

A Study of the Romantic Elements in *The Mill on the Floss*

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INTRODUCTION

It might be inconsistent to say that such a novelist as George Eliot who thought of herself as a realist is essentially a Romantic. Of course her works are not so simple ones to be classified into isms. Moreover, she particularly tried to provide her works rich social realities as well as the theory of science in order to weigh down works of imagination. But it must be noted that this tactic in her novels makes us tend to overlook the strong romantic elements which are well concealed by the ballast fact. Reading carefully, we realize the double frame by which her works are constructed. One is the obvious outward frame, the objective one and the other the inner frame which is subjective. This inner frame, though it is usually concealed by the outward frame, is conspicuous especially in *The Mill on the Floss*. As Leslie Stephen suggests, of all her works this is really the most "subjective" novel which the subversive emotions and impulsiveness pervade.¹⁾ It is why I focus my attention upon this novel.

I think the fact is very significant that George Lukacs, the best recent analyst of nineteenth-century realism, excluded George Eliot from his list of realists, which means she is not primarily a realist.²⁾ As for the great realists, Calvin Bedient's definition is convincing. That is to say, they were 'militant social critics, propagandists for a manner of being that society had forsaken or never attained. What oppressed them was, above all, the concrete, total form of their own society, the inexorable circle it made for those who had struggle within it.'³⁾ In the case of George Eliot, as contrasted with this defini-

tion, we notice that her society is by no means a real concrete one, but only represented as antithesis to the individual – the self. (The representation of the society opposed to the individual as "the world wife" in *The Mill on the Floss* is, I think, a good example.) As Bedient pertinently says, 'for her, any society is preferable to the explosive egoism of the individual'. Society's function is only 'to contain man, and it is not for the prisoner to complain'.⁴⁾ Thus, 'because of her devotion not to a unique or particular society but to the idea of society itself, George Eliot's documentary realism tends to function as merely the illusion of a moral'.⁵⁾ On this point I quite agree with him. It is, I think, not too much to say that it is not the society but the self itself, or the socialization of the self with its enormous and glowing self-expansion that she devoted to. Briefly speaking, all her works are the illustration of a process of such an intense and painful struggling between the society and the ego (the self-importance). The fundamental theme of her novels is 'the necessity of dying unto the self', and the characteristic process is that of 'un-selving'.⁶⁾ As Barbara Hardy says; 'her (George Eliot's) prevailing wind is the human egoism which may be damned or redeemed',⁷⁾ the typical characters are the repentant egoists. Though the illustration of the outward process seems simple, we, at the same time, see that something of the inner forces against this process makes her novels very complex ones.

As for the reason why she strived so hard to shrine the social self, we cannot analyze so simply. However I think Bedient might be right in saying 'George Eliot perhaps suffered even more from the "evil perturbations" of a passionate and imaginative nature. Had she not had the making of a great sinner, she would not

have struggled so earnestly to become a saint. There were, she said when young, demons “mopping and mowing and gibbering” within her, inciting her into forbidden regions.⁸⁾ Isn't it a very interesting and significant suggestion? It also seems to me very interesting to think what it would have been, if she were born more seventy or eighty years later. Because it is an important fact that she thought it was a sin to liberate the “demons” within her. On the other hand, it is also undeniable that she instinctively perceived that to stifle the “demons” is to stifle “life” itself, which become the main cause of Maggie's frustration and on which the important theme of *The Mill on the Floss* is built. As Bedient says, the repentant characters' misfortune is that ‘they know and feel that their life has become (in words from *The Mill*) “a long suicide” and that “resignation to individual nothingness” – the common fate – is tantamount to self murder’. So their victory cannot become more than a “Pyrrhic victory”.¹⁰⁾ We can find such lamentation undeniably identified with Eliot's own one in Fianle of *Middlemarch* which is written out of her full intelligence and ironically considered as the most successful book of hers. Surely, I think, she instinctively believed in the importance of the self and the natural, animal-like life where impulse is fully released, as passionately as D.H. Lawrence whose creed is ‘nothing is important but life’.¹¹⁾ As I later explain, Eliot, looking ahead with some foreboding, makes Philip a spokesman of relativistic ethics of an age to come with all her free thinking.

However, in spite of this fact, we must not forget that she is a moral spokesman of her age. Moreover her intelligence cannot but realize the destructive and dangerous nature of the impulsive power submerged in the self which is hostile to reason, tradition and society. She cannot openly assert emotional need which she is unable to sustain with her intellectual conviction. Then she approves the Victorian view saying that ‘we must lose the natural life before we can participate in the spiritual one’.¹²⁾ She, in the atmosphere of Victorian morality, inevitably accepts a long suicidal process as Maggie's. In other words, it may be said that she is a faithful witness to her age. Her inner struggle between the Victorian moral faith and her primitive instinct, her

belief in the dynamic forces in the self, makes her divided nature as well as Maggie's. If we see only the outward theme of her novels, perhaps it may be right of Bedient to say ‘Eliot is simply turned upside down D. H. Lawrence's tablet of values’, and that ‘where George Eliot free from Being, Lawrence runs toward it’.¹³⁾ However if we carefully observe the inward subjective theme, we notice that she also approaches to life. This is especially prominent in *The Mill* in which Maggie's searches for the clue of life is, I think, to be interpreted as her attempt at self-fulfillment. So the double frame of her novels makes Eliot's realism very unique one. Bedient calls it ‘psychological realism’, because as Lord Acton remarked, she is an expert pathologist of conscience.¹⁴⁾ However, I want to say it is romanticism disguised as ‘psychological realism’. We cannot deny such strong romantic elements burst out in *The Mill on the Floss* where George Eliot let herself go completely, which I'll examine in this essay.

I THE ROMANTIC TRAITS

I want to point out here seven conspicuous romantic traits found in *The Mill* by which I want to approach this novel as a romantic one.

1. Reminiscence and nostalgia:

It is well known that the nature lyrics of William Wordsworth, an English Romantic poet, gave a strong impact on the early Victorian imagination and that one of his admirers was of course George Eliot. We can easily discern her affinities with the poet. Especially *The Mill* whose property shares many concerns with his poems was written getting its inspiration from *The Prelude* which is regarded as the poet's most genuine and the most imaginative work. His major effect on her is the contemplation of the past, the attempt to recover a lost past – irrecoverable child innocence. At the opening pages of *The Mill*, we see the past – the lost world slowly coming into focus, which is also starting to recreate the author's another inner real world:

Just by the red-roofed town the tributary Ribble flows with a lively current into the Floss. How lovely the little river is, with its dark, changing wave-

lets! It seems to me like a living companion while I wander along the bank and listen to its low placid voice, as to the voice of one who is deaf and loving. I remember those large dipping willows. I remember the stone bridge.

.....
The rush of the water, and the booming of the mill, bring a dreary deafness, which seems to heighten the peacefulness of the scene. They are like a great curtain of sound, shutting one out from the world beyond. And now there is the thunder of the huge covered waggon coming home with secks of grain. (ch. 1)

Then St. Ogg's is introduced to us, which is a town "familiar with forgotten years". This attitude of George Eliot to speak to us from places removed and across the gulf of years is very significant. Barbara Hardy remarks; 'The voice here is nostalgic, possessive, and personal' 'It is an affectionate voice which makes the introduction, and the stake in the real past gives the necessary excuse for the lingering affectionateness. Pity itself is given the excuse of nostalgia'.¹⁵⁾ Such focus as hers upon the extraordinary distance between present and past, between the inner reality and the outer reality, between narrator and actor, between the active, unreflective younger self in his glad animal vitality and his old self, wiser perhaps, but also passive, somehow diminished is said to be the characteristics of the central poems of the English Romantics and many other writers under their influence.¹⁶⁾ In any event both of Wordsworth and Eliot are heavy with nostalgia. However we must not overlook something more than nostalgia is intimated in them. Wordsworth significantly says; 'The child is father to the man'. The dynamic self must yield up to experience, to reason. And here they sincerely suggest that this loss is very grievable because it is a splendor or radical potency of Being.

2. Liberation of impulse:

The second romantic trait is 'the liberation of impulse'¹⁷⁾ which, Lerner says, is the single element that lies at the center of the Romantic movement, and which, I think, is the most conspicuous trait in this novel too.

As I'll explain later, George Eliot releases the powerful emotional forces in this novel, though it is deftly colored by morality. At any rate, she was 'deeply drawn to emotional surrender'¹⁸⁾ and has visited the deep places of her inner real world and attained her pure self-fulfillment.

3. Soul's yearning:

The third Romantic trait is the spiritual yearning for an unattainable goal. In Maggie's case, the author's profound ambivalence toward her unconscious vital self characterizes her frustration. Maggie's divided nature represented by her inner conflict between impulse and duty as much as that between her inward desires and what really happens to it in real world makes her yearn for transcendental vision which is the only means to her salvation.

4. Self-consciousness and self-dramatizing as a special Romantic malaise:

Maggie's impulsiveness derived from the Romantic self-consciousness and self-absorption is obviously expressed in her spiritual development which is marked by the odd mingling of delight and pessimism. The following quotation clearly shows this trait:

Her own life was still a drama for her, in which she demanded of herself that her part should be played with intensity. And so it came to pass that she often lost the spirit of humanity by being excessively in the outward act; she often strove after too high a flight and came down with her poor little half-fledged wings dabbled in the mud. (Book IV, ch. 3)

And I must add here that this self-conscious nature can be said as a mark of George Eliot's modernity which links her with twentieth-century novelist.

5. Root in the ordinary:

The impulse to recover and to celebrate the ordinary has roots deep in Romanticism, which is widely showed not only by George Eliot but by other modern English writers such as James Joyce. George Eliot never shrinks from the comparison of 'small things with great' (Book

IV, ch. 1). She places Maggie's destiny in the everyday actual life and elevates it into a common and important problem of human beings. It is very significant that Maggie who particularly yearns for an 'ordinary' destiny is destroyed by her extraordinary intensive impulse and the flood which is an extreme development of the ordinary.

6. Sense of loneliness and isolation:

Though I could not be confirmed by any references, I still think this is the common feelings rooted in Romanticism. The island in *The Prelude* is said to be one of the great Romantic images.¹⁹⁾ Although it may be the perfect embodiment of the idyllic mode of life, I think it produces the other harsh meaning, that is, the sense of separateness, solitude. We see the same sense haunts Maggie throughout her short life. When she was advised to leave St. Ogg's by Dr. Kenn, she realizes that 'she must be a lonely wanderer', for the rest of her life. And she can make 'no image of rest – except of that far, far off rest, from which there would be no more waking for her into this struggling earthly life'. (Book VII. ch. 5) I cannot help thinking that because of Eliot's romantic nature, her life and her age gave her deep sense of alienation.

7. Subordination to symbol:

It is well known that the dominating image of *The Prelude* are wind and water. They are 'images which by their very nature – their flowing transforming quality, their ability to interact with other natural elements, and also their traditional associations – allow the poet free range between the observable world and the higher transcendental reality which he wishes to make visible to us. Their chief function is to act as intermediaries between the two worlds'.²⁰⁾ In *The Mill* also the river Floss and the flood are the dominating images. They are the symbol of ordinary quality and extraordinary quality as well as of life and death. From the pastoral scene George Eliot uses the water imagery normally and at the same time for feeling and strong passion. Garrett says, 'it is not unique to *The Mill*; it seems to be as much a part of George Eliot's basic imaginative vocabulary as the mirror and window'.²¹⁾ However, I think it is very

unique here. Of course it is right that Eliot often uses mirror, window, and water as an auxiliary method of creating significance. But in *The Mill* the symbolism of water dominates throughout the book and the author surrenders completely to this symbol, which I'll explain here in detail.

At the beginning of the book, 'the rush of the water, the booming of the mill' and Maggie, a little girl who is watching 'the unresting wheel sending out its diamond jets of water' are presented to us. At the same time, she is identified with the white ducks that are dipping their heads far into the water which symbolize life itself. Here we see the intimation of the focal significance of the novel. The mill is not a mere symbol of the lost world, but it has more positive meaning, – the center of Maggie's inner real world. We see it pervades Maggie's total consciousness throughout her life. That is, she realizes before death, the symbol of her own identity. In this opening scene we also anticipate some disturbing element embodied in the little girl, overlapped by the 'unresting' wheel and water. Moreover we hear her mother's anxious voice: 'Ah, I thought so – wonderin' up an' down by the water, like a wild thing: she'll tumble in some day'. (ch. 2) Our anticipation of her drowning is gradually convinced by various episodes. For example we hear of a legend of the great flood in St. Ogg's. Also we are told Maggie cannot help looking at a dreadful picture of a book in which the 'old woman in the water's a witch – they've put her in to find out whether she's a witch or no, and if she swims she's a witch, and if she's drowned – and killed, you know – she's innocent, and not a witch, but only a poor silly old woman' (Book I, ch. 3) It is made more prominent much later when Philip dreams of Maggie falling down a waterfall and when the river carries Maggie and Stephen to the sea, with disastrous consequence for Maggie.

Thus it is clear the author, representing the water as a symbol of Maggie's natural surrounding, gradually makes use of its symbolic value by introducing it on the figurative level. Here I enumerate the symbolic meanings of the water – the river Floss, the stream, the Mill – along the process of the book.

(a) the Mill – the center of Maggie's world during her childhood and later the center of her total conscious-

ness

- (b) the river Floss and its stream – the general stream of sensation and impulsive nature
- (c) the flood of the Mill – a main cause of economic ruin of Mr. Tulliver and a symbol of rashness of his nature
- (d) Maggie's deep apprehension of the life that flows through herself
- (e) a current of passion which Maggie can neither resist nor control, which carries her past the point of no return
- (f) a current of circumstances which she also cannot resist
- (g) the flood – a closing symbol

This fatal passionate flood becomes equated with the actual fatal flood. And the ending drowning scene conclude the elaborate water imagery of this novel. Maggie's complete yielding to the vital power of the flood stream means her desperate attempt to free herself from any of restriction and to attain the perfection of her intense and passionate aspiration. Here we cannot overlook the Biblical overtones which confirms our sense of the transcendental powers inherent in the water image, which is common with the use of *The Prelude*. Through the Biblical echo in the final scene, we get the suggestion of a new and higher order of symbolic meaning. In this point, we must give much attention to Eliot's deep ambivalence. That is, the image of the water has an ambivalent meaning. Stump's remark is very suggestive here: 'it is the dark life-taking flood water which makes the only possible affirmation in this novel – and this life-taking flood water paradoxically life-giving image.'²²) Maggie attained her pure self-fulfillment at the expense of her actual life. What does this mean? It clearly illustrates Maggie's and the author's divided nature. We have already seen that the flood is Maggie's impulse and at the same time it is the power of circumstances which drives her to moral dilemma and to an impossible attempt to be a Dodson. Here we realize that Eliot uses the water image as the same function as the one of *The Prelude*. It is used as a means to reconcile two opposed – never merged elements. It is used as an only possible intermediary with a Biblical touch between the inner reality and the out-

ward, between past and present, between child and adult, between Tulliver and Dodson, between impulse and duty, between Tom and Maggie, between flesh and spirit, and between self and society. During the fatal flood we see Maggie's impulse is closely linked with her instinct of duty which drives her back to the Mill – to her death. She approached the mighty depth of waters and attained her self-fulfillment. The water, the flood like a Biblical flood is a means toward her transcendental vision, which symbolizes the restoration of harmony in both natural and human relations.

George Eliot though having trusted in her own deepest self, never allowed her intelligence to be satisfied with such 'blood contact of life' as Lawrence. We must say that she, who knew her own deep ambivalence, and who used the flood as a bond to unify the separation, is really a conscious symbolist.

Thus the Romantic traits deeply color this book. Presenting the romantic side of her nature George Eliot revealed a part of the modern awareness – the complexities of the inner life.

II. MAGGIE AS A ROMANTIC FIGURE – THE PROBLEM OF HER CHARACTER

Maggie Tulliver is the very embodiment of her creator's deep ambivalence toward the Romantic self. We can never say she is an idealized character, nor a victim. We are told that Maggie's is a 'troublesome life' because of her perpetual frustration. We can enumerate various causes of this frustration. After her father's downfall, her character is described as follows: 'a creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad; thirsty for all knowledge; with an ear straining after dreamy music that died away and would not come near to her'. 'No wonder', the author comments, 'when there is this contrast between the outward and inward, that painful collisions come of it'. (Book III. ch. 5) As Maggie thinks that 'the world outside the book was not a happy one,' her circumstances as well as her hard lot deny to her all the satisfactions that her nature urgently craves. At the opening of the novel, the first words Mr. Tulliver says to his wife is that 'What I want, you know – is to give Tom a good eddica-

tion; an eddication as'll be a bread to him'. However, ironically we are shown that Maggie is far more intelligent and ripe for learning than Tom, but that nobody is much concerned her about an 'edication' for her. Mr. Tulliver makes no secrets of his opinion on this matter. Maggie is to him 'too cute for a woman'; 'But it's bad – it's bad, a woman's no business wi' being so clever; it'll turn to trouble, I doubt.' (Book I, ch. 2, 3) On this point, Colby suggests the female education of pre-Victorian days underscores the frustration of the gifted woman of George Eliot's age.²³⁾ Actually Maggie has long yearned for a systematic education, some significant knowledge to help her in life. Then it may be right that Paris, objecting to Leavis' argument, says 'Maggie's spiritual hunger is not (as with Dorothea) the sources, but the product of her frustration'.²⁴⁾ However, I don't think she would be content even if she had all the thing such as beauty, gladness, knowledge and the sensuous delight of music, along with love and understanding. In fact Maggie's is not the same as Dorothea's ardent, theoretical yearning 'after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there'. (*Middlemarch*, ch. 1) In the description of her behaviour, 'her tendency toward excess'²⁵⁾ is implicit. We see she herself confesses to Philip: 'I was never satisfied with a little of anything. That is why it is better for me to do without earthly happiness altogether – I had never felt that I had enough music – I wanted more instruments playing together – I wanted voices to be fuller and deeper'. (Book V. ch. 3) She really has an excess of sensibility, an excess of expectation. Walter Allen remarks; 'one can't help feeling that Maggie's demands on Tom were in their nature excessive'.²⁶⁾ Of course she has much to give others, but she wants much more in return. She surrenders to Tom because she wants much more affection in return. That is why 'she is too ardent, swerving passionately from the extreme of desire to the extreme of self abnegation'.²⁷⁾ It is obvious she can never know harmony, still less peace. Even if she had everything she wants, she would never be satisfied with them and would yearns for something different. This savage appetite is characteristic of the Romantic nature. Then I think we must say the

spiritual hunger is both the source and the product of her frustration.

This nature we are told, she owes to her hereditary tie – something embedded in her Tulliver nature. However, she, Bonaparte says, 'seems to be the first of her line who questions the goals themselves'. She is 'the first Tulliver who pursues, with increasing consciousness, the richer, more human life of the Tulliver instinct toward the fulfillment of the real impulses of that genetic heritage'.²⁸⁾ Here we become aware that her nature is clearly identified with her creator's. It is obvious her frustration is not explained by the mere materialistic cause. It carries a wider meaning than that. It raises a more serious problem of human life, that is to say, the collision between self and society, between impulse and intellect in one's own nature, for which we have had none of good solutions. Eliot's ardent longing for solution drives Maggie to take an impossible attempt to be a Dodson (a symbol of the requirements of society), to let impulse surrender to reason, though it is obvious that for her to be a Dodson is utterly impossible. She set out to take the path of martyrdom with its false vision. Her creator well knows this. Martyrdom is none of heroic, romantic acts as Maggie thinks. 'Maggie's is the path we all like when we set out an our abandonment of egoism'; it is 'the path of martyrdom and endurance, where the palmbranches grow, rather than the steep high way of tolerance, just allowance, and self-blame, where there are no leafy honours to be gathered and won'. (Book IV. ch. 3) However, the author herself cannot but feel that this is really an impossible attempt for her as well as Maggie. It is very suggestive that Maggie, immediately after she said 'I have received the Cross (a symbol of martyrdom) – I will bear it', reveals involuntarily her unwillingness; 'But how long it will be before death come!' From then on the Cross changes in its meaning. It becomes a symbol of a ritual for her rebirth – to be herself again. George Eliot rapidly shifts in mode. Maggie is again energetic and strong enough to refute the values of the Dodsons. She instinctively clings her real identity – her sense of home. However, it is significant that Eliot never meant that we should rejoice in the triumph of Maggie's impulse.

III. IMPULSE VS. MORALITY

We are shown that Maggie's behaviour is a riddling mixture of abasement and self-assertion, which Tom realizes:

I never feel certain about anything with you. At one time you take pleasure in a sort of perverse self-denial, and at another you have not resolution to resist a thing that you know to be wrong. There was a terrible cutting truth in Tom's words – that hard rind of truth which is discerned by unimaginative, unsympathetic minds. (Book VI, ch. 4)

This passage is very significant because it obviously illustrates Maggie's divided nature, which determines both the shape and the meaning of this novel. Really such 'ridiculous flights first into one extreme and then into another' (Book V, ch. 5) of hers shows her deep ambivalence toward her own self which is identified with the author's. On this point, I think Colby's remark is very suggestive. That is: 'to appreciate Maggie's "tragedy", one must sympathize with Calvinistic scrupulousness and sense of sin that to us seem to verge on the morbid'.²⁹⁾ It is no doubt that George Eliot discovered in herself primitive longings and the final horror. So it might have been inevitable for her to arm her impulse with moral ideas. We can say that in the storms and struggles of Maggie there was much in the vein of Charlotte Brontë.³⁰⁾ However, Brontë recognized the irrational only as a phase of the human condition, while Eliot's insight into this is far more precise and her analysis of it far more complex. I think it is with justice that Lerner says: "the moral pattern of *The Mill* does not square with the creation of Maggie. They often overlap – often enough for the discrepancy not to show too obviously – but they lead independent lives'.³¹⁾ I think Eliot's consciousness of this disparity between feeling and reason deeply affects most of all her novels, which is conspicuously revealed in *The Mill*. To catch the real meaning of this novel, we have to give due attention to this antithesis – the juxtaposition of vital young self and older, wiser, diminished self, on which this novel is built.

Thus Maggie's history is to be interpreted as both of a struggle for moral survival and a spiritual journey of a Romantic self into fulfillment. However, the former is her illusion to cover her real nature. She, from the beginning, instinctively learns it means self-murder. We can say her real history is the latter. Lerner's remark is fitting: 'Maggie breaks free of the book that contains her: she has a kind of independent existence that I can best indicate by saying that the terms in which the action of the book is best analysed do not tell us much about her But Maggie never needs to awaken from restraint: the Maggie who surrenders totally to impulse is there from the beginning. This is the Maggie who cuts her hair, pushes Lucy in the mud, begs Tom for forgiveness, feels the "bitter sorrows of childhood, when sorrow is all new and strange".³²⁾ Actually we see in Maggie the typical Romantic self with its strenuous, glowing pride in life which is unable to be stifled. It is not surprising that the ending has been the most critical part of this novel where Eliot revealed her deep ambivalence. It is, in a sense, an impossible attempt to stifle the younger vital self and accept the older, reasonable self – an impossible attempt to bring the inner reality contact with the outward reality. Here the author reveals her romantic impulse – the inner secrets of hers – in the most complicated way. It is no wonder readers, particularly the Victorian readers, took this novel for a moral fable. In fact the cross image in the final Book strengthens this impression – that is, the intelligent and passionate person as Maggie who well knows what it means to lose her own deepest self – is to be put upon the cross. It is also natural that Victorian readers were disappointed in the ending, where under the cross image the author prepares to release fully her romantic impulse. In this scene we must notice the important fact that the author cannot but present Maggie's victory through the life-taking and life-giving flood which is the greatest unifying symbol in this novel. 'What the impulse leads to overlaps largely with what reason approves, but it is only an overlap or, a coincidence'.³³⁾

IV DEATH AS A TRANSCENDENTAL REALITY

It is no doubt George Eliot wrote this final scene in

her most excited mood. The heat and the glare pass to us from the Romantic self – Maggie's identity as well as the author's. It is natural that most of the critics found the artistic faults in this scene because of their wrong viewpoint. Maggie who, they assume, has awakened to a moral vision along the tide, rejected Stephen and survived the crucial temptation is swept along providentially by the flood. The last scene offers us; 'The boat reappeared – but brother and sister had gone in an embrace never to be parted: living through again in one supreme moment, the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together'. Her final experience immediately before death – clearly 'the emotional fulfillment' – has been said to batter the confidence in Maggie's rightness and undermine the moral scheme of this book. However, as mentioned before, Maggie did not awaken to any moral vision, that is to say, never needed to awaken. The Maggie who experiences the 'supreme moment'³⁴) is completely the same Maggie who rejected Stephen. We realize this final scene is never an easy conclusion nor a refuge in its untroubled ways. Rather we have already anticipated from the very beginning through the images of water this final moment – the fitting moment for the completion of the Romantic self through the emotional images of water, the detail of which really reminds us what a skilled craftsman Eliot was.

Having rejected Stephen's final appeal, Maggie survives the final temptation. However, her estimate of the climax, her vision of heroic martyrdom is a false one. In direct contradiction to the climax George Eliot prepares for the final moment by more direct emotional means. Maggie feels 'a startling sensation of sudden cold about her knees and feet'. And in this scene the sensation of horror completely overlaps the sensation of her childhood recollection. From then on all rapidly goes toward the end. Unhesitatingly she fetches the boat to rescue Tom and is driven out upon the flood, a supreme image for being swept away. The flood is equated with her passion. She is swept away figuratively as well as literally. The author remarks: 'The whole thing had been so rapid – so dreamlike – that the threads of ordinary association were broken'. When all the artificial vesture of her life is gone, she is all one with her

primitive needs. Her 'unhesitating' behaviour clearly tells us it is her impulse to go back, to be the old impulsive Maggie again that she is really responding. Maggie was 'alone in the darkness with God'. It is no doubt 'God' is her own identity. It is why 'the dim loneliness' on the water, 'the widening of that dismal watery level' was so welcome to her. Her act to fetch Tom in the boat tends to mislead us. However, we should not take it for a moral act. We must notice that Maggie says; 'Yes, Tom: God has taken care of me, to bring to you'. As mentioned before, God is her deep self. It is obvious her act is strongly backed by her own impulse. It is why her final union with Tom is presented as the emotional fulfillment. It is never the victory of love over estrangement.

In the scene in which Maggie cries out, 'O God, where am I? Which is the way home?', the image of home is successfully used. In her bewilderment, she herself is not yet sure what she means by 'home'. Nonetheless, as Lerner suggest, it is nothing but her real self – her divided nature. To turn back to it, she must attain her reunion with Tom who is, 'to her, a symbol of love and duty. Also this reunion is doubtless to mean the only solution for her divided nature. Maggie and Tom, who each inherited different strains of the Tulliver Dodson line and never accord with each other, could grow toward one another only through their death. Because it is clear that while she is alive, as child or adult, the complex Maggie cannot link herself with Tom, with any past. Also we see this is the only means for George Eliot to reconcile her Romantic self with her intellect – her faith of Victorian morality. Thus it is clear that we should not exaggerate the sibling love, relating it with Eliot's estrangement from her own brother, owing to her unconventional union with Lewis. Maggie's reunion with Tom is only the symbol of her unattainable desire for solution. It may be said the direct cause of their death is of course the flood, but the indirect cause is Maggie's fetching of Tom in the boat. That is to say, she or her impulse, in a sense, forced Tom to reunion with her. It reminds us of the Maggie who in her childhood used to claim Tom's love much more than she gives. We already see here the eruption of the savage appetite of Maggie's self-absorbing, self-expansive

Romantic self. Lerner's fitting remarks seem to confirm this: 'What makes Maggie fetch Tom is what made her cut her hair off, run away to the jispies, meet Philip Waken, protest at the bible oath – the fact that she is what she is. "Which is the way home?" The answer is, The way to yourself.'³⁵) Her creation of the image of her old home in her mind is not the actual Tom nor the actual home in St. Ogg's, but is closely related with her adolescent 'blind unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impression of this mysterious life, and give her soul a sense of home in it (Book III, ch. 5). Now she at last has attained the transcendental vision through death. Adding to this, I must say that in this scene none of the religious touches are exaggerated. We know that God in her childhood was any adult in St. Ogg's, God in her adult years was her memories, and God in the final scene is Maggie herself.

V. GEORGE ELIOT'S ATTITUDE TO HER HEROINE

In spite of George Eliot's perpetual referring to the individual lot, Maggie's frustration owes rather to her own divided nature shared by her creator. Baptized by the Victorian ethos, Eliot presents Maggie to be a little skeptical to the inner forces in the self. Though in the early scenes Eliot seems to be delighted in depicting strong and wild feeling of Maggie, she also presents her as a weak individual. We are told she is weak in self-trust which partly accounts for the vagueness of her aspirations and thought. Adult Maggie vaguely senses the destructive elements of the inner dynamic forces – passion. It seems to her a straying from the right public path to a wrong unsound path which means utterly darkness. Maggie says to Stephen: 'We can only choose whether we will indulge ourselves in the present moment (a wrong path), or whether we will renounce that (a public path)'. We can understand Eliot's circumstances never allowed her to assert the power of a full blooded nature. Just as we see that Maggie perpetually appeals to God, – 'divine' motives, Eliot's Calvinistic view cannot but consider impulse, – passion, as something diabolical, or as an affront to the human spirit. If we sympathize with the Victorian moral faith saying

that 'without morality, a man is utter nothingness',³⁶) we can understand Maggie's unnatural self-abnegation, – her mortification of a dynamic self. However, it is interesting that eventually Eliot reveals that Maggie's God is her own identify. The Romantic self of hers with its strenuous and sensuous pride in life rooted in her earlier experience of natural life instinctively senses something wrong in a faith of selflessness. How can one believe in the social self without believing in his own self? It is significant that Philip's intelligence, not Maggie's, does point out the unnatural state of human being who is metamorphosed and held captive. It means that Eliot's reason believed in morality, while her instinct believed in life. We can well understand that such Maggie once astride the stallion of imaginative impulse, inescapably returns to the dull public path. We may say that, for her, passion and pieties or delight and sorrow are two sides of the same coin. In other words, her impulse is in distinguishable from her sense of duty (which is considered as 'sacrad'). However, what is worse, for her both the sense of duty and the impulse are extravagant. It is inevitable for her to be driven to confront with the dilemma of either/or. Maggie, who is too much alive to pretend to be dead can never be in harmony within herself, much less with the world. It is the only means to attain the ideal whole for George Eliot to send her heroine to the bottom of the Floss locked in Tom's arms, who represents the family and her earliest memories. Though it seems inconsistent, we must realize Maggie's final going back is the manifestation of the inner forces that rent her soul. It is also the manifestation of the ideal vision of George Eliot who, placed between the Romantic self and the Victorian moral faith, ardently desired to be a whole, sought moral order in the irrational elements. It is why she let Maggie reject Philip and Stephen and come back to her old home. We realize how ardently did Maggie yearn for the 'ordinary' destiny – harmony. Thus through Maggie's complex character George Eliot honestly presented us the deep inner truth of one intelligent woman in her age.

CONCLUSION

It is already mentioned that the psychological ideas and scheme of *The Prelude* exerted an important influence upon *The Mill on the Floss*. Both works show, 'the impingement of sensory experience on the sensitive mind, the storing associations, the persistence of childhood memories into adult life' and 'the intellectual progress from childhood to formal education to completion of moral education by friendship, love, and society'. In *The Mill* as in *The Prelude*, 'The child in effect leads the man back to his grass roots, and the cycle of nature ends with its beginnings'.³⁷⁾ However, though the affinities are clear, we also see some difference between them. The analysis of which, I think, makes an approach to the real meaning of George Eliot's Romanticism. That is to say, the vision of Wordsworth is subtly changed in mode in *The Mill*. George Eliot's is psychologically far more complex and far less optimistic, which, I think anticipates the nihilism of modern romantic writers such as Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and so on.

The ending scene of the novel, with Tom and Maggie drowning together in the river they have known since their childhood, is in spite of the intimation of martyrdom, in every respect, the culmination on Maggie's life, the fittest ending that George Eliot had ever written. Though the meaning of the connection between their shared childhood and the shared death may seem to be ambiguous, we can at least see one overt element is manifested here, which is predominately present from the beginning to the end in this novel. It is the intensity of Maggie's impulsive nature. Then perhaps 'it is not upon her relation with her brother, nor the childhood itself to which we should give our first careful attention, but to the meaning of this intensity, which makes her act on a level below that of moral concepts',³⁸⁾ and makes her return to her recollection of her childhood and experience 'one supreme moment'. We see that this intensity is also the cause of her failure not only in her childhood but also in her adult years to live up to the requirements of other people which are practically represented by the rigid ones of the Dodsons. For Maggie Tulliver, her childhood was, unlike Wordsworth's, not

always happy, but 'comparatively' happy. Because her intensive nature always makes her blunder, she comes to question about her own identify. As aforesaid, hers is a life of an 'impossible' attempt, to be self-less, to efface the Romantic self. On this point Jones says suggestively as follows: 'we do not have to approve of Maggie's inability to extend her life beyond what Tom might consent to if he understood it properly; but the novel does make us understand how this constriction comes into being'.³⁹⁾ His words also seem to explain George Eliot's own dilemma between her moral faith and her impulse. Though both of them are hostile to each other and each of them is extravagant, they both unmistakably come to being for George Eliot. For such a divided character, it is no doubt Wordsworth's cycle scheme offered a fitting idea for solution. We know Maggie who in her childhood and in her adult years somewhat passively surrendered to Tom, comes to learn that loyalties and obligations operate deep in herself. Pieties are also her own inevitable identity. Now that she has realized both her impulse and pieties are her unmistakable identity which she owes to her past, she must come back and regain her past. It is no longer a mere past. Confirmed by the cycle idea of Wordsworth, George Eliot affirms the supreme value of the lost past. It becomes for her a tranquil world, a transcendental reality in which the disturbing elements can be in harmony with each other. It is not surprising that she let Maggie come back to be the old Maggie who had been identified with a 'Skye terrier' which represents something of the intensely loyal and spontaneous emotional response. Maggie, compared with Bob Jakin in whom there is a constant growth, may seem on the backward belt. In fact, Harvey thinks so: 'George Eliot's attitude to Maggie is the reverse of mature. I would prefer to view the novel as in itself a struggle towards maturity, towards an impersonal workingout of very personal dilemmas and crisis'.⁴⁰⁾ However, it may be said that George Eliot herself is enough mature to be able to realize her own problem through Maggie who, in her difficulties, is painfully trying to come to Being. I think she, looking ahead with some foreboding to an age of free thinking, covertly believed in the Romantic self of hers. Just her Calvinistic scrupulousness forbade to assert it. Also it is

no doubt her intellect, too, told her that without the restriction in the release of impulse, in the world there would be no longer an organic, harmonious whole.

Then why one cannot say she is a positive Romantic with modern real agonies? Maggie's cries clearly confirm it:

Oh, it is difficult life is very difficult! It seems right to me sometimes that we should follow our strongest feeling; but then, such feelings continually come across the ties that all our former life has made for us. If life were quite easy and simple, as it might have been in Paradise – (Book VI, ch. 11)

I think Bedient's words are fitting to conclude this essay: 'George Eliot was more than a mirror; she was a burning glass. In her the Victorian ethos came to an inflammatory focus. One has but to hear the exigency of her appeals, the solemnity of her accents, to comprehend that she wrote from deep and compelling necessities of her own'.⁴¹ Really, through George Eliot's statement of the female dilemma in her age, we can clearly see why and how she suffered and loved.

NOTES

Text: George Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*, Everyman's Library, 1974.

- 1) Leslie Stephen: *George Eliot*, Macmillan and Co., London, 1924, p. 87.
- 2) Calvin Bedient: *Architect of the Self*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972, p. 33.
- 3) *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- 4) *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- 6) *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.
- 7) Barbara Hardy; *The Novels of George Eliot*, The Athlone Press, London, 1963, p. 12.
- 8) Bedient, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- 9) *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 10) U.C. Kneppflamacher: *Religious Humanism and The Victorian Novel*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1970, p. 115.
- 11) D. H. Lawrence: *Phoenix*, The Viking Press, New York, 1936, p. 534.
- 12) Bedient, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
- 13) *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 14) *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 15) Barbara Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
- 16) David Thorburn: *Conrad's Romanticism*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1974, p. 104.
- 17) Laurence Lerner: *The Truth-tellers*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1967, p. 281.
- 18) *Ibid.*, p. 236.
- 19) Herbert Lindenberger: *On Wordsworth's Prelude*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966, p. 80.
- 20) *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- 21) Peter K. Garrett: *Scene and Symbol from George Eliot to James Joyce*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1969, p. 44.
- 22) Reva Stump: *Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels*, Russell and Russell, New York, 1959, p. 67.
- 23) Robert A. Colby: *Fiction with a Purpose*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1967, p. 214.
- 24) Bernard J. Paris: *Experiments in Life*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1965, p. 157.
- 25) Walter Allen: *George Eliot*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964, p. 108.
- 26) *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- 27) *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- 28) Felicia Bonaparte: *Will and Destiny*, New York University Press, New York, 1975, p. 69.
- 29) Colby, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
- 30) W. Robertson Nicoll: Introduction to *The Mill on the Floss*, Everyman's Library, 1974, p. vii.
- 31) Lerner, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-274.
- 32) *Ibid.*, p. 272.
- 33) *Ibid.*, p. 281.
- 34) *Ibid.*, p. 277.
- 35) *Ibid.*, p. 277.
- 36) Bedient, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 37) Colby, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-233.
- 38) Lerner, *op. cit.*, 277.
- 39) R. T. Jones: *George Eliot*, The University Press, Cambridge, p. 21.
- 40) W. H. Harvey: *The Art of George Eliot*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1969, p. 190.
- 41) Bedient, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

Setsu ITOH

『フロス河畔の水車場』におけるロマンティシズムについて

伊藤 節

(昭和59年10月15日受理)

ヴィクトリア朝のモラル・スポークスマンであり、リアリズム作家と見做されるジョージ・エリオットの作品には、背面からそれを突き崩していくようなロマンティシズムの進りがみられる。特にその要因の濃い『フロス河畔の水車場』においてこれを考察し、同時に、時代の制約を受けとめながらも目覚めた一女性の意識の様相を照らし出していく。