial one may find true purpose in life. It is only through admitting powerlessness that one can regain power through a Power greater than oneself. Once unified with a higher purpose, and reconnected with this Power, the individual can be reintroduced into society and become a contributing member in their community. In her representation of Silas Marner, she demonstrates in clear and honest terms the importance of coming to terms with the past in order to be connected to the present, imagining how one can be carried out of the depths of addiction through the power of love. Through her sympathetic depiction of Silas's character, Eliot reveals the reality of a person who is tortured by addictive, self-destructive behavior and works to break the stigma of addiction. With *Silas Marner*, Eliot reminds us that there is, indeed, light at the end of the tunnel of addiction, and shows that the light is found through living for others.

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