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The Fielding influence in George Eliot's Middlemarch

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THE FIELDING INFLUENCE IN
GEORGE ELIOT'S MIDDLEMARCH

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Judy A. Hobor
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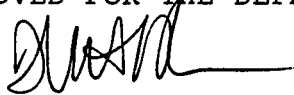
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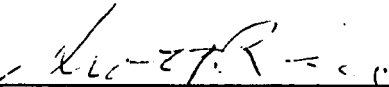
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ABSTRACT

THE FIELDING INFLUENCE IN GEORGE ELIOT'S MIDDLEMARCH

by Judy A. Hobor

The purpose of this thesis is to reestablish the critical link between Henry Fielding and George Eliot. Severed for several reasons, the Fielding/Eliot connection is important because it (1) unites similar views between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries concerning the historical presentation of fiction, (2) demonstrates George Eliot's admiration for Fielding's work, (3) demonstrates how both authors were concerned about the social problems of their respective eras, and (4) shows how both authors incorporated the diversity and complexity of the philosophic, economic, and scientific ideas of their eras into their novels, Tom Jones and Middlemarch.

As a result of establishing this important connection, an argument is forged that Middlemarch is Eliot's attempt to write a satire, using Fielding's sprawling, satiric work, Tom Jones, as a model. Through excerpts from her letters, compiled by Gordon S. Haight, and the text of Middlemarch itself, this thesis attempts to prove that Eliot's Middlemarch was a Victorian satire, whose ironic humor is often ignored in favor of its intellectual contribution to the era and the era's general tendency to discredit Fielding's literary contribution to his own.

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CHAPTER ONE

Reestablishing the Fielding
Connection in George Eliot's
Middlemarch

In chapter fifteen of Middlemarch, George Eliot directly refers to her eighteenth-century predecessor, Henry Fielding:

A great historian, as he insisted on calling himself, who had the happiness to be dead a hundred years ago, and so to take his place among the colossi whose huge legs our living pettiness is observed to walk under, glories in his copious remarks and digressions as the least imitable part of his work, and especially in those initial chapters to the successive books of his history, where he seems to bring his arm-chair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English. But Fielding lived when the days were longer (for time, like money, is measured by our needs), when summer afternoons were spacious, and the clock ticked slowly in the winter evenings. We belated historians must not linger after his example; and if we did so, it is probable that our chat would be thin and eager, as if delivered from a camp-stool in a parrot-house. I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe. (170)

Calling him "a great historian" (170), a term she remarks "he insisted on calling himself," Eliot constructs a creative link with the author that joins them to the evolution of the novel. Although she stresses a different time sense, that is asserting the eighteenth century was an

era of spacious summer afternoons where "the clock ticked slowly in winter evenings," equating time with money, "measured by our needs," she nevertheless establishes a connection with Fielding which exceeds the brevity of this opening to the chapter. The intention of this thesis is to explore in depth Middlemarch's connection with Fielding and to examine the debt George Eliot owes to Fielding in the creation of perhaps her greatest novel, a debt which has been ignored or trivialized for a variety of reasons, which will also be discussed in this paper.

Gordon S. Haight's biography of George Eliot documents Eliot's awareness of Fielding's works. It also reveals, in citing her letters, her admiration for Fielding. While working on Scenes of Clerical Life, Eliot wrote to her publisher, John Blackwood, about the possibility of using a motto from Amelia for the title page of her first novel. According to the entry dated December 14, 1857, at first Blackwood misplaces the motto; then on the fifteenth Eliot countermands her request:

I give up the motto because it struck you as having been used before, and though I copied it into my note-book when I was re-reading "Amelia" a few months ago, it is one of those obvious quotations which never appear fresh though they may actually be made for the first time. (414)

Haight also documents that George Eliot's reading list in 1870 included Tom Jones. The reading of Fielding's novel occurred during the crucial period when Eliot was attempting

to combine the Lydgate/Miss Brooke story lines. According to Pratt and Neufeldt in George Eliot's Middlemarch Notebooks, the Tom Jones reference occurs in the George Henry Lewes Diaries, a notation dated December 9, 1870 (282). This notation matched with the creative chronology outlined in Jerome Beaty's Middlemarch From Notebook to Novel: A Study in George Eliot's Creative Method presents some interesting parallels. From March of 1870 until the end of that year, Middlemarch was a novel floundering. There had been some deaths in the family to slow Eliot's progress. She had bouts of ill health and a general lethargy hindered her, yet there is still evidence that she continued her arduous task of writing. In November 1870, she began her "Miss Brooke" section. At this point, three years had elapsed since she mentioned in her letters the idea of writing the novel. On January 1, 1869, she had conceived of the novel thoroughly enough to give it its title. By December 2, 1870, the novel was still in pieces. The Lydgate segment had been extensively researched, as evidenced by the voluminous texts she dissected in her journal on medical terminology and medical history. She was also veering off into her "Miss Brooke" story. She had written 100 pages by December 31, yet the fusion had still not occurred. In the midst of this separation of ideas, Eliot read Tom Jones. By March 1871, she had finished 256

pages of the work, including the fusion of the two story lines and chapters one through eighteen and chapter twenty-three. The Fielding reference occurs in the much-discussed chapter fifteen, obviously written during the time of the crucial fusion of the two plots. This may be much more than a mere coincidence. The concurrent reading of Tom Jones may have helped her to conceive of how to unify the divergent characters of Lydgate and Dorothea into a single location. The manner in which Sophia Western's and Tom Jones's story lines intersect and diverge during the lengthy novel may have illustrated to Eliot a way to combine the two characters under a single setting, developing them separately before reuniting them later in the novel. Both Lydgate and Dorothea have many roads to travel, many lessons to learn separately, as do Tom and Sophia, before returning to the body of the narrative. From the time of Eliot's reading of Tom Jones, the novel moves swiftly forward; her creative output increases; and the novel is finished by October 1872.

Jerome Beaty analyzes the original construction of the novel. The "Miss Brooke" story emerges during the lull from May to early December 1870. On December 2, 1870, Eliot wrote:

I am experimenting in a story which I began without any very serious intention of carrying it out lengthily. It is a subject which has been recorded among my possible themes ever since I

began to write fiction, but will probably take new shapes in the development. I am today at p.44. (3)

Again, during this period, she was also reading Tom Jones. After this entry, she never mentions the "Miss Brooke" section again as a separate work. By March of 1871, "her novel" referred to the new fused version of Middlemarch. Beaty, with the help of Haight's compilations, journals, letters, and Cross's biography, attempts to reconstruct the chronology of the fused works, raising some interesting questions as he proceeds. To approximate the date of her combining the two story lines, Beaty resorts to the original manuscript at the British Museum. Working from the variations in handwriting and the different types of paper she used, Beaty works hard to try to pinpoint this crucial creative moment.

For the purposes of this paper, such scrutiny is not so important. What is important, however, is the manipulation and movement of the chapters one through nineteen, especially chapter fifteen. As Beaty proceeds in his investigation, he decides that chapter eighteen is "either the first chapter to be written in its entirety after the fusion of the two works or, at least, is the first such chapter to join elements from both 'Middlemarch' and 'Miss Brooke'" (6). Beaty considers that the first ten chapters of Middlemarch are the "Miss Brooke" segments, and they

merge into the new Middlemarch between chapters nineteen and twenty-two. He concludes then that the March 19 journal entry "refers to about nineteen chapters of the joined Middlemarch" (7). He suggests that the middle of chapter ten marks the end of the "Miss Brooke" segment:

These chapters brought "Miss Brooke" up to Dorothea's departure on her honeymoon and perhaps represented the major portion of George Eliot's original conception of that story. Why, then, did George Eliot come to recognize "Miss Brooke" and "Middlemarch" as possibly parts of one novel at this point? (9)

Again I would like to suggest that the reading of Tom Jones may have influenced this important fusion. Obviously Fielding's work displays a compatibility between the two characters, Sophia and Tom, a similarity Eliot was to discover in the personalities of Lydgate and Dorothea. Beaty adds, concerning Lydgate and Dorothea:

Both have high ideals which come to nothing or little more than nothing; in both cases an unwise and unhappy marriage plays a part in obstructing the realization of these ideals. That this is the theme of the Dorothea story, with the added implication that for a woman in nineteenth-century England the only possible way of realizing these ideals was through marriage, is clear in the "Prelude" and in that part of the "Miss Brooke" story we know was written before it was joined to "Middlemarch." We cannot be sure, however, that this theme was part of the author's original conception of "Middlemarch." It is possible, then, but not certain, that the two separate works were joined when it became apparent to the author that their themes were similar. (9)

It is possible that the idealistic Tom and Sophia of Fielding's work may have stirred Eliot to this realization.

Despite Tom's promiscuity, comparisons can be made quite strongly to the moral lapses of Lydgate. In fact, the rather ludicrous adherence to idealistic values by the two heroes may have helped Eliot construct the rather ironic tone of chapter ten in Middlemarch. Eliot may have drawn comparisons between Blifil's shallow reasons for marrying Sophia and Dorothea's well-meaning and noble, but nevertheless completely wrongheaded, reasons for marrying Casaubon. The idealism of both Jones and Lydgate perpetuates a spiritual and intellectual blindness. This weakness in the characters of both men forces their creators to often make rationalizations for their behavior.

Consider the rather Fieldingesque opening to chapter ten. Eliot begins a "camp-stool" chat with the reader. She employs Fielding's "least imitable part of his work," those "copious remarks and digressions . . . where he seems to bring his arm-chair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English" (Middlemarch 170). She uses his type of narrative digressions to begin a discussion on genius, as a way of developing the character of Ladislav:

Genius, he held, is necessarily intolerant of fetters: on the one hand it must have the utmost play for its spontaneity; on the other, it may confidently await those messages from the universe which summon it to its peculiar work, only placing itself in an attitude of receptivity towards all sublime chances. The attitudes of receptivity are various, and Will had sincerely

tried many of them. He was not excessively fond of wine, but he had several times taken too much, simply as an experiment in that form of ecstasy; he had fasted till he was faint, and then supped on lobster; he made himself ill with doses of opium. Nothing greatly original had resulted from these measures; and the effects of the opium had convinced him that there was an entire dissimilarity between his constitution and De Quincey's. (109)

Eliot's humor in this passage is surpassed only by her perception into character. Ladislav comes to the stage fully clothed as somewhat the likeable buffoon, a rather doing-nothing, yet harmless character, young, a perfect foil to the sternness and sepulchred coldness of Casaubon, whom Eliot takes great pains to defend in this same chapter. Ladislav bears the harmless boyishness of Tom Jones.

In a similar manner, Fielding also has a digression on genius which he attaches to the development of character, perhaps in a more general sense than Eliot. In fact, he considers it "in a pretty high degree necessary to this order of historians" (Fielding, Tom Jones 437), a trait desirable to have:

The first is genius, without a rich vein of which, no study, says Horace, can avail us. By genius I would understand that power, or rather those powers of the mind, which are capable of penetrating into all things within our reach and knowledge, and of distinguishing their essential differences. These are no other than invention and judgment; and they are both called by the collective name of genius as they are of those gifts of nature which we bring with us into the world. Concerning each of which many seem to have fallen into very great errors: for by invention, I believe, is generally understood a most creative

faculty; which would indeed prove most romance-writers to have the highest pretensions to it; whereas by invention is really meant no more . . . than discovery and finding out; or to explain it at large, a quick and sagacious penetration into the true essence of all the objects of contemplation. This, I think, can rarely exist without the concomitancy of judgment: . . . some few men of wit have agreed with all the dull fellows in the world, in representing these two to have been seldom or never the property of one and the same person. (437)

Citing Homer and Milton as two great historians who possess the above qualifications, Fielding adds a third dimension, "another sort of knowledge beyond the power of learning to bestow," and here we come close to Eliot's creative experimentation of Ladislav's character foiled against the sternness and erudition of Casaubon's, Eliot's Milton and Locke. This third element "is to be had by conversation" (Fielding, Tom Jones 438):

So necessary is this to the understanding the characters of men, that none are more ignorant of them than those learned pedants, whose lives have been entirely consumed in colleges, and among books: for however exquisitely human nature may have been described by writers, the true practical system can only be learnt in the world. (438)

One can almost see Eliot sculpturing the Casaubon from the image of Fielding's learned pedant, foiled against the carefree and experiential learner, Ladislav, who saw "the world is full of hopeful analogies and handsome dubious eggs called possibilities" (Middlemarch 110). Eliot explains:

Will saw clearly enough the pitiable instances of long incubation producing no chick, and but

gratitude would have laughed at Casaubon, whose plodding application, rows of note-books, and small taper of learned theory exploring the tossed ruins of the world, seemed to enforce a moral entirely encouraging to Will's generous reliance on the intentions of the universe with regard to himself. (109-10)

Eliot pits these two characters against each other and the theories of education and learning they represent. She continues her diatribe about genius as captured in Ladislav's vision:

He held that reliance to be a mark of genius; and certainly it is no mark to the contrary; genius consisting neither in self-conceit nor in humility, but in a power to make or do, not anything in general, but something in particular. Let him start for the Continent, then, without our pronouncing on his future. Among all forms of mistake, prophecy is the most gratuitous. (110)

Eliot in this playoff of two types of knowledge also refers to Milton as she begins her defense of Casaubon's world view, but from a slightly different angle than Fielding's:

I protest against any absolute conclusion, any prejudice derived from Mrs. Cadwallader's contempt for a neighbouring clergyman's alleged greatness of soul, of Sir James Chettam's poor opinion of his rival's legs,--from Mr. Brooke's failure to elicit a companion's ideas, or from Celia's criticism of a middle-aged scholar's personal appearance. I am not sure that the greatest man of his age, if ever that solitary superlative existed, could escape these unfavorable reflections of himself in various small mirrors; and even Milton, looking for his portrait in a spoon, must submit to have the facial angle of a bumpkin. Moreover, if Mr. Casaubon, speaking for himself, has rather

chilling rhetoric, it is not therefore certain that there is no good work or fine feeling in him. . . . Has the theory of the solar system been advanced by graceful manners and conversational tact? (110)

All this dialogue and defense of character mark the opening to chapter ten. It appears to already show strains of Fielding, his humor, insightfulness, and allusions. Both authors in constructing character are investigating the manner in which one learns. Again all this is taking place as the two plots, Lydgate's and Dorothea's, merge. While Beaty discusses the similarity of theme, setting, character, and historical time as having perhaps "triggered" the merging of the two lines, he admits, "there still remains the question of how George Eliot was primed to see them as one. Perhaps no such priming was necessary; perhaps the idea of uniting the stories came to her in a flash of inspiration" (10). But perhaps there was priming; maybe she was reading a novel which helped her synthesize the variant elements on which she was working.

What is very curious about George Eliot's reading list during the writing of Middlemarch is, of course, first the extent of it, its breadth and depth of erudition. Also, it is interesting how she wrote such copious notes about the works of Lucretius, Pindar, as well as Muller's Ancient Art and its Remains, Wolf's Prolegomena ad Homerum, Wood's An Essay on the Original Genius of Homer, and so on, and yet

wrote down not one word of her reaction to Tom Jones. The actual reference to her reading of Tom Jones occurs in Lewes's diaries not her own. Could the lack of comment on the novel been a deliberate omission? Perhaps, she was absorbing creatively the material on a level that required no commentary. With so much research and detailed analysis which Eliot obviously did before and during the writing of the novel, it certainly seems remarkable that Middlemarch did not turn into a dusty tome. Yet it is filled with life and humor and depth and is far more a syncretic miracle than suggested by any of the preparation done in her notebooks could ever explain. But Eliot's reading of Fielding could have solved more than just structural problems in her long work. Mingled with her unusual high level of erudition, she might have identified a mood and a tone in Fielding which opened the doors of creative possibility in her own writing. Without the reading of Tom Jones, Middlemarch may have become a learned pedantic nightmare, bearing a character akin to Casaubon. Certainly the depth of cohesion and the depth of characterization rivals that of Fielding. And, the synthesis of the work, not only in the double story lines but in the order and logic of the whole, bears a striking resemblance to the achievement of Tom Jones.

We are permitted a sprawling walk through the old midlands, without the romp and pomp of Fielding's world, and

still allowed to witness and experience the connection of unity. Fielding, likewise, though his world seems dangerously close to spinning out of control, still maintains an order. Even though Eliot suggests in the opening of Middlemarch that "these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul" (25), her characters live in an order strong enough nearly to ruin the reputation of a Lydgate, an innocent man of high principles and ideals. Mary Garth senses that her behavior is dangerously close to infamy as she contemplates old Featherstone's offer of a new will. The social orders of both worlds, though on the brink of collapse, still maintain a grip on the inhabitants' reputations and behaviors. Tom runs amuck through his England, but, eventually, he must settle down and reclaim his inheritance. Sophia defies her father because she must suffer hardship and near rape before she can regain the keys to the kingdom, this being the price of defiance. No one escapes the power of the community, and the cohesiveness of both novels reflects this fact. The whole is still greater than the sum of its parts.

According to Beaty, chapter fifteen may have been written twice, but the first draft contains a detailed history of Lydgate plus a change in his first name from

Tristram to Tertius. Beaty also suggests that the introduction of this chapter may have actually been the introduction of the new "Middlemarch" section, further strengthening the idea that Fielding's influence was very important in the writing of Middlemarch. In fact, such a chronology may verify the extraordinary creative synthesis which took place in Eliot as she wrote her novel and read Tom Jones simultaneously. What is important here is the idea of Lydgate as the Middlemarch outsider. "Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably" (Beaty 24). Middlemarch seems to be a welcoming place as does Jones's provincial world, yet, as both novels progress, it becomes obvious that the dictates of culture inevitably supersede the desires and ambitions of the individual. Tom is an outsider, too, a bastard of low birth. He is hit, jailed, and rejected while alternately being adored and revered by the characters he encounters on his journey. Lydgate, too, is accepted into one of the best societies in Middlemarch, and yet when he encounters financial difficulties or when a hint of scandal is attached to his name, he is almost friendless in the same town which had been so quick to "assimilate" him. The force of moral standards is very strong in both novels. The community has the power to destroy an individual quite arbitrarily. Ironically, both heroes are helped and consoled by "good"

women, good and wealthy women, Tom being reclaimed by Sophia and Dorothea redeeming Lydgate.

Chapter ten gives us an introduction to Ladislav and chapter fifteen a description of Lydgate. Both characters bear at least a partial resemblance to Tom Jones. Chapter ten digresses into a passage on genius, reminiscent of Fielding, and chapter fifteen opens with a reference to Fielding. Both crucial chapters seem to fit chronologically into the creative fusion taking place in Middlemarch.

In fact, Beaty, continuing his reconstruction of the novel, states:

The semispaced chapter 15 seems to be a much revised later draft of the original "Introduction" of "Middlemarch." Because of the repagination of the beginning of chapter 14 (which indicated that it once followed chapter 15) it appears likely that chapter 15 was once many pages longer, probably a regularly spaced draft. . . . All the semispace sections (the end of chapter 12, the beginning of chapter 13, most of chapter 15) seem to be post-join drafts of "Middlemarch" passages adding new material. Though George Eliot seems to have rewritten these passages while joining "Middlemarch" to "Miss Brooke," she did so not to effect the fusion but to improve the unsatisfactory beginning of "Middlemarch." (29)

It seems more that these chapters were actually transitional units meant to flesh out the various characters in Middlemarch, a technique Fielding used in the beginning of Tom Jones also. Beaty adds:

That chapter 15 extended to page 172 until very late in the writing of this section of the novel is indicated in Quarry II, 6, which, though it lists the chapters in their present order,

indicates that chapter 15 ended at this late date with page 172 and chapter 16 begins with page 173. This list of chapters was made up after the decision to join "Middlemarch" and "Miss Brooke," even after the decision to publish Middlemarch in parts, i.e., in the spring or summer of 1872.
(31)

Again, chapter fifteen is the one which opens with the reference to Fielding as the historian. Beaty also remarks that "the semispaced chapter 15, what was apparently all or part of the old 'Introduction' to 'Middlemarch' was combined with new material about medical research and practices of the day and perhaps with the new Laure episode" (35), an episode which hints of a bit of indiscretion on Lydgate's part, an act which ties him closer to the philanderings of Tom Jones.

Within the time frame cited for the fusion of the story lines and the major revisions of the beginnings of the final version of Middlemarch, Eliot had assimilated Tom Jones into her creative process. Beaty words it this way, feeling that the real debt Middlemarch owes is "to the original draft of "Middlemarch":

The semispaced pages, the references to Mary "Dove," the revised "Miss Brooke" names in the "Middlemarch" sections and vice versa--the criteria upon which this reconstruction has largely been based--disappear from the manuscript. Chapter 17, Lydgate's visit to Farebrother, has been extensively revised and rewritten, but there is no indication that any part of it belongs to the pre-join period. Chapter 18, containing the Tyke-Farebrother elections, includes Dorothea's uncle in a speaking role. For the first time since the dinner party in chapter 10, characters

from both portions of the novel mingle. They are to do so more frequently from this point on. By March 19, 1871, George Eliot reached the end of the next chapter, then 19, now 23. Though perhaps some of the final revisions described above were yet to be done, Middlemarch was not one novel.
(42)

Beaty never mentions Henry Fielding. However, this is not really surprising. Indeed, few critics mention such a connection. Early critics like Edith Simcox and Henry James recognized one connection, but the further the novel comes away from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the more tenuous that connection seems.

Edith Simcox, in her January 1, 1873, review of Middlemarch published in the Academy, remarks that when considering the "ideal" of the English novel, "our ideal is simply one or other of the masterpieces of one or other of the great novelists between Fielding and George Eliot"; these "are the sources from whence all theories of the novel, as a prose narrative representation of manners, character and passion, ultimately derive" (Haight, A Century 73-4).

Simcox at least mentions the names of Fielding and Eliot in the same sentence. Henry James compliments Eliot's development of male characters by referencing Fielding:

Several English romancers--notably Fielding, Thackeray, and Charles Reade--have won great praise for their figures of women: but they owe it, in reversed conditions, to a meaner sort of art, it seems to us, . . . George Eliot's manner

is more philosophic--more broadly intelligent, and yet her result is as concrete, or, if you please, as picturesque. (84)

He adds "Fielding was didactic--the author of Middlemarch is really philosophic" (86). Leslie Stephen in Cornhill Magazine, February 1881, states [Eliot] "has done for [the English novel] what Scott did for the Scotch peasantry, or Fielding for the eighteenth-century Englishman, or Thackeray for the higher social stratus of his time" (139). At least the above critics mention the two authors together. As we approach twentieth-century criticism, the two authors are rarely connected. However, Joan Bennett remarks in "Vision and Design," a chapter from her George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art:

From one point of view her novels continue in the tradition evolved from Fielding, but which had gradually become less picaresque and more strictly narrative. She tells a story with a beginning, middle, and end. (Haight, A Century 233)

Although many critics may unite them in some sort of evolutionary schematic, Eliot and Fielding are seldom discussed in the same essay. Even though many critics have commented on the way Eliot developed her clergy as opposed to the manner in which Fielding did it, or they mention the frequent digressions of both authors, few critics consider this attachment very important.

Recent criticism spends time disputing the intentions of chapter fifteen, thereby, in many cases, weakening the

already flimsy link between Eliot and Fielding. U. C. Knoepfelmacher in George Eliot's Early Novels claims Eliot meant to dissociate herself from Fielding, and did so in chapter fifteen of Middlemarch, by implying that "unlike Fielding, this narrator must become a genuine historian." A scientist, who "cares much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time," he must, on his own, find those laws which previous novelists could take for granted. And what is more, "this narrator-historian must extricate those laws from the casual web of actuality" (Knoepfelmacher 16). To Knoepfelmacher, "George Eliot's distinction is clear":

Despite her affinity to Fielding, despite her affection for the didactic lectures so resonantly delivered from his armchair, she cannot mount the same "proscenium." The traditional forms of the novel can no longer satisfy the needs of a philosophical writer steeped in the evolutionary lore of the mid-nineteenth century.

Knoepfelmacher suggests that chapter fifteen is rather a negative statement about Fielding, his irrelevancy to the nineteenth century, and his tendency to speak in generalities. However, he does let slip that Middlemarch is "that novel, the closest in mode to Fielding's 'epic comedies in prose'" (15). Supposedly Eliot's biggest complaint against Fielding is that he has the time to linger on such irrelevancies while the nineteenth century is posed on the brink of some monumental change. Knoepfelmacher

himself refers to the "secure and static eighteenth century," an idea which will be argued later as too simplistic a view of an era which experienced as many upheavals as the later Victorian Age. While Knoepfmacher calls Fielding's narrative a simulated reality and praises Eliot for her dissociation with his example, Michael McKeon feels Knoepfmacher has misread the introduction to chapter fifteen.

The argument between the two critics is mentioned in John L. Tucker's "George Eliot's Reflexive Text: Three Tonalities in the Narrative Voice of Middlemarch." In the notes to the article, Tucker suggests that McKeon takes issue with the fact that "Knoepfmacher's reading misses Fielding's ironic self-consciousness about literary authority (McKeon, pp. 384, 405-409), a quality in his writing that George Eliot enjoys and in her own way continues, while recognizing the new distances imposed by an increasingly anonymous culture" (790).

Unfortunately, though I agree with McKeon's idea, I find that the pages referenced in McKeon's The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740 do not mention a word about Eliot. Yet Tucker's article yields some fine connections between Eliot and Fielding and a different slant on chapter fifteen. Tucker claims "Herodotus wove the whole fabric of Greek history from a single thread. Even a writer as recent

as Henry Fielding could take in more of the world than modern life has time to contemplate" (779). He calls Eliot's comments on Fielding a "Circeronic disclaimer--while deprecating his talent for digression, the narrator has actually demonstrated it":

He [Eliot's narrator] has also managed to appropriate Fielding's title of historian while distracting us with elaborate modesties about antecedent colossi. But though Fielding has given novelists the right to call their work history, this novel is "belated" history. It must, says the narrator, keep up with the tempo of modern life, too hasty for leisurely digression. In consequence, Middlemarch will seem less personal than Tom Jones, where in fact Fielding speaks of his digressions as "a kind of mark or stamp, which may hereafter enable a very indifferent reader to distinguish what is true and genuine in this historic kind of writing, from what is false and counterfeit. Fielding claims to have originated "this historic kind of writing"--"historic" meaning both "like history" and "history-making"--and his sense of doing a new thing is partly what confers authority on the enterprise. He speaks of originating as "true and genuine," like making accurate history. Thus in one move Fielding posits the idea that originality is truth, and his fiction true history. Middlemarch, its narrator implies, is no less true, but more anonymous. The coinage has been devalued, like so much else in modern life, and a true history must go forth without so much of the author's personality visible upon it. (779-80)

Although Tucker's excerpt may imply more than Eliot intended, and Knoepflmacher's "dissociation" notion may be a misreading, the connection between Eliot and Fielding is at least linked critically. Chapter fifteen may be nothing more than Eliot's debt to Fielding, an encomium to the direction he offered to her own writing.

However, another view is offered by Margaret Anne Doody in "George Eliot and the Eighteenth-Century Novel." For Doody, Eliot raises, in chapter fifteen, "the question of influence and tradition" (262):

George Eliot's allusion to Tom Jones (1749) in chapter 15 of Middlemarch has, unlike her glancing reference to Smollett, attracted considerable notice. . . . The apparent admiration is not untinged with mockery. The ironic echo of an ironic speech in Julius Caesar suggests that Fielding's colossal stature may be largely imaginary. George Eliot sets herself up as an author unlike Fielding, an author not to be seduced into "relevancies called the universe." Fundamentally, the criticism of Fielding is the same as that of Casaubon; like Casaubon, Fielding thinks himself a great historian, while his inhuman copiousness and desire for simple generalizations have taken life and meaning out of difficult and fascinating particulars. (262-64)

Doody also adds "that Fielding and Richardson were pervasive influences, affecting subsequent English novelists and thus, indirectly, Eliot's works" (263). Yet, perhaps Eliot was not influenced indirectly. Even if Doody shares Knoepfelmacher's notion that Eliot meant to deliberately "dissociate" herself from the Fielding influence, it still remains to discuss why she would want such a disconnection and did she actually succeed in verifying this concept.

The passage above also seems to suggest that Eliot believed that Fielding was an overrated novelist, that her comments were ironic and negative concerning Fielding as a self-professed historian. Perhaps the irony that Doody suggests is not directed at Fielding the novelist but rather

at the variant views of history available to the nineteenth-century novelist as compared to eighteenth-century authors. While Eliot comments on the leisurely summer afternoons and the clock which "ticked slowly in the winter evenings" (Middlemarch 170), it is odd that the prose of her novel seems to linger so luxuriously while Fielding gaily romps through the supposedly static eighteenth-century England. Granting that the nineteenth century was working with a theory of history as progress, it seems also ironic that Eliot as a "belated historian" sees progress as antithetical to her sense of moral and spiritual progress which affects her characters negatively. While she claims to be settling down on a "particular web," "not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe" (170), she appears no more localized than Fielding as she romps through a multitude of scientific, philosophical, and moral ideas that infiltrated her era. They both wrote about provincial life and the fact that that life was controlled by very powerful social forces. Whereas some may conclude Eliot wished to dissociate herself, it seems more likely she meant to reconnect herself with Fielding's example but also desired a recognition, not entirely verified in her novel, that history is different in the nineteenth century than in the eighteenth.

Now, glancing once again at Knoepfmacher's remarks, there may be some historical validity to his comments. George Eliot was clearly devoted to George Henry Lewes. His opinions concerning her work and her abilities clearly mattered a great deal to Eliot, as evidenced in the collected letters, and Lewes had some very strong opinions about Henry Fielding. On January 18, 1860, Lewes wrote to Blackwood concerning an article he wished to write about Tom Jones. He begins the letter ironically, "Herewith goes Tom Jones, which I hope you will like--I have rather exaggerated the praise in order not to raise too great a hubbub" (George Eliot Letters 3: 250). Actually the article, published in March 1860 in Blackwood's Magazine, was so scathing that Blackwood urged Lewes to tone it down before publication. Blackwood's January 23, 1860, response follows:

My dear Lewes

I enclose proof of Tom Jones which I have read twice with great amusement. You make out a most logical case. At page 2 I think "coarse drollery" is too low a quality to be put forward as Fielding's leading merit. It grated on me a bit in the M.S. and I still feel it in the proof. As it would turn aside his great admirers whom we wish to read the paper I think you should put some higher estimate first. Coarse drollery is too low a term for humor such as his which has made so many generations of us shout with laughter. At page 7 "shallow circumscribed nature" seems to me a phrase which should not be applied to a man who has done so much as Fielding. I think you would improve the paper by speaking of him throughout as an intensely clever fellow and making it more clear that it is only the very high rank given to him among the giants by modern critics that you utterly deny his right to. (3: 251-52)

What Lewes alluded to in that article, which he called a "stunner" (3: 245), seems to be an "ardent" refutation of the critical praise Fielding was receiving even in his own era. Condemning even the much praised plot of Tom Jones, Lewes adds "abiding this, there is the fact of a great fame, and the unconscious tendency in most minds to exalt the writers of the past over those of the present--a tendency which renders freedom of judgment somewhat difficult" (Lewes 332). Lewes almost appears to be paving the way for Eliot's future success. In much the same way, Eliot may be saying the same thing in the opening of chapter fifteen, heralding herself as a new type of historian, better suited to describe the conditions of her era with a new type of narrative, not workable in the eighteenth century by her predecessor. Lewes adds:

Indeed, in the high and highest qualities of a novelist, Fielding seems to us quite unworthy to rank beside Scott or Miss Austen (we purposely abstain from naming any contemporary writer, because we desire our criticism to be disengaged from all extraneous influences). Fielding is assuredly far below Scott in invention, imagination, humor, and sympathy; he is also, we think, many degrees below Miss Austen as an artist and painter of character (not of characteristics), and even in humor of the finer sort. (333)

Though I think there is ample evidence that Eliot valued Lewes's opinion in almost all matters, she held a markedly different interpretation of Fielding's abilities.

In an entry to Francois D'Albert-Durade dated January 29, 1861, Eliot writes about the newly published novel, The Mill on the Floss:

It seems to me that I have discerned such shades very strikingly rendered in Balzac, and occasionally in George Sand. Balzac, I think, dares to be thoroughly colloquial, in spite of French strait-lacing. Even in English this daring is far from being general. The writers who dare to be thoroughly familiar are Shakespeare, Fielding, Scott (where he is expressing the popular life with which he is familiar), and indeed every other writer of fiction of the first class. (George Eliot Letters 3: 374)

Eliot certainly puts Henry Fielding in lofty company and at least weakens the hold of those critics who maintain she wished to dissociate herself from his example. Further, the Lewes article seems to be a direct attack on the essay by Thackeray entitled "Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding." John Blackwood seems to support this idea. In a postscript to the letter dated January 23, 1860, he writes:

Return the proof. Thackeray's laudation of Fielding is most ludicrous. In fact throughout these lectures on the humorists his tone is absurd or insincere. He had the lectures to do and I suppose he did them on the large hearted or the bitterly virtuous view according to his humor. (3: 252)

Indeed, Thackeray's praise of Fielding is very high. Thackeray even quotes Gibbon's comments about Fielding:

But a greater scholar than Johnson could afford to admire that astonishing genius of Harry Fielding: and we all know the lofty panegyric which Gibbon wrote of him, and which remains a towering monument to the great novelist's memory. "Our immortal Fielding," Gibbon writes, "was of

the younger branch of the Earls of Denbigh, who drew their origin from the Counts of Hapsburgh. The successors of Charles V. may disdain their brethren of England: but the romance of 'Tom Jones,' " that exquisite picture of humor and manners will outlive the palace of the Escorial and the Imperial Eagle of Austria." . . . There can be no gainsaying the sentence of this great judge. To have your name mentioned by Gibbon, is like having it written on the dome of St. Peter's. Pilgrims from all the world admire and behold it. (Thackeray 229)

Certainly Eliot was as well acquainted with this laudatory essay by Thackeray as she was with Lewes's vitriolic response to it. She was quite familiar with Thackeray's works, having written many articles about him and having dined with him often at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Parkes (Haight, George Eliot 103). It is easy enough to deduce that Eliot held Fielding in quite high esteem, enough to begin a chapter with a reference to him, enough to model a great deal of Middlemarch after his example, and enough to overlook the criticism of Lewes to consider a set of mottoes to be included in Scenes from Clerical Life from Fielding's Amelia. So, though competent scholars like Knoepfmacher and Doody suggest Eliot was reluctant to associate herself with Fielding, it seems much more likely she wanted very much to mimic his techniques of structure and characterization. Conversely, when Doody suggests that Eliot wanted to follow in the line of Richardson, there is little to connect Eliot with that idea except a hint of praise she also awarded to Scott, Thackeray, Wordsworth, and

Shakespeare. Chronologically, Middlemarch seems far removed from Eliot's early readings of Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison which she finished in 1847. It is much more likely that Eliot was aware through Thackeray, Blackwood, and countless other contemporaries, that Fielding was very popular and for very sound reasons. He was genius and an innovator of a high order. This high standard is a realm any novelist attempting to advance the English novel tradition would have been aware of.

George Eliot latched on firmly to Fielding's literary coattails and rode them until the closing of her novel, Middlemarch. Middlemarch is a highly complex work and to manage it, the breadth and depth of perspective and characterization, she needed the guidance of a master adept at steering his way through chaos. She chose Henry Fielding, a mentor who had already proven that a large, sprawling tableau of provincial life could maintain coherence, express the concerns and values of an era, and entertain at the same time. George Eliot's mimicking of Fielding will be discussed subsequently, and in no way is that discussion intended to diminish from her brilliance and her own genius. But first the groundwork should be laid to establish an intersection between the two writers which seems of utmost importance in reestablishing the Fielding connection by examining the theories and practices of both

writers concerning the historic imagination and the role of the historian in fiction. This will be covered next.

CHAPTER TWO

The Historian Connection

"The culture of any historical period, . . . is more like the debris, or 'fall-out,' of past ideological systems, than it is itself a system, a coherent whole."
("Ingratitude in Tom Jones by Maaja A. Stewart)

One of the key areas where the work of Henry Fielding and George Eliot seems to intersect is in their view of themselves as historians and in their concept of what it meant to be a historian in their respective eras. Eliot calls Fielding a "great historian, as he insisted on calling himself" (Middlemarch 170). She adds in that same chapter of Middlemarch a discussion of a different conception of time perceived between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Both were trying to unite concepts of history to their ideas about the art of fiction. From this attempt, realism was born in Fielding's time and reexamined in Eliot's era.

Homai J. Shroff, in The Eighteenth-Century Novel, discusses the focus of Fielding's writing. He claims Fielding was "as anxious as Richardson to examine the principles of life that should guide the governing classes in their conduct of life":

No writer of the period presents more forceful and impassioned pictures of the ruthlessness with which the ignorant, selfish, coarse country gentleman exercised his authority, and the veneer of elegance underneath which the town gallant

harboured the most degrading lust, hypocrisy and villainy. Against these vigorous pictures of brutality and depravity, Fielding places his characteristic heroes,--Squire Allworthy, Dr. Harrison, Tom Jones, William Booth, and Parson Adams--five different kinds of men, not one of them perfect, but each picturing quite clearly a few of the qualities their creator demands of an ideal person. (Shroff 12)

Fielding's narrative eye focuses on the world around him. He is giving details of the society in which he finds himself. In that sense, he is recording history. He is the observer casting his net about for connections, patterns, the webs of his era. He is not writing historical novels, yet he is recording history. In many ways, the novels of mores and manners are historical; they are documents reflecting a particular period. The realism of today's details becomes tomorrow's history. Within that "historical" setting:

The eighteenth-century novel is preoccupied with the concept of the gentleman, it provides rich material to ascertaining the ideals of character and behavior which moralists and thinkers were seeking to establish during this first great period of the English novel. It makes vividly clear to us the reactions of a large and influential section of the nation to the manners, morals and social attitudes of the governing classes of contemporary society. (10)

But Fielding's realism, Shroff comments, "did not prevent him from instructing his readers 'in this most useful of all arts, which I call the ART OF LIFE.'" In much the same way, Eliot creates in Middlemarch a novel about the art of life, a treatise instructing her readers on the

"ardent" and "benevolent" ways in which to live and treat others. Again a historical novel is a novel of manners and mores, yet it often includes a doctrine of behavior. Like Fielding, Eliot confines her word to the governing classes of her era. She has this to say about "old provincial society," a world Fielding was equally familiar with:

Old provincial society had its share of this subtle movement: had not only its striking downfalls, its brilliant young professional dandies who ended by living up an entry with a drab and six children for their establishment, but also those less marked vicissitudes which are constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse, and begetting new consciousness of interdependence. Some slipped a little downward, some got higher footing: people denied aspirates, gained wealth, and fastidious gentlemen stood for boroughs; some were caught in political currents, some in ecclesiastical, and perhaps found themselves surprisingly grouped in consequence; while a few personages or families that stood with rock firmness amid all this fluctuation, were slowly presenting new aspects in spite of solidity, and altering with the double change of self and beholder. Municipal town and rural parish gradually made fresh threads of connection--gradually, as the old stocking gave way to the savings-bank, and the worship of the solar guinea became extinct, while squires and baronets, and even lords who had once lived blamelessly afar from the civic mind, gathered the faultiness of closer acquaintanceship. Settlers, too, came from distant countries, some with an alarming novelty of skill, others with an offensive advantage in cunning. In fact, much the same sort of movement and mixture went on in old England as we find in older Herodotus, who also, in telling what had been, thought it well to take a woman's lot for his starting-point; . . . (Middlemarch 123)

Eliot even identifies with another historian, Herodotus, in the above passage. As she traces the

"history" of the area under discussion in her novel, she is investigating the rather double function of the novel form, as she perceives it--to record with great accuracy, a debt she owes to the Victorian era and the advance of science, and to acknowledge a debt she owes to Fielding's example.

In a very similar passage, Fielding investigates the role of the historian as well as giving the reader a bit of "old provincial society." Speaking of Tom Jones, Fielding remarks:

Tho' we have properly enough entitled this our work, a history, and not a life; nor an apology for a life, as is more in fashion; yet we intend in it rather to pursue the method of those writers, who profess to disclose the revolutions of countries, than to imitate the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the detail of months and years in which nothing remarkable happened as he employs upon those notable areas when the greatest scenes have been transacted on the human stage. (87)

Hence, Fielding makes a distinction between factual accounting and the twisting of plot and circumstances in a work of historical fiction, which may also be recording factually. To emphasize his point, he gives the reader an eighteenth-century historical setting and situation:

These are indeed to be considered as blanks in the grand lottery of time. We therefore who are the registers of that lottery, shall imitate those sagacious persons who deal in that which is drawn at Guild-hall, and who never trouble the public with the many blanks they dispose of; but when a great prize happens to be drawn, the newspapers are presently filled with it, and the world is

sure to be informed at whose office it was sold: indeed, commonly two or three different offices lay claim to the honour of having disposed of it; by which, I suppose, the adventurers are given to understand that certain brokers are in the secrets of Fortune, and indeed of her cabinet-council.
(88)

Fielding warns his reader that he should not be surprised if some chapters are short, some excessively long, some contain the events of a single day, and some convey within but a few pages an entire year, because one element which distinguishes fiction for history is the writer's ability to select details according to his whim. This explains, "in a word, if my history sometimes seems to stand still, and sometimes to fly":

For all which I shall not look on myself as accountable to any court of critical jurisdiction whatever: for as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein. And these laws, my readers, whom I consider as my subjects, are bound to believe in and to obey; with which that they may readily and chearfully comply, I do hereby assure them, that I shall principally regard their ease and advantage in all such institutions: for I do not, like a jure divino tyrant, imagine that they are my slaves, or my commodity, I am, indeed, set over them for their own good only, and was created for their use, and not they for mine. Nor do I doubt, while I make their interest the great rule of my writings, that will unanimously concur in supporting my dignity, and in rendering me all honour I shall deserve or desire. (88-9)

Fielding establishes authorial authority, a concept of some interest to a budding novelist like George Eliot. Despite the humorous allusions to writers as gods or at

least kings who have the right to deliver edicts, Fielding really seems to be anticipating Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief," but, of course, with a degree of arrogance Coleridge would never subscribe to. Fielding is both defending and defining his new art form. Likewise, Eliot was concerned about the union of history and art.

Brian Rosenberg discusses George Eliot's views of fiction and history in "George Eliot and the Victorian Historic Imagination." Between 1872 and 1879, Eliot wrote an entry which appears in the "Leaves from the Notebook" section of Cross's biography of her. Her central concern was, according to Rosenberg, "the effective incorporation of history into art" (1). For Eliot "the writing of history is extremely, perhaps uniquely important. . . . [T]his writing should be neither completely factual nor completely imaginary, but somehow should combine concrete facts with the artist's shaping vision." Like Fielding, Eliot wanted a way to record the "marvelous." Her views in the essay are outlined by Rosenberg:

Concrete facts should range in scale from the most extraordinary, bringing together in historical writing a rigorous particularity and an awareness of what surpasses the typical. . . . Imaginative recreation of historical material should draw from it some meaning--moral, psychological, spiritual--which transcends the specific historical moment and applies as well to other places and times. Understanding history, that is, should allow us to see in the past the seeds of present and future. . . . This intimate relationship between past and present must inevitably affect the style

and structure of imaginative historical writing. . . . [O]nly the heroic figure--frequently the artist--can see within his or her own time the transcendent, ahistorical meaning.
(1)

With a subdued arrogance of her own, George Eliot professes her own confusion, even after the writing of Middlemarch, about the elements of historic fiction. Even though she set the novel forty years before the writing, Middlemarch is still a "contemporary" Victorian work. Eliot shares Fielding's concern, and Fielding had it first, with "the value of historic picturing" (2). Rosenberg explains:

The exhortation to combine fact and imagination in historical writing dominates the early portion of Eliot's fragment. Its title already suggests a mixture of the real ("historic") and the fictitious ("Imagination"), a suggestion repeated in the phrase "veracious imagination" as well as in the pairing of "extant evidence" with "analogical creation" and "elements of history" with "imaginative treatment."

Fielding also comments on the qualities of the historian in his digression on "genius." In "Of those who lawfully may, and of those who may not write such Histories as this," Fielding is quite specific about the traits a historian must possess. Fielding comments:

A competent knowledge of history and of the belle lettres, is here absolutely necessary; and without this share of knowledge at least, to affect the character of an historian, is as vain as to endeavor at building a house without timber or mortar, or brick or stone. Homer and Milton, who, though they added the ornament of numbers to their

works, were both historians of our order, were
 master of all the learning of their times.
 (Tom Jones 438)

It would appear that both Fielding and Eliot wish to align themselves in the tradition of the historian, but they both realize that with the "fictional" dimension added to their works, certain elements of accuracy are bound to be altered. One of the concerns of other Victorians, like Browning, Ruskin, and Carlyle, was with "the artist's ability to fuse fiction and historical accuracy," a sort of "Prime Nature with an added artistry" (Rosenberg 2).

Fiction, even with the added concepts of realism, the recording of details, must include, as Fielding would call it, the "marvelous." According to Rosenberg, "the historical element" Eliot identified ranged from the extraordinary to the common, from the "conditions of great discoveries, or theoretic conceptions to the circumstances affecting individual lots." With Victorian restraint, Eliot realized:

Victorian historians in general often combine a Carlylean interest in great men or great movements with a Wordsworthian interest in the details of everyday life: in fact Eliot would argue, the two are inseparable since the common circumstances and grand inventions thoroughly infiltrate and affect one another. (Rosenberg 2)

Carlyle had argued in other essays that "History is not only the fittest study, but the only study, and includes all others whatsoever. . . . [It] lies at the root of all

science" (qtd. in Rosenberg 2). Now, while Eliot was immersed in the erudition of her era, she needed the Fielding model to show her how to incorporate "the momentous and the mundane." She could not find this in other authors, like Richardson and Defoe, who more ardently believed in the minute-by-minute construction of experience. Eliot needed an author who, like herself, was able to weave a complex tapestry from "that tempting range of relevancies called the universe" (Middlemarch 171). Middlemarch was a complicated novel with a complex, interwoven plot. She wanted accuracy in her novel because that "might help the judgement greatly with regard to present and future events," but she also knew, as Fielding had stated in his "genius" passage from Tom Jones, and as Macaulay would also assert: "a perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque" (qtd. in Rosenberg 3). Fielding in his very "picturesque" vision in Tom Jones had already successfully written the kind of narrative Eliot was about to attempt. Tom Jones also offered discussions on the elements of invention and judgment, elements which comprise genius, which is a component of the historian. Eliot need not have looked further for a model than Tom Jones which both synthesized the theoretical approaches of history floating around in the

Victorian era and incorporated the altered sense of time the complex plot of a fictional narrative demanded.

Fielding appears perfectly at ease informing his reader that some chapters may be three days long and others only an hour, despite the rigors imposed on the ordinary historian. Like Carlyle, Eliot and Fielding believed:

We study history not merely to learn lessons or establish connections, but to make apparent continuities that already exist on a deeper level, to unite ourselves in "clear conscious relations" to the past as in "dim unconscious relation" we are already united. . . . History, more Prophet than schoolmistress, should not merely instruct the intelligence but should, in Eliot's words, "instruct the imagination in true comparison." Precisely what this comparison should teach us varies to some extent from author to author. (Rosenberg 3)

This sense of history as a prophet appears in chapter ten of Middlemarch as a method of characterization. In defense of young Ladislaw's youthful ambivalence, Eliot writes, "Let him start for the Continent, then, without our pronouncing on his future. Among all forms of mistake, prophecy is the most gratuitous" (Middlemarch 110). In other words, in the history of the individual, the outcome is a lot more complex than the details. The interconnections of events can only be viewed after the effect. This concept of the historian as one who can make the unusual connections is also discussed by Fielding in Tom Jones under the topic of judgment or discernment:

For by invention, I believe, is generally understood a creative faculty; which would indeed prove most romance-writers to have the highest pretensions to it; whereas by invention is really meant no more, (and so the word signifies) than discovery, or finding out; or to explain it at large, a quick and sagacious penetration into the true essence of all the objects of our contemplation. This, I think, can rarely exist without the concomitancy of judgment: for how we can be said to have discovered the true essence of two things, without discerning their difference, seems to me hard to conceive; now this last is the undisputed province of judgment, and yet some few men of wit have agreed with all the dull fellows in the world, in representing these two to have seldom or never the property of one and the same person. (437)

Rosenberg adds that this inability to see the connection between the past and present, this lack of discernment, was a concern of the Victorians. He suggests

that for Eliot, and to a lesser extent for her contemporaries, ignorance of the past means not only ignorance of the present and future but confusion about personal identity and motive. Since we are almost literally created by the past, the study of history is in part the study of ourselves and should teach us both what we are and what we are meant to do in any given circumstance. (Rosenberg 3)

For both Fielding and Eliot, the historical imagination is "properly not ornamental but structural" (4). Even though Ian Watt might argue that Fielding's stylistic language gets in the way of his narrative, he would certainly give Fielding the credit he deserved for structurally reorganizing the natural order of simple history in his novel Tom Jones. The fictive imagination is clearly at work in this work. With both Romola and

Middlemarch, Eliot tried to incorporate the notion that "the genuine artist, whose sight, aided by the illumination of special imagination, also passes beyond the empirical fact."

Eliot's specific aims for her fiction are quoted by Rosenberg. From her notebook, she writes:

I want something different from the abstract treatment which belongs to grave history from a doctrinal point of view, and something different from the schemed picturesqueness of ordinary historical fiction. I want brief, severely conscientious reproductions, in their concrete incidents, of pregnant movements in the past. (qtd. in Rosenberg 3)

Both Eliot and Fielding drape their narratives upon a specific historic event. For Eliot, it is the Reform Act of 1832. For Fielding, it is the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 and the Enclosure Acts. Ian Watt maintains that Fielding's sense of fixed time in space was "one interesting innovation in the fictional treatment of time." He writes:

Fielding seems to have used an almanac, that symbol of diffusion of an objective sense of time by the printing press: with slight exceptions, nearly all the events of his novel are chronologically consistent, not only in relation to each other, and to the time that each stage of the journey of the various characters from the West Country to London would actually have taken, but also in relation to such external considerations as the proper phases of the moon and the time-table of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745, the supposed year of the action. (Watt 25)

A concept of time becomes a complex problem for any writer of fiction. It became more of a problem for those who were trying to adhere an idea of history to the concept

of fiction and realism. On one level, realism demands a set of details, often chronological, to give a sense of reality the reader can understand. On another level, the fictional layer, the day-to-day, minute-to-minute, analysis of life would be too painful and tedious to record, even though Richardson seems to have attempted just that in Pamela. Fiction writers were forced to create plots that became cause-and-effect narratives, points of time and events linked together. According to Watt, Fielding:

In Tom Jones he indicated his intention of being much more selective than Richardson in his handling of the time dimension: "We intend . . . rather to pursue the method of those writers who profess to disclose the revolutions of countries, than to imitate the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the detail of months and years in which nothing remarkable happened, as he employs upon those notable eras when the greatest scenes have been transacted on the human stage." (25)

One of the subjects Eliot is referring to in chapter fifteen of Middlemarch, is the pace of her era against the pace of Fielding's. She suggests, and U. C. Knoepfelmacher agrees, that the Victorian era was much more chaotic, fast-paced, and on the brink of more important social changes than its predecessor. The change in pace would suggest a tightening of the sense of time, a reigning in of any superfluous details to slow the narrative. This really doesn't seem to be the case in Middlemarch. Time is spread out; the action is methodical. There seems to be plenty of

time to digress and comment on the event. Perhaps Tucker's comment that "for George Eliot, history in this age means evolution, slow and subtle, both in society at large and in the growth of individual character" (780) is a more appropriate way of looking at the topic.

Fielding's novel, in fact, seems to be so quick paced at times it is breathless in its energy. He may begin a chapter with a leisurely chat, but, once he stands up, the action is off and running. Fielding's sense of time is, as Watt suggests, innovative, as it runs contrary to some of theories of time under study in his own era:

Soon, however, the modern sense of time began to permeate many areas of thought. The late seventeenth century witnessed the rise of a more objective study of history and therefore of a deeper sense of the difference between the past and the present. At the same time Newton and Locke presented a new analysis of the temporal process; it became a slower and more mechanical sense of duration which was minutely enough discriminated to measure the falling of objects or the succession of thoughts in the mind.
(Watt 24)

With his fictional devices, Fielding veers off of this meticulous, methodical route and "selects" the details he considers important to his narrative. He did the hard work and provided a model for those who followed him. He gave his followers "new techniques for dealing with the observed external world" (Doody 282), an element of which was an elastic concept of time. While Doody suggests eighteenth-century women writers were the models Eliot looked to, a

cursory reading of Eliot's "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" will show that Eliot wished, like even the women writers of the eighteenth century, for a slightly higher calling, and that was "to achieve something like Fielding's authority without necessarily subscribing to everything the author of Tom Jones stands for" (263).

Eliot wants to be associated with the new type of history Fielding created. Fielding, according to Tucker, had given "novelists the right to call their work history" (779). This new type of history would "enable a very indifferent reader to distinguish what is true and genuine in this historic kind of writing, from what is false and counterfeit" (Fielding, Tom Jones 435). According to Tucker:

Fielding claims to have originated "this historic kind of writing"--"historic" meaning both "like history"--and his sense of doing a new thing is partly what confers authority on the enterprise. He speaks of originating as "true and genuine," like making accurate history. Thus in one move Fielding posits the idea that originality is truth, and his fiction true history. (779-80)

This would have been especially appealing to Eliot in her era where fiction was suspect because "to immerse oneself in a substitute world might be a dereliction of Christian duty" (787). And yet this attests to the power of fiction, even with an attached negativity. The idea of an author "playing God" was a source of irritation to many Victorians. Tucker states:

The Victorian audience was deeply attracted to the spectacle of a miniature world governed by a visible Creator. Fiction was, in U. C. Knoepfelmacher's words, a joint enterprise undertaken by writer and audience "To devise alternate models of reality in which . . . anxieties could be scrutinized and, ideally, be allayed, arrested, or countered. (787)

Tucker suggests Victorian audiences were ambivalent about these concepts. Eliot, however, was fortunate in that she had Fielding to use as a model. He had successfully united history and fiction into a thought-provoking narrative and had achieved a bit of literary immortality also. Any fledgling novelist would be silly to ignore his achievement. Eliot realized his significance both for what he offered and achieved in his own era, and what he could help her to achieve in her own.

It is interesting to note also that Fielding, with his strong background in the classics, (his references to Horace, Homer, and Aristotle being often the stuff of his digressions), was a model for Eliot's background reading for Middlemarch. Pratt and Neufeldt record in George Eliot's Middlemarch Notebooks her preparation for the writing of the novel. Besides medical material and Fielding's novel Tom Jones, Eliot immersed herself in histories and philosophy, reading much of the same material Fielding had read during his career: Aristotle's Ethics and Poetics, Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, Horace's The Odes and Epodes, an unspecified work by John Locke, various works by Lucretius, Machiavelli,

Ovid, Plato's Republic, Plutarch's Morals, Theocritus's Idylls, and Virgil's Aeneid.

Since the connection between Eliot and Fielding has been established, it would now be appropriate to look at the historical relevance of what both authors did with two of the most important genres in literature, namely the epic and the romance.

CHAPTER THREE

The Genre Connection

Fielding lovingly refers to his new mode of writing, in the "Preface" of Joseph Andrews, as a "comic epic poem in prose" (47). In this statement he establishes his novel simultaneously within a classical tradition of the narrative and as a new genre, to be used again in Tom Jones and, in a more serious way, in Amelia. He states in the Preface:

Now, a comic romance is a comic epic poem in prose; differing from comedy, as the serious epic from tragedy: its action being more extended and comprehensive; containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a greater variety of characters. It differs from the serious romance in its fable and action, in this: that as in the one these are grave and solemn, so in the other they are light and ridiculous: it differs in its characters by introducing persons of inferior manners, whereas the grave romance sets the highest before us: lastly, in its sentiments and diction; by preserving the ludicrous instead of the sublime. In the diction, I think, burlesque itself may be sometimes admitted; of which many instances will occur in this work, as in the description of battles, and some other places, not necessary to be pointed out to the classical reader, for whose entertainment those parodies or burlesque imitations are chiefly calculated. (Fielding, Joseph Andrews 47-8).

In many ways, the above sounds like a description of Middlemarch. Although Eliot's low characters, the Garths for example, are not nearly so low as Fielding's, still we are not always dealing with aristocracy or the upper classes in Middlemarch. Although George Eliot's "ludicrousness" is

certainly more tame than Fielding's, her moments of sparkle and humor are barely veiled in Victorian restraint.

Middlemarch is also a "comic epic poem in prose." John L. Tucker suggests, "we could simplify the novel's mixed tone by calling it ironic wit, and certainly it is a funnier book than modern criticism tends to notice" (774). He also remarks that the novel is made up of "several kinds of discourse, notably comedy, history, and science." He suggests that this mixture of "competing tones" is part of the novel's tension:

Sometimes the narrator's own voice betrays that tension, as, for example, whenever he issues one of his mock-apologies for having described "low" people or "common" situations. In these passages the narrator always lets his audience know that he suspects them of hankering after romance and epic, of wishing to escape the salutary contemplation of their own recent history. He points out that readers disturbed by vulgar lives are at liberty to imagine them in more exalted dress. Apologies of this sort are a well worn convention of the novel, which since its beginnings has often sounded defensive about its modern, comic, realistic bias. To this tradition Middlemarch adds the Romantic principle that man is more completely understood when looked at in common life than in exceptional circumstances. (776)

Tucker adds a set of comments which further establish Middlemarch in the tradition of Tom Jones:

Traditionally, of course, marriage is a comic theme, the final resolution of disorder. The narrator's intent is to begin where novels usually end--to show what really follows marriage. Thus George Eliot signals her impatience not only with the social inaccuracies of novels, but also with the comic mode itself. She may be said to

be inaugurating a new mode--neither epic, because social conditions have changed; nor tragic because she aims to represent common life; nor comic, because she offers no resolution, nor does she fully share the comic view. The tension of these constituent parts of her enterprise tends the novel's tone in contrary directions. (776)

What it more clearly shows is her inability to completely synthesize the tone and methodology of Fielding's Tom Jones. She was reading it, analyzing it, and attempting to incorporate her own dual plot lines into a coherent work. She understood a great deal of what Fielding was trying to do in the work, but the restraints and pressures of her era were not pliable enough to allow such a hodgepodge of ideas and concepts into a single work. Eliot tries valiantly to stitch the parts together, a la Fielding, even to the point of calling Middlemarch a "home epic." This is not to suggest that she failed in any way. It is only to suggest that the imitation had its limits. Like Fielding's Amelia, Middlemarch is about marriage, marriage or marriages with an epic tone:

Marriage, which has bourne of so many narratives, is still a great beginning, as it was to Adam and Eve, who kept their honeymoon in Eden, but had their first little one among the thorns and thistles of the thorns and thistles of the wilderness. It is still the beginning of the home epic--the gradual conquest or irremediable loss of that complete union which makes the advancing years a climax, and age the harvest of sweet memories in common. (Middlemarch 890)

Tucker ties this new "home epic" and the themes of marriage into Fielding's "comic mock epic in prose."

Middlemarch shares elements of both the romance and the epic as Fielding's Tom Jones does. He suggests that the narrator of Middlemarch is "hankering after romance and epic, of wishing to escape the salutary contemplation of their own recent history" and that Middlemarch "adds the romantic principle that 'man is more completely understood when looked at in common life than in exceptional circumstances'" (Tucker 775-76). This would appear to be a contradiction in terms of the grandiloquence of the epic tone and romantic topics. But these contradictions explain the variety of moods and tones in Middlemarch and reflect the same sort of diversity which appears in Tom Jones.

The epic must have a hero and some sort of concept of heroism. In both novels we have heroism, but it is the heroism of Don Quixote, heroes out of time and place with their era. Tucker suggests that that is exactly why Eliot uses the romantic and epic modes in her novel, a disenchantment with her own era. Ian Watt says much the same thing about Fielding. Watt suggests that the novels of Fielding are "a manifestation of the spirit of epic under the impact of a modern and prosaic concept of reality" (239-40). He states that "the epic is, after all, an oral and poetic genre of historical or legendary persons engaged in a collective rather than an individual enterprise." Both Middlemarch and Tom Jones suppress the actions of their

heroes/heroines. They are not giants among the community, although their behavior is never strictly status quo. They have qualities which could potentially set them above those of their neighbors, but either society or their own ignorance keeps them from rising to the role of the dynamic epic hero. So, in a sense both Dorothea and Tom become part of collective evolution rather than the products of individual heroic acts which set them apart from their neighbors. They traverse the same ground as the other inhabitants of their respective neighborhoods, but their qualities of goodness put Dorothea and Tom into positions to act heroically when the opportunities arise. Tom saves many a damsel in distress and acts with great compassion towards those he finds injured or in need along the roadsides of his travels. Dorothea is prepared to save her part of the world if necessary. She is armed with plans to build housing for the poor and to nurture the great genius she suspects in Casaubon. However, her era will not allow her the heroism of a St. Theresa. It will, however, permit her benevolence to save the career and reputation of Lydgate.

Both Eliot and Fielding are translating the epic and romance into the genres of their time periods. Although Watt suggests that the novel form is alien to the epic because "it is obvious that since, in epic, warfare is 'an essential rather an accessory,' its moral world stands for

values which are alien and unwelcome to the members of a peace-loving society" (243), Fielding has his Homeric battle scenes between Molly and the townsfolk, and Tom battles many a foe on his journey. George Eliot's Middlemarch may not contain scenes of ruffian encounters but surely the violence is there right below the surface of gentility in the character of Bulstrode and the reptilian species of Raffles. The warfare in Middlemarch lies in the corners of every room where a man's or woman's reputation may be injured by a rumor or the falsification of a will. Considering the death of Farebrother and his attempt to have Mary Garth change the will for Fred's benefit, or Casaubon's edict upon Dorothea's and Ladislav's characters from beyond the grave, these supernatural forces threatening at any moment to topple the goodness of a character's life generate the dramatic tension associated with the epic form. These strands of violence are not alien to a peace-loving society, as Watt suggests, but rather have become more subtle and variegated organisms, more insidious in that they are hidden from the naive eye. The villains of Tom Jones are the ignorance of a Thwackum or a Square, the self-centeredness of a Squire Western, or the cruelty of a Blifil. In Middlemarch, the villains again mutate. Dorothea battles the selfishness and arrogance of Casaubon, fights off a community which would carelessly discard its physician Lydgate without a fair rendering of

the truth, and wages a silent but sure-footed advance against the ignorance of her era, an era which would rather have her remain idle, unproductive, and invisible in her widowhood. There are acts of heroism, of epic proportion for their eras, in both Fielding's and Eliot's novels, as momentous and filled with the sense of "marvelous" as anything experienced by Aeneas. Fielding and Eliot are doing a bit of nation building in their respective novels. Like Aeneas, the reluctant hero in the Aeneid, Tom Jones and Dorothea barely seem able to comprehend their place or importance in their worlds. Circumstances force them to take their place among greatness, and as the authors elevate their heroes, the flows, foibles, and possible strengths of their respective eras are unveiled. The decisions and direction of Tom and Dorothea point out the ethos necessary to herald in a new, complicated age.

The setting up of both the epic and the romantic dimensions of the novel can be traced through the crucial chapters ten through nineteen and chapter twenty-three, the chapters whose development corresponds with Eliot's reading of Tom Jones. Ladislav is also a reluctant hero. He may or may not possess the characteristic of genius, but he does possess potential. The narrator proclaims, "Even Caesar's fortune at one time was but a grand presentiment" (Middlemarch 109). Although at this early stage of the

novel he appears but an unfixed mark on the horizon, the narrator assures us that the final evaluation on Ladislav cannot be made yet:

The superadded circumstance which would evolve the genius had not yet come; the universe had not yet beckoned. . . . We know what a masquerade all development is, and what effective shapes may be disguised in helpless embryos.--In fact, the world is full of hopeful analogies and handsome dubious eggs called possibilities. (109)

Virgil's Aeneas could not move up to greatness until called to action. Likewise, Will Ladislav's abilities remain dormant until his calling is revealed. Like Tom Jones, Will has goodness, youth, and potential. These qualities, despite an uncertain birth and a preponderance of adversities surrounding Will, eventually serve to make him heroic, at least within the terms of the eras of Will Ladislav and Tom Jones. Fielding concurs with this support of the restlessness of youth waged against the maturity of their experience by proclaiming, "it is a more useful capacity to be able to foretell the actions of men, in any circumstance, from their characters, than to judge of their characters from their actions" (Tom Jones 122).

Both Eliot and Fielding exploit the technique of the foil, defining character by contrast to develop the personalities of their heroes. For Eliot, Casaubon's focused diligence is a perfect contrast to Ladislav's chronic indolence. With true Fieldingesque irony, Eliot

defends the dubious virtues of her elderly scholar with this justification:

If Mr. Casaubon, speaking for himself, has rather chilling rhetoric, it is not therefore certain that there is no good work or fine feeling in him. . . . Suppose we turn from outside estimates of a man, to wonder, with keener interest, what is the report of his own consciousness about his doings or capacity: with what hindrances he is carrying on his daily labours; what fading of hopes, or what deeper fixity of self-delusion the years are marking off within him; and with what spirit he wrestles against universal pressure, which will one day be too heavy for him, and bring his heart to its final pause. Doubtless his lot is important in his own eyes; and the chief reason that we think he asks too large a place in our consideration must be our want of room for him, since we refer him to the Divine regard with perfect confidence; nay, it is even held sublime for our neighbor to expect the utmost there, however little he may have got from us. Mr. Casaubon, too, was the centre of his own world; if he was liable to think that others were providentially made for him, and especially to consider them in the light of their fitness for the author of a Key to all Mythologies, this trait is not quite alien to us, and, like the other mendicant hopes of mortals, claims some of our pity. (Middlemarch 110-11)

The above passage suggests a bit of the ludicrous mixed with the sublime. The narrator tells us that we can see our own failings in the self-centered attitudes of Casaubon; moreover, the narrator is informing us that our self-perceptions tend to condition our relationships with others. A Will Ladislaw may well laugh at the "plodding application, rows of note-books, and small taper of learned theory exploring the tossed ruins of the world" (109), but Will is,

in God's eyes, of no more importance than a Casaubon. Likewise, Fielding produces a foil to young Jones in the characters of Square, Thwackum, and Blifil.

Comparing Blifil to Tom Jones, Fielding constructs the Black George situation, where we witness Tom's great generosity of spirit and Blifil's meanness. Black George, like Lydgate, on the brink of ruin, is aided by Tom. As a foil, Fielding offers us this description of Blifil:

Master Blifil fell very short of his companion in the amiable quality of mercy; but he as greatly exceeded him in one of a much higher kind, namely, in justice: in which he followed both the precepts and example of Thwackum and Square; for tho' they would both make frequent use of the word mercy, yet it was plain, that in reality Square held it to be inconsistent with the rule of right; and Thwackum was for doing justice, and leaving mercy to Heaven. The two gentlemen did indeed somewhat differ in opinion concerning the objects of this sublime virtue; by which Thwackum would probably have destroyed one half of mankind, and Square the other half. (Tom Jones 147)

These contrasts between goodness, an even heroic goodness, and the indifference of the other characters echoes the unequivocal morality of the epic and the romance. Fielding gives us a more detailed accounting of his application of the foil and ties it into the concept of the serious versus the comic. He explains:

And here we shall of necessity be led to open a new vein of knowledge, which, if it hath been discovered, hath not, to our remembrance, been wrought on by any antient or modern writer. This vein is no other than that of contrast, which runs through all the works of the creation, and may, probably, have a large share in constituting in

us the idea of all beauty, as well natural as artificial: for what demonstrates the beauty and excellence of anything, but its reverse? Thus the beauty of day, and that of summer, is set off by the horrors of night and winter. And, I believe, if it was possible for a man to have seen only the two former, he would have a very imperfect idea of their beauty. (201)

Eliot seems to have employed this same methodology by having Ladislaw and Casaubon share the same opening of chapter ten. She would agree with Fielding that "most artists have this secret in practice, tho' some, perhaps, have not much studied the theory. The jeweller knows that the finest brilliant requires a foil; and the painter, by the contrast of his figures, often acquires great applause" (201). In Tom Jones, Fielding follows this explanation with a connection between the foil and English pantomime:

This entertainment consisted of two parts, which the inventor distinguished by the names of the serious and the comic. The serious exhibited a certain number of heathen gods and heroes, who were certainly the worst and dullest company into which an audience was ever introduced; and (which was a secret known to few) were actually intended so to be, in order to contrast the comic part of the entertainment, and to display the tricks of Harlequin to the better advantage. (201-02)

He then goes on to explore the serious and comic as related to the duller and dullest and a "late facetious writer, who told the public, that whenever he was dull, they might be assured there was a design in it" (202). Perhaps it is best to not explore that following connection, lest we become an author who "actually falls asleep while he is

writing." What is important to note, however, is that both Fielding and Eliot use the dramatic technique of the foil and use it in a very obvious way. Lewes had warned Eliot early on in her career as a novelist that though he felt she had a great deal of skill, he was not certain of her ability to create dramatic tension. Eliot, always responsive to Lewes's criticisms, may well have used Fielding's obvious brilliance in this area to overcome this defect in her own abilities. Fielding's particular use of contrast may have served as an apt model.

In chapter ten of Middlemarch, Eliot also introduces the comic themes of marriage. Yet these "matrimonial garden scenes" are not of the stuff of idyllic romance. Not yet. Instead we have the foreshadowing of a sort of epic disaster looming as Dorothea will eventually languish for the affection Casaubon is ill-prepared to give her. Taper in hand, Casaubon reflects on his approaching marriage:

He did not confess to himself, still less could he have breathed to another, his surprise that though he had won a lovely and noble-hearted girl he had not won delight,--which he had regarded as an object to be found by search. It is true that he knew all the classical passages implying the contrary; but knowing classical passages, we find, is a mode of motion, which explains why they leave so little extra force for their personal application. (Middlemarch 111)

As Mrs. Cadwallader announces on seeing Casaubon enter the room, "'The bridegroom--Casaubon. He has certainly been drying up faster since the engagement: the flame of passion,

I suppose'" (117). Critics seldom comment on the comic aspects of Middlemarch; the humorous elements are many discrete nuggets buried in the conversations of the provincial inhabitants. Because the characters are developed so seriously, the tendency to deal with Middlemarch as a serious work is easier than to acknowledge its satirical and comic elements. We tend to side with the narrator who dramatically defends his characters against the viciousness of Middlemarch ignorance and indifference. But Eliot often pokes fun at her most loveable characters, specifically Dorothea, through the eyes and words of some other character, someone we like less, so we resist their assessments. When Dorothea's sister, Celia, remarks on Casaubon's mole and white hairs, we laugh, yet we take Dorothea's side, wanting to believe in her informed intelligence concerning her choice of mate.

While Eliot is constructing chapter ten, setting up epic heroes and villains and fair ladies to ignite the romance of the novel, she is also deciding who will belong to whom. It is clear by the end of chapter ten that Dorothea Brooke will not be a match for young Lydgate, a gentleman who certainly shares her idealism. With the townsfolk, Lydgate would probably agree that Dorothea is "a good creature--that fine girl--but a little too

earnest, . . . it is troublesome to talk to such women. They are always wanting reasons, yet they are too ignorant to understand the merits of any question, and usually fall back on their moral sense to settle things after their own taste" (119-20). While most would find these admirable qualities, indeed Lydgate does consider her "an unusual combination" of "youthful bloom" and with an "interest in matters socially useful," he has set his sights on a much more romantic vision, the beatific Beatrice, the Laura of Petrarch, the Sophia of Tom Jones, the Rosamond Vincy of Middlemarch. Not only does this idealized match meet Lydgate's notion of "reclining in a paradise with sweet laughs for bird-notes, and blue eyes for a heaven" (122), and meet Rosamond's fatigue with "the faces and figures she had always been used to--the various irregular profiles and gaits and turns of phrase distinguishing those Middlemarch young men whom she had known as boys" (124), but also the union has the approval of the powerful provincial society of Middlemarch.

In this same chapter, chapter eleven, as the prospective marriage pairs are being joined and/or separated by the novelist's scrutiny and criteria of appropriateness, a third pair is introduced and carried into chapter twelve. Rosamond and her brother, Fred Vincy, travel to Stone Court, where Mary Garth, Fred's childhood sweetheart, is

introduced. Eliot's description of Mary is brilliant and is used as a foil to Rosamond's heavenly blue eyes and flaxen hair:

Mary Garth, on the contrary, had the aspect of an ordinary sinner: she was brown; her curly dark hair was rough and stubborn; her stature was low; and it would not be true to declare, in satisfactory antithesis, that she had all the virtues. Plainness had its peculiar temptations and vices quite as much as beauty; it is apt either to feign amiability, or, not feigning it, to show all the repulsiveness of discontent: at any rate, to be called an ugly thing in contrast with that lovely creature your companion, is apt to produce some effect beyond a sense of fine veracity and fitness in the phrase. . . . Advancing womanhood had tempered her plainness, which was of a good human sort, such as the mothers of our race have very commonly worn in all latitudes under a more or less becoming headgear. Rembrandt would have painted her with pleasure, and would have made her broad features look out of the canvas with intelligent honesty. For honesty, truthtelling fairness, was Mary's reigning virtue. (139-40)

With this description, the marriage pairs are complete. The comic mode of the novel is set up. The epic portion has already been mirrored in the conflicts to face Ladislav, Casaubon, Lydgate, and Dorothea. There has been foreshadowing and a Chaucerian glimpse into the paradoxical world of Middlemarch, a world where rumor, myth, and science occupy equal realms of importance, each competing for dominance over the characters in their web.

The epic framework of the novel is established by its length and breadth of conflict and experience. Those elements are established between chapters ten and twelve.

The episodes of falling in love create what Eliot terms "the social romance" portion of the novel. Like Fielding, Eliot incorporates, using a very classical definition of both genres, the epic form and the romance into her work. As the novel progresses from this point, the web of familial and social ties are constructed and constricted. As Tom Jones is barely able to turn a corner of his life without encountering a possible relative or other connection, so the characters of *Middlemarch* cannot turn from left to right without finding their decisions and desires modified by the tightening social fibers.

Watt states that the epic was not a popular form in the eighteenth century. "This unpopularity must have been connected with the fact that reading epic meant a continuous effort to exclude the normal expectations of everyday contemporary life--the very expectations which the novel exploited" (Watt 246). Watt also suggests that the anti-epic stance may have been expressed by Richardson and "stimulated by a feminine correspondent, and expressed mainly through his female characters." But Fielding was "steeped in the classical tradition, and though he was by no means a slavish supporter of the Rules, he felt strongly that the growing anarchy of literary taste called for drastic measures" (248). Fielding supported both the prose epic and the French Romances. Even though he was

introducing a new form of literature, based on history and realism, he felt no need to exclude earlier, successful forms.

Likewise, Eliot, in the wave of science and a secular realism, felt no desire to exclude forms which had entertained and delighted readers for centuries. Though often both Fielding and Eliot dip into the "sentiments and diction" of the romance "by preserving the ludicrous instead of the sublime" (250), neither author wished to ignore the heroic qualities of mankind still perceptible even in a world increasingly defined less by individual than by communal effort. The social impact upon character, begun in Fielding, was to become a topic of enormous concern to Eliot in Middlemarch. The diminishing of the individual was a major theme in her novel and ties into her valiant, though sometimes ironic, efforts to keep that individualistic spirit alive.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Science Connection

George Eliot's decision to try her hand at fiction corresponded with her trip with George Lewes to Ilfracombe in April 1856. This journey awakened Eliot's visual skills. John Cross records an excerpt from that trip, which he claims shows "unmistakable signs of the rising of the sap of creative production" (201). In a creative fervor, Eliot states:

It was a crescendo of delight when we found a "strawberry," and a fortissimo when I, for the first time, saw the pale fawn-colored tentacles of an Anthea cereus viciously waving like little serpents in a low-tide pool. But not a polyp for a long, long while could even G. detect, after all his reading--so necessary is it for the eye to be educated by objects as well as ideas. Every day I gleaned some little bit of naturalistic experience, either through G.'s calling on me to look through the microscope, or from hunting on the rocks: . . . There are tide-pools to be seen almost at every step on the shore at Ilfracombe; and I shall never forget their appearance when we first arrived there. . . . These tide-pools made me quite in love with seaweeds, so I took up Landsborough's book and tried to get a little more light on their structure and history. (Cross 204)

Despite the rather childish glee associated with these observations, Eliot is developing a very adult view of science. The Lockean need to name things helped create the artist George Eliot. What may seem an idle meandering through the seaside actually became the foundation of the

"science" in Middlemarch, a science which was to be welded to her "realism," a technique she adapted from her predecessor Henry Fielding.

The above passage, besides displaying her intense scientific curiosity, also states a concept born in the eighteenth century and matured in the Victorian era: "so necessary is it for the eye to be educated by objects as well as ideas" (208). This "little bit of naturalistic experience" at Ilfracombe helped Eliot to focus, both at a wide-angled perspective and a microscopic closeness, upon the social web of her provincial town, Middlemarch. What began as a little curiosity in science became the horizontal and vertical shaping of her novel. The book is built on two axes which includes a linear, evolutionary, development of history and a perpendicular grouping of events based on what shall be termed "social realism." In Middlemarch, Eliot is portraying a grand social experiment. The organisms, or characters, are set in play, and the results provide the narrative of the novel. Though it may appear at first glance that Eliot is breaking new ground with this sociological study in her novel, she is actually following the work of one of the first social realists, namely Henry Fielding.

Michael McKeon in The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 seems to afford Fielding the credit for realism he

feels Watt denies him. McKeon also ties this realism, this focus on the social aspects of his era, to an epistemological legacy borrowed from John Locke and the science of his century. McKeon first proposes that Watt shares this idea of "a close analogy between the epistemological premises of formal realism and those of 'philosophical realism,' the modern tradition of realism inaugurated by Descartes and Locke" (2). McKeon insists:

Watt is concerned to argue a connection between the rise of the novel and the transformation of the social context of early eighteenth-century England. The philosophical, the novelistic, and the socioeconomic are united during this period in their validation of individual experience, of one or another sort of "individualism," which is manifested in the realm of the social by a number of inseparable phenomena: the development of capitalism and of economic specialization, the spread of secularized Protestantism, the increasing dominance of "the commercial and industrial classes," and the growth of a reading public (61). Watt associates these phenomena with "the middle classes" (e.g., 48, 59, 61), and he thereby encourages us to understand his thesis as a singularly persuasive treatment of a venerable theme: the historical coincidence of the rise of the middle class and the rise of the novel. (2)

What can really be seen in Watt's attempt to relate the rise of the middle class with the rise of the novel is George Eliot's use of the same concepts in Middlemarch. The provincial world which Eliot writes about is very similar to the world from the Fielding composes. Both environments are in a state of flux. It may be argued that while Fielding's world moves up and down, the social upheavals of his era

being compared to a juggler throwing the class structures into the air, recapturing the pins as they descend, Eliot's moves along the horizontal plane. Her characters are evolving as the social structure moves forward, hence her preoccupation with economics and social dynamics of her era. Regardless, eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century social structures in England were experiencing enormous structural changes. Fielding and Eliot were recording those changes in historical terms, with realistic details, hence founding a sort of science of realism.

McKeon, however, suggests that Watt does not claim Fielding followed the rules of realism. Several authors of the period in fact used traditional forms in unique ways. "Many critics have pointed out that even though Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding explicitly subvert the idea and ethos of romance, they nonetheless draw upon many of its stock situations and conventions" (2). However, McKeon insists:

Watt is well aware of the way that Fielding in particular evades the specifications of formal realism, and he has provided some hints of how his original and more comprehensive theoretical framework for The Rise of the Novel would have done Fielding greater justice by treating formal realism as a less dominant formal criterion. But this leaves us in something of a dilemma. For Watt's thesis is attractive in great measure because of the precision with which he associates formal realism with "the novel," and the plausibility with which he ties the rise of the novel to contextual developments that bear analogy to formal realism. If we want Fielding, we must

dissipate and weaken the explanatory framework by requiring it to accommodate "romance" elements and the anti-individualist tendencies they imply. If we want the explanatory framework, we must be prepared to exclude much of Fielding from the rise of the novel. In other words, one central problem that Watt's unusually persuasive argument has helped to uncover is that of the persistence of romance, both within the novel and concurrently with its rise. And behind this lurks a yet more fundamental problem, the inadequacy of our theoretical distinction between "novel" and "romance." (3)

McKeon suggests that this weakness in Watt's thesis is followed by another, namely his inability to convince critics of the rise of the middle class in the eighteenth century. McKeon asks:

Where is the evidence, critics have asked, for the dominance of the middle class in the early eighteenth century? How was it distinguished--by contemporaries and in reality--from the traditional social categories of the aristocracy and gentry, especially as the nobility of early modern England was itself transformed by cultural attitudes and material activities that bear a clear relation to the "individualism"? What, indeed, are we to make in this context, of the familiar type of middle-class upstart whose middle-class identity is defined by nothing so much as a self-negating impulse, a will to be assimilated into the aristocracy? On the other hand, what are we to make of the unsettling argument that middle-class individualism originated not in eighteenth- but in thirteenth-century England? So far as the theory of the novel is concerned, the most troublesome figure once again seems to be Fielding. If the formal features of his novels are enmeshed in the romance tradition, form, content, and Fielding's own biography might appear to suggest a sympathy with the social perspective not of an emerging middle class but of a nobility particularized as the "declining gentry." (3-4)

McKeon also states that "Watt has acknowledged the degree to which the new literary form of the novel not only subverts, but also expresses, social norms that are still traditional in the early eighteenth century." The reason that McKeon pursues this line of inquiry and debate is to come to the following conclusion:

For it begins to appear that we are dealing with two different versions of the same difficulty, and that what is required is a theory not just of the rise of the novel but of how categories, whether "literary" or "social," exist in history: how they first coalesce by being understood in terms of--as transformations of--other forms that have thus far been taken to define the field of possibility. What sort of guidance does genre theory provide for the pursuit of such an understanding? (4)

The truth seems to be that genre theory can only serve as a historical framework in a very limited way. In transforming the genre, the artists show a much clearer understanding of the historical significance of the forms in their respective eras than do the critics in developing theories around those transformations. Fielding may not have been exploring "the emerging middle class" along with the "rise of the novel," but he was discussing a class structure in upheaval, a shifting of forms and populations, which required a scientific explanation. Realism was a way of objectively recording the events of an era--or as near to objectively as an artist can record those event--but Fielding left the interpretation of larger issues to others,

like Hobbes and Locke. Fielding's detailed reflections on those recordings were his way of dealing with the changes he sensed in the eighteenth century. The chaotic movement in the novel of Tom and company, from provincial town to London and back to provincial town, mirrors the shifts in population--as Fielding, the artist, perceived those shifts--which were occurring during the eighteenth century as the Industrial Revolution fastened its hold in England. Fielding's empiricism transcribes the hypocrisy of his era, epitomized by the indifference of Squire Western, a landowner who cared nothing for Black George or Molly or even his own daughter Sophia, except for the prospect of her marrying a neighbor to help enlarge his landholdings. As Tom and friends travel through England, the characters he meets are displaced persons. The Man on the Hill, the Barber of Baghdad, and Mrs. Waters, to name a few characters, are personages who do not fit into the social schema, in large part because the schema is changing on the road to Upton. The landscape is no longer static. It is progressing towards the city. Fielding records Tom's encounters with these persons in great detail, in the form of conversations about situations, human nature, education, and moral indiscretions. As the wheel turns, new and revised world views are demanded; there is more to scrutinize.

McKeon states, quoting Levi-Strauss, that "the dichotomy of structure and history is roughly analogous . . . to that of form and content. "Content" is variously associated with "history," "empirical diversity," and "demographic change" (5). This would certainly seem to coordinate and explain some of the diversity and chaos in Tom Jones.

It is Fielding's empirical stand in Tom Jones that aligns him with the thinking of John Locke and possibly made him so appealing to George Eliot as she developed her own Victorian empiricism. Fielding, as he recorded the world around him for his novel, may well have uttered the phrase spoken by Locke: "What I see, I know to be so, by the evidence of the thing itself; what I believe, I take to be so upon the testimony of another" (qtd. in McKeon 81). Truth, and the "truth" required in fiction, takes on the nature of revelation. McKeon states, "The truth of revelation, then, requires authentication by the truth of empirical knowledge," and "faith can never convince us of anything that contradicts our knowledge" (80). The eye is the important "artistic" organ in the eighteenth century. It continues to be so in the nineteenth century. This recording of the eye, this naming of things seen, becomes the foundation of fiction and the new genre, the novel.

By both authors, Fielding and Eliot, this sense of the importance of things seen is translated into realism, the accurate recording of external events. This recording has a scientific basis. For Fielding, it is exemplified in the writings of Locke and Hobbes. For Eliot, her "science" is influenced by the writings of Carlyle and Darwin. The focus of this realism for both Fielding and Eliot is the class structure of their eras. These authors are writing to record the results of the social experiment, and what they both see is the social irresponsibility of the wealthy towards the unfortunate. Eliot and Fielding write about the lack of benevolence in their respective worlds. Blifil and Squire Western, Square and Thwackum, show a general disregard for the unfortunate, in the same way as Bulstrode ignores the plight of young Fred Vincy and later seeks to destroy Lydgate. Tom Jones and Middlemarch chronicle the struggle of the socially imperiled against the solid power and hypocrisy of the privileged.

Eliot and Fielding strive to tell the truth of their eras through fiction. McKeon asserts:

Whereas in Swift the argument is most explicit in the realm of ideology and sociopolitical institutions, in Fielding the major emphasis modulates to the epistemological "institution" of narrative form, to the reclamation of specifically literary fiction as a mode of telling the truth. Buttressing Fielding's extreme skepticism is a critique of empiricist objectivity (and of the allied belief that the instrument of verification is separable from the object verified) that would

make a deist proud. On the basis of this powerful critique, Fielding implicates narrative in the fictionalizing deceptions of the political puppeteer. The question, then, is not how to avoid the inevitable condition of fictionality (of romance), but how to avoid the ethical pitfalls that seem to be an inevitable part of it: the impositions of the puppeteer and the bad faith of the audience. What is required is a fiction so palpable, so "evident to the senses," that its power to deceive even a "willing" audience becomes neutralized. (393)

In much the same way, Eliot uses the narrative of fiction to record a truth "so palpable" that even an incredulous Victorian audience, one skeptical of authors who play "God" with their characters, could immerse themselves in the moral truth of the message. While both Eliot and Fielding may sincerely desire "to draw natural, not perfect characters, and to record the truths of history, not the extravagances of romance (IV, iv, 135)" (McKeon 384), this attention to detail is evolving towards the classic novel of manners, and, therefore, the novel of moral truth. Eliot's desire to write in the past may indicate her belief that the truths of the past may have the power to alter the problems of the present. McKeon explains this momentum:

The self-subversive instability of Fielding's mock heroic, which he shares with his age, is parallel to that of naive empiricism and an expression of the same implacable process. . . . In Fielding's strategy of extreme skepticism, Plutarch and Suetonius are the negative examples that are attacked by the normative standard of empirical history, even as naive empiricism itself is subjected to parody. But in the mock-heroic movement, it is the modern example that is negative; the positive norm by which it is

criticized is ancient history, which in turn becomes vulnerable to a similar attack. What is achieved by this remarkable interweaving of satiric strategies that are structurally parallel but asymmetrical in substance? The major effect of the asymmetry--the confusing conflation of terms (positive and negative, ancient and modern, hero and rogue) that have been posited in opposition to each other--is to emphasize what is a dominant feature of each strategy as it operates on its own: the sense of the collapse of categories. . . . For the latter movement mediates us from the epistemological of the former to an analogous realm of ethical and social concerns, from questions of truth to questions of virtue.

Thus, the empirical, epistemological novel moves from the realms of truth of experience to greater, higher moral issues. This idea is certainly as applicable to Middlemarch as it is to Tom Jones. While Middlemarch may at times seem to be a novel based on objective observation of both characters and their historical setting, Eliot is prodding us to greater insight as she moves through the novel. Like Fielding's digressions to the "dear and gentle reader," Eliot digresses to truths which record the moral fiber of the community.

For example, in chapter fifteen of Middlemarch, after the discussion of Fielding, Eliot moves to Middlemarch's acceptance of Lydgate and the reasons behind that acceptance. Directly after assuring the reader that the narrator of this novel has no intention of dispersing the focus "over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe," Eliot moves on to Lydgate. The narrator informs

the reader that "all the light I command must be concentrated on this particular web" (Middlemarch 170). The scientist/narrator's vision is now directed at how the new organism, Lydgate, adapts to the new surroundings in which he finds himself, and at how the community assimilates him:

At present I have to make the new settler Lydgate better known to any one interested in him than he could possibly be even to those who had seen the most of him since his arrival in Middlemarch. For surely all must admit that a man may be puffed and belauded, envied, ridiculed, counted upon as a tool and fallen in love with, or at least selected as a future husband, and yet remain virtually unknown--known merely as a cluster of signs for his neighbours' false suppositions. There was a general impression, that Lydgate was not altogether a common country doctor, and in Middlemarch at that time such an impression was significant of great things being expected from him. For everybody's family doctor was remarkably clever, and was understood to have immeasurable skill in the management and training of the most skittish or vicious diseases. (171)

In this ironic excerpt, Eliot discloses the force of the community and the flimsy thing upon which it is constructed--rumor, innuendo, and false suppositions. These same good wishes from the community will become the same ill wishes, based on no more sound reasoning than Lydgate's temporary acceptance by that community. The community is abuzz with both how Lydgate will fit into their social web and how he will fit into the historical, horizontal line of the development of the medical profession. Thus the forces on character are delineated for the community, by the community.

Against this medium, Eliot gives us a glimpse of the organism's own psychology. Lydgate is described through his own eyes:

He was but seven-and-twenty, an age at which many men are not quite common--at which they are hopeful of achievement, resolute in avoidance, thinking that Mammon shall never put a bit in their mouths and get astride their backs, but rather that Mammon, if they have anything to do with him, shall draw their chariot. (171)

Here, behind the mask of objectivity, the irony begins to crystallize. By the end of the novel, Lydgate's expectations, both those of the community and his own, are to be totally determined by his financial sovereignty. Lydgate may "dream of himself as a discoverer" (175), and the community may think him a most uncommon country doctor, but without solvency, he will become a shattered soul. Middlemarch is about work, proper work, in an economic environment which will shape and change the evolutionary landscape of England forever. On the outskirts of the Garth home lies the building of the railroad, cutting trenches and tearing up lives, as it moves slowly but certainly through the town of Middlemarch. Fred Vincy can no longer afford to act like a spoiled aristocrat. He must find proper work as Mary Garth insists, and Dorothea must learn the cost of things, much as John Locke proclaimed, "I must learn the names of things." Ladislav must channel his genius into something useful for the community or lose everything he

loves. Casaubon dies, as Featherstone dies, because they are relics of an earlier, indolent age which could afford such luxuries. The lessons of Middlemarch are the painful lessons of history. To survive, one must adapt. Lydgate may be accepted into the web at first, but when he fails to meet certain qualifications, the community expels him. He becomes a man drowning, but the denizens of the pond give him not a glance. The inability to support a wife adequately becomes worse than the inability to identify a rare disease. In this environment, the rare disease can wait.

In this same chapter, Eliot unites a study of Lydgate's character with a short treatise on science, but it is a discussion clothed in the idea of the social experiment and the effect of that experiment upon the individual. It seeks to demarcate the line between the social and the psychological:

Perhaps that was a more cheerful time for observers and theorizers than the present; Lydgate was ambitious above all to contribute towards enlarging the scientific, rational basis of his profession. . . . That great Frenchman first carried out the conception that living bodies, fundamentally considered, are not associations of organs which can be understood by studying them first apart, and then as it were federally; but must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs of tissues, out of which the various organs . . . are compacted, as the various accommodations of a house are built up in various proportions of wood, iron, stone, brick, zinc, and the rest, each material having its peculiar composition and proportions. No man, one sees,

can understand and estimate the entire structure or its parts--what are its frailties and what its repairs, without knowing the nature of the materials. (177)

From this passage, Eliot returns to Lydgate at the microscope and describes him as "a happy fellow at this time: to be seven-and-twenty, without any fixed vices, with a generous resolution that his action should be beneficent, and with ideas in his brain that made life interesting quite apart from the cultus of horseflesh and other mystic rites of costly observance" (178). Following the above passage on science and pathology, on the web of tissues and the holistic study of organs, Eliot returns to say this about Lydgate, an individual organism:

He was at a starting point which makes many a man's career a fine subject for betting, . . . with all the possible thwartings and furtherings of circumstance, all the niceties of inward balance, by which a man swims and makes his point or else is carried headlong. The risk would remain, even with close knowledge of Lydgate's character; for character too is a process and an unfolding. The man was still in the making, as much as the Middlemarch doctor and immortal discoverer, and there were both virtues and faults capable of shrinking and expanding. . . . All these things might be alleged against Lydgate, but then, they are the periphrases of a polite preacher, who talks of Adam, and would not like to mention anything painful to the pew-renters. The particular faults from which these delicate generalities are distilled have distinguishable physiognomies, diction, accent, and grimaces; filling up parts in very various dramas. Our vanities differ as our noses do: all conceit is not the same conceit, but varies in correspondence with the minutiae of mental makeup in which one of us differs from another. Lydgate's conceit was of the arrogant sort, never simpering, never

impertinent, but massive in its claims and benevolently contemptuous. (179)

What Eliot is sketching here is the unpredictability of character. She is preparing us for the disclosure of Lydgate's interesting and perhaps out-of-character love affair with the French actress, Laure, and preparing us for the later instability of his relationship with Rosamond Vincy. He is, after all, a man, and a man of "chivalrous kindness" caught in a bit of melodrama.

Fielding calls this unpredictability the fallibility of character. In the science of realism, the authors deal not with types, but rather with characters capable of assailing the heights of greatness or slipping to the depths of depravity. Fielding says in Tom Jones:

We do not pretend to introduce any infallible characters into this history and indeed the reader is greatly mistaken, if he conceives that Thwackum appeared to Mr. Allworthy in the same light as he doth to him in this history; and he is as much deceived, if he imagines, that the most intimate acquaintance with he himself could have had with that divine, would have informed him of those things which we, from our inspiration, are enabled to open and discover. Of readers who from such conceits as these, condemn the wisdom or penetration of Mr. Allworthy, I shall not scruple to say, that they make a very bad and ungrateful use of that knowledge which we have communicated to them. (17)

Not only does Eliot seem to have borrowed her rhetoric from Fielding, she also may have assimilated his notion of benevolence. Certainly her narrator and Fielding's spare nothing to acquit even the foulest of villains. As Eliot

asks the gentle reader to accept the failings of the old Casaubon, even though he causes despair from the grave, Fielding asks us to endure Lady Bellaston and Blifil and the troublemaking Squire Western. It must have pained both authors to discover that their good and benevolent heroes and heroines must also fall under the scientific scrutiny of social realism. Dorothea, affectionately and perhaps ironically nicknamed Dodo, has numerous illusions about life and love. She wishes to serve so much that she fails to accurately perceive those whom she serves. Fielding's Squire Allworthy, surely one of the noblest characters in all of Tom Jones, is characterized as "though all-worthy, he is not all-seeing" (17). A certain charming naivete seem to dominate the characters of many of the good characters in both novels. Tom Jones is certainly a good-natured young man with just one major flaw, his promiscuity. Lydgate, likewise, has the potential to be a discoverer. Yet, his unfortunate affair with Laure and his unsettling marriage to Rosamond makes the reader wonder about the true nature of this young country doctor. The narrator of Middlemarch proclaims in true Fieldingesque style:

How could there be any commonness in a man so well-bred, so ambitious of social distinction, so generous and unusual in his views of social duty? As easily as there may be stupidity in a man of genius if you take him unawares on the wrong subject, or as many a man who has the best will to advance the social millennium might be

ill-inspired in imagining its lighter pleasures: unable to go beyond Offenbach's music, or the brilliant punning in the last burlesque. (179)

In a moment of fallibility, Lydgate asks the murderous Laure to marry him, then the psychology of character comes forward:

He knew that this was like the sudden impulse of a madman--incongruous even with his habitual foibles. No matter! It was the one thing which he was resolved to do. He had two selves within him apparently, and they must learn to accommodate each other and bear reciprocal impediments. Strange, that some of us, with quick alternate vision, see beyond our infatuations, and even while we rave on the heights, behold the wide plain where our persistent self pauses and await us. (182)

From the general to the particular, from the specific back to the general, Eliot moves through chapter fifteen, setting up her science of social realism. At the close of this important chapter, Eliot brings us back to Middlemarch. The organism has been dissected carefully; now he must be brought back to the petri dish to see whether character will determine action or vice versa. Eliot's narrator states:

Not only young virgins of that town, but grey-bearded men also, were often in haste to conjecture how a new acquaintance might be wrought into their purposes, contented with very vague knowledge as to the way in which life had been shaping him for that instrumentality. Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably. (183)

Again the power of the community surfaces. Community becomes a place where the individual defect may for a time

be hidden until the experiment introduces some costly variables. It is interesting to recall John Tucker's remarks, mentioned earlier that "For George Eliot, history in this age means evolution, slow and subtle, both in society at large and in the growth of individual character" (780). Eliot's gaze is constructing history, but as it studies society and its effects on the individual, the narrator of Middlemarch takes on a new role. Tucker remarks:

Tracking these developments the narrator of Middlemarch sees himself as a kind of natural historian, but the author's attitude towards this scientific stance is more complicated than some modern critics have suggested. In the first place, science does not rule the novel unopposed--it simply represents one of the competing movements in the novel's narrative style. George Eliot does seem to have hoped sometimes that the truths discoverable to fiction would turn out to be laws as elegant and lucid as those governing the physical universe. But several important episodes in Middlemarch tend to balance this enthusiasm for the scientific point of view with a sense that science has its own special liabilities. (Tucker 780)

Lydgate seems to represent science in the novel, and Eliot's ambivalence about science is often aimed at him. Lydgate's rhetoric, or rather that which is assigned him by Eliot, contains the elements of science and also the elements of his own lack of insight. Eliot remarks, "Lydgate relied much on the psychological difference between what for the sake of variety I will call goose and gander:

especially on the innate submissiveness of the goose as beautifully corresponding to the strength of the gander" (Middlemarch 391). But what seems more crucial in Eliot's perspective is science's attempt to create an anti-human environment, that it is trying to explain behavior in a way which limits character and community. She seems also to be trying to say that it must still operate within the system of the era and, for the Victorians, the economic system is the most important. In the Prelude to Middlemarch Eliot acknowledges that "for these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul" (25); the key word here being "social" faith and order. In other words, if the system fails to support idealism, innovation, passion, or artistic endeavors, the individual will be overwhelmed by failure. This is part of her scientific observations into the world of her novel. She may at times appear to be mocking the individual, but her real criticism is leveled at the systems and the study of those systems which deny the variables of compassion, emotion, and intellectual curiosity for both men and women. The social web she constructs, or rather records, in her novel may appear an image of weightlessness and flexibility, but it is more a fixed, static thing, approaching inertia

and entropy. The true shimmering light of flexibility and creativity still rests with the individual in Eliot's world.

It is typical one might say that she also closed the novel with another passage on the social condition of the era. Discussing Dorothea, Eliot remarks:

Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of a young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it. (Middlemarch 896)

For Eliot, the era of Middlemarch is one in which the epic life is unavailable to the individual. What is left is a life of "a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity" (25). But to these moral conclusions, Eliot adds the gaze of the scientist, a scientist detached often, but not always, from the emotional life of his organisms.

Using the concept of vision and different angles of perspective, which were very important notions in the eighteenth century, Eliot describes both the microscopic and telescopic views of her community. She humorously applies her observations to Mrs. Cadwallader and her views on important impending marriages in Middlemarch:

Now, why on earth should Mrs Cadwallader have been at all busy about Miss Brooke's marriage;

and why, when one match that she liked to think she had a hand in was frustrated, should she have straightway contrived the preliminaries of another? Was there any ingenious plot, any hide-and-seek course of action, which might be detected by a careful telescopic watch? Not at all: a telescope might have swept the parishes of Tipton and Freshitt, the whole area visited by Mrs Cadwallader in her phaeton, without witnessing any interview that could excite suspicion, or any scene from which she did not return with the same unperturbed keenness of eye and the same high natural colour. In fact, if that convenient vehicle had existed in the days of the Seven Sages, one of them would doubtless have remarked, that you can know little of women by following them about in their pony phaetons. Even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a stronger lens reveals to you certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom. In this way, metaphorically speaking, a strong lens applied to Mrs. Cadwallader's matchmaking will show a play of minute causes producing what may be called thought and speech vortices to bring her the sort of food she needed. (83)

Often the human organism seems out of place against the backdrop of science. To have the behavior of matchmaking scrutinized through a telescope and a microscope is both comical and disheartening. It would appear that the true study of man needed a different type of science, one which the narrator of Middlemarch might term a social realism, using the "fictional" technique of realism. This attempt to connect man with the terminology of natural science continues ironically throughout Middlemarch. Casaubon's

"stream of feeling" is called "an exceedingly shallow rill" (87), and "he took a wife, as we have seen, to adorn the remaining quadrant of his course, and to be a little moon that would cause hardly a calculable perturbation" (121). Provincial society is discussed in geological terms, with "subtle movements," "striking downfalls," and "constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse," individuals who "slipped a little downward," and "families that stood with rock firmness amid all this fluctuation" (122). Casaubon is again referred to in naturalistic terms, described as some sort of insect or bird:

Mr. Casaubon had never had a strong bodily frame, and his soul was sensitive without being enthusiastic: it was too languid to thrill out of self-consciousness into passionate delight; it went fluttering in the swampy group where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying. His experience was of that pitiable kind which shrinks from pity, and fears most of all that it should be known: it was that proud narrow sensitiveness which has not mass enough to spare for transformation into sympathy, and quiver thread-like in small currents of self-preoccupation or at best of an egoistic scrupulosity. (313)

Aligning the animal kingdom once more with the behavior of mankind, Eliot makes these remarks:

When the animals entered the Ark in pairs, one may imagine that allied species made much private remark on each other, and were tempted to think that so many forms feeding on the same store of fodder were eminently superfluous, as tending to diminish the rations. (I fear the part played by the vultures on that occasion would be too painful for art to represent, those birds being

disadvantageously naked about the gullet, and apparently without rites and ceremonies.) (365)

This digression pertains to the funeral of Peter Featherstone and refers to the fodder of his inheritance being spread too thinly over the population of Middlemarch. But perhaps one of the most important applications of the "web" motifs appears in chapter thirty-six and is applied to the social fastenings of love: Speaking of Rosamond and Lydgate, Eliot explains, again in scientific terms:

Young love-making--that gossamer web! Even the points it clings to--the things whence its subtle interlacings are swung--are scarcely perceptible; momentary touches of finger-tips, meetings of the rays from blue and dark orbs, unfinished phrases, lightest changes of cheek and lip, faintest tremors. The web itself is made of spontaneous beliefs and indefinable joys, yearnings of one life towards another, visions of completeness, indefinite trust. And Lydgate fell to spinning that web from his inward self with wonderful rapidity, in spite of experience supposed to finished off with the drama of Laure--in spite too of medicine and biology; for the inspection of macerated muscle or of eyes presented in a dish (like Santa Lucia's), and other incidents of scientific inquiry, are observed to be less incompatible with poetic love than a native dulness or a lively addiction to the lowest prose. As for Rosamond, she was in the water-lily's expanding wonderment at its own fuller web. All this went on in the corner of the drawing room where the piano stood, and subtle as it was, the light made it a sort of rainbow visible to many observers besides Mr Farebrother. The certainty that Miss Vincy and Mr Lydgate were engaged became general in Middlemarch without the aid of formal announcement. (380)

No social filament binds like love, according to Eliot's narrator. And Lydgate is soon to discover just how

caught he is in the community's conception of what love must do to be acceptable. Another scene worth mentioning occurs when Mr. Farebrother goes to visit Lydgate in his lab with several vials of pond products he wishes to examine under Lydgate's superior microscope. Their conversation is compelling. Farebrother remarks, "Eros has degenerated; he began by introducing order and harmony, and now he brings back chaos." Whereupon Lydgate responds, "Yes, at some stages . . . but a better order will begin after" (382). Considering Eliot's opening comments about the current world which contains no social coherence, Lydgate is perhaps predicting a new world order. At the very least, the conversation indicates some intention by the author to discuss the cyclical nature of experience and introduce some ideas about time. This would certainly tie into an earlier reference, in chapter twenty, where Dorothea glances backwards and reflects on the present. She is in Rome, on her honeymoon, and, while looking upon the ruins of history, makes these observations:

The weight of unintelligible Rome might lie easily on bright nymphs to whom it formed a background for the brilliant picnic of Anglo-foreign society; but Dorothea had no such defence against deep impressions. Ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence; the dimmer but yet eager Titanic life gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings; the long vistas of white forms whose marble eyes seemed to hold the monotonous light of

an alien world: all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion. . . . Our moods are apt to bring with them images which succeed each other like the magic-lantern pictures of a doze; and in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St. Peter's, the huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the attitudes and garments of the prophets and evangelists in the mosaics above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina. (226)

Time concepts are fused with images of light, lanterns, and eyes. They occur throughout Middlemarch, as in the passage above which again discusses the emotional contamination of epistemological objectivity. There are also several references to geometric perspective in the novel. All these concepts tie back into the eighteenth century, into the work of Locke and Newton, and into the novels of Henry Fielding.

In Eighteenth-Century English Literature, edited by Tillotson, Fussell, and Waingrow, John Locke, and Sir Isaac Newton are discussed in the following way:

Newton had won an unparalleled conquest of the human mind by showing that it was capable of grasping the very laws of nature, Locke had turned his eye upon the mind itself, and, appealing simply to the facts of every man's experience, had given a plain and persuasive account of the mechanism of human understanding. (186)

Locke's most impressive achievement "was his concrete new psychology, which swept away the chaos of theories about innate ideas, humors, and animal spirits that popular tradition had handed down" (188). It must be remembered that Eliot was often adapting these Lockean principles into her novel, not always commenting on them or the truth of them, for Middlemarch is a book filled with conflicting theories, existing side by side as often they do in the reality of any era. Both Fielding and Eliot, as has already been discussed, apply many of Locke's epistemological theories in their development of characters.

As many critics have observed, Fielding is one of the few eighteenth-century authors who does not consider education one of the beneficent influences upon character. There is much in Middlemarch which supports the same attitude. For example, the education of the Garths, though they are a literate people, taught at home by a diligent mother, their education does little to prepare them for the economic hardships approaching because the railroad will eventually swallow up their land. And Fred Vincy's education prepares him for nothing. Ladislav has poetic genius, a supposed education in the liberal arts, yet, even at the end of the lengthy novel, he still has not "found himself." Dorothea's uncle tells her to be careful not to become too educated. Dorothea assures him there is no

danger in that; her mind continually wanders from books to sketches of cottages. Fielding also seems to have little good to say about formal education in Tom Jones. In fact, some of the best educated, like Square and Thwackum, are the worst examples of goodness and compassion. The Barber of Baghdad, Partridge, has found his education makes him an alien to his culture. Jenny Jones finds her learning still does not help her deal with men, and Mrs. Western seems the antithesis of what education should mean to women, as she uses it as a weapon against others.

Fielding shared John Locke's ideas concerning education, knowledge, and the study of knowing, namely that knowledge and understanding come from Observation and Experience. Fielding in Tom Jones seems to agree. He begins by saying that understanding, especially understanding in the author, begins with genius "thou gift of Heaven," is augmented by learning, "(for without thy assistance nothing pure, nothing correct, can genius produce)," and is refined by "Experience, long conversant with the wise, the good, the learned, and the polite" (608-09). Adding to this definition, Eliot would include Locke's concept of Sensation, being that the source of all our ideas comes from sensation which is produced by the work of our senses. Hence, Locke stresses the importance of naming things.

Newton's work on light shows up in Eliot's Middlemarch in the form of images about light, eyes, and perspective. But first there was a complicated synthesis of ideas in Fielding's age which attempted to unite the dogmas of Locke and Newton. Again this synthesis found its way into the nineteenth-century and George Eliot's Middlemarch.

According to Michael McKeon, Locke tried to resolve questions of truth with "a Baconian-Galilean argument concerning the unity of truth and the relation between the realms of faith and empirical knowledge" (80):

The compatibility of these "distinct provinces" Locke affirms by calling reason "natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of our natural faculties: [whereas] revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately; which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they came from God." By the terms of this epistemology, the authority of divine revelation is both incontestable and negligible. For "though faith be founded on the testimony of God (who cannot lie) revealing any proposition to us: yet we cannot have an assurance of the truth of its being a divine revelation greater than our own [natural] knowledge." (80)

McKeon also sees the Newtonian principles operating in Fielding's era:

The new--especially the Newtonian--philosophy played an integral part in the liberal Anglican vision of the providential system. As Bacon had prophesied, the accumulated evidence of the senses now revealed an intricate and self-regulating natural order that seemed to be coextensive with God's spiritual order. From

this it appeared that the social order, as well, most nearly approximated the providential design when it enjoyed an absolute freedom and self-sufficiency. (200)

In the light of these eighteenth-century attempts to coordinate the knowledge of man, gained by observation and experience, and the knowledge gained from God, it is interesting that Eliot would write a novel which appears to operate under a system of no cohesive social order, a world which contains only the illusion of coherence. The social positions of the characters are not nearly as fixed as in previous eras. They are like puppets dashed about by a mad puppeteer, veering off first one disaster then another. Compared to the world of Tom Jones, Eliot's Middlemarch seems a place of relative peace, beneficence, and harmony, yet this is only an illusion structured upon the weight of systems that function against the true nature of character.

One way that Eliot constructs the illusion is through the use of motifs like the eye and light and references to "diseases of the retina." Dorothea is described by the narrator at one point in the novel as a great source of irritation to Casaubon: "This cruel outward accuser was there in the shape of wife--nay, of a young bride, who, instead of observing his abundant pen scratches and amplitude of paper with the uncritical awe of an elegant-minded canary-bird, seemed to present herself as a spy watching everything with a malign power of inference"

(Middlemarch 232-33). The gaze upon Casaubon is really a reflection of his own inadequacies; his senses are dimmed by his lack of understanding. Light, in the form of sunlight, dominates this passage of Middlemarch:

She did not really see the streak of sunlight on the floor more than she saw the statues: she was inwardly seeing the light of years to come in her own home and over the English fields and elms and hedge-bordered highroads: and feeling that the way in which they might be filled with joyful devotedness was not so clear to her as it had been. (235)

On the literal level, the passage refers to Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon, but figuratively there is a sense that the past held more promise than the present or the future. The sunlight may be referring to the Enlightenment, a time of great optimism and an attempt to unify a social vision with humanitarian principles. In this passage, perhaps the narrator, perhaps Dorothea are really sensing the futility of such optimism. In this biting passage from the opening of chapter twenty-seven, Eliot relates optics, science, and illusion into one stunning, very Fieldingesque digression. From the opening of chapter twenty-seven:

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

is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent. (297)

Eliot certainly seems to be developing the view that real objectivity is an illusion, so formulated are we by our passions, self-deception, biased observations, and general state of ignorance. All knowledge and all science may be but the construct of a gigantic ego, and our social institutions may be nothing more than a recombining of the same principles.

In Eliot's search for some true vision of reality, geometry makes an appearance in Middlemarch, again attached to some aspect of characterization, inserted in some consideration of a moral truth. Eliot claims:

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling--an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects--that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference. (243)

Eliot also discusses geometric shape in relation to Ladislaw:

Will was conscious that he should not have been at Middlemarch but for Dorothea; and yet his position there was threatening to divide him from her with those barriers of habitual sentiment which are more fatal to the persistence of mutual interest than all the distance between Rome and Britain. Prejudices about rank and status were easy enough to defy in the form of a tyrannical letter from Mr. Casaubon; but prejudices, like odorous bodies, have a double existence both solid and subtle--solid as the pyramids, subtle as the twentieth echo of an echo, or as the memory of hyacinths which once scented the darkness. (473)

It would appear that in the search for truth, through the objective tool of mathematics, one confronts at last moral truths proposed by moral dilemmas. And morality almost necessarily leads us to some sort of religious inquiry. Eliot seems to have been acutely aware that the science of the Victorian era had unhinged the religious foundations upon which society had functioned relatively well. Despite its objective base, it almost appears that Eliot is saying that science can never touch the essence of what it means to be human, whereas religion may still be able, with some realignment, to do so.

One of the most beautiful lines in Middlemarch is the following: "For religion can only change when the emotions which fill it are changed; and the religion of personal fear remains nearly at the level of the savage" (668-69). As Eliot and Fielding studied their respective eras, recording the problems and concerns through the tool of realism, they collided with the idea that the social ills might well be

related to the decline of religious foundations. The observations of the narrator are not the observations of a minister saying the decline of civilization is in direct proportion to the decline in an obedience to God, but rather the scholarly observations of two well-read intellectuals who saw the different theories of their respective eras assaulting the individual rather than uplifting him, that with progress, intellectual as well as material, simple human virtues such as benevolence and compassion were being cast aside. As in the eighteenth century, the Victorians were experiencing a crisis of faith. The science of Locke and Newton needed to be incorporated into the religious ethos of the Neoclassical period. Darwin was undermining a great deal of the religious doctrine for the Victorians; their sense of historical time was significantly altered. The science of both eras was attacking the spiritual immune systems of its inhabitants. Fielding and Eliot were concerned with these forces which were crushing the spirit of the individual. John Tucker asks about Middlemarch: "What sort of enterprise is he [the narrator] engaged in, then?" Tucker's answer is the following:

We have been invited to think of the novel as an experiment, to imagine the book as a kind of terrarium, a miniature ecosystem where all the flora and fauna of English provincial life are allowed to flourish. Into this little world a creature from another time and place is released, a modern Saint Theresa. . . . [B]ut experiment is

only a partial way of describing what the novel is up to. More precisely, the experimental impulse is visibly in conflict here with another, older set of values. (782)

Whether the variable in the social experiment is a Saint Theresa or a Dorothea, a Lydgate, or a Tom Jones, the emotions and passions of the individual are of utmost importance in both novels. Both novels ask: "How the individual will survive the dictates and mores of his/her respective eras, when those dictates and mores are so very often aimed as a weapon against humanity?" The narratives of both Tom Jones and Middlemarch at least attempt to provide an answer. What is interesting is that what the characters of Middlemarch may be trying to overcome are the very ideals that built Fielding's eighteenth-century world view.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Satiric Connection

One of the intentions of establishing the Fielding connection to George Eliot's Middlemarch is to be able to discuss the novel as a satire. It seems odd that with all these connections between Eliot and Fielding that one of the most important connections has been ignored; that is, the idea that Middlemarch is actually a satire. Certainly, if a novel employs satiric elements and is connected to one of literature's most famous satires, Tom Jones, there are at least enough elements to begin a discussion. And if a novelist mimics one of English literature's most famous satirists, Henry Fielding, then certainly an argument can be forged. Another reason for considering Middlemarch a satire is that it satirizes society, in this case provincial society.

To firmly establish the satiric connection, three main areas will be discussed: the manner in which Eliot and Fielding construct characters, the role of satire in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the narrator as satirist in both Middlemarch and Tom Jones. Also a brief discussion on the satiric strategies in both novels will be presented.

Michael McKeon in The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 discusses literature as a revolutionary tool. He remarks:

When we schematically describe intellectual or social conflict as an opposition between two contending forces, we rightly adopt a schematism that was constructed by seventeenth-century contemporaries to reduce the existent field of indefinite possibility to manageable proportions. One central function of categories like romance and novel, aristocracy and middle class, sword and robe, Whig and Tory, landed and monied interest, is to make conflict--and its mediation--accessible by simplifying and institutionalizing its terms. Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century, "the novel" and "the middle class" have an institutional and monolithic integrity that would seem to belie even the modest partiality expressed by our epistemological and social conflicts, let alone the broad range of lived diversity which those conflicts make intelligible. (McKeon 268)

For McKeon, literature became an example of "the application of reference-group theory to the study of revolution" which has "helped us to understand these mysterious currents of historical process because it discloses the multitude of relative perceptions that contribute to an apparently highly singular end like political revolt." In other words, McKeon sets up the radical, commentary, and social reform bias for the novel and aims the new form towards the nineteenth century.

McKeon continues:

Early modern English people knew the dialectical truths of reference-group theory. They also ascribed sufficient power and value to literature to regard it as political and social change "by other means." This is nowhere more obvious than

in the commonplace insistence that the function of literature, and of satire in particular, is to correct and reform mankind. (268)

McKeon gives special emphasis to the "satire" as a means of revolt and reform, and Middlemarch and Tom Jones certainly seem designed to instruct and correct humankind. However, the important message behind McKeon's discussion is that earlier phrase which states that literature, most particularly satire, was used "to reduce the existent field of indefinite possibility to manageable proportions" (268). As has already been discussed in this paper, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were eras in a tremendous state of flux. The class structures of both worlds were being upended by economic changes; the individual's value system was being challenged by the scientific, philosophical, legal, and political organizations of the times. These challenges are of course true of all eras. Every century is in a state of change, yet, not every era responds by building novels on satiric principles. Both Fielding and Eliot did respond by writing large, panoramic works which disclosed the foibles and problems of their respective eras. And the satire was the most convenient form in which to formulate their observations. As McKeon suggests, "satire helps connect several disparate strands" (309). Eras of great complexity and a lack of stability, conflicts between

opposing systems of thoughts and institutions, spawn reactions found in satires.

McKeon, in a broader discussion of Fielding's works notably his early dramas, suggests that "the highly reflexive quality of much of Fielding's drama suggests that he was both fascinated and impatient with an artistic mode so obligated to the evidence of the senses that its illusions fairly cried out for an easy disconfirmation" (382). The pressures of rational, empirical reasoning, characteristic of the thinking of his era, seem to have been an impetus in devising Fielding's imaginative genius. He was working against the strictures of his century. His creativity pushed against the confines of his era and helped to develop the format of his later novels. McKeon explains that the early dramas:

these farces are also Fielding's first laboratory for the experimental juxtaposition of questions of truth and virtue. It was not hard to see, in the popular theater of the period, a connection between the epistemological ingratiating of the senses evident in the wholesale reliance on theatrical "spectacle," and the shameless commercial pandering that was entailed in such theatrics. Moreover Fielding often seized the occasion to specify the traditional analogy of the world and the stage to a self-conscious critique of political manipulation and corruption under the Whig "management" of the 1730s. Even the old dramatic device of discovery and reversal takes on (at least with hindsight) a characteristically Fieldingesque exorbitance. (383)

The early artistic rebellion by Fielding helped create his later novels. A doctrine of his satiric motivation is

evident in the "The Preface to Joseph Andrews," where Fielding outlines his novelistic intentions. From the rather flippant explanation that his new form is a "comic epic poem in prose," Fielding breaks down this category into more precise units. He explains that the comic epic poem in prose differs

from comedy, as the serious epic from tragedy; its action being more extended and comprehensive; containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a greater variety of characters. It differs from the serious romance in its fable and action, in this; that as in the one these are grave and solemn, so in the other they are light and ridiculous: it differs in its characters by introducing characters of inferior rank, and consequently, of inferior manners, whereas the grave romance sets the highest before us: lastly in its sentiments and diction; by preserving the ludicrous instead of the sublime. (Fielding, Joseph Andrews 48)

Certainly the above passage is remarkably descriptive of Eliot's Middlemarch. Her novel is "extended and comprehensive; containing a greater variety of characters" than many of the other novels of her era and of even her earlier works. The genre she employs differs significantly from the "serious romance" yet employs, as Fielding does in Tom Jones, enough reactions to and elements of the romance form to indicate a healthy respect for it. The tone of both novels fluctuates between "grave and solemn" and the "light and ridiculous." A wide variety of characters along the social spectrum are introduced in Eliot's work, as well as Fielding's. Her characters of inferior rank, such as the

Garths, are certainly not as low as the rowdy, brawling Molly Seagrim and Black George of Tom Jones, because Eliot gives the Garths a bit of salt-of-the-earth dignity. Yet all the characters played off each other in both novels have much in common: the low of birth are only inferior in their level of poverty; their virtue is described as the wealth of their character. Bulstrode is a wealthy personage in Middlemarch. Though not often center stage in the novel, he nevertheless maintains a tight hold over the financial fates of the denizens of Middlemarch. He is socially respectable, but he is the true villain in the piece. Rosamond Vincy also is the local "angel" in the community. Yet Eliot uncovers her wretched selfishness when she portrays her as the unsympathetic wife. Likewise, Fielding's "good" characters are often the dregs of the community. Tom Jones himself is illegitimate, but he has the most generous and noble heart in the novel. Mr. Western, Mrs. Western, Lady Bellaston, Square and Thwackum, and Blifil are characters of elevated social status, but their nobility is simply a show. Their respective hearts are of a low inferior rank. Fielding remarks later in the "Preface" that "the only source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is affectation," and "Now, affectation proceeds from one of these two causes, vanity or hypocrisy" (50). In this Eliot also mirrors Fielding's intentions. The targets of most of

Eliot's satiric attacks are those who are vain, like Rosamond Vincy and at times Lydgate, affected like Mr. Brooke's and Casaubon's respective political and intellectual ambitions, and, of course, the very damaging hypocrisy of Bulstrode. Fielding likewise mocks the pretensions of Mrs. Western, Square and Thwackum, the Partridges, marvels at the vanities of all his characters from the surly Molly Seagrim up through the aristocratic manipulations of Lady Bellaston, and rages against the hypocrisy of his era.

Both Eliot and Fielding are very concerned about the hypocrisy of their eras. Satire becomes the perfect vehicle in which to express this hypocrisy. George Eliot's last essay in The Westminster Review, entitled "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness" and published in January 1857, was about the poet, Edward Young (Pinion 16). In this essay, Eliot discusses Young's notion that all forms of folly can be attributed to one passion; this "ruling passion" often becomes the pivot to graver social ills, namely hypocrisy. Eliot says about Young:

Like Pope, whom he imitated, he sets out with a psychological mistake as the basis of his satire, attributing all forms of folly to one passion--the love of fame, or vanity--a much grosser mistake, indeed than Pope's exaggeration of the extent to which the "ruling passion" determines conduct in the individual. (Eliot, "Worldliness" 234)

The manner of looking at character as determined by a "ruling passion" in a created character becomes a touchstone in both the works of Fielding and Eliot. It is interesting also in that same essay that Eliot remarks: "Young's oddity and absence of mind are gathered from other sources besides these stories of Mrs. Montagu's and gave rise to the report that he was the original of Fielding's 'Parson Adams;'" (Sheppard 221). The connection between Fielding, Young, hypocrisy, and satire does not stop there. David Nokes, in Raillery and Rage--A Study in Eighteenth-Century Satire asserts:

At the heart of almost all of Fielding's work is a simple contrast between the spontaneous good nature of a Joseph Andrews, a Parson Adams, or a Tom Jones, and this practised hypocrisy of a dedicated follower of fashion such as Beau Didapper or Lady Bellaston. (95)

Eliot also contrasts the goodness of a Dorothea, a Ladislav, or a Mary Garth against the ruthlessness of a Bulstrode, the selfish cunning of a Rosamond Vincy, or the cold, self-interest of a Casaubon. But in the essay on Young, Eliot also discusses Young's role as a satirist. This detailed analysis gave her an enhanced understanding of Fielding's satiric techniques when she later read Tom Jones. About Young she says:

Young never could describe a real, complex human being; but what he could do with eminent success was to describe, with neat and finished point, obvious types of manners rather than

character . . . [and] to write cold and clever epigrams on personified vices and absurdities. There is no more emotion in his satire than if he was turning witty verses on a waxen image of Cupid or a lady's glove. (Eliot, "Worldliness" 233)

But Eliot is clever enough to realize that Young "is not a satirist of a high order." She explains:

This is one reason why the Satires, read seriatim, have a flatness to us, which, when we afterward read picked passages, we are inclined to disbelieve in, and to attribute to some deficiency in our own mood. . . . His satire has neither the terrible vigor, the lacerating energy of genuine indignation, nor the humour which owns loving fellowship with the poor human nature it laughs at; nor yet the personal bitterness which, as in Pope's characters of Sporus and Atticus, insures those living touches by virtue of which the individual and particular in Art becomes the universal and immortal. (233)

Young appears to be the antithesis of what later Eliot discovers in Fielding, for like herself, Fielding displays benevolence towards his characters, and, with a high degree of energy and vigor, travels through the pain and pleasures of his characters while he snickers at their weaknesses. Walter E. Houghton, in The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870, offers this comment by Eliot on character, a quotation footnoted as coming from Cross's George Eliot's Life, from a letter to Blackwood dated February 18, 1857:

My artistic bent is directed not at all to the presentation of eminently irreproachable characters, but to the presentation of mixed human beings in such a way as to call forth tolerant judgment, pity, and sympathy. (qtd. in Houghton 279)

This comment resembles Fielding's comment in Tom Jones, where he remarks that "We do not pretend to introduce any infallible characters into this history" (17). Eliot's comment, Houghton feels, is a "discussion of fiction which develops her characteristic defense of realism" (279). He adds:

Her purpose was partly social amelioration. Though the artist should not propose concrete remedies for particular evils, he should give reform its animating spirit by rousing "The nobler emotions, which make mankind desire the social right." But George Eliot had a wider object in mind which she shared with many of her contemporaries in the fifties and sixties, to heal the divisive effect of the sectarian spirit, especially in the area of religion. In the clash of warring doctrines, speculative truth begins to appear but a shadow of individual minds. Agreement between intellects seems unattainable, and we turn to the "truth of feeling" as the only universal bond of union"--the truth, that is, of those sympathetic feelings which draw men together. . . . Men are increasingly drawn together by that which belongs to the spheres of sympathies . . . while they attach less and less importance to merely intellectual agreement. To further this movement was the central aim of George Eliot's work. (Houghton 279)

Eliot's novel contains the seeds of revolution McKeon mentions in the beginning of this chapter. Also the direction of Eliot's intent in the above quotation sounds very similar to Fielding's notions that the "rational" aspects of his era are more appropriate sources of parody than aspects to be taken seriously. Fielding, too, adheres to the principles of realism because it brings him closer to the real, the actual components of everyday experience.

Ronald Paulson in Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England discusses the novel's connection to satire, realism, and the complexity of eras:

Although the novel may be ultimately concerned with understanding rather than judging, with comedy rather than satire, the situation was very different in the beginning. Satire was naturally most useful during the insurgent phase of a realistic movement, when manifestos were being issued and the strong walls of convention had to be broken through. Satire offered a militancy in the presentation of reality far beyond the reach of comedy. (18)

Perhaps "the presentation of reality far beyond the reach of comedy" explains why so many critics miss the humorous elements in Middlemarch. The satirist and the aim of the satirist is Paulson's next focus:

The satirist customarily regards reality as something that the ordinary person can see only if he takes off the glasses of convention (the convention of romance, pastoral, epic)--[The transformation of the epic and romance genres by Fielding and Eliot has already been discussed in chapter three of this paper]. He says, in effect: I am going to show you things as they really are. See how simple--all of this that appeared complex can be reduced to lust and greed [Young's "ruling passion"]; or else, see how complex--all of this that appeared to be simple is less easily formulable than you think. Surprising exposure is a basic satiric aim, and satirists have developed many ingenious ways of revealing truth under appearance. They have accordingly tended to adopt the pose of convention-destroyers and anti-romanticists. Beginning with Horace and Juvenal, satirists have established their "true" picture of life by contrasting it with the imaginary world of tragedy and romance. (18-9)

This technique of contrast was employed by both Fielding and Eliot in their works, as has already been discussed in chapter three. The genres of romance and tragedy were being transformed by both authors as they constructed their satires, Tom Jones and Middlemarch. The above quotation clearly unites the novelistic intentions of both Eliot and Fielding, and, since the discussion is about the nature and aim of satire, it connects the two artists in a most profound way.

To more clearly identify the satiric techniques and strategies Eliot borrowed from Fielding, it is important to return to her essay on Edward Young. The satiric technique of grandiloquence forms a portion of the discussion in "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness." Eliot states:

The source of all grandiloquence is the want of taking for a criterion the true qualities of the object described or the emotion expressed. The grandiloquent man is never bent on saying what he feels or what he sees, but on producing a certain effect on his audience; hence he may float away into utter inanity without meeting any criteria to arrest him. (238)

Two particular scenes, one from Tom Jones, the other from Middlemarch, illustrate Fielding's and Eliot's use of the grandiloquent in their works. The rational in Fielding's era was as much a source of parody for him as the romantic spirit was a source of mockery for Eliot. In Fielding's work, those characters who appear the most rational become the most ludicrous of all. Consider this

carefully constructed juxtaposition of satiric scenes from "One of the most bloody battles, or rather duels, that were ever recorded in Domestic History" from Tom Jones. In this segment, Mrs. Partridge "rationally" investigates her jealousy toward Jenny Jones:

Nothing can be so quiet and sudden as the operations of the mind, especially when hope, or fear; or jealousy to which the two others are but journeymen, set it to work. It occurred instantly to her, that Jenny had scarce ever been out of her own house, while she lived with her. The leaning over the chair, the sudden starting up, in Latin, the smile, and many other things rushed upon her all at once. The satisfaction her husband expressed in the departure of Jenny, appeared now to be only dissembled again, in the same instant, to be real, and yet to confirm her jealousy, as proceeding from satiety, and a hundred other bad causes. In a word, she was convinced of her husband's guilt, and immediately left the assembly in confusion. (Tom Jones 96-7)

This cool veneer of logical analysis, the legalistic search for evidence to decide a matter, is followed by the raging of the fair "Grimalkin," Fielding's nickname for Mrs. Partridge, as she moves from logic to the flash of violence inherent in her disposition:

Not with less flurry did Mrs. Partridge fly on the poor pedagogue. Her tongue, teeth and hands, fell all upon him at once. His wig was in an instant torn from his head, his shirt from his back, and from his face descended five streams of blood, denoting the number of claws which with nature had unhappily armed the enemy. (97)

In this simple but energetic scene, Fielding maligns much of the supposed rational methods of thought prevalent in his era. Beneath the surface of rationality lay the

violence which fills the corners of Tom Jones and the world of the eighteenth century. Eliot employs the same technique in Middlemarch as she examines the excessive emotional spirit of her age. For example, this segment from the "Sunset and Sunrise" section, chapter twenty-seven, deals also with the subject of jealousy.

"Drive on to Freshitt Fall," she said to the coachman, and any one looking at her might have thought that though she was paler than usual she was never more animated by a more self-possessed energy. And that was really her experience. It was as if she had drunk a great draught of scorn that stimulated her beyond the susceptibility to other feelings. She had seen something so far below her belief, that her emotions rushed back from it and made an excited throng without an object. She needed something active to turn her excitement out upon. She felt the power to walk and work for a day, without meat or drink. . . . She wished them to know about Lydgate, whose married loneliness under his trial now presented itself to her with new significance, and made her more ardent in readiness to be his companion. . . . She took it as a sign of new strength. (Middlemarch 833)

This grandiloquent, dramatic setup is immediately followed by a conversation between Celia and Dorothea which instantly fizzles the intensity of the previous scene's emotion:

"Dodo, how bright your eyes are!" said Celia. . . . "And you don't see anything you look at, Arthur or anything. You are going to do something, uncomfortable, I know. Is it about Mr Lydgate, or has something else happened?"

"Yes, dear, a great many things have happened," said Dodo, in her full tones.

"I wonder what," said Celia.

"Oh all the trouble of all people on the face of the earth." . . .

"Dear me, Dodo, are you going to have a scheme for them?" said Celia, a little uneasy at this Hamlet-like raving.

Celia, expressing the sentiments of her age, this dislike of excessive emotionality, of uncontrolled passions, is juxtaposed against Dorothea's romantic concerns.

Several points of comparison are produced by the above passages. First, Fielding was a master in "producing a certain effect on his audience." Through the constant interchange between the authorial presence and the reader, the dramatist in Fielding is always manipulating the audience. Tom Jones is his journey; the reader is merely a passenger on an exciting, seemingly endless romp. What emotion is expected, Fielding controls. In the same way, Eliot dictates, although more subtly, the same sort of control over the reader; she tells us what to feel towards the characters and the era in which they abide. It is her strong intellectual voice which allows the reader to sit back and enjoy the journey. The reader is only committed to observing her viewpoint of the action. The technique of grandiloquence is an ornament of control in both novels. The exaggeration is accepted because the reader trusts the narrator, the satirist, and the satiric voice. Although Eliot seldom seems that she "utters inanity without meeting any criteria head on," as Fielding does quite consistently, it is but an illusion. While Fielding romps all over his

novel, like a court jester, adjusting scenes and logic to fit his mood and need of the moment, Eliot just pretends to follow some sort of criteria. She is orderly in her presentation, but, for example, her ludicrous defense of Casaubon becomes a sort of justification which dissolves into sheer irony, the irony George A. Test in Satire, Spirit, and Art calls "the irony of disparate elements"; that is, "the main expression of disparate elements is to treat a trivial, mean, or otherwise unredeeming subject as though it were a fact in nature or had epic dimensions" (174). This concept runs wild in Tom Jones and is present in Middlemarch yet in a more subdued tone. For example, Eliot writes in defense of Casaubon:

I protest against any absolute conclusion, any prejudice derived from Mrs. Cadwallader's contempt for a neighbouring clergyman's alleged greatness of soul, of Sir James Chettam's poor opinion of his rival's legs,-- from Mr Brooke's failure to elicit a companion's ideas, or from Celia's criticism of a middle-aged scholar's personal appearance. (Middlemarch 110)

This personal appearance reference is of course a remark made earlier by Celia concerning the worth of the bridegroom, Casaubon. In this delightfully witty conversation between the sisters, the satire in the novel is evident:

When the two girls were in the drawing-room alone, Celia said--

"How very ugly Mr Casaubon is!"

"Celia! He is one of the most distinguished--

looking men I ever saw. He is remarkably like the portrait of Locke. He has the same deep eye-sockets."

"Had Locke those two white moles with hairs on them?"

"Oh, I daresay! When people of a certain sort looked at him," said Dorothea, walking a little.

"Mr. Casaubon is so fallow."

All the better. I suppose you admire a man with the complexion of a cochon de lait." (42)

This conversation continues with Dorothea continually defending Casaubon's virtues over Celia's nasty but obviously more thorough grasp on reality than Dorothea possesses. The satiric narrator in Middlemarch continues this relentless defense of Casaubon, most notably in the already discussed chapter ten. Throughout the novel, Eliot defends Casaubon despite his cruel and vindictive spirit directed against Will and Dorothea. Ironically, the narrator becomes a source of satire for Eliot. This justification of character sounds much like Fielding's endless defense of Jones, whose licentious behavior seems to be but a product of his naïveté or his poor timing, of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. As usual, like Eliot's Celia, the reader knows the truth, the essential weakness of the character, yet is willing to put that viewpoint aside in favor of the authorial direction. Eliot's "benevolence" towards her characters is the same technique Fielding uses called "mock deference," a technique infused throughout Tom Jones.

The role of the narrator in a satire is interesting and applicable to the satiric connecting between Fielding and Eliot. Ronald Paulson examines the role of satire and the narrator in his book. Echoing the remarks by McKeon quoted earlier in this chapter, Paulson remarks:

This new kind of writing embodied many values abhorrent to the Augustan satirists; a form interested in human experience for its own sake replaced one that advocated strict moral judgment. Indeed the novel and satire are convenient poles from which to chart the patterns of change in eighteenth-century literature and criticism. The novel, as the name implies, represents new values, and satire, usually a conservative genre, represents old.
(3)

The shift changes the role of the satirist. Now, "the satirist shoots rays out in space, catching as many aspects of folly and/or knavery as possible; but in time he touches only the past that was better and the future that will be worse. . . . Change is often desired by the subject of satire, but it always remains false aspiration or attempted impersonation." Paulson also remarks:

And so the eighteenth century heralds a change from a literature concerned with "the actions of a character in a situation with primary interest in the moral consequences and values of those actions"--[from Ernest Tuveson's The Imagination as a Means of Grace]--as in classical satire--to a literature concerned with the responses of a character's consciousness. (5)

These changes signal a new persona for the narrator: "Whether the satirist deals with the observer or the object, he can no longer count on the emblematic character, a

sitting duck in whom clear-cut patterns of right and wrong are evident to a reasonable, unprejudiced mind" (7). The narrator's shift also changes the role of the reader: "With the shift of interest from the objective action to the consciousness of it, and from the objective character to the dissolution of objective identity in consciousness, the reader finds himself no longer willing or able to step back and judge with detachment." The narrator becomes a powerful directive force.

Paulson likes to divide Augustan satire politically with categories of Tory and Whig references. He states, "the basic rhetorical strategy of Tory satire involved isolating individuals" (57). In another form of Tory fiction, "the good man is defeated and alone, a descendant of the alienated Juvenalian satirist. The isolated Satans and Quixotes have taken over and are running society according to the wildly individualistic ways; the good man is always isolated in chaos" (57). This form certainly reflects the Lydgate of Middlemarch and Fielding's Tom Jones. True to the dictates of his "Preface" in Joseph Andrews, Fielding remarks "Ridicule is one of those principal lights or natural mediums by which things are to be viewed, in order to a thorough recognition: for that truth, it is supposed, may bear all lights" (72). Paulson also remarks about the role of the satirist that "the

metaphor that makes the satirist and, later, the reader himself a magistrate, and every character or action a case for judgment, becomes a central one in Tom Jones (96).

Paulson offers this detailed discussion about Fielding's narrator in Tom Jones:

To begin with, it involves a more modified definition of a satirist--a more legal, even social, interpretation with less sense of urgency; a transition from a prosecuting attorney to an impartial judge with a more or less even balance of alternatives before him. Besides the metaphor itself and one of the possible forms through which to convey it, Fielding also developed in his periodicals, a persona that began to move in the direction of the detached, fair-minded judge who would later be equated with the artist-creator or historian in the characteristic figure of the Fielding narrator. (96)

Certainly any number of the elements discussed by Paulson are relevant to a discussion of Eliot's narrator also. In summarizing his views of Fielding's satire, Paulson concludes with these remarks:

My own supposition is that Fielding began as a satirist in order to be in the proper tradition of writing, and that as he became increasingly immersed in his undertaking he became increasingly interested in the moral imperatives which satire requires. Put another way, he began not for but against certain things, a typical satirist; as time passed he became knowledgeable of the positives to which pantomimes and political corruption are opposed, and so his persona, and perhaps he himself, became increasingly the orthodox Christian which Pope used as his persona in his ethic epistles. Certainly the positives became more important as he grew older, partly due to his reformer's instinct, his career in the law, and his belief in man's positive potential. He became more interested in the causes and motives--in the lure of fashion and emulation--

than in the criminal act itself. (99)

This last quotation brings Fielding very close to Eliot's narrator in Middlemarch. According to U. C. Knoepfelmacher in George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism:

In Middlemarch George Eliot thus balanced and reapportioned all the elements which had warred in most of her previous fiction. Fully profiting from each of her earlier successes and failures, she devised a form which drew on all the modes she had previously used: the domestic tale, fable, romance, epic, tragedy, and satire. (11)

Knoepfelmacher perhaps unwittingly asserts that the satire is present in Middlemarch. It seems a very small leap to proclaim that Middlemarch is a satire, after all the connections have been established between Fielding and Eliot. He also claims that, like Fielding's attempt to reconcile the diverse, conflicting elements of his era through the satiric form and the satire, Tom Jones, Eliot had a similar mission:

George Eliot's preoccupation with time and reality resulted from her desire to reconcile the empirical laws of nineteenth-century science with the teleology of her lost belief. Her purpose was shared by those who hoped to steer their iron age toward a better future. If, in our own times, the golden era they yearned for has hardly materialized, we can at any rate participate in their imaginative refashioning of the past. As George Eliot understood so well, each age, though irrevocably separated from that preceding it, must nevertheless reinterpret the past it has lost in order to arrange its own disordered present. (Knoepfelmacher 13)

It seems so very obvious that in form, fiction, and the interpretation of history, Eliot leaned heavily on the experienced work of Henry Fielding. He had drawn a literary blueprint, distinct enough for her to attach to the complexities of her own era. Knoepfmacher further remarks:

It was Eliot's refusal to accept some of the logical implications of her own outlook which led this highly logical woman to see new theoretical forms which would accommodate reason and faith, the promptings of the head and the heart. Her philosophical system was destined to remain inconsistent, as likely to be superseded as our own feeble efforts to account for the dualistic nature of life. Yet the very inconsistencies of her creed permitted her to create two acknowledged masterpieces whose artistic reality exceeded by far that of her underlying ideas. (13)

Given the discussion of the power and intention behind the satiric form and Eliot's obvious knowledge and attachment to the work of Henry Fielding, most specifically Tom Jones, in her writing of Middlemarch, it seems essential to conclude that satire was the perfect genre in which to write her most famous and critically acclaimed work. Simply because the connections between the genre and Henry Fielding have not been stressed very strongly does not disprove the disprove the fact that Middlemarch is a wonderfully entertaining satire on the strengths and foibles of the Victorian era, its inhabitants and its ethos. To merely assert something like "perhaps Eliot only uses satiric strategy in the novel and yet it is not a satire" only weakens the links between herself and Fielding and

perpetuates the critical insistence that the relationship between Eliot and Fielding was a passing acquaintance and not the passionate affair which the text of Middlemarch verifies, at least beyond a reasonable doubt. It seems more than appropriate to both establish the important linkage between Eliot and Fielding, thereby reconstructing the historical connections between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to call both novels a satire. To mimic the mathematical formulas both Fielding and Eliot hint at in their novels: if $A=B$ and $B=C$, then $A=C$. Such relationships are never mere equivocations.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

To end this study with the concept of Middlemarch as a satire serves many purposes. First, it ties together the chapters on Science and History because both areas are relevant to the development of the Satire. As Paulson reminds us:

In Tom Jones Fielding is even more emphatic about the special quality of his form than in Joseph Andrews: he calls himself "the founder of a new province of writing" (Bk. II, Chap. I; 3, 66) and his work "this kind of writing, of which we have set ourselves at the head" (Bk. V, Chap. I; 3, 205); he now calls his writing "this heroic historical, prosaic poem" (Bk. IV, Chap. I; 3, 143) and "this historic kind of writing" (Bk. IX, Chap. I; 4, 154). The emphasis shifts from epic to history as the defining genre. Indeed Fielding's changing employment of satire as we have traced it corresponds in certain particulars to the role of satire in history writing in Fielding's lifetime. (150)

Brian Rosenberg in "George Eliot and the Victorian 'Historic Imagination'" also gives Eliot credit for her innovative contribution to the concept of history and fiction in her own era:

To call George Eliot representative is not to say anything new, one of the commonplaces of Eliot criticism being that her intellectual and artistic development epitomizes the most decided trends of the nineteenth century. The brief note on "Historic Imagination," however is almost uniquely concentrated, enlightening, and paradigmatic, even for a writer so centrally located as Eliot. Its object--the effective incorporation of history into art--preoccupied Victorian writers as it

has preoccupied no others before or since; [except for perhaps Henry Fielding] its argument echoes and crystallizes many of the major theoretical statements of four decades; and its application extends from fiction to poetry, social criticism, and other kinds of historical recreation. Understand these fifteen sentences and we understand much about what writers like Eliot, Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens, and Browning were trying repeatedly to accomplish. (Rosenberg 1)

Some of these new ideas about history included: (1) The writing of history is extremely important; (2) "This writing should be neither completely factual nor completely imaginary, but somehow should combine concrete facts with the artist's shaping vision;" (3) The concrete facts can range from the mundane to the extraordinary [or the "marvelous" as Fielding would maintain]; (4) "Imaginative recreation of historical material should draw from it some meaning--moral, psychological, spiritual--which transcends the specific historical moment and applies as well to other places and times. Understanding history, that is should allow us to see in the past the seeds of the present and future." [Again, Paulson has emphasized the distinct quality of satire in that it looks back longingly to the past]; (5) "This intimate relationship between past and present must inevitably affect the style and structure of imaginative historical writing;" (6) "Only the heroic figure--frequently the artist--can see within his or her own time the transcendent, ahistorical meaning" (Rosenberg 1). These excerpts and ideas were written down by Eliot between

1872 and 1879, corresponding to the writing of Middlemarch and Eliot's reading of Tom Jones.

The reason to comment on the historic connection is again to emphasize the relationship between Eliot and Fielding and their shared views on the importance of history in the writing of the novel and to recognize the connection between history and the Satire.

Further, the satiric form, as Paulson has indicated, places its emphasis on realism. Realism is the tool which both creates and molds the satirist's experience in his text. This is especially critical to the development of the satiric narrator; it helps to establish his authority and his control over the reader. Notably, both Eliot and Fielding use the technique of realism in their respective novels. This realism is a product of the complexity and philosophical diversity of their eras; it shapes the epistemological concepts of their respective centuries. Realism ties into the satiric and the scientific portions of this paper and the works of Fielding and Eliot. As Tucker has already been quoted as saying, the objective, scientific narrator of Middlemarch is a satiric device used by Eliot. Also as a way of tying this view in with another, look at the vitally important chapter fifteen in Middlemarch. This quotation from Susan M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's book,

The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination serves a dual purpose:

Understandably, then, the narrator is presented as someone who is scientifically unravelling the social fabric in order to study how it came into being: "I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots," this narrator reasons, "and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe" (chap. 15). Like Lydgate or Casaubon, this narrator is searching for the hidden structure that gives coherence and meaning to the whole. (Gilbert and Gubar 523)

This search for the "hidden structure that gives coherence and meaning to the whole" is the motivation behind the satiric form in general and displays the intentions of both authors. Also in both their novels we find a range of satiric strategies which include the use of the foil, the juxtaposition of scenes, the comic, the ironic, and the antagonism against and admiration for the genres of the romance and the epic. We discover a new, more dimensional view of character in which the authors philosophically, morally, and scientifically scrutinize their creations. The narrators of both works are as complex and interesting as any of the other characters in the novels. This is a very modern concept which Eliot and Fielding share. They have both written novels of manners and mores; their satiric narrators' gaze is both harsh and benevolent. There is an

implicit sense of honor in many of the characters from both works, and many of the "noble" characters are "ardent" in their passions and their weaknesses. Something new concerning character which both Fielding and Eliot add to their satires is the "gaze" into the motives or "controlling passion" of their characters' lives.

As satirists, Fielding and Eliot share a passionate longing for the past and an anxiety about the future of their eras. The numerous, conflicting theories and advances--philosophical, economic, scientific--leave the authors and the characters in their novels gasping for air, uncertain about their place in their present surroundings, and unable to fully grasp the significance of the future. Both novels contain the "acting" metaphor, a metaphor which often appears in satires in general, frequently in many of Fielding's works, and is covered by Eliot with her comments about the dramas and melodramas of her characters' lives.

The difficult task, when discussing the satiric connections between Eliot and Fielding, becomes where does one stop looking; everywhere--in drawing room or church, in office or at deathbeds--the satiric elements abide. No character escapes the subtle Eliotian sideswipe. It is sad that so much of Eliot's wonderful, ironic humor is missed, as Tucker suggests, by the critics. Virginia Woolf in her essay, "George Eliot," calls Middlemarch--"the

magnificent book which with all its imperfections is one of the few English novels written for grown-up people" (Haight, A Century 187). This fine tribute follows this searing comment:

We can only attribute the ease and pleasure with which we ramble from house to smithy, from cottage parlour to rectory garden, to the fact that George Eliot makes us share their lives, not in a spirit of condescension or of curiosity, but in a spirit of sympathy. She is no satirist. The movement of her mind was too slow and cumbersome to lend itself to comedy. But she gathers in her large grasp a great bunch of the main elements of human nature and groups them loosely together with a tolerant and wholesome understanding which, as one finds upon re-reading, has not only kept her figures fresh and free, but has given them an unexpected hold upon our laughter and our tears. (186)

Perhaps Woolf's desire to initiate Eliot into the hall of legitimate literature has made her view Middlemarch in too serious a manner. A look at the Fielding influence upon George Eliot's writing has uncovered evidence of her incredibly fine sense of humor and irony, her skillful satiric hand, and the literary tradition upon which Eliot truly places the text of Middlemarch. Though there is an obvious overlay of Victorian subtlety upon the text when her work is linked with Fielding's, it becomes evident that George Eliot was a fine satirist. Perhaps this is the best reason to explore the connection between Eliot and Fielding--to give George Eliot the credit she deserves for carrying the conflicts and strengths of the Victorian era

into the twentieth century through the transformed vehicle of Fielding's eighteenth-century satire. George Eliot took an imaginary, provincial burg and turned it into a laboratory to investigate the fabric of the Victorian era. As a mentor, Fielding was a wonderful model, but Eliot added her own unique genius to the satiric form and gave it a spin which projected its relevance into the modern period and gave Middlemarch the universal quality she had so desperately wanted to achieve in her first satiric novel.

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