

The German Key to Life in Middlemarch

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THE criticism of life and art in *Middlemarch* functions in a German context. George Eliot's treatment of such ideas as culture and self-culture, of scope and versatility, dilettantism and disinterestedness, is part of the Victorian tradition of showing by way of German examples what one may do in life and in art. Succeeding Carlyle and preceding Arnold she had already in her translations and articles contributed much to the anti-philistine discussion.

At the end of the "Prelude" to *Middlemarch* George Eliot criticizes the false conventional picture of "the social lot of women," the variations of which have "really much wider" limits than those drawn by the "favourite love-stories in prose and verse."¹ The criticism and implied promise are akin to the statement against idealism in the introduction to Book II of *Adam Bede*. This in turn has its origin in her review of Riehl's German social history, where she first formulated her artistic creed: "Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot."² Here is in the "Prelude" the narrowness of idealistic art is held to confirm our egoism, while a realistically wide representation of life's variations is "really moral in its influence," as she writes of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister (Essays, p. 146)*. The extension aimed at in the Riehl review and *Adam Bede* is towards the commonplace; for *Middlemarch* she promises a widening of a different aspect of life, the "social lot of women." This grows later on, with the full introduction of the second major protagonist, Lydgate, to include men. This concern of George Eliot, the literary critic, with the scope

of fiction is matched by the author's judgment of her characters. Not only the concept but the very word "wide" from the "Prelude" recurs frequently. The concept of scope appears appropriately in many variations. Basic to them all is fellow-feeling, in love and "beyond the bounds of our personal lot." But as the author directs our attention to her extending the literary scope to include the adventure of intellectual passion, I wish to concentrate on the concept of intellectual and artistic scope.

To begin with an unambiguous example, Dr. Lydgate, the birth, growth and decline of whose intellectual passion the author records with unequivocal sympathy. As a boy he was versatile, a disadvantage since he "could do anything he liked," but "had certainly not yet liked to do anything remarkable" (p. 172). For his talents to be effective they have to be concentrated on a single purpose. Yet when this happens, in "the moment of vocation," a truer expansion begins, "the world was made new to him by a presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight by that wordy ignorance which he had supposed to be knowledge" (p. 173). It is important, especially in contrast with Casaubon, that Lydgate's new world is also literally large. After receiving the best British medical education from London and Edinburgh, he went on to Paris. Thus Lydgate was "enamoured" — in the language of the new troubadour of intellectual passion — of the sequence to Bichat's work on the primary tissue, "already vibrating along many currents of the European mind" (p. 178). During his courtship of Rosamond he is afraid that it interferes "with the diligent use of spare hours which might serve some 'plodding fellow of a German' to make the great, imminent discovery" (p. 383). It was indeed two German biologists, Schleiden and Schwann, who in 1833 resolved Lydgate's question by proving it wrong. Lydgate's search for the hypothetical primitive tissue, or *Ur-Zelle*, has a German context. It is related to Goethe's morphological studies,

resulting in the *Ur-Pflanze*. In his *Life of Goethe* Lewes asserts "on some of the highest scientific testimonies in Europe," that "in the organic sciences Goethe holds an eminent place." Goethe's discovery of the intermaxillary bone confirmed the belief "that all organisms are constructed on an uniform plan."³ George Eliot stipulates a check for such a passion as Lydgate's: it must not result in research for its own sake but in "the most direct alliance between intellectual conquest and the social good" (p. 174). Dr. Frankenstein's warning has been heeded.

The beginning of Lydgate's adventure in Middlemarch is heroic, "about 1829 the dark territories of Pathology were a fine America for a spirited young adventurer" (p. 177). His scope is large enough, unlike Casaubon's it is modern and European. Another narrowness defeats him, his "unreflecting egoism" or "commonness" (p. 183) about everything but medical research and reform, particularly about social appearances. These explanations of the author's immediately precede the reference to "plodding" Germans, suggesting a comparison with the simplicity of German scholars which George Eliot frequently noted in her letters and articles. When his social pretensions have ruined him, Lydgate suffers from

the sense that there was a grand existence in thought and effective action lying around him while his self was being narrowed into the miserable isolation of egoistic fears, and vulgar anxieties for events that might allay such fears. (p. 698)

The author contrasts Lydgate's disappointment with one which she says is much easier to bear:

Some gentlemen have made an amazing figure in literature by general discontent with the universe as a trap of dulness into which their great souls have fallen by mistake; but the sense of a stupendous self and an insignificant world may have its consolations. (p. 698)

She is speaking of the Byronic hero, in the spirit of Carlyle's condemnation of Byron's self-indulgence. "Close thy *Byron*, open thy *Goethe*," he had commanded in *Sartor Resartus*, and prescribed Wilhelm Meister's renunciation

of personal happiness as an antidote. By implication then, the narrowing of Lydgate's self is a painful failure at emulating the right model, Wilhelm Meister, master of *Selbst-Bildung*.

The conclusive reference to Goethe in this context appears as the motto to chapter 81. At the end of the preceding chapter Dorothea has made the hard but "calm resolve" "to acknowledge that she had not the less an active life before her because she had buried a private joy" (pp. 847-48). This is the second "Doctrine" Carlyle extracted from *Wilhelm Meister*, the efficacy of "Employment" which serves both as "Medicine" for moral convalescence and will be the true purpose of "Life, properly speaking" after recovery.⁴ The motto is from Faust's first speech in *Faust II*, an apostrophe by the mature Faust, who actively improves the life of his fellow-men, to Earth who moves him to a "strong resolve to strive forever for the highest existence." George Eliot speaks in relation to Lydgate of "grand existence."

While Goethe's writings and German scientific work belong to the best that Germany can offer to an expanding mind, German spas represent the worst temptation for the disillusioned egoist. At the hopeful beginning of his career Lydgate scorns an old friend from his Paris days when he hears that he has given up his utopian plans and instead "is practising at a German bath, and has married a rich patient" (p. 203). But his own career ends in the same luxurious slough. He has "gained an excellent practice, alternating, according to the season, between London and a Continental bathing-place" (p. 892).

In contrast with Lydgate, Casaubon's narrow selfishness is also evident in the British insularity of his research. Ladislaw's cosmopolitan bias makes him single out this defect. He expresses to Dorothea a feigned regret that Casaubon's labour "should be thrown away, as so much English scholarship is, for want of knowing what is being done by the rest of the world. If Mr. Casaubon read German he would save himself a great deal of trouble." And

although the author admits with ironic distance from her hero that "Young Mr. Ladislaw was not at all deep himself in German writers" (p. 240), we know with the author, who was, that Ladislaw is right. While his neglect of German scholarship is one of Casaubon's failings, he is modeled on the stock-figure of the German professor. His antecedent in George Eliot's writings is Professor Bücher-mann whom she invented, with touches of Dr. Brabant and Strauss, for the amusement of her friends, in 1846.

Dorothea feels Casaubon's intellectual narrowness in images determined by her misplaced hopes for herself. She

had not distinctly observed but felt with a stifling depression, that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by ante-rooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither. (pp. 227-28)

The large vistas which in Rome prove a self-delusion were the wish-fulfilment of an eager but untutored mind. "For to Dorothea, after that toy-box history of the world adapted to young ladies which had made the chief part of her education, Mr. Casaubon's talk about his great book was full of new vistas" (p. 112). What Dorothea expects from Casaubon's "lamp of knowledge" is "complete teaching," a "binding theory" which would "give the remotest sources of knowledge some bearing on her actions," so that "her life might be filled with action at once rational and ardent." (pp. 113, 112). The aim is the same as Lydgate's, "a grand existence in thought and effective action" (p. 698). It is Faust's "highest existence." Rome is the appropriate place for Dorothea to discover her mistake in Casaubon. There she sees him literally and metaphorically in his element, and she does not like Rome. She rescues her dream of "large vistas and wide fresh air" of knowledge, fleeing from Rome's "oppressive masquerade of ages" (p. 225) to the open Campagna. Casaubon's distrust in himself makes him an unconvincing guide through Rome's treasures. As with love, he can only rely on what "most persons think it worth while to visit," on the "opinion of the cognoscenti" (p. 229).

Another guide presents himself who is not too deep into knowledge but quick to judge what he cares about. Ladislav is influenced by the "modern spirit" which Arnold in his essay on Heine praised in Goethe who constantly asked the "subversive" question, "fatal to all routine thinking": "But is it so? is it so to *me*?" Guided by Ladislav's "ardent words" in praise of Naumann's pictures, "Dorothea felt that she was getting quite new notions. . . . Some things which had seemed monstrous to her were gathering intelligibility and even a natural meaning." So that she ends up saying to herself "that Rome, if she had only been less ignorant, would have been full of beauty" (p. 246, 247).

More importantly, Ladislav tells Dorothea that his own enjoyment is increased by "daubing a little" himself, "and having an idea of the process" (p. 238). It was in this occupation that Dorothea first met him, a "youngster" seated, in symbolical contrast to Casaubon, in front of "a fine yew tree, the chief hereditary glory of the grounds . . . conspicuous on a dark background of evergreens . . . sketching the old tree" (p. 104). Here, as later in Rome, he does not pretend to an artistic vocation, and declines Mr. Brooke's enthusiastic identification of him as an artist with the remark, "No, I only sketch a little" (p. 104). A reservation which, at this stage of our acquaintance with him, puts his painting on a level with Mr. Brooke's own youthful dilettantism and the conventional pastimes of girls, "sketching, fine art and so on" (p. 105). With the subsequent description of Ladislav his guardian means to support this impression. Instead of going to an English university he chose what Casaubon

must consider the anomalous course of studying at Heidelberg. And now he wants to go abroad again, without any special object, save the vague purpose of what he calls culture, preparation for he knows not what. He declines to choose a profession. (p. 106)

Heidelberg was, with Bonn, the university to which Lewes had gone in 1867 to consult the German physiologists about

his psychological theories for *Problems of Life and Mind*. He wrote of his stay: "spending the whole day in the anatomical theatres and the evening over the microscope I learned more in two weeks than I could here have learned in twelve months."⁵ Ladislav, however, does not pursue such a single purpose as the older Lewes. Unlike Lydgate he has not found his vocation. The recurrence of the image of the explorer emphasizes the comparison with Lydgate. While for the doctor "the dark territories of Pathology were a fine America," Ladislav "has no bent towards exploration, or the enlargement of our geognosis," in fact objects to it since "there should be some unknown regions preserved as hunting grounds for the poetic imagination" (pp. 106-107). In the first part of this speech of Mr. Casaubon's we recognize his own pedantry, in the second Ladislav's fancy. He will not be literally an explorer but figuratively, and not, it is true, of Lydgate's scientific world, but of the world of poetry, that is, in contemporary usage, culture. Lewes had written of Goethe and Schiller that "they, as artists, knew no Culture equal to that of Art" (*Goethe*, p. 383). Arnold's essay on "Culture and Anarchy" appeared when George Eliot began writing *Middlemarch*. There may be a connection between the "sweetness and light" of his Culture and the constant association of Ladislav with light, as for instance when he talks in Rome to Dorothea about painting, "Will Ladislav's smile was delightful . . . it was a gush of inward light illuminating the transparent skin as well as the eyes, and playing about every curve and line" (p. 237). And Arnold in his earlier *Essays in Criticism* had continued Carlyle's work of exploring contemporary European literature for possible cures for British "narrowness" and found that German poetry alone offered a disinterested moral interpretation of man and the world. If culture in the form of German poetry was the territory to be explored by Ladislav, then Heidelberg was the place, other than Weimar. In the late 1820's, when Ladislav was there, it retained the glory of having been

the centre of the young Romantics, Brentano, Arnim, Eichendorff and others; and the birthplace of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Ladislaw has returned to England "calling himself a Pegasus" (p. 107), as impatient of "harness" as any German Romantic poet. While Casaubon condemns Ladislaw's indecision about his vocation as a "part of his general inaccuracy and indisposition to thoroughness of all kinds," Dorothea sees in such vagueness the promise of further growth. After these speculations about Ladislaw's motives the author presents his own apology. Her gentle irony does not discredit what she admits to be his "sincere" and "clear" comprehension of his expectations. But she asserts, as with Lydgate's talents, and as Dorothea has just implied, that genius consists in "a power to make or do, not anything in general, but something in particular" (p. 110). Which is close to Goethe's alternative of the "highest existence" in *Faust II* to the Romantic's ideal of a vague universality.

So Ladislaw returns to the Continent. This time he finds the best soil for his growth in Rome. But it is not the Rome of Mr. Brooke's Italian engravings, but of German Romanticism, "fermenting still as a distinguishable vigorous enthusiasm in certain long-haired German artists at Rome" (p. 219). As Heine recorded in *Die Romantische Schule*, Book I, the aesthetic-mystic theories of the Schlegels generally and in particular Ludwig Tieck's novel *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* and Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, edited by Tieck, inspired some German painters at the beginning of the nineteenth century to imitate pre-Raphaelite and early German religious painting. They founded in Rome the St. Luke Brotherhood, later nicknamed "Nazarene," and, in George Eliot's words, "the youth of other nations who worked or idled near them were sometimes caught in the spreading movement" (p. 219). Ford Madox Brown was one of them and became on his return one immediate contact for the founders of the English Pre-Raphaelite Brother-

hood. Ladislav's foreign extraction and versatility suggest Rossetti as one model. Rossetti first visited at "The Priory" in February 1869, more than a year before George Eliot began the "Miss Brooke" story. The Nazarenes enjoyed much favourable publicity in England in the 1840's and 50's. In 1852 George Eliot writes in her role as sub-editor of the *Westminster Review* to Chapman about the *British Quarterly*: "They have one subject of which I am jealous — 'Pre-Raphaelism in Painting and Literature.' We have no good writer on such subjects on our staff" (*Letters*, II, p. 48).

To offset Ladislav's obsession with Dorothea the author allows his Nazarene teachers, Naumann, a sense of humour and some play of wit. Arguing in the German antithetical tradition, he draws Ladislav's attention to the "fine bit of antithesis" between the sculpture of Ariadne and Dorothea: "There lies antique beauty . . . in the complete contentment of its sensuous perfection: and here stands beauty in its breathing life, with the consciousness of Christian centuries in its bosom" (p. 220). This echoes Lewes' interpretation of much in Goethe, especially *Iphigenie* of which he says that "it substitutes profound moral struggles, for the passionate struggles of the old legend" (*Goethe*, p. 264). Matthew Arnold argued similarly in favour of a union of the Hellenic and the Christian spirit and saw it achieved in Goethe and Heine. Naumann again suggests a reference to Goethe when he wishes to paint Casaubon as St. Thomas Aquinas because he embodies "the idealistic in the real" (p. 247). Lewes had described Goethe's realistic objectivity, in contrast to Schiller's subjectivity, as seeing "in Reality the incarnation of the Ideal" (*Goethe*, p. 52). Besides aesthetics Naumann argues metaphysics, parodying Fichte's idealism, as Coleridge had done in the *Biographia*:

'See now! My existence pre-supposes the existence of the whole universe — does it *not*? and my function is to paint — and as a painter I have a conception which is altogether *genialisch*, of your great-aunt or second grandmother as a subject for a picture; therefore, the universe is straining towards that picture through that particular

hook or claw which is put forth in the shape of me — not true?" (p. 221)

Naumann's success in getting Dorothea to sit for him proves him right, though not so much in his metaphysics as in his professional self-esteem and consequent power over Casaubon's vanity. Ladislav's social scruples merely prove his own lack of professionalism; Naumann ascribes them to his being "dilettantish and amateurish" (p. 221). A criticism he repeats, to Casaubon's satisfaction, when Ladislav speaks of his own painting, which he says Naumann calls "*pfuscherei*," his "most opprobrious word" (p. 247). *Pfuscherei* means not "mess" as W. J. Harvey has it in his edition, although that is usually the result, but more to the point, a dabbling pretense at work, an offensive bungling, a word George Eliot has Dorothea use a little later. The painter presses the professional point when he explains: "Oh, he does not mean it seriously with painting. His walk must be *belles-lettres*. That is wi-ide" (p. 247). Although we are not to accept his painterly prejudice in a novel, his satire is allowed to score a hit with Ladislav whose wide "self-culture" has not yet found a particular vocation; he has already admitted to Dorothea that he finds painting "too one-sided a life" (p. 239). His oil sketches resemble his present state in that they have a "very wide meaning" (p. 246), and, moreover, their "breadth of intention" (p. 245) is not taken seriously even by Ladislav himself. His mythical-historical conception of Tamburlaine, including as he tells it Dorothea "everything you can imagine" (p. 246) is a parody of the "German School," such as Kaulbach's "world-historical" frescoes, which George Eliot saw in Berlin and Munich and described in her letters. Like her author, who found that nothing "grasped" her in pictures such as Kaulbach's *Destruction of Jerusalem*, which she called "a regular child's puzzle of symbolism" (*Letters*, II, pp. 455, 294), Dorothea "would rather feel that painting is beautiful than have to read it as an enigma" (p. 246). She characteristically prefers Naumann's religious, Nazarene, paintings.

Ladislav's decision to renounce Casaubon's generosity and return to England to work his own way has the author's

approval, who lets Ladislav quote Goethe on the poet's duty to "know how to hate" (p. 257) even though he has no more illusion about being a poet than being a painter. Narrowing his scope from the pursuit of culture on the Continent to an employment as journalist in England, he extends his effect on his fellow-beings; to adapt Chesterton's words about Arnold, he "was chiefly valuable as a man who knew things . . . that Middlemarch didn't know. He knew that England was a part of Europe."⁶ Having renounced Casaubon whose narrowness would not let him benefit from Ladislav's knowledge, he now makes himself useful to Mr. Brooke whose "rambling habit of mind" provides an equally strong warning against ineffective width. But at least it guarantees an openness to Ladislav's merits which most of Middlemarch, town and country, lack.

Holding a comfortable middle course Middlemarch criticizes and derides as inferior differences which may be equally good or even superior. Middlemarch society not only lacks the virtue dearest to George Eliot, imaginative sympathy, but could well do with a little admixture of the qualities it despises in Ladislav. The author shares her hero's sentiment, if not his "hyperbolic" language, when he thinks of the "Middlemarch tribes" who "looked down on him as an adventurer, and were in a state of brutal ignorance about Dante — who sneered at his Polish blood, and were themselves of a breed very much in need of crossing" (p. 651). Mrs. Cadwallader is the most vociferous of the pure-bred Anglo-Saxons on the topic of the "frightful mixture" (p. 877) of Ladislav's blood. In her eyes Dorothea might "as well marry an Italian with white mice" (p. 532) as "Mr. Orlando Ladislav" (p. 676). His musicality is suspect since, unlike Rosamond's, it goes with foreign looks and "general laxity" (p. 503) inherited from "a rebellious Polish fiddler or dancing-master" (p. 877). And the editor of the rival newspaper comments on Ladislav, a "polish emissary's" "preternatural quickness and glibness of speech . . . a facility which cast reflections on solid Englishmen generally" (p. 502).

His social mobility — he visits at Tipton Grange and rambles “about among the poor people” (p. 503) — is a concomitant oddity. It is evident in his “general laxity” about social decorum. Lydgate, who himself fails from a surfeit of social pretensions, which lead him to being indistinguishable from a “Philistine” (p. 730), is the first to comment on Ladislav’s disregard of social status: “Ladislav is a sort of gypsy; he thinks nothing of leather and prunella” (p. 474). “Gypsy” is the term which Ladislav, who takes a “troop of droll children” on “gypsy excursions” (p. 503), uses in his own mind: “he was a sort of gypsy, rather enjoying the sense of belonging to no class; he had a feeling of romance in his position, and a pleasant consciousness of creating a little surprise wherever he went” (p. 502). He thinks of himself as never having had any “caste.” German social historians had defined a class for people like Ladislav. In her review of Riehl’s social history, George Eliot quotes him as including in the fourth estate the “day-labourers with the quill, the literary proletariat” (*Essays*, p. 294). Ladislav, after his break with well-situated Casaubon, appears to Middlemarch eyes as what Riehl describes as singularly German, a member of the “dangerous classes” which “begin with the impoverished prince and end in the hungriest litterateur” (*Essays*, pp. 297-298). Lady Chettam expresses the general puzzlement at this strange species: “It is difficult to say what Mr. Ladislav is, eh, James?” (p. 877).

The most charitable explanation, besides Dorothea’s, comes of course from Mr. Farebrother, who calls Ladislav “a disinterested unworldly fellow” (p. 773). In Lewes’ *Goethe* there is a passage from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* on the “boundless disinterestedness” which Goethe admired in Spinoza (*Goethe*, p. 127). The translation is by George Eliot, who at the time was also translating Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Disinterestedness is the positive side to Ladislav’s dilettantism. As editor of Mr. Brooke’s paper Ladislav has found the particular, if not the loftiest, “bit of work” to end his pursuit of “self-culture.” His new sense of vocation sug-

gests a more heroic title than that of "day-labourer with a quill." He is a soldier with a quill, like Heine who had exalted his journalism over his poetry which had been merely a "divine plaything" and preferred that a sword rather than a laurel wreath should be laid on his coffin. Arnold's essay on Heine was published in 1863, and George Eliot would very likely have read it in comparison with her own earlier article, for which she had read the original, Heine's *Reisebilder*. In this soldierly context we can fully appreciate, and are encouraged to do so by the author, that Ladislav's "nature warmed easily in the presence of subjects which were visibly mixed with life and action, and the easily-stirred rebellion in him helped the glow of public spirit" (p. 501).

His love of Dorothea, by way of making him renounce Casaubon's support, has helped him to a vocation. What has he done for her? In the scene in Rome when Ladislav decides to be free to hate Casaubon, Dorothea tells him how "narrow" she would be if she couldn't conceive of vocations outside her own experience. As with Maggie Tulliver and George Eliot herself, her Puritanical asceticism has made her renounce not only personal adornment but the accomplishments which Mr. Brooke and the rest of the genteel world think fit for the "lightness about the feminine mind — a touch and go — music, the fine arts, that kind of thing — they should study those up to a certain point, women should; but in a light way" (p. 89). The author asks us to forgive Dorothea her "slight regard for domestic music and feminine fine art . . . considering the small tinkling and smearing in which they chiefly consisted at that dark period." The standard is not only more recent English music-making but contemporary German musical life. Rosamond Vincy has learnt her admirable piano-playing from "one of those excellent musicians here and there to be found in our provinces, worthy to compare with many a noted Kapellmeister in a country which offers more plentiful conditions of musical celebrity" (p. 190). A "noted Kapellmeister" of George Eliot's acquaintance was

the "inspired" Franz Liszt at Weimar. When she goes on to say that "a hidden soul seemed to be flowing forth from Rosamond's fingers," she is referring to Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, where he says, in her translation, "Music is a monologue of emotion." The same two reasons, Dorothea's moral earnestness and feminine education, "at once narrow and promiscuous" (p. 30), account for her narrow view of Rome's art treasures. Ladislav, as we have already seen, appears as a cosmopolitan guide, a many-sided Orphic messenger from the world of the arts, much as Philip did for Maggie, and G. H. Lewes for George Eliot. But Dorothea, like Maggie and their author, wants more than knowledge, she wants a "binding theory which could bring her own life and doctrine into strict connection with that amazing past, and give the remotest sources of knowledge some bearing on her actions" (p. 112). The compiler of the "Key to all Mythologies" cannot give her such a "key" or "clue of life" as it is called in *The Mill on the Floss*. His key locks her into his own spiritual and physical death.

The person we have seen opening a wider world to her is "young Ladislav." I have already noted most actual instances of his guidance. The "binding theory" evolves in several discussions which Dorothea and Ladislav have about "the good and the beautiful." At the beginning of her story Dorothea experiences "a new current of feeling" (p. 35) at the sight of the beautiful gems, but clinging to her old Puritanical convictions "her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy" (p. 36). When she is asked to admire Ladislav's sketch, she admits her insensitivity to the beauty of pictures: "They are a language I do not understand" (p. 105). She repeats this in Rome to Ladislav (p. 238), who in their next private conversation, when Dorothea speaks disparagingly of the fine cameos she has bought for her more frivolous sister, begins to question her convictions: "I fear you are a heretic about art generally. How is that? I should have expected you to be very

sensitive to the beautiful everywhere." To which Dorothea answers that she is "dull about many things" but should "like to make life beautiful — I mean everybody's life" (p. 251). While her goodness can't effect this, beauty pains her. Ladislav reproaches her for her "fanaticism of sympathy" which is an "anachronism" to her youth, and which he argues would lead to the absurd conclusion that her goodness should make her be miserable in her own goodness, since that is, no more than beauty, shared by all the world. Dorothea comes to see the relation between art and life, if for the moment only in the light of their shared shortcomings: "I have often felt since I have been in Rome that most of our lives would look much uglier and more bungling than the pictures, if they could be put on the wall" (pp. 252-53). And the author establishes in the word "bungling," English for *Pfuscherei*, the relation between Ladislav's recognition in Rome of his "*pfuscherei*" in painting and Dorothea's simultaneous recognition of her bungled life with Casaubon. At this point the only relation of shared goodness and beauty open to them is metaphorical, in another art — he will be her poet, she his poem: "You are a *poem* — and that is the best part of a poet — what makes up the poet's consciousness in his best moods" (p. 256).

At their next meeting, back at home, Dorothea again shows herself "a little one-sided" (p. 425), as Mr. Brooke points out to Ladislav, in the question of beauty. Coming in from the "coarse ugliness" of Mr. Brooke's neglected village, she finds the "simpering pictures" in his drawing-room — no doubt such idylls of rustic life as George Eliot criticized in the Riehl review — "a wicked attempt to find delight in what is false, while we don't mind how hard the truth is for the neighbours outside our walls" (p. 424). Here, then, is the companion concept to the good to be reconciled with beauty — truth. George Eliot had chosen for the title-page of the *Westminster Review* a motto from Goethe to go with one from Shakespeare. It is "Love of truth is shown in this: that one know how to find good

everywhere and to treasure it." But for Goethe there was no conflict between truth and beauty, a fact Heine admired and tried to emulate. In what is thought to be his last poem "Es träumte mir von einer Sommernacht" Heine despairs of the "boring controversy" between the Barbarian party of truth and the Hellenic party of beauty ever ending. The novel's two partisans isolate the controversial issues. Dorothea confesses to Ladislav the belief which comforts her:

That by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil — widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower.

Ladislav characteristically does not see the truth but the beauty of her belief, calling it a "beautiful mysticism." To Dorothea's question, what is the belief that helps him most, he answers: "To love what is good and beautiful when I see it. . . . But I am a rebel: I don't feel bound, as you do, to submit to what I don't like" (p. 427). A reservation which Dorothea, true to herself, refutes with the reminder that he likes what is good. Ladislav offers her the "key of life," the "binding theory" — to love not only what is good but also what is beautiful, while Dorothea strengthens his love of what is good and has indirectly caused him to find the work in which he can "make it prevail," in Arnold's words. Eventually Ladislav shares and makes effective her ardour, having himself become "an ardent public man" (p. 894), working at reforms. Together they now hold the key of which their author wrote in "Poetry and Prose from the Notebook of an Eccentric," an early series of articles for the *Coventry Herald*: "The kind of purpose which makes life resemble a work of art in its isolated majesty or loveliness . . . is to live for the good, the true, the beautiful, which outlive every generation" (*Essays*, p. 18). The triad is a variation on Goethe's, which proved so problematical for Carlyle, "to live resolutely in the whole, the good, the beautiful." Ladislav follows the German model for the "highest existence," as Lewes had quoted it, in George

Eliot's translation, from Schiller's *Horen*, "the higher universal interest in that which is purely *human* and removed beyond the influences of time, and thus once more to reunite the divided political world under the banner of Truth and Beauty" (*Goethe*, p. 386).

It is a fit symbolical touch that the token of Ladislav's trustworthiness should be the German tortoise-shell box he once gave to the little Miss Noble. At its first appearance, its association with him shakes Dorothea from her dull renunciation to a first spoken self-admission of her love (pp. 843-44). When Miss Noble comes to ask Dorothea's permission for a final interview for Ladislav, she unconsciously draws the German box from her basket, "and Dorothea felt the colour mounting to her cheeks" (p. 864). Two apprenticeships have been successfully completed in the spirit of *Wilhelm Meister*. The German context of the education gives the "Study of Provincial Life" the "large vistas and wide fresh air" of a novel which can do what Arnold had considered the "grand business of modern poetry," "the moral interpretation of man and the world." In *Daniel Deronda* George Eliot was to extend the scope of the cosmopolitan, especially German, context even further in order to try, in the words of Henry James' review, "what one may do in a novel."

NOTES

- ¹George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965; text based on the last edition corrected by the author, 1 vol. 1874), p. 26. Hereafter page references will be included in the text.
- ²Thomas Pinney, ed., *Essays of George Eliot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 271. Hereafter page references will be included in the text.
- ³G. H. Lewes, *The Life of Goethe*, 2nd. ed. partly rewritten (London: Smith, Elder, 1864), pp. 341-42. Hereafter page references will be included in the text. For George Eliot's silent collaboration cf. Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 172-73.
- ⁴*The Letters of Thomas Carlyle, 1826-36*, ed. C. E. Norton (London: Macmillan, 1889), p. 266.
- ⁵*The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 7 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954-1955), IV, p. 416. Hereafter page references will be included in the text.

⁶G. K. Chesterton, *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London: Williams & Norgate, Home University Library of Modern Knowledge, n. d.), p. 74.

⁷Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans., George Eliot (New York: Harper, 1957), p. 9.

Ten Lines

My friends are like warm seasons over the earth.
Deeply, they see me scavenge and aspire.
I am a wolf like many other wolves.

They are like weathers that teach their symmetries
the climbing sky. They understand the sky,
yet move in grass. They bend into my ways.

And though I write in a style already old,
they learn my style; though I grumble and seem cold,
'All will be well,' they say, and courtesously.

I have not many friends. They ripen me.

Robert Clayton Casto