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RIRCED

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LIGNE EDITORIALE ET DOMAINES DE RECHERCHE

1. LIGNE EDITORIALE

La Revue Internationale de Recherche en Communication, Education et Développement (RIRCED) est une revue scientifique internationale multilingue (français, anglais, allemand, espagnol, portugais et yoruba). Les textes sont sélectionnés par le comité de rédaction de la revue après avis favorable du comité scientifique de lecture en raison de leur originalité, des intérêts qu'ils présentent aux plans africain, international et de leur rigueur scientifique. Les articles à publier doivent respecter les normes éditoriales suivantes :

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Volume : 18 à 20 pages ; interligne : 1,5 ; pas d'écriture : 12, Time New Roman.

- **Ordre logique du texte**

- Un TITRE en caractère d'imprimerie et en gras. Le titre ne doit pas être trop long ;
- Un Résumé en français qui ne doit pas dépasser 6 lignes ;

Les mots clés ;

Un résumé en anglais (Abstract) qui ne doit pas dépasser 6 Lignes ;

Key words ;

Introduction ;

Développement ;

Les articulations du développement du texte doivent être titrées et/ou sous titrées ainsi :

- Pour le **Titre** de la première section

1.1. Pour le Titre de la première sous-section

Pour le **Titre** de la deuxième section

1.2. Pour le Titre de la première sous-section de la deuxième section etc.

- **Conclusion**

Elle doit être brève et insister sur l'originalité des résultats de la Recherche.

- **Bibliographie**

Les sources consultées et/ou citées doivent figurer dans une rubrique, en fin de texte, intitulée :

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Elle est classée par ordre alphabétique (en référence aux noms de famille des auteurs) et se présente comme suit :

Pour un livre : Nom, Prénoms (ou initiaux), Titre du livre (en italique)
Lieu d'édition, Editions, Année d'édition.

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Les rapports et des documents inédits mais d'intérêt scientifique peuvent être cités.

- **La présentation des notes**
- La rédaction n'admet que des notes en bas de page. Les notes en fin de texte ne sont pas tolérées.
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- Communication et Information,
- Education et Formation,
- Développement et Economie,
- Sciences Politiques et Relations Internationales,
- Sociologie et Psychologie,
- Lettres, Langues et Arts,
- sujets généraux d'intérêts vitaux pour le développement des études au Bénin, en Afrique et dans le Monde.

Au total, la RIRCED se veut le lieu de rencontre et de dissémination de nouvelles idées et opinions savantes dans les domaines ci-dessus cités.

LE COMITE DE REDACTION

EDITORIAL

La Revue Internationale de Recherche en Communication, Education et Développement (RIRCED), publiée par l'Institut Universitaire Panafricain (IUP), est une revue ouverte aux Enseignants-Chercheurs et Chercheurs des universités, instituts, centres universitaires et grandes écoles.

L'objectif visé par la publication de cette revue dont nous sommes à la onzième publication est de permettre aux collègues Enseignants-Chercheurs et Chercheurs de disposer d'une tribune pour faire connaître leurs travaux de recherche. Cette édition a connu une modification en générale et en particulier au niveau du comité de rédaction où le Professeur Titulaire Elisabeth A. GNANSOUNOU épouse FOURN, devient le Directeur de Publication, le Dr (MC) Innocent C. DATONDJI reste le Rédacteur en Chef et le volume de la revue passe au numéro 2.

Le comité scientifique de lecture de la RIRCED est présidé par le Professeur Cyriaque C. S. AHODEKON. Il compte neuf membres dont huit (08) Professeurs Titulaires et un (01) Maître de Conférences.

Pr Elisabeth A. FOURN GNANSOUNOU

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THE MORAL GROWTH OF GEORGE ELIOT'S HEROINES: A CRITICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights and analyzes the moral development of George Eliot's characters in her novels. Eliot's moral view is characterized by her conviction in the moral growth of individuals as revealed through her heroines after learning from errors, experience, and sufferings. As long as the individuals treat others with sympathy and understanding, they can develop morally.

Keywords: individuals – sufferings – moral development.

RESUME

Cette étude met en évidence et analyse le développement moral des personages de George Eliot dans ses romans. La vision morale d'Eliot se caractérise par sa conviction de la croissance morale des individus,

révélée par ses héroïnes après avoir appris des erreurs, de l'expérience et des souffrances. Tant que les individus traitent les autres avec sympathie et compréhension, ils peuvent se développer moralement.
Mots clés: individus – souffrances – développement moral.

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian age is clearly reflected in all George Eliot's novels (except *Romola*, a historic novel) and her characters reveal conventional Victorian attitudes towards questions of behavior and morality that I choose to investigate through her heroines.

Moral growth comes to those who recognize the limitations of their vision instead of despairing (Granlund 175). While presenting examples of moral growth, George Eliot follows a realistic approach as a result of her belief in positive science. According to her, human beings have weakness: **"We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves."**(Eliot in *Middlemarch*, 208). This statement from *Middlemarch* contains the basis of George

Eliot's belief in morality and moral growth. It suggests that, a certain moral awareness is needed before moral growth can be achieved. Morality, for George Eliot, is something greater than the strict observance of the rigid laws laid down by society. Moral growth is achieved by those who learn through experience and self-knowledge, particularly self-knowledge, from egoism to altruism. Its opposite is moral decline as illustrated by George Eliot in the person of Tito Melema in *Romola.*

Being a woman herself, George Eliot seems to have a most penetrating insight into the minds of women, and her heroines are often more convincing than their male counterparts. Moreover, with the exception of Silas Marner and Adam Bede, the realism of moral growth belongs to the heroines.

1. THE ROAD TO MORAL GROWTH

If in most of George Eliot's novels, it is the heroine who develops morally, the hero plays also an important role. His role is often that of a moral adviser. He analyses the heroine to herself and to the reader, and he opens the road to moral growth. He is the moral

supporter, someone to be looked up to by the heroine, and a necessary requisite for: "the first condition of human goodness is something to love, the second something to venerate."

The hero is not always the moral adviser. In *Silas Marner*, it is Silas himself who is the subject of moral growth. In *Adam Bede*, Hetty is not reformed at the hands of Adam, but then whether or not she is a heroine is a debatable matter. Dinah, on the other hand, does change for the better, having witnessed Adam's sorrows.

These two novels are, however exceptions to the general rule. "Janet's Repentance", *The Mill on the Floss*, *Romola*, *Felix Holt, the Radical*, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* all contain a heroine who undergoes moral development with the aid and support of one of the main male characters.

In "Janet's Repentance", Mr. Tryan is the moral adviser. At the beginning of the tale, Janet, under the influence of her husband, is totally antagonistic towards the curate. But gradually she comes to revere him, and then to love him. Mr. Tryan is a realistic character. He is not perfect; he has sinned, repented and developed

morally himself. He is a human being, not a saint, as such, he understands his fellow creatures. Therefore, he is admirably suited to the task of reforming Janet. The fact that we are told Mr. Tryan's story adds to his human quality and this naturally makes Janet herself all the more convincing. Mr. Tryan is not a superman, but he has won the struggle between good and evil after a hard fight.

Philip Wakem, Maggie's adviser and lover in *The Mill on the Floss*, is less realistic than Mr. Tryan. It is true that his deformity and his bitterness about it lend him a certain air of reality, but he lacks the dimensions for a real life character. His role is to analyse Maggie to herself and to the reader, and he has little more apart from this. He is continually explaining Maggie's actions, and so is almost reduced to a mere passive analyst. He makes statements that seem to come straight from the mouth of the author: "You are not resigned; you are only trying to stupefy yourself!" He is almost too good to be true. He resigns all claims to Maggie with a nobleness that is unreal. He has an almost omniscient insight into Maggie's soul. It is the pathos which surrounds him that redeems him as a character. Moreover, Philip Wakem's existence is

necessary for the part he plays in the tragedy of Maggie's conscience. Miraculously, Maggie does not seem to suffer from his lack of realism. She exists too strongly in the mind of her creator for this to happen, and consequently she is put across as a convincing character.

Romola's adviser is not her lover, but the great friar, Savonarola. As Savonarola really existed, George Eliot is trying to portrait the man as he was. Not only is he the very human, but he is one of those divided souls who are not always completely sure of right and wrong. He is realistically complex. Nevertheless, Savonarola still does assume a certain two-dimensional quality. He is to some extent a vehicle for ideas, particularly the conflict of theory and practice. He never totally comes over as a living being, for he is too much the embodiment of an idea.

Felix Holt is a strange mixture. On a first reading of the novel of the same name, he might be thought a total failure, and Esther might consequently be thought misguided in her admiration for him, thus causing the whole theme of moral growth to be built on an illusion. However, on closer scrutiny of the book, Felix is perhaps

not such a fanatic and prosy bore as first suspected. He undergoes a sort of moral growth as well as Esther. He starts out by condemning in such an exaggerated way that the reader actually feels sympathy for Esther. Felix is such an idealist that he wants everything to be perfect. It is his nature. His attempted reform of Esther is part of his large scale plan to reform the people. As Esther improves, Felix seems to abandon his exaggerated attitude and grows to accept her as less than perfect. At the end, he speaks of himself as a **"sleek dog"** which prospective view of himself he would never have accepted the beginning. But Felix also appears at times as something less than human. He too is a vehicle for an idea that of socialism, and as a character he cannot exist without it. Take away Felix Holt's ideas and ideals, what is left? Almost nothing. Again, the heroine suffers only a little for this; for Esther can admire Felix ideals and try to live up to him. In doing so, she herself can remain a convincing and realistic character.

Will Ladislaw, the hero of *Middlemarch,* fails almost completely, and Dorothea cannot but be affected by this. Will has no characteristic at all. He is

unconceivable to the imagination. The reader cannot even be sure that is not a lay about, who dabbles his fingers in most everything. He is certainly no foil to Mr. Casaubon, except in so far as he is young and handsome whereas Mr. Casaubon is old and ugly. One wonders why Dorothea loves Will so devotedly, for he does nothing to deserve such love, except perhaps to understand and feel for her in her plight, to notice her as Casaubon never does. It detracts from the realism of dorothea's character that she loves an almost non-existent person, although her love might be explained by her tendency to do the unexpected. Her excuse for the great love she feels for Will Ladislaw is the fact that **"He has been used so ill"**. As a human being, Will is George Eliot's most negative character. He is not merely a silhouette, but a large blank, and Dorothea's love for him remains incomprehensive and unsatisfactory.

Not a great deal more can be said for Daniel Deronda. At the beginning of the novel, the reader is pleasantly impressed by Daniel. He seems a kind, considerate young man. But after a while, this begins to fall. Daniel is too good to be true, and he assumes the

aspect of a prig. The reader becomes weary and disgusted with him. Moreover, he too has not much character. Too much is said about him and through him. When he speaks, it is not to reveal his own character, but to speak of others, of the world. He is the superman upon whom Gwendolen can lean, and who can advise her from his superior height of knowledge and experience. The effect on Gwendolen is slight. She looks up to Daniel, and he is there to be looked up to, to be revered and loved. He plays his role and Gwendolen does not suffer from his lack of stature.

The heroines do not seem really to suffer as characters from the fact that their mentors often lack depth and realism. Dorothea is perhaps the greatest sufferer, but she still remains a realistically character herself. Romola whose adviser Savonarola, is perhaps the fullest of all these male characters, comes near to being too "good" herself.

Although a clear pattern of moral support can be seen in the examples mentioned, these are exceptions of the rule. Sometimes, moral support is given by a female character. Dorothea, for instance, while undergoing her own moral development, gives support to other

characters, particularly Rosamund, who on her part undergoes a very limited kind of moral growth herself.

Rosamund is, in a sense, a foil to Dorothea. She is a true egoist, and although Dorothea is an egoist in her own way, there is a world of difference between the two. Dorothea exerts herself to try and improve the world for others. Rosamund thinks only of improving her own lot. She is far too selfish to develop to any great degree, for her selfishness causes her to be blind to her own faults, and thereby eliminate any hope of improvement. But Dorothea, in the midst of her own suffering and growth, unwillingly teaches Rosamund a moral lesson, while trying to give her practical help. Rosamund, realizing Dorothea's generosity, is moved to do a generous act herself, which is the more noble because it causes her some effort to overcome her pride and admit that WILL admires Dorothea more than herself:

> "He has never had any love for me – I know he has not – he has always thought slightly of me. He said yesterday that no other woman existed for him besides you. The

> blame of what happened is entirely mine". (Eliot in *Middlemarch*, 105).

Thereafter, Rosamund's improvement is but slight. Nevertheless, her marriage is saved, and this is due indirectly to Dorothea. Through Dorothea, she improves as much a person of her character can improve.

Dorothea is also a great support to Rosamund's husband, Lydgate. Her gentle, unswering faith in him does much to help him through the great crisis of his life. Dorothea has no aim to improve Lydgate and Rosamund, but she wants to relieve their suffering, and in trying to do so, unconsciously influences them with her own moral development.

It is Dinah who, while enlarging her own vision as a result of Adam's suffering, proves to be a moral support to both Hetty and Adam. She helps Adam unobtrusively by her mere soothing presence, and he learns to appreciate her real goodness and selfishness, which is a foil to Hetty's complete unconsciousness and egoism. She helps Hetty in a more positive way. It is Dinah who persuades Hetty to confess. She re-establishes

contact with her in her dark prison of despair, who comforts her in her distress. With Adam, she comes to realize that she can love a husband and God at the same time. But Dinah is "good" from the beginning. Her moral growth consists merely of coming down to earth. It is secondary to her role of moral supporter. Hetty is an amoral character. Hetty is too unaware herself to undergo much moral growth, and is therefore no heroine. She is but the poor helpless instrument of the tragedy. She never realizes the importance of her actions. Therefore, she too can only develop in a very limited way, and besides she has little time in which to do so. But through Dinah, she is made to realize that she has done wrong, and she has to repent. She is brought to regret her cruelty to Adam, and to try to forgive Arthur:

> "And tell him, Hetty said, in rather a stronger voice, tell him…for there's nobody else to tell him…as I went after him and couldn't find him…and I hated him and cursed him

> once…but Dinah says, I should forgive him…and I try…for else God won't forgive me". (Eliot in *Adam Bede,* 249).

Silas Marner is another novel with no heroine. Silas himself is concerned with moral growth, perhaps Godfrey Cass to a lesser extent. Silas is aided by his adopted daughter, Eppie. Her support is unconscious. She merely exists and this is enough. It is Eppie who diverts Silas Marner's thoughts from his long-lost gold and directs them into fresh, healthier channels. Here again, the moral growth works both ways. Silas grows into awareness after many years spent in a moral vacuum, and Eppie grows into awareness, from her childhood of natural moral stupidity:

> "As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory; as her life unfolded, his soul, long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full

consciousness". (Eliot in *Silas Marner*, 95).

As for Godfrey Cass, the very existence of Nancy, with her firm principles, is enough to make him revert. She is kept in ignorance of his past errors, and thus is another totally unconscious supporter. Indeed, had she known that Eppie was Godfrey's child, she would have adopted her at once and the whole story would have been different. Her firm principles are the reason for Godfrey's growth, and the reason for his silence about former mistakes.

2. THE BEGINNING OF MORAL GROWTH

Janet is the first George Eliot's heroines to develop morally and she is in many ways the forerunner of Gwendolen Harleth, who is, in my opinion, the supreme creation of the author.

Janet Dempster does not, of course, receive such a full treatment as Gwendolen Harleth does. The reader only heard of her life and personality before marriage, being taken back with her when she reflects upon her earlier years and inexperience. But into her brief reflections is

condensed a whole picture of her original character and the changes that circumstances have wrought upon it.

Like Gwendolen Harleth, Janet was a spoilt child, fond of her own power, aware of her own beauty, and ill equipped for the rigours of life. The effect of Janet's marriage to a drinker is dramatic. She is unable to cope. However, like Gwendolen, her pride is such that she shows the world a brave face. Her marriage, which started out in blissful happiness, declines into a series of cruelties on the part of Robert Dempster. Unable to deal with her husband, Janet is tempted to follow his example and drinks herself into oblivion.

During her marriage, Janet's personality is a mixture. Latent within her, and to some extent, active, is the desire to help others with their problems. With this, however, is the inability to overcome her own. She believes that God and the world have treated her harshly. She does not realize that it is she who has made the mistake through her own pride and inexperience. She has married a rich and clever lawyer, probably thinking that he was the best of all men but when she found out later on that he is not the perfect specimen of her dreams. She blames God and

the world and her poor devoted mother: **"You are cruel like the others; everyone is cruel in this world. Nothing but blame – blame – blame: never any pity – God is cruel to have sent into the world to bear all this misery".** (Eliot in *Janet's Repentance,* 189).

In fact, it is not so much Robert Dempster who is the cause of Janet's despair, as herself:

> "She had no strength to sustain her in a course of self-defense and independence: there was a darker shadow over her life than the dread of her husband it was the shadow of self-despair." (Eliot in *Janet's Repentance*, 234)

So, it is weakness, not strength that keeps her by her husband's side. Her insight means that she is capable of moral growth if she does not give way under despair, but she needs something to believe in something to love and revere. Janet would have not been strong enough to leave her husband, had it not been for the force of circumstance. In a fit of fury, he throws her out of the house and this force a moral choice upon her. Should she go back or should she make a definitive break? Janet's

decision is facilitated when she finds out that he is ill and her tender heart forgives him instantly and desires that he should know her forgiveness.

The fact that Mr. Tryan has made mistakes in his life and has grown above them helps Janet to gain strength herself. She does almost lapse again one day when she is alone and finds a bottle of spirits, but she manages to avoid temptation by smashing the bottle on the ground. She feels reverent for Mr. Tryan and she comes to feel love. There is no cry that the world is cruel when Mr. Tryan comes to die. She is resigned and grateful to God that he has not been spared for her at all. For the remainder of his life, Janet remains devoted to Mr. Tryan and dedicated to helping all those around her who are suffering. She is resigned to her own life now, no longer regretting it, no longer too proud to speak of it. Janet had triumphed morally, but there can be no more happiness for her. She sees the rest of life as a duty, a time of uncomplaining peaceful acceptance:

> "She thirsted for no pleasure; she craved no wordily good. She saw the years to come stretch before her like an

> autumn afternoon, filled with resigned memory. Life to her could never more have any eagerness; it was a solemn service of gratitude and patient effort."(Eliot in *Janet's Repentance,* 272).

It may seem contradictory to George Eliot's beliefs that this redemption should take the form Christian salvation. But it is a moral salvation clothed in religious terms. Beneath the cloak of Christianity, lies the human emphasis, not so much on salvation, as on moral growth for the sake of peace of mind. Indeed, if George Eliot cannot be called a Christian in the strictest sense of the world, her ideals are not so different from those of a Christian.

There is a clear line of moral growth in this tale. Janet was "a good child", but inexperienced, proud and fond of her own power. Suffering through marriage causes first a moral decline through weakness, and then a new awareness within her, which is a necessary pre-requisite for moral growth. The existence of Mr. Tryan, her guide and adviser, is essential. From the spoilt child

develops the resigned woman, dedicated to helping others. The fact that she begins the difficult climb upward at this moment, rather than at her husband's death, is important because it shows a greater moral courage. She starts to grow more aware to improve a most difficult time when there is no hope of a new beginning, no ray of sunlight in her life at all. The ray of sunlight is to come, however, in the form of Mr. Tryan. It is he who helps and supports her through the hard times.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, for a start, the reader sees more of Maggie as a child than as he sees of the other heroines. She is clever and we learn from her father that **"she's twice cute as Tom".** Maggie is indeed clever, but cleverness is not enough if unaccompanied by experience. Her strong imagination tells it would be fun to run away to the gypsies, but her inexperience causes her to build a more romantic picture of the gypsies than reality can furnish and she soon regrets her impulsive act, as she does many others. She cannot continue to leave in dream-worlds. She has to face the fact of her father's ruin. She is thirteen at the time of the disaster, and like other heroines of George Eliot, the suffering makes Maggie

conscious of the existence of others. She has never liked the wife of Tom's schoolmaster, but a kind act on the part of this lady is keenly felt by Maggie in her trouble.

Maggie's sorrow does not change her in a trice. She remains the same passionate, passionate, impulsive creature as before, but already with more concern for the feelings of others. She bursts out passionately against her aunts when they start blaming her father for the calamity which befallen him. For Maggie's sensitive nature, this collapse of her world is a serious blow, and bound to affect her strongly. As she grows older, Maggie still retains her vivid imagination and her passionate nature. She loses her egoism, and becomes less impulsive. Maggie grows bitter at the thought that the real world should be at such variance with her desires. She reads a great deal as she did when younger and Thomas a Kempis proves very enlightening:

> "It flashed through her like the suddenly apprehended solution of a problem, that all the miseries of her young life had come from fixing heart on her own pleasure, as if that were the central

necessity of the universe". (Eliot in *The Mill On The Floss,* 193).

Like Janet, Maggie has learnt through suffering that the universe does not exist for her, but that she exists in it as a part of it. But Maggie is a far more extreme creature than Janet, and she resolves to give up pursuing her own pleasure entirely. She renounces all pleasures, refuses to read books. Her renunciation takes the form of self-indulgence as does Dorothea's in *Middlemarch.*

It is Philip who points out to Maggie that she is deluding herself, and exaggerating in her rush of self-denial: **"And you are shutting yourself up in a narrow self-delusive fanaticism, which is only a way of escaping pain by starving into dullness all the highest powers of your nature".**

She is swayed by both Philip's and Tom's opinions. She feels it right to give Philip up because of upsetting her father, yet she is swayed by Philip's view of the affair: **"I would give up a great deal for my father, but I would not give up a friendship, or an attachment of any sort, in obedience to any wish of his that I didn't recognize as right".** However, Philip has not taken into

account the existent to which Mr. Tulliver would have suffered, had he known of their friendship. Maggie is faced here with a moral choice, but she is by no means willing to pander to Tom now as she would have been in the old days. Her moral sense has grown beyond that: **“Don’t suppose I would give up Philip Wakem in obedience to you”.**

It is not weakness that causes her to give him up; it is her feeling for her father, and for what he will suffer if Tom tells him of the relationship. Maggie is torn between her love for her father and her pity for Philip that she has mistaken for love. She has made the decision to give him up; there is an involuntary feeling of relief within her, the reason for which she does not recognize.

She comes to recognize it, however. Her true passion for Stephen Guest is to cause her to realize that what has felt for Philip is pitying affection, not love. She is invited to stay with her cousin, Lucy, and having entered Lucy’s world, feels she can no longer be content with her own.

The temporary penetration into this world is the permanent goodbye to her peace of mind:

> "No prayer, no striving now, would bring back that negative peace: the battle of her life, it seemed, was not to be decided in that short and easy way by perfect renunciation at the very threshold of her youth". (Eliot in *The Mill On The Floss*, 265).

It is made clear that Stephen is more at fault than Maggie. He seeks her out when he knows she is alone, and consistently makes a deliberate effort to gain her attention. Maggie's intention is to avoid Stephen and she is innocent of deception as far as her cousin is concerned. But over and above Stephen and Maggie, is that force which no-one is powerful enough to resist, Fate. Character **"is not the whole of our destiny"**. Here, we see the determinism of George Eliot in action. She believes that character and actions are affected by the circumstance. Maggie and Stephen's passion is a fatal one, and the feeling that draws them together is **"too strong to be overcome".** Nevertheless, although they cannot help falling in love. Maggie is determined that they shall not hurt the other people.

To make the moral choice more difficult for Maggie is the fact that she feels that Stephen's love for her constitutes a claim upon her just as does Lucy's trust and Philip's deformity. Her mind is a turmoil of conflicting claims which pull her in opposite directions and force the necessity of a moral choice upon her.

Ironically, Stephen and Maggie find themselves going alone in the boat through the unconscious contrivance of Lucy and Philip. There seems nothing for it, but to step into the boat with Stephen and let herself **"be born along the tide"**. But Maggie isn't giving into the lover choice here. She is suspending the choice, and giving into one delicious moment because it has been forced upon her.

Before the end, Maggie has made her moral choice and has been elevated to the heights of heroism. However, Stephen writes again to ask her to come back. Philip nobly and voluntarily renounces all claims to her, and as Lucy was never officially engaged to Stephen anyway, the couple may now be considered free to marry. Maggie must either dwindle away in melancholy spinsterhood or she must marry Stephen and renounce the

higher life to be reaccepted into society, thus abandoning her heroic elevation. For Maggie to grow old in pursuit of a number of high ideals, which will grow vague as time passes, is unsatisfactory; for her to marry Stephen is impossible if she is to remain a consistent character. She could have no claims to moral growth if she pursued this course of action. Therefore, she must die. All decisions are suspended and left in the air as Maggie is swept under in the flood. She has reached the lofty height of moral supremacy and can climb no further. So she must now be allowed to escape from this world.

3. MORAL GROWTH AND MORAL DECLINE

Romola is, in several ways an exception to the other works. It is the only historical novel being set in Sixteenth Century Florence and not in Nineteenth Century England, as are the other novels. This is the obvious difference, but in addition, Romola is an exceptional heroine. The difference lies not so much in that the personality belongs to her time and setting, on the contrary, she has all the aura of a Nineteenth Century girl with the independence of spirit and resolution that belongs to a later day and age

rather than to her own. Her distinction lies in her innate and sincere goodness, which gives her a high moral status from the beginning. In her case, experience sophisticates rather than elevates. Moreover, this novel is exceptional in that it shows the most brilliantly drawn male character George Eliot ever portrayed: Tito Melema. Whereas Romola grows and develops morally, Tito declines. Each act to some extent is a spring-box for the other respective growth or decline, and although I shall only mention Tito's decline in relation to Romola, this aspect of the novel is a very bit as fascinating as the heroine's side of the story. Romola is not entirely free from egoism, but she starts out less egoism than any of the other heroines. She is a devoted daughter, intensely honourable, with a strict sense of duty. She has been kept so closely closed with her father that she has no experience at the entire world around her. So when Tito walks into her life with all his grace, charm and beauty, Romola immediately falls in love with him and in her ignorance and innocence, naturally believes him to be the best and most noble man in the world.

Romola has complete trust and confidence in Tito. She says to her godfather:

> "You know I love my father and you because you are both good, and I love Tito too because he is so good, I see it, I feel it, in everything he says and does. And he is handsome too: why should I not love him the better for that? It seems to me that beauty is part of the finished language by which goodness speaks". (Eliot in *Romola, 228).*

Beauty is indeed in the eyes of the beholder as moral attitudes are in the mind of individual, and both are subjected to the standards of experience.

Romola's pride will not let her admit this disappointment in her husband to anyone, not even her godfather. Her disappointment in Tito turns to contempt when he expresses his opinion on father's book. He cannot evidently understand Romola's attitude to her father for **"faithfulness, and love, and sweet grateful memories".** Then comes Tito's revelation that he has sold all the books and Romola's innate moral nobility

revolts at this shady, underhand behavior. Romola is as strong as Tito is weak. Once Tito is known to be unworthy, she can no longer have any feeling for him. According to her, this loss of love nullifies their marriage vows. She feels she can leave him with impunity, and makes detailed plans to do so. But for all her sorrow, Romola is still a child. She is still living under some illusions although Tito is no longer one of them. She does not yet see her role as living in the world and for it. As George Eliot say of her:

> "Romola had had contact with no mind that could stir the larger possibilities of her nature; they lay folded and crushed like embryonic wings, making no element in her consciousness beyond and occasional vague uneasiness". (Eliot in *Romola,* 282).

This remark is preparing for the meeting with Savonarola which will open her mind to new possibilities. Savonarola teaches her where duty really lies. Her flight brings her into immediate contact with him just outside the city walls. Savonarola points out that just because she no longer feels love for Tito; it is no reason to leave him,

as she has impulsively thought fit to do. She has after all married him of her own free will. If she married him in a state of ignorance, she must now accept the responsibility of having done so. She belongs to the world, not to herself. Romola needs something to believe in. It can no longer be Tito. But Savonarola appears to be everything that Tito is not. He has a **"stronger will and stronger conviction than her own".** He teaches her to live for the people and to accept her marriage as part of the sacrifice – in short, to try to live as a reflection of divine sacrifice. Savonarola also points out to Romola that perhaps she owes something to others besides her father. Her life has been narrow hitherto. Savonarola opens up broader vistas before her. Her belief in Savonarola is a new experience, due to the fact that she has found a will stronger and wiser than her own. For a time, she is content to live, believing in him and helping her fellow citizens of Florence. But there comes a time when she starts to doubt him too. It is over his acceptance of Camilla. Savonarola is perhaps not that infallible rock of greatness Romola had wished to believe in. She is severely shaken. She has a clinging nature, and needs to believe in someone. But still she

comes into conflict with Savonarola. Yet Savonarola's excommunication helps Romola, for it causes her a renewed and wholehearted sympathy for him. But this is only a brief respite for her. Up comes the question of her godfather, and again filial devotion causes a rift with Savonarola. Family ties are strong within Romola. She cannot comprehend the difficulties of Savonarola's position – she cannot comprehend the fact that he cannot afford to let personal sentiment weight with him.

Again, Romola runs away. This time, she gets to brink of the Mediterranean, where she finds a small boat and drifts off. She is hoping that death will come, but fate and the tides guide her to a stricken village where, at the great danger to her, she helps the community to overcome the ravages of the pestilence. But with her disappointment in Savonarola, life has ceased to have any meaning for her. She comes to realize that in spite of their disagreements, she is still much indebted to Savonarola. She has come to learn that he is a human being, not a superman being, serving as an example to be blindly followed. That would have been too easy. In the final analysis, all truly moral beings make their own decisions.

Savonarola has helped her to be morally conscious. The rest is up to Romola herself. Her moral growth consists of learning to stand alone.

The lesson Romola has learnt from Savonarola lies in the fact that to run away is not the answer to the problems. The answer is to stay and face them. In taking care of Tessa, she even takes responsibility for Tito's actions. She has been influenced by Savonarola, but she no longer retains to blind the faith she once had in him. She has learnt to stand alone, in moral independence. Her moral growth is complete.

4. MORAL GROWTH REWARDED

In two of George Eliot's novels, the positive development of the heroine is rewarded in the end, for she obtains her heart's desire and is able to marry the man she loves. These two novels are *Felix Holt, the Radical* and *Middlemarch,* respectively with their heroines Esther Lyon and Dorothea Brooke. Had Gwendolen Harlet married Daniel Deronda, she could have been placed in a category of her own. Esther and Dorothea may be comparable in this one respect, but their nature differs

and so necessarily does their character development. Esther's development is the simplest of the two, and her sufferings are less.

At the beginning of *Felix Holt, the Radical,* Esther is a frivolous and self-assured young lady who puts all values on outward appearance. She is never taught to think of anyone but herself. When Felix Holt walks into her life and teaches her that there are other people in the world besides herself and that there is more to life than just appearance, she shows great aptitude as a pupil, and her moral growth is extremely rapid.

The first meeting between Felix and Esther is not simply a question of right, in the shape of Felix, versus wrong, in the shape of Esther. Some sympathy may be felt for Esther, because Felix is rude, and does exaggerate his criticism. She is half-attracted by him, and she listens to his words. This shows that she does not cast them aside as unworthy of her notice. Soon, after this first meeting between Esther and Felix, a new awareness is already beginning to form within her, although she continues to deceive herself about her feelings towards him. She feels instinctively that Felix is a worthier creature than herself.

So in order to make up to herself to this, she consoles herself with the thought that she is socially his superior. She would naturally have to reject him as a lover, she persuades herself. This is a kind of "sour grapes" attitudes on her part because Felix is not dreaming of making any lover-like advances to her. She is deceiving herself the whole time, and yet she does realize that Felix is paying her a tribute, and not insulting her, when he comes to deliver homilies to her. It shows that he considers her worth trying to improve: **"For the first time in her life, Esther felt herself seriously shaken in her self-contentment. She knew there was a mind to which she appeared trivial, narrow, and selfish".** This engenders within her a desire to improve – not in order to become a better citizen, but to prove to Felix Holt that she is not a worthless as he makes out. So her first acts of tenderness are towards her father, and they are motivated, not by a sudden rush of altruism, but by Esther's desire to prove herself to Felix and to her.

Yet already the second time, a meeting between Esther and Felix is described; she has improved in some ways, because she decides to tell him that she does not

resent in criticism. She has learnt fast. She is more humble and is beginning to be willing to recognize Felix as a worthier character than herself. Through Felix, Esther becomes aware of her own faults and admits them, both to her and to him: **"I know I am selfish and think too much of my own small tastes and too little of what affects others. But I am not stupid, I am not unfeeling. I can see what is better!"**

Esther is a character who needs guidance – the guidance of a husband. This is in part an excuse to link the theme of moral growth with that of love, and Esther's moral growth is made easy for her by the fact that she was the prospect of a reward at the end of it. Gone is the resentment she once felt for Felix, the initial attraction has grown stronger and has deepened into love. She feels that without Felix she can never improve: **"If she might have married Felix Holt, she could have been a good woman. She felt no trust that she could ever be good without him".** It was Felix who first turned her eyes inwards upon herself; therefore, Felix must stay and see his work achieved.

By the end of the novel, Esther has come to think so highly of Felix that, she is prepared actually to make a fool of herself in a court room to try to help him. In a few months, all her latent generosity had come to the surface. Esther's moral growth may be easier than that of most of the other heroines, but it is not as easy as one must think. She makes thinks more difficult. Moreover, she is confronted with the inevitable moral choice when she is offered the luxury of Transome Court and Harold. At the beginning, she finds Felix's antagonism hard to bear, and although she dreams about him.

In the novel, Esther's soul is divided. Harold represents luxury and elegance, Felix a high, perhaps unattainable ideal. But finally, she goes to Transome Court and finds that the of luxury is not so perfect as she had dreamed it would be:

> "This life at Transome Court was not the life of her daydreams; there was a dullness already in its ease, and in the absence of high demand; and there was the vague consciousness that the love of this not unfascinating man who hovered

about her, gave an air of moral mediocrity to all her prospects". (Eliot in *Felix Holt, the Radical,* 291).

Once more, Esther shows her great generosity. She had been generous to Felix when she had seen the power she had over him, and refused to take advantage of it. She had been generous to Mr. Lyon. Now, she is generous to Mrs. Transome and Harold. When she first met Mrs. Transome, she was not averse to being admired by the aristocracy and turns on all her charm. However, she comes to pity Mrs. Transome sincerely and tries to help her. **"O! I think I would bear a great deal of unhappiness to save her from having any more".** Mrs. Transome is so unhappy, and Esther, while pitying her, can see that this life of luxury is not necessarily the ideal form of existence.

As for Dorothea, she suffers rather more than Esther. Her moral growth is not achieved so easily, but life turns out happily for her too in the end as it was for Esther who gained Felix heart.

As Barbara Hardy says, in *The Novels of George Eliot,* "The tragic process: the egoist" **"all George Eliot's characters are egoist in some ways".**

Dorothea is as egoist as Esther, but in a more subtle different way. Esther's self-centredness is more straightforward. Dorothea's is an inverted egoism. She is perhaps a little like Maggie in that she indulges in being over-good to no purpose. **"She likes giving up".** This is a form of self-indulgence. Dorothea has a love of extremes. She is inexperienced and her untrained mind dwells on theory rather than practice, which is why she makes the great mistakes of marrying Mr. Casaubon.

She is impractical about Mr. Casaubon; or rather she is "theoric". She has no idea of what his work consists in, and she merely sees him as one of those higher beings whose life is worthier than others' lives and whom she must revere and worship. Dorothea wants an object to worship and Mr. Casaubon is the most likely candidate to hand. She is not as vain as Esther, but such remarks give her an air of superiority over others of which she is unconscious. She has decided that Mr. Casaubon is

worthy object for devotion and seeing his lack of most of the qualities that make up an acceptable human being:

> "She filled up all blanks with unmanifested perfections, interpreting him as she interpreted the works of Providence, and accounting for seeming discords by her own deafness to the higher harmonies."(Eliot in *Middlemarch, 310).*

This behavior is similar to that of Gwendolen Harlet, when she decides to marry Grandcourt. Dorothea has created a Mr. Casaubon in her own mind, who does not resemble the true Mr. Casaubon at least. Dorothea with all her illusions is in a rude awakening. She finds herself unhappy during the weeks of her honeymoon. Mr. Casaubon is not the ideal husband of her dreams. He tends to go offs and leave her. He is a complete fraud and cannot live up to any of Dorothea's notions. But Dorothea, still believing in him, can find no other reason for her unhappiness than " her own spiritual poverty".

Gradually, and at first, unconsciously, Dorothea begins to realize that Mr. Casaubon is not so worthy as

she had thought. But she is proud enough not to admit; even to herself, that Casaubon is a disappointment. Gradually and unnoticeably to herself, Dorothea's hero-worship turns to pity. WILL LADISLAW has perceived: **"what Dorothea was hardly conscious of – that she was traveling into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty towards her husband".**

Eventually, Dorothea comes to admit to herself that she no longer believes in Mr. Casaubon. So when Casaubon dies, Dorothea is faced with a moral choice. He wished her to carry on his work, and she, torn between her loyalty to him and her belief that his work is worth nothing, is facing a dilemma. But, finally, she abandons the idea of continuing the work. With the death of Mr. Casaubon, Dorothea's attitude towards Will Ladislaw changes. She has always been attracted to him. After all, he shows her much more deference and pays far more attention to her than Mr. Casaubon ever did. He also has the advantage of being young and handsome – a much more normal young man for a girl to be attracted to than Mr. Casaubon. Will influenced Dorothea during her marriage, but now she sees him as having something that

Mr. Casaubon never had. Will is young and adores Dorothea. Mr. Casaubon was, in the words of Sir James Ghettam, **"no better than a mummy!"**

Although she never alters completely, experience teaches Dorothea a great deal. She is no longer the priggish, superior young lady she was at the beginning of the novel. She is no longer the girl who suddenly decides that she will abandon horse-riding because she likes giving up. She has been made wise by sorrow. With increasing experience, Dorothea's early theoretical desires for noble actions are actually translated into practical effect as she finds that the acts themselves give an intrinsic pleasure. Earlier, she designed cottages for the poor and this showed her desire to help practically.

Later, she finds that there is room for nobility in her own small world after all. She has always had: "a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity". But this nature has never been given free expression. But after her sufferings in marriage, Dorothea's generosity is guided into more practical, valid channels. Lydgate needs help and encouragement and Dorothea, with a mere gesture of kindness, by her simple faith in him, does a

great deal for him. But where Rosamund is concerned, she does more, and elevates herself to deserve the name of heroine, in the strictest sense of the word. She helps Rosamund in spite of her belief that Rosamund has engaged Will's affections. This is truly altruistic and her sincerity and simple honesty shine through her words to Rosamund, whom two years before she would perhaps have been harsh to in condemning:

> "Trouble is so hard to bear, is it not? How can we live and think that anyone has trouble, piercing trouble, and we could help them, and never try?" (Eliot in *Middlemarch, 276).*

Neither Esther nor Dorothea are such tragically great heroines as Gwendolen. But they are nevertheless interesting characters and their moral growth is convincing, although Esther seems to change very rapidly. Each merely learns to understand herself through experience and to consider the world in a new light. They are the product of their environment, and the result of the education, or lack of it, that young ladies received in their day and age. Esther is spoiled because she has been

brought up by Mr. Lyon. Dorothea cannot recognize a false intellectual because young ladies were not supposed to have anything to do with such matters. Mr. Brooke, her uncle is given a dig for his attitude that girls are only capable of a very limited level of education. However, through her own experience, Dorothea is able to develop beyond the effects of these restrictions. But although she is able to carry out selfless, noble acts, her environment is such that none of these acts achieve greatness.

5. THE END AND THE SUPREME BEGINNING

In all George Eliot's novels, there is only one heroine who achieves real greatness, and who is subjected to true and unadulterated moral growth, and that is Gwendolen Harlet. She neither escapes from her moral dilemma as does unwillingly Maggie Tulliver, nor is her moral growth rewarded, as is Eather's and Dorothea's. Even Romola, whose life is certainly not easy, cannot be compared with Gwendolen. Romola is so "good" that her moral growth is not striking. Gwendolen is a more realistic character. She is the best conceived of all George Eliot's heroines.

Like Esther Lyon, Gwendolen starts life as a spoiled child, even more spoiled than Esther. She is looked up to and obeyed by all. She is haughty, conceited and used to having her own way. She is vain about her own beauty. She is thoughtless of the feelings of others, and shows this by going off without leaving address for her mamma. She is fond of her mamma but not prepared to exert herself to help the poor lady. This is illustrated when Gwendolen refuses to leave her warm bed to fetch her mother's tablets. And Gwendolen is proud with the kind of pride that goes before a fall. She is so inexperienced and so conceived that she believes in her ability to crush disaster under foot:

> "How could she believe in sorrow? If I attached her, she felt the force to crush it, to defy it, or run away from it, as she had done already. Anything seemed more possible than that she could go on bearing miseries, great or small."(Eliot in *Daniel Deronda, 126).*

She is as yet unaware that the existence of others is bound to affect her, and possibly in ways that she

cannot control: **"I have made up my mind not let other people interfere with me as they have done".** This rash statement shows an alarming ignorance, for living in a world of people, it is impossible to remain unaffected by them. Gwendolen does not realize that marriage necessarily means interference. She means to rule, and ironically chooses the worst possible husband for carrying out desire. But Grandcourt is seen as she wants to see him, and her fatal mistake is the same as Dorothea's. Like Dorothea, she feels the blanks in Mr. Grandcourt with characteristics with which she would endow him.

Unlike most of the other heroines, Gwendolen has to make a moral choice before she has gained any experience. At first, she is quite decided on the right course of actions and she flees to Germany, determined to leave the field free for Mrs Glasher. She had already learnt one important thing. Mrs Glasher's existence has taught her that she cannot ordain things as she likes. She has shown herself capable of sane judgment. But circumstances now intervene. Gwendolen comes back from Baden to find her family ruined, and this shows a

different light on the Grandcourt affair. At first, the fact of ruin has no effect on Gwendolen. She feels prepared to suffer it. It is almost her desire for. A little diversion that causes her to consent to marry Grandcourt. It is so easy just to say the word “yes”. It is due partly to circumstance, partly to her own character that she accepts him in the end. The entwining forces of character and force of events are shaping Gwendolen’s destiny, as they shape everyone’s. Having said “yes”, things no longer remain easy.

She is tempted by luxury, and in her ignorance makes the choice which will cause her to suffer and through suffering to develop morally. She is aware that she has condemned her marriage in theory, but in practice, she is determined to go through with it. But although Gwendolen suffers the pangs of conscience before her marriage, she casts them aside on her wedding day. The seed of moral growth is there, but moral growth is not a process to be accomplished in twenty-four hours.

Marriage soon teaches Gwendolen who is master. Her love of power is completely outdone by one whose own love of power is sadistic.

She is very soon disillusioned. However, she has pride and dignity enough to keep up appearances and here her pride is to her credit: I will not say to the world, "Pity me". She is suffering and disillusioned. This is the first step towards moral growth, but no development can be achieved while she is still married to Grandcourt, for he is the **"husband to whom she had sold her truthfulness and sense of justice, so that he held them throttled into silence."** However, after the death of Grandcourt, Gwendolen is ready and able to show moral improvement. But in this, she needs the help of Daniel Deronda. He is her adviser, her guide, the Supreme Being who benevolently watches over his pupil. Gwendolen is struck by Daniel and does all she can to gain his attention.

Gwendolen soon comes to respect and admire Daniel. Her original involuntary interest provided by his obvious scorn of her gambling is strengthened. She is sincere in her feeling for Daniel. Indeed, in spite of her lack of warmth, she is beyond a doubt in love with him, and respecting him, heeds his advice, but finds herself petrified by the control her husband has over her. Like Esther, Gwendolen feels no hope if her teacher is not near

her. He IS something to live for and something to be worthy of. Gwendolen is proud and asks no help in her sorrow but for the moral support of Daniel. She has never questioned Daniel about his affairs. Therefore, it is a new shock and a new source of suffering when she learns that he is going away. From now on, she is on her own, she must continue to grow in spite of the fact that there is no hope of reward, and this is why she is the greatest of all George Eliot's heroines:

> "That was the sort of crisis which was at this moment beginning in Gwendolen's small life; she was for the first time feeling the pressure of vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving."(Eliot in *Daniel Deronda,* 297).

She is beginning to realize that the world was not made for her, but that she is only a very small part of it, and that part does not belong to Daniel Deronda, whose vocation lies on other horizon. She has only thought of

herself. Now it is her turn to think of Daniel, and all her latent generosity and nobility are poured forth in the words she addresses to Daniel, that come straight from her heart:

> "I only thought of myself, and I make you grieve. It hurts me now to think of your grief. You must now grieve any more for me. It is better – it shall be better with me because I have known you."(Eliot in *Daniel Deronda, 318).*

Her only concern about luxury now is that her mother should be well provided for. She cares not at all that her husband's wealth should go to Mrs Glasher. Indeed she considers it just. But it is the greatest sadness of all. Daniel's withdrawal into his own world, that is the real trigger for Gwendolen's moral growth.

Gwendolen has been made aware of her faults and errors, through suffering and experience. With Daniel at the end of the novel, she is capable of her first truly generous act. She wishes him well in his marriage with Mirah. Her new life is beginning. She is ready to follow up that generous act with others. That is why the end of

George Eliot's career as a novelist, marks a supreme beginning in character study; for Gwendolen appears to be the product of all the other heroines put together, the most complete character of all. She is fascinating and realistic.

CONCLUSION

In George Eliot's novels, all the heroines start life as inexperienced young girls, and all are subjected to delusions on account of their inexperience. Janet married the most impressive man she knows, only to find that he is an alcoholic of a violent disposition. Maggie fancies that she is in love with a poor young cripple; she dreams of an ideal Tom who would love her devotedly; she imagines that her burst of self-denial is true renunciation. Romola thinks that Tito is the best of men and that with him she will find perfect happiness. Esther Lyon deludes herself into thinking that appearance is important and that uncouth creatures such as Felix Holt are of no consequences at all. Dorothea tends to pursue anything she considers is worthy and noble, whether or not she knows anything about it. Gwendolen's thoughts all

revolve round the importance of herself, and everyone else must fit into her own view of them.

Thus deluded, all the heroines are forced to go through some sort of suffering owing to the mistakes they make. Janet is obliged to bear the cruelty of her husband, and to suffer humiliation at his hands. Maggie realizes too late that it is Stephen whom she loves, not Philip. She also has to accept Tom as less than perfect. Romola comes to realize that Tito is a weak and despicable character, and that her faith in him was misguided, for she knew nothing about him. Dorothea's eyes are opened when she sees her husband in his true colours, which are by no means the rosy ones with which she painted him. Gwendolen also is desperately unhappy in marriage and in conscience. She is beaten in her desire for power by the man she thought to be the most flexible of her acquaintances.

If all these characters suffer in some way or another, they all learn from their errors, and all grow, more able to live a satisfactory life. Experience opens their eyes. Janet finds that she has been too proud and learns true humility. Maggie has little time to put her experience into effect, but she learns to be less extreme

and impulsive. Romola grows to accept her place in the world with resignation. Esther learns that there is a deeper good in life than mere good manners and elegant appearance, and she realizes that Felix Holt is part of that good. Dorothea experiences the difference between theory and practice when she discovers that Mr. Casaubon's supposedly erudite research is worthless. Gwendolen learns that she is not of such great account in the world as she thought herself.

At some times or others during their career, all the heroines have to make a moral choice. Janet must decide whether to leave her husband. Maggie must decide whether she will give up Stephen or not. Although the final decision is made unnecessarily by Maggie's death, she makes it clear beforehand that she considers giving him up the only moral way of behaving. Romola must choose between running away and going back. She must also decide between her belief in Savonarola and her rising disgust with him. Esther must choose between Transome Court with the addition of luxury, refinement and Harold, at the price of a guilty conscience, and a simpler, hardworking form of existence with the

possibility, but by no means the certainty of Felix Holt as a husband. Dorothea is obliged to decide whether, out of a sense of study, she would continue her husband‘s work, or whether in all honesty she should abandon it as she knows it to be worthless. Gwendolen is forced to work out for herself the rights and wrongs of marrying Mr. Grandcourt, Glasher standing in the background.

All the heroines feel the need of moral support as they go through the rigours of initiation into life, Janet has Mr.Tryan to help her, and she learns to respect and love him. Maggie has Philip who understands her thoroughly. Romola is advised by Savonarola, whom she considers as an ideally great figure. Esther is morally improved by Felix, whom she loves. Dorothea is understood and adored by Will Ladislaw, whom she loves in return. Gwendolen is helped by Daniel Deronda and loves him without receiving love in return.

It must be noted that once each heroine has had her eyes opened towards her delusions and errors, she herself is open to moral growth. Tito Melema is made aware of his weakness by Romola’s goodness and strength, and he undergoes a steady moral decline. But all

the heroines have the necessary force of character to accept the narrow road upwards. That is why they are heroines. So a certain pattern of growth emerges from a study of these heroines. But within that pattern, there is much variation, so much so that no two of them are so alike as to lose their identity. All are completely distinguishable with the variety of real life.

At the beginning of each novel, every heroine is an egoist, but in very different ways. Janet and Gwendolen are the only two who resemble each other to any degree. They are proud, haughty egoists, who think too much about themselves. Esther is a self-righteous egoist. Maggie is an impulsive, thoughtless egoist. Dorothea's is an inverted egoism which takes the form of excessive renunciation. Romola is only egoistic in so far as she believes that what belongs to her must be the best. Her childish belief in Tito is a kind of egoism.

All the heroines learn the same lesson through experience and suffering. But they learn it in different ways, and their suffering differs both in kind and extent. Janet has to suffer ill-treatment from her husband. Maggie has no such physical suffering to endure. Hers is

all mental. Romola has to bear the pain of knowing that her once adored husband is a weakling with no moral integrity at all. Esther's suffering is light – it consists merely of the breaking down of her notions and scruples, and her unwillingness to recognize the gap between theory and practice. Gwendolen suffers at the hands of a cruel sadist in the person of Grandcourt, the least attractive of all the husbands. She then suffers the pangs of unrequited love. She does not change out of all recognition. But she shakes off her egoism and directs her pride and strength of character towards another goal – that of moral growth. She is never too good, never too bad. But she is always attractive enough for the reader to feel with her, to be interested in her. Of all George Eliot's heroines, Gwendolen Harlet may be considered as the most perfectly conceived.

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