

Part VI: George Eliot

19. The Organic Unity of *Middlemarch*

Middlemarch is a big book; and from the point of view of *plot*, it is not one story, but several. They are interlaced, often in a quite external way. We are asked to move from one to another; and, once we are familiar with the book, we can follow any one of the stories independently with fair success, if we wish. It is not at all obvious what they really have to do with one another, except that they are happening in the same neighborhood.

Reviewers, encountering the community of Middlemarch for the first time, were puzzled and unhappy about this. A.V. Dicey complained in the *Saturday Review* (31 Dec. 1872) that “the form of the story has made it impossible to center the reader’s interests fixedly on any one character . . . the mere annoyance at being constantly shifted from one scene to another is a trying consideration. A much more serious evil of this constant shifting is that it prevents the author from fully elaborating any one character, and from studying the effect of the work as a whole.”ⁱ

Dicey was certainly mistaken about the author’s “elaboration of character” and her “study.” Only the *reader* was prevented from clearly perceiving the elaboration, and required to study the effect for herself in a second slow and meditative reading. Henry James, himself a highly practiced and demanding novelist, understood this very well when he described *Middlemarch* as “one of the strongest and one of the weakest of English novels . . . a treasure house of detail, but an indifferent whole” (*Galaxy*, March 1873).ⁱⁱ Clearly he found the “elaboration” immensely impressive; but “the work as a whole” did not, in his opinion, have a properly organic “effect.”

The claim that will be advanced here is that James was right about the strength, but quite wrong about the weakness of *Middlemarch*. The weakness is not in the book, but in himself as reader — as it was, even more evidently, in Dicey before him, and in many critics since. George Eliot was seeking an effect that James did not grasp, although she put all of the evidence before him. *Middlemarch* is just as powerful as a whole, as it is in the details; but we have to be able to recognize the wholeness of it.

The sort of organic unity which even a reader as sophisticated as James was half-expecting, was expressed by the *Examiner* when the third “part” of the novel appeared. The reviewer speculated that Dorothea and Lydgate would eventually be united in marriage. When the last part was published, the more prestigious (and intellectual) *Edinburgh Review* was disappointed to observe that this had not happened.ⁱⁱⁱ This was the “result” that James says “we hoped for.” But he saw that it was against the logic of the two lives, for he concedes that “We expected the actual result.” Therefore, he concludes, “The author’s purpose was to be a generous rural historian”; and history must take each of us on our own road. “But if we write novels so,” he says, “how shall we write History?”^{iv}

The answer is that George Eliot was far more ambitious as a social historian than James recognized; and she understood that a novelist must be much more than a historian. She wanted to write — and she did write — a modern epic poem.^v *Middlemarch* is not just “one of the strongest of English novels”; it is quite simply “the strongest.”

***Middlemarch* as an allegorical Epic**

Let us begin with the title: “Middlemarch” is literally the name of a fictional provincial *town*; and the subtitle says that the book is “A Study of Provincial Life.” The town is emphatically English, so the *capital* for this province is *London*. But *London life*, to which the protagonists depart in the *Finale*, is *not* pictured as better — or as notably different. The two men achieve little there;

but Ladislaw does probably realize all he is capable of — whereas in the provincial town he was *never* independent. The effect of his successful self-realization is to highlight the total failure of the two real heroes who *needed* to be independently self-expressive; for the deepest truth about Ladislaw is that he did not need to be independent at all.

Still, “provincial” does not seem to be an important adjective *realistically*. Realistically, we feel that *Middlemarch* is a *universal* picture of middle-class life in England — viewed from forty years’ distance, which gives the opportunity for seeing it whole.^{vi}

So now let us consider the title, figuratively. First, “Middlemarch” is the name of an actual place in the world. It is not a town but a region, and it is not in England but in Germany. *Mittelmark* is the middle region (between Östmark and Westmark) of the old Mark of Brandenburg. The Mark of Brandenburg was the core of the kingdom of Prussia. It *contains* Berlin, the capital of Prussia in 1832, and of a united German empire by 1872. Thus it contains the intellectual *capital* of George Eliot’s thought-world — for *she* was not so “provincial” as to take London for the capital of the world, like Casaubon. She wouldn’t expect her readers to know German or Germany (any more than Casaubon did); but an intelligent reader could get to her desired conclusion just by asking what *Middlemarch* is the *middle* of?

A *march* is a border defended by military patrols. Rather than East/West (the *Welsh* Marches) or North/South (the *Scottish* Marches), George Eliot’s “middle” march is a *middle* between *upper* and *lower*, perhaps classwise (the society is definitely *middle* class) but certainly spiritually. “Middlemarch” is the earthly city of the Church *militant* — in the middle between Heaven and Hell.

The names of its *women* drive this point home. Mary Garth is queen of heaven, Rosamund Vincy (a title of Mary’s) is Rose of this world; Celia Brooke is in the pre-Christian heaven already; Dorothea is the gift of God to this world (or “given to God in this world”); and Dorothea is

compared to the Virgin by one of the *seekers* (Lydgate) — who won't stay at the *middle* level, and who cannot appreciate the real Mary of the *middle* march.

The male *surnames* similarly have an appropriate spiritual resonance. *Garth* is short for cloister-garth, the small plot of land enclosed in the cloister; and the Garths are the home defense force that does not move from its place in this world.^{vii} Lydgate is a substitute for lych-gate. Primitively *lidgate* is “a swing-gate between meadow and plowed land”; and the latest reference in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is for 1881 — in the dialect forms “ligget” and “liggate” which George Eliot would most probably know. The churchyard form “lych-gate” is still current. Here “lych” means *body* and especially corpse.^{viii} Tertius Lydgate can go either to the Church militant or to death in his living body (George Eliot would know from Chaucer that “lyke” is the living body first).

Vincy means “he(she) wins or conquers (*vincit*)” — and both Fred and Rosamund are *winners*. Clearest of all is *Farebrother* which means journey-comrade or fellow-*pilgrim* (as well as being a pun upon his *fairness* and brotherliness). Peter *Featherstone* is dialectically significant. The combination of *Peter* and *stone* point to the Church founder appointed by Jesus. But his church is reduced to nullity by the *feather* in the middle. This Peter has founded his church on the feather base of “the treasure of this world.” *Bulstrode* directs our attention to the *Minotaur* (which is exactly what he is, since the bull-half dominates). Contrast Lydgate who is *Heracles*; but the Cretan parallel is duplicated, when Will Ladislaw is compared to *Theseus*; for in his world-view it is surely Casaubon who is the Minotaur. This heroic persona for Will is just as much serious as it is ironic, since his actual vocation is for *political* leadership and reform. Ultimately, however, the duplication of Theseus and the Minotaur (in Will's career) is deeply ironic, because George Eliot regards political reform as a superficial (and deceptive) mode of spiritual progress; and even Dorothea's personal happiness is not a matter of truly epic concern. It is *Bulstrode* whose name is symbolic (like Featherstone) at the Bunyan level of the work.^{ix}

Joshua Rigg is an enigma because the English word has so many meanings (all of them now obsolete and almost all *dialect* forms even in George Eliot's time). The one I like is found in John Lydgate's poems (which George Eliot had read). The *first* meaning of the noun is the *back* of a man or an animal. Derivatively, the word comes to be applied to a sexually imperfect male. A "rigg" is an animal with one testicle (the other being supposed to be *up the back* somewhere, not having dropped). This makes the name a marvelous joke, since far from being "riggish" (*wanton* — a "rigg" in this sense is *female*) Joshua Rigg is about as sexless as they come — but he is *also* the *product of Featherstone's hidden testicle*. As for his being enigmatic, almost every meaning of *rig* except the wanton one applies to him. For instance, Peter Featherstone "runs his rig" on his relations, i.e. makes fun of them, to use an idiom found in Thackeray. But Rigg himself *runs his rig* on Peter Featherstone for he takes the rig (ridge) of land left him, and turns it into the rig of his trading vessels, etc. (George Eliot certainly knew the land, sea and wanton uses; and the half-male use from her agricultural childhood before she found it in Lydgate, if she did.)

Raffles is originally a dicing game of chance — 3 dice, the *best raffle* being *three sixes* — and later it is any lottery for a prize, as now. (Raffles lives and dies by his luck — and the whole luck of Bulstrode, Lydgate, and ultimately of Dorothea, is determined by the very bad "raffle" of his arrival.) Brooke, finally, is a stream that proverbially babbles (as Mr. Brooke does) but its destiny is to flow into the great river of life (and death) and finally back to the sea whence it came (the sea is God's ineffability in Augustine, and in Christian mysticism generally). A brook can of course merely terminate in a landlocked lake. Dorothea escapes this fate; but she never released the great river of saintly force that she had in her.

Cadwallader is a legendary King of the Britons. George Eliot may or may not have known of the historic Welsh prince; but she certainly knew the name was Welsh, and in that way it fitted her Marches theme. *Chettam* is not significant — except at the level of social realism — being just a good *gentry* name referring to the landowning function (*-ham*), where long and responsible tenure outweighs any title of nobility.^x

Similarly, Ladislav is significant, first of all, at the level of social realism. It is visibly Anglicized Polish — hence it designates a *foreigner* with *no* status in the stable world of Garth, Chettam, Lydgate, even Rigg and Raffles or Bambridge. Our Will *may* be part-Jewish (Raffles may have said so, Bambridge spreads the rumor so) and that puts him a bit further outside the pale. But George Eliot is deliberately punning here too: Dorothea's hero is actually "Lady's law" — attractive to the ladies, but a natural subject for the "law" of whatever "lady" he chooses (Dorothea or Rosamund) — a knight of chivalry, or a poet of romances, but a "poet without poems."

At the fringes of town-life (in places where George Eliot could not go, such as the pubs) we have some *frankly* allegorical names, e.g. Mrs. *Dollop*. But that recourse to ironic unreality is different (and quite traditional). We should pass on now from the universal Bunyan-allegory level, to the *particular* or temporal allegory level.

This is where the "study of provincial life" comes in allegorically. For English life is a great province of the history of mankind or of God's family. George Eliot does not believe in a real Heaven and Hell, so *Middlemarch* (as *this earth* with its warriors, gardeners and keepers, hung between Heaven and Hell) is an allegory about this life only. The God of this allegory is Spinoza's "God or Nature," a life-force that imposes on us a moral law of mutual assistance, and self-realization through service — and primitively through care, guardianship and maximal development of the natural resources entrusted to us for (and in) our lifetime. To "put a piece of the country in good fettle" (Caleb Garth, Ch.40) is what the least of us — even Fred — can do with our seventy years here on the "middle march." Bulstrode does it even while asserting his *bullying* drive to dominate. But to make our own life record into something that *survives* — something that has "immortality" in the Heaven of the spirit — is the proper goal for anyone with creative gifts, anyone fitted to be a pilgrim, to *journey* towards a better world, not just of fact but of consciousness. Bulstrode wants to be such a one, but his motion is all downhill, and his belief that he can be a forward mover is mistaken. He could perhaps be a Garth, but not a Farebrother or a Lydgate (he fancies himself to be the last two combined, and so he fails completely to be the first). But

Bulstrode is typical of the movers in George Eliot's world, for she is convinced that it is going downhill, and *Middlemarch* studies *why*.

Historically the England of 1830 is a “middle march” between the English province of Europe in the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment (the period from Shakespeare to Newton and Locke, or from 1559 to 1688) and the England of 1871. *Politically* there is progress in both periods. In the world of Elizabeth, Spain was defeated, and the Catholic world of Theresa was replaced by the sovereign *provinces* of Protestantism; the English province itself advanced toward parliamentary sovereignty. Then again, between the Iron Duke in 1830 and Messrs. Gladstone and Disraeli in the 1870s, popular sovereignty became popular *democracy*. But George Eliot saw this *political* progress as a spiritual regress. For where now is there a Shakespeare, a Raleigh, a William Harvey; above all, where is there a *Theresa*? Marriage is clearly (and *rightly*) now recognized as a higher state than conventual celibacy — but what can a wife *do*? (This problem had already been dramatized by the marriage politics of Queen Elizabeth.) *Theresa* founded an order of service for unmarried women. Why can no one do such a thing for married women in this land of Protestant freedom in the 1870's? To examine what would happen to a potential Protestant Theresa in 1830, is the best way to answer this question, and also to show what *Providence* is (what “Heaven” and “Hell” really are), and what it really means to say that “In God we live and move and have our being.”

This historical level of the allegory (which contains the Feuerbachian key for interpreting the universal or Bunyanesque religious symbolism of the whole) is clearly pointed out on the first page of the Prelude. For in “the history of man” (of which we study a “province,” the English *nation*) some swans grow up awkward and lost among the ducks (in the pond to which their brook flows).^{xi} Our heroine is a “Saint Theresa foundress of nothing” who never found the opportunity for that “long-recognizable deed” (in which “immortality” really consists) which she had in her. Chapter I immediately confirms this theme. Dorothea belongs to the *Puritan or Roundhead* nobility — but she could serve as a painter's model for the Blessed Virgin Mary. She reads Pascal (1623-62) and Jeremy Taylor (1613-67 — *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living*, 1650; *Rule and Exercises of Holy*

Dying, 1651), Hooker (1553-1600), Milton (1608-74). But perhaps she has never heard of Theresa (1515-82), although she knows of Bossuet (1627-1704).^{xii}

Dorothea is nineteen years old, “not yet 20”; and she has returned the year before from six years in Switzerland. She *belongs* to the gentry, like Lydgate, but like him she is a stranger. Lydgate is a bit handicapped economically, in this circle of the “county” families — but that is not socially significant. (Ladislaw, on the other hand, is a stranger who *doesn't* “belong.”) Dorothea is masterful, just as Theresa was. Celia has always “worn a yoke”; Celia’s view of Dorothea is systematically overlooked by male critics, because Dorothea believes that she wants a master — actually she does *not* need or want this at all. “Lady’s Law” is exactly the *husband* that she needs, supposing that she could ever find her “long-recognizable deed.” *Middlemarch* cries out for the recognition of female vocations *other than* marriage, and for a revision of our concept of marriage to make that possible.

George Eliot explicitly links Dorothea with Theresa; but everyone around her is *implicitly* linked with someone in the Elizabethan-Jacobean (Shakespeare-Milton) century. *Casaubon* is the “key” to George Eliot’s “mythology” here, because, with a nudge from her (in Ch.), his name makes the linkage almost explicit. There were *two* Casaubons in Elizabeth’s England. The great scholar of the age was Isaac Casaubon: he was born in Geneva in 1559; married Stephanus’ daughter; was librarian to Henri IV; being a Protestant he moved to London in 1610; became prebendary canon of Canterbury; and died in 1614.^{xiii} His son Méric (1599-1671) followed in his footsteps, but a fair distance below his level. He died as rector of Ickham (near Canterbury), having edited Marcus Aurelius and “vindicated” Isaac in two Latin works.

The *thirdness* of Edward Casaubon indicates to us that Lydgate’s being called *Tertius* is significant.^{xiv} The identity of *name* regularly marks progressive decline; but Lydgate is *third* in a sequence that is not decadent. *Primus* for him is Andreas Vesalius (1514-64): born in Brussels; studied in Louvain and Paris; professor at Padua, Bologna, Basle. He was sentenced to death by the Inquisition for body-snatching; and died while returning from the Jerusalem pilgrimage to which that

sentence was commuted. Vesalius was Court physician to Philip II of Spain; and is thus an *older brother* for Theresa. *Secundus* is certainly William Harvey (1578-1657). He was educated at Kings School, Canterbury, at Cambridge, and at Padua; he published *Exercitatio anatomica de Motu Cordis et sanguinis* in 1628; and he was physician to James I and Charles I. Lydgate with his Hospital, means to be the “People’s Physician” after these two Royal servants; and the potential of his research is to anticipate (or at least to share in) the German discovery of the cell, and the development of cell theory. He might even have anticipated Pasteur and the germ theory of disease.^{xv} But the cholera epidemic never comes. Instead it is a meeting about the risk of it (Ch. 71) that is the occasion for Bulstrode’s exposure; and the way that Lydgate’s genuine vocation obliges him to act at that juncture creates a situation such that *only* in the crisis of a general epidemic could he recover his credit in the community. That epidemic does not happen and so — because of Rosamund, and his own spots of commonness (for he is *not* St. Vincent de Paul) — Lydgate must leave Middlemarch.

Will Lady’s-Law, the “poet without poems,” probably offers us a deliberate contrast to the martial masculinity of Will Shake-Spear (but I have not noticed any asides or hints that confirm this). The Rev. *Camden* Farebrother is named for William Camden (1551-1623). The great antiquary (*Britannia*, 1586; *Annals of the Reign of Elizabeth*, 1615) has here turned into an entomologist. Humphrey and Elinor Cadwallader get their Christian names from royalty (and from an earlier period; their connection with Elizabethan times is through Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*, since they are the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester therein). But George Eliot almost certainly wants to point to Duke Humphrey (1391-1447) *for his own sake* (calling Mrs. Cadwallader Elinor simply supports that) because he gave his library to Oxford University, where it formed the original nucleus of the *Bodleian*. Thus the intended *Elizabethan* connection is with Sir Thomas *Bodley* (1545-1613), child-exile in Geneva, Fellow of Merton 1564; 1576-80 in Italy, France, Germany; ambassador, knighted 1603; keeper of Bodley’s Library from 1597.

Only Sir James Chettam resists Elizabethan or Jacobean identification. One *does* wonder whether George Eliot knew of the existence of Humphrey Chetham (1580-1653), Manchester

merchant and cloth manufacturer, founder of a bluecoat hospital, and a public library in Manchester. Giving Sir James the ancestor that Bulstrode would have wished for, is a nice irony — and a neat reflection on how the social system actually works. Bulstrode, like Ladislaw, is necessarily a man without ancestors. But he gets *his* name from a Roundhead: Bulstrode Whitelocke the Puritan who refused to be one of the regicides because “too conscientious to do what he thought wrong.”^{xvi} The only hint of our Bulstrode’s *spiritual* ancestry in the earlier time is the Bunyan (1628-88) epigraph for Chapter 85. The intention to *criticize* such simple black-and-white morality is clear. We can regard Bulstrode as a nemesis for the Protestant ethic. He is so far from a martyr’s courage that he cannot confess even to his wife.

All of these allegorical signs show that George Eliot had a *great design* in her mind. But, of course, they do not show that there is any organic unity in what she actually produced. Perhaps the novel itself simply is a “baggy monster” (as Henry James thought). Let us see now whether we can discover the internal living organism. The question to be answered is: “How has *our world* come to be out of this great past? *Middlemarch* is meant to provide us with the *middle* or *means* for an answer.

Dorothea (Edward Casaubon — Will Ladislaw)

Dorothea is *promised* to us in the Prelude as a St. Theresa who failed to find her opportunity for a “long recognizable deed” in the middle-class England of 1830. The novel follows her life from the age of nineteen until about her twenty-second birthday. We are informed about her subsequent history in the Finale. But the “determining acts” of her life are identified as the two marriages that she made during the period of the novel. In the last paragraph it is further suggested that “a new Theresa will hardly have the opportunity of reforming a conventual life.” The implication of that comment is that the “new Theresa” must do her “recognizable deed” in an *ordinary* life, and that it was not marriage itself that was a mistake in 1830, because deeds done in the context of religious withdrawal from life will not now *be* “long-recognizable.” *Equally* it is affirmed that heroic deeds

done in a *family* context will not count in our democratic world (as they could in the primitive world of ancient Thebes, so that Antigone's burial of her brother could be made "recognizable" by Sophocles in civilized Athens — and through Sophocles to us). Already we can see why Dorothea's marriages were "not ideally beautiful." The first one brought her to the verge of self-immolation (on the model of Antigone) for the "burial" (the spiritual peace) of a "brother" who was her "husband" in name, her "father" in her anticipation, and her "living death" in fact. The second marriage resulted in her confinement to private life, happy and fulfilled in her own mind,^{xvii} but wasted in the eyes of others (many others, not just Sir James, who was prejudiced both by his feelings, since he continued to be in love with her, and by his principles since he cordially loathed reformist politics).

That *waste* is the declared topic of the novel, so we must study it. But first we should examine the happiness and fulfilment of Dorothea in her own mind. The word George Eliot habitually uses to suggest Dorothea's saint-like quality is "ardent"; and in the Finale she tells us that "Will became an *ardent* public man, working well in those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days, and getting at last returned to Parliament by a constituency who paid his expenses." This "at last" is revealing, for it indicates that by the time Will got to Parliament, the "young hopefulness" was "checked" — so nothing came of the *ardency* in the way of a "recognizable deed" in *public* life. Of course, the *ardency* is properly Dorothea's, not his, for he is (as we shall soon demonstrate) a creature of the light, but never of the fire. He mirrors and reflects truly, but he does not *burn*. So the *ardency* of the "new Theresa" goes to waste, because the burning flame of a Theresa exists, not to be *reflected*, but to consume; it is a devouring flame, and it needs a perpetual supply of fresh fuel if it is to do its work. At its source it burns unquenchably, for Theresa of Jesus is never sundered from the savior whose name she added to her own. But Theresa is a doer, an organizer, not a visionary. Her visionary experience (in my opinion, Ms. Sackville West's opinion, and — in view of George Eliot's treatment of Dorothea and Casaubon, which anticipates Freud in so many ways — I feel entitled to claim that it was our author's opinion, too) was a backlash from the repression of that flame of living activity caused by the *conventual* restriction of her life. That the repression was necessary in order

for her to become Saint *Theresa of Jesus* in the first place, I do not doubt; but George Eliot clearly wants to claim that Dorothea's Casaubon experience was essential to *her* sainthood too.

Dorothea Brooke *was* a saint. She was not the saint she could have been, because the Theresa flame will not serve as the light for a burning glass, and a burning glass husband was all that life eventually gave her. But she did become the saint properly identified by her own name (much less important than Theresa in the "history of man," but by no means negligible). The original St. Dorothea is in the *Golden Legend* thus: St. and Virgin martyr of Caesarea (Cappadocia, Asia Minor). Fabricius the Roman Governor condemns her to death for her Christian faith (in one of my books there is a story of her converting two sisters sent to convert her — perhaps the Rosamund encounter in Chapter 81 is meant to mirror this). The account of her execution varies (in different *pictures*, for it is to painting and not to literature that she properly belongs). But as she went to execution, she was laughed at by a scribe, Theophilus, who challenged her to send *roses* and *apples* from the garden of her heavenly bridegroom. At the scaffold (or stake) an angel appeared with roses and apples, and she sent them to Theophilus. Theophilus was converted and martyred later for his faith.^{xviii}

Unlike the actual career of Theresa, the legend of Dorothea is an image, a *myth*. What can it signify in real (Feuerbachian) terms? That Dorothea is martyred for her *faith*, in a world that has lost faith, and that she can only live by the *knowledge* supplied through her religious education, is exactly portrayed in our heroine's marriage to Casaubon. Casaubon himself has no faith, and he has devoted his life to the impossible task of showing that one does not need it, because the record of the traditional faith is the simple truth that appears deformed in all other traditions. The holy book of Dorothea's *faith* becomes for Casaubon the *key* to all *mythology*. But Casaubon himself is a mythological monster. For Dorothea he is a *labyrinth*. It is not really correct to take him for the Minotaur proper (though that is supported by the fact that the Minotaur's diet *was* virgin maidens), because there is none of the actual violence in Casaubon which Dante — for one — associates with the Minotaur, and which *Bulstrode*, the true Minotaur, displays. Bulstrode is someone whose desires have overwhelmed his calling and his faith; but he does have a calling, and a faith in which he

continues to believe. Casaubon has no faith, no calling, and even no desire left except the desire to *hide*. He is not a bull at all, but a *fish* (ICHTHUS, the key to Christian mythology) swimming in a freshwater lake in terror of “Pike” and “Tench.” The ardent Dorothea, spreading *light* everywhere — and wanting to see Casaubon’s great book come forth to where these enemies can devour it, while those who know what reason is (Will, or even Mr. Brooke, who “goes into everything”) join with those who don’t (Celia) in laughing their heads off — is far more *actively* the Minotaur in Casaubon’s labyrinth, than he is in hers. Those *judging* eyes of hers, which read character and will so readily, and are so soon enlightened as to facts by Will, are a Nemesis for Casaubon even worse than the discovery that he has no life and desire left in him, and that marriage is a nuisance and a burden rather than a pleasure. That is why he hates Will — not for any sexual reasons, but because those ardent eyes see him as clearly as Will does. Will is a do-nothing, so it doesn’t matter what Will sees, but Dorothea, in all her female ignorance is far worse than Pike and Tench, because she is the sun that shows up the very pool they all dwell in for the backwater that it is.

And Dorothea has to face the awful fact that her light and life and fire is itself a hurtful thing, which must be hidden, muffled, and quenched by anyone who feels Christian charity for this poor cave creature. From being imperious and enthusiastic, she becomes humble and timid, afraid to speak lest she do hurt. She discovers what Celia knows so well from being subjected to it: that she is extremely arrogant (like Bulstrode) in her committed service of God. She is incredulous at the idea that Sir James should be in love with her, because that would be *presumption* on the part of one so ordinary, so worldly, so unintellectual (Ch. 1). Her destiny is higher altogether. She chooses someone who is intellectual, who *does* belong to another world, a “father who could teach you even Hebrew”; and she displays her imperious pride of service, fully and freely, when that father is disposed to keep her out of the higher world. But then once she gets into his world, she is constrained to discipline this driving will of hers to the true service of God, for the being whom she finds there is a cripple, one on whom *no* demands must be made, whereas her very *existence* is *demanding* — and she has hitherto believed that that was perfectly justified if the demands were made in God’s name. It is Casaubon who teaches Dorothea what being a saint really involves.^{xix}

These two are bound to go in fear of one another, because the one needs darkness as much as the other *must* spread light. Only in the shadow of death can they achieve the real charity of proper sympathy on the part of each for the other's fate (Ch. 42). And then, the fate of having to spread light in this cavern of the mind where the knowledge of Hebrew *is* the key to all truth, is only averted by Death itself. At the stake (or the scaffold) the dark angel takes the dark half of St. Dorothea, while an angel of light receives her as the light-bringer. (The new saint Dorothea is *married*; she is "one flesh" with the partner whom she chooses.)

Will Ladislaw is a perfect realization of what it means to be an *angel* (a *messenger* of God) in real life, or in Feuerbachian terms. He is not the sort of angel Jacob wrestled with (that is an unusual role for angels). He carries *messages* from God to man (and back again) as Gabriel did for Mary; and he speaks prophetically (as Milton's Raphael, the affable archangel, spoke to Eve). He sees everything and can say everything, but he has no being or direction of his own. We meet him first, appropriately, in Casaubon's garden (Ch. 9); "not a gardener," as Celia says — refusing to be taken in, as the holy women were at the Resurrection — but "a gentleman with a sketchbook" remarkable for his youth in this family (where Celia is quite surprised to think that anyone was ever young). Mr. Brooke takes to Will at once — having never been anything but a child, he recognizes Peter Pan. Dorothea is negative to his imaging activity, and Will is convinced she *must* be unpleasant and contemptuous (as indeed she secretly is). But her *voice* touches him at once, leaving him bewildered by the suggestion of a passion that ought not to be there. There is *one* important difference between Will and Mr. Brooke — Will is not indolent. He likes to *do* things — but only of an expressive sort, whereas Dorothea regards such expressions only as *plans of action*. Casaubon makes Will out to be just Mr. Brooke. But Dorothea can see the awful seriousness of the commitment and choice that Will faces (cf. Chs. 9, 21).

By the time they meet in Rome, she knows the seriousness of *her own* choice, and Will is conscious of the tragedy of it. Already, in his way, he is in love with her, he is her knight errant. He knows that he is no visual artist, but *words* are his medium. A critic he might well be (Naumann, Ch. 22) since he is well informed — e.g. about Casaubon's studies. The origin of *that* rather

surprising (and none too extensive [Ch. 21]) knowledge, was clearly a felt *need* to be critically superior to the would-be “governor” of his life, who does not scruple to offer himself as a model of disciplined application (Ch. 9). But Dorothea has no use for a “poet without poems”; so a critic of the arts Will cannot be. His lady’s word is law for him, so a critic of society is what this angelic presence has to become — for society, and its improvement, is all that the lady cares about. Santa Clara she is painted as, while Casaubon serves as Aquinas. At the very moment when Will’s mission is to tell her that her Aquinas is no angelic doctor, but a cave crawler,^{xx} he takes his new angelic function from her. He will go home to preach her gospel. Dorothea is the *poem* he cannot write, but can critically expound.

Casaubon clearly expects nothing of Will, because he wants him to amount to nothing; he is *conscious* of Will’s critical capacity, and of how it applies to himself, the “governor.” But Will surprises him. Will has a real potential in politics, and he begins to burn now with his borrowed fire. In the fiasco of Mr. Brooke’s candidacy for parliament, Will emerges as both a good journalist, and a good political speaker.^{xxi} To speak and to write (not creatively, but to *spread the word*) is Will’s office in the world; the continual emphasis on his “honor” and “chivalry” shows he is on the side of the *angels*. His genuine and absolute commitment to these “knightly” ideals is both explained and reinforced by his awareness of some *real* disgrace in his mother’s family, and by the *conventional* evaluation of him as an outsider, the son of a nobody. When the scandal breaks, he is *falsely* identified as the “grandson of a Jew pawnbroker” (Ch. 71). His supposed Fagin-grandfather was in fact a member of Bulstrode’s church, so he was not Jewish by religion, and almost certainly not by blood. The Jewishness is a *displacement* (originating probably in the mind of Bambridge, though Raffles *might* have embroidered Bulstrode’s disgrace in this way) expressing the Middlemarch stereotype of the pawnbroker (“old-clothes man” is Mrs. Cadwallader’s euphemistic displacement for that — Ch. 84). Will could just possibly be Jewish through his Polish grandfather;^{xxii} but if George Eliot wanted *this* irony she would have given some hint of it. Instead Mrs. Cadwallader’s displacement of Will’s origin points rather to a *Papist* grandfather — “an *Italian* with white mice” (Chs. 50, 76). All that matters is Will’s *not* having an established right of birth, and position as a *gentleman*, and hence being very sensitive about his *right of feeling*.

When Bulstrode offers reparation, Will's feeling at first prompts rejection. Then his "reflection" of Dorothea makes *him* dream of being a *community founder* (Ch. 82). But this is *visibly* a rationalization. "Planning" of this kind is not his thing, and he only enters into it as an excuse for coming back into Dorothea's orbit. Even on Dorothea's part, the *Utopia* scheme is only a return to the play-acting of a role that she has already given up, thanks to the chastening of her egoism in her first marriage. She can *talk* of being the center of the wheel in an ideal community, but she knows that an ideal community would give no scope for her (Ch. 55). Once things are *right*, they are no longer interesting to Dorothea. That was one aspect of the tragedy of being mistress of Lowick; and Mr. Brooke would never let his *niece* put Tipton in order (Caleb Garth can do that better anyway — see Ch. 39). *Talking* about a project of this kind is a fantasy revenge (and consolation) for Casaubon's cutting her off from Will by making her an heiress whom Will cannot approach without impoverishing her. She is ready enough to be talked out of it on practical grounds, and we *know* that she would never take such advice, if it were not what she *wanted* to hear; otherwise the *difficulty* would be an attraction. To give *that* up is not her "sad sacrifice"; and to give Casaubon's money up thereafter is no sacrifice at all.

Dorothea and Will exist together on another plane than this. But Will, when he feels his honor is smirched, becomes unstable — and when Dorothea has to defend Lydgate, and finds Will in Rosamund's arms, she shows in the completion of her "martyrdom" (remember that the roses and apples are sent to "Theophilus" by the angel's hand, while the saint goes to death alone) the clearest flash of that appalling pride which led her to believe Mr. Casaubon *must* have a "great soul" because *she* deserved a Hooker, a Milton, or a Pascal. It is only her acknowledged suitors — Chettam and Casaubon — whom she misjudges on this scale; and that is because her ego gets in the way. About Will and Lydgate (and Farebrother) she is as clear-eyed as could be. But when she finds Will making love to another woman she thinks that he has caused her to let *herself* down:

Why had *he* come obtruding his life into hers, hers that might have been whole enough without him? Why had he brought his cheap regard and his lip born words to *her who had nothing paltry to give in exchange* . . . Why had he not stayed among

the crowd of whom she asked nothing — *but only prayed that they might be less contemptible?* (Ch. 80)

This is the sin of Lucifer himself — to be absolutely superior and self-sufficient. It is Bulstrode's sin; and we saw it work its rationalizing will upon Dorothea in the division of her mother's jewels (which are worldly dross, beneath the notice of her true vocation — though she ends up taking the best of them). Now it is not baubles but her glimpse of Paradise that she must renounce, in order to send the rose to "Theophilus." She does it, and the *angel* is restored to her (she must break through the conventions to get his "honor" out of the way, but that is nothing compared with the miracle that she works upon Rosamund. It is in her impact upon Rosamund that she shows herself as St. Dorothea. And while giving the miracle its proper Feuerbachian form, George Eliot means us to see this encounter as the *miracle* that it was — one that Dorothea (but never Theresa) could perform.

Lydgate (Rosamond — Bulstrode — Dorothea)

Dorothea is a Feuerbachian saint in actuality. (Her *potential* is higher than anything Feuerbach actually *explains*, but George Eliot takes Feuerbach's principles far beyond the range of Feuerbach's essentially bourgeois vision.) Lydgate, on the other hand, is a Feuerbachian (classical) *hero*. Each of them accepts the "call" of service to *humanity*, but for Dorothea that call is the call of *God*; for Lydgate it is the call of a *self-defined ideal*. Dorothea has *religion*; Lydgate has only a heroic ideal of life.

The implications are manifold. At the beginning, all the advantage is on Lydgate's side. Dorothea wants to serve God, Lydgate knows that there is only humanity to be served. Dorothea has to *find* God, knowing only by intuition that he is "Love," and that one must love one's neighbor. For Lydgate the call can only come as a discovery of just *how* he can best serve humanity. It is the essence of a hero's call that he *knows* what he has to do. The "hero" is an intermediary not between *man and God*, but between *men and the Gods*. There is a *God* on his side (and other Gods against

him); and he *must* know the one who is his friend. He will not recognize his enemies, until he has felt their power.

If we look at Lydgate in the context of *Greek* mythology, it is clear that he is one of the Asklepiadae. He is a *healer*. But Asklepios was only a *hero* himself. His divine “father” was Apollo; and Lydgate as a *scientist*, one who has no truck with *religion* as such, is a true child of Apollo, the God of light, and of philosophic and scientific clarity.

But it is *Dorothea* who is said (from the beginning) to have a *theoretic* mind (Ch. 1). This seemingly puzzling attribute, considering that all her talents are *practical*, is quickly interpretable once we look at how George Eliot glosses it: “her mind was theoretic and yearned by its nature after *some lofty conception of the world* which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there.” She seeks *knowledge of the whole*. Hence she falls victim to a form of theory that is not knowledge at all, but false consciousness, misrepresentation of our nature and of nature in general: “theology.” She thinks Mr. Casaubon has a “great soul” because “Everything I see in him corresponds to his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology” (Ch. 2). The correspondence is certainly *there*; it is the significance of the *pamphlet* that is falsely estimated. But in the context of her actual education, this is the only way of bringing God and world together that Dorothea has.

Lydgate by contrast *does not want* to know the world as God’s world at all. The world is *man’s world*, and he is quite content to let it *be* the way it is, to accept his place in it, and to do and receive what is expected in that place. *He* wants to get knowledge not of the macrocosm, but only of the microcosm. He begins with a voracious appetite for all forms of human experience (from *Gulliver’s Travels* to the Apocrypha). But once he discovers *anatomy*, he has found *his thing*.^{xxiii} His story is the sad tale of how he comes to be “shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross” (Ch. 15) in spite of his genuinely heroic potential, and that very early moment of self-discovery. (Dorothea is “shapen after the average” but never “fit to be packed by the gross,” because with her urge to know her place in the whole she must always remain an individual.)

When a *hero* is “shapen after the average,” however, it must happen in the *heroic* way. Lydgate *accepts the whole* of which he is part, without thinking about it. Being a hero, he accepts responsibility for his own destiny, and is convinced that he can shape it himself. he gets the *best* medical training, and he accepts the fact that the resulting “foreignness” confines him to the provinces.^{xxiv} Not having much of his own, though still enough to raise him above drug-peddling, Lydgate knows he must postpone marriage. After one bad experience in France (which ought to have taught him what force of will can lie behind seeming softness and pliancy in a woman) he thinks he has learned his lesson about women.

Indeed, *his* feeling of being attracted to Rosamund *is* quite well under his control. As soon as he realizes that expectations are being aroused (Ch. 31) he begins to avoid her. But he is a good physician because he does not only care for “cases” in theory, he responds to *people* in practice (“John and Elizabeth, especially Elizabeth” — Ch. 15). This is the *beginning* of his undoing. For Rosamund has set him up in her mind as the knight errant who is really a prince, and who will carry her away into an aristocratic fairyland. He was only saved from Laure, because she did not want him. The discovery that a girl who is his ideal of what a woman should be — beautiful, and content to be decorative, without any ambition to change the world or anything in it — *is in love with him*, is too much for him. We should not forget the *rebound* aspect of his previous experience, but it is his perception that Rosamund is suffering that turns the scale at the critical moment (end of Ch. 31).

It is only for *someone with heroic commitments*, however, that this moment of engagement is *critical*. Rosamund is the “rose of the world” — the high priestess of “average values.” In many ways Lydgate is just as *average* as she is; and where he is *not* average, he perceives the operation of average values just as clearly as she does, and he manipulates them almost as cleverly as she — but more cynically, since in these areas he does not accept them in the way that she does. Thus Bulstrode appears to him as a valuable aid for the achievement of his goals. Who should be chaplain of the hospital is of little importance to Lydgate. Religious *doctrine* is of *no* importance at all; but Lydgate is a *good* judge of John, and even of Elizabeth, once he puts his mind to her — which he generally feels no need to do, because he thinks she ought not to be an agent in the world. So he

knows that Farebrother is the better candidate for the chaplaincy, but he votes for Tyke *heroically* (i.e. consciously breaking with what his conventional standards tell him is right — Ch. 18 end).

The important thing for a *hero* is to be *independent* of the world in following his heroic mission. This imperative dictated to Lydgate that he ought not to get married. But once he has engaged himself, Rosamund becomes *part* of what he is *independently* responsible for. This is his *real* downfall, because it imposes a heroic obligation on him, for matters in which he has no heroic vision, but only the most “average” opinions and expectations. Getting married (or even engaging oneself to do it) is a great mass of such conventions. When Dorothea engages herself to the “great soul” revealed in Edward Casaubon’s letter, Mr. Brooke is a bit disturbed, and Sir James is beside himself. So if any conventional obstacle were possible, it would be found. But the marriage is *not* beyond conventional bounds (Ch. 29); and Casaubon is as conventional as anyone. He has plenty of money and he does everything conventionally expected to guarantee that Dorothea’s money, which must pass into his control, shall be held in trust for her (Ch. 9, beginning). Hence their engagement can be brief (six weeks — end of Ch. 5).

Conventionally speaking, Lydgate’s engagement ought to have been long — long enough, perhaps, for Rosamund to realize how mistaken she was, and so to break it. Mr. Vincy *ought* to have inquired into Lydgate’s prospects, and Lydgate *ought* to have asked what kind of “settlement” Rosamund would have. But Rosamund short-circuited all that. Vincy is ready to start the inquiry in Chapter 36 — because he *loves* Rosamund and he knows *her* expectations. He also knows that he cannot settle anything on her at this point — his initial pliability arises from the Featherstone expectations for Rosamund as well as Fred (Ch. 31 end, and Ch. 36). Lydgate *expects* help and a settlement — but his *heroic* independence prevents him from asking about it, until it is far too late. He wants a short engagement, precisely because the social formalities of it *waste his time* (Ch. 36) — the *rebound* phenomenon is apparent, however, in his fear that Rosamund may want to put the marriage off. Vincy is flattered, overawed, and not anxious to confess that he is not as solid as the Mayor ought to be (Ch. 36). So the engagement is short and nothing is said while there is time.

The *really* critical moment comes when Lydgate takes the house Rosamund wants; and buys expensive furnishings for it. His own pride in doing what is expected, and his own weakness for nice things, are the forces that immobilize Heracles at last, and put him into the position of Atlas holding up the world that he wanted to take for granted. (“One must hire servants who will not break things” — Ch. 36.) The “settlement” therefore takes the form of a *life insurance*; and Lydgate’s heroic independence does keep him from piling up debts *too* fast. But he will not live as Wrench does (until Chapter 64) and *unlike* Mrs. Wrench, or her own brother, Rosamund *is* industrious (Ch. 16) — there is no doubt she is a good housewife as well as house-proud (Ch. 81). But the *look* of things is Rosamund’s god.^{xxv} So she throws Lydgate’s own contempt for scrimping at him in Chapter 64; and in Chapter 57 she says “What can *I* do?” in sharp contrast to Lydgate’s memory of Dorothea asking “Think what I can *do*” about Casaubon.

After Chapter 57 Lydgate knows the score; he is not yet an immobilized Atlas, and there is no reason to think that the goddess of convention *can* immobilize him now that he sees the face of the enemy plainly. In Chapter 64 Rosamund foils his plan to dispose of the expensive house; but *her* daydream of aristocratic connections is exploded by Sir Godwin — and after that the face of the enemy is completely unmasked (Ch. 65).

It is *Bulstrode* who destroys the hero. Lydgate tries opium (Ch. 66) and gambling (Chs. 66-67); but the latter experience (at least) is an education in humility. He cannot carry on his research; but with Dorothea in Bulstrode’s place at the Hospital he could recover his ground. Indeed *she* would lend him the money to tide him over, just as she does when she actually knows about it. We should notice the resemblance between Lydgate and Caleb Garth. Both of them are *heroic*; they would prefer *to work for nothing* (Ch. 67, end). They must both *learn* the necessity of earning their own bread. Even after the disaster of Bulstrode’s change of mind, and the public revelation of what motivated it, Lydgate remains resolute, but he cannot work the miracle upon Rosamund that Dorothea does (end of Ch. 75). In Chapter 76 Dorothea comes to his aid; and this is the moment when he confesses that he is beaten.

This moment is the crisis of the action. For Lydgate recognizes Dorothea's quality ("a heart large enough for the Virgin Mary" — cf. Ch. 1). What if the continually threatened cholera outbreak came *now*?^{xxvi} All of Lydgate's "Herculean" powers would be called forth. The Hospital would be the place of his salvation, and that of his community. Certainly he would be a *recognized* hero by the time the emergency was over; and no one would be muttering about his dependence on Bulstrode, and his possible complicity in the death of Raffles. Rosamund's ambitions would be realized. She would be "queen" of the world of *Middlemarch*, and no longer tempted to dream of starting out elsewhere. All of Lydgate's research interest would be focused on "fever" from this time onwards. He would take the place beside Vesalius and Harvey that actually belongs to Pasteur.

But Dorothea would be there in the emergency too. *Doing* things: slop-pails and clean bed sheets, as well as prayers and spiritual comfort. *Wishing* she could do more, and finding out what God meant her to do from the first (why else is her story tied to that of a dedicated physician?). Fifteen years later Florence Nightingale went to Germany to train as a nurse. In George Eliot's vision this could have happened to her new "Theresa" — for surely "the Lady with the Lamp" *is* the Theresa of George Eliot's century. But George Eliot's heroine is *not Theresa*, in that she does not follow the *cloistered* pattern (as Florence Nightingale *did*). If the cholera had come against Dorothea, the nursing profession itself would have evolved differently with a married role-model at its fountainhead. (An organizing genius like Florence Nightingale would still have had a great impact, but not the *either/or* impact that she *did* have.) This is where Dorothea's "long-recognizable deed" would have come in.

When we are told in the "Prelude" that the heroine will be "St. Theresa foundress of nothing," we are meant to ask ourselves all the way through her story what she *might* have founded. The carefully orchestrated association of her career with that of Lydgate gives us the clue that we need for finding the right answer. *Marriage* is not the destiny of a saint; but it is a crucial moment in the maturing of a fully human individual life. George Eliot calls Dorothea's marriages "those determining acts of her life" (Finale, last page); and she says that they "were not ideally beautiful." But, in fact, the second marriage *was* "ideal." Will and Dorothea were completely committed to one another; whereas Celia had always the consciousness of being "second choice." Dorothea became a

happy mother, just like Celia. But it is Celia, not Dorothea, who is perfectly fulfilled by her marriage.

The reason why Dorothea's second marriage is not "ideally beautiful" is implicit in the unequal conception of marriage itself. Married to Will, Dorothea's "ardency" was socially subordinated to the *potentiality* of her husband. Many readers — especially strong-minded male readers — have agreed with Sir James that Dorothea's second marriage was "a mistake." But they are missing the point. Dorothea would not have been more fittingly matched, if Will were the young Mr. Gladstone. She would not even have been more fittingly matched, if the cholera had removed Rosamund and Will, so that she could marry Lydgate. For Lydgate was not a husband who would cheerfully let his wife become a nurse. Will is the perfect husband for Dorothea, because he knows that he must take his lead from her. But according to the Pauline conception of marriage, he was her "head" (just as Caleb Garth was Susan's). It was their *education* that was at fault.

Caleb, like Lydgate, is a *hero*; but he was lucky in his wife. Luck of another kind might have saved Lydgate — the luck of a social catastrophe. That would also have set Dorothea — who was so lucky in her second husband — on the right path. But in the absence of that luck, it was his marriage that was truly "the determining act" of Lydgate's life.

It is Dorothea's "finely touched spirit" that unifies this great novel into an organic whole. The "Prelude," which seems to speak only of her, actually explains her relation to Lydgate. There is a deliberate *mistake* in the opening sentences which tells us why their careers have been brought together. The ironic assumption that we all know the story of the child Theresa setting out to convert the Moors invites us to *make* that story part of our knowledge properly. If we *do* that, we find that the "still smaller brother" was in fact *four years older* than Theresa. We also find that the story is not fully given by the Saint herself (in her *Autobiography*). She tells us that her brother was "about the same age as me" and that they resolved to convert the Moors, but found their *parents* were always a serious impediment to their plans. The story of the actual attempt (meeting an Uncle on the bridge leading out of the city) is found only in the early (first?) biography by the Jesuit father

Ribera. And in his account the age of the brother becomes unforgettable, because being both older *and a boy* the brother gets all the blame; and he cries out indignantly “But it was *she* — *la niña*, the little one — *she made me do it!*” George Eliot’s point, therefore, is that the brother was “smaller” *not chronologically, but in the spirit*. Exactly the same applies to Dorothea and Lydgate (who must be at least four years older than she). Both of them are “children” in their knowledge of the world; and their great enterprise is cut off before they can get out of town, by an *Aunt* called Mrs. Grundy. It is only because of the inevitable victory of Mrs. Grundy, that the great epic of “Miss Brooke” declines into the “generous rural history” of *Middlemarch*.

Notes

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- i. Cited in P. Swinden (ed.), *George Eliot: Middlemarch, A Casebook*, London, Macmillan, 1972, 16 [hereafter, *Casebook*].
 - ii. Reprinted in *Casebook*, 60-8 (see p. 60).
 - iii. Cited in *Casebook*, p. 14.
 - iv. *Casebook*, pp. 61, 68. This view of the novel is determined by the paragraph in Ch. 11 about “Old provincial society.” But that paragraph clearly identifies Rosamond (rather than Miss Brooke) as the Io of the modern Herodotus. That is the clear sign that Henry James only *half*-understood George Eliot’s aim and purpose.
 - v. This aim is very clear in the “Prelude” where George Eliot speaks of Theresa’s demand for an “epic life”; and of the old *romances* as “light fuel.” The “reform of a religious order” was Theresa’s “epos.” When Theresa is linked with Antigone at the end of the “Finale,” this epic concern is deliberately recalled.
 - vi. See the beginning of Ch. 19 for the *whole* context in which the author means us to see it.
 - vii. The Garths (with the gentry, the Established Church, and the townsfolk) represent those “personages or families that . . . were slowly presenting new aspects in spite of solidity” (Ch. 11). But the dominance of Mary over Fred — which is not a “new aspect” — points to the need for a complete revaluation of marriage even at the heart of this stable social structure.

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- viii. The lych-gate is a covered gateway at the entrance to the church-yard cemetery (where the corpse can rest till the minister arrives for the burial. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives Tennyson's "Aylmer's folly" (1864) for it.
- ix. *Casaubon* belongs to a different level of the allegory (the historic or temporal one which the critics have already caught on to). We shall deal with his name in the next section.
- x. Note what Sir James' mother says in Ch. 84. The fact that Celia calls her baby *Arthur* is certainly symbolic: It is reminiscent of "Little Arthur's History of England" as well as of King Arthur. "Arthur" is Mr. Brooke's name; and the contrast here is between his lack of will, and the determination of *Will* Ladislaw to be a true gentleman.
- xi. Hans Andersen's story was first translated in 1846.
- xii. Probably for his *Histoire des Variations des Églises Protestantes* as well as for the *Histoire Universelle*.
- xiii. No doubt George Eliot depended on the *Life* by Mark Pattison (18).
- xiv. Mrs. Vincy draws attention to the oddity of Lydgate's name in Chapter 11.
- xv. Actually his Bichat-inspired research for the "primitive tissue" was on the wrong track, and would only have been shown to be *erroneous* by the discovery of the cell. Also, serious work in that field could not be successfully combined with a provincial medical practice.

But the Hospital was a natural place for serious research on “fevers”; and that could have led to a “germ-theory.” (A. Mintz is mistaken when he claims that the vocation of physician is not consistent with that of research.)

- xvi. See the article of U.C. Knopflmacher in I. Adam (ed.), *This Particular Web*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1975, 54. (Raffles plays upon the association of “Old Nick” with the Devil — Ch. 53. But we should remember that St. Nicholas is Santa Claus; and one of his most famous benefactions was the provision of dowries for three poor girls. This is neatly reflected in Bulstrode’s relations both with Ladislav’s mother and Mary Garth.)
- xvii. But she herself always continued to have fits of depression — see Ch. .
- xviii. The legend of St. Dorothea is essentially a subject for art. *Apples* do not appear in every picture; but she is always associated with *roses*. We can readily imagine Naumann expounding a Dorothea picture to Mrs. Casaubon (Ch. 22) though George Eliot gives no hint of that (probably because she wanted us to suppose that Dorothea already knew her own saint’s story).
- xix. Some critics think that Casaubon is *impotent*. But this is *not* quite what George Eliot means to suggest. Mrs. Cadwallader says that “marriage to Casaubon is as good as going to a nunnery” (Ch. 6). But Casaubon is convinced that he is “an irreproachable husband” (Ch. 20) “fulfilling unimpeachably all requirements” (Ch. 29). So he was probably not afflicted by any *physical* incapacity. What is powerfully suggested is that he was *infertile*. Dorothea could have been a nun (Naumann, Ch. 19); but she certainly *ought* to be a mother (compare Ch. 28, although her failure to become pregnant is not explicitly referred to).

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- xx. “What could be sadder than so much *ardent* labour all in vain,” (Ch.) says Dorothea, but the *burning* is all hers.
- xxi. Dorothea is in love when she praises Will’s speaking (Ch. 54) but she is not giving her own opinion, for this is not her territory — she only reports what everyone agrees on. The journalism is described by the narrator and shown in its general effect and reception.
- xxii. This may have been the *mystery* about his birth as originally conceived in “Miss Brooke” — cf. *Daniel Deronda*. But it seems clear that the “Jew pawnbroker” of popular gossip (Ch. 71) was not actually Jewish.
- xxiii. George Eliot indicates in Chapter 15 that the choice of a profession is *at least as important* as the choice of a marriage partner. This lesson is continually reinforced through the examples of Fred Vincy and of Farebrother. Dorothea never finds her proper vocation; Lydgate’s vocation is ruined by his marriage. It is the former failure that makes the latter inevitable. That is the connection between them. Seeing that marriage is clearly *barred*, we have to ask, “How could Dorothea and Lydgate be connected *vocationally*?” A. Mintz (1978) has rightly understood the central importance of “vocation” in *Middlemarch*. But he is so obsessed about the inevitability of *failure* in a vocation, that he cannot recognize the successes that we are offered (especially the Garths); and so he does not ask the right questions about how Dorothea and Lydgate might have succeeded. He even says, “Whether George Eliot in the end succeeds in making *Middlemarch* the new novel about the new theme is far from certain” (1978, 58). This is the clearest index one could ask for, of his failure in his own *critical* vocation.
- xxiv. Lydgate actually *wants* to advance the cause of medicine in the provinces (Ch. 13). Just how

he *manages* to become a fashionable *London* practitioner in the end George Eliot does not explain; but no doubt she *could* have done that, for she studied the opening up of the profession carefully.

- xxv. Contrast Dorothea in Chapter 83 in spite of the way the jewels fascinate her in Chapter 1. When she is persuading Will that they should be married she says “and I will learn what everything costs” (end of Ch. 83). That is *exactly* what Rosamund does *not* want to do.
- xxvi. The march of the cholera is carefully chronicled all through the second half of the novel. In Chapter 45 it is “at Dantzic.” In Chapter 63 Dorothea is going often to the new fever hospital, where a special cholera ward is ready. In Chapter 67, Bulstrode is afraid of the cholera, which has actually broken out near London. In Chapter 70 Bulstrode and Lydgate discuss it (together with the Reform Bill). In Chapter 71 we learn that there is actually a case in the town. That case terminated fatally (Ch. 74); but there were no more.