"The treatment of the recent past in nineteenth-century fiction, with particular reference to George Eliot."

submitted by

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This thesis examines a practice of nineteenth-century novelists which has often been mentioned by critics but never studied in detail—the setting of much of their work in a period a generation or two before the time of writing. Its main focus is on the fiction of George Eliot set in the recent past: Scenes of Clerical Life (1857-58), Adam Bede (1859), The Mill on the Floss (1860), Silas Marner (1861), Felix Holt, the Radical (1866), and Middlemarch (1871-72). However, I begin by looking briefly at the pioneering novel in the field, Waverley (1814), and go on to discuss three more novels by Scott—Guy Mannering (1815), The Antiquary (1816) and Redgauntlet (1824)—as well as three by Thackeray: Vanity Fair (1847-48), Pendennis (1848-50) and The Newcomes (1853-55). Since I aim to discover the attitudes these writers adopted to the recent past, and conveyed to their first readers, this study involves discussion not only of the periods in which the novels are set, but also of the periods in which they were written, so as to establish the knowledge and preconceptions which the books' early readers brought to bear on the fiction. Where possible I quote the responses of actual contemporary readers, notably those of the early reviewers. This thesis draws attention to the various functions a setting in the recent past could serve in nineteenth-century fiction: to arouse nostalgic feelings for a vanished but remembered past, or sympathy for the people of the past, to point out that change is sometimes more apparent than real, to comment obliquely on contemporary issues, to highlight the unchanging features of human nature and human predicaments, to examine the role of the individual in effecting change.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In her Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, Kathleen Tillotson observed:

The modern reader tends to assume that any Victorian novel which is not obviously 'historical' is intended to be roughly contemporary in setting; but in fact many writers were coming to prefer a setting which was neither historical nor contemporary, but which lay in a period from twenty to sixty years earlier. Reading novels such as Wives and Daughters and Middlemarch without due recognition of their setting in an England of forty years before the date of writing, the modern reader misses much of their quality.

Since this was written almost thirty years ago, little attention has been paid to this aspect of nineteenth-century fiction, and the lacuna is particularly surprising in the case of George Eliot, given the spate of books and articles about her which have appeared in the last twenty-five years or so. Hence the main focus of my thesis will be on her novels and stories published between 1857 and 1872 and set in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: Scenes of Clerical Life (1857-58), Adam Bede (1859), The Mill on the Floss (1860), Silas Marner (1861), Felix Holt, the Radical (1866), and Middlemarch (1871-72). I shall begin however by looking at four novels by Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), a writer whose influence was still much felt in the Victorian period, and dealing with the period from 1745 till the 1790's: Waverley (1814), Guy Mannering (1815), The Antiquary (1816), and Redgauntlet (1824) — as well as three novels by Thackeray (1811-1863): Vanity Fair (1847-48), Pendennis (1848-50) and The Newcomes (1853-55). Space forbids me to offer a more comprehensive treatment, including such novels as Mrs Gaskell's Cranford (1852), Sylvia's Lovers (1863) and Wives and Daughters (1864-66), Charlotte Brontë's Shirley (1849), and Bulwer Lytton's Caxtons (1849) and My Novel (1853), but I think the writers I have chosen provide

ample evidence of the ways in which nineteenth-century novelists could approach the recent past.

The "recent past" is of course a difficult period to define exactly, and my choice of novels may seem somewhat arbitrary. *Waverley*, for example, is subtitled *'Tis Sixty Years Since*, but although Scott began the novel in 1805, sixty years after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 with which it deals, he did not complete or publish it till 1814, so that the time-gap is really sixty-nine years. Only a few years later (1818) he published *The Heart of Midlothian*, which is set mainly in 1736-37, that is, just over eighty years before the time of writing. On the other hand *St Ronan's Well* (1823), usually described as Scott's only novel of contemporary life, deals with the period of the Peninsular War (1809-14), while a case could be made for including George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) since it is set in the mid-1860's. *Waverley* is I think a necessary starting-point because it presents the past as significantly different from the present, while at the same time drawing on Scott's own memories and those of some of his readers: although few people living in 1814 could recall the 1745 rebellion, many of Scott's age or older would remember the Jacobites themselves and their "lingering, though hopeless attachment, to the house of Stewart."1 According to Mary Lascelles, Culloden was Scott's watershed, and that of his readers, because of the many changes which had occurred in Scotland since 1745.2 Similarly *Adam Bede*, which really is set "sixty years since," and hence also in a period beyond the recollection of the author and of most of its readers, introduces Adam in old age as a commentator on the growth of

1 Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, ed. Claire Lamont (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 340. All subsequent citations will be from this edition, which is based on the first.

Evangelicalism since his youth. Novels set in the recent past, as distinct from a more remote age, draw on the readers' memories, or at least on their sense, based on oral tradition, of what it was like to live at the time just before they were born. On the other hand St Ronan's Well and Daniel Deronda are set too close to the time of writing for the narrators to create any sense of the distance between past and present.

However an important reason why Scott, Thackeray, and George Eliot turned to the recent past in the first place was I think that they all felt strongly the effects of the great changes which had occurred in their own lifetimes. In the last chapter of Waverley Scott wrote:

There is no European nation, which, within the course of half a century, or little more, has undergone so complete a change as this kingdom of Scotland. The effects of the insurrection of 1745 - the destruction of the patriarchal power of the Highland chiefs — the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions of the Lowland nobility and barons — the total eradication of the Jacobite party, which, averse to intermingle with the English, or adopt their customs, long continued to pride themselves upon maintaining ancient Scottish manners and customs — commenced this innovation. The gradual influx of wealth, and extension of commerce, have since united to render the present people of Scotland a class of beings as different from their grandfathers as the existing English are from those of Queen Elizabeth's time (p. 340)

For Thackeray, it was the advent of the railways during his lifetime which divided the past irrevocably from the present: towards the end of his life he wrote in the Roundabout Papers:

We who have lived before railways were made, belong to another world ... It was only yesterday; but what a gulf between now and then! Then was the old world. Stage-coaches, more or less swift, riding-horses, pack-horses, highwaymen, knights in armour, Norman invaders, Roman legions, Druids, ancient Britons painted blue, and so forth - all these belong to the old period ... But your railroad starts the new era, and we of a certain age belong to the new time and the old one...

The expansion of the railways from the 1830s onward transformed the landscape because of the cuttings and tunnels they required, the buildings they replaced, and the industrial development and urbanisation they encouraged; there is a famous description of the impact of railway construction on the Camden Town of 1836 in Dickens' *Dombey and Son* (1848; Chapters 6, 15, 20). By 1855, when the last parts of *The Newcomes* appeared, there were already 6,280 miles of railroad. Travel was cheaper and much quicker than ever before (up from twelve to fifty miles an hour); the population became more mobile; agricultural and industrial products, as well as bulky raw materials, could be transported swiftly and cheaply, a change which then facilitated the development of large-scale industry. In his biography of George Eliot (1819-1880) her husband J.W. Cross attributed her "genius" to the fact that she had lived through a period of rapid change:

> Her roots were down in the pre-railroad, pre-telegraphic period — the days of fine old leisure — but the fruit was formed during an era of extraordinary activity in scientific and mechanical discovery. Her genius was the outcome of these conditions. It could not have existed in the same form deprived of either influence.

As Walter Houghton has pointed out, people living in the middle decades of the nineteenth century often thought of themselves as living in an age of transition, and their sense that old institutions were crumbling and accepted values being undermined frequently led them to turn to the past for guidance. In 1831 John Stuart Mill claimed that the "idea of comparing one's own age with former ages, or with our notion of those which are yet to come" was the "dominant idea" of the age, because the nineteenth century was

an "age of change," set to be recalled as "the era of one of the greatest
revolutions of which history has preserved the remembrance, in the human
mind, and in the whole constitution of human society," although at present
"mankind have outgrown old institutions and old doctrines, and have not
yet acquired new ones."¹ In the mid-1840's George Henry Lewes, reviewing
the work of contemporary French historians, observed that it was

an age of universal anarchy of thought, with strong desire for
organization; - an age, succeeding one of destruction, anxious
to reconstruct, - anxious, but as yet impotent. The desire of
belief is strong; convictions are wanting: there is neither
spiritual nor moral union. In this plight we may hope for the
future, but can cling only to the past: that alone is secure,
well-grounded. The past must form the basis of certainty and
the materials for speculation.²

And although the 1850's and 1860's were less characterised than the two pre­
vious decades by political and social upheavals, Matthew Arnold still felt
in 1857 that the modern age was in need of an "intellectual deliverance"
involving a comprehension of the "copious and complex present, and behind it
a copious and complex past," via a study of other ages and literatures - "To
know how others stand, that we may know how we ourselves stand"³- while in
1865 John Grote, Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge and brother of the
historian George Grote, noted the "tendency of questions and subjects of
all kinds at this time to run to history," such that "the study of the his­
tory of man is now put before us as that by means of which we are to under­
stand man himself, and know what we ought to do."⁴

¹ The Spirit of the Age (1831; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago
² "The State of Historical Science in France," British and Foreign
Review, 16 (1844), 72-118, at 73.
³ "On the Modern Element in Literature" (1857); rpt. The Complete
Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, ed. R.H. Super, I (Ann Arbor: University
⁴ Exploratio Philosophica (1865), I, ix; quoted in J. W. Arrow,
Since I am dealing with a group of novels written at different times and covering different periods, I have naturally not been able to offer a comprehensive treatment of all the historical events and developments which the novels touch on, since subjects such as the decline of Jacobitism, public responses to the Napoleonic Wars, the impact of Evangelicalism, and the Reform agitation of the early 1830's, have each generated many books and articles. Nor am I assuming that history can function as kind of grid on which the accuracy or otherwise of literary works can be tested with incontrovertible results, since historians themselves and the source material with which they deal are inevitably affected by the political, social and philosophical assumptions of their time. Moreover it was Scott's fiction which demonstrated how novels could reveal more about the daily lives, feelings and mental attitudes of the people of the past than the conventional historical account of battles, political intrigues, and doings of monarchs and great men. This was the attitude adopted enthusiastically by Thackeray, while George Eliot's well-known essay "The Natural History of German Life" uses an account of two pioneering works in German social history to judge the strengths and weaknesses of various nineteenth-century novelists in their attempts to recreate past and present societies. My conclusions will necessarily be tentative, but I have tried to bear in mind George Eliot's strictures on sweeping generalisation based on insufficient evidence in "The Natural History of German Life," and also her awareness of the variations which existed in the ways of life to be found in different areas of England at the same period.

Scott's treatment of the past has already received much attention from critics, and several have dealt at length with Waverley, his first novel, and an important landmark in the history of fiction.\(^1\) The general consensus of Waverley criticism is that the novel aims to give a sympathetic treatment of the heroic Highland way of life, while through the experience of Waverley himself, it shows why the Jacobite cause failed, and the factors within the clan system which made its disintegration inevitable. Although the peace and prosperity of Scotland over the succeeding sixty-nine years made life more drab, and people more likely to compromise their principles, they were on the whole beneficial. Since I agree with this general interpretation I intend to discuss Waverley very briefly. Approaches to Guy Mannering, which has a vaguer historical setting than Waverley, have concentrated on the substitution of law for warfare as a means of solving disputes,\(^2\) and on Godfrey Bertram's eviction of the gypsies from Derncleugh and his other activities as a J.P., as well as on Glossin's manoeuvres to gain the estate, as showing the replacement of traditional feudal relationships by a legalistic conception of justice.\(^3\) I will also give some attention to the slightly nostalgic treatment of the Lowland store-farmer Dandie Dinmont, the effects of the American War of Independence, and Scott's references to leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment. The Antiquary, set only twenty years before the time of writing, has scarcely been discussed as a novel dealing


\(^2\) Daiches, "Sir Walter Scott and History."

\(^3\) Gordon, pp. 29-31; Brown, pp. 31-46.
with the recent past, but does in fact offer an interesting retrospective from the vantage point of 1816 on the way people of the 1790's reacted to - and exploited - the fears and social unrest of the early years of the Napoleonic wars. Finally, Redgauntlet, in which Scott describes the failure of an imaginary Jacobite conspiracy of about 1766, has been seen by David Daiches as a threnody on the final disappearance of the old "heroic" way of life embodied in Redgauntlet himself, and as an examination of the various possible Scottish attitudes to Scotland and the Scottish past in the second half of the eighteenth century. 1 D. D. Devlin and David Brown have also drawn attention to the novel's treatment of the social and political changes which have made Redgauntlet's military courage and feudal values anachronistic by the 1760's. 2 What has not been realised however is that Scott, although dealing with a purely imaginary visit to Britain by the Stewart claimant, does in fact draw on the history and traditions of a real Jacobite family with the surname Maxwell and the title Herries.

My chapter on Vanity Fair is indebted to Kathleen Tillotson's comments on Thackeray's treatment of the recent past in Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, 3 and especially to her and Geoffrey Tillotson's Introduction and Notes to the 1963 Methuen edition of the novel. Pendennis and The Newcomes have however attracted little attention as recreations of periods in the recent past, although the reminiscent tone of Thackeray's later novels is often mentioned. John Carey has discussed Thackeray's sense of time's destructiveness, and Jean Sudrann has focussed on the characters' - and the

3 94ff.
readers' - experience of time passing in both novels, while Jack P. Hawlins has analysed the complex internal chronology of The Newcomes. We shall find in fact that in both Pendennis and The Newcomes Thackeray can be inconsistent in his indications as to the period in which the events take place.

In the field of George Eliot studies there has been little discussion of the setting of most of her fiction in the recent past, although writers often comment on the important - and related - theme of characters' relationships with their own pasts (especially those of Maggie Tulliver, Silas Marner, Mrs Transome, and Mulstrode). Work has also been done on specific themes relevant to George Eliot's fiction, and I shall be drawing on Patricia Thomson's study of the changing role of women in both fiction and real life over the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Valentine Cunningham's work on the treatment of Methodism in Adam Bede and of Congregationalism in Felix Holt, Alan Mintz's research into the expansion of the professions during the nineteenth century and the cottage-building schemes of the 1830's Elisabeth Jay's book on Anglican Evangelicalism. A few writers have commented on aspects of the historical settings of Felix Holt and Middlemarch. Michael Wolff, Peter Coveney, Valentine Cunningham and Patrick Brantlinger have discussed the way in which political events and views of the mid-1860's affect George Eliot's approach to the aftermath of the 1832 Reform Bill in


Felix Holt. Jerome Beaty has drawn attention to the oblique portrayal of political events in Middlemarch and their muted impact on the characters, while Joy Hooton has commented briefly on how readers of 1871-72 would have been able to identify features of the society of the early 1830's which had had ramifications for their own time. Medical and scientific developments between 1829 and 1872 have also been dealt with by Asa Briggs, C.L. Cline, Patrick J. McCarthy and Robert A. Greenberg, while W.J. Harvey has written on both the medical background and Casaubon's mythography. Gillian Beer's new book Darwin's Plots discusses the impact of The Origin of Species (1859) on the thought, imagery and structure of Middlemarch. Finally, Barbara Hardy has pointed out how Middlemarch is not only a novel about history, but also, in its treatment of Dorothea in particular, a novel about the historical consciousness, the individual's sense of history.


Scott had an immense knowledge of history, especially of Scottish history, while both Thackeray and George Eliot, partly because of the impact of his novels, sometimes cast their narrators in the role of historian. Therefore, before discussing the novels and stories themselves, I shall briefly attempt to set them in the context of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century historiography.

As a student in Edinburgh in the late 1760s Scott was influenced by the work of philosophers and historians of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, John Millar, William Robertson, David Hume, Dugald Stewart and John Bruce. They saw mankind as developing through several stages from a savage to a polished state, with each stage manifesting the laws, manners, customs and ethical systems suited to it. Societies like the Highland clans with which Waverley deals would have been seen as belonging to the rude or barbarous stage of historical development - organised into mutually hostile groups based on the family under chieftains, and attaching great value to military valour and to loyalty to the leader and to other members of the group. More civilised commercial forms of society tended to give rise to selfishness, effeminacy (because of dependence on a professional army), and excessive specialisation. Overall however the development of society was progressive, and David Hume often attacked the barbarity, violence, superstition and bigotry of earlier periods, particularly the middle ages. Another important Enlightenment belief was that, despite

3 Adam Smith, Lectures of Adam Smith on Justice, Police, Revenues and Arms, quoted in Garside, "Scott, the Romantic Past and the Nineteenth Century," pp. 151-52; also Adam Ferguson, pp. 4-55.
4 Garside, p. 151.
changes over time in habits, customs, forms of government, and so on, human nature remained fundamentally the same. In his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Hume, who was later to write a *History of England*, observed:

> It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains the same, in all its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions. The same events follow from the same causes...

From this point of view, history's record of "wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions" provide the historian with "so many collections of experiments" from which he can discover "the constant and universal principles of human nature." In Robertson's view "the human mind whenever it is placed in the same situation will in all ages the most distant and in countries the most remote assume the same form and be distinguished by the same manners."\(^1\)

These ideas help to explain why, in the first chapter of *Waverley*, the narrator declares that the story will focus on

> those passions common to men in all stages of society, and which have alike agitated the human heart, whether it throbbed under the steel corset of the fifteenth century, the brocaded coat of the eighteenth, or the blue frock and white dimity waistcoat of the present day (p. 5)

The effect of the "state of manners and laws" is only to cast a "necessary colouring" on these passions, such that "the proud peer who can now only ruin his neighbour according to law, by protracted suits, is the genuine descendant of the baron who wrapped the castle of his competitor in flames, and knocked him on the head as he endeavoured to escape from the conflagration" (p. 5). However, Scott's novels of the recent past do give more empha-

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2 quoted by McMaster, p. 56.
sis than these comments suggest to the way in which character is affected by political and social conditions. In this his novels differ from other historical novels of the period, such as Jane Porter's *The Scottish Chiefs* (1811), a long chauvinistic novel about the struggles of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce against the English, or Mrs Jane West's *The Loyalists* (1812), a pro-Royalist, pro-Anglican novel set in Civil War England. The love scenes which occupy much of Miss Porter's novel are written in the style of the eighteenth-century sentimental novel, while the author's introduction points out that in her historical research for the novel she "found those virtues in the fathers, which have attached [her] to their posterity." Mrs West's novel, by showing how seventeenth-century attempts at political reform led to anarchy and despotism, and the proliferation of new religions to infidelity, was explicitly written as a lesson for the England of 1812, which, according to Mrs West, was threatened by "calamities" from "noisy reformers," "popular demagogues" and attitudes of "insubordination" towards national institutions. Hence she feels her novel can give "instruction to the present times, under the form of a chronicle of the past."

In the General Preface to the Waverley Novels Scott claimed that he had hoped to do for Scotland what Maria Edgeworth, in her novels of the recent past (notably *Caste Rackrent*, 1800) had done for Ireland — present her people to the English "in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto" so as to "procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles." As a result of the Union with England in 1707 and the quashing of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, Scotland had become

4 1629; rpt. Claire Lamont's edn of *Waverley*, p. 353.
more dependent, both politically and economically, on the larger and wealthier kingdom. One response to this was exemplified by the Enlightenment philosophers, who tried to write in an Augustan English denuded of Scotticisms, and to make their reputations in England and Europe. Another response however was an increasing interest in the Scottish past and the use of Scottish dialects, reflected in the poetry of Burns and in collections of old Scottish ballads by David Herd, John Pinkerton, Joseph Ritson, John Graham Dalzell, Robert Jamieson, John Finlay, and Scott himself, in his three-volume *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3). Moreover, the violence and social upheaval of the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars led to a questioning of eighteenth-century values and a revival of interest in and respect for traditions, customs, established beliefs, and even superstitions of the past. By 1814, people in Britain had seen much of Europe submit to Napoleon's despotism in the name of progress and improving principles, and were more willing to see the tragedy implicit in social revolution and the value of the older kind of close-knit hierarchical society like that of the Highland clans. The ideas expressed in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790, which stressed the debt of the present to the past, were hence still influential. He wished, Burke wrote, "to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers," since "[p]eople will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors."
Even flawed institutions are worth preserving because they have cast their roots wide and deep, and where, by long habit, things more valuable than themselves are so adapted to them, and in a manner interwoven with them, that the one cannot be destroyed without notably impairing the other.

The same sense of the value of tradition, as we shall see, underlies Scott's treatment of Godfrey Bertram's reforms as a J.P. in *Guy Manners*.

Scott's contemporary critics did not always approve of his use of historical characters and events in his novels, believing that he had created a hybrid form in which the different kinds of interest aroused by history and fiction worked against each other. For the reviewer of *Ivanhoe* in the *Eclectic Review*, "historical romances" tried to combine two opposite kinds of interest; that arising from general views of society connected with moral and political considerations, and implying a certain degree of abstraction, which is the proper interest of history, and that resulting from an engrossing sympathy with the feelings and fortunes of individuals, which is the appropriate charm of fictitious narrative.

However other writers saw Scott as having made an important contribution to historiography, by showing how the past could be brought to life, and also how history was not simply a record of battles, political events and the exploits of rulers. As early as 1817, Francis Jeffrey wrote that Scott's novels had shown how misleading was so-called "authentic history":

The great public events of which alone it takes cognisance, have but little direct influence upon the body of the people, and do not, in general, form the principal business, or happiness or misery even of those who are in some measure concerned in them.

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The point is all the more telling in that the main subject of Jeffrey's review is *Old Mortality* (1817), a novel which deals more directly and copiously with the events and important historical figures of the time in which it is set (the late 1670's - 1690's) than do any of the novels I will be discussing. For Carlyle, writing in 1838, Scott had taught that "the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men not by protocol; state-papers, controversies and abstractions of men,"¹ while in 1828 the young Macaulay praised Scott for using "those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them," for concentrating, not on the vagaries of politics and war, but on the circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity.

Twenty years later Macaulay was himself to trace the changes in British society between 1665 and his own day in the famous third chapter of his *History of England from the Accession of James the Second* (1848), focussing on developments in economics, technology, trade, agriculture, communications, standard of living, and morality, as well as politics. By 1847 a writer in *Fraser's* could say that it was almost a "literary canon" that Scott had served historians by showing them how to substitute "life-like portraiture and clear, intelligible description, for philosophical comparison and analysis."³

¹Hackeray's explicit comments on the nature of history show that he had derived from Scott's novels the same meaning as had Jeffrey, Carlyle,


and Macaulay—that the important aspects of the past were not the political and military events, nor the actions of the leading public men, but the manners, customs, and everyday lives of the people. In his lecture-series *The Four Georges*, given in 1855, he claims that he intends to tell "[n]ot about battles, about politics, about statesmen and measures of state ... but to Sketch the manners and life of the old world," the lords and ladies hunting and dancing, the servants waiting at table, the coachmen, postilions and footmen, the burghers and their wives and daughters. Moreover the best sources for this kind of information are not the so-called histories, which are, as he had put it in the *Paris Sketch-Book* of 1840, "mere contemptible catalogues of names and places," but novels, which are "a great deal more agreeable, life-like, and natural," and give the reader an "acquaintance with people and manners whom he could not hope otherwise to know." He cites as evidence *Ivanhoe* and *Waverley*, as well as *Tom Jones*, which he says "gives us a better idea of the state and ways of the people, than one could gather from any more pompous or authentic histories," and the *Pickwick Papers*, which he predicts will be used as an historical source in a hundred years' time. Fiction, he claims in his other lecture-series on *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* (1851), is "the expression of the life of the time; of the manners, of the movement, the dress, the pleasures, the laughter, the ridicules of society," and in support of this argument he adduces the essays of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. It is characteristic that in reviewing Carlyle's *French Revolution* (1837), he praised it mainly for the vividness of his descriptions and its capacity to arouse and move the reader.

An important development in nineteenth-century historiography to which Scott contributed was the growing belief that periods in the past were worth studying for their own sake, and not just as stages leading towards the present, and that people of the past should be judged by the standards of their own day rather than according to modern criteria. In 1821 Sir James Mackintosh had argued that the historian should be able to "antiquate his feelings, so as to become for a moment the contemporary" of the ages with which he is dealing, divesting himself of modern passions and prejudices, for "[i]t is on the sympathy which History excites that its moral effect depends."¹ The great German historian Barthold Niebuhr wrote in the Preface to the second edition of his *History of Rome* (3 vols, 1827-32):

When a historian is reviving former times, his interest in them and sympathy with them will be the deeper, the greater the events he has witnessed with a bleeding or a rejoicing heart. His feelings are moved by justice and injustice, by wisdom or folly, by coming or departing greatness, as if all were going on before his eyes; and when he is thus moved, his lips speak, although *decuba* is nothing to the player.²

Another great German historian, Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) also laid great stress on the need for the historian to be impartial, avoiding the temptation to allow the prejudices of the present to colour his approach to the past.³ In 1844 John Stuart Mill attacked historians who transposed the notions of the present back into the past, and judged the leading figures

accordingly, praising Niebuhr, Carlyle, and French historians such as Thierry and Michelet for aiming to "realize a true and living picture of the past time, clothed in its circumstances and peculiarities." The "Liberal Anglican" historians, Thomas Arnold, Connop Thirlwall, Julius Hare, Henry Hart Milman and A.P. Stanley also believed in a sympathetic approach to the past: in Guesses at Truth Hare argued that "the very process of endeavouring faithfully and carefully to enter into the minds of others, as it can only be effected by passing out of ourselves, out of our habitual prepossessions and predilections, is a discipline both of love and humility." By the end of our period John Morley felt that people were more concerned with the pedigree and genealogical connections of a custom or idea than with its goodness of badness, strength or weakness.

George Eliot too was concerned that the people, habits, and ideas of the past should be treated sympathetically, and not looked down on from the vantage point of modern progress. In 1861 in a letter to Sara Hennell she expressed her hope that

we are well out of that phase in which the most philosophic view of the past was held to be a smiling survey of human folly, and when the wisest man was supposed to be one who could sympathize with no age but the age to come.

and writing to Richard Holt Hutton in 1863, she described the "religious and moral sympathy with the historical life of man" as "the larger half of culture."

In the well-known passage from "The Natural History of German Life,"


in which she explains that "[t]he greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies," since art is "a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot," she cites among her examples of great art in this respect the scenes in Luckie Muckle backit's cottage in The Antiquary, thus suggesting that fiction can extend her contemporaries' understanding not only of people lower down in the social scale, but also of people who lived before their own time. Moreover not only a contemptuous or condescending attitude to the past, but also the idealising tendency which creates the "heroic artisan or the sentimental peasant" militates against this understanding. In her review of Westward Ho! George Eliot attacks Kingsley for idealising the Elizabethan period:

he can undertake to depict a past age and try to make out that it was the pattern of all heroisms now utterly extinct; he can sneer at actual doings which are only a new form of the sentiments he vaunts as the peculiar possession of his pet period.

What Kingsley has failed to do, according to George Eliot here, is to see the connections and similarities between past and present. A few years before, in a review of R.W. Mackay's The Progress of the Intellect, she had spelt out the qualities necessary in an historian: they included a mind with a "susceptibility to the pleasure of changing its point of view, of mastering a remote form of thought, of perceiving identity of nature under variety of manifestation." George Eliot's response to the Bible had after all involved seeing what was common to past and present: through

1 Essays, pp. 270-71.
reading Charles Hennell's *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1641) and translating David Strauss's *Das Leben Jesus* (1835; trans. 1846) and Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841; trans. 1854) she had reached the conclusion that the Scriptures were not revealed truth but historical documents to be judged critically as reflecting the knowledge, beliefs and values current at the time in which they were written. For all this however, the Gospels are, according to Hennell, valuable as a statement of the genuine and sincere faith of the early Christians, while Christianity, freed from fable and miraculous foundations, was "the purest form yet existing of natural religion," reflecting the elevated thoughts and feelings of the human mind itself. For Strauss, Christ's supernatural birth, miracles, resurrection and ascension remain eternal truths because of their basis in human belief, however doubtful their reality as historical facts. The Christian is the sublimest of all religions and contains the deepest philosophical truths. In 1859 George Eliot wrote to Charles Bray that she was concerned to bring out in her books "that which is essentially human in all forms of belief." Her novels show the differences between the people of the recent past and her contemporary readers, and then point out, with varying degrees of subtlety, their "identity of nature under variety of manifestation."

George Eliot's ideas about how change occurs, how the past has become the present, are explained in "The Natural History of German Life." In the essay she attacks the assumption that social or political change can be

2. Willey, p. 222.
4. 5 July 1859, in *Eliot Letters*, III, 111.
effected on the basis of general theories rather than a detailed and first-hand knowledge of the people to be reformed, criticising:

"The tendency created by the splendid conquests of modern generalisation, to believe that all social questions are merged in economical science, and that the relations of men to their neighbours may be settled by algebraic equations, - the dream that the uncultured classes are prepared for a condition which appeals principally to their moral sensibilities, - the aristocratic dilettantism which attempts to restore the 'good old times' by a sort of idyllic masquerading, and to grow feudal fidelity and veneration as we grow prize turnips, by an artificial system of culture..."

Here her targets seem to be the theories of political economists, the socialist and communist ideas which inspired the European revolutions of 1848, and, in Britain, the communities set up by Robert Owen, and Disraeli's "Young England" movement which aimed to revive the feudal, paternalistic role of the aristocracy towards the lower classes as a cure for poverty and class hostility engendered by industrialisation. Riehl's studies of the German peasantry in Die Bürglerliche Gesellschaft and Land und Leute had shown how their society could not be reorganised successfully on a communist model because of their selfishness and, especially, their unthinking adherence to custom:

He sees in European society incarnate history, and any attempt to disengage it from its historical elements must, he believes, be simply destructive of social vitality. What has grown up historically can only die out historically, by the gradual operation of necessary laws. The external conditions which society has inherited from the past are but the manifestation of inherited internal conditions in the human beings who compose it; the internal conditions and the external are related to each other as the organism and its medium, and development can take place only by the gradual consentaneous development of both.

1 *Essays*, p. 272.
2 *Essays*, p. 287.
And although, on account of the effects of Protestantism and commerce, the “vital connexion with the past is much more vividly felt on the Continent than in England," George Eliot was still to argue several years later that:

Our sentiments may be called organised traditions; and a large part of our actions gather all their justification, all their attraction and aroma, from the memory of the life lived, of the actions done, before we were born.

George Eliot's organicist view of the development of society, the idea that change could only be a slow, gradual process involving no break with the past, both looks back to the ideas of Burke, and reflects an outlook which was becoming increasingly common in the mid-nineteenth century: legislation such as the 1832 Reform Bill, the New Poor Law of 1834, and the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, had been inspired by Bentham's Utilitarian ideas about the need for radical change in government and the law, but the economic depression of the late 1830's and 1840's, together with the revelations in Blue Books and statistical enquiries of the complexity of social problems meant that simple, sweeping solutions came to appear suspect. With the collapse of Chartism in 1848 and the economic upturn of the 1850's, the resulting optimism and satisfaction gave rise to a belief in slow, natural growth through self-help and laissez-faire policies. In Social Statics (1851), a book which George Eliot recommended to Charles Bray, Spencer argued that change occurred through the gradual modification of human beings until they became adapted to their conditions. Social development was progressive, and the murders, enslavings, robberies, tyranny, class oppressions,

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2 This is the general argument of Brantlinger's The Spirit of Reform...
3 4 October 1851, in Eliot Letters, I, 364.
4 Herbert Spencer, Social Statics (London: John Chapman, 1851), 59ff.
and sect and party persecutions only happened because man retained the constitution of the savage in conditions for which it was not fitted. The result of the process of adaptation is the complete manifestation of everyone's individuality, and this also means the end of evil and immorality. Society as a whole, like an organism, develops from the simple to the complex: from a homogeneous to an increasingly heterogeneous structure, and the increasing individuation of the parts also makes them more interdependent. As a result of this complexity and interdependence, attempts to accelerate the growth of the organism in one part would only disturb the balance of its organisation and cause atrophy in another.

A confident belief in progress was of course very characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century. The most popular historian of the period, Macaulay, continually extols the advances the present has made over the past. At the beginning of the first volume of his History of England, he declares, "the history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, of moral, and of intellectual improvement." In her essay "The Progress of the Intellect" George Eliot had mentioned as one of the qualities of the ideal historian "a profound belief in the progressive character of human development," and was later to call herself a "meliorist." But elsewhere she seems far less sure that progress is inevitable. When in the essay on Kiehl she writes of the need for a similar "natural

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1 Social Statics, p. 413.
2 Social Statics, pp. 67-69, 434.
4 See Walter Doughton's section on "Optimism" in The Victorian Frame of Mind, pp. 27-53.
6 Essays, p. 29.
history" of the English social classes, she mentions as one of the features to be studied "the tendencies in their position towards disintegration or towards development," and later, when discussing Riehl's findings about the German peasantry, notes that "many disintegrating forces have been at work on the peasant character, and degeneration is unhappily going on at a greater pace than development." The question of degeneration vs. development had become important with the spread of Darwinian evolutionary ideas, which were in the air before the actual publication of The Origin of Specie in 1859 - the issue of whether natural selection, the "survival of the fittest" favoured the fittest in the moral sense, or merely the strongest.

Spencer, with his idea that the eventual complete adaptation of the organism to its environment assured the evanescence of evil, the less adaptable having failed to survive, took the optimistic view, while Tennyson's vision of "Nature, red in tooth and claw," carelessly letting the best of men die before their time, in In Memoriam (1850), evokes the fears to which the alternative prediction gave rise. George Eliot however was also to explore societies which seemed to show no marked tendencies for either degeneration or development: Spencer assumes that when the organism is not adapted to conditions, it is because its development has lagged behind that of its conditions, while George Eliot in the Riehl essay speaks of the two kinds of development being "consentaneous" - yet in both The Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch she shows the tensions which arise when individuals are morally and/or intellectually above the general level of societies which are restrictive and resistant to change.

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1 Essays, pp. 272-73.
2 Essays, p. 261.
3 Social Statics, 37ff.
4 Stanza LV.
George Eliot's concern that the study of society should be based on careful study of evidence rather than on theoretical generalisation was shared by many nineteenth-century historians—notably Ranke, who stressed the importance of making extensive use of primary sources and of adopting a critical attitude to all his sources—while in England both government and private archives became more organised and accessible to historians.¹ A major impetus behind this kind of concern for evidence was the scientific outlook, and from about the 1640's onward writers such as Mill and Lewes, following the lead of Comte in France, demanded that history should be studied in a scientific fashion.² Crucial to this was not only a careful study of evidence but also a generalisation from that evidence to establish the underlying laws governing social development. The fundamental problem, according to Mill, was to "find the laws according to which any state of society produces the state which succeeds it and takes its place."³ In 1844 Lewes predicted that history was likely to become as exact a science as geology, when the general laws governing the evolution of society were discovered and organised.⁴ In Spencer's vision of social progress there are

No accidents, no chance; but everywhere order and completeness ... Throughout ... the same vital principles, ever in action, and embracing the minutest details. Growth is unceasing; and though slow, all powerful ... ²

⁵ Social Statics, p. 293.
For the anthropologist Henry Maine, "[i]f history indeed be true, it must teach that which every other science teaches - continuous sequence, inflexible order, and eternal law." Sometimes statistics were used to prove the existence of uniform laws controlling human behaviour, as in the case of the historian H.T. Huckle, who cited them to show that the annual number of murders, suicides - and misdirected letters - remained constant, while the rate of marriages bore a fixed relation to the price of corn.

This approach tended to minimise the impact of the individual on society, of the great man on the progress of history. According to Spencer,

we must look upon social convulsions as upon other natural phenomena, which work themselves out in a certain, inevitable, unalterable way ... These changes are brought about by a power far above individual wills. Men who seem the prime movers, are merely the tool with which it works; and were they absent, it would quickly find others.

In Middlemarch George Eliot was to register the increasing prevalence of this view in the period after that in which the novel is set (1829-32) in the narrator's comment on Lydgate:

considering that statistics had not yet embraced a calculation as to the number of ignorant or canting doctors which absolutely must exist in the teeth of all changes, it seemed to Lydgate that a change in the units was the most direct mode of changing the numbers.

The implications of the "scientific" approach to history did arouse opposition mid-century. In his inaugural lecture as Professor of History

3 Social Statics, p. 433.
4 Middlemarch a Study of Provincial Life (6 parts; Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1871-72), II, 259-60.
at Cambridge in 1861, Kingsley argued that moral phenomena could not be explained by economic and physical laws: the invariable laws are those of right and wrong, and they do not result in inevitable sequence or irresistible growth. In any case, by breaking such laws as do exist, a man can seriously disturb the so-called inevitable sequence, even if he is later punished by the consequences. Moreover the true history of mankind is that of great men, the men of genius.¹ In "The Science of History" J. A. Froude claimed that men's acts could not be predicted, that the temper of each new generation was a continual surprise, and that history would best resemble life, when least explicable by laws. The historian should concentrate on "the illustrious natures who have shaped the fortunes of the world."² But the main exponent of the "great man" theory of history was Froude's mentor Carlyle, whose lecture series of 1840, On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History argued that:

The history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realisation and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world; the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the story of these.³

The passage I have already quoted from "The Natural History of German Life" refers to historical change occurring from "the gradual operation of

necessary laws." In "The Progress of the Intellect" George Eliot argues that the key to the revelation provided by the "history of human development" is

the recognition of the presence of undeviating law in the material and moral world - of that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still perversely ignored in our social organisation, our ethics and our religion.

It is this "inexorable law of consequences" which gives the "seal of prohibition and of sanction" to "human deeds and aspirations," so that "human duty is comprised in the earnest study of this law and patient obedience to its teaching." We can learn from seeing this law operating throughout history:

- every past phase of human development is part of that education of the race in which we are sharing;
- every mistake, every absurdity into which poor human nature has fallen, may be looked upon as an experiment of which we may reap the benefit.

In George Eliot's fiction characters often suffer because they fail to act with due regard to the consequences of their actions, and readers living one or two generations later can benefit from this experience of the past. On the other hand George Eliot does not I think illustrate the operation of the "necessary laws" governing historical change - how the Milby of the early 1830's becomes the Milby of 1857, or the Hayslope of 1800, the Hayslope of 1859. Commenting on The Origin of Species, she wrote:


1 "Essays, p. 31
She is I think more interested in exploring the capacity of the individual to effect social change. The power of the laws controlling the external world and the "inexorable law of consequences" governing human conduct do not render the individual helpless. Writing to John Morley in 1867 she spoke of the power of love to "mitigate the harshness of all fatalities" and of the capacity of "growing moral force to lighten the pressure of hard non-moral outward conditions." There is a "moral evolution" distinguishable from "mere zoological evolution." ¹ A few years later she urged Mrs Ponsonby not to feel that the conditions of the material world made human efforts towards good meaningless, as "the consideration of molecular physics is not the direct ground of human love and moral action." She goes on to say that "[t]he progress of the world ... can certainly never come at all, save by the modified action of the individual beings who compose the world." ² Her stories and novels of the recent past look back on the people of earlier generations, and examine how they have contributed to this "progress of the world."

¹ 14 May 1867, in Eliot Letters, IV, 364-65.
CHAPTER 2

SCOTT - 1. WAVERLEY

The self-conscious tone of the opening of Waverley shows how innovatory Scott was being in setting a novel in the recent past. It is assumed that the subtitle "A Tale of Other Days" would evoke not so much an historical setting as the trappings of Mrs Radcliffe's Gothic romances (see p. 3), while the novelist faced with "the court dress of George the Second's reign, with its no collar, large sleeves, and low pocket holes," and "the splendid formality of an entertainment given Sixty Years since" (p. 4), can exploit neither the glamour and exotic appeal of a distant period nor the topicality of a modern setting in the fashionable world. The unprecedented popularity of Waverley showed however that the reading public was very interested in a novel not only set sixty-nine years in the past, but also laying more stress on the differences between past and present than on the characteristics shared by the people of 1745 and 1614. Their appetite for Scottish history in general had been whetted by The Scottish Chiefs, and by Scott's poems The Lay of the Last Minstrel (1805) and Marmion (1808), and their interest in Highland life in particular stimulated by his The Lady of the Lake (1810) as well as by Anne Grant's Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland (1811) and Elizabeth Hamilton's Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808) - both mentioned by Scott in the last chapter of Waverley. What the novel does is to capture Lowland feudal society in the last few years before feudal tenures were abolished (in 1766), the centuries-old Highland way of life just before it disintegrated, Jacobitism just before it became a hope-


2 See Andrew Hook's Introduction to the Penguin edn of Waverley, (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 16-17.
lessly lost cause.

As has often been noticed, Scott's treatment of both Lowland and Highland life from the point of view of 1814 is very even-handed. Contemporaries would have realised that the agricultural advances in the Lowlands since the 1740's - enclosure of fields, enlargement of holdings, draining of bogs and marshes, cultivation of turnips, grasses, clover, potatoes, and of a greater variety of vegetables, had helped alleviate the "misery and dirt" of villages like Tully-Veolan, with their "unprofitable variety" of crops. By 1814 too the standard of clothing and housing had much improved, with the wretched, irregularly-laid-out houses of places like Tully-Veolan superseded by larger, cleaner, dryer dwellings, sometimes in model villages such as that built by Scott's relative John Scott of Gala. Among the gentry meanwhile excessive drinking, especially tavern parties like that described in Chapter 11 of Waverley, had declined, and their habits had become more polished than those of Falconer and Killancureit, on account of increased contact with English and Edinburgh society. Meanwhile the abolition of hereditary jurisdictions had meant that a laird could not "imprison, try, and execute his vassals" as the Baron claims to be able to do (pp. 41-42), and the money paid in compensation could be used to finance agricultural innovations. On the other hand, landlords' paternalism towards tenants, exemplified in the novel by the


2 Smout, 265ff; Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century, From the ESS. of John Ramsay, Esq., of Ochtertyre, ed. A. Allardyce (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1865), I, 179ff, II, 46ff, 306ff

3 Ramsay, II, 212-13; McMaster, Scott and Society, pp. 102-103.
Baron's support of Davie Gellatly and his protection of Janet Gellatly when she is tried for witchcraft (p. 61) had also decayed, such that when farming became more profitable, landlords put up rents, and often offered land to the highest bidder regardless of whether his family had traditionally been tenants on the estate. Consolidation of holdings meant too that small tenants and cottars could be dispossessed and forced to become landless labourers. 1

The bond between clan and chief in the Highlands was closer than that between landlord and tenant in the Lowlands, and its strength and limitations are brought out in two well-known scenes in the novel: the first, where Waverley seeks to help his former Serjeant who is dying in a miserable hut, and can only get Fergus Mac-Ivor to accept this by explaining that Houghton is the son of one of his uncle's tenants (that is, one of his "following"), since the Highlanders have no sense of "general philanthropy" (p. 218); the second, at Fergus's trial, when Ewan Dhu offers in good faith to provide six of the best of the clan to suffer execution in place of the chief, only to be laughed at by the people in court (p. 320). It is this strong sense of loyalty to the chief which makes bearable the wretched poverty of Highland life, brought out in the account of Donald Bean Lean and his followers (pp. 60-63) and the descriptions of Clan Ivor and their feast (see esp. pp. 94, 101) 2 This social system broke down rapidly after the defeat of the rebellion, with the disarming of the clans, the suppression of cattle-lifting, the Hereditary Jurisdictions Act, and the abolition of both military services and tenures based on them. As in the Lowlands, farming

1 See Ramsay, II, 344-45; Smout, pp. 350-301.

2 Cf. also one of Scott's sources, Edward Bart's Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to His Friend in London (1726-30; London: S. Birt, 1754), I, 98, 109-10, 301; II, 121, 126-27.
became more profitable, especially the cattle-trade and, later, sheep-farming and many farms were converted into sheep-walk. But this meant that clan leaders, with no longer any military incentive to maintain large numbers of tenants paying low rents, tended to let land to the highest bidder, while, since sheep-farming required fewer workers than agriculture, tenants could be dispossessed and forced to seek work in the Lowlands or abroad.¹ On account of these developments, combined with the great population increase in the Highlands during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Highlanders of 1814 were not necessarily better off than those of 1745.

In his treatment of the Jacobite campaign, Scott eschews descriptions of well-known events: he summarises Prestonpans, after the Highlanders' initial onslaught (p. 225), and introduces the account of the rebels' march into England with the disclaimer, "[i]t is not our purpose to intrude upon the province of history" (p. 263). Most notoriously, of course, the novel does not describe Culloden. Instead, the novel shows why Jacobitism failed: the half-starved, badly-armed, unenthusiastic recruits among the inferior ranks (p. 214), the poverty and selfish motives of supporters like Jinker (pp. 166-69), the greed and disunity among the leaders, including Fergus (see esp. p. 254). Nor do real historical figures play a major role. Charles Edward appears occasionally, and in conversations with fictional characters which do not relate to the military campaign, while the death of Colonel Gardiner, referred to merely as "Colonel G---" till the 1829 edition (see Scott's note, p. 391) mainly serves to affect Waverley with the sense that he has betrayed his company of dragoons (p. 226). Scott is perhaps

suggesting that this private influence of famous historical figures is as much a part of history as their public role. He is not so much interested in actual historical figures, however, as in showing, as Lukács put it, "the typically human terms in which great historical trends become tangible."¹

It is pointed out that

Had Fergus Mac-Ivor lived sixty years sooner than he did, he would, in all probability, have wanted the polished manner and knowledge of the world which he now possessed; and had he lived sixty years later, his ambition and love of rule would have lacked the fuel which his situation now afforded (pp. 91-92)

The "Baron has the "prejudices of ancient birth and Jacobite politics," a lawyer's pedantry going unchecked because his politics do not allow him to practise his profession, and the "military pride of the soldier," on account of the career he has had to adopt instead (p. 41). Colonel Talbot is "in every point the English soldier," patriotic, but, since he is affected by the anti-Scottish prejudices of his time, refusing to try and save Fergus's life (p. 316). Sir Everard "Averley's Jacobitism is decaying for want of any encouragement in the England of his period, while his brother is one of the many men of Jacobite families brought over to the Government side by Sir Robert "Alpole's unparalleled system of political corruption." The character of "Averley himself is largely the product of Sir Everard's and "Alpole's Jacobite sentiment, coloured by unrestricted reading in romantic literature.

¹ The Historical Novel, p. 35.
SCOTT - 2. GUY MANNERING

In his introduction to the first edition of The Antiquary, Scott claims that his first three "fictitious narratives" were "intended to illustrate the manners of Scotland at three different periods." He explains that "Waverley embraced the age of our fathers, Guy Mannering that of our own youth, and the Antiquary refers to the last ten years of the eighteenth century." Some contemporaries however doubted that he had any such plan when he began to write novels: John Wilson Croker in the Quarterly Review argued that Oldbuck and the characters in The Antiquary could have lived before those of Guy Mannering, while a writer in the Monthly Review thought that the main action of The Antiquary could have taken place "as well within the last half century as the last twenty years." The statement in Chapter 36 of Guy Mannering that "the period was near the end of the American War," and the opening of The Antiquary ("It was early on a fine summer's day, near the end of the eighteenth century") combined with this novel's periodic references to the French Revolution, popular discontent in Scotland, and the war against France which began in 1793, make it clear that Scott did intend to set each novel at a specific time. Yet unlike Waverley, these novels neither contain historical figures who participate in the action nor show the fictional characters engaged in historical events, and the reader is not kept continually aware of the specific period of the setting.

Guy Mannering opens with the first visit of the eponymous hero to Ellar gowan, which is said to occur "in the beginning of the month of November.

1 1st edn (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co.; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1816), p. v. All subsequent citations will be from this edn.
4 1st edn (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co.; London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815), II, 255. All subsequent citations will be from this edn.
and no more precise date is mentioned until Mrs Mac-Candlish's allusion, on the occasion of his next visit, to "this weary American war" (I, 194). In the interim about twenty-one years are supposed to have passed and, given Glossin's comment to Hatteraick that "'peace is now so much talked of'" (II, 228) and the later reference to "near the end of the American war" (which ended in 1783), it would appear that the novel opens in about 1760. However since this has to be worked out retrospectively, it is unlikely that Scott is concerned at this stage to evoke a specific period.

Two important subjects of the opening chapters—the state of the Bertram family, and Mannering's practice of astrology—are in fact presented in relation to a more remote past, rather than from the perspective of 1815.

The second chapter traces the history of the Bertram family from the Dark Ages up to Godfrey Bertram's time, explaining how they invariably adhered to the weaker side in all civil conflicts, thus losing a large part of their estate. Finally Godfrey embarrasses the property still further by employing Glossin, "a man of business," who increases its debts and encumbers him with lawsuits. Since Bertram is described as "one of those second-rate sort of persons that are to be found frequently in rural situations" (I, 15)—that is, as a type still prevalent in 1815—it appears that Scott is contrasting a period, extending up to about Lewis Bertram's time, when military concerns and conflicts predominated, with the more recent period, when lawsuits are the means by which property is won and lost. Lewis is the transitional figure in that he adopted the losing side (in the '15), but did not forfeit any of his estate as a direct result of this: rather, having left it in the hands of trustees, he had to fight a lawsuit afterwards in which he lost part of it (I, 21). Later in the novel Lawyer Pleydell, confronted with Andie Dinmont's trivial lawsuit against Jock o'Dawston Cleugh, comments on how lawsuits have replaced fighting as a means
of settling disputes over property: Dandie has "'feuds in the court of
Session,'" whereas his ancestors had "'manslaughters and fire-raisings'" (II,
323). The novel is, as the reviewer in the Scots Magazine pointed out,
set in the Lowlands "as they existed thirty or forty years ago, while sub-
siding from the tumult of half-civilized times, and border warfare, into
their present tranquil and orderly state." For Pleydell legal means of
resolving disputes represent however some advance over warfare:

"In civilised society, law is the chimney through which all that
smoke discharges itself that used to circulate through the whole
house, and put every one's eyes out." (II, 326)

But as far as the Bertram estates are concerned, the result of both war and
law is the same - continual debt and diminution.

Mannering is said to be convinced of the "absurdity" of astrological
predictions, and, having boasted of his powers at Sampson's expense, under-
takes to cast the young heir's nativity in order to preserve appearances
and to see if he can remember what his old tutor had taught him. His scepti-
cism is set against the belief in astrology which is said to have been uni-
versal in the mid-seventeenth century, and to have persisted among some
"[g]rave and studious men" at universities into the beginning of the eigh-
teenth century, despite general disbelief and ridicule (I, 52). The narra-
tor assumes too that Mannering's scepticism is shared by the reader of 1815,
and asserts that "we lay no weight whatever" on the coincidence of Mannering's
horoscopes of both Harry Bertram and Sophia Wellwood, suggesting a
couple of rational explanations for it (I, 55-6). That this assumption was
well-grounded was demonstrated by the reaction of contemporary reviewers;

1 cf. Chapter 1 of Waverley: "the proud peer who can now only ruin his
neighbour according to law, by protracted suits, is the genuine descendant
of the baron who wrapped the castle of his competitor in flames, and knocked
him on the head as he endeavoured to escape from the conflagration" (p. 5)

2 Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany, 77 (1815), 608-14,
at 609.
Mannering's predictions of a series of crises in Harry Bertram's life in his fifth, tenth, and twenty-first years (coinciding also with the predictions of Meg Merrilies), and of the death of Sophia Wellwood in her thirty-ninth year (i.e. in Bertram's twenty-first) are fulfilled, and several reviewers commented on how improbable and unconvincing all this was. Scott was to outline one of his sources for the astrological aspect of the novel in the 1829 Introduction – a story told by an old Highland servant of his father – but the "Astrologer" in this tale is a grave, mysterious, elderly figure who takes his art seriously, while the story is not set at any particular period, and the crisis faced by the young man, the struggle against religious despair embodied in the Devil, suggests a time before that of eighteenth-century rationalism. Another possible source, the ballad of the "Durham Garland", concerns an astrological prediction made by a noble lord at the birth of a forester's son, involving a crisis to come in his eighteenth year, and is closer to the novel in that, instead of being assailed by religious doubts, the hero is threatened with hanging for robbing the astrologer figure, a crime he did not commit, is identified by a cabinet containing a gold chain and the horoscope, and marries the astrologer's daughter. But again, astrology is taken seriously, and the historical setting is indeterminate. Scott seems then to be adapting legendary material relating to the seventeenth century or earlier, to a novel set at a time in which astrology was no longer credible to most people, and written for an audience for whom it was even less so. It is not even likely that Mannering could have known a clergyman from the Oxford of the eighteenth century who

1 Monthly Review, 77 (1815), 85-94, at 86; British Critic, 3 (1815) 399-409, at 409; Port Folio, 4th ser. 2 (1816), 159-78, at 178; Quarterly Review, 12 (1815), 501-9, at 507.
2 Joseph Train sent the ballad to Lockhart after Scott's death, and it is reprinted in the 1850 1-volume edn of the Life (pp. 765-68). Train had mentioned it in a letter to Scott of 4 September 1829 – it had been current at least sixty years earlier (National Library of Scotland, MS 874, f. 163v).
seriously believed in astrology, as the subject had been rejected by the students as early as 1659.\textsuperscript{1}

Other subjects taken up in the early chapters also serve to suggest the similarities between the 1760's and the time of writing. Godfrey Bertram eventually becomes a J.P. because of Glossin's machinations at an election which occurs about four years after Mannering's first visit (i.e. in c. 1764). Bertram's candidate is elected because Glossin went to work, making votes, as every Scottish lawyer knows how, by splitting and subdividing the superiorities upon this ancient and once powerful barony ... by dint of clipping and paring here, adding and eiking there, and creating over-lords upon all the estate which Bertram held of the crown, they advanced upon the day of contest, at the head of ten as good men of parchment as ever took the oath of trust and possession (l, 89).

These practices were particularly common after 1770, such that by 1790 nearly half the votes in Scottish counties were fictitious.\textsuperscript{2} They continued however right up to 1832 (the year of the Reform Bill),\textsuperscript{3} and Scott himself in a letter written a few months after Guy Mannering was published, complained of a "stupid cause" which had come up in his own professional work, concerning a small area of land worth almost nothing in rent but forming part of a freehold qualification, such that "the decision may wing a voter."\textsuperscript{4} And just as lawsuits replaced war as a means of settling property disputes, "caballing in elections and soliciting neighbours ... to accept of fictitious

\textsuperscript{2} Mathieson, \textit{The Awakening of Scotland}, pp. 19-20; Smout, p. 219.
\textsuperscript{3} Mathieson, p. 101.
votes" became, according to Ramsay, the means by which a "great man", when malcontent, showed his resentment of the political situation, whereas his ancestors would have summoned their friends and dependants to rise against the throne.¹

Similarly, the comments on Godfrey Bertram's activities as a J.P. relate as much to 1815 as they do to the 1760's. Bertram dispatches beggars to the workhouse and the local idiot to the county bridewell, and abolishes the pedlar's annual rounds - but the "daft Jock" pines away and dies within six months, deprived of air and sunshine, while the local people miss their bartering with itinerant dealers, the local gossip, and the "self-applause" for distributing alms (I, 92-97). The narrator argues that "[e]ven an admitted nuisance of ancient standing should not be abated without some caution," since

We are not made of wood or stone, and the things which connect themselves with our hearts and habits cannot, like bark or lichen, be rent away without our missing them (I, 95)²

This was written at a time when the spread of industrialisation had led to the rise of a new group of paupers, people who had come to seek work in the towns and then been thrown out of employment by the periodic shocks to trade during the second decade of the century.³ In 1812 a "Society for the Suppression of Public Begging" had been formed, advocating the establishment of more Houses of Industry and Houses of Refuge for the poor. Scott is arguing however for a non-institutionalised system of poor-relief, since it gives the poor some human contact and exercises the charitable impulses

¹ Scotland and Scotsmen, II, 46.
² cf. the quotation from Burke in the Introduction (see above, p.15)
Apart from this, he favoured a voluntary assessment of the heritors in country areas, to make up deficiencies in the parish funds, while his solution for the towns was one which sought to create in the manufacturing classes some sense of responsibility towards the unemployed: writing to Morritt in August, 1817, he attacks manufacturers for overpaying workers and then turning them off when speculations failed, and advocates taxing manufacturers according to the number of workmen they employ on average, in order to provide a fund for maintaining the manufacturing poor. Within the time-span of the novel however a paternalistic attitude towards the poor on the part of the individual proprietor is still seen as sufficient for country areas - seventeen years after their father’s high-handed measures have jeopardised the lives of the local poor, Lucy Bertram tells Harry that she hopes he can regain the estate so as to protect the poor and destitute dependants of the family (III, 262).

The dispossession of the gypsies from Dernclough is related more explicitly to events occurring round the time of writing. The destruction of the cottages is described as a "summary and effectual mode of ejection still practised in some remote parts of Scotland, when a tenant proves refractory" (I, 117). The notorious evictions of tenants on the Sutherland estates in northern Scotland to make way for sheep-walks had occurred in 1814, and in 1816 the Countess of Sutherland’s agent Patrick Sellar was to be tried for burning tenants’ houses, one with an old woman still inside.

David Stewart of Garth in his Sketches of the Character, Manners and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland (1822) was to assume that Scott was

1 cf. Wordsworth's attitude in his "The Old Cumberland Beggar," written in 1797.
2 McMaster, p. 125.
3 11 August 1817, in Scott Letters, IV, 495-96.
drawing attention to the Sutherland clearances in *Guy Mannering*. In Gallo­
way itself by the 1820's the destruction of cottages due to consolidation
of farms had led to an exodus of dispossessed tenants to villages and towns.

But if the eviction of the gypsies is used to point to an issue of
Scott's own day, the prominent part played in the novel by gypsies and smug­
glers can be seen as an evocation of the past. In the introduction to *The
Antiquary* Scott explains that in both this novel and *Guy Mannering* he has
taken his main characters "in the class of society who are the last to feel
the influence of that general polish which assimilates to each other the
manners of different nations" (v-vi). Dirk Hatteraick and especially Meg
Merrilies were often mentioned by reviewers as striking and memorable cha­
acters. According to the account of the gypsies in Chapter 7 there had
been about a hundred thousand of them in Scotland up to the early eighteenth
century, but by the time of writing their numbers had declined to about five
hundred (I, 98-104). The original of Meg Merrilies, Jean Gordon, whom
Scott discusses in the 1829 introduction to the novel, had actually died
in 1745. However the Dumfriesshire-Galloway area in which the novel is
set was still a backward and remote region in the early nineteenth century,
and, according to Train, was still inhabited by gypsies, but in 1821
William Chambers noted that the gypsies in areas closer to Edinburgh (i.e.
in places likely to be more familiar to the novel's readers), were largely
assimilated with the local peasantry.

The kind of smuggling dealt with in *Guy Mannering*, based in the Isle

1 McMaster, pp. 158-60.
2 George Chalmers, *Caledonia*, III (London: T. Caddel; Edinburgh: A.
3 See the Dryburgh edn (Edinburgh and London: Adam and Charles Black,
1892), xiv-xvii.
4 "Letter to Scott," 3 July 1817, (National Library of Scotland, MS 874, 
ff. 20v-22r).
5 *Exploits and Anecdotes of the Scottish Gypsies* (Edinburgh: W. Brown,
1836), n. 46.
of Man (I, 127) and involving contraband goods such as tea, cognac and Mechlin lace brought into Scotland from the Continent, was, as Scott's 1829 Introduction points out, destroyed by Pitt's commutation law which reduced the duties on excisable articles. This came into effect in 1764, very soon after the time in which the main action of the novel is set, but smuggling had already been undermined by the Crown's annexation of the Isle of Man in 1765. During the period in which the novel is set, the trade had been practised by the common people, tolerated by the gentry, and even connived at by judges in their private capacities (I, 127).1 John Galt's Annals of the Parish (1821) describes in the entry for 1761 the great smuggling trade corrupting people all along the west coast of Scotland, and causing battles between smugglers and excisemen.2 Smuggling is later said to revive in 1776 (about the time Dirk Hatteraick reappears in the Ellangowan area), but in Galt's account it is more easily controlled by this time because the American War has meant that there are more Navy ships about.3 Moreover the practice became increasingly discredited among landed proprietors, since it was seen to distract tenants from work on the land and from industrious pursuits, as well as encouraging dissipated and reckless habits among the men.4

With Mrs Mac-Candlish's reference to "this weary American War" in Chapter 12, the setting of the novel becomes more precise, but in this and many subsequent chapters the focus is not on the changes between c. 1760 and 1815, or on any major public events which have occurred in the seventeen years between Harry Bertram's disappearance and Mannering's return, but

3 Galt, pp. 91-94.
rather on the characters' memories. The discussion of the Bertram family history at the inn shows how unreliable memory can be: the deacon thinks Harry Bertram disappeared twenty years before, rather than seventeen (I, 179 and the precentor recalls Mannering as "an ancient man, strangely habited," who predicted that the "Evil One" would have power over the boy (I, 183-84). Mannering's letter to Mervyn slightly later on shows him too ruminating about the past, and regretting that he had been misled by his friend Archer into believing that his wife was involved in an intrigue with Brown (I, 196-207). For him there is a great gulf between past and present:

The landscape was the same; but how changed the feelings, hopes, and views, of the spectator! Then, life and love were new, and all the prospect was gilded by their rays. And now, disappointed in affection, sated with fame, and what the world calls success, his mind goaded by bitter and repentant recollection, his best hope was to find a retirement in which he might nurse the melancholy that was to accompany him to his grave (I, 211)

Mannering seems to believe that he killed Brown in their duel, but later Julia's letters to Matilda Marchmont reveal that he is still alive (I, 266-78). Yet neither she nor Brown himself (who gives his account of the past to his friend Delaserre, I, 326-41) is aware of the real reason behind Mannering's initial enmity towards him, attributing it to his prejudices in favour of high birth. Brown also mentions his Scottish background and the attachment he feels for the Scottish landscape, so that the reader may suspect even at this early stage that he is the long-lost Harry Bertram, Having a more accurate knowledge than any of the characters about what has really happened in the seventeen years since Bertram's disappearance, the reader is aware of the inadequacy of their interpretations of the past.

1 cf. the tale on which the astrological part of the novel was based.
Some sense of period is created by scattered references to Indian affairs. Mannerling's career in India attracts the admiration of the people assembled at the inn, who have read in the papers how he "relieved Cuddieburn, and defended Chingalore, and defeated the great Mahratta chief, Ram Jolli Bundleman" (I, 190). The period from the 1760's to the 1790's was one of continual warfare between the British and various native chiefs who were usually supported by the French. The early 1760's had seen a series of British victories, but during the American War of Independence the French instigated further risings against the British, culminating in Hyder Ali's invasion of the Carnatic in 1780-81.¹ This last is no doubt the crisis mentioned in the novel which facilitated Brown's enlistment as an army volunteer (I, 200). One of the crowd at the reading of Margaret Bertram's will questions Mannerling about future trouble to be expected from Tippoo Saib (Hyder Ali's son), with the aim of gleaning some advice about prospects for East India Company stock (II, 296) - a reference to the threat posed to the British by Tippoo Saib from the early 1780's on.² However Mannerling himself is preoccupied with his chequered personal and family life, rather than with his military achievements, and deliberately eschews the "ostentatious display of wealth" characteristic of "nabobs" returning to Britain from India with great fortunes in the late eighteenth century.³

However if Mannerling's behaviour on acquiring an estate is unconventional for a man of the period who had made a successful career in India, Bertram's loss of his is partly due to conditions peculiar to the period. He has difficulty in getting a good price for it, or any purchaser other

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² Harlow, I, 363; II, 70. The Company was actually on the verge of bankruptcy in 1781.
than Glossin, because of the dearth of capital available on account of the war (I, 194). The tobacco trade stagnated because imports of raw tobacco from America were cut off, while markets for sugar, cotton and linen were uncertain. Shipping around Scottish coasts was harried by French and American privateers, and by 1778 there had been a drain of money from the banks. In 1779 it was still difficult to borrow, even on the best security. It was also common in the late eighteenth century for lawyers to profit from conveyancing and land disputes, as Glossin does on the Ullangowan estate. But the main causes of Bertram's downfall are his own inertia (contrasted with his father Lewis's energetic attempts to improve farming practices), his trust in Glossin, and the latter's unmitigated villainy. And of course the long series of fortuitous encounters which lead to Harry Bertram's recovery of the estate are highly improbable, and are not related to the historical setting.

Nevertheless, with the account of Brown/Bertram's experiences with Dandie Dinmont in Liddesdale, and of Mannering's visit to Pleydell in Edinburgh, Scott widens his range of characters and begins to draw attention explicitly to changes which had taken place between c.1780 and 1815 in both rural and urban life. As we have noted, Dinmont is seen in relation to his ancestors — he shows to some extent the aggressive tendencies of the old lawless Borderers, but channels this aggression into a lawsuit. However he is also the product of circumstances pertaining to his own time, and hence differs from the store-farmers of 1815. The account of life at Charlie's-hope begins,

1. Hamilton, *An Economic History of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 327-29. The tobacco shortage is mentioned in the account of one of Mrs Bertram's relations, a tobacconist, who had tripled his prices to everyone except her.


3. Two real-life inheritance cases full of coincidence may have contributed to Bertram's story, but neither came before the courts in the 1760's - 1780's period. One, the Annesley case, discussed in the Gentleman's Magazine of July 1840, (reprinted by Lockhart in the 1850 1-volume *Life* pp. 768-9) — it was tried in 1743. The other, the Dornmont case, was recounted by Scott in a letter to Lady Abercorn of May 1813 (*Scott Letters*, III, 275-78) was heard in 1811, and not finally resolved till 1820. In neither case did the heir gain the estate.
The present store-farmers of the south of Scotland are a much more refined race than their fathers, and the manners I am now to describe have either altogether disappeared, or are greatly modified (II, 37).

The narrator goes on to point out that the store-farmers preserve a "rural simplicity of manners" but also have "more commodious" houses, better-regulated habits, greater knowledge, and a more refined sort of hospitality, accompanied by less drinking than formerly. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had certainly seen an increase in wealth and refinement among Lowland farmers: tenants of larger farms had come to resemble country gentlemen in knowledge, education and manners. They began to build large Georgian houses which they filled with mahogany furniture, mirrors, feather-beds, carpets, pianos and Wedgwood china. They also began to dress in cottons from Lanarkshire and Lancashire, and to read more secular books. Most popular were books on agriculture, and in the description of Dinmont's farm the narrator draws attention to its deficiencies:

"All was rough and neglected in the neighbourhood of the house; - a paltry garden, no pains taken to make the vicinity dry or comfortable, and a total absence of all those little neatnesses which give the eye so much pleasure in looking at an English farm-house (II, 46)"

In the land nearby there are "[n]o inclosures, no roads, almost no tillage" (II, 34). Scott is dealing here with a period when agricultural improvements like drainage and the cultivation of a wide variety of vegetables had begun, but had by no means made the advances which were to occur by 1815. It was only after 1780 that tenants (as distinct from landlords) began to take a leading role in improvements, such that in 1810 Malthus could attribute advances in Scottish husbandry to the "improving capitals and skills of the tenantry."  

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1 Smout, pp. 312-14.
2 Smout, pp. 296-99.
3 Smout, p. 308.
But certainly a comparison between Dinmont's noble cow-house, well filled with good milk cows, a feeding-house, with ten bullocks of the most approved breed, a stable, with two good teams of horses ... an air of liberal though sluttish plenty (II, 49) and the state of Tully-Veolan in 1745 suggests that great progress had been made.

Moreover, despite the narratorial assertion of the superiority of contemporary store-farmers over those of thirty years before, the liveliness and generosity of the Dinmont family make them attractive characters, and there is some suggestion that the increase in sophistication since c. 1780 has been a loss as well as a gain: when Ailie Dinmont says farewell to Brown, she offers him her cheek with "an affectionate simplicity which marked the olden time" (II, 74). And the salmon-spearing, presented as a sport enjoyed by all concerned, also provides a "savoury addition" to the usual winter food of the shepherds and cottars (II, 68) - but, according to Ramsay, salmon had become a luxury by the early nineteenth century. Perhaps too Dinmont's later comment that he cannot buy another farm with his spare money because his landlord the Duke "'canna bide to put away the auld tenantry" (III, 224) is an oblique criticism of the tendency of contemporary landlords to sell or rent land to the highest bidder, regardless of whether they and their families traditionally held land on the estate. We have already noted too how enclosure was one cause of the dispossession of tenants. Francis Jeffrey was to write enthusiastically of Scott's treatment of Dinmont, that he was

1 *Scotland and Scotsmen*, II, 68.
the best rustic portrait that has ever yet been exhibited to the public - the most honourable to rustics, and the most creditable to the heart, as well as the genius of the artist - the truest to nature - the most interesting and the most complete in all its lineaments."

There is again a sense of nostalgia I think in Scott's approach to the Edinburgh society of the 1780's. He is dealing with a period when the building of the New Town had just begun - "the desire of room, of air, and of decent accommodation, had not as yet made very much progress," and most of the upper classes still lived in cramped "flats or dungeons" in the Old Town (II, 355-56). Different social classes lived on different floors of the same block of flats, and the buildings themselves, like the one where Pleydell lives, were very high. Edward Topham, an English visitor of 1776, was astonished at the height of the houses, at the steep wynds and closes, and also at the contrast between these and the elegant Georgian houses of the emerging New Town. Some of the Old Town survived up to Scott's own day (I, 257) - as it still does - but by 1815 the flats formerly occupied by lawyers and aristocrats were filled with the lower orders. By then there were about two thousand houses in the New Town, a number which continued to rise. In c. 1780 Mannering and Sampson had stayed at an inn in Edinburgh, as there were no hotels, but by 1816 there were fifteen in the New Town.

Connected with Pleydell's predilection for life in the Old Town is the survival into the early 1780's of the custom of lawyers seeing clients in taverns. This practice, the narrator explains, had been general fifty years before, but by this time was retained only by a few old-fashioned lawyers (II, 256). And by the time the novel was written, combining drinking with

2 Smout, p. 370.
4 Smout, p. 371.
business was even less respectable. Ramsay recalled in the early nineteenth century that late in the eighteenth, drinking at taverns was "in much more repute with men of all professions and characters than at present." He is discussing in particular the drinking habits of the elder President Dundas of Arnistoun, and in a note of 1829 Scott tells an anecdote of the same man which he says is the basis for Pleydell's account of how he himself drew up an appeal case in the midst of a revel (II, 337-38; note in Dryburgh edn, p. 430). Henry Cockburn was also to notice the decline of swearing and drunkenness among the upper ranks since the eighteenth century, when getting drunk in a tavern had been "a natural, if not an intended consequence of going to one," and to connect this and other changes in Scottish manners with the rise of the New Town and the accompanying increase in population—these developments "obliterated our old peculiarities with the greatest rapidity and effect." He found the alteration in manners, the disappearance of the "picturesque peculiarities" of the Scottish character, in "rapid and visible progress" by the 1790's, but it had started some years earlier. By the time he is writing, in the 1820's, the transformation is complete.Certainly in the novel Pleydell, devotee of habits which are old-fashioned in his own time and obsolete by 1815, is held up for the reader's admiration on account of his immediate willingness to help Mannering and Lucy despite his drunken revelry, and his persistent efforts on their and Harry's behalf.

Mannering's meeting with Pleydell also puts him in contact with the leading literary and intellectual figures of the Scottish Enlightenment.

1 *Scotland and Scotsmen*, I, 71.
4 *Memorials*, p. 25.
When Pleydell offers to accompany him to church, 1 Mannering declares that he "should wish much to hear some of your Scottish preachers whose talents have done such honour to your country - your Blair, your Robertson, or your Henry" (II, 284), and although he is able to hear only the "colleague of Dr R——" - whom Scott identifies in a note to the 1829 edition as Dr Erskine 2 - the latter's sermon is described as

fraught with new, striking, and entertaining views of scripture history, in which the Calvinism of the Kirk of Scotland was ably supported, yet made the basis of a sound system of practical morals, which should neither shelter the sinner under the cloak of speculative faith or of peculiarity of opinion, nor leave him loose to the waves of unbelief and schism (II, 286-87)

Mannering reflects that he "had seldom heard so much learning, metaphysical acuteness, and energy of argument, brought into the service of Christianity" (II, 287). According to Pleydell Erskine also "has nothing of the souring or pharisaical pride which has been imputed to some of the early fathers of the Calvinistic Kirk of Scotland" Later Pleydell gives Mannering notes of introduction to "some of the first literary characters of Scotland" - David Hume, John Home, Dr Ferguson, Dr Black, Lord Kaimes, Mr Hutton, John Clerk of Eldin, Adam Smith, and Dr Robertson (II, 328).

These men, together with Blair, Henry and Erskine mentioned earlier, comprise most of the leading figures in law, religion, history, science and literature in Scotland in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Hugh Blair (1718-1800) and Robert Henry (1718-90) were both churchmen, but the former was to become famous for his Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) as well as for his five volumes of sermons (1777 - ), while the latter was celebrated for his History of England (1771-93). Also known for his

1 II, 283 - an instance of hospitality noted as old-fashioned for the period and presumably unheard of in 1615.
2 "Dr R——" was also identified in the 1829 edn as "Dr Robertson".
historical works was Dr William Robertson (1721-93), leader of the Moderate party in the Kirk of Scotland and Principal of Edinburgh University, whom Pleydell calls "our historian of Scotland, of the Continent, and of America" (II, 286). His *History of Scotland* (1759), *History of the Reign of Charles V* (1769) and *History of America* (1777) were translated into all the major western European languages, and show a combination of narrative form, careful citation of authorities, and a penetrating analysis of major issues, involving mastery of a great mass of material.¹

Meanwhile Scott's presentation of Robertson's colleague John Erskine (1721-1803) is also borne out by contemporary accounts. Cockburn calls him the best-known Edinburgh figure of his time, reverenced by all because of his "fine spirit, operating in all the walks in which liberal religion and active benevolence can be engaged ... There was nothing that this man would not do for truth or a friend."² In church he preached with great earnestness, but "with none of the Presbyterian roar or violence."³ Alexander Somerville noted particularly his lack of dogmatism, calling him the most "...practical and useful preacher" he had ever heard.⁴ Scott as a child would have heard him preach, since his parents supported Erskine's evangelical views and patronised Old Greyfriars church, but Scott himself later became an Episcopalian like Pleydell. He draws attention to Erskine's emphasis on "a sound system of practical morals" and his treatment of the seventeenth-century Cameronians in his later novel *Old Mortality* (1817) was to show his dislike of a theolo-

² Memorials, p. 49.
³ Memorials, p. 50.
logical dogmatism which did not encourage moral behaviour (rather the reverse).

John Home, author of *History of the Rebellion of 1745* (1802), was famous for his tragedy *Douglas* (1756), the most celebrated Scottish play of the late eighteenth century. We have already had occasion to notice the work of Adam Ferguson, whose *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) was a pioneering work of social theory, setting out to explain the different stages through which societies progressed from rude ages to times of refinement and civilisation and into decline. David Hume is of course the celebrated philosopher, acknowledged *doyen* of the Edinburgh *literati* by 1772 but best-known for his *History of England* (1754-56). The reference to him in the novel however shows the risk which Scott ran in making the dating more specific in this part — Hume actually died in 1776. His great friend the economist Adam Smith (1723-90) succeeded him as the great arbiter of literary taste in Edinburgh — his book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) gave him much influence and status with the leading politicians of the day, and Mannerling no doubt attends one of his Sunday supper-parties which became famous as a resort of talent and intellect after 1776.1

Prominent in science was Dr Joseph Black (1728-99), Professor of Chemistry at Edinburgh University from 1766 to 1795, who discovered carbon dioxide and helped to make possible the work of Priestley, Scheele, Cavendish and Lavoisier. He also formulated the theories of latent heat and of specific heat which helped James Watt, inventor of the steam engine, towards the idea of a separate condenser. James Hutton (1726-97) was a pioneer of modern geology, explaining the phenomena of the earth's crust by means of the changes still in progress, while John Clerk of Eldin (1728-1812),

1 Lenman, p. 86; Joyce, p. 25.
father of Scott's friend William Clerk, was famous mainly for his essay on naval tactics, but, according to Cockburn, possessed scientific knowledge of a more general kind, and gave advice to the philosophers of his day.¹

In the context of the novel, the most interesting figure whom Mannering meets is probably Lord Kaimes (Henry Home, 1696–1762). A judge of the Court of Session, he was seen as the ideally-cultivated man of law of the period, since he promoted philosophy, belles lettres, arts and manufactures, while his treatise on farming, The Gentleman Farmer, was the most popular book among improving landlords before the 1790's.² His conversation was "rich and fascinating," while his humour was very versatile.³ Indeed at this period the pursuit of law was seen as a guarantee of a liberal mind, and lawyers saw themselves as leaders of both society and national thought.⁴

In the novel Pleydell, although hardly so famous or versatile as Kaimes, owns portraits by Jamieson, "the Caledonian Vandyke," as well as "the best editions of the best authors, and in particular an admirable collection of classics," and declares that

"a lawyer without history or literature is a mechanic, a mere working mason; if he possesses some knowledge of these, he may venture to call himself an architect" (II, 289–90)

Hence through his own literary tastes as well as through his acquaintance with leading intellectuals of the period, Pleydell is seen as playing a minor part in the Scottish Enlightenment, while his behaviour as a lawyer qualifies the view of the law suggested by the character of Glossin.

¹ Memorials, p. 263.
² Smout, pp. 374–75; Daiches, The Paradox of Scottish Culture, p. 60.
³ Scotland and Scotsmen, I, 201.
⁴ Daiches, Paradox, p. 57.
After mentioning all these figures, the narrator praises them as a circle never closed against strangers of sense and information, and which has perhaps at no period been equalled, considering the depth and variety of talent which it embraced and concentrated (II, 329)

Their contemporary the Rev. Alexander Carlyle recalled in his Autobiography, "a fine time it was when we could collect David Hume, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, Lord Elibank and Drs. Blair and Jardine, on an hour's warning" for a lively intellectual discussion over drinks at a tavern. ¹ But the narrator laments that "it is not in our power to give the reader an account of the pleasure and information" which Mannering received from all the talented men he met (II, 329). Except for Ferguson, who survived till 1816, they were all dead by the time the novel was written. In the 1820's Cockburn, writing of Black, Erskine, Robertson, Ferguson and Henry, was to express the fear that no such other race of men, so tried by time, such friends of each other and of learning, and all of such amiable manners and such spotless characters, could be expected soon to arise, and again enoble Scotland. ²

He felt that "by about the year 1820 the old thing was much worn out, and there was no new thing, of the same piece, to continue or replace it," and that over the 1790-1810 period the calibre of the clergy and the standard of Kirk leadership had declined. ³ Scott himself had known Black, Ferguson, Erskine, Smith and Home in his youth, and was to tell Lockhart in 1819 that he wished he or someone else had written a work twenty-five or more years

¹ Quoted by Smout, p. 508.
² Memorials, p. 52.
before which would "have handed them down to posterity in their living colours." By describing Erskine and his preaching, and by mentioning the main figures of the Scottish Enlightenment only to point out that he cannot give an account of their conversation, Scott's narrator is drawing attention to what has been lost since c. 1780, creating a sense of nostalgia. On the other hand it is difficult to imagine what role any discussion involving David Hume, Adam Smith et al could have played in the novel. Scott does evoke a certain lively social and intellectual environment, but at the same time indicates the limits of his concerns in the novel. He is more interested in gypsies, smugglers and store-farmers than in Edinburgh intellectuals, more interested in private life than in the real historical figure of the period. The writers of the Scottish Enlightenment were after all often concerned to avoid Scotticisms in their works and to produce books which would make their mark in England and Europe as well as in Scotland, which they usually referred to as "North Britain", and in this way contributed towards the disappearance of manners and customs peculiar to Scotland, the spread of "that general polish which assimilates to each other the manners of different nations."

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1 28 July 1819, in Scott Letters, V, 430.
2 See Leiches, Paradox, 20ff, 73.
As we have noted, the historical setting of *The Antiquary* - "near the end of the eighteenth century" - is established in the first sentence of the novel. No more specific date is mentioned, but events referred to later suggest that the story takes place in about 1794. One hypothesis about Lovel in Fairport is that he is an "emigrant noble, summoned to head an insurrection that had broken out in La Vendee" (I, 328), that is, the leader of a revolt by anti-revolutionary forces or *Chouans* in the west of France which erupted in March, 1793, was largely put down in December of the same year, but smouldered on in guerilla warfare during 1794.\(^1\) Trouble broke out again in 1795, but was suppressed in November, when the leaders were shot.\(^2\) Very near the end of the novel Lovel recalls his meeting with his former nurse Teresa D'Acunha in a convent in a town which his regiment had occupied in French Flanders the year before. He had been unable to hear the full story of his parentage and rank, however, since the French Republicans had pillaged the town and burnt down the convent, killing several nuns including Teresa (III, 347-48). This incident could have been part of the republicans' campaign to expel all the foreign invaders from their own territory, which began in 1793 and culminated in the Battle of Fleurus on 25 June, 1794, re-opening their way to Belgium.\(^3\) Oldbuck's reference to the "set of furious madmen" in possession of the government of France (III, 123) suggests that he is speaking during the Reign of Terror, which lasted from October 1793 till July 1794, and had been partly precipitated by the insurrection in La


\(^2\) *War and Peace...*, p. 288.

\(^3\) *War and Peace...*, pp. 254, 264.
Vendée. In Chapter 5 the volunteer corps of citizens in Fairport is described as "lately embodied" (I, 92), and later Oldbuck mocks the military fervour of the similar group in Edinburgh - his lawyer, agent, mercer, banker's clerk, surgeon and physician have all joined (I, 126-27).

These voluntary corps of citizen militia had been formed for the defence of the country in the event of a French invasion as early as 1794. On the other hand, fears of such an event were more acute over the 1795-96 period: in November 1795 the French Directory contemplated invading Britain, but by February 1796, Napoleon, whose influence was increasing at this time, had come to oppose the scheme, while the British victory in the Battle of the Nile (1 August 1798) forced the French to turn their attention elsewhere for a few years. Fears revived in the early nineteenth century, and, according to Cockburn, from 1803 to 1814 Edinburgh was a camp - "the parade and the review formed the staple of men's talks and thoughts," as the invasion threat united all parties in defence of the country. The false alarm on which the events at the end of the novel are based actually occurred in February 1804, as Scott was to point out in a note to the 1829 edition. Moreover the "powder-tax" (or tax on hair-powder) which has undermined Caxon's business in wigs (III, 14) was not introduced till 1795. In any case the use of a quotation from Wordsworth's "The Fountain: A Conversation" early in the novel to express Oldbuck's response to the change from youth to old age (I, 212), suggests that Scott is willing to sacrifice strict chronological con-

1 War and Peace..., pp. 280-81.
2 See Scott's letters to Charles Kerr, 30 June 1794 (Scott Letters, I, 33) and to Miss Christian Rutherford, 5 September 1794 (I, 35), on the Edinburgh militia.
3 Henry J. Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1912), pp. 161, 177.
4 Memorials, pp. 179-80.
6 cf. Mannering's feelings on his return to Allandowan
sistency for the sake of making his characterisation more subtle, revealing Olbduck as capable of self-analysis and deep feeling, and as responsive to contemporary literature as well as to relics of the distant past. A footnote points out that Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* had probably not been published—that is, that Olbduck could not really have quoted the poem at the time the novel is supposed to be set.

Allusions to democratic movements and to popular discontent also evoke the atmosphere of the 1790's. In Chapter 5 reference is made to "the two parties which then divided Fairport, as they did more important places," and Lovel is described as "too little of an aristocrat to join the Club of Royal True Blues, and too little of a democrat to fraternize with an affiliated society of the *soi disant* Friends of the People, which the borough had also the happiness of possessing" (I, 92). Saclon talks of the commons' being discontented and rising above the law, and Sir Arthur Wardour holds forth about the aims of the French

"an enemy who comes to propose to us a whiggish sort of government, a republican system, and who is aided and abetted by a sort of fanatics of the worst sort in our own bowels (I, 124)

— albeit his identification of Edie Ochiltree as one of these "fanatics" is very wide of the mark. Saunders Mucklebackit in conversation with Olbduck refers to "'thae times when they were ganging to raise up the puir folk against the gentles" (III, 95), while Bailie Littlejohn, who has imprisoned Ochiltree at Dousterswivel's instigation, speaks importantly of his correspondence with the Under Secretary of State, "'on putting down political societies'" when Oldbuck hints that Dousterswivel's story of hidden treasure

1 or that he could have heard it from Wordsworth himself? The poem was written in 1799 and published in the second volume of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800.
in the ruins of St. Ruth may have been concerned with a bribe from the French for a great man, or funds for a seditious club, Littlejohn declares that any plot must have "'treason in it, or sedition at least'" (III, 179, 199). Oldbuck's renewed intercourse with the Earl of Glenallan, meanwhile, causes him to be suspected by both sides—the democrats believe that Glenallan is conspiring with Oldbuck over bringing down his Highland tenantry to put down the meetings of the 'Friends of the People, while the volunteers and Loyalist club fear the Earl as a Catholic with French friends, and suspect that Oldbuck is "'no a gude friend to government'" as he had not encouraged the petition about the peace, or the one in favour of the new tax, nor supported bringing in the yeomanry to break up the "meal mob" (III, 145-46).

The outbreak of the French Revolution had led to the formation in England and Scotland of groups aiming to promote its principles, influenced particularly by Tom Paine's phenomenally successful Rights of Man (1791-92). Groups called the Associated Friends of the People grew up in Edinburgh and other Scottish towns throughout 1792, and the government became alarmed at the spread of these organisations, especially as the year had seen various disturbances. There was a riot in Dundee over the high price of meal—(presumably the "meal mob" mentioned in the novel), which involved the planting of a "liberty tree" in support of French Revolutionary ideas. Groups expressing loyalty to the government began to be established, and 1793 saw the decline of such middle and upper-class support as the Friends had attracted, as well as the radicalisation of their aims. When war broke out between Britain and France, they published resolutions against it. Meanwhile the

2 The editor of the Centenary edition of the novel (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1866), claims that Fairport is thought to be based on Arbroath, near Dundee (p. 26).
3 Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution, 124f.
authorities began to take action against the agitators. Early in 1793 three printers were imprisoned for proposing a seditious toast, and in August the advocate Thomas Muir was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation to Botany Bay for making seditious speeches and circulating seditious writings, (including Paine's), but his real crime had been advocating parliamentary reform.\(^1\) Thomas Fysche Palmer, a Unitarian clergyman, was transported for seven years for publishing a pamphlet which opposed the war against France and advocated universal suffrage.\(^2\) Their fate however roused the Friends of the People to new life and vigour, and at their Convention in October they passed resolutions in favour of manhood suffrage and annual elections, as well as adopting the French form of address "citizen", calling their meeting-places Liberty Hall and Liberty Court, proposing to divide the country into departments on the French model, and inscribing the minutes of their meeting "1st Year of the British Convention."\(^3\) In 1794 however Joseph Gerrald and Maurice Margaret (two delegates from the London Corresponding Society, an organisation in England with similar aims) and the Scottish radical William Skirving were each transported for fourteen years, while the printer of the Edinburgh Gazetteer was outlawed. In the summer of the same year the Scottish agitators Watt and Downie were tried on a charge of high treason, for planning an insurrection based in Paisley and other manufacturing towns, and involving the kidnapping of the Edinburgh garrison and the surprise of the Castle. Both were convicted, and Watt was sentenced to death.\(^4\) As a result of these blows the Friends of the People were inactive after about 1796.

\(^{1}\) Mathieson, pp. 130-31.
\(^{2}\) Mathieson, p. 132.
\(^{3}\) Mathieson, pp. 133-36.
\(^{4}\) Mathieson, pp. 138-39.
In the novel it transpires that, despite evidence of political disaffection, the people unite in defence of the country when they think themselves under attack from the French, and give a "loud and cheerful acquiescence" to Bailie Littlejohn's declaration that "[w]e have made ourselves wealthy under a free and paternal government, and now is the time to shew we know its value" (III, 338). It is difficult to determine whether this enthusiasm for the political status quo in the 1790's was as widespread as Scott would have his readers believe, or whether the discontented were afraid to express their views because of what had happened to Muir, Palmer et al. The judge at the sedition trials, Lord Braxfield, had after all been blatantly partisan. Over the 1795–97 period tough measures were passed against sedition in speech and writing, public meetings without a special permit were banned, newspaper stamp duties were raised, and printing presses were required to be registered. Cockburn, a Whig but no revolutionary, felt that the 1790's were a period of great personal bitterness, when men expressing liberal opinions would encounter "insult and cold unkindness," and anyone supporting French Revolutionary ideals or measures for reform in Britain would be labelled a Jacobin. Even in 1803 when fear of invasion had led to greater unity in the country, John Younger, a farmer's son and later a shoemaker, joined the volunteers only to avoid being drafted into the regular army, and thought that the war was the result merely of the political machinations of the Government. He felt he was defending "our gentry's precious island," their estates and their repressive laws, while the gentry themselves were interested only in taxing the people, and were refusing him "the common

1 Lenman, Integration, Enlightenment, and Industrialization, p. 102.
2 Mathieson, p. 11; Lenman, p. 104.
3 Memorials, pp. 73–74, 94–95.
rights of common existence": the French could be no worse as masters.¹

However this may be, the treatment of the military and political situation of the 1790's in the novel has I think the overall effect of suggesting that it has little real importance in the lives of the characters. Lovel is not in fact involved in any insurrection in the Vendée, and until he appears as Major Neville at the end, in charge of handling the alleged invasion, is preoccupied mainly with his love for Isabella Wardour and the handicap which his (supposed) illegitimacy poses for their union. The Earl and Oldbuck discuss the French Revolution largely because it is the only recent event which has had enough impact for the Earl to have heard of it, and the renewed acquaintance between the two has nothing to do with politics, but has resulted from Elspeth's revelations and the Earl's hope of tracing his son. Caxon complains of popular discontent only to attribute the current lack of respect for authority to the decline in the habit of wearing wigs among legal officials, and Sir Arthur only directs the constables to take up Edie for "spreading disaffection against church and state through the whole parish" because the beggar has ridiculed the baronet himself, telling Caxon that "William Howie's Kilmarnock cowl covered more sense than all the three wigs in the parish" (I, 124). Saunders mentions "thae times when they were ganging to raise up the puir folk against the gentles" only to assure Oldbuck that he and "teenie would not have let anyone harm the laird, while the "plot" involving Dousterswivel which Oldbuck hints at, is not directed against the state but against Sir Arthur's fortune. "Although the adept is found to have had "'some unlawful correspondence on the other side of the water'" (III, 262), its nature is not specified, and Oldbuck's motive

¹ Autobiography of John Younger, Shoemaker, St. Boswell's (Kelso: J. and J. H. Rutherford, 1681), 221ff. He also sees Scott's novels as showing contempt for the lower classes, presenting them as stupid and as preoccupied only with eating and drinking (pp. xvi-xvii, xxii).
in discrediting him with Littlejohn had been simply to get Edie released. Finally, the beacon seen on the hill near the end is not of course a warning of a French invasion but a bonfire of Dousterswivel's mining equipment. The characters remain basically unaffected by the highly-charged political atmosphere in which they live, but the context does mean that their actions can be wrongly interpreted in political or military terms, while also enabling them to rationalise a personal sense of injury, exploit the fears of others, or assert their loyalty to the status quo.

However Scott is I think also distancing his readers from the French Revolutionary wars and from the discontent of the period. This distancing effect arises partly from the mere passage of time - the novel was published in May 1816, nearly a year after Waterloo, when the French had finally been defeated before they could invade Britain. Hence Scott can exploit the purely comic possibilities of the invasion scare, as in the scene where Oldbuck and his womenfolk fetch a series of old defective swords for him to wear (III, 333-34). The distancing is also geographical - the novel is set mainly in the country, whereas political discontent was centred on industrial towns and involved mainly weavers, shopkeepers and artisans, the growth of trade and industry having led to more independence of thought among the middle and lower classes. 1

But Scott's main means of distancing his readers from the political and military situation of the 1790's is through the detached and often ironical attitudes of Oldbuck himself. He is scornful of the military fervour which has gripped both Edinburgh and Fairport (I, 126-27), the sight of lawyers

1 Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution, p. 62.
and agents and banker's clerks and doctors in uniform. Later he uses the fact that Hector K'Intyre could be asked to serve anywhere "in the strange contingencies of the present war which agitates every corner of Europe" to urge upon him the importance of knowing about Runic monuments and other Scandinavian antiquities (III, 16-19). When the rumour of a French invasion reaches him, he rejects it, and, on hearing that Caxon has been named to watch the beacon light, his first worry is about what will happen to his wig (III, 311-12). Edie arrives next morning to confirm the rumour, but Oldbuck is more interested in the old beggar's deception of Dousterswivel and in Lovel's efforts to relieve Sir Arthur's financial difficulties (III, 319-25). He is less preoccupied with defeating the French in c. 1794 than with encouraging Lovel to write a poem showing the Caledonians defeating the Romans in 64 AD (I, 304ff).

Scott as a young man in the 1790's had reacted more strongly to events than does his middle-aged fictional character living at the same period. After watching the trial of Watt, he had written to his aunt Christian Rutherford that it had revealed "the most atrocious & deliberate plan of villany which has occurred perhaps in the annals of G. Britain," a plan which he thinks could have succeeded in part, "as far as concern'd cutting off the soldiers & obtaining possession of the Banks besides shedding the Blood of the most distinguished Inhabitants." However he is pleased that the people "seem to interest themselves very little in the fate of their soi disant friends." In April of the same year he had been involved in a brawl with pro-democrat Irish medical students at a theatre and had to pay

2 Scott Letters, I, 35. The echo of this in the novel ("soi disant friends of the People") suggests that his attitude had not changed, even if his feelings had mellowed.
bail to guarantee future good behaviour. " When the Volunteers were embodied in Edinburgh, Scott became Quarter-master, Secretary, and briefly Paymaster of the Royal Edinburgh Light Dragoons; he was very enthusiastic about the appearance and performance of his troop, and looked forward to the chance of fighting the French. Having heard that the French Directory had raised an army to invade England, he wrote to Murray on 21 December 1797, the day before his wedding, that he "would march tomorrow — mark me even tomorrow — with all earthly pleasure to cut One & Two" at the invading army.

Oldbuck may then provide a means for Scott to project into the past the calmer and more detached attitude towards the wars of 1793-1815 which it was easier to adopt after they were all over. But if his contemporary readers could feel secure from the threat of invasion by 1816, they could not feel so confident that the suppression of the Friends of the People had put an end to discontent among the lower classes, or to agitation for political reform. From 1815 onwards networks of Hampden Clubs grew up, inspired by the speeches and writings of Cobbett and the veteran agitator Major Cartwright. The period was also one of economic depression in both industry and agriculture, with periods of mass unemployment in the towns, aggravated by the huge influx of returning soldiers, Irish labourers, and dispossessed Highlanders, as well as distress in rural areas when a decline in prices for agricultural products had led to reduced wages for labourers. In this context, Scott's approach to the character and social role ofodie Ochiltree, and to Oldbuck's relationship with the Mucklebackits, takes on added significance.

4 Smout, p. 446.
We have noted that the paupers whom Godfrey Bertram removes from the parish in c. 1764 were valued by the community for the gossip they retailed and the useful articles they sold. In *The Antiquary*, Oldbuck plays an even more valuable and prominent part: he helps to rescue Sir Arthur and Isabella when they are trapped by the tide (I, 153ff), retrieves an urgent letter for Lovel from Davie Mailsetter and delivers it (I, 331-34), makes an eloquent attempt to dissuade Lovel and M'Intyre from fighting their duel (II, 131-33), and conceals Lovel from the authorities after he has wounded his opponent (II, 137ff). Later he contributes to the downfall of Dousterswivel by luring him to the chapel of St. Ruth's at night to have him beaten by Steenie (II, 233ff), helping Lovel to relieve Sir Arthur's difficulties by engineering the latter's discovery of the silver ingots (II, 154ff), and bringing the letter and money from Wardour's son which solve his financial problems (III, 292ff). He also acts as a messenger between Dilspeth and the Earl, thus helping to bring about the confession which will transform the lives of the Earl, Lovel, and Isabella (II, 297ff). More generally, as Oldbuck acknowledges after the beggar has told him what the "Kaim of Kinprunes" really is, he is

"one of the last specimens of the old-fashioned Scottish mendicant, who kept his rounds within a particular district, and was the news-carrier, the minstrel, and sometimes the historian of the district".

who "knows more old ballads and traditions than any other man in this and the four next parishes" (I, 67-68). He prefers to be given his food "'wi' the look o' kindness that gars it digest sae weel!" from the community at large, rather than settle at Knockwinnock and face the scorn of Sir Arthur's servants (I, 261), or accept money from anyone (I, 262ff). As a result of his close ties with his local community, when the country seems threatened with an invasion, he feels he has a personal stake in it (III, 326).
By the time Scott wrote *The Antiquary* the Bluegowns or King's Cohesmen were still in existence — there were fifty-nine in 1632, the year of Scott's death, and the last did not die till 1864 — but there were far greater numbers of less privileged paupers created by low wages and unemployment in town and country. In the towns especially many people had no-one to turn to for help — the churches could not cope with mass unemployment, and the able-bodied were not entitled to any church relief at all. Scott is then trying to evoke a period when poverty could be handled by means of private charity and the beggar could both maintain the respect of the community and play a valuable social role: the early 1790's were the end of a prosperous period in rural areas which had lasted since the 1750's, with wages rising more than prices and a greater quantity and variety of food being consumed by farm-workers, as well as clothing and heating being improved. But from 1795 onwards there were periodic bad harvests, which meant a dearth of grain, high prices, and more poverty. Oldbuck's description of Edie suggests that his kind were dying out even in the 1790's, and in the 1829 Introduction to the novel Scott was to distinguish old Scottish mendicants like Edie from "the utterly degraded class of beings who now practise that wandering trade" (Dryburgh edn, p. vii). Robert Chambers' account of Scottish mendicants claims that although beggars at the end of the eighteenth century were still a "respectable sort of people, occupying an honourable place at once in the farmer's estimation and his ingle-nook," about a hundred years earlier some had had an "almost dignified character," were even contemptuous of the merchant class, and were employed as minstrels and envoys of great families.

1 National Library of Scotland, MS 574.
2 Smout, p. 402.
3 Smout, pp. 317-18.
4 Smout, pp. 318-19; also Cockburn, Memorials, pp. 65-66.
Scott in 1816 was aware of contemporary rural poverty and discontent: writing to Morritt in February/March he noticed the fact that rents were ceasing to rise, but that farmers were speculating in land, "bidding over each others heads not with reference too often to the real value of the subject but to some theoretical idea of what it would be worth if the progressive value of land continued to rise." Early in May, the month in which the novel was published, he told Morritt how both current and winter wages were down, but how the farmers could not afford to pay any more than they were doing. There was, he said, a "spirit of effervescence" about, and he feared that military force would be needed to put it down - yet the trouble might be averted since there were "a thousand complicated causes making an ensemble too great for our views to embrace." Three months later he argued that the bad economic conditions would however have the effect of teaching the landed interest that their connection with their farmers should be of a nature more intimate than that of mere payment and receipt of rent and that the largest offerer for a farm is often the person least fit to be preferred as a tenant.

This stress on the importance of relationships between landlord and tenant which are not based solely on money is also found in the novel, where it is applied to other connections between people of different ranks as well. By volunteering to carry the head of Steenie Mucklebackit's coffin to the grave, Oldbuck gains "more popularity than by all the sums which he had yearly distributed in the parish for purposes of private or general charity" (III, 47), and Saunders later says that he and his son would have resisted any violence offered the laird during any outbreaks of discontent against

1 cf. The Antiquary, I, 31: since Oldbuck had inherited his father's estate, presumably in about 1760, "the rent of his small property rose with the improvement of the country," without his having to exert himself.
2 Scott Letters, IV, 183.
3 Scott Letters, IV, 228.
the gentry, because he was "fay kind and naeighbourly" (III, 95). Oldbuck himself endorses the custom of the landlord's attending the peasant's funeral, since it "comes from ancient times, and was founded deep in the notions of mutual aid and dependence between the lord and cultivator of the soil" (III, 6), echoing the sentiments of contemporary landowners such as Lord Gardenstone, who had declared in his Letter to the People of Laurencekirk of 1779 that the "relationship of master and tenant, like prince and people, implies a reciprocal duty and mutual affection ... beneficence to tenants is the best privilege of landed property." Edie declines money from Isabella after helping to rescue her and her father from the waves, and in trying to persuade M'Intyre to desist from his planned duel against Lovel, urges his connection with the family as an old soldier of his father (II, 130). M'Intyre tries to fob him off with money, but soon afterwards realises how pointless the duel really was, and when Edie has been imprisoned through the machinations of Dousterswivel, goes off to try and have him released, explaining to Oldbuck, "[h]e was a soldier in my father's company ... and besides, when I was about to do a very foolish thing one day, he interfered to prevent me!" (III, 157). Sir Arthur's servant also regrets swiftly that he has seen his connection with the Wardour family in purely monetary terms. when the baronet, in great distress over his impending ruin, dismisses him for over-browning the toast, Robert declares that he is ready to go the moment his wages are paid - but as soon as Sir Arthur has collected together the money for him, he tells Isabella that he really "had nae thoughts o' leaving the family in this way" since he had been long in Sir Arthur's service, and the baronet and his daughter been a kind master and mistress (III, 250-52), "hen reinstated by Sir Arthur after the recovery of the family's fortunes, and offered help by Isabella for his mother's rheumatism, Robert

1 quoted by Smout, p. 262.
dilates on how the house of Knockwinnock has "'been a kind and a gude house to the puir this mony hundred years'" (III, 305).

The antiquarian interests and controversies of Jonathan Oldbuck and Sir Arthur Wardour are a subject for much comedy in the novel, and the virulence with which they express their views was characteristic of antiquaries of the period. The "'learned Pinkerton'" whom Oldbuck cites in support of his view of the Gothic origin of the Pictish language (I, 131) had attacked the Celts in 1789 as "natural savages" who had borrowed from other languages, whereas the Goths were the "conquering people, superior in all things to the Celts,"¹ Pinkerton also ridicules the succession of 104 Scottish kings so dear to Sir Arthur (I, 101-2) as a "childish fiction,"² and his animosity towards the Celts extends to the Highlanders of his own time, whom he calls "stupid, indolent, foolish, fawning, slavish,"³ Andrew Plummer (d. 1799) an antiquary whose work Scott drew on for his Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802-3) attacks Pinkerton in letters of the 1790's (to his fellow antiquary David Herd), calling him "the Infallible who can impose upon any other person & was never imposed on himself,"⁴ and condemning the "illiberal petulance, arrogance, and scurrility, which distinguish the Pinkertonian School."⁵ Plummer himself discusses such subjects as Chaucer, Beaumont and Fletcher, the "Mirror of Magistrates", Jonson, ancient ballads, Scott's ancestor Walter Scott of Harden, the vagaries of Shakespeare editors, historical inaccuracies in Shakespeare, the genealogies of the characters in

¹ John Pinkerton, An Inquiry into the History of Scotland Preceding the Reign of Malcolm III, or the Year 1056 (London: George Nicol; Edinburgh: John Bell, 1789), I, 137-38.
² Inquiry, I, 232
³ Inquiry, I, 340.
⁴ 17 December 1792, National Library of Scotland, MS 892, f. 16v.
⁵ 12 January 1793, MS 892, f. 26v.
Macbeth, the origin of the Jacobite white rose as a political symbol, and ancient Roman camps (arguing, against Herd, that "Kame" is a corruption of "camp"). Scott owned this collection of letters, and one of them is possibly the source of the story of "Snuffy Javie" and Caxton's Game of Chess. Meanwhile one of the champions of Sir Arthur's side in the dispute over the Pictish language, Joseph Ritson (d. 1803), assails Pinkerton's views, claiming that the idea that the Picts spoke Gothic was, "if not a palpable falsehood, asserted without the slightest shadow of authority, and merely for the support of a groundless and self-contradictory system." The Gentleman's Magazine - a periodical to which Oldbuck claims to have contributed an article (I, 304) - is full of contributions and letters of antiquarian interest in 1794: descriptions of churches, castles, ancient towers and tombs, mysterious inscriptions which readers are invited to help decipher, and Roman seals, altars and statues. The controversy over the Pictish language is dealt with in the review of the Rev. John Lanne Buchanan's Defence of the Scottish Highlanders, which is a reply to Pinkerton, asserting the "purity and originality of the Gaelic language." The reviewer however confesses that he is tired of this argument, and supposes that his readers are too. Yet several readers expend ink attacking or defending other antiquarian works of the period, especially Collinson's History and Antiquities of Somersetshire, and the Rev. Richard Polwhele's History of Devonshire. Another correspondent seeks readers' advice as to what to do about his seventeen-year-old son and his friend, who have gone antiquities-mad, thinking of

1 The Antiquary, I, 57-59; letter of 1792, MS 892, f. 20.
3 cf. Oldbuck's and Dryasdust's six-year correspondence on the inscription on a horn in York Minster, during which time they had settled the meaning of only one line (III, 135).
4 Gentleman's Magazine, 64 (1794), 453-56.
5 Gentleman's Magazine, 64 (1794), 497-99, 701-3, 1165-67 1170
nothing else but becoming an F.A.S. "Sometimes I perceive them in deep study over a piece of copper as plain as a common half-penny," he writes, while his son has "rambled over the whole country in search of old coin and heathen altars, which are erected in every room of my house."\(^1\) Antiquarianism was clearly open to ridicule in the 1790's as well as in 1816, and the reviewer in the \textit{Augustan Review} described the "ridicule of antiquarianism" as a "beaten path".\(^2\)

Antiquarians of 1616 do not however appear to have differed much from those of the generation before. The novel refers to the "lords, knights, and squires of our own day" who have imitated Don Quixote in exchanging "fields and farms for folios and quartos of chivalry" (I, 57). The change that has occurred in the previous twenty years is that book prices have increased enormously, so that although Oldbuck has paid an inflated price for Johnnie Howie's land under the illusion that it is the site of Agricola's battle against the Caledonians, he has been able to build up his collection of books and pamphlets at no great expense (I, 56-57). The \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} for 1816 features many contributions dealing with antiquities, including a review of the Rev. T.D. Fosbrooke's \textit{Latent Antiquities}, on the language of the ancient Gauls and Britons, arguing that the Celts probably used at least one Gothic alphabet,\(^3\) as well as comments on the origins of place-names in London and on the etymology of "Cambridge."\(^4\) Ritson's \textit{Annals}, moreover, was not actually published till 1626, twenty-five years after his death, while George Chalmers (1742-1825), another authority cited by "ardour on his side of the argument, did not publish his principal contri-

\(^1\) \textit{Gentleman's Magazine}, 64 (1794), 426-25.
\(^2\) \textit{Augustan Review}, 3 (1816), 155-77, at 176.
\(^3\) \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} NS 9 (1816), 306-9.
\(^4\) \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} NS 9 (1816), 394-96, 515-16.
tribution to the subject till 1807. The reviewers and correspondents of 1816 are however less aggressive and argumentative than those of 1794. Scott was of course an antiquary himself: throughout the 1790's he was collecting the ballads for his _Minstrelsy_, and in 1796 made excavations on the site of the old Roman fort at Dunnottar. In March 1813 he had to decline to join a Northumbrian Society of Antiquaries on the grounds that he was already a member of two similar groups in Scotland, and in 1823 was to be involved in founding the Bannatyne Club in Edinburgh, which aimed to publish source material for Scottish history. He collected books, manuscripts, broadsides, old weapons and other relics at Abbotsford, and an 1829 footnote points out that he owns a copy of the seventeenth-century broadside which Oldbuck shows to Lovel (Dryburgh edn, p. 25).

Antiquarianism is not the only theme of the novel where we find that little change had occurred between 1794 and 1816. M'Intyre challenges Lovel to a duel on the grounds that he will not prove his identity, and in 1815 a correspondent in the _Gentleman's Magazine_ quotes approvingly a contemporary attack on duelling:

_Now a man kills his companion for treading on his toe - his friend, for contradicting him - and his brother, for having a better dog._

The "rage for funeral ceremonial" which is shown in the Mucklebackits' expenses at Steenie's burial is said to infect the Scottish peasantry still in 1816, and the narrator claims to have known

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1. _Caledonia_, 3 vols (1807, 1810, 1824).
many in the lowest stations, who have denied themselves not merely the comforts, but almost the necessaries of life, in order to save such a sum of money as might enable their surviving friends to bury them like Christians — as they termed it (III, 46)

while their executors could not be persuaded to use this money to maintain the living instead. Similarly the system of gynocracy operating among the fishing community, as expounded by Maggie Mucklebackit (II, 279-81), is described in a note as still current (Dryburgh edn pp. 417-18). And as far as a higher rank of life is concerned, Sir Arthur is said to live

like most country gentlemen in Scotland — hunted and fished — gave and received dinners — attended races and county meetings — was a deputy-lieutenant and trustee upon turnpike acts (I, 100-1)

preoccupations which had not changed much by 1816. At the very end of the novel in fact the distinction between past and present is strangely blurred: the narrator shifts into the present tense, and explains how Mrs Hadoway and the Mucklebackits continue to receive the bounty of Lord and Lady Geraldin (formerly Lovel and Isabella Wardour) under the supervision of Edie Ochiltree; the "young soldier" Hector is "rising rapidly in the army," while there is "talk of a marriage between Miss M'Intyre and Captain Wardour, but this wants confirmation" (III, 353-54). But if about twenty years have passed since the time of the main action of the novel, Edie is most likely dead, Hector is scarcely young any more, and Mary M'Intyre and Captain Wardour are being unusually cautious about embarking upon matrimony. In view of all this it is understandable why the writer in the Monthly Review felt that the novel was not "a delineation of the manners, considered generally, of any one short limited period whatever," albeit the writer in the Augustan Review did describe it as a "glowing resemblance of the manners, customs, and characters,
which were fast fading away." But the novel does explore in some detail the issue of how the individual responds to the past.

Edie's revelation about the true nature of the "Kaim of Kinprunes" early in the novel shows up the deficiencies of Oldbuck's approach to the past: he has been so concerned with speculating over an event in the distant past that he has ignored the life going on around him, and the knowledge available from Edie, who is a living repository of tradition. Oldbuck's own attitudes are (from the perspective of both 1794 and 1616) a curious mixture of the modern and the old-fashioned. He supports the original ideology of the French Revolution and the Protestant succession at home, but persists in wearing a wig, a practice which declined over the second half of the eighteenth century, especially after the tax on hair-powder was introduced in 1795. He rejects the "modern slops of tea and coffee" in favour of "Mum" described as "a species of fat ale, brewed from wheat and bitter herbs, of which the present generation only know the name by its occurrence in revenue acts of parliament" (I, 231) — although tea-drinking had made rapid progress before 1745, and was certainly replacing ale and whisky by 1800. He also goes in for big meals consisting largely of meat, of the kind that were becoming less common among lairds by the end of the century, offering his guests a dinner "such as suited a professed antiquary, comprehending many savoury specimens of Scottish viands, now disused at the tables of those who profess elegance" — solan goose, hotchpotch, fish and sauce, crappit-heads, and chicken pie (I, 121-22). And while he keeps up

2 Scotland and Scotsmen, II, 71-72.
3 Smout, p. 288.
4 Smout, pp. 287-88.
traditional ties with his tenants and despises the people of Fairport for their worship of the Golden Calf (I, 300); he is also niggardly with his own money.

Sir Arthur Wardour, who considers himself a Jacobite, shows how by the 1790's Jacobitism was a "sort of speculative opinion merely - the shadow of a shade" (I, 123). Although continuing to pray for the Stewarts even when the family was extinct, he had "fairly gulped down the oaths of abjuration and allegiance" in 1770 in order to promote a candidate in a disputed election, and behaves "in all actual service and practical exertion" as "a most zealous and devoted subject of George III" (I, 100). He does however need to believe in - and to make others believe in - an "heroic past": when threatened with imprisonment for debt he looks back nostalgically to his imprisonment in the Tower during the '45:

"When I was sent to the Tower with my late father, in the year 1745, it was upon a charge becoming our birth - upon an accusation of high-treason ... we were escorted from Highgate by a group of life guards, and committed upon a secretary of state's warrant; and now, here I am, in my old age, dragged from my household by a miserable creature like that, (pointing to the messenger), and for a paltry concern of pounds, shillings, and pence (III, 290)

But this is really a distortion of the past: Sir Anthony Wardour had served the Prince's cause in 1745 with words only, and, like most Lowland Jacobites, had sought excuses for not joining the rebel army. He and his son had actually been released very promptly, as they had not committed any overt act of treason. For Oldbuck and Wardour the remote past offers subjects for acrimonious controversy based on political prejudices which would otherwise have no outlet.

1 The last in the direct line from James II, Charles Edward's brother Henry, Cardinal York, actually did not die till 1807.
If Sir Arthur embodies Scottish Lowland Jacobitism in its final throes, Oldbuck's nephew Hector M'Intyre shows readers of *Waverley* what can become of Fergus Mac-Ivor's kind of Highland martial spirit in a society where fighting, except against external enemies, is seldom called for. He challenges Lovel to a duel on a trivial pretext, so that he is himself wounded and forces his opponent into hiding; he enters into a ludicrous combat with a seal in which he is worsted (III, 27-29), and has to be prevented by his uncle from assaulting the legal officer who has come to supervise the seizure of Sir Arthur's property. Totally ignorant of legal terminology, he does not understand the officer's claim that he has been "deforced" ("forcibly interrupted in the discharge of his duty"), being himself "better accustomed to the artillery of the field than to that of the law," and Oldbuck has to explain that he is risking a severe penalty (III, 275-76). Soon after Hector has to be restrained again from attacking the bailiff and those under him, not believing that they really comprise an "officer" and a "party" (III, 285-86). Hector is only able to act effectively when a real war is in question: he can speak of the actions in which he has been involved with modesty, spirit, and zeal (III, 124), and when a French invasion seems imminent, remains calm amid the general hysteria of the Oldbuck household (III, 335), displaying "presence of mind, and knowledge of his profession" as he directs the precautionary measure to be taken with a "calm and steady manner" (III, 338). After the '45 the Government channelled the military spirit of the Highlanders into its own service by establishing Highland regiments in the army, and from 1793 the Highlanders had responded enthusiastically to the demand for soldiers to fight the French.¹

¹ Mathieson, p. 116.
The obvious ineffectiveness of M'Intyre's violent expedients in solving Sir Arthur's debt problem highlights again how legal measures had replaced military action as a means of resolving disputes over property in the second half of the eighteenth century. Near the beginning of \textit{The Antiquary} the innkeeper Mackitchinson tells Oldbuck proudly about his long lawsuit against Hutchinson about his backyard, a cause which has been before the Fifteen four times, perplexing them continually. Since it began in the time of Mackitchinson's grandfather, it has come to resemble an hereditary feud (I, 23-24).

When Sir Arthur has been relieved of his financial worries he accedes to his daughter's request that ale and beef should be distributed to the servants and people assembled round the castle, on the grounds that this had always been done by the family "when a siege had been raised." Oldbuck points out that this "siege" had been "laid by Saunders Sweepclean the bailiff, and raised by "die Ochiltree the gaberluszie!" but goes on to say that "these are such sieges and such reliefs as our time of day admits of" (III, 307).

But for all his military fervour, the portrayal of Hector M'Intyre in the novel, as David Brown has pointed out, shows how by the 1790's the Highlanders were losing some of their traditional characteristics. Hector tries to dismiss Edie's claim on him as a former soldier in his father's regiment by offering him money, and evades attending the funeral of Steenie Mucklebackit, a tenant of his family, firstly pleading the lack of a mourning suit (III, 117), and then using his fall during the combat with the seal as a pretext for returning to Monkbarns (III, 129-30). He eagerly takes up the Earl of Glenallan's offer of the use of his horses, resenting his uncle's interference when the latter points out that Highlanders do not

1 \textit{Sir Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination}, p. 61.
mount on horseback (III, 153f). His enthusiastic championing of the authenticity of Macpherson's "Ossian" poems (III, 20f) also suggests that he is out of touch with genuine Gaelic culture. His acceptance of the forgeries is typical enough - he claims to have heard the songs sung from infancy, and "like many a sturdy Celt, he imagined the honour of his country and native language connected with the authenticity of these popular poems, and would have fought knee-deep, or forfeited life and land, rather than have given up a line of them" (III, 20-21). But it is also rather ironic, since the actual M'Intyre family were the hereditary bards of the Mackintosh clan from the fifteenth century onwards and hence composed genuine Gaelic poetry. They included the prominent eighteenth-century writer of Jacobite, martial, satiric, descriptive and amatory poetry, Duncan Ban Macintyre.¹

Hector's evasion of his obligations towards the Mucklebackits, tenants of his mother's family, involves a rejection of traditional ties between landlord and tenant. But the consequences of too close an adherence to traditional loyalties, and of keeping up habits and prejudices of the past, are demonstrated in the stories of the Glenallan family and of Isapeth Mucklebackit. The Glenallan family apartments are furnished "in the taste of a former and distant period" (II, 317), while the Earl himself has allowed his grief and remorse over what he thinks was his incestuous marriage with Eveline Neville to dominate his life for more than twenty years. He has lived a hermit-like existence and does not even know the extent of his own estate (III, 318-19) or whether his carriage-horses were bred on it (III, 153). He keeps alive on the Catholic side the religious bigotry of the past, having his mother buried at night although there is no longer any need to conceal a Catholic funeral-service: Luckie Mucklebackit cannot

¹ Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, An Account of the Confederation of Clan Chattan (Glasgow: John Mackay, 1898), pp. 136-38; laiches, Paradox, p. 96.
understand why the burial has been carried out so secretly (II, 283-84). His generosity in distributing alms is also regulated according to the religion professed by the recipient, with the Catholics served first by an ecclesiastic with a triple ration, the Episcopalians next by a porter with a double portion, and the Presbyterians given their single portion last of all by an old servant (II, 308f). As a Catholic the earl would have had genuine grievances against the political status quo, since until 1793 he would have been debarred from holding civil and military offices and from voting in elections (see II, 305), and could not have stood for election even in 1816, so that his isolation is not entirely self-imposed. In February 1779, too, Lord George Gordon (instigator of the "Gordon Riots" in London in 1780) had incited disturbances in Edinburgh against a proposal rescinding the laws providing for the imprisonment of Jesuits and other Catholics involved in education, and debarring Catholics from inheriting or purchasing land - riots which resulted in the proposal's being discarded. Moreover not all the traditions of the Glenallan family are presented as obsolete or harmful in the 1790's - the earl had been brought up to consider that "the trade of arms was the first duty of man, and believed that to employ them against the French was a sort of holy warfare" (III, 124), and this attitude later leads him to bring out his tenants in defence of the country when a French invasion seems likely, such that "the ancient military spirit of his house seemed to animate and invigorate" his decayed frame (III, 340).

Old Elspeth has come to see her lifelong trouble and poverty, the deaths of three of her four sons and of her grandson Steenie, as a punishment for the deception of the earl and Eveline Neville which had driven the latter to

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1 Mathieson, pp. 77-80. The proposal had also been opposed by the Protestant churches, and petitioned against by them as well as by parishes, towns, incorporated trades and friendly societies.
suicide (III, 64, 89), but she tries to justify her behaviour by appealing to the centuries-long devotion of her family to the Glenallans. She had obeyed the Countess because her ancestors had always carried the shield of the Earls of Glenallan into battle, and her father Reginald Cheyne had died to save the Countess's father at Sheriffmuir (III, 71). In the old days, she says, "[n]ae man parted frae his chief for love of gold or of gain, or of right or of wrong" (III, 77-78), so she hated what her mistress hated, and swore on the Gospels that the Earl's marriage was incestuous, since she would not have spared her body or soul to serve the house of Glenallan (III, 82). Although in her interview with the Earl she acknowledges that her behaviour is a matter between God and her conscience (III, 82), when Oldbuck, Edie and Hector visit her, she screams, "'none shall say that I betrayed my mistress, though it were to save my soul!'" (III, 230), and dies calling, "'Teresa. - Teresa - my Lady calls us ... we are coming, my Lady!'" (III, 235). Her grotesque sense of feudal loyalty to the Glenallan family which has overcome all moral and religious considerations and continues to do so even as she confronts death, clearly shows the ugly side of adherence to hereditary loyalties. If, as she says, "'the times are changed,'" so that men will part from their chiefs "'for love of gold or of gain, or of right or of wrong'" this is not really a change entirely for the worse. Similarly her personal motive for hating Eveline Neville, the English girl's scorn for her "'northern speech and habit'" (III, 73) shows the unattractive side of that exaggerated Scottish nationalism which has been displayed from its more comic angle in Sir Arthur's belief in the 104 Scottish kings, and Oldbuck's eagerness for Lovel to write a poem in which the Scots defeat Agricola in spite of history.

In The "Antiquary," then, Scott plays down the impact of major political and military events of the 1790's on the lives of the characters, partly
by mediating them through the detached perspective of Jonathan Oldbuck, at the same time he highlights for the readers of 1616 the value of retaining traditional ties of mutual loyalty and duty between people of different ranks, as a means of avoiding disaffection. On the other hand he shows too the dangers of both the pedantic attitude to the past common among antiquar-ies, and an unthinking and unyielding adherence to past values and prejudices,
Redgauntlet (1824) is subtitled a Tale of the Eighteenth Century, and, as in Guy Mannering, it is difficult to determine from the early chapters the exact period in which it is set. The device of beginning with a series of letters between two of the main characters looks back to the eighteenth-century practice of Richardson, Smollett, and Fanny Burney, but it also means that there can be no explicit reference within the text to the differences between past and present.

The fact that the novel is set in the past first emerges from Jarsie's account of his and Alan's exploits as schoolboys at the "Kittle Nine Steps" - the narrator explains in a footnote that the gateway they would have used is "now demolished". Slightly later, Jarsie's reference to the "ingenious traders" on the outside of the Hall of the Parliament House in Edinburgh and the "long-robed fraternity within" (I, 8-9n) is explained in another note: by the time the novel was written, the stalls of stationers and toymen had been removed from the outer part. A little further on, the narrator glosses Jarsie's reference to the "cramp-speech" Alan will have to make before being admitted to the Bar, explaining that the Latin address made in set terms to the court, faculty, and audience by aspiring advocates has been dispensed with "of late years". The dating can be established more specifically when Alan tells how his father moved from his "old and beloved quarters, adjacent to the very Heart of Midlothian" into "one of those new tenements, [entire within themselves], which modern taste has so lately introduced" (I, 29). As another note points out, these residences were built in 1763-64, and although Brown's Square seems at the time of writing

Redgauntlet; a Tale of the Eighteenth Century, by the Author of Waverley (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1824), I, 7. Subsequent citations will be from this edition.
"diminutive and obscure," it was "hailed about the time of its erection as
an extremely elegant improvement upon the style of designing and erecting
Edinburgh residences."¹ By 1824 the New Town had been built and had become
the fashionable area for the upper and middle classes to live, quite over­
shadowing Brown's Square. Meanwhile the fact that Alan and Darsie have
attended the "formal balls and concerts" in Edinburgh presided over by "the
far-famed Miss Nickie Murray" (I, 271) also suggests a mid-eighteenth cen­
tury setting. Miss Murray, sister of Lord Mansfield, "exercised undisputed
sway" over the balls held in the West Bow, Assembly Close (and, after 1756,
in Bell's "ynd"), determined when couples could dance, and when the procee­
dings had to end. However by the time the assemblies shifted to George St.
in the New Town in 1777, Miss Murray's reign had ended.² Hence Alan's later
reference to plans to build new assembly rooms, in his conversation with
Maxwell and Provost Crosbie (II, 237), means that the novel is set before
1777.

The dating of the events in the novel can be worked out more accurately
in the second half, since Crosbie, "edgauntlet and Lilias all mention polit­
ical events which point to the mid-1760's. On Alan's visit to Crosbie,
the latter "debated with great earnestness upon the stamp act, which was
then impending over the American colonies" (II, 259). This controversy,
which involved the direct taxation through stamp duties of Britain's colo­
nies in America, was going on during 1765-66, and was one factor which
eventually led the King (George III) to send for the elder Pitt to form an
administration in July 1766,³ making him Earl of Chatham. Lilias tells

¹ It should be noted that in the first edn. of 1624, the comments on the
"Kittle Nine Steps" and the layout of Parliament House occur as footnotes,
but that the notes on the cramp-speech and Brown's Square were added only in
the 1832 edn.

² Henry Grey Graham, The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth

³ J. Steven "atson, The Reign of George III, 1760-1815 (1939), rev. C.
sity Press. 1960). nn 106 116f
Darsie of the circumstances which encourage their uncle's hopes of a Jacobite revolt:

"The general dissatisfaction with the peace - the unpopularity of the minister, which has extended itself even to the person of his master - the various uproars which have disturbed the peace of the metropolis, and a general state of disgust and disaffection which seems to affect the body of the nation (III, 149)

Redgauntlet himself of course presents a view of the state of the country which makes his own cause seem even more hopeful: under Chatham, Britain has acquired Canada only by plunging deep into debt, the peace has been hasty and disgraceful, "the rich are alarmed - the nobles are disgusted - the populace are inflamed" (III, 174). The peace here is the Peace of Paris of 1763, which brought an end to the Seven Years' War. The conflict had been very costly, and the government found it impossible to get back quickly to a peacetime financial footing. Some felt too that it was a bad bargain to accept Canada under the treaty and to return Guadeloupe to France, since the West Indies were more profitable than Canada, both as a supplier of goods and as a market for British products - hence there was an outcry that the peace was not glorious or grasping enough. The fact that Redgauntlet styles Pitt "Chatham" implies that he is speaking after July 1766, and we know from Darsie's journal that the month is August (II, 54). Pitt's acceptance of the peerage had actually been one cause of the unpopularity to which Lilias alludes, as he had a reputation for being incorruptible. The view that the novel cannot be set any earlier than 1766 is confirmed by the fact that the Jacobite conspirators treat Charles Edward as

1 Watson, pp. 72, 90f.
2 Watson, pp. 85-86.
the King: this would not have been possible until 1766, when his father James died (on 1 January). Moreover it emerges from Lilias's account of their family background that Warsie was less than a year old when their father died at Carlisle (III, 125), which would have been in October 1746, and since at the time the novel is set he is within a few months of acquiring the "'privilege of acting for himself'" (III, 122), i.e. of turning twenty-one, it must then be the August of 1766.

The rest of the novel is not however entirely consistent with this precise dating. For example Warsie has already referred to the date on which he first writes to Alan as "this my twenty-first birthday" (I, 5), which contradicts his later statement to Lilias. Furthermore, when contrasting Geddes' garden with the ideal which Alan has derived from his reading, Warsie mentions "Horace Walpole's late Essay on Gardening" (I, 153) which was not published till 1770. In any case the Stamp Act had actually been repealed before Pitt came to power - in April 1766 - and was no longer "impending over the American colonies." In fact the vagueness of the dating in the first half of the novel, and the inconsistencies which emerge when it seems to be becoming more specific, suggest that Scott is much less concerned in Redgauntlet than in Waverley or even The Antiquary with establishing a specific historical setting.

The aspect of Redgauntlet which most connects it to Waverley and to the realm of public history is of course its treatment of Jacobitism. The novel shows how the Jacobite cause, and its raison d'etre, Charles Edward, had declined by the 1760's; Scott invents a visit to England by the Stewart claimant, to demonstrate how after twenty or so years another Jacobite rising had become an impossibility. It is pointed out repeatedly in the novel how unfounded are hopes such as Redgauntlet's for another rebellion.
For example Darsie, in complaining that Alan's father had not let him accept an invitation from the Laird of Glengallacher to go hunting in the Highlands, "in the full ardour of his zeal for King George, the Hanover succession, and the Presbyterian faith," declares that Saunders' ideas are "absolutely chimerical," since

The Pretender is no more remembered in the Highlands, than if the poor gentleman were gathered to his hundred and eight fathers, whose portraits adorn the ancient walls of Holyrood; the broadswords have passed into other hands; the targets are used to cover the butter-churns; and the race has sunk, or is fast sinking, from ruffling bullies into tame cheaters (I, 42-43).

The degradation of the Highlanders in the 1760's is brought out too in Alan's passing references to the "Highland chairman" (I, 19) whom he delegates to take his horse to the stable, and to the "able-bodied Celt" who has to remove the drunken beggar Peter Peebles from the Fairford house (I, 318). Later Darsie writes in his journal that, apart from Redgauntlet, the Jacobites he has met have been "[o]ld ladies of family" who remembered having led down a dance with the Chevalier, and "grey-haired lairds," recalling their feats at Preston, Clifton and Falkirk (II, 163). He recognises too that, even if he does present himself as head of his family and as a Jacobite leader to his family's erstwhile followers, the Act of 1748 abolishing vassalage and hereditary jurisdictions has meant that they will no longer follow him (III, 151). Nanty Ewart's view is, predictably, more misogynistic and cynical. Declaring that "[y]ou'll as soon raise the dead as raise the Highlands - you'll as soon get a grunt from a dead sow as any comfort from Wales or Cheshire," he points out that those who claim to support Redgauntlet do so out of ambition, or discontent, or fear of being considered turncoats (III, 23-25). Lilias later describes to Darsie how desperately Redgauntlet has tried to cajole old aristocrats "'with
principles as antiquated as their dwellings and their manners" and "outlawed smugglers, or Highland banditti" into supporting another rebellion (III, 148). Redgauntlet himself has to recognize "the degeneracy of the times, the decay of activity among the aged, and the want of zeal in the rising generation" (III, 149), and when he argues to Foxley that it is unlikely that "at the distance of so many years, the Secretary of State should trouble himself about the unfortunate relics of a ruined cause!" (II, 150), he is acknowledging implicitly that Jacobitism is at this time considered harmless by the authorities. The events at Crackenthorp's inn make it clear that no rising is to be expected, even if Charles Edward were to discard his mistress, since the few conspirators who do assemble are very lukewarm about staging another rebellion. In any case, although one of them regrets that they may all disperse "without the flash of a sword among them" (III, 258) the representative of government authority, Colin Campbell, will not meet them on their own, military, terms, and, by not considering them even dangerous enough to fight or arrest, the government makes Redgauntlet realise that "the cause is lost for ever!" (III, 316).

Scott's treatment of the Jacobitism of the 1760's in Redgauntlet is borne out by both contemporary and modern accounts. As we have seen in dealing with Waverley, the Highlands changed rapidly within a few years, while the disarming of the clans made the area an unpromising one for sowing the seeds of rebellion. According to Ramsay of Ochtertyre, hopes of a Jacobite revolt were at an end by the end of George II's reign (1760) and party rancour was abating as early as 1754.¹ By the beginning of George III's reign, party spirit seemed extinguished, and a "golden age of peace

¹ Scotland and Scotsmen, I, 153, 331.
and harmony fondly expected," most Jacobites having decided to abandon the Stewarts. Even those who retained their loyalties did not oppose their children's transferring their allegiance to the Hanoverians, — a development reflected in the novel by Crosbie's complaint that the sons of powerful Jacobite lairds are taking the oaths to政府 which will allow them to practise at the Bar (II, 224). Sir Charles Petrie describes the Jacobites of the period after the '45 as "a dwindling band of men and women who lived in the past," and desperadoes of all classes with nothing to lose with the overthrow of the established order. George III could command allegiance among many because, unlike his two predecessors, he had been born and bred an Englishman, while Charles Edward had spent most of his life abroad and was also alienating his followers because of his jealousy, suspicions, and habitual drinking.

On the other hand, insofar as there was any Jacobite activity during the 1760's, it was encouraged by the weakness of the successive administrations after the Seven Years' War, and several Jacobite clubs were founded in the provinces. As we have noted, objections were made to the terms of the peace, and Pitt was unpopular for accepting his peerage. There were still moreover some loyal Jacobites, notably the non-juring bishops Forbes and Gordon, and the family of Laurence Oliphant of Gask. The latter, father of the poet Lady Nairne, is mentioned by Scott in his 182 Introduction to Redgauntlet as retaining his loyalty to the Stewarts to such an extent as to win the respect of George III. In September 1766 Bishop Gordon re-

1 *Scotland and Scotsmen*, I, 154, 334.
2 *Scotland and Scotsmen*, II, 506.
3 *The Jacobite Movement: The Last Phase 1746-1807*, p. 140.
4 Petrie, pp. 141-42.
5 Petrie, pp. 168-69.
ported the Laird of Gask as claiming that "some great and principal persons were beginning to turn their views" to Charles Edward as "the only one to extricate them out of their difficulties, and set to rights their disjointed affairs," while Gask himself repeated this view in a letter of 9 July, 1767. Nothing came of this, but there were enough rumours of visits to Britain by the Chevalier in the 1750's and 1760's, even apart from those mentioned by Scott, for the visit invented in Redgauntlet to be within the realms of possibility. David Hume even mentions a second-hand report that Charles had been present at George III's coronation, and speculates as to what would have happened if he had taken up the Champion's gauntlet.

Scott's picture of the decline of Charles Edward since 1745 also tallies with contemporary accounts. He is described in the novel as "a man of middle life, about forty, or upwards; but either care, or fatigue, or indulgence, had brought on the appearance of premature old age, and given to his fine features a cast of seriousness or even sadness," such that he stoops and needs a cane to walk (III, 63). The contrast between his youth and middle age is made clearest when Redgauntlet has to support him on his way to the boat at the end, "for the ground was rough, and he no longer possessed the elasticity of limb and of spirit which had, twenty years before, carried him over many a Highland hill, as light as one of their native deer" (III, 319). On the other hand, he retains a "noble countenance" as well as a "lofty forehead ... full and well-opened eye, and ... well-formed nose" (III, 63). Charles would have been forty-five in 1766,

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2 The Lyon in Mourning, III, 219.
3 See the Introduction to the novel, and note, in Dryburgh edn (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894), pp. xii-xiii, 444-45.
4 Petrie, 160ff.
5 John Heneage Jesse, Memoirs of the Pretenders and Their Adherents (London: Richard Bentley, 1845), II, 123.
but his drinking habits had been mentioned in a contemporary letter as early as 1747. During the 1750's his drunkenness and public quarrels with his mistress Clementina Walkinshaw had become "the common gossip of Europe," and in the late 1760's he was described as stooped, bloated, and red in the face, with a melancholy and mortified demeanour. Yet he still had a noble person and graceful manner, and seems to have been able to control his drinking temporarily. The presence of Charles's mistress in the novel is however an anachronism, since Clementina Walkinshaw left him permanently in 1760.

If Jacobitism was almost a dead cause by the 1760's, and certainly one by 1824, when the book was published, why does Scott devote so much of the novel to it? The reason is I think that he is not so much interested in Jacobitism per se as in the issue of how the individual comes to terms with the past - one of the prominent themes of The Antiquary, as we have seen. This probably accounts in part for his lack of care in establishing a specific date for the events of the novel. Within the novel most of the characters of the older generation have participated in some way in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745-46: Saunders Fairford was involved in the retreats from Edinburgh and the flight from Falkirk as the rebel forces advanced (I, 42), while Provost Crosbie claims to have fought for the Government (II, 223). On the other side, as well as Hugh Redgauntlet himself, whose life has been totally dominated by his commitment to Jacobitism, there was Maxwell or "Pate-in-Peril", who by his daring escape after Culloden narrowly avoided sharing the fate of his comrade Sir Harry Redgauntlet,

1 Jesse, II, 131.
4 Petrie, pp. 165-66.
executed at Carlisle. For Saunders the Jacobite past of a large part of Scotland must be distanced, put to one side: hence he will not permit Worsie to visit the Highlands, and later writes to warn him against associating with Papists and Jacobites (I, 190f). "hen he himself has to deal with Jacobites such as Herries in business, his main concern is to avoid offence and controversy (I, 100, II, 6). Provost Crosbie, in a position of public responsibility but married to a woman from a Jacobite family, temporises, trying to evade simultaneously his wife's anger and any suspicion of his loyalty to the Hanoverian succession. The result is that he gains support from all sides, and has been made Provost three times, because no-one really knows whether he is Whig or Tory (II, 277). To Maxwell, his Jacobite past, and especially his escape, seem largely to be subjects for dinner-time reminiscence for the entertainment of the company and for his own gratification, and he admits that at the time he had no very clear idea of what the cause involved:

"There was a set of rampaging chields in the country then that they called rebels - I never could find out what for ... I dinna mind very weel what I was doing, swaggering about the country with dirk and pistol at my belt, for five or six months, or thereawayer; but I had a weary waking out of a wild dream." (II, 247).

Because of Alan's presence, he may be claiming to have been more naive than he was, but even when he joins in Redgauntlet's conspiracy at the end, he claims that "'if Pate were not a fool, he would be Pate-in-Safety'" (III, 247).

For Hugh Redgauntlet however, the past means not just the Jacobite revolt of 1745-46 but a whole family history going back to the days of Edward Baliol, in which the Redgaunlets have fought for Scottish pride and independence, but, like the Bertrams, have consistently been on the
losing side in all the country's civil broils (II, 177). The name Redgauntlet itself derives from the ruthlessness with which an ancestor of Baliol's day pursued the English in battle, and refused them quarter (II, 170).

Darsie, as the last of the family, has to discover this violent family past, of which the 'Redgauntlets' support of the Jacobite cause has been merely the most recent manifestation.

The salient feature about Darsie at the beginning of the novel is that he feels himself to be cut off from any connection with anyone apart from the Fairfords. "In a country where all the world have a circle of consanguinity, extending to sixth cousins at least," he writes in his first letter to Alan, "I am a solitary individual, having only one kind heart to throb in unison with my own (I, 11). He is like "a stranger in the crowded coffee-house, where he enters, calls for what refreshments he wants, pays his bill, and is forgotten so soon as the waiter's mouth has pronounced his 'Thank ye, sir'" (I, 12). According to Alan, he hopes that the cloud over his birth "will clear up into something inexpressibly and inconceivably brilliant, and this without any effort or exertion of [his] own, but purely by the goodwill of Fortune" (I, 32).

However implausible it may seem, the mystery of Darsie's birth is cleared up without his having to exert himself. The first account he hears about his own family is in "Wandering Willie's Tale" although he does not realise at this stage that he himself is a Redgauntlet. For the reader too the tale is the first occasion when any clue is given to the meaning of the title, as no character (or place) called Redgauntlet has been mentioned hitherto. The two Redgauntlets of the tale are unappealing figures: Sir Robert is cruel and violent, hated and feared by everyone except his own tenants (I, 225-26), and of course, damned with the other pitiless persecutors of the Covenanters, while his son Sir John is both sanctimonious and grasping, lacking his father's affection for those on the estate. Darsie's
(and the reader's) sympathy is all with Steenie Steenson, braving hell to claim his "ain." Later Darsie, seeing the family horse-shoe mark on Herries' forehead, and on his own as it is reflected in a mirror, senses his kinship with Herries (II, 148), although he cannot work out the connection with the Redgauntlets until Herries outlines the family history soon afterwards, and Lilias elaborates on this account. However the reader may well have guessed that Darsie is to have something to do with the family which gives the novel its title, since Scott had already used the theme of the "lost heir" in Guy Mannering and The Antiquary.

In his taste for the old-fashioned, rather artificial form of landscape gardening, Darsie shows an interest in the past, while his predilection for "the blowing, bleezing stories" which the Highland gentlemen tell of the '45 (I, 191) suggests that this interest extends to Jacobitism. His concern for the genealogy of his own family is also shared with the Jacobites in the novel. However after Darsie has discovered the truth about his family background, he never considers adopting the Jacobite cause, and even puts the ties of friendship above those of blood: when he believes that his uncle has harmed Alan, he exclaims, "not even our relationship shall protect you" (III, 241). Throughout the conspiracy he hopes that the plot will break up of its own accord, so that he will neither have to commit himself to it nor incur his uncle's terrible wrath by refusing to participate. His hopes are realised, and almost the last thing we hear of him is that he was presented to George III at the drawing-room by Lieutenant-General Campbell. The ending of the novel is rather truncated - it is handed over to Oldbuck's pedantic antiquarian correspondent Mr Dryasdust - but it does not appear, from what we learn, that Darsie was deeply affected
by his experience of his uncle's fanaticism: his trusting in circumstances while the plotting is afoot is after all merely a continuation of his characteristic attitude to events throughout the novel. However he does feel the sheer physical power of Redgauntlet's presence and manner from his first encounter with him on the Solway Firth, and, on sensing from the horse-shoe mark on his forehead that he may be related to him, has "a wild and mysterious feeling of wonder, almost amounting to pleasure" (II, 166). Darsie's rejection of his family's traditional violent adherence to lost causes, through his support for the winning side, is in one sense a break with the past, but in another sense a continuation of it - after all, the cause of the hereditary Redgauntlet horse-shoe mark is a son who fought on the opposite side from his father in the conflict between Edward Baliol and the Scottish chiefs, while in "Wandering Willie's Tale" Sir John Redgauntlet is on bad terms with his father because he supports the Union of Scotland and England of 1707 - the winning side, as it were.

Alan Fairford's attitude to the past, especially the past as represented by family history, is rather different from Darsie's. He is very attached to his father, and recognises the law as his family's hereditary vocation, but is concerned to go further in his profession than his forbears had, rather than merely to follow the family tradition. He is proud that Saunders "has raised his family from a low and obscure situation" to become a writer to the Signet, and is anxious to advance one step further by becoming a successful advocate through his own talent and efforts (I, 30-31, III, 67). He resents the condescending attitude of Herries to his father, because he thinks Herries' "'patrician birth and aristocratic fortunes!'" do not give him any right to "'censure those who dispose of the fruits of their own industry according to their own pleasure!'" (I, 102).
When confronted with Varsie's ridicule of his father's past, his retreats before the rebel force in 1745-46, "Alan responds by claiming that Saunders has "civil courage" - "courage enough to do what is right, and to spurn what is wrong - courage enough to defend a righteous cause with hand and purse, and to take the part of the poor man against his oppressor, without fear of the consequences to himself" (I, 69). As for "military courage," it is scarcely important to "most men in this day and country" whether they possess it or not. In his attitude to Peter Peebles' lawsuit he is (with great justification) similarly dismissive of the past - his speech in court removes from the case "those complicated formalities with which it had been loaded, ... the cumbrous and complicated technicalities of litigation," the "veil of obscurity and unintelligibility" which had darkened it for many years (II, 23, 48).

However, although he never considers adopting Jacobite beliefs, and has nothing to learn about his family background, "Alan does have to confront the past in the shape of "Father Buonaventura" or Charles Edward. Like Edgauntlet, the Chevalier has a powerful, commanding presence and Alan feels intimidated by him even when he does not know who he is, forbearing to snatch Maxwell's letter from him because of his "air of such fearlessness and calm authority" (III, 74). His earlier experiences with Crosbie and Maxwell have moreover revealed that there are still people in Scotland who, on account of their Jacobite sympathies, have no great respect for the legal knowledge by which "Alan sets such great store.

"Edgauntlet himself, like Fergus Mac-Ivor, exemplifies an older way of life which puts military valour above the letter of the law (cf. his burning of Foxley's warrant for his arrest), and involves great loyalty to an ideal. He has devoted his whole life to promoting a cause which is doomed to failure, and, ultimately, is not given the chance to die heroic-
ally (as Fergus had twenty years before), but can only retire from the world. Towards the end the novel focusses on Redgauntlet, Charles Edward, and the Jacobites, rather than on the younger generation, so that we are left with the overriding sense of the pathos of this lost cause, embodied in the flawed but dignified Chevalier, the fanatical but courageous and self-sacrificing Redgauntlet, and a handful of other loyal adherents. In his treatment of Redgauntlet Scott creates the sympathy for the virtues of the Scots of the past which he was to claim as one of his literary aims in the General Preface of 1829.

Both the story of Alberick Redgauntlet and his son, and "Wandering Willie's Tale," are of course legends rather than historical events, but in presenting Hugh Redgauntlet several times as "Herries of Birrenswark," and introducing a relation of his called Maxwell, Scott is drawing on the history of actual Jacobite families of the eighteenth century. In fact the original title of the novel was Herries, and Scott was only persuaded to change it by Constable and Ballantyne when a substantial part of it was already through the presses. The records of the Herries family go back to 1296, when a William de Heriz swore fealty to Edward I, but they had apparently changed sides by 1323 (cf. Sir Alberick and his son) for then we find that Robert the Bruce gave a charter to Richard de Herir of land in Haddingtonshire, while a Robert de Herries is referred to as "Dominus de Nithsdale" that is, ruler of the area around Dumfries, which is where much of the action of Redgauntlet takes place. In 1490 Herbert Herries was created 1st Lord Herries of Terregles (also an area just outside Dumfries) and his two successors in the early sixteenth century.

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1 A title derived partly from his mother, and partly his own - II, 218.
acquired yet more land. 1 Meanwhile the 4th Lord Herries left only daugh-
ters, and in 1547 the eldest of these, Agnes, married Robert, Lord Maxwell, who then became Lord Herries of Terregles as well. Like the Redgauntlets, he devoted himself to a losing cause, that of Mary Queen of Scots. 2 Since the brothers of the 4th Lord Herries had had male descendants, the surname Herries did however remain in the family.

The early history of the Herries/Maxwell family would have been famili-
ar to readers of Scott's Minstrelsy, since he had outlined it in the intro-
duction to his friend C.K. Sharpe's ballad "Lord Herries His Complaint". Moreover the legend with which the ballad itself deals may have suggested the two incidents in the novel where Redgauntlet carries Darsie across the Solway. The square tower of "Repentance" near the family's former seat at Hoddam Castle is said to have been built by a Lord Herries to expiate the crime he had committed while crossing the Solway with some English prisoners: when the boat became caught in a storm, he had cut their throats and thrown them overboard to lighten the load. 3 Hugh Redgauntlet, although anachronistic in his proclivity for rash and desperate action, is not nearly as cruel and violent as his ancestors.

The next stage of interest in the history of the Herries/Maxwell family is actually mentioned in the novel by Saunders Fairford, who explains to Alan that Herries of Birrenswork belongs to "a branch of that great and once powerful family of Herries, the elder branch whereof merged in the house of Nithsdale at the death of Lord Robin the Philoso-
pher, anno Domini sixteen hundred and sixty-seven" (I, 96). On the

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1 M'Kerlie, V, 147.
death of Robert, 11th Lord Maxwell and 2nd Earl of Nithsdale, who was popularly called "the Philosopher" because of his addiction to astrology, the Earldom of Nithsdale passed to his cousin John Maxwell, 7th Lord Herries of Terregles. Both the 2nd Earl Robert and his successor John had fought for the losing side in the English Civil War. Later Robert, 4th Earl of Nithsdale (and 6th Lord Herries) was involved in the persecution of the Covenanters in the late 1670's, and was present at Bothwell Brig, but was not apparently nearly as bloodthirsty as Sir Robert Redgauntlet in the novel, for Claverhouse wrote to him in 1676 complaining that a minister he had captured and imprisoned was still holding conventicles in prison.

The reason that the Herries/Maxwell family were no longer powerful at the time the novel is set, is that they had been involved in the Jacobite rising of 1715. I have not found any evidence of a Herbert Herries, who, as Saunders Fairf ord says, forfeited his property by following his kinsman the Earl of Derwentwater to Preston in 1715, but Herbert was a common Herries Christian name, and one of the leading figures in the '15 was William, 5th Earl of Nithsdale and 9th Lord Herries. He forfeited his titles because of his involvement in the rebellion, and was sentenced, with Derwentwater and a few others, to execution. However on the night before it was due to take place, he escaped from prison by a ruse of his wife's, disguised as one of her friends, a Mrs Hills. This escape became famous, and it is possible that in having Darsie disguised as a woman during the Jacobite conspiracy,

1 The Scots Peerage, IV, 416-17; VI, 487.
2 The Book of Carlaverock, I, 398ff. Sir Robert Redgauntlet is based on a more active persecutor of the Covenanters, Sir Robert Grierson of Lag, as Scott was to point out in note III to the 1832 edn. The Griersons were distant relatives and friends of the Maxwells, and Sir Robert Grierson held the stewardry of Kirkcudbright for the 5th Earl of Nithsdale during the latter's minority (Book of Carlaverock, I, 414; Burke's Peerage and Baronetage, [London, 1970], pp. 1161-62). A later holder of the title, also Sir Robert Grierson, who died in 1639 at the age of 102, was a friend of Scott's and a possible model for Redgauntlet, as he was prone to fits of temper which revealed a horse-shoe mark on his forehead (W. J. Crockett, The Scott Originals, [London and Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1912], p. 355).
Scott is recalling this event, as well as the even more celebrated disguise of Charles Edward as Flora MacDonald's maid "Betty Burke" during his time as a fugitive after Culloden. If so, it is rather a case of history being repeated as farce.

The subsequent history of the Herries/Maxwell family tallies less with the events mentioned in the novel. The 5th Earl escaped to the Chevalier's court in Europe, and died abroad in 1744, while his son William (6th Earl and 10th Lord Herries but for the attainder), although presented to Charles Edward in Edinburgh in 1745, was apparently too conscious of the fate which his father had so narrowly avoided to lend any military support to the rebels. His wife (and cousin) Katharine was a more ardent Jacobite, but her brother Charles, "Earl of Traquair, was one who pledged himself to come out, but did not, as "Pate-in-Peril" observes (II, 247). There were however other members of the Maxwell family involved in the '45, notably James Maxwell of Kirkconnell, who served in Charles Edward's Life Guards up to Culloden, escaped abroad, but returned to Scotland in 1750. The escape of Maxwell of Summertrees is actually based on the experience of one MacEwen or MacMillan, as Scott explains in a note to the 1832 edition.

The Maxwell family retained their Jacobite sympathies into the next generation, for in 1789 Burns wrote to the "6th Earl"'s daughter and heir, Lady Winifred Constable-Maxwell (d. 1801) seeking an introduction to her on the grounds of their shared support for Jacobitism. Scott was to acquire this letter in 1828. He met Lady Winifred himself, whom he described as "a singular old curmudgeon" and "one of the most extravagant figures" he

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1 See also Henrietta Tayler, Lady Nithsdale and Her Family (London: Lindsay Drummond Ltd, 1939), pp. 63, 253ff.

ever saw. The main branch of the Herries/Maxwell family was still in existence in 1824, and although I have not found any reference to the Herries of Heatagill or Auchintulloch mentioned by Crosbie (II, 216), there were still Herries of Barnbarroch till 1822, when the property was sold, and there are still Herries of Spottes. Whether Scott realised it or not, there was even a Herries of Birrenswark in 1624, for, after Redgauntlet had appeared, Maria Edgeworth reported to the author that it had caused a great accession of visitors to a Miss Herries of Birrenswark living at Cheltenham - "everybody looks as keenly as civility will allow no doubt for the horseshoe in her forehead." There was also a hill in Dumfriesshire called Birrenswark with a Roman fort on it, the site of the incident which gave Scott the idea for Oldbuck's confrontation with Olddie over the "Kaim of Kinprunes" (see Note C to the 1829 and later editions of The Antiquary).

Scott also draws on the history of a real family in the account of Joshua Geddes' forbears. Geddes explains that his ancestors of the sixteenth century were

"renowned among the ravenous and bloodthirsty men who then dwelt in this vexed country; and so much were they famed for successful freebooting, robbery, and bloodshed, that they are said to have been called Ceddies, as likening them to the fish called a Jack, Pike, or Luce, and in our country tongue, a Ged"

(I, 140)

The Geddes were a leading Peeblesshire family, who held lands in Kirkurd and Auchan for hundreds of years. Their name did derive from the plural of "ged", a pike, and their arms were three pike-heads. During the sixteenth century

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1 See The Book of Carlaverock, I, 490-91, and Scott's letter of 4 August 1826 to Lockhart, in Scott Letters, X, 482.
3 17 November 1824, in Scott Letters, VIII, 497n.
century they were continually feuding with the Tweedies of Drumelzier, and one of them was murdered by the Tweedies, in December 1592. In 1617 the minister of Glenholm was to complain of the disruptive behaviour of Charles Geddes of Nachan, which had caused the dissolution of a Kirk Session, but the culprit paid little heed to warnings and admonitions, and even when threatened with excommunication did not promise to mend his ways till a year later. The conversion of Joshua's grandfather Philip to Quakerism, and the commercial success of his father which is the basis of Joshua's own prosperity (I, 141-45) seem however to be Scott's own invention, for by 1749 the Geddes family was deeply in debt and their land had all been sold off by 1752. For some of Scott's readers of 1624, the presence in the novel of characters with the names Herries, Maxwell and Geddes possibly recalled actual Scottish families and their traditions, and added to their sense of the book's historical authenticity.

We have noted in connection with the dating of the novel how Scott creates some sense of a mid-eighteenth-century setting by mentioning features of Edinburgh life of the past - schoolboy games, the division of the law courts, Brown's Square, Miss Nickie Murray's formal dancing assemblies. These and other references to bygone practices create, from the point of view of 1824 and after, an ironic perspective on the period in which the novel is set, in that what seems new-fangled and innovatory to the characters may be old-fashioned to the readers. For example Crosbie ridicules the Edinburgh habit of dining at 3.00 instead of 2.00, but by 1824 it was 5.00 or even 6.00 (II, 235-36). Changes of fashion are continual, novelty only relative. On the other hand the novel also draws attention to features of

2 Cockburn, Memorials, p. 30.
life in the 1760's which were still present in the 1820's. An obvious example is the prevalence of smuggling on the Borders: when Alan has to visit the hidden passages where the hypocritical Trumbull keeps his smuggled goods and smuggling apparatus, the narrator points out that the contraband trade between England and Scotland still exists and "will continue to exist, until the utter abolition of the wretched system which establishes an inequality of duties betwixt the different parts of the same kingdom" (II, 304), while a note to the 1832 edition expands on this theme. Hence Scott undermines any complacent assumption on the reader's part that unscrupulous hypocrites like Trumbull could not still exist in their own time. 1

Jarsie's description of the Geddes' garden also points to the fashions in landscaping which were to prevail from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. He defends Geddes' formal, old-fashioned style of landscaping, with its fountain, artificial waterfall, "cabinet of verdure", and terrace, against Alan's more modern views, based on Horace Walpole's Essay on Gardening, and on Dodsley's descriptions of the Leasowes and of "Brown's imitations of nature" (I, 153-54). Walpole had criticised the prevailing features of the gardens of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, such as straight walks, symmetry, fountains, water-works, terraces, statues, balustrades, parterres, grottoes, arbours, and summer-houses, 2 and the stricture on "walking up and downstairs in the open air" which Jarsie attributes to Alan is almost a direct quotation from Walpole. 3 Meanwhile Robert Dodsley had ridiculed "the regular deformity/of plans by line and compass" in his Public Virtue (1753). 4 Both had praised the new style

1 The duties were not equalised till 1655.
3 cf. "going up and down stairs in the open air" ("On Modern Gardening"," 77)
of garden developed by William Kent (d. 1748) and Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1715-83) who eschewed formality and artificiality to exploit the natural features of the landscape. Walpole commends Kent for seeing "that all nature was a garden," while Dodsley, writing of the Leasowes, the gardens designed and owned by the poet William Shenstone, praises his efforts to landscape the hills and dales into "nature's finest form/Vague, undetermin'd, infinite," the "lucid rills," the "solemn grove," the "unequal lawns,/In beauteous wildness, yon fair-spreading trees; and mingling woods and waters, hills and dales," the "bursting torrent" which "tumbles down the steep/In foaming fury; fierce, irregular,/Wild, interrupted." This concern for the natural in landscape-gardening continued throughout the century and beyond under the aegis of Humphry Repton (1752-1818). The period after the Napoleonic Wars was to see a growing interest in flowers, which had formed little part of Repton's scheme of things - they were collected from all over the world, and greenhouses came to be considered a necessity. However old-fashioned he is in his other gardening techniques, Geddes, with his taste for flowers and extensive greenhouse "filled with the choicest plants" could be seen from the perspective of 1824 as quite advanced in his ideas. Similarly, the fact that he breaks with the custom of his ancestors to cultivate his fields in "'the newest and best fashion'" (I, 161), enclosing his land with hedges and keeping a mixture of arable and pasture (I, 161) also makes him a pioneer of the agricultural improvements which were to become more common in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

1 "On Modern Gardening," p. 61.
4 In Galt's Annals of the Parish, the first agricultural improvements begin at "Almelling" in 1765, with tree-planting and hedging of the fields (p. 34).
The dispute between Redgauntlet and Geddes over the legality of stake-net fishing for salmon is not explicitly related to contemporary life in the novel, but, as Graham Hickaster has shown, the subject was still a live issue in 1824. The legal position at the time the novel is set is in doubt, as Alan tells Darsie (I, 165) and Crosbie later reminds Alan (II, 216), and in 1824 the first Blue Book on salmon-fishing was to appear. The arguments dealt with in the Blue Books appear in the novel, notably the idea of the injustice to the "upper heritors" like Redgauntlet. By 1824 stake-net fishing had been practised in the Solway Firth for at least half a century, but spear-fishing was also still used. The Parliamentary report did not in fact come down on one side or the other.¹

More important perhaps than the focus on the continuity from the 1760's to the 1820's in such things as landscape gardening, smuggling, and disputes over fishing rights, is the suggestion at some points in the novel that hereditary characteristics cannot be completely suppressed by environmental influences or the force of will. In "Wandering Willie's Tale" Sir John Redgauntlet seems very different from his father - fair-spoken, religious, and non-violent - but when Steenie Steenson declares to him that he believes the rent-money is in hell with Sir John's father, then "he heard the Laird swearing blood and wounds behind him, as fast as ever did Sir Robert" (I, 243). And although Saunders Fairford can show no military courage during the '45, his launching of his son on a career as an advocate via the Peebles vs. Plainstanes case is viewed in terms of military exploits and values: "like a brave officer sending forth his son to battle, [he] rather chose he should die upon the breach, than desert the conflict with dishonour" (II, 12). But the main illustration of this idea is Joshua Geddes. He tries to

¹ Scott and Society, pp. 40-41.
put behind him his family background of violence, robbery, and bloodshed, even passionate feeling itself, defacing the family's armorial scutcheon, creating a quiet, peaceful retreat where life moves on slowly (like the verj river within his domain), and rejecting most involvement in the outside world, even that entailed in the acceptance of a secular judicial system. But his temper is actually quite easily-roused: when he sees Benjie riding quickly by on his horse Solomon, he exclaims, "[t]he mischievous bastard! ... the doomed gallows-bird!" (I, 133). A little later, after Rachel has explained how her brother, although eschewing the use of force, will not submit to Gedgauntlet's threats over the salmon issue, Warsie concludes that "the spirit of the old sharers of the spoil was not utterly departed even from the bosom of the peaceful Quaker" (I, 160), and when Geddes goes off to confront Gedgauntlet's men at the fishing-station, Warsie decides that his more habitual absence of enthusiasm "rather belonged to the sect than to his own personal character" (II, 63). On Warsie's abduction, he does resolve to have recourse to "'the magistrates of the Gentiles'" after all (II, 231), and turns up at Crackenthorp's inn near the end, still in quest of him. Rachel had said that "'[e]ven in the best-trained temper there may remain some leaven of the old Adam'" (I, 159), and this observation not only exemplifies her own habitually-religious outlook on life, but also suggests that everyone may be in the same position as Joshua, unable to escape from the influence of tendencies which are both hereditary and shared by all their fellows. Hence, despite the sense of the inevitability of change which is created by its picture of the decay of Jacobitism, the novel also shows — better than does Waverley — the "passions common to men in all stages of society."
SCOTT – CONCLUSIONS

The novels of Scott with which we have dealt are concerned largely to present a sympathetic view of the manners and people of the Scottish recent past within (or just beyond) the memories of their first readers, before these customs and character-types vanish completely through being assimilated into the more polished and civilized culture of the early nineteenth century from the increasing contact between Scotland and England. The period is part of that which Leslie Stephen was to call

the twilight of history; that period ... from which the broad glare of the present has departed, and which we can yet dimly observe without making use of the dark-lantern of ancient historians.

and the characters to be observed in it, Highlanders Fergus and Flora Mac-Ivor and van Dhu Maccombich, Lowland Jacobites the Baron of Bradwardine and Hugh Redgauntlet, the store-farmer Dandie Dinmont, the gypsy-queen Meg Merrilies, the old-fashioned convivial Scots Lawyer Paulus Pleydell, and the King's Bedesman Andie Ochiltree. The gradual disappearance of such people and the qualities they embody is treated as a subject for regret, and the fates of Fergus Mac-Ivor and Hugh Redgauntlet are seen as tragic. The account of Fergus's condemnation and execution highlights the power of clan loyalty and the Highlanders' great courage, while the final failure of Redgauntlet's cause spells the end of a long tradition of military heroism inspired by a sense of Scottish nationalism. Sometimes too the novels' portrayal of past values and practices points up an implicit lesson for Scott's contemporaries: Oldbuck's paternalistic attitude to his tenants, the valuable social role played by Andie Ochiltree, and the breakdown of social ties

and the gypsies' misery brought on by Godfrey Bertram's high-handed measures as a J.P., suggest the worth of retaining social relationships based on mutual help and tolerance between different ranks rather than on exchange of money. But Scott would not have wished for the success of the Jacobite rebellion, nor wished undone the cultural, economic and agricultural improvements which had occurred since 1746, accelerated by the defeat of the rebellion. Moreover the story of Ispeth Mucklebackit and the Glenallans shows the horrific consequences of an unquestioning and amoral adherence to traditional loyalties. As David Daiches has observed, Scott's greatest novels are the record of that ambiguity of feeling which combined passionate love of everything that stood for Scotland's heroic past and reluctant recognition that the "crowded hour of glorious life", the age of warriors and embattled fighters for principle, had to give way to an age of merchants and lawyers and respectable citizens.

Although Scott's novels of the recent past all refer to events of political or military history, and occasionally mention (or introduce) real historical figures, the impact of the major national events and of important individuals on the lives of the characters and the progress of the story is relatively unimportant. Waverley would appear to be the exception here, but the emphasis here is on the social and economic factors inherent to the Jacobite cause which made its failure inevitable, rather than on the progress of the rising and the battles fought, what Scott calls the "province of history," and Charles Edward's emotional impact on Waverley is only temporary, soon modified by that of the fictional Colonel Talbot. The exchange of mutual protection between Waverley and Talbot shows how individual efforts towards peace and conciliation can mitigate to some extent the bloody consequences of civil war. In "Edgauntlet, Scott draws on the

names and traditions of well-known Scottish families, the Maxwells, Herries and Geddes, in order to give a sense of historical authenticity to a novel which reaches its climax in a purely imaginary event, but much of the novel focusses not on the events of Scottish history per se, but on how individuals have come to terms with the past. In *Guy Mannering* the Colonel's grief over his duel with Brown and his wife's death causes him to attach no value to his great military exploits in India, while the important figures of the Scottish Enlightenment whom he is said to visit play no part in the plot. In *The Antiquary* the French Revolutionary Wars have little effect on the lives of the characters and are distanced from the reader too by the detached and ironic perspective of Jonathan Oldbuck.

Despite Scott's claim that his concern in *Waverley* is to concentrate on "those passions common to men in all stages of society," the impression left by this novel is of the way the circumstances peculiar to a particular time in history strongly affect the characters' conduct. Similarly in *Redgauntlet* the changed conditions of Scotland of twenty years later have meant that the hot-headed idealism of his Jacobite forbears have become in Jarsie Latimer merely a habit of aimless romanticing. In *Guy Mannering* Dandie Dinmont's ignorance and Paulus Pleydell's conviviality are seen as characteristic respectively of the store-farmers and of the old-fashioned Edinburgh lawyers of the early 1780's, while Hector M'Intyre in *The Antiquary*, although possessing the martial spirit of his Highland ancestors, shows how Highlanders' behaviour has been affected by the failure of the '45 and the breakdown of clan society. However, as occasional outbursts on the part of Quaker Joshua Geddes in *Redgauntlet* suggest, the passions which characterised people in less civilised periods of history do not simply disappear with the advent of social change. Rather, they are channelled into such outlets as
the time affords, and Scott shows how it is law which comes to provide such outlets during the second half of the eighteenth century, such as the legal machinations which diminish the Bertram estate after the '45, Dinmont's and Mackintosh's lawsuits, the creation of fictitious votes to win elections. That this change is not necessarily for the better is suggested by Glossin's legal chicanery and the Peebles vs. Plainstanes case. Hugh Redgauntlet, for all the violence and civil disorder which would result if all his dearest hopes came to pass, is at least unselfish and idealistic, whereas Peebles' legal "cause" is motivated by madness, greed, and his enjoyment of being the centre of attention. Saunders Fairford's welcoming of such a cause as an opportunity to advance his son's career throws doubt too on the nature of the "civil courage" which Alan attributes to him and lauds at the expense of the Jacobites' "military courage". The suit has obviously been exploited by advocates in the pursuit of personal advancement rather than of justice.

Despite the fact that it is possible to derive from Scott's novels a specific viewpoint on various aspects of the Scottish recent past, these views are seldom spelt out by the narrators—it rather, they emerge from description and dramatisation. The poverty of Lowland rural life in 1745 is brought out in the description of Tully-Veolan, and the strength and value of clan loyalties by Ó''Dhu's conduct at Fergus's trial; in Redgauntlet the pathos of the decline of Jacobitism emerges from the account of the middle-aged Prince's halting walk to the shore and the Jacobites' final farewells; in The Antiquary, the value to the community of the old-fashioned kind of Scottish mendicant is illustrated by Òdie Ochiltree's crucial interventions at crises in the lives of the other characters. And although the narrator in Guy Mannerings does point out explicitly the consequences of Godfrey Bertram's removal of the local paupers into institutions, his cruelty in dispossessing the gypsies of Herecleugh is brought out most
forcibly in Meg's celebrated speech at the end of Chapter 8 ("...Ride your ways ... ride your ways, Laird of Ellangowan..."). We will find that Thackeray and George Eliot convey their attitudes to the recent past much more through explicit interventions by their narrators.

The popularity of Scott's novels led to a great upsurge in the writing of historical fiction, in a vogue which continued till the end of the 1840's, and produced such works as W. Harrison Ainsworth's Rookwood (1834), The Tower of London (1840), Old St. Paul's (1841) and Windsor Castle (1843), Emma Robinson's Whitefriars (1844), Bulwer Lytton's Evereux (1829), The Last Days of Pompeii (1834), Dzenzi (1835), The Last of the Barons (1843), and Harold (1848), not to mention the fifty-seven historical romances written by W. P. R. James between 1829 and 1859. Bulwer's novels were at least extensively researched and aimed at historical accuracy, and were actually received as history rather than as fiction, but most other historical fiction of the period offered a dreamy romanticised view of the past, with characters little different from middle-class Victorians. Interest was centred on complex plots full of missing heirs, disguises, incredible escapes, coincidences, mistaken identities, and missing letters, and the effort made to recreate a particular period was either minimal, or expressed in large slabs of undigested historical information inserted into the text. Real historical figures also tended to play an implausibly large part in

3 Simmons, pp. 19, 14.
the proceedings: **Devereux** includes Pope, Gray, Swift, Bolingbroke, Louis XIV and Peter the Great, while **Whitefriars** introduces Charles II, Nell Gwynne, the Duke of Monmouth, Titus Oates, and Aumerle. Moreover Scott's imitators generally chose to emulate, not his novels of the recent past, but the fiction concerned with England and Europe in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. In novels like *Ivanhoe* (1819), *The Monastery* (1820) and *The Talisman* (1825) Scott devoted much attention to the externals of the past, the scenery, costumes and architecture, and this feature, combined with the kind of wildly inaccurate treatment of real events found in *Kenilworth* (1821) gave his less talented imitators scope to carry such faults to greater excesses. The twenty or so years after Scott's death in 1832 did produce some first-rate novels set in the recent past, notably Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), which treated the period of the Gordon Riots of 1780, and Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), dealing with the industrial unrest of 1811-12. But by 1847 Thackeray, like Scott in 1805, felt the need to distance himself from the kind of fiction being written in his day, including the historical fiction, and to make his own attempt to recreate the recent past - in *Vanity Fair*. 
Before *Vanity Fair* (1847-48), Thackeray wrote several satirical attacks directed at the contemporary novelists who were exploiting the vogue for historical fiction initiated by Scott. His early novel *Catherine* (1839-40) set in the early eighteenth century, is largely a parody of the "Newgate" fiction of the 1830's, the romanticisation of criminals in such novels as Bulwer's *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832) and Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* (1838), but it also satirises the habit of bringing fictional heroes into contact with a plethora of the leading historical figures of their time, as Bulwer had done in *Devereux*:

we had a great mind to make Hayes philosophizing with Bolingbroke, like a certain Devereux; and Mrs Catherine maîtresse en titre to Mr. Alexander Pope, Doctor Sacheverel, Sir John Reade the oculist, Jean Swift, or Marshall Tallard; as the very commonest romancer would under such circumstances.

Later in the story Thackeray writes a brief pastiche of Ainsworth, involving a quarrel between two ladies by the Thames at midnight:

They turn out to be Stella and Vanessa, who have followed Swift thither; who is in the act of reading Gulliver's Travels to Gay, Arbuthnot, Bolingbroke, and Pope. Two fellows are sitting, shuddering, under a doorway; to one of them Tom Billings flung a sixpence. He little knew that the names of these two young men were — Samuel Johnson and Richard Savage.

He also ridicules the "great and learned display" of knowledge of the costumes of the period, to which historical novelists could devote "at least half a dozen pages of fine writing," and the "pretty antiquarian figments" about the songs and music performed at the concerts of the time, got up from

such sources as the Burney collection of music at the British Museum and
the memoirs of Colley Gibber and his daughter.¹

A few years later *Barry Lyndon* (1844) offers a cynical view of warfare
itself and a sceptical one of novelists who have their fictional heroes
encounter famous army commanders at crucial stages of a battle. The epony­

mous hero tells how at Minden during the Seven Years’ War he bayonetted a
Colonel and clubbed down a feeble ensign, and how he and other soldiers
stripped and robbed the dead, even those of their own side - "What a number
of items of human crime, misery, slavery, to form that sum-total of glory!"
attributed to the "Great Frederick."² Moreover, he did not meet any of the
"great characters of this remarkable time," unlike the heroes of novels,
who would all be brought into contact with "the greatest lords and most no­
torious personages of the empire."³

More directly relevant to *Vanity Fair* are Thackeray's views of the fic­
tion of Charles Lever. Lever's *Charles O'Malley, The Irish Dragoon* (1841)
had dealt with the Peninsula campaign and the battle of Waterloo, and in
the war scenes, although acknowledging that battles did involve much blood­
shed and suffering, Lever concentrated on the "glorious reality of war," the
"spirit and adventure of a soldier's life," the "overwhelming excitement" of
charging into the mêlée.⁴ Moreover the hero is continually in contact with
the Duke of Wellington, and is sent with dispatches from Spain to the Duke
of York, becoming a social lion at Carlton House and meeting the Regent, Fox
Burke, and Sheridan.⁵ At the Duchess of Richmond's ball on the eve of Quatre

¹ *The Oxford Thackeray*, III, 138.
² *The Oxford Thackeray*, VI, 1-311, at 70-71.
³ *The Oxford Thackeray*, VI, 69-70.
⁴ *Charles Lever*, *Charles O'Malley the Irish Dragoon*, ed. Harry
I, 229, 235, 246.
Bras, he sees Lord Uxbridge, Captain Vandeleur, Ponsonby, the Prince of Orange, and again, Wellington. 1 Taken prisoner at Quatre Bras, he is brought to Napoleon, and later at Waterloo sees Wellington, Napoleon, Uxbridge and General Graham, being the one to deliver to Uxbridge the Duke's order to charge into the French centre. 2 Thackeray's pastiche of Lever in his Novels by Eminent Hands, "Phil Fogarty; A Tale of the Fighting Oneey-Oneth, By Harry Hollicker," 3 concentrates into a few pages what Thackeray clearly saw as the more ludicrous side of Lever's fiction:

"Ha! there goes poor Jack Welamere's head off! The ball chose a soft one, anyhow. Come here, Tim, till I mend your leg. Your wife has need only knit half as many stockings next year, Doolan, my boy." 4

I and Prince Talleyrand danced a double hornpipe with Pauline Bonaparte and Madame de Stael; Marshal Soult went down a couple of sets with Madame Récamier; and Robespierre's widow ... stood up with the Austrian ambassador. Besides, the famous artists Baron Gros, David and Nicholas Poussin, and Canova....

Needless to say, our hero is also acquainted with Napoleon, Murat, Ney, and Prince Eugene. Also of interest in this context is G.P.R. James's My Aunt Pontypool (1835), one of this author's infrequent forays into the recent past, which deals with the battle of Waterloo and the period immediately preceding it: although more sparing than Lever in his battle descriptions, James has his heroine (who has been abducted by agents of the villain wanting to force her into marriage with his son) come across Ney in a house near Waterloo, while another character encounters Wellington. 5

1 Charles O'Malley, II, 286-90.
2 Charles O'Malley, II, 310ff.
3 Punch, 7-21 August 1847; rpt. The Oxford Thackeray, VIII, 138-53.
4 The Oxford Thackeray, VIII, 141.
5 The Oxford Thackeray, VIII, 146.
Two years after *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray was to satirise in his continuation of *Ivanhoe, Rebecca and Rowena: A Romance Upon Romance* the same tendencies in Scott's medieval novels. In the Crusaders' battles in which Ivanhoe becomes caught up,

everything passes off agreeably; the people are slain, but without any unpleasant sensation to the reader; nay, some of the most savage and bloodstained characters of history... become amiable, jovial companions for whom one has a hearty sympathy.

He is speaking particularly of King Richard the Lionheart, who in his "fiendish appetite for blood" has just butchered some children with an axe. Ivanhoe, meanwhile, was only prevented from sawing Prince Arthur from King John's "horrid designs" by a six-year spell of fever and delirium:

for Ivanhoe was, we need scarcely say, a hero of romance; and it is the custom and duty of all gentlemen of that profession to be present on all occasions of historic interest, to be engaged in all conspiracies, royal interviews, and remarkable occurrences.

In creating in *Vanity Fair, A Novel Without a Hero*, and one in which the character closest to being a military hero, George Osborne, is deeply flawed in other ways, Thackeray is then reacting against the conventions of Scott's later novels and their imitators. Likewise his sparing use of encounters between fictional and real historical characters. In the latter case however Thackeray could well be emulating Scott's practice in his novels of the recent past, but his comments on Richard the Lionheart and on Frederick the Great show that he is much more critical than Scott of so-called great men. Moreover, speculating about Napoléon, who greatly influences the lives of the characters in *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray had argued

1 *The Oxford Thackeray*, *X*, 461-572, at 531.
that if we could actually see the famous people of history in their private lives, stripped naked as it were, as well as in their public roles, they would seem far different—reputed warriors would be seen to be cowards, the virtuous to be vicious, and sages, fools.  

The action of *Vanity Fair* begins in June, 1813, when Becky and Amelia leave Miss Pinkerton's, and extends up to the time of writing, when Amelia and Dobbin are married with a daughter, and Becky is living at Bath and Cheltenham practising good works on the proceeds of her murder of Jos Sedley—albeit the period after Amelia's second marriage in about 1831 is covered very briefly. There are also retrospectives of the main characters' schooldays in the early years of the century. While writing the novel Thackeray was 36-37; hence the period he is dealing with is more or less his own lifetime, and could have been reconstructed at least partly from memory, and from what he had heard from his mother, stepfather and others of their generation. Similarly the period would have been recalled by the readers of the same age or older. However the central event of public history on which he is drawing—the battle of Waterloo—occurred early in this time-span, when he himself was not quite four (i.e. 18 June 1815), so that it was rather something that he and those of a similar age would have heard about rather than remembered personally. Before the description of the actual battle in the novel, the narrator claims that

you and I, who were children when the great battle was won and lost, are never tired of hearing and recounting the history of that famous action.

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The victory was in fact still celebrated every year on Wellington's birthday. But in his treatment of the battle, its background, and its aftereffects, Thackeray offers an approach different from that of Lever and his ilk, and also from that which would have been familiar to readers of his own age from the accounts of their elders and of historians. Instead of devoting much space to descriptions of battles and encomiums on British military glory, he aims to demonstrate the effect the war had on people living at the time, on those who were not particularly interested in it as well as on those who were directly involved — "[w]e do not claim to rank among the military novelists. Our place is with the non-combatants" (p. 361).

As she leaves Miss Pinkerton's, Becky, in order to revenge herself on the sisters, exploits the hatred and fear of Napoleon felt by most people in Britain at the time, by shouting, "[v]ive la France! Vive l'Empereur! Vive Bonaparte!" (p. 14). A few chapters later the main characters discuss "war and glory, and Boney and Lord Wellington," over dinner at Sedleys', and, the period being "those famous days" when "every gazette had a victory in it," George and Dobbins long "to see their own names in the glorious list" and to have "the chances of honour" (p. 59). However the visit to Vauxhall immediately afterwards shows how such victories could also be trivialised or forgotten in preoccupation with more personal concerns: the Russians' burning of Moscow (in the face of the French invasion of 1812) is presented as a "panorama" the viewing of which gives Becky a chance to fall into Jos's arms when another spectator steps on her toe, while the cantata the "Battle of Borodino" ("a savage Cantata against the Corsican upstart," concerning the struggle between the French and Russian armies on 7 September 1812) is only one attraction amongst the thousands of lamps, the "comic and sentimental ballads," the tightrope walking of Mme Saqui, the eating
and drinking, and the dark walks thronged with courting couples. Moreover when Dobbin tries to hum it, he is so preoccupied with his new love for Amelia that he finds himself humming instead the song he had heard her sing before dinner (pp. 62-64).

After this the war is not mentioned for several chapters and when the subject is reintroduced Thackeray points out that, although there may have been great public interest in the battles being fought, some people could feel sheltered from their effects and indifferent to their outcome: despite the fact that "war was raging all over Europe, and empires were being staked that it was a period

when the Courier newspaper had tens of thousands of subscribers; when one day brought you a battle of Vittoria, another a burning of Moscow, or a newcomer's horn blowing down Russell Square about dinner-time, announced such a fact as - "Battle of Leipsic - six hundred thousand men engaged - total defeat of the French - two hundred thousand killed (p. 137)

the routine at the Sedleys' house goes on uninterrupted, and Amelia cares nothing about Brienne and Montmirail (two battles won by Napoleon against the Allies in France during January and February, 1814). When Napoleon abdicates and peace is announced, she is overjoyed, but only because she thinks that George's regiment will not be ordered on service:

The fate of Europe was Lieutenant George Osborne to her. His dangers being over, she sang Te Deum. He was her Europe; her empeor; her allied monarchs and august prince regent. He was her sun and moon; and I believe she thought the grand illumination and ball at the Mansion House, given to the sovereigns, were especially in honour of George Osborne (p. 137)

As the Allies prepared to invade France after the battle of Vittoria in October 1813, the Courier had demanded of its "tens of thousands of sub-
Is there a heart in the British empire that does not swell with pride in the contemplation of the glories of our arms? Is there a nerve that does not quiver in beholding this success of freedom and free men over tyranny and its engines, this victory of justice over injustice, this ample harvest of imperishable honour and renown?

Thackeray is obviously suggesting that some people living at the time were proof against this excitement and patriotic fervour; as Carola Oman has pointed out, there would have been by 1811 many girls of marriageable age who could not recall a time when Britain had not been at war with France, since the struggle had been going on since 1793. Even among those in the novel who are more stirred by the events of the war than Amelia, Thackeray focusses not on the participants but on people in London responding to newspaper reports, including inaccurate ones: at Leipsic (16-19 October 1813) there were actually about 510,000 engaged and 115,000 killed.

As readers of 1847 would have been aware, contemporary confidence in the peace of 1814 was ill-founded, and the beginning of Chapter 18 reveals that it was Napoleon's sudden landing in France which was the ultimate cause of the ruin of John Sedley, described in the preceding chapter. The passage draws attention to the way in which "famous events and personages" can affect the lives even of those who are least interested in them:

Bon Dieu, I say, is it not hard that the fateful rush of the great Imperial struggle can't take place without affecting a poor little harmless girl of eighteen, who is occupied in billing and cooing, or working muslin collars in Russell Square? ... Yes; Napoleon is flinging his last stake, and poor little Emmy Sedley's happiness forms, somehow, part of it (pp. 211-12)

1 *Courier and Evening Gazette*, 19 October 1813, p.2. It was out of publication by 1847.
In his rage and bitterness Emmy's father even imagines that Napoleon's escape was planned by "'half the powers of Europe'" simply to "'bring the funds down'" (p. 242). In fact Napoleon's escape brings on Amelia's marriage, since George is shamed into proposing to her when her father insists she send back George's letters and gifts, and is confirmed in his resolve by his disgust at his own father's slanders of her.

For the part of the novel set in Belgium Thackeray follows closely the account of G.R. Gleig, whose Story of the Battle of Waterloo was published in 1847, but omits most of the parts dealing with the actual battles to concentrate firstly on the hedonistic, frenetic social life of Brussels before Quatre Bras, culminating in the Duchess of Richmond's ball, and then on the feelings and responses of the non-combatants left in the city to await the outcome of the war; he is concerned not with the events of Quatre Bras and Waterloo as such, familiar as they already were to his readers, but with the way half-knowledge and inaccurate rumours about the battles created terror and panic among the people in Brussels. This recalls Scott's treatment of the war in The Antiquary. The novel draws attention as well to the sufferings of the wounded at Quatre Bras, and the pathos of the situation is brought out by the description of the young Ensign Stubule, who had initially been so naively enthusiastic about going to war (pp. 288-91, 397-98). Kathleen and Geoffrey Tillotson have shown how Thackeray dramatises Gleig's account, embodying typical behaviour in his descriptions of the responses of individual characters. But his account is less sombre than Gleig's: he recreates the "'heart-rending' partings between husbands and wives on the morning of 16 June, the "'wild tokens' of the women's

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1 See their Introduction to the 1963 Methuen edition, pp. xxix-xxxii.
alarm, which were "piteous to see and agonizing to listen to,"\textsuperscript{1} in the reactions of Amelia, but varies the picture with his portrayal of Mrs O'Dowd's level-headed good sense and Becky's self-confident equanimity. He also exploits the comic possibilities of the situation in his account of Becky's revenge on Lady Bareacres, and in his description of Jos's panic and eventual flight.

As I have suggested above, Thackeray's sparing use of battle descriptions in his novel is partly a reaction against their prevalence in the work of other novelists. He also disliked "[t]he idea of sedentary, pacific readers getting titillation from fictional bloodbaths," as John Carey has pointed out,\textsuperscript{2} and felt in any case that Waterloo was just one in a long line of battles between England and France, each leaving "its cursed legacy of hatred and rage" and following "the Devil's code of honour" (p. 405). But the avoidance of such description does mean that the news of George Osborne's death, coming as it does in a subordinate clause at the end of a chapter, after pages of rumour-mongering, comedy, and pathos, hits the reader with all the more force, and enables him to feel perhaps some faint echo of the shock undergone by Amelia and the Osbornes.\textsuperscript{3}

Directly after this Thackeray takes us back to England and deals with the rather mild effect on Miss Crawley of the news of Waterloo, which for her merely "rendered the newspapers rather interesting" while her knowledge of Rawdon's gallantry and promotion does not palliate her rage against him for marrying Becky or cause her to alter her will in his favour. Nor does Waterloo greatly affect the lives of Becky and Rawdon, except insofar as the social life at Brussels and later at Paris enables Becky to gain a


\textsuperscript{2} Thackeray: \textit{Prodigal Genius}, p. 190.

\textsuperscript{3} In the original part-publication it also came right at the end of Number 9.
foothold in the upper-class society into which she is eventually accepted in London. Both during and after the war she demonstrates her ability to control and manipulate circumstances. Amelia is of course more deeply affected; she is numbed by grief for George, and his death also serves to fix in her mind an idealised image of him which his behaviour in life must needs have tarnished had he survived. The grief of the rest of the Osborne family is also intense, and in dealing with it the narrator urges the reader to imagine what it felt like in Britain to read the dreadful casualty lists of Quatre Bras and Waterloo:

Fancy, at every village and homestead almost through the three kingdoms, the great news coming of the battles of Flanders, and the feelings of exultation and gratitude, bereavement and sickening dismay, when the lists of the regimental losses were gone through, and it became known whether the dear friend and relative had escaped or had fallen. Anybody who will take the trouble of looking back to a file of the newspapers of the time, must, even now, feel at second-hand this breathless pause of expectation. The lists of casualties are carried on from day to day; you stop in the midst as in a story which is to be continued in our next. Think what the feelings must have been as those papers followed each other fresh from the press... (p. 436)

And this is merely the final stage of twenty years of war which had been fought by millions and had bereaved millions more.

In the latter half of the novel the Napoleonic Wars actually become history. A few years afterwards Georgy, in the Park with his grandfather Sedley and a Corporal Clink, seizes hold of the latter's Waterloo Medal, and when the group meets Rawdon and his son, Sedley explains proudly that Georgy's father had also been a "Waterloo man" (p. 481). "And just as the Misses Osborne had played the piano sonata "The Battle of Prague" in 1815 as a pre-dinner diversion, Amelia in placid Pumpernickel in about 1830 hears Beethoven's "Die Schlacht bei Vittoria" (1813), which had been based partly on the earlier piece (p. 794). Meanwhile Napoleon, object of love

1 By Frantisek Koczwara, c. 1768.
and hatred, devotion and terror throughout Europe for nearly twenty years, had died at St. Helena in 1820, and by 1827 is the subject of Georgy's pom­pous schoolboy essay "On Selfishness". Becky exaggerates her husband's achievements at Waterloo by sending Miss Crawley relics from the battle — actually bought from a pedlar (pp. 408-9) — and the character who ends up with the greatest reputation for military heroism is the cowardly Jos, who becomes known as "Waterloo Sedley" because he displays such detailed knowledge of what Wellington felt, said and did all through the battle, that everyone he meets in India believes that he had been at the Duke's side the whole time, like the hero of a typical historical novel (pp. 482-83).

The events of the Napoleonic wars have a greater impact on the characters of Vanity Fair than on those of The Antiquary — possibly Scott, writing so soon after the end of the wars, did not want to revive their horrors. Thackeray is also more cynical, presenting their outcome as the result of chance rather than of superior valour or virtue on the part of the Allies. The latter were not on a war-footing in 1815 "providentially" as the "historians on our side" would have it, but in order to enforce their claims for control of different parts of Europe against each other. Napoleon was just unlucky not to have waited till they were too busy fighting each other to be able to oppose him (pp. 339-40). Certainly the Congress of Vienna in 1814 had almost broken up under threat of war several times over Russia's claim on Poland and Prussia's demands for control of Saxony. Hence Napoleon's return and its consequences were really just as arbitrary and almost as important to the characters' lives as Jos's drinking of the famous bowl of rack punch at Vauxhall: "[t] hat bowl of rack punch was the cause of all this history. And why not a bowl of rack punch

as well as any other cause?" (p. 66). Jos's drunken behaviour and his later embarrassment about it spell the end of Becky's plans to catch him as a husband, and force her to try her luck elsewhere. Such mundane causes have after all had great consequences in history -

"Was not a bowl of prussic acid the cause of fair Rosamond's retiring from the world? Was not a bowl of wine the cause of the demise of Alexander the Great? (p. 66)

This technique of raising apparently trivial incidents to the level of momentous events, and of drawing analogies between fictional characters and well-known historic figures, is paralleled elsewhere in the novel. The fight between Cuff and Dobbin at Dr. Swishtail's is compared to the battle of Waterloo, (although, as the narrator acknowledges, the latter had not yet taken place):

It was the last charge of the Guard -...-it was Ney's column breasting the hill of La Hay Sainte, bristling with ten thousand bayonets, and crowned with twenty eagles - it was the shout of the beef-eating British, as leaping down the hill they rushed to hug the enemy in the savage arms of battle (p. 54)

In fact the spectators' attitude - supporting throughout the side which looks most likely to win,- forshadows the behaviour of the Belgians in Brussels, who prepare to welcome Napoleon when they believe he will prove the victor (pp. 399-400). Moreover chapter headings characterise Becky's and Amelia's matrimonial ambitions in military terms - "In Which Miss Sharp and Miss Sedley Prepare to Open the Campaign" (Chapter 2), "Rebecca is in Presence of the Enemy" (Chapter 3), as if to suggest that husband-hunting is the female equivalent of warfare. Later the focus on the female perspective on the real war is brought out in the titles of Chapters 27 and 28 - "In which Amelia Joins Her Regiment" and "In which Amelia Invades the Low Countries". And Becky, an upstart like Napoleon (with whom she has allied her-
self in her outburst to the Misses Pinkerton), manages to return from exile at the end, and is more successful than the French Emperor in achieving her designs.\footnote{The illustration to the opening of Chapter 64 shows Becky as Napoleon looking out over the Channel — a satirical reference to B.R. Haydon's many paintings of "Napoleon Musing at St. Helena" — see Joan Stevens, "Thackeray's Pictorial Capitals," in \textit{Costerus}, NS 2 (1974), 113-40, at 126-26.}

As we would expect from his satirical attacks on other novelists, Thackeray makes sparing use of encounters between his characters and celebrated historical figures, and records no dialogue between real and fictional people. Becky is seen riding among "some of the very greatest persons in Brussels" by Jos, Amelia, George, Dobbin, and Mrs O'Dowd, and the latter points out two of them as "'the juke himself!'" and Lord Uxbridge (p. 347) but the scene is developed no further. Later Becky is presented to George IV (598ff), but the narrator claims sarcastically that his pen is too "feeble and inexperienced" to describe such a magnificent and dazzling occasion as her interview with her sovereign. Hawdon Crawley may patronise Wattier's (p. 128), but Thackeray does not have him meet Byron, as does the hero of Mrs Gore's \textit{Cecil} (1841).\footnote{\textit{Cecil; or, The Adventures of a Coxcomb} (London: Richard Bentley, 1841), II, 135-36. \textit{Cecil} later spends much time with Byron in Geneva and Venice, meeting Shelley, and Mme de Staël as well (III, 14ff).} The impact which the unseen Napoleon has on the characters' lives is both more complex and more plausible than would have been dramatic encounters with him. However the novel as a whole is studded with allusions to well-known figures from the period in which it is set, and since it is also full of passing references to minor characters who never appear, the fictional and historical seem to coalesce, the allusions to historical figures adding to the reader's belief in the reality of the fictional ones. For example while Becky is at Queen's Crawley during Miss Crawley's visit, the narrator recalls that at this time (1814), "as some old readers may recollect, the genteel world was thrown into a consi-
derable state of excitement" by the elopements of Shafton with Lady Barbara Fitzurse, daughter and heiress of the Earl of Bruin, and of Vere Vane with the sexagenarian actress Mrs Rougemont (p. 128), and while the names show that these people are fictitious, they take on credibility from Miss Crawley's encomium immediately afterwards on Lord Nelson, who "went to the deuce for a woman!" Earlier, the younger Pitt Crawley's friendships with Wilberforce and the Rev. Silas Hornblower have been mentioned in the same sentence, while his grandfather Lord Binkie had been a cousin of Henry Dundas, Lord Melville (pp. 77, 100). George Osborne goes to see Edmund Kean play Shylock (p. 316) before embarking for the Continent, while his General writes to the fictional Mlle Aménaide of His Majesty's Theatre (p. 287). James Crawley raves drunkenly to his aunt about "the different pugilistic qualities of Molyneux and Dutch Sam" (both boxers of the period) and at the same time offers Lady Jane odds on the (fictional) Outbury Pet and Rottingdean Fibber (p. 430).

In a slightly different category are the fictional characters based on well-known figures of the society of the time: Lord Steyne, modelled on the 3rd Marquess of Hertford, his toady Wenham, suggested by the journalist and politician John Wilson Croker, and Mr Wagge, based on the novelist and society wit Theodor Hook. A similar trio—Lord Monmouth, Mr Digby, and Lucian Gay—had figured in Disraeli's Coningsby (1844), and Thackeray had identified Monmouth as Hertford in his review of the novel for the Morning Chronicle. Although the Tillotsons point out that in Steyne Thackeray has suppressed the more creditable aspects of Hertford's career, Charles

1 See Kathleen and Geoffrey Tillotson's introduction to the 1963 Methuen edn of the novel, pp. xxxii-xxxiii. Thackeray puts his death back to 1630, from 1842, and ages him correspondingly. Steyne, a grandfather, is described and pictured as old, while Lord Hertford (b. 1777) would have been only in his late forties and early fifties during the period in which he appears in the novel.

Greville, writing just after the latter's death, said that his later life at least was "undisguised debauchery", that he never had a "serious thought, or kindly feeling" or did "a generous or charitable action," wasting or degrading his talents. ¹

Thackeray also shows how people of no particular distinction try to enhance their own prestige by boasting of their connections with the great. The reputation of Miss Pinkerton's academy is due to a visit once paid to it by Dr Johnson; Jos Sedley in India speaks of his lonely life in Regency London as if "he and Brummell were the leading bucks of the day" (p. 27), and, as we have seen, claims acquaintance with Wellington; his ruined father tries to delude himself and others into believing he has a future in the world of high finance by talking of the doings of the Rothschilds and Baring Brothers (p. 484); Mrs O'Dowd points out the resemblance between Lord Uxbridge and her brother Molloy Moloney (p. 347); Becky continually talks of her meeting with George IV (p. 604); old Osborne adopts the arms of the Duke of Leeds. The Crawleys of course make a practice of advertising their allegiance to whomever is in the political ascendant in the names they give to their sons.

As well as being a comment on how a war of the past was really experienced, and on the most likely kind and degree of relationship between ordinary people of the past and famous historical figures, Vanity Fair is also of course an attempt to recreate the life and manners of the time. The picture is extremely varied and detailed, too, although, unlike Scott, Thackeray does not venture down the social scale beyond those who can make some claim to gentility or who have some prospect of making one (like Briggs' dissenting shoemaker brother who wants to send his son to college)

except for the Haggles family and assorted servants, who are seen mainly in relation to their masters. There is the genteel girls' school where trivial accomplishments like dancing, embroidery and deportment come before "principles of religion and morality" (p. 5), and where the students defer to wealth and noble birth (p. 19); the boys' school where fagging and bullying are rife. Old Sir Pitt Crawley holds a pocket borough which returns two members and £1,500 a year with five voters (a position not unknown before the 1832 Reform Bill), and increases his revenue by means typical of his period - taking out canal shares, horsecars, and undertaking mining ventures on the estate. In presenting his appalling boorishness, libertinism, and meanness, Thackeray is not suggesting that he is a typical baronet of his period so much as indicating the extent to which birth and landownership carried political power and social deference. But he does resemble in many ways the peer Lord Deerhurst of Harriette Wilson's Memoirs (1825), who seduces her thirteen-year-old sister. Deerhurst is dirty, uses tallow candles and broken candlesticks, takes the girls to a common village pothouse to dine off fried eggs and bacon, and, after failing to gallop through a turnpike in an effort to avoid a 2d toll, beats up the tollkeeper with the boxing skills he has learnt from Cribb and Jackson. Sir Pitt's brother the Rev. Rawdon Crawley is characteristic of the "fox-hunting parsons" of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, interested little if at all in religion and preoccupied with boxing, racing, hunting and social conviviality (pp. 113-14). Meanwhile the younger generation of bucks like Rawdon Crawley and Lord Soutindown, and would-be bucks like George Osborne and James Crawley, indulge in such popular Regency pastimes as heavy drin-


king, smoking, betting, boxing, driving—four-in-hand, womanising, and duelling.

Reacting against Bute's approach to religion and Sir Pitt's and Rawdon's habits, are the younger Pitt, together with his wife's mother and sister, Lady Southdown and Lady Emily Sheepshanks, with their Nonconformist allegiances and their interest in overseas missionary work, negro emancipation, and the distribution of tracts. The tracts are distributed along class lines too, with the stronger ones going to the servants, the milder ones to Miss Briggs, and, initially at least, none at all to Miss Crawley herself, in case she is frightened to death before altering her will in Pitt's favour (pp. 416-17). The doyenne of tract-writers, Hannah More, although hardly as self-interested as the Sheepshanks family, would also deliberately vary her style according to the social standing of the recipient. Although the co-existence during the Regency of an hedonistic and irreligious element centred on the Court and a growing number of austere and religious people among the same social class had caused Miss More to claim in 1816 that "the wicked seem more wicked, and the good, better. Thackeray sees little real difference between the two: all of Miss Crawley's relatives devote their efforts to securing her favour so as to inherit her money. Moreover, on succeeding to the baronetcy Pitt abandons his Dissenting views to become an orthodox Anglican (p. 569), a common phenomenon at this time and afterwards, as it was socially advantageous to do so.

The novel also deals extensively with life in fashionable society, with the continual efforts of those on the outskirts to get into it, and the

3 Jay, pp. 24-25.
deference to rank and wealth which governs them all. Marriage is generally undertaken to acquire rank or money: the ironmonger's daughter Rose Dawson marries the vulgar old Sir Pitt Crawley because he is a baronet, while the wealthy Miss Swartz espouses the Hon. James McMull. In fact a "host of fashionables" marry into Lombard St. and "ennoble Cornhill" (p. 537). And those who cannot marry directly into the aristocracy, like Maria Osborne, exploit to the hilt such prospects for mixing with the fashionable world as their marriages provide. Her brother George is bought a commission in the army, where he mixes with (and is exploited by) the sons of peers and baronets, coming to despise the "bankers and city big-wigs" with whom his father associates (p. 246). His son Georgy is earmarked for a college education and eventual baronetcy. Meanwhile the society of a man of the rank and connections of Lord Steyne is pursued by everyone who has any chance of meeting him, despite his notorious vices (p. 597).

Thackeray uses Becky's rise to the apex of fashionable society to suggest that this world of worshippers of money and rank is not proof against the ambitions of an adventuress who begins with neither, and lacks even a mother to find her a husband. Her rise is facilitated by the fact that the summit of the social world, the province of Lady Slowbore, Lady Grizzel Macbeth, and Lady Fitz-Willis, does not actually comprise the richest or the best-born, but simply those generally agreed to be "the best" (p. 636). This was the group of "exclusives" of the 1820's, and their citadel was Almack's (of which Lady Fitz-Willis is said to be the "Patron Saint"), venue of the weekly balls which could be attended only by those who had been sold a ticket by one of the half-dozen patronesses. As Pückler-Muskau wrote, the exclusives were "a peculiar caste" which exercised "a still more despotic power in society" than the nobility as such, and which was "not influenced by rank, still less by riches," such that "those who have never been
seen at Almack's are regarded as utterly unfashionable - I might almost say disreputable. Eventually however Becky finds that meeting the same people night after night and hearing them make dreary conversation about "each other's houses, and characters, and families; just as the Joneses do about the Smiths" (p. 637) is very boring, and when during her subsequent exile she is living in a Parisian boarding-house, she finds the "shabby dandies and fly-blown beauties who frequented her landlady's salons," the Regency débris of which Paris became full after Waterloo, just as amusing as (and less vulgar than) the leaders of London fashionable society (pp. 819-20). Her "yawning in spirit" was shared by Pückler-Muskau, who, wearied with seeing the same faces and hearing the same talk, could even describe a fête, put on by Lord Hertford himself in his magnificiènt apartments, and complete with a ball, concert and play, as "magnificement ennuyeux." Thackeray's picture of fashionable society and the aspirants to it is very similar to that of Bulwer, who in his non-fictional analysis England and the English (1833) dealt at length with obsequiousness towards the aristocracy and the latter's habitual frivolity, extravagance and debauchery, social climbing via marriage and education, deference to wealth, and insipid fashionable conversation.

But although he is concerned to recreate the life of the period from about 1813 to about 1830, Thackeray is also at pains to point out that society had not really changed in essentials by 1848. This view is of course implicit in the title, for in his allegory Bunyan explains that Vanity-Fair "is no new erected business, but a thing of ancient standing"

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3 Letter of 7 April 1827, in A Regency Visitor, p. 167.
set up by the fallen angels, which must be traversed by all those who seek the "Celestial City." During his account of Becky's social triumphs, the narrator avers -

At the time whereof we are writing, though the Great George was on the throne and ladies wore pigots and large combs like tortoise-shell shovels in their hair, instead of the simple sleeves and lovely wreaths which are actually in fashion, the manners of the very polite world were not, I take it, essentially different from those of the present day; and their amusements pretty similar (p. 643)

and the novel is full of generalisations about human motives and conduct which make it clear that Thackeray believes that the people of his own day are just as immoral and self-seeking as those of twenty-five or thirty-five years before. For example the account of the great respect Miss Crawley commands from her relations because of her wealth is succeeded by a long passage detailing the narrator's (and reader's) similar response to wealthy old relatives (pp. 103-4); Maria Osborne would marry old Bullock for his money were he not already married, and

The other day I saw Miss Trotter (that was), ... trip into the travelling carriage at St. George's Hanover Square, and Lord Methuselah hobbled in after (p. 138)

Everyone who can waits on Lord Steyne "as you the reader (do not say nay) or I the writer hereof would go if we had an invitation" (p. 597). Becky believes she would be a good woman if she had five thousand a year, and the narrator speculates about his own period:


2 The Duke of Leeds in 1847-48 (s. 1838, d. 1859) married the daughter of a Baltimore merchant (Complete Peerage, VII [1929], p. 517).
An alderman coming from a turtle feast will not step out of his carriage to steal a leg of mutton; but put him to starve, and see if he will not purloin a loaf (p. 533)

As late as 1858 the Darlington Telegraph could observe that

We all of us feel as if we belonged to some rank or caste, out of which we are all struggling to rise into some other above it ... while everyone has his or her own exclusive circle, which all of supposed inferior rank are prevented from entering, they are at the same time struggling to pass over the line of social demarcation drawn by those above them.

Fagging and petty tyranny were still part of boys' public-school education; girls' schooling still encouraged them to plume themselves on tawdry, superficial accomplishments and on beauty, dress, rank and wealth. The novel also conveys the impression that some things never change, by showing us the Osbornes patronising and promoting the Todd family just as they had once been patronised and promoted by the Sedleys - to the extent that Mrs Todd sees her daughter Rosa Jemima as a possible future bride for Georgy (p. 720). The beginning of Chapter 56 ("Georgy is Made a Gentleman") in early editions shows Georgy in the robes and crown of the Regent, (considered in his day the "First Gentleman of Europe"), suggesting both that the Osbornes defer to him as much as if he were the Regent, and that the Regent's frivolity and extravagance were in danger of being imitated by those two generations younger. Georgy also exemplifies the very selfishness which he berates in the dead Napoleon. Moreover, despite his occasional references to the costume of the period in which the novel is set, Thackeray's illustrations in general show the characters in the dress of the 1640's, thus stressing continually the story's relevance to his own time. Contem-

2 See for example "An Inquiry into the State of Girls' Fashionable Schools," Fraser's, 31 (1845), 703-12.
porary critics too, even though many thought the novel adopted too pessi-
mistic and misogynistic an attitude to human motive and conduct, responded
to it as a comment on their own time. Elizabeth Rigby called it "pre-
eminently a novel of the day ... a literal photograph of the manners and
habits of the nineteenth century,"¹ while for Theodore Martin it aimed to
"probe the principles upon which the framework of society in the nineteenth
century is based."²

This is not to say that nothing important had changed by 1847-48.
George IV was long dead, and Victoria's court, which set an example of
happy and respectable family life to the rest of the nation, did not receive
fast-living men and women.³ The popularity of such pastimes as heavy
drinking, boxing, four-in-hand driving, gambling and duelling was in dec-
line, as Thackeray was to observe himself a few years later.⁴ In the first
edition he felt it necessary to refer the reader to "Byron's Memoirs" to
prove that Rawdon's hunting, gambling, duelling and womanising were really
characteristic of the period.⁵ As well as the influence of the Court, the
spreading through secular society of the Evangelical notions of respectabi-
ility, involving sobriety, thrift, respect for law, and chastity, as well
as Evangelical opposition to jockeys, bruisers, living on nothing a year,
and the valuing of ton at the expense of moral tone, helped to bring

¹ "Vanity Fair - and Jane Eyre," Quarterly Review, 84 (1848), 153-85; rpt. in Thackeray: The Critical Heritage, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson and
² "Thackeray's works," Westminster Review NS 3 (1853), 363-88; rpt.
³ Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867 (London: Longmans,
Green & Co., 1959), pp. 459-60; Richard Altick, Victorian People and
⁴ In "George the Fourth," in The Oxford Thackeray, XIII, 781-88, at 784-800.
⁵ pp. 884-85 (note to p. 125). He is referring to Thomas Moore's
Letters and Journals of Lord Byron (1829-33), which, he says, embody "the
morals of Richelieu and the elegance of Dutch Sam."
about these changes. In the novel this increase in piety of an Evangelical colouring (or at least in concern for an appearance of piety) is registered in Becky's eventual triumph as a devout subscriber to charity-lists and stall-holder at fancy-fairs among the Evangelical coteries of Bath and Cheltenham. The actual fancy-fairs which had become ever more popular from the 1820's onward among women as a means of raising money for charity (as well as an opportunity to show off sewing and selling talents, and to meet marriageable men) come to embody Thackeray's metaphorical Vanity Fair. Becky's success is I think meant to suggest not so much that respectable religious circles were full of murderesses, as that, so long as one was wealthy, society was not concerned to enquire into the sources of one's money, especially as "the moral world, ... has, perhaps, no particular objection to vice, but an insuperable repugnance to having vice called by its proper name" (p. 812). The intolerance which could accompany an increase in religiosity is brought out too in the conversation of Amelia's genteel circle in the Anglo-Indian district of London in the late 1820's - they talk of "Mr. Peel's late extraordinary tergiversation in the fatal Catholic Relief Bill" (i.e. Peel's decision in 1829 to support the removal of civil disabilities against Catholics; the bill was passed in that year), and predict the fall of the Pope (p. 595). The rise of the Tractarian movement in the 1830's was to make Evangelicals of this and subsequent decades even more preoccupied with opposing what they saw as "Popish" ideas and practices.3

Another important change, mentioned in the novel, was the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832: it causes the second Sir Pitt (a Tory) to prophesy "the speedy ruin of the Empire" (p. 872) because his rotten borough has lost both its seats (as did fifty-six English boroughs, forty-one of them in the agricultural south), and his reaction is similar to those of Ralph Sneyd, a Tory landowner in Staffordshire, who planned to go abroad if the Bill was passed in order to protect his person and property, and of the second Earl of Malmesbury, who compared it to the French Revolution. John Wilson Croker wrote to Scott that it would mean the end of the monarchy, House of Lords, and inequalities in the social system. The Bill had extended the franchise to take in more middle-class voters, and had taken steps towards equalising the electorates, abolishing or reducing the representation of small boroughs, and enfranchising large manufacturing towns in the midlands and north. Meanwhile the Corn Laws, a subject of interest to the second Sir Pitt, and a bastion of the landowning agricultural interest, since they kept up grain prices by restricting the importation of foreign corn, had finally been abolished in 1846, after a long and bitter struggle during which the aristocracy had been criticised more sharply than ever before on economic, social, political and moral grounds. In Past and Present (1843) Carlyle had berated their frivolity and dilettantism, and the lack of social responsibility they showed in return for the power and privileges they enjoyed. Disraeli's Young England Movement arose partly in response to this sort of attack: in his novel Coningsby Lord Monmouth, a borough-monger as

1 Briggs, The Age of Improvement, p. 261.
3 Briggs, p. 242.
4 Briggs, p. 323.
well as a cynical libertine, is meant to embody the old corrupt order, and, unlike Lord Steyne, survives until 1842 as Hertford had. But for Thackeray the change was more apparent than real: during the Corn Law controversy in 1845 he had called Britain a "lickspittle of a country" for allowing the aristocrats Lord John Russell and Viscount Morpeth, who had held aloof from the debate, to come in at the end on the side of repeal and "head the party and take all the prize-money." In any case the landed families continued to be a substantial majority of the House of Commons till after the Second Reform Bill of 1867. To George Henry Lewes, one of the many critics who protested that the world was not really as bad as the novel made out, Thackeray wrote, "God forbid that the world should be like it altogether; though I fear it is more like it than we like to own."  

But a less cynical kind of pessimism, more elegiac in tone, also emerges from the novel. In his references to music, singers and dancers of the recent past, and in his descriptions of the vanished glories of Vauxhall and of coaching life, Thackeray is drawing on his own and his readers' memories to create a nostalgic awareness of the transience of human successes, pleasures and pastimes. Early in the novel he recalls the nautical ballads of forty years ago, which contain numberless good-natured, simple appeals to the affections, which people understood better than the milk-and-water lagrima, sospiri, and felicità of the eternal Donizettian music with which we are favoured now-a-days. (pp. 41-42) 

Moreover the singer Elizabeth Billington and the dancers Hillisberg and Parisot, to all of whom Amelia is compared (p. 6) were all prominent in


the early years of the nineteenth century but dead by 1848. The great actor John Philip Kemble (seen by Cuff - p. 49) had retired in 1817 and died in 1823, while Edmund Kean, who had made his London debut in 1814, had been failing visibly for several years due to alcoholism before he died in 1833.

After the charades at Levant House the audience likens Becky to Catherine Stephens, Maria Caradori and Donzi de Begnis, and as all had retired by 1848, the allusions to them hint at the ephemeral nature of Becky's "culmination" (p. 652).

In recreating Vauxhall, with its hundred thousand extra lamps, which were always lighted; the fiddlers, in cocked-hats, who played ravishing melodies under the gilded cockle-shell in the midst of the Gardens; the singers, both of comic and sentimental ballads, who charmed the ears there; the country dances, formed by bouncing cockneys and cockneyesses, and executed amidst jumping, thumping, and laughter; the signal which announced that Madame Saqui was about to mount skyward on a slack-rope ascending to the stars; the hermit that always sat in the illuminated hermitage; the dark walks, so favourable to the interviews of young lovers; the pots of stout handed about by the people in the shabby old liveries; and the twinkling boxes, in which the happy feasters made believe to eat slices of almost invisible ham (p. 63)

"Thackeray celebrates a fashionable pleasure-garden (patronised by the Regent himself) which had had its day by the time he was writing." By the 1830's it was catering for a more middle-class clientele, with the introduction of juggling, conjuring, acrobatics and balloon ascents, but it was doing badly by 1837, was auctioned in 1840, and by the 1850's had become "a raffish caricature of its eighteenth-century self," its rowdy masked balls frequented by the disreputable. Soon after the Vauxhall episode, as

1 It is hence unlikely that Cuff would have seen him during the period of Bobbin's and George's childhood - see J.I.M Stewart's note to the Penguin edn of the novel (Harmondsworth, 1966), pp. 800-1.
2 See the Tillotsons' Introduction to the Methuen edn, pp. xxxiv-vi.
Becky and Sir Pitt leave for Queen's Crawley on the London-Southampton coach, Thackeray evokes the old days of coaching, recalling "with a sweet and tender regret" his own experiences on the journey through a landscape which has itself altered ("jingling rapidly by the strangers' entry of Fleet-Market, which, with Exeter 'Change, has now departed to the world of shadows"), lamenting the now-vanished coachmen, passengers, horses and inns (pp. 86-87). The coaching trade had been killed off by the early 1840's because of the competition from railways;¹ the London-Southampton railway was opened in 1840 and that to Brighton (see p. 266), in 1841. The retrospective on coaching at this stage in the novel gives to Becky's situation a temporary pathos, in that it suggests how her future—what will happen at the end of her coach journey—is now over, is part of the past. The account of George's journey to his wedding on the road down Piccadilly—through a part of London which had changed much by 1847 (p. 262)—has a similar effect.² The transitoriness even of Lord Steyne's prosperity and pleasures is brought out by the description of Gaunt House as it is in 1847-48, deserted and desolate in a dreary area which has been taken over by doctors and businessmen (p. 588).

The treatment of the manners, values, customs and pleasure of the recent past in Vanity Fair serves then to point up the persistence of human vice and folly, and the ephemeral nature of human success and pleasure. In Pilgrim's Progress Bunyan stresses the false values and immoral behaviour prevalent in Vanity-Fair, but the principal Biblical text on vanity, the Book of Ecclesiastes, concentrates more on the sheer transitoriness of the things of this world. At the end the preacher urges us to "Feare God, and

¹ For an extensive treatment of the coaching trade and its decline, see E.W. Covill, English Country Life 1760-1830, 140ff.
keepe his commandements, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecol. 12: 13)

Thackeray's message would seem to be that we should "learn to love and pray," as the narrator says after describing the pain and fear of the "worldly, selfish, graceless, thankless, religionless" Miss Crawley as she confronts death (p. 164). But in the novel love is after all usually misdirected and transient, while prayers (like Amelia's for George in battle) are not always answered. Earlier in Ecclesiastes the preacher "commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the Sunne, then to eate and to drinke and to be merrie" (Ecol. 9: 15), and before describing Becky's short-lived triumph at the Levant House charades, the narrator points out that, although Belgravia and Hyde Park gardens will pass away in their turn, just as the great names of eighteenth-century politics and society have deserted Baker Street, although "it is all vanity to be sure,"

what well-constituted mind, merely because it is transitory, dislikes roast-beef? That is a vanity, but may every man who reads this, have a wholesome portion of it through life (p. 634).
Pendennis was Thackeray's next work of fiction after Vanity Fair, being published in twenty-four monthly parts between November 1848 and December 1850, when the completed novel was then published in book form. In January 1854, the economist Nassau Senior was to commend the "solid foundation" of historical fact which supported Vanity Fair, but observed that Pendennis lacked this "grand historical background."\(^1\) In fact

"as far as can be inferred from any historical allusions, it might have been written at any time during the present, or indeed during the last century. The old, the young, the Londoners and the provincials, all act and talk as if the fortunes of the country had no connexion with theirs. Even the professional writers deal with politics with the impartiality of indifference."

The setting of Pendennis is not as vague as Senior claims, but the characters do not participate in any major historical events. Moreover the sense of the past is created mainly by a reminiscent tone on the part of the narrator, who often portrays himself as a middle-aged man recalling the vanished days of youth; Pendennis's career has similarities with that of Thackeray himself, notably the Oxbridge episode and his life as a journalist in London. In October 1848 he told Mrs Brookfield that he thought he resembled Pendennis.\(^3\)

The opening chapter of the novel, which introduces Major Pendennis and his fashionable London social life, suggests a period of about twenty years in the past, since the Major is invited to dine with Lord Steyne, who was said in Vanity Fair to have died in 1630.\(^4\) The mail-coaches

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\(^3\) 7–9 October 1848, in Thackeray Letters, II, 437.

\(^4\) Later in the novel it is however clear that Thackeray has extended Steyne's life well into the 1630's.
of the kind in which the Major travels to Fairoaks were in decline by the late 1830's because of the competition of railways, and by the time the novel was written belonged to memory alone — as the narrator points out at the beginning of Chapter 7. The retrospective account of Arthur Pendennis's life after he leaves school at sixteen mentions that he used to read to his mother *The Christian Year* (by John Keble) which is described as "a book which appeared about that time" (p. 31), thus suggesting a date of about 1827. His love for Byron's poetry also fits in with the late 1820's, as do his verses in the *County Chronicle* warning "the people of England to rally against emancipating the Roman Catholics" (p. 31), since the Catholic Emancipation bill was finally passed in 1829. But the time-gap is also that between youth and middle (or even old?) age, for the narrator interrupts his description of young Arthur's reading to defend his account against possible charges of insipidity:

> Look back, good friend, at your own youth, and ask how was that? what bright colours [the world] wore then, and how you enjoyed it! A man has not many years of such time. He does not know them whilst they are with him. It is only when they are passed long away that he remembers how dear and happy they were (p. 29)

Pendennis's courtship of Emily Costigan takes place during his eighteenth year (p. 4), that is, in about 1830, and the chapters dealing with it contain references to plays which were written or being performed around that time: Douglas Jerrold's nautical melodrama *Black Ey'd Susan* (pp. 75-77), first performed in 1829, James Kenney's *Ella Rosenberg* (p. 106), a melodrama first staged in 1807, and two English adaptations of plays by the German dramatist Kotzebue, *The Stranger* (44ff), adapted by Benjamin Thompson in 1796 from his *Henschenhass und Reue*, and *Pizarro*, adapted by

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1 *The History of Pendennis* [1848-50], Vol. XII of *The Oxford Thackeray*, ed. George Saintsbury (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), p. 83. All subsequent citations will be from this edition, which notes significant variants from that of 1850.
Sheridan in 1799 from his Die Spanier in Peru (152ff). In general however the readers of 1848-50 would not I think have found that the theatrical life portrayed in Pendennis was much different from that of their own day. Both The Stranger (with which Thackeray assumes at least some of his readers to be familiar) and Pizarro continued to be performed into the mid-nineteent century, as was Black Ey'd Susan for even longer, while Kenney continued writing into the 1840's. The financial problems experienced by the theatre impresario Dolphin were very common in the London theatre world of the first three decades of the century, and the situation had not really improved by 1850. Edmund Yates, who came from an acting family, believed that Dolphin was based on Alfred Bunn, whose long career in managing the major London theatres of Covent Garden and Drury Lane at various times between 1833 and 1848 had been fraught with difficulties.

The ignorance and stupidity of Emily Costigan herself, extreme as they are, seem to have been shared to some extent by actors of the time in which the early part of the novel is set, and also by those of the period in which it was written. Macready, the leading actor between Kean's death in 1833 and his retirement in 1851, and a man of education and intelligence, lamented in his diary in 1836 "the blunders, the ignorance, and wanton buffoonery, which ... degrades the poor art I am labouring in" while in his review of the novel in 1850 Lewes, who had had plays performed, claimed:

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1 For London performances of Pizarro and The Stranger up to the end of the 1820's, see Rev. John Genest, Some Account of the English Stage From the Restoration in 1660 to 1630 (Bath: H.S. Carrington, 1832), Vol. IX. Ella Rosenberg seems to have dropped out of the repertoire after 1821.
3 His last play was produced in 1846.
5 Edmund Yates; His Recollections and Experiences (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1864), I, 24-25.
speaking generally, actors are certainly below par rather than above it in intellect ... If any one doubts this, let him listen to a greenroom conversation for half an hour!1

On the other hand the fictional actors likely to be most familiar to Thackeray's readers, the Crummles company in Nicholas Nickleby (1838-39), are not for all their professional rivalry and hamming, presented as stupid, vulgar or mercenary in the way Emily is.2

Similarly the low social status of the theatrical profession in general, and the assumption that actresses in particular were sexually loose - the factors behind the almost universal horror expressed in Clavering at the idea of Arthur's marrying Emily - had not changed between 1830 and 1850.3 Geraldine Jewsbury's novel of 1846, The Half-Sisters, covering the career of a dedicated actress from about 1830 to the time of writing, shows up and criticises the common belief that actresses are little better than prostitutes, advocating a more elevated view of the profession on the part of both practitioners and public. By stressing Emily's virtue, Thackeray is no doubt mocking his readers' preconceptions.

Such sense of the past as is conveyed by the chapters dealing with Pendennis's courtship of Emily emerges rather from the perspective of a mature narrator looking at the follies and illusions of an immature young man undergoing his first feelings of romantic love, since the narrator shows both Pendennis's rapturous feelings about Emily, and what she is really like. In the proposal scene for example, Emily asks if his mother knows of his love:

He seized her hand madly and kissed it a thousand times. She did not withdraw it. "Does the old lady know it?" Miss Costigan

1 Leader, 21 December 1850, rpt. in Thackeray: The Critical Heritage, pp. 105-10, at p. 110. See also his novel Ranthorpe (1547), pp. 147-48.
2 Nicholas Nickleby, Chapters 22-25, 29-30, 46.
3 Baker, pp. 18, 27, 48, 81, 95ff.
thought to herself: "Well, perhaps she may," and then she remem­bered what a handsome diamond cross Mrs. Pendennis had on the night of the play, and thought, "Sure 'twill go in the family." (p. 25)

In the account of Pendennis's career at Oxbridge (Thackeray's own coin­nage) the novelist is concerned to evoke the "bright colours" of the "dear and happy" years of youth, and after the comedy of the Fotheringay episode the tone becomes more sentimental:

Every man, however brief or inglorious may have been his acade­mical career, must remember with kindness and tenderness the old University comrades and days. The young man's life is just beginning: the boy's leading-strings are cut, and he has all the novel delights and dignities of freedom. He has no idea of cares yet, or of bad health, or of roguery, or poverty, or to-morrow's disappointment. The play has not been acted so often as to make him tired... (p. 200)

Later the narrator looks at a collection of old Oxbridge prize-poems, tracts, declamations and debating-speeches of Pendennis and his contempo­raries (of whom he is one), and laments the changes wrought by time on their generation. Fate, he says, "has removed some, estranged others, dealt awfully with all." Some have died, others become more staid and conservative:

Here is Jack moaning with despair and Byronic misanthropy, whose career at the university was one of unmixed milk­punch. Here is Tom's daring essay in defence of suicide and of republicanism in general,... Tom's, who wears the star­chiest tie in all the diocese, and would go to Smithfield rather than eat a beefsteak on a Friday in Lent. Here is Bob of the --- Circuit, who has made a fortune in Railroad Com­mittees - bellowing out with Tancred and Godfrey, "On to the breach, ye soldiers of the cross... (pp. 220-21)

"The narrator's comment that this book of memorabilia is "scarce fifteen years old" suggests the early 1830's, as does the "Byronic misanthropy" attributed to Jack, while both the profits to be made from Railroad
Committees and the emergence of High Church clergy who refused to eat meat on Fridays in Lent were developments which had occurred since the early 1830's. Similarly contemporary readers would have been aware that Pendennis's flamboyant clothes, his "gorgeous velvet waistcoats, with richly embroidered cravats," pink hunting gear, and jewellery (pp. 213, 216-17), the attire of the post-Brummell dandies of the 1830's like Count D'Orsay and the young Disraeli, were a thing of the past. However the main contrast being made is again between the fervent but often foolish idealism of youth and the placidity and self-interest of middle age. In March 1849 Thackeray had revisited his old university, Cambridge, but found it in great measure "bitterly melancholious," so that his disappointment with contemporary Cambridge was probably one reason why he sentimentalised his own youth in the novel. Pendennis is held up for the reader's indulgence for his "frank, brave" manner which "becomes a high-spirited youth" (p. 216), his generosity, his lack of rancour over "the roguery of the University tradesmen" or the moneylender who charged 100% interest (p. 234), and the variety of his "liberal tastes and amusements" which accounts for the large total of his debts.

But Thackeray is also contributing here to a contemporary debate. Heavy debts were still common among students in the late 1840's, and there was a long correspondence and series of leaders in the Times about them in January 1848 and again in August and October 1849. Writers variously attributed the problem to the students' extravagance, the attempt on the part of those of poorer and more humble backgrounds to keep up with the

noble and wealthy, the traditional tone of university life, the rascality of tradesmen and their credit system, and lack of proper vigilance by fathers and/or college authorities. The subject had initially come before the public eye in two cases in which former Oxford students had been sent to the Insolvents' Court because of debts to tradesmen which they had left outstanding on going down. The first of these, Edward Napleton Jennings, had a wide variety of tastes (like Pendennis), since he owed £50 for wine, £33 for saddlery, £46 for confectionery, about £130 for clothes, travelling apparatus and archery goods, and £195 for books, stationery, perfumery, upholstery, groceries, drugs, guns, tobacco, and boats. In this context Thackeray seems to be urging an indulgent attitude to university students who run up large debts, and provides his hero with a convenient loan from Laura so that there is no suggestion that any Oxbridge equivalent of Vanity Fair's Ruggles family will be thrown on the streets.

The narrator's tendency for nostalgic reminiscence persists to some extent in the descriptions of Pendennis's life in London. It is implicit perhaps in the reporter Doolan's talk about "all the leading men of letters of his day, Tom Campbell, and Tom Hood, and Sydney Smith" (p. 350), since all had died in recent years, and very clear in the following:

It was a jovial time, that of four-and-twenty, when every muscle of mind and body was in healthy action, when the world was new as yet, and one moved over it spurred onwards by good spirits and the delightful capability to enjoy ... Sometimes, perhaps, the festivity of that period revives in our memory; but how dingy the pleasure-garden has grown, how tattered the garlands look, how scant and old the company, and what a number of the lights have gone out since that day! (p. 377)

1 Times, 1846: 3 Jan., p. 4; 5 Jan., p. 7; 6 Jan., p. 3; 7 Jan., p. 5; 8 Jan., p. 3; 10 Jan., p. 3; 11 Jan., p. 8; 12 Jan., p. 4; 13 Jan., p. 5; 1643: 6 Aug., p. 8; 7 Aug., p. 6; 13 Aug., p. 5; 16 Oct., p. 4; 20 Oct., p. 7.

2 Times, 1 Jan., p. 3; 6 Jan., p. 3.

3 Campbell in 1844, Hood and Smith in 1845.
From the account of Pendennis's literary career it is difficult to work out the extent to which Thackeray is concerned to evoke a particular period: as Pendennis is twenty-four, it should be the mid-1830's. For example the novel recalls the landlord of the Fielding's Head, whose "jolly appearance and fine voice may be remembered" by some male readers (p. 378), and who in the narrator's youth used to sing ballads celebrating "good liquor and the social affections ... The charms of our women, the heroic deeds of our military and naval commanders" (p. 381). But Edmund Yates recognised in the description of Hodgen and his song "The Body Snatcher" a resemblance to the singer Ross and his "Sam Hall," a popular favourite at the Cyder Cellars at the time the novel appeared^: Thackeray himself mentioned hearing the performance in October 1848. Song-and-supper rooms of the Back Kitchen type were still popular mid-century, the best-known being the Coal Hole, Evans's Supper Rooms at Covent Garden, and the Cyder Cellars, which is probably also the prototype of the Cave of Harmony in The Newcomes.3

Some of the characters in the novel were recognised at the time it appeared as being based on well-known people in the London literary and magazine world, notably Bacon and Bungay (Richard Bentley and Henry Colburn, rival publishers of Bentley's Miscellany and the New Monthly Magazine respectively), Tenham and Wagg (as in Vanity Fair, Croker and Hook), and Captain Shandon (William Maginn, editor of Fraser's, 1830-36 and friend and colleague of Thackeray's youth).4 By 1849 Hook and Maginn were both dead, the latter having died an alcoholic in the Fleet in 1842, while Colburn no longer owned the New Monthly. Shandon's prospectus for the Pall Mall Gazette (pp. 407-10), a cynical attempt in high-flown language to appeal to

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1 Recollections and Experiences, I, 166-68.
4 Raw Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom (1647-1663) (London: Oxford Uni-
the many who would consider themselves the "gentlemen of England" is in a style similar to that of Maginn's brilliant "Tobias Correpondence," published in Blackwood's in 1840, and consisting of advice from one journalist to another about what jargon should be used to write on either side of a given political question.¹ Maginn himself once wrote a leader for the Standard one evening, and answered it the next day in the True Sun.² On the other hand Thackeray does not, as Senior points out, show his journalists dealing with specific religious, political or social issues of their day.

The popularity of annuals of the Spring Annual type was also at its height during the 1830's, although some, including the Keepsake (see p. 282), survived into the early 1850's: ornately bound, they consisted generally of badly-drawn steel-engraved plates of languishing beauties and scenes from Byron, accompanying verses by people of noble birth or the inferior work of reputable poets; sixty-three were published in 1832 alone.³

Mr Bludyer, the hard-hitting, hard-drinking literary critic, is described as belonging to a "race which... is quite extinct in the press of our time" (p. 449), and indeed by the late 1840's the spirit of the times was too earnest to tolerate the scurrilous satire, attacks on personalities and witty invective which had characterised much of the writing in Fraser's in the 1830's.⁴ Moreover journalism as a profession had become more respectable: from 1847 onwards the Morning Chronicle employed on its staff

¹ Blackwood's, 48 (1840), 52-63, 205-14.
a "WC, a professor, an archdeacon, and even a peer, and editors like John Delane (of The Times), Algernon Borthwick (of the Morning Post) and George Biber (Hook's successor on the John Bull) were welcomed by polite society.\(^1\)

Thackeray was to draw attention to this latter development in The Newcomes, contrasting the journalist "good old Tom Sarjent" of the time of Clive's youth, who spends his evenings tippling and singing at a tavern, with his successor of the early 1850's, who "goes to Parliament in his brougham, and dines with the ministers of the crown"\(^2\) On the other hand Thackeray evidently saw similarities between the literary world of the mid-1830's and that of the time of writing, for after their dinner at Bungay's with the publisher's leading authors, Pendennis and Warrington agree that their talk had not been literary, intellectual or memorable, and the narrator goes on to assert that "there are no race of people who talk about books, or, perhaps, who read books, so little as literary men" (p. 440).\(^3\)

As the novel goes on, however, it becomes increasingly concerned with the changes which have occurred between the heyday of Major Pendennis and the time in which the novel is set, rather than with the vanished pleasures of Pendennis's youth. The Major laments that the former Lord Castlewood who came in state to London with four post-chaises and sixteen horses, and caroused with crowds of company at Castlewood during autumn, has been succeeded by one who travels by rail and brougham, and spends his autumn shooting in Scotland and dining at Paris cafés. Furthermore the gorgeous and witty Lady Lorraine of his day has been followed by a woman who "talks astronomy, and labouring classes, and emigration ... and lurks to church at eight o' clock in the morning" while at Abbots-Lorraine they "don't drink


\(^2\) The Newcomes: Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family [1853-55], Vol. A IV of The Oxford Thackeray, ed. George Saintsbury (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), p. 317. All subsequent citations will be from this edition, which notes significant variants from that of 1855.

\(^3\) For the controversy this comment aroused at the time, see Gordon N. Ray, Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom (1847-1863), pp. 114-15, 136ff; Thackeray Letters, II, 629-37.
two glasses of wine after dinner, and every other man at table is a country
curate with a white neckcloth whose talk is about Polly Higson's progress
at school, or widow "atkins' lumbago." The "gentlemen" of his time have
been replaced by a "'parcel of damned cotton-spinners and utilitarians,'"
and "'sprigs of parsons with their hair combed down their backs'" (p. 872).
This passage glances at several changes in English upper-class society
which had occurred since the Regency: the development of railways, the gro­
wing habit of the aristocracy and gentry of travelling abroad and to Scot­
land, the increasing interest on the part of upper-class women in education,
the welfare of the working classes, and emigration, and the influence of
the Evangelical and Oxford movements (both of which encouraged early-morning
services); the increasing prominence of *nouveaux riches* industrialists.
Meanwhile Pendennis reflects rather more sympathetically on the life of a
"woman of the world," who, as well as having an active social round to go
through in London, "'sits upon Charity Committees, or Ball Committees, or
Emigration Committees, or Queen's College Committees," and "'very likely
keeps a poor-visiting list; has conversations with the clergyman about
soup or flannel, or proper religious teaching for the parish; and (if she
lives in certain districts) probably attends early church" (p. 570). The
curate Smirke, born into the Clapham sect, adopts High Church beliefs and
practices, letting his hair grow long, going without dinner on Fridays,
putting candlesticks on his chapel table (which he calls an altar), and
dating his letters by Saints' Feasts and Vigils, while his church is

a little Anglo-Norman *bijou*, built the day before yesterday,
and decorated with all sorts of painted windows, carved saints'
heads, gilt *scripture* texts, and open pews (pp. 618-19)

The results of all these developments in English life were still in evi­
dence in the late 1840's—probably more so, since emigration was a more
pressing need in the light of the Irish potato famine, and issues of ritual ceremonial, and ecclesiastical architecture loomed larger as the High Church movement continued into the 1640's.¹ In his influential book The Progress of the Nation (1651) G.R. Porter was to draw attention to the growing interest shown during the previous ten years in the moral condition of society, and to the efforts made for the bettering of the physical condition of the labouring classes,² while the report on the census on religious belief and attendance at worship in the same year was to note that among the upper classes "the subject of religion has obtained of late a marked degree of notice, a regular church-attendance is now ranked among the recognized proprieties of life."³

On a more personal level, the Major's simple and overt worldliness, his lack of insight into "moral questions" (p. 873) is set against his nephew's more complex perceptions: even when he is willing both to run for Parliament and to make a loveless match for motives of personal aggrandisement, Pendennis is uneasy enough about it to rationalise his decision in a long speech to Warrington (Chapter 61), and when he finds that his seat and Blanche's fortune are only available to him because the Major has done a deal with Clavering, he refuses to stand, or to take Blanche with any more than her original fortune. As the illustration which appeared on the cover of each number (and, slightly varied, on the cover of the complete novel) shows, he is meant to be seen as torn between the claims of carnal pleasure and evil, and those of domesticity and religion.

³ Quoted in W.L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise, p. 271.
By the time we reach Pendennis's speech on "The Day of the World," the novel is just as concerned with contemporary society as with recreating the world of Thackeray's youth: Pendennis's and Warrington's argument about whether it is justifiable merely to accept the status quo for the sake of getting on in the world, is treated as an issue which must also confront Thackeray's readers (pp. 800-1). And whereas in Vanity Fair Thackeray related the world of 1613-30 to his own time while remaining very accurate in his allusions to specific people and events, Pendennis contains several anachronisms. For example when Blanche Amory comes to Clavering as a young woman just after Pendennis's failure at Oxbridge, when it must be about 1633, she is said to have "been in love with Prince Rodolph and Prince Djalma while she was yet at school" (p. 284), but the books in which these characters appear, Eugène Sue's Les Mystères de Paris and Le Juif errant, were not published till 1842-43 and 1844-45 respectively. And her mother's ignorance of Tennyson, mentioned by Pendennis in chapter 61 as one result of her lack of education (p. 794) would not have been unusual in the late 1830's, as the two volumes he had published by then had been little noticed, while Queen's College, supposedly of interest to upper-class women of the time, was not actually founded till 1848. It is however in Pendennis's discussions of religion and politics towards the end of the novel that concern with contemporary issues is most clear.

In 1849-50 there was still great interest in the "Sanitary and Colonisation questions" which Pendennis gets up from Blue Books (p. 897) - the former had been brought to public attention again by the cholera outbreaks of summer, 1849, in which 6,500 Londoners had died in September alone, and the latter by the publication of Samuel Sidney's Australian Hand-Book in 1848 and Edward Gibbon Wakefield's Art of Colonisation the following year.
Pendennis's comment that the Liberal Conservatives "have done for the nation what the Whigs could never have done without them" (p. 696) would only have made sense after 1641, when this party (under Peel) first came to power. But the most obvious anachronism occurs when he comes to explain how difficult it is to decide on which side religious truth lies:

"I see [the truth] ... in that man, who, driven fatally by the remorseless logic of his creed, gives up every thing, friends, fame, dearest ties, closest vanities, the respect of an army of Churchmen, the recognized position of a leader, and passes over, truth-impelled, to the enemy, in whose ranks he is ready to serve henceforth as a nameless private soldier: — I see the truth in that man, as I do in his brother, whose logic drives him to quite a different conclusion, and who, after having passed a life in vain endeavour to reconcile an irreconcilable book, flings it at last down in despair, and declares, with tearful eyes, and hands up to heaven, his revolt and recantation (pp. 801-2)

This is clearly a reference to John Henry Newman and his brother Francis, but the former was not received into the Roman Catholic Church till 1845, while the latter's account of the changes in his religious belief which led to his rejection of historical Christianity, Phases of Faith, was not published till 1850. It is therefore hardly surprising that a writer in the Weekly Chronicle, which was reviewing the novel as it came out in parts, should remark at the end that he had come to see it as "a series of papers of which every new section reproduces or suggests some substantial feature of the social philosophy of our age."¹ A writer in the Prospective Review, moreover, saw Pendennis as representative of a specifically modern sensibility: the self-consciousness of many characters in modern fiction mirrors

"one phase of our own daily life," in that they are continually "striving, not to act out their inmost selves, but to determine, throughout the detail of action, what their inmost selves would really be about." Scott's novel are however quite different, in that they could even encourage their readers to "look on the fortunes and retributions of life, as a more simple, straightforward and visible conflict between the powers of light and darkness than they really are."¹

¹ "David Copperfield, and Pendennis," Prospective Review, 7 (1851), 157-91, at 176-77.
The Newcomes, which was published in twenty-four numbers from October 1853 to August 1855, and in book form in the latter year, deals with the period from the late eighteenth century till the early 1840's, and shares with Pendennis both an intermittently nostalgic tone and a concern with the society of the time in which it was written. However the opening, which recounts several well-known fables, reminds us that there is "nothing new under and including the sun" (p. 5), a point that is made several times later in the novel. The illustration on the cover of each part also showed eight scenes from the fables in Chapter 1.

The story is narrated by Pendennis, who is also a character in it, and this raises the question of the narrator's role as historian - how he acquired his information about events and conversations at which he was not present. At the beginning of Chapter 24, for example, he points out that the narrative

is written maturely and at ease, long after the voyage is over, whereof it recounts the adventures and perils; the winds adverse and favourable; the storms, shoals, shipwrecks, islands, and so forth, which Clive Newcome met in his early journey in life.

He then goes on to stress the random and arbitrary nature of the development in such a story:

In such a history events follow each other without necessarily having a connexion with one another. One ship crosses another ship, and after a visit from one captain to his comrade, they sail away each on his course. The Clive Newcome meets a vessel which makes signals that she is short of bread and water; and after supplying her, our captain leaves her to see her no more.

Furthermore he candidly admits that, as the writer in possession of Clive's "log," he "dresses up the narrative in his own way; utters his own remarks
in place of Newcome's, makes fanciful descriptions of individuals and inci-
dents with which he never could have been personally acquainted." He records
dialogues he never could have witnessed and supplies motives which were
never confided to him, forming his narrative as best he can "out of stray
papers, conversations reported to him, and his knowledge, right or wrong,
of the characters of the persons engaged." But this is no more that what pro-
fessional historians do - many of the descriptions in "Cook's Voyages" are
known to have been invented by Dr. Hawkesworth; Sallust and Livy write ora-
tions no more authentic than the speeches he attributes to Clive and the Co-
lonel, and historians like Mr James, Professor Alison, - and Robinson Crusoe -
all deal much in guesses and conjectures, the outcome of which is "printed
in exactly the same type as the most ascertained patent facts" (pp. 296-97).
Furthermore, the story of one man's personal life is just as important as
the material with which historians generally deal: earlier, in describing
Clive's childhood, Pendennis has also pointed out that there is another side
to the history of the British in India apart from that "official history
which fills Gazettes and embroiders banners with names of victory" - there
is the grief of the women left behind in England, and the sorrow of the pa-
rents in India forced to send their children back there so that they may
have some chance of surviving (p. 66). This is of course what had happened
to Thackeray as a child. In Guy Mannering Scott had also shown the private
history behind the public history of Mannering's military exploits, but his
story was hardly as typical as Clive's.

The opening of The Newcomes, from the scene at the Cave of Harmony soon
after the Colonel's return from India, through a retrospective of the Newcor
family history, is notoriously complicated, moving as it does from the first

1 "Mr James" was actually the historical novelist G.P.R. James, who
had been appointed official historiographer to the queen - an indication of
the lack of demarcation between history and fiction in this period.
Thomas Newcome's arrival in London during the American war of Independence, back to speculations about his birth, on to his marriage to Sophia Hobson, back to his first marriage to Susan and the birth of the future Colonel, on to an account of the Newcomes' life at Clapham and the boy's troubled childhood and love affair, and ending with a series of letters received by the Colonel in India, concerning Mme de Florac's married life, Honeyman's early career, Clive's childhood, and Sophia Newcome's death. Thomas Newcome's marriage to Sophia Hobson takes place presumably some time in the 1790's, since the Clapham sect was established after John Venn became rector there in 1792, and he dies in 1812 ("about the time the French emperor was meeting with his Russian reverses," p. 21) several years after his eldest son has gone to India. Further difficulties arise however in the main part of the story. The time of the Colonel's return from India is "not twenty years since" (p. 56) - 1833, to be precise, since his mufti-coat, bought in 1821, is twelve years old. (p. 96). It is therefore disconcerting to read a few chapters later that "[w]e are writing of George the Fourth's reign" (p. 182), since that king had died in 1830. Not long after his father's return Clive goes to Paris and writes to Pendennis in praise of Carlyle's description of the mob's pursuit of Louis XVI during the French revolution - a reference to his History of the French Revolution, published in 1837. In response Pendennis sends him Fred Hayham's reviews of the Royal Academy exhibition, in which the critic asks, "[w]hy have we no picture of the sovereign and her august consort from Smee's brush?" (p. 278), a question which would have been meaningless before Queen Victoria's marriage in 1840. Clive's later visit to the Haunt in Chapter 26 is said to take place more than three years after his father's arrival from India (p. 319), which suggests a date of about 1837. Soon after this Clive meets the Vicomte de Florac at Baden,
who says he married Miss Higg during the July Revolution fifteen years be-
fore. As the Revolution occurred in 1630, it is puzzling that it should now
be 1845, unless we are to assume that the Vicomte only feels as if he has
been married that long. Pendennis's and Laura's visit to Newcome, during
which Lady Clara elopes with Lord Highgate, must occur some time during the
1640's (see p. 748). Clearly several years pass after this, but it is diffi-
cult to locate the specific period. Thackeray's own notes list the following
chronology, locating many of the main events in the early 1840's:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Colonel goes away</td>
<td>August 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clive goes to Baden</td>
<td>October 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>returns to England</td>
<td>June 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Highgate &amp; Lord Worthing die</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Clive] meets Ethel in Paris</td>
<td>May 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Brian dies</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pendennis marries</td>
<td>September 43,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Clive] meets the company</td>
<td>May 44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subtitle of the novel is Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family, and
in anatomising the "respectability" to which many members and connections of
the Newcome family lay claim, Thackeray through Pendennis is clearly attack-
ing values which he saw as persisting at the time of writing—for example,
in the strictures on "British virtue" in Chapter 26:

Gnats are shut out of its ports, or not admitted without scrutiny
and repugnance, whilst herds of camels are let in ... Virtue is
very often shameful according to the English social constitution,
and shame honourable. Truth, if yours happens to differ from your
neighbour's, provokes your friend's coldness, your mother's tears,
the world's persecution. Love is not to be dealt in, save under
restrictions which kill its sweet healthy free commerce. Sin in
man is so light, that scarce the fine of a penny is imposed:
while for woman it is so heavy, that no repentance can wash it out.
"Ah yes! all stories are old. You proud matrons in your May Fair
markets, have you never seen a virgin sold, or sold one? Have you

1 Quoted in Edgar F. Harden, The Emergence of Thackeray's Serial Fiction
(Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1979), p. 345. Note that Penden-
ish's marriage is fixed at a later date than seemed likely at the end of
Pendennis.
never heard of a poor wayfarer fallen among robbers, and not a Pharisee to help him? of a poor woman fallen more sadly yet, abject in repentance and tears, and a crowd to stone her? (p. 360)

The biblical references suggest too that, as in Vanity Fair, Thackeray is also concerned with the recurrent failings of human nature. In The Newcomes intolerance and lack of charity to sinners is embodied in Mrs Hobson Newcome, who sees every misfortune of others as a reason to congratulate herself on her own virtue, while Barnes profits from the light penalty imposed on male sexual licence, and Lady Clara suffers most from the sexual double standard. The selling of May Fair virgins is of course a central theme of the novel, leading to the disastrous marriage between Barnes and Lady Clara, and almost to a loveless match between Ethel and the corrupt and stupid Marquis of Farintosh.

The concern for respectability and the hypocrisy it encourages is more pervasive in the period covered by The Newcomes than it had been in the time in which Vanity Fair is set, when vice was more open. But already in 1833 Bulwer had observed the great importance attached to respectability, "which may certainly exclude virtue, but never a decent sufficiency of wealth." His "most respectable man" Mrarm has affinities with Barnes: he forswore his best friend who was imprisoned for failing in trade, seduced a woman and left her penniless when he married, but pays his bills regularly, subscribes to six public charities, and goes to Church with all his family on Sundays. Mrs Hobson Newcome's expressions of contempt for the fashionable society she is secretly longing to enter is also an example of what Bulwer had called "social fagging," where "the fag loathed his master, but not the system by which one day he himself might be permitted to fag."¹ Her preten-

¹ England and the English, pp. 34, 76, 164, 268.
tious parties, designed to show off her political, scientific and artistic "lions" (Chapter 8) recall Harriet Martineau's article of 1837, "Literary Lionism," describing the ambitions of hostesses to display their eminent acquaintance and to use them to attract other guests.\(^1\) But Thackeray's social criticism was equally relevant to the early 1850's. In 1851 G.R. Porter observed that

> With the self-denying doctrines of Christianity on our lips, we present a practical denial of them in our lives, which are given up in a greater degree than ever to self-aggrandisement.

while Clough's mid-century poem "The Latest Decalogue" attributed to his own time commandments like "[n]o graven images may be/orshipped, except the currency:"", "[a]t church on Sunday to attend/ill serve to keep the world thy friend:"", "[t]hou shalt not steal; an empty feat/When it's so lucrative to cheat:"", and "[t]hou shalt not covet; but tradition/approves all forms of competition."\(^3\) And with reference to sexual morality, John S. Smith queried whether any real progress had been made since the eighteenth century:

> it is one thing to have hooted immorality into concealment, and another to have actually lessened the sum of immorality ... have we so driven immorality in, to fester even more foully in its hidden channels, or are we more moral in our lives, thoughts, and conversations, individually and nationally, than we were in those days of blatant prodigality?\(^4\)

And Thackeray himself satirised the social hostesses of the 1850's and their pursuit of distinguished guests in "The Lion-Huntress of Belgravia."\(^5\)

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2 The Progress of the Nation, p. 681.
3 quoted in Altick, Victorian People and Ideas, pp. 176-77.
4 Social Topics (1850), pp. 63-64, quoted in Trudgill, Madonnas and Magdalens, p. 130.
5 Punch, 24 and 31 August, and 21 September, 1850; rpt. The Oxford Thackeray, VIII, 507-22.
In 1851 D.M. Moir had even published a series of lectures in which, like
Barnes, he discussed the work of Mrs Hemans and L.E.L., and enthused over the
former much as we can imagine Barnes having done:

her forte lay in depicting whatever tends to beautify and embellish
domestic life, by purifying the passions and by sanctifying the
affections ... - the gentle sufferings of love and friendship -
"home-bred delights and heartfelt happiness" - the glowing associa-
tions of local attachment - and the influence of religious feel-
ings over the soul."

Coventry Patmore's best-selling poem of 1854-56, The Angel in the House,
also dealt with the sanctity of the domestic affections.

Two other subjects of the novel with resonances for the 1850's are the
Newcome divorce case and the life of gentleman pensioners at Greyfriars.
The latter has already been discussed by Gordon N. Ray and John Carey,
who explain how the Colonel's description of his life at Greyfriars, with
"'good quarters, good food, good light and fire, and good friends'" (p. 955)
obviously contradicts the 1852 Household Words account of the conditions in
which gentlemen-pensioners lived at Charterhouse, the model for Greyfriars.

Before writing about the Newcome divorce case, Thackeray looked up the case
of Norton vs. Melbourne, in which George Norton had accused the then Prime
Minister, Lord Melbourne, of adultery with his wife Caroline. Since Mrs
Norton and Melbourne were innocent and he was acquitted, the case did not
really have much in common with Newcome vs. Highgate, except in that the
prosecution in both cases presented the husbands as deeply betrayed and in-
jured. However public wrangling between the Nortons continued for years,
and Mrs Norton was in the public eye in 1854-55 with the publication of her

1 Sketches of the Poetical Literature of the Past Half-Century (Edin-
2 Ray, Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom (1847-1863), pp. 272-73, 475n.9;
3 "Letter to Mrs Carmichael-Smyth," 6-7 March 1855, in Thackeray Letter
III, 428.
4 Times, 23 June 1836, pp. 2-5.
two pamphlets, *English Laws for English Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1854) and *A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill* (1855). Mrs Norton pointed out that under the current and the proposed legislation, women could sue for separation only on the grounds of "cruelty that endangers life and limb," and not at all if she once condoned such cruelty, nor could she defend herself in court if sued for divorce on the grounds of adultery, or even leave her husband.¹ Dickens' *Hard Times*, appearing concurrently with *The Newcomes* in 1854 and set in contemporary England, deals with the vulnerability to sexual temptation of a woman trapped in a loveless mercenary marriage, and also with the impossibility of divorce for those not wealthy enough to afford a private Bill.

As in *Pendennis* references to changes which have occurred between the time in which the novel is set and some earlier period reinforce our sense of Thackeray's preoccupation with contemporary society. For example the Colonel's literary preferences are contrasted with those of Olive and his friends. He admires Johnson, Addison, Byron and Scott, but they declare that Johnson "talked admirably, but did not write English," Addison was only an elegant essayist, and shallow trifler," Byron "no great poet, though a very clever man," and Scott a "poet of the second order," and they set up Wordsworth, Keats and Tennyson as the great poets of their time (pp. 260-61). This conversation is supposed to take place in about 1834, and although the critical reputations of Byron and Scott as poets was in decline by the early 1830's,² Keats was read by few people except other poets till the late 1840's; while Tennyson's real popularity came with *The Princess* in 1847.

But if Thackeray is interested in showing what the society of his time is like, he is also concerned with how it got that way. Thomas Newcome marries into the Clapham Sect, the Anglican evangelical group established in Clapham parish in the 1790's under the aegis of the Rev. John Venn. The leading figure was of course Wilberforce; others included the Thorntons, a wealthy banking family, Pitt's brother-in-law Edward Eliot, East India Company Director James Grant, former Governor-General of India Lord Teignmouth, barrister James Stephen, and Sachary Macaulay (father of the historian). They concerned themselves with spreading the Gospel at home and abroad, agitating for the abolition of the slave trade, and expending large sums to better the condition of the poor. In the novel, however, although Sophia Newcome's piety and charitableness are presented as genuine enough, Thackeray mocks the sect's preoccupation with converting "Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Papists," points up what he sees as their fundamental worldliness, and draws attention to the way in which narrow standards of morality can encourage both intolerance and hypocrisy. There were, it is said, "not more savoury fleshpots than at Clapham," and "no finer grapes, peaches, or pineapples, in all England" (pp. 18-19). Moreover because of her wealth the "clerical gentlemen" pray for Mrs Newcome "before they thought of asking any favour for her husband" (p. 21). When very young the future Colonel is warned of the punishment meted out to wicked little children, and ordered to be whipped for upsetting his little brothers in a go-cart, although his step-mother feels "unaffected pity" for the lashing of negro slaves (p. 27). Having found him coming back drunk from Epsom races, Mrs Newcome decides that such a "castaway" can no longer be brought up with the "two little cherubs" her sons, and when he falls in love with the "Papist" Léonore de Florac, he is packed quickly off to India (pp. 30-34). In Pendennis
Thackeray had registered the widening impact of the Evangelical movement over the first half of the century in his account of the influence of Mr Simcoe and his Chapel of Ease on Clavering (pp. 170-71); later when an inaccurate version of Fendennis's liaison with Fanny Bolton reaches the "happy village" Simcoe, "rather pleased than otherwise" to have his prejudices against Fendennis reinforced, preaches a sermon against "the dangers of London, and the crime of reading or writing novels" to a large congregation of "admirable moralists" who take his wickedness for granted (p. 639). In The Newcomes he suggests that the repression of natural feeling demanded by Clapham's "serious paradise" enables Sophia's sons and grandson to sow their wild oats while retaining a calm and pious exterior: Brian and Hobson go to the play and Opera, but at home are "'as mum as Quakers at a meeting'" (p. 60), while Barnes hopes to "take his pleasure decorously, and sow his wild oats ... not broadcast after the fashion of careless scatter-brained youth, but trimly and neatly, where the crop can come up unobserved, and be taken in without bustle or scandal" (p. 103), but never misses church or shows the effects of a hangover. The evident respect for wealth shown in the novel at Clapham, which in real life Sir James Stephen acknowledged as a source of Wilberforce's influence, also continues into the next generation, while the habit of household prayers, a Clapham Sect innovation, has in Sir Brian's family become an empty ritual which has no ramifications for anyone's behaviour during the rest of the day (pp. 115-67), while Sophia Newcome's self-righteous intolerance is manifested in a stronger and more smug fashion in her daughter-in-law Mrs Hobson Newcome.

Thackeray's unsympathetic treatment of the Clapham Sect is in some ways unfair, and he is probably transposing into the past the more rigid and intolerant evangelical attitudes of his own time which were fostered by the narrow and puritanical "Recordite" sect which emerged in the late 1820's, and by the alarm at the supposedly "Popish" practices and doctrines of the Tractarians. His views were also no doubt influenced by the evangelicalism of his mother, which she tried to impose on him and later on his daughters: writing to Anne in 1852 he had recalled that at her age (fifteen - i.e. in about 1826) he "was accustomed to hear and read a great deal of the evangelical (so called) doctrine and got an extreme distaste for that sort of composition." He goes on to attack dogmatism of all kinds, as leading inevitably to the persecution of unbelievers. In *Marianne Thornton*, a biography of one of the Clapham Thorntons and his own great-aunt, E.M. Forster claims that Thackeray fails to get to the "depths" of the Clapham Sect. For all their "earnestness and pious phraseology" and their concern for "[prayer]ers before plenty. But plenty!", life at the Thorntons' house was not narrow and stuffy: the adults did not deny amusement to children and were disinclined to inflict pain on others - the atmosphere was rather one of "affections, comfort, piety, integrity, intelligence, public activity, private benevolence." 

The fact that by the time the main part of the story begins the Newcomes' religious observance has become a cloak for vice, or else a social convention by which they can reinforce their "respectability" means that there is ample scope for a charlatan like Charles Honeyman to take advantage

1 Bradley calls it "grossly exaggerated", p. 27.
of passing trends. Histrionic preaching which aimed at "starring" the preacher and making his fortune seems to have been a problem at least since the first decade of the century. Robert Southey, writing in 1807, had criticised preachers whose sermons were like theatrical performances, and contained nothing but "a little smooth morality ... sparkling with metaphors and similes"; their main aim was to become wealthy via marriage.\(^1\) Elisabeth Jay has pointed out that Honeyman's career has similarities with that of Edward Irving, whose emotional preaching had great impact during the late 1820's and early 1830's; in his case power without responsibility had led to the dilution of his doctrine and to the growth of the cult of the individual minister.\(^2\) And in the year Thackeray began The Newcomes, the Rev. W.J. Conybeare had attacked Recordite preachers who aimed to avoid the responsibilities of pastoral care by setting up chapels in large towns in which to preach to big crowds of wealthy and educated disciples.\(^3\) While the Colonel is still in India, Honeyman borrows money from him to buy Lady Hittlessea's chapel in May Fair, and by the time of his return, has become a very successful preacher, especially among wealthy women (pp. 146-49). But Honeyman's career is also related specifically to the Oxford Movement. In order to restore his waning popularity, Herrick the Jewish wine-merchant, who will undertake anything likely to be profitable, sets him up with the paraphernalia of the High Church – narrow scarf, ephod cut close and short, sleeves of the surplice trimmed with lace, long curling hair, professional singers, flowers, Gothic lettering on the organ-loft and galleries to give the place

\(^2\) The Religion of the Heart, pp. 60, 123.  
\(^3\) "Church Parties," Edinburgh Review, 98 (1853), 273-342, at 293-96.
a medieval look. Meanwhile "red Bayham has engineered a public controversy over Honeyman's allegedly "Popish practices" to further enhance his fame and popularity (580ff).

Set against the hypocrisy and worldly ambitions of most of the rest of the family is the Bohemian life of Clive and his friends. Thackeray himself had tried unsuccessfully to become a painter in Paris and London over 1833-35, and Gandish's studio is based on Henry Sass's art school in Bloomsbury at which he had studied in 1833-34. However as in Pendennis there is much nostalgic reminiscence about the time of youth as such, which is not tied to any specific period. This starts in the very opening scene at the Cave of Harmony:

There was once a time when the sun used to shine brighter than it appears to do in this latter half of the nineteenth century; when the zest of life was certainly keener; when tavern wines seemed to be delicious, and tavern dinners the perfection of cookery; when the perusal of novels was productive of immense delight, and the monthly advent of magazine-day was hailed as an exciting holiday .... when it seemed necessary to purchase a grand silver dressing-case, so as to be ready for the beard that was not yet born...

There are several other rather sentimental comments on the joys of youth - for example:

Mr. Clive Newcome, who has long since shaved his beard, who has become a family man, and has seen the world in a thousand different phases, avers that his life as an art-student at home and abroad was the pleasantest part of his whole existence (p. 215)

"ah! pleasant days, happy old dingy chambers illuminated by youthful sunshine! merry songs and kind faces - it is pleasant to recall you! Some of those bright eyes shine no more; some of those smiling lips do not speak. Some are not less kind, but sadder than in those days; of which the memories revisit us for a moment and sink back into the grey past (p. 288)

The description of artistic life does not in itself evoke the past, and the equivocal social status of art which is the cause of Ethel's rejection of Ulysses and of the rest of the family's contempt for him is seen as persisting at the time of writing - the "social station" of the "Muse of Painting" is "not altogether recognized with us as yet" (p. 339). Historical painting, the genre officially encouraged by the Royal Academy as "high art," and including subjects taken from legend, the Bible, Shakespeare and Scott, still offered a target for satire: "Dick Tinto" is a "kind chirping artist" treated comically in the Introduction to Scott's Bride of Lammermoor (1819).

Insofar as the life of the young artists in the novel can be compared with Thackeray's youthful experiences, the fictional version is a romanticised one. In October 1833 he had written to his mother from Paris:

>"... The artists with their wild ways & their poverty are the happiest fellows in the world ... - Yesterday we had a breakfast for five consisting of 5 sausages 3 loaves & a bottle of wine for 15 sous; there were no plates or knives accordingly the meat was carved by the fingers - afterwards pipes succeeded & the songs imitations of all the singers in Paris they are admirable musicians."
soul" and a "gentle creature," and as for his friends:

The kindest folks alive I have found among those scowling whiskeraddles. They open oysters with their yataghans, toast muffins on their rapiers, and fill their Venice glasses with half-and-half. If they have money in their lean purses, be sure they have a friend to share it. What innocent gaiety, what jovial suppers on threadbare clothes, and wonderful songs after; what pathos, merriment, humour does not a man enjoy who frequents their company (p. 215)

Moreover, whereas Thackeray himself had found it difficult to make progress with his painting, writing to his mother in July 1835 that he was "as thoroughly disheartened as a man could be" since he can "do nothing" although he thinks he has "got the stuff to make as good a painter as the very best of them,"¹ in the novel it is said of art students:

Their work is for the most part delightfully easy. It does not exercise the brain too much, but gently occupies it, and with a subject most agreeable to the scholar ... If you pass his door you will very probably hear him singing at his easel (pp. 507-8)

A couple of passages do however draw attention more specifically to changes which occurred between about 1830 and 1853-55. One compares the wild youth of Lord Kew with the manners of the present. Because the "spirit of the age" appears "to equalize all ranks" and make people "more peaceable and polished," young aristocrats of the 1850's can no longer amuse themselves by driving mail-coaches or by boxing and watching boxing-matches:

Young gentlemen went eagerly to Moulsey to see the Slasher punch the Pet's head, or the Negro beat the Jew's nose to a jelly.... To travel in coaches, to drive coaches, to know coachmen and guards, to laugh with the jolly hostess in the bar, to chuck the pretty chambermaid under the chin, were the delight of men who were young not very long ago (p. 137)

Lord Kew had "kept race-horses, patronized boxers, fought a duel, thrashed a Life Guardsman, gambled furiously at Crockford's," (p. 138), and, as we learn later, had affairs with a large number of women. On the other hand, the faults of the Marquis of Tarintosh are attributed to the fact that people have deferred to him all his life, and this servility towards the "Princekins of private life" is clearly seen as persisting in the 1850's (pp. 698-700).

Another passage describes Olive's and Pendennis's visit to a tavern called the Haunt (in about 1836), and is for the most part both maudlin and flaccidly written. The old journalist "om arjent is described as "one of the old boys; a good old scholar with a good old library of books" who will "never troll a chorus more." At this tavern "painters, sculptors, men of letters, actors used to congregate, passing pleasant hours in rough, kindly communion" (p. 316), singing "brave old songs ... kindly ballads in praise of love and wine; famous maritime ditties in honour of old Angland" (p. 317). In fact, "[t]he time is not very long since, though to-day is so changed."

More specifically:

In the days when the Haunt was a haunt, stage coaches were not yet quite over. Casinos were not invented; clubs were rather rare luxuries: there were sanded floors, triangular sawdust-boxes, pipes, and tavern parlours. Youngsmith and Brown, from the Temple, did not go from chambers to dine at the Polyanthus, or the Megatherium, off potage à la Bisque, turbot au gratin, cotelettes à la what-d'you-call-'em, and a pint of St. Émilion; but ordered their beefsteak and pint of port from the "plump head waiter at the Cock": did not disdain the pit of the theatre; and for a supper a homely refection at the tavern. How delightful are the suppers in Charles Lamb to read of even now! - the cards - the punch - the candles to be snuffed - the social oysters - the modest cheer! whoever snuffs a candle now? "a hundred years ago is a hundred years off - so much has our social life changed in those five lustres (pp. 316-17)."
Thackeray's letters and diary of the early 1830's are full of references to tavern-dining, but in his youth the suppers of Charles Lamb were already a thing of the past. Lamb himself, having had to move in middle age to Enfield, wrote in 1822, "I have lived to a time of life to have outlived the good hours, the nine-o'clock suppers ... Now you cannot get tea before that hour." Thackeray looks back on the social life of the recent past, as does Scott in Guy Mannering, but unlike Scott, who recalls the great names of the Scottish enlightenment as well as the drinking habits of the 1760's, Thackeray is interested in the old social customs but not in the people who actually attended Lamb's suppers — men such as Charles Kemble, Hazlitt, Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Clive's and Kew's youthful pleasures are obviously meant to contrast with the lives led by Barnes, Sir Brian, Mrs Hobson Newcome, Lady Kew et al., but since most of the events in the novel are not fixed in any particular period of the recent past, whereas Clive's and Kew's youth is generally described in a sentimentally nostalgic tone, it is as if the novel is being written about two different periods. Thackeray wants both to castigate the society of his time and indulge in reminiscences of his youth. In one of his Roundabout Papers he was later to declare:

"A man can be alive in 1860 and 1830 at the same time, don't you see? Foolsily, I may be in 1860, inert, silent, torpid; but in the spirit I am walking about in 1826, let us say; — in a blue dress coat and brass buttons, a sweet figured silk waistcoat (which I button round a slim waist with perfect ease), looking at beautiful beings with gigot sleeves and tea-tray hats under the golden chestnuts of the Tuileries, or around the Place Vendôme, where the drapeau blanc is floating from the statueless column..."

2 Thomas Noon Talfourd, Final Memorials of Charles Lamb (London: Edward Moxon, 1848), II, 116ff
Occasionally however the treatment of the past is more complex. At the beginning of Chapter 47 of *The Newcomes* Pendennis again declares that his narrative is as authentic as other histories, and compares himself to scientists like Professors Owen and Agassiz who build an "enormous forgotten monster" of thousands of years ago out of "a fragment of bone." Sir Richard Owen, an authority on fossil mammals, was also the first to show that ancient monsters were structurally different from modern lizards, while the paleontologist Louis Agassiz was the first to advance the idea that the earth had been subjected to a long reign of snow and ice. Pendennis as novelist/historian believes his conjectures about the mental and emotional life of people living in the recent past are as reliable as Owen's and Agassiz's conjectures about the physical appearance of creatures who lived in the remote past. The reconstruction of prehistoric mammals was topical in 1854–55, since Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins had built replicas of the monsters in the grounds of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, and 40,000 spectators had seen Queen Victoria and Prince Albert open the new dinosaur park in June 1854.¹ The novelist/historian's task is also compared to that of the physiologist, who depicts the size, habits, appearance and structure of various animals. Pendennis then goes on to describe the old garden of the Hôtel de Florac:

Suppose then, in the quaint old garden of the Hôtel de Florac, two young people are walking up and down in an avenue of lime-trees, which are still permitted to grow in that ancient place. In the centre of that avenue is a fountain, surmounted by a Triton so grey and moss-eaten, that though he holds his conch to his swelling lips, curling his tail in the arid basin, his instrument has had a sinecure for at least fifty years, and did not think fit even to play when the Bourbons, in whose time he was erected,

came back from their exile. At the end of the lime-tree avenue is a broken-nosed damp Faun with a marble panpipe who pipes to the spirit ditties which I believe never had any tune. The perron of the hôtel is at the other end of the avenue; a couple of Caesars on either side of the door-window, from which the inhabitants of the hôtel issue into the garden—Caracalla frowning over his mouldy shoulder at Nerva, on to whose clipped hair the roofs of the grey chateau have been dribbling for ever so many long years. There are more statues gracing this noble place. There is Cupid, who has been at the point of kissing Psyche this half-century at least, though the delicious event has never come off, through all those blazing summers and dreary winters; there is Venus and her Boy under the damp little dome of a cracked old Temple (pp. 616-17)

Present in the garden are three generations— the old M. de Florac in his chair, his melancholy wife, their son the abbé, their grandchildren, and Clive and Æthel. Meanwhile the hôtel next door, with a "new Chapel rising over the trees," had passed through the hands of a member of the Directory—so that "'no doubt in the groves of its garden, Madame Tallien, and Madame Récamier, and Madame Beauharnais have danced under the lamps"—a Marshal of the Empire, and eventually its legitimate owner, who sold it to the Convent. The dry fountain with its "grey and moss-eaten" Triton, the "broken-nosed damp Faun," the equally damp Nerva and mouldy Caracalla, the "cracked old Temple" all evoke an atmosphere of decay, imaged in human terms in the decrepit M. de Florac. The allusion to the Cupid who has not kissed Psyche over fifty years recalls the emotional and sexual frustration of Mme de Florac and Colonel Newcome, the latter of whom, ironically, would not, as we know, have picked up the reference to Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Clive and Æthel are, like the lime-trees, "still permitted to grow in that ancient place," but the presence of the old Florac couple is a reminder of the outcome of a loveless marriage such as Æthel seems about to enter into with Farintosh. The history of the neighbouring hôtel also highlights the transience of human power, pleasure and of life itself. Madame Beauharnais of the Directory period was to become the Empress Josephine,
under the Empire, but was divorced by Napoleon and died in 1814. The Bourbons had indeed come back from exile in 1815, but were deposed again in 1830 by Louis-Philippe, whose court was "in its splendour" at the period in which this part of the novel is set (p. 610), but by the time Thackeray wrote this, France was ruled by Louis-Napoleon — both grandson and nephew—by-marriage of Mme Beauharnais. Nevertheless the new chapel perhaps indicates that piety such as that exemplified by Mme de Florac has undergone a revival.¹

¹ I am indebted to the fine and sensitive analysis of this passage by Jean Sudmann in her "The Philosopher's Property: Thackeray and the Use of Time," 360-63.
THACKERAY - CONCLUSION

In their first major novels dealing with the recent past both Scott and Thackeray focus on an important conflict, but in neither Waverley nor Vanity Fair does the novelist follow the obvious course of describing important battles in detail: Scott eschews "the province of history" and Thackeray refuses to "rank among the military novelists." Scott contrasts opposing cultures, and shows why the Highlanders were doomed to fail and what was lost when they did; Thackeray looks at the different ways in which Waterloo and the events preceding it affected people living at the time. Both pay little attention to real historical figures, but do draw on the careers of real people in creating a few of their fictional characters, and this heightens the sense of historical authenticity about the characters while freeing the novelist from the demands of strict biographical accuracy. Thackeray also shows how people enhance their own prestige by drawing attention to their own connections with the famous. Similarly, political issues and events as such play little role in the work of either novelist, but both show an awareness of how political views and ambitions are affected by personal feelings and motives. In Thackeray this is evident from the way Pendennis defends the status quo because he has been offered a seat, Sir Brian Newcome grumbles about "[t]he spirit of Radicalism abroad in this country" when the Newcome Independent attacks him (p. 192), and the Colonel stands against Barnes with no coherent political programme, merely a desire to be revenged on his nephew for personal slights.

As Scott and Thackeray move closer to their own time, the settings of their novels are less precisely located in the past, but both are also concerned to show how events become history. Scott demonstrates how in the years after the '45 Jacobitism itself gradually decayed but how men defined
their past in terms of their allegiance at that time, while Thackeray traces
the way in which Napoleon and Waterloo became part of the past and were
trivialised — Napoleon as a subject of a trite school essay, Waterloo as a
rhetorical device in journalism (in Pendennis) or an entertainment at Astley
(in The Newcomes). Sometimes too the past is distorted, as when Mannering
is remembered as a mysterious old astrologer, and Jos Sedley gains a reputa­
tion as a Waterloo hero.

In Scott's novels character is seen to be shaped partly by historical
conditions. In Thackeray's, it is true that Mrs Hobson Newcome, Sir Barnes,
and Honeyman would have been different if they had lived at a time offering
less scope for smug self-righteousness, hypocrisy, or concern for an appear­
ance of piety, and that Lord Steyne would not have flourished under Victoria
as he had under George IV. However Thackeray is more concerned than Scott
with universal human virtues and failings, and highlights this theme through
the feature of his novels in which they most clearly differ from Scott's —
the narratorial commentary. In Vanity Fair this continually draws attention
to the similarities between human conduct of past and present which transcend
superficial changes in manners, while in the later novels, where the sense
of the past is less strong, the tendency to generalise actually serves to
weaken it. In the later novels too, in keeping with their less cynical
tone, the commentary is sometimes used to arouse sympathy for the more attrac­
tive characters by making their experience seem typical, as for example in
this passage from Pendennis:

I suppose there is scarcely any man who reads this or another
novel but has been balked in love some time or the other, by
fate and circumstance, by falsehood of women, or his own fault.
Let that worthy friend recall his own sensations under the cir­
cumstances, and apply them as illustrative of Mr. Pen's anguish...
(p. 165)
On the other hand, when Thackeray does draw attention to differences between recent past and present, the important role of the narrative voice in his work means that he tends to be more emphatic about them than Scott. In 1856 Bernard Cracroft observed that "Thackeray seems to cling to his moral reflections as tenaciously as Walter Scott did to his descriptions." \(^1\) After Thackeray's death, Walter Bagehot commented that Scott "throws himself far away into fictitious worlds, and soars there without effort, without pain, and with increasing enjoyment," and although this underestimates I think the extent to which a sense of the contrasts between recent past and present is implicit in Scott's writing, it is true, as Bagehot goes on to say, that Thackeray's "thoughts were never long away from the close proximate scene," that he could not forget "the ever-attending, the ever-painful sense of himself." \(^2\)


As the title suggests, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, serialised in Blackwood's in 1857 and published in book form in 1858, is concerned particularly with the religious movements and beliefs of the recent past. But in introducing the series to John Blackwood, Lewes was careful to point out that the stories would consist of tales and sketches illustrative of the actual life of our country clergy about a quarter of a century ago; but solely in its human and not at all in its theological aspect; ... we have had abundant religious stories polemical and doctrinal, but since the "Vicar" and Miss Austen, no stories representing the clergy like any other class with the humours, sorrows, and troubles of other men."

Lewes is referring to the plethora of novels which had appeared by the 1850's, taking sides in the religious controversies of the day. William Gresley (1801-76) and Elizabeth Sewell (1815-1906) put forward the High Church viewpoint, while Charlotte Elizabeth" (Mrs Tonna, 1790-1846) used her novels to promote Evangelicalism. Kingsley's "Alton Locke, Tom Thurnall (in *Two Years Ago*, 1857) and Lancelot Smith (in *Yeast*, 1851) all resolve their doubts by adopting a Broad Church Anglicanism, while J.H. Newman charts his conversion to Catholicism in *Loss and Gain* (1848). At least one novel of this kind, Froude's *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849), with its record of the author's doubt and anguish, affected George Eliot deeply, for she described its impact on her by quoting the sestet of Keats's "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer."  

*Scenes of Clerical Life* can however be seen as a reaction not only against this kind of roman à thèse, but also against its sub-literary variant, 

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1 6 November 1856, in *Eliot Letters*, II, 269. "emphasis Lewes'.


3 "Letter to Sara Sophia Hennell," 16 April 1849, in *Eliot Letters*, I,
a kind of pastiche, combining characteristics of the "silver-fork" novels of fashionable life with those of novels of faith and doubt. George Eliot attacks these novels in her essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists."¹ Their heroines move in a world of balls, parties, improbable melodrama and eligible offers, but are made to mouth the authoresses' religious views in long, high-flown speeches. These novels, according to George Eliot, show no real knowledge of any class of society, and in fact the less the writer knows of real life, the more confidently she expresses her religious opinions about it: "the means by which she usually chooses to conduct you to true ideas of the invisible is a totally false picture of the visible."²

More directly relevant to Scenes of Clerical Life are her comments on the Evangelical version of this type of novel, what she called "white neck-cloth novels" - a "genteel tract on a large scale, intended as a sort of medicinal sweetmeat for Low Church young ladies," where "the vicissitudes of the tender passion are sanctified by saving views of Regeneration and the Atonement."³ The hero is usually a young curate, frowned upon, perhaps, by worldly mammas, but carrying captive the hearts of their daughters, who can 'never forget that sermon;' tender glances are seized from the pulpit stairs instead of the opera-box; tête à têtes are seasoned with quotations from Scripture, instead of quotations from the poets; and questions as to the state of the heroine's affections are mingled with anxieties as to the state of her soul.⁴

As this passage suggests, such novels show an awkward grafting of religious issues onto a conventional, sentimental love-intrigue, set in the fashionable and aristocratic world. For example, in one of the novels George Eliot dis-

² Essays, p. 311.
³ Essays, p. 317.
⁴ Essays, p. 318.
cusses, *The Old Grey Church*¹ (by Lady Caroline Lucy Scott), the hero, Evangelical curate Eustace Grey, combines piety with natural "refinement of taste and feeling" (I, 4) and a "naturally superior understanding," and because "there was so great a charm in his intelligent countenance, and simple open manners," he would not have been "déplacé" in any society (I, 125). The story deals mainly with his love for his cousin Lucy, who is given to the enjoyments of the fashionable world, but contains occasional outbursts of religious sentiment on the part of the hero or the narrator: when Eustace breaks off his clandestine engagement to Lucy, resolving to reveal all to her father, he exclaims (in the Coliseum!), "I leave all in the hands of our Heavenly Father. If He sees fit, He can bring even my heart's wild desires to pass; if not —" (I, 194). Crying for God's help, he suddenly hears the "Waning Hymn, the sound of which thrills to his "inmost soul" (I, 195). Later, on Lucy's receiving another proposal from Eustace, the narrator urges, "Apply to HIM, Lucy, and He will guide you aright" (II, 173), explaining that for Lucy, Eustace is the "one thing needful" (II, 235). Not surprisingly, in one of Eustace's last sermons, the preacher has a "look of almost divine inspiration ... in his eyes" and a "brilliant flush on his before-pallid face" reminiscent of "the description in Holy Writ of the martyr Stephen when ... 'they looking on him saw his face as it had been the face of an angel...'" (III, 294). According to George Eliot, a novelist should deal with the "real drama of Evangelicalism," which "lies among the middle and lower classes," rather than indulge in this excessive idealisation of the hero and efforts to give a routine love-story a pseudo-religious significance.

¹ 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1856).
² *Essays*, p. 318.
Of the three stories in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, two, "The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton" and "Janet's Repentance", are set in the 1830's, the period of George Eliot's youth, and can hence be considered together. The events of "Janet's Repentance" take place "more than a quarter of a century" ago, while "Amos Barton" opens with a description of Shepperton Church "five-and-twenty years ago" (I, 3), with the main part of the story taking place at the time when "the immense sale of the 'Pickwick Papers'" had been "recently completed" (I, 105) — that is, in 1837. George Eliot creates a sense of the past, and of the reader's distance from that past, partly through reference to particular historical events and developments. "Amos Barton" begins with allusions to the Tithe Commutation Act (1836), the New Police (1839) and the penny-post (1840) as examples of changes in the past twenty-five years (I, 4). The description of Milby in "Janet's Repentance" mentions that there is now a railway station (thus registering the most significant change of the past quarter-century), and gas-lighting, while the change from Mr Crewe's "arduous inacquaintance with Latin" conveyed to "three pupils in the upper grammar-school" to the crowded new school "conducted on reformed principles" (II, 59-60), is part of the widespread increase in literacy, expansion of school funding, and development of teacher-training which all occurred between the late 1830's and the early 1850's. Meanwhile the decline in the drunkenness prevalent at Milby reflects the effects of the temperance movement which came to the fore during the 1840's, and echoes the comment of a Blackwood's contributor of 1856.

1 *Scenes of Clerical Life*, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1858), II, 59. All subsequent citations will be from this edition.

2 Introduced in Nuneaton, on which Milby was based, in February 1837 — see the anonymous diary of Nuneaton events from 1810 to 1845, "Memorandum Book of Occurrences at Nuneaton," (Nuneaton Public Library), p. 118.


(J.H. Burton) that drinking had declined in the middle and lower classes.¹

As far as religious history is concerned, the changes evoked in the beginning of "Amos Barton" - the replacement of large pews restricted to particular families by benches open to all, the use of organs rather than the rustic bands of bassoon and key-bugles, and the substitution of hymns for the Old and New Versions - were all characteristic of the period between the late 1830's and 1860.² Charlotte Yonge's Chantry House (1886, set in 1827 and the years following), provides a similar if less sympathetic picture of a church service of the same period, in a church with stained walls, bricked-up windows, and singing gallery, and conducted by a top-booted parson with his orchestra of bassoon, clarionet, and fiddle.³

George Eliot draws attention also to the fact that Barton's poverty results from the abuse of plurality, where one clergyman could hold several livings and delegate all but one to curates, taking part of the proceeds from each. The pluralities act of 1838 was to limit such benefices to two per person, with a joint value of £1,000 only, and George Eliot registers this fact in "Janet's Repentance" when she mentions that Milby now has a resident rector instead of a curate (II, 59). In "Amos Barton" she lays particular emphasis on the change by assuming initially that the reader may be ignorant of it (I, 9-10), and later has Carpe remove Barton from his curacy so that his own brother-in-law may take it up (I, 144-45). The reference to Barton's emulation of Simeon, Thomas Scott and John Newton establishes his roots in the Evangelical tradition, but when he, like they, combines strong Calvinist beliefs with a fervent support of "ecclesiastical powers and functions" it is

less from conviction than from a muddle-headed desire to bewilder the Dissenting opposition with his "wisdom of the serpent" (I, 26-27). His insensitive and tactless warnings to Mrs Brick and Master Fodge of the tortures of hell (I, 48-51) are a kind of reductio ad absurdum of the Evangelical preoccupation with the necessity for salvation.

On a more positive note, Barton's and Tryan's establishment of lending libraries in Shepperton and Milby, Tryan's attempt to start weekly lectures and his ministry to the poor, and Barton's Tract Society, are all measures typical of Evangelicals of the early part of the century. In his 1853 article "Church Parties" which George Eliot mentioned at the time as being very much talked of, J. Coneybear had praised the efforts of the early Evangelicals to lighten the "profound darkness" of the English peasantry by their teaching and example:

They were the establishers of Sunday schools, of Infant Schools, and lending libraries. By weekly lectures in the sequestered hamlets of their parishes, they brought the teaching of the Church to the door of the most distant cottage.

Dempster's hostility to Tryan's efforts, and the language in which it is expressed in his talk and his mock playbill, reflect popular opposition to the Evangelical movement of the period. Just as Dempster calls his entertainment "The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing, or The Methodist in a Mask," a very popular tract circulated in the first thirty years of the century by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge attacks the Evangelicals for being disguised Dissenters, while Gladstone recalls that tracts of the

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2 See her letter to Charles Bray, 29 October 1853, in Eliot Letters, II, 121.

3 Edinburgh Review 98 (1853), 280.
period directed against Evangelicals used language "which was not only insolent, but almost libellous."¹

Given the views set out in her essay on Riehl, it is clear that George Eliot would hope that the detail and comprehensiveness of her portrayal of the society of the period would serve to arouse the readers' sympathies for the people of the recent past. Contemporary reviewers invariably singled out for praise the stories' social realism, commenting on their "candid and inclusive appreciation of life and character," the "freshness, vivacity, and sweetness" of the "descriptions of simple life in a country village" such that the "greater part of each story reads like a reminiscence of real life."² The stories were said to show "a sobriety ... compatible with strength" and "a combination of humour and pathos in depicting ordinary situations."³ But in this context the tone of the narratorial commentary towards the people, practices and institutions of the recent past is all-important, particularly since the gap between George Eliot's characters on the one hand and many of her readers on the other would have been not only historical but also social and cultural. This tone varies, however, between "Amos Barton" and "Janet's Repentance" and within each story.

The contrast is perhaps best demonstrated by comparing the respective opening chapters. "Amos Barton" begins with the recollection of Shepperton Church as it was twenty-five years before, and the narrator admits to

revelling in regret that dear, old, brown, crumbling, picturesque inefficiency is everywhere giving place to spick-and-span new-painted, new-varnished efficiency, which will yield endless diagrams, plans, elevations, and sections, but alas! no picture (I, 4-5)

³ Times, 2 January 1656, p. 9.
and feels "an occasional tenderness for old abuses" (I, 5). This doing a "little Toryism by the sly" recalls, albeit in a more sentimental vein, Scott's attitude towards Godfrey Bertram's treatment of the paupers and gypsies on his estate. Although subsequent references to "dear old quaintnesses" (I, 5) and to "the bucolic mind" (I, 7), and the comic treatment of the incompetence of the choir and orchestra (I, 6-7), convey a tone of arcness and even condescension towards the practices of the past, the use of personal reminiscence and overtly-expressed nostalgia invites the reader of the period to revel in his own memories of the churches and services of twenty-five years before. On the other hand, the scene at the Red Lion which opens "Janet's Repentance" begins with a violent exclamation from Dempster, and goes on to reveal the citizens' ignorance and prejudice. The reader is expected to be aware that Presbyterianism did not derive from a John Presbyter, that Tryan's doctrine cannot be at once "methodistical" (II, 47) and "sectarian, antinomian, anabaptist" (II, 55) and the man himself a "domineering ambitious Jesuit" (II, 55), nor Luke Byles both an "insolvent atheist" and a "deistical prater" (II, 51). He is hence induced to feel superior to - and contemptuous of - the characters.

After the recollections of Shepperton Church, the narrator of "Amos Barton" drops the tone of personal reminiscence and moves on to a series of scenes characterised by comedy and a tone of amused tolerance - scenes such as that at the Cross Farm:

Mrs Hackit declines cream; she has so long abstained from it with an eye to the weekly butter-money, that abstinence, wedded to habit, has begotten aversion. She is a thin woman with a chronic liver-complaint, which would have secured her Mr Pilgrim's entire regard and unreserved good word, even if he had not been in awe of her tongue, which was as sharp as his own lancet. She has brought her knitting - no frivolous fancy knitting, but a substantial woollen stocking; the click-click of her knitting-
needles is the running accompaniment to all her conversation, and in her utmost enjoyment of spoiling a friend's self-satisfaction, she was never known to spoil a stocking (I, 13)

The tone in which Amos Barton himself is treated is more patronising. Explaining Milly's love for him, the narrator claims

I have all my life had a sympathy for mongrel ungainly dogs, who are nobody's pets; and I would rather surprise one of them by a pat and a pleasant morsel, than meet the condescending advances of the loveliest Skye-terrier... (I, 30)

The picture of Wilby life in "Janet's Repentance" is however presented much more acerbically: apart from the drunken, wife-beating lawyer Dempster, there are the tight-fisted curate Mr Crewe, Drs Pilgrim and Pratt, ready to unite to drive out all medical newcomers, Church tradesmen who attend Dissenting chapels to encourage Dissenting customers, and another lawyer, Pittman, who like Dempster is tolerated although known to be unsorupulous. John Blackwood complained about the early chapters of the story that "the colours are rather harsh for a sketch of English County Town Life only 25 years ago," She was writing, he thought, "in the harsher Thackerayan view of human nature."¹ In reply, she explained that the "real town" (Nuneaton) was "more vicious" than Wilby, the real Dempster (James Williams Auchanan, 1792-1846) "more disgusting" than hers, and the real Janet far more unfortunate in her fate. She thinks that she may have some resemblance to Thackeray in that she refuses to exclude "disagreeable truths" from her fiction, and considers him "on the whole the most powerful of living novelists."² The diary of occurrences at Nuneaton notes the "disgracefully conspicuous" intoxication at the Nuneaton Assembly in January 1827, the

¹ 8 June 1857, in Eliot Letters, II, 344.
death of a man in a brawl at a beer-house in October 1830, public opposition to Catholic Emancipation in February 1829, continual litigation among the inhabitants over property, and even "[a] woman exhibited in a Halter in the Market for sale" in November 1833. George Eliot did in fact delete from her manuscript several passages relating to drunkenness among women (ff. 11-12), the Milby girls' bad French (f. 14), and the inhabitants' lack of generosity and their tolerance of Dempster's vices (ff. 22-23).

The narrator's tone in presenting the social worlds of Shepperton and Milby can, then, create a distance between the reader and characters, and thus militate against the extension of their sympathies. This is less of a problem in Scott's and Thackeray's novels since Scott is generally not self-conscious enough a writer for his narrative to have a patronising tone, while Thackeray continually points out that his readers share his characters' vices. George Eliot overcomes this distancing effect partly by the tone of personal reminiscence at the beginning of "Amos Barton" and also by the comedy of scenes like that at the Cross Farm. In "Janet's Repentance" she partly undermines the mixture of condescension and repugnance in the reader attitude to Milby by the use of sarcasm at the expense of modern advances: excessive drunkenness has declined, but there is now at dinner-parties a "perfectly well-bred and virtuous excess of stupidity," while the young ladies are educated "so far as to have forgotten a little German" (II, 60).

Later nostalgia is even brought into play in the description of Mr Jerome's garden, "one of those old-fashioned paradises which hardly exist any longer except as memories of our childhood" (II, 159). Unfortunately however George Eliot tends to idealise her evangelical clergyman Tryan. If we are

encouraged to sympathise with him in advance on account of the persecution he suffers, the passage in which he is actually introduced recalls the "Orlando"s of evangelical literature like Eustace Grey: "Mr Tryan has entered the room, and the strange light from the golden sky falling on his light brown hair, which is brushed high up round his head, makes it look almost like an auréole" (II, 105).

In order to overcome the distance between reader and characters, George Eliot sometimes relies on direct appeals to the reader's sympathy. The most overt example of this occurs in "Amos Barton", where Barton's ordinariness is insisted on at length, and he is contrasted favourably with the "ideal" heroes of fiction. Then the narrator points out that "so very large a majority" of the reader's compatriots are "of this insignificant stamp" (I, 61-82) - thus presenting Barton as typical of the present as well as of the recent past - and goes on to declare:

Depend upon it; you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos, the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull grey eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones (I, 82-83)

The attitude of moral superiority shown elsewhere towards the characters is here transferred to the readers. George Eliot is I think more successful in extending the reader's sympathies when a character's suffering is realised dramatically, as in the description of Janet's feelings when Dempster shuts her out at night, and of her disenchantment in the morning:

The daylight changes the aspect of misery to us, as of everything else. In the night it presses on our imagination - the forms it takes are false, fitful, exaggerated; in broad day it sickens our sense with the dreary persistence of definite measurable reality. ...That moment of intensest depression was come to Janet, when
the daylight which showed her the walls, and chairs, and tables, and all the commonplace reality that surrounded her, seemed to lay bare the future too, and bring out into oppressive distinctness all the details of a weary life to be lived from day to day, with no hope to strengthen her against that evil habit, which she loathed in retrospect and yet was powerless to resist (II, 254-55)

Here Janet's experience is also generalised, presented as something which the reader has shared, rather than as an incident related to one particular time and place.  

Most illuminating perhaps in the context of George Eliot's treatment of the recent past is her defence of Tryan and the account of the influence of evangelicalism on Milby. The passage begins by acknowledging the possible detrimental effects: the way some of the inhabitants may have gained a "religious vocabulary rather than religious experience," becoming "sanctimonious" without their conduct being changed for the better. But this happens "in all other times and places where the mental atmosphere is changing, and men are inhaling the stimulus of new ideas," and the suggestion is I think that the people of 1657 may also live at a time when "folly ... mistook itself for wisdom, ignorance gave itself airs of knowledge, and selfishness, turning its eyes upward, called itself religion" (II, 193-94).

Further on, when speaking of Tryan, the narrator admits that any one looking at him with the bird's-eye glance of a critic might perhaps say that he made the mistake of identifying Christianity with a too narrow doctrinal system; that he saw God's work too exclusively in antagonism to the world, the flesh, and the devil; that his intellectual culture was too limited - and so on; making Mr Tryan the text for a wise discourse on the characteristics of the Evangelical school in his day (II, 197-98)

Many Evangelicals of the period were liable to such criticism, because of the rather uncritical contempt for the things of the secular world which

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Barbara Hardy notes that the image of the "disenchanted daylit room" is a recurrent motif in George Eliot's fiction - see her The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form (London: Athlone Press, 1959), 190ff.
increased in the late 1820's and early 1830's with the emergence of the conservative "Recordite" group, their concentration on the Bible sometimes to the exclusion of all other books, their suspicion of the dangerous effects of the arts, and the limiting of their preaching to the subject of "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." These limitations would have been thrown into relief for George Eliot's contemporaries by the Tractarian movement of the 1830's and 1840's, with its emphasis on ritual, liturgical renewal, the authority of the Church, and the study of the Church Fathers, and by the Evangelicalism of the 1850's, which, as we have seen, became more narrow and intolerant in response to the allegedly "Popish" practices of the Tractarians, hence causing many cultivated Victorians to consider them to be hostile to intellectual enquiry. Discussing the Evangelicalism of 1853, Conybeare draws attention to its "narrowness and rigidity in teaching, neglect of learning, lack of critical study of Scripture." However the "bird's-eye" critic fails to respond to "ryan as a fellow human-being, merely classifying him as "'[o]ne of the Evangelical clergy, a disciple of Venn" treating him as would a student of "natural history" in the most limited sense of the term: "'[n]ot a remarkable specimen; the anatomy and habits of his species have been determined long ago" (II, 198). Later the narrator stresses the need to move beyond details of history and circumstance to an awareness of the common humanity we share with others:

surely, surely the only true knowledge of our fellow-man is that which enables us to feel with him — which gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of

4 Probably Henry Venn (1725-97), father of the founder of the Clapham sect.
circumstance and opinion. Our subtlest analysis of schools and sects must miss the essential truth, unless it be lit up by the love that sees in all forms of human thought and work, the life and death struggles of separate human beings (II, 198-99)

In other words, the reader, like the historian, must perceive "identity of nature under variety of manifestation - a perception which resembles an expansion of one's own being - a pre-existence in the past"¹

But such a man as Tryan is also one of the "real heroes" of the modern world. By contrast with the ideal hero currently in demand, these men have their natural heritage of love and conscience which they drew in with their mother's milk; they know one or two of those deep spiritual truths which are only to be won by long wrestling with their own sins and their own sorrows; they have earned faith and strength so far as they have done genuine work; but the rest is dry barren theory, blank prejudice, vague hearsay. Their insight is blended with mere opinion; their sympathy is perhaps confined in narrow conduits of doctrine, instead of flowing forth with the freedom of a stream that blesses every weed in its course; obstinacy or self-assertion will often interfuse itself with their grandest impulses; and their very deeds of self-sacrifice are sometimes only the rebound of a passionate egoism (II, 197)

George Eliot is of course reacting against the idealised heroes of fiction, but is also I think trying to redefine the heroic. "hackeray, who deliber­ately wrote a "novel without a hero" believed that the virtues and achieve­ments of the so-called great men of history would not bear close examina­tion, while on the other hand Carlyle asserted their superiority to the normal run of men, and attributed to their efforts and inspiration all that man had accomplished in the world. The treatment of Tryan suggests however that for George Eliot the great man was flawed like other men, and could attract their sympathy and understanding partly because of these flaws, the sense they can feel that they are like him. After all even

¹ Essays, p. 29.
"Bunyan and Luther (one of Carlyle's heroes) could not satisfy the modern demand for an ideal novel hero "who believes nothing but what is true, feels nothing but what is exalted, and does nothing but what is graceful" (II, 197). Yet a hero is not necessarily a well-known, influential figure like Bunyan and Luther, but can operate for a short period and on a local scale - Tryan has no "memorial" of his work outside Milby.

George Eliot's treatment of the country clergy from the human rather than the theological aspect and her eschewing of the "polemical and doctrinal" also reflect her personal view that it is after all the human aspect which is the more important. She told Blackwood that in "Janet's Repentance" the "collision ... is not at all between 'bigotted churchmanship' and evangelicalism, but between irreligion and religion," and went on to equate "irreligion and religion" with "immorality and morality."1 As is well-known, her own rejection of Evangelicalism was largely due to her reading of Hennell, Strauss and Feuerbach, but she attributed the initial unsettling of her orthodox views to Scott's influence.2 She does not elaborate, but presumably she was referring to Scott's concern for the human and moral rather than for the theological implications of religious beliefs. We have seen how in Guy Mannering Pleydell praises Erskine for making his views of scripture the basis of a "sound system of practical morals" and for being free of the "souring or pharisaical pride" of the early Scottish Calvinist leaders, while in The Antiquary the Glenallans' bigotted Catholicism unnecessarily perpetuates religious divisions. His next novel Old Mortality (1617), which dealt with the Scottish civil war of the 1670's between religious sects, highlighted the intolerance, violence and fanaticism to which rigidly-held theological convictions could give rise.

2 Cross, new edn, I, 48; quoted by Haight in Eliot Letters, I, 21 n.8.
George Eliot's beliefs of the 1850's evidently colour her view of the religious life of the 1830's as presented in *Scenes of Clerical Life*. This comes out in details of plot and character: Barton's troubles arouse the "better sympathies" of his parishioners where his sermons had failed, and as a result there is a "real bond between him and his flock" (I, 146). Mr Jerome initially becomes a "dissenter because where he lived as a boy Dissent "seemed to have the balance of piety, purity, and good works on its side," but later transfers from Salem Chapel to hear Tryan, since the latter is a "good man and a powerful preacher" (II, 163-64). The Rev. Martin Cleves in "Amos Barton" is called the "true parish priest" although he is the "least clerical-looking of the party" at the Clerical dinner, and he is distinguished for the purely human aspect of his relationship with his parishioners - the comprehensibility (rather than the content) of his sermons, his "humour and feeling," and his addresses to workers on "useful practical matters" (I, 106-7). Similarly the beneficial effect of Evangelicalism on Milby is seen as moral rather than as specifically religious: the "recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self," the "principle ... of self-mastery," and the awareness of a "rule of goodness higher than the opinion of their neighbours" (II, 194-95).

The influence of George Eliot's beliefs of the 1850's is evident too in her treatment of Janet's conversion, the "real drama of "evangelicalism" although offering a deeper psychological explanation of Janet's experience than Scott - or indeed Thackeray - would have done, she emphasises the "[b]lessed influence of one true loving human soul on another!" (II, 284): Janet's conversion is effected more by Tryan than by Christ. In the moment

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1 According to Ian Bradley, Jerome's attitude was quite common - see *The Call to Seriousness*, pp. 68-69.
of her greatest despair, Janet tries to "throw herself with the more desper­ate clinging energy at the foot of the cross, where the Divine Sufferer would impart divine strength," but she finally decides that she must seek "Ryan's help, since she has "no confidence that the aid she sought would be given" (II, 346-47). But then her confiding in "human sympathy" says the narrator, "prepared her soul for that stronger leap by which faith grasps the idea of the divine sympathy" (II, 349). Yet Janet is never actually shown appropriating the merits and realising the all-sufficiency of Christ, the process involved in full conversion. Although secularist views of religion like George Eliot's had a growing appeal in the mid-Victorian period, she is I think too conscious of the respectable family readership of Blackwood's to say anything explicitly anti-Christian, and the early reviewers did not question the Christian content of the story.

The first chapter of "Mr Gilfil's Love-Story" is set "thirty years ago" (i.e. about 1827), and continues the social comedy of the early part of "Amos Barton", albeit the occasion for the comedy is Gilfil's death. The stress is on the conservatism of the Shepperton and Knebley parishioners, the way in which the Church and Gilfil himself are an accepted, unquestioned part of life, "like markets and toll-gates and dirty bank-notes" (I, 131). These analogies help to establish the period, since although by the middle of the century Parliament had adopted a policy of discontinuing turnpike roads and the toll-gates connected with them, in the early nineteenth century there had been in England 7,800 toll-gates controlling 23,000 miles of roads. Bank-notes meanwhile had been issued in profusion during the

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1 The Religion of the Heart, p. 62.

1620's by some eight hundred provincial banks, but after many failures over
1825-26 notes under £5 value were forbidden and replaced by the gold sover­
eign. Gilfil's acceptance by his parishioners is due to his human rather
than to his clerical qualities, and his behaviour contrasts favourably with
Barton's: Gilfil gains popularity by quarrelling with the bad landlord Mr
Oldinport, while Barton is sycophantic towards the unscrupulous Countess;
Gilfil gives sugar-plums to Tommy Bond while Barton preaches hell-fire to
Master Fodge; Gilfil gains respect by showing knowledge of farming, while
Barton alienates parishioners like Mrs Patten by hectoring them about their
sins; Gilfil claims no money from his parishioners, but Barton annoys them
with requests for funds to rebuild the church; Gilfil's sermons are short
and simple, Barton's pseudo-erudite. On the other hand the parishioners
are more critical of Barton than of Gilfil partly because "that dangerous
fruit of the tree of knowledge - innovation" (I, 170) had intervened bet­
ween 1827 and 1837, "an interval in which Evangelicalism and the Catholic
Question had begun to agitate the rustic mind with controversial debates"
(I, 6).

The main contrast established in this story is however that between the
recent past (1827) and the more remote past (1788-91) - between the period
of Gilfil's early life, when his wife's death could tragically stunt his
growth, and the period forty years later, when his own death could be an
occasion for gossip about the social respectability of mourning clothes.
George Eliot hopes to arouse the reader's sympathies by comparing his ro­
mantic past with his prosaic present, so that the "poetry and the pathos"
lie not in the events of ordinary life, but in the very contrast between

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1 Webb, Modern England: From the 18th Century to the Present, pp.
171-73.
2 U.C. Knoepflmacher, "George Eliot's Anti-Romantic Romance: 'Mr.
Gilfil's Love-Story,'" Victorian Newsletter, no. 31 (Spring 1967), 11-15,
at 11.
the hopes of the past and his present circumstances. The following passage makes this clear, as well as exemplifying again the narrator's attitude of moral superiority to the readers:

But in the first place, dear ladies, allow me to plead that gin-and-water, like obesity, or baldness, or the gout, does not exclude a vast amount of antecedent romance, any more than the neatly-executed "fronts" which you may some day wear, will exclude your present possession of less expensive braids. Alas! alas! we poor mortals are often little better than wood-ashes there is small sign of the sap, and the leafy freshness, and the bursting buds that were once there... (I, 173)

By contrast, Thackeray generally assumes that his readers are middle-aged or old, and share the narrators' regrets over the evanescence of youth.

The flashback to Gilfil's youth - complicated by a further flashback to Caterina's childhood - takes us from a middle-class to an aristocratic setting. The neo-Gothic Cheverel Manor (a reminiscence of Arbury Hall where George Eliot's father had been estate manager) is described in confused and rather laborious detail, and the life of the Cheverels and Asshers is presented as a leisured round of music, embroidery, and talk about servants. Here the lack of emphasis on Gilfil's specifically clerical role reflects the state of the Church in the late eighteenth century, especially before the French Revolution. Although not necessarily as worldly as Aunt Crawley, the clergy in general were complacent, fearful of enthusiasm, and chary of dealing with doctrine,¹ and many shared Mary Craw- ford's view that the Church was merely a convenient career for younger sons.² Sir Christopher Cheverel sees Gilfil as a "domestic appendage"

¹ "Church Parties," 274.
who takes life easily, "keeping his hunter, and observing a mild regimen of clerical duty" till the Cumbermoor living falls vacant (I, 242).

The events of the story are concurrent with those of the French Revolution - Sir Christopher reads of "the last portentous proceedings of the French parliaments" (I, 186-87) - but the life of Cheverel Manor is isolated from the currents of great historical movements and events. When George Eliot does make a direct comparison between the "conflicting thoughts and passions" agitating France in the summer of 1788, and the "terrible struggles" which Caterina endures at the same time (I, 211), the effect is merely bathetic, as the passions of Caterina and those of the "evolution are too different both in scale and kind. The comparison of the Manor to a scene from "atteau, and of Lady Cheverel to "one of Sir Joshua Reynolds's stately ladies" (I, 184) establish not so much the period as the aristocratic opulence and idyllic nature of the opening scene on the lawn.

The identification by Warwickshire people of the figures from George Eliot's youth on whom some of the characters were based forced her to refine her view of the writer's treatment of the recent past. She claimed to vary the stories and characters considerably from the originals, and said that the scenes represented "widely sundered portions of experience" and a "combination of subtle shadowy suggestions with certain actual objects and events." The stories are "spun out of the subtlest web of minute observation and inward experience," from her "first childish recollections up to recent years"; in fact - "[i]t would be a very difficult thing for me to furnish a key to them myself."

1 Apart from the identification of Barton with Gwyther, Tyron was identified with the Rev. John Edmund Jones of Nuneaton, Sir Christopher Chevere with Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury Hall, the Kempsters with James Williams Buchanan and his wife Nancy.

2 See her letters to Gwyther, 15 June 1859 (Eliot Letters, III, 65-86, and to John Blackwood, 11 June 1857 (II, 347) and 28 May 1858 (II, 459-60).

Contemporary reviewers of *Adam Bede* welcomed enthusiastically what they saw as its social realism. The writer in *Blackwood's* claims that George Eliot, unlike most other novelists, shows true knowledge of the lower classes, portrays the "genuine article," while Geraldine Jewsbury in the *Athenaeum* goes so far as to declare that "the story is not a story, but a true account of a place and people who have really lived." Meanwhile the belief that the novel is true to history, is expressed by the *Westminster Review*:

His work reads like an authentic history: the actors impress us as real men and women, who, being what they were, could not have spoken or acted other than they did ... the function of the author being that of a faithful and wise historian, who records simply what he had seen or learnt.

George Eliot even had to deny the claim of a Charles Holte Bracebridge that she had copied Dinah Morris's sermon from the journals and sermon notes of her Methodist aunt Mrs Samuel Evans, whose conversion of a girl imprisoned for child-murder provided the germ of the story. "Truth in art is so startling," she complained to Blackwood, "that no one can believe in it as art."

The opening sentence of the novel itself declares the narrator's intention of imitating the Egyptian sorcerer's power to "reveal to any chance-comer far-reaching visions of the past." Since the book is set almost sixty years before the time of writing, only a small proportion of George Eliot's readers would have any direct recollection of the period it deals with, and throughout the narrator shows a strong sense of the distance,

both social and historical, between the farmers and rural craftsmen of 1799-1807 and the middle and upper-class reading public of 1859. As in Scenes of Clerical Life, George Eliot sometimes urges the readers directly to sympathise with the unidealised kind of character she is describing - notably in Chapter 17:

I have had quite enthusiastic movements of admiration towards old gentlemen who spoke the worst English, who were occasionally fretful in their temper, and who had never moved in a higher sphere of influence than that of parish overseer; and ... the way in which I have come to the conclusion that human nature is lovable - the way I have learnt something of its deep pathos, its sublime mysteries - has been by living a great deal among people more or less commonplace and vulgar.

Meanwhile, the later defence of the old labourer Kester Bale points out the debt that the people of the present owe to those of the recent past:

I am not ashamed of commemorating old Kester; you and I are indebted to the hard hands of such men - hands that have long ago mingled with the soil they tilled so faithfully, thriftily making the best they could of the earth's fruits, and receiving the smallest share as their own wages (p. 562).

The tone of both these passages suggests that George Eliot feels she is stillcombatting in her readers a preference for stories of ideal characters set in the fashionable world, an attitude of repugnance and condescension towards the farmers and labourers of sixty years before - this despite Scott's sympathetic treatment of characters like Dandie Dinmont, the Wucklebackits, and Edie Ochiltree, and Thackeray's exposure of the selfish and mercenary attitudes prevalent in fashionable life.

Another straightforward technique of overcoming the reader's (supposed) feeling of condescension towards the recent past is the comparison of past

1 George Eliot, Adam Bede (1859), ed. and intro. Stephen Gill (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 229. All subsequent citations will be from this edition, which is based on the first.
and present practice at the expense of the latter, such as the lament for
the passing of dances like the one at Arthur's birthday feast:

That merry stamping, that gracious nodding of the head, that
waving bestowal of the hand - where can we see them now? ... instead of low dresses and large skirts, and scanning glances
exploring costumes, and languid men in lackered boots smiling
with double meaning (p. 329)

This recalls of course Thackeray's nostalgic passages about vanished plea-
sures like coach-travel and innocent conviviality in taverns. Similarly in
Chapter 3, modern Methodism is compared unfavourably with that embodied in
Dinah and Seth. Their naive and "old-fashioned" belief in "present miracles,
in instantaneous conversions, in revelations by dreams and visions ... lots,
and ... Divine guidance by opening the Bible at hazard" (p. 82) does not
prevent "sublime feelings", or "faith, hope, and charity", and so is prefer-
able to the attitude of Methodists "of that modern type which reads quarterly
reviews and attends in chapels with pillared porticoes" (p. 82). By the
1850's the Connexion had become more middle-class, and Philip Gosse lamented
the "large fine Wesleyan chapels of Liverpool, the fashionable attire of
the audiences, and the studied refinement of the discourses." 1 The railways
had in any case made itinerant preaching like Dinah's less romantic, the age
of the great inspirational preachers was over, and membership was declining,
partly through the secession of breakaway groups. 2 In fact it was the years
of the Napoleonic Wars which had seen the greatest expansion of the Connexion. 3

The many generalisations drawn from the characters' experience serve to

1 Edmund Gosse, Life of Philip Henry Gosse, p. 153, quoted in Cunningham
everywhere Spoken Against, p. 33.
2 Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, I, 372, 383-84.
relate the recent past to the present, by suggesting that the same feelings
and laws govern human behaviour in both periods. Of Adam's reaction to his
father's drowning, the narrator comments that when we encounter death, "it
is never our tenderness that we repent of, but our severity" (p. 97).
Hetty's style of beauty is described as if it still exists to "turn the
heads" of men, women, and "all intelligent mammals," and the narrator even
says that it is useless to describe it to people who have not experienced it
(pp. 127-28). Of the change in Arthur's character after his seduction of
Hetty, the narrator claims that

Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds . . .
There is a terrible coercion in our deeds which may first turn
the honest man into a deceiver, and then reconcile him to the
change; for this reason - that the second wrong presents itself
to him in the guise of the only practicable right (p. 359)

Some of the passages generalising from a character's feelings are quite ex-
tensive, such as that relating Adam's reaction to sorrow to the common human
experience of it - the change in character involved in the "transformation
of pain into sympathy" such that we gain a "sense of our lives having vi-
sible and invisible relations beyond any of which either our present or
prospective self is the centre" (pp. 531-32). Overall, they convey the idea
that human nature and human experience change little throughout history.
This is of course the tenor of many of the narratorial comments in Thacke-
ray's novels, but the latter tend to point up the unattractive qualities
which readers share with people of the recent past, while George Eliot's
stress is on common feelings and psychological processes.

Sometimes however these generalisations simultaneously relate the rece-
past to the present, while demonstrating in the language used the difference
between the narrator's range of experience and expression, and that of the
characters. Of Seth's love for Dinah, the narrator declares that "[l]ove of this sort is hardly distinguishable from religious feeling," and that

Our caresses, our tender words, our still rapture under the influence of autumn sunsets, or pillared vistas, or calm majestic statues, or Beethoven symphonies, all bring with them the consciousness that they are mere waves and ripples in an unfathomable ocean of love and beauty (p. 61)

George Eliot's language moves far beyond the range of Seth's power of expression, and indeed, of his experience: he is unlikely to have encountered "pillared vistas, or, calm majestic statues," while none of Beethoven's symphonies had been written by 1799 and Seth would not have been able to hear them in Hayslope if they had been. George Eliot translates Seth's experience into the terms of her readers' consciousness to make it more comprehensible to them, but in so doing is obliged to expose the gap between his awareness and theirs.

Yet it is not only the relatively inarticulate lower-class characters whose means of expression is shown to differ from that of the narrator and reader. When citing Mr Irwine's religious views - how he sees "certain dim but strong emotions, suffusing themselves as a hallowing influence over the family affections and neighbourly duties" as the "only healthy form" religion could take for his parishioners (p. 112), the narrator says that Irwine would "perhaps" have expressed himself in this way, "[i]f he had been in the habit of speaking theoretically." The point is that he is a practical man, a clergyman like many who were criticised in parliamentary reports of the time, 1 who were not much interested in doctrine or in abstract speculation.

But in order to make this kind of outlook accessible to the readers of 1859, George Eliot has to present his views in a theoretical way. On the other hand, many of the comments on characters in *Adam Bede* which could have been expressed by the narrator are put into the mouth of Mrs Poyser—e.g., the strictures on Dinah's self-sacrificing asceticism (121ff, 518ff) and on Hetty's hardness (p. 384), and the attack on Jartle Massey and Mr Craig (568ff), so that the patronising tone which can sometimes result from the social, historical and intellectual gap between narrator (and reader) and characters is avoided. Unfortunately this is not the case with the defence of Irwine by Adam in Chapter 17, as he is too obviously paraphrasing the comments already made by the narrator both in this chapter and in Chapter 5.

George Eliot's main way of bringing the recent past to life is the detail of her descriptions of Hayslope life, particularly at the beginning of the novel. The narrative moves slowly through the different centres of Hayslope life, to introduce the main characters and to show their typical activities—e.g., in Jonathan Burge's workshop (Chapter 1), the Bede home (Chapter 4), the Irwine's residence (Chapter 5), the Hall Farm (Chapter 6) and its dairy (Chapter 7). The reader is treated as if he is actually visiting each of these places, being guided by the narrator, while the use of the historic present is clearly intended to create a sense of immediacy, to make the past present:

Put your face to one of the glass panes in the right-hand window: [of the Hall Farm] what do you see? A large open fireplace, with rusty dogs in it, and a bare-boarded floor; at the far end fleeces of wool stacked up; in the middle of the floor some empty corn-bags (p. 116)

As far as the characters are concerned, George Eliot makes it clear that they are not to be judged according to stereotyped views about the people of the recent past. Dinah as a Methodist is unlike both the kinds the
stranger has encountered, "the ecstatic and the bilious" (p. 66).—or the
"ordinary type of the Ranter" (p. 72). And the presentation in Chapter 5
of Irwine's home life, his devotion to his mother and sisters, is explicitly
intended to prevent the readers' judging him according to conventional
views of late eighteenth-century clergy. The reader is urged to see Irwine,
not from a "lofty historical level" (p. 112), condemning him for lacking
the "enthusiasm", earnestness, interest in spiritual life, or "self-scour­
ging sense of duty" valued by people of the 1850's, but from the point of
view of people who know him personally, who can "walk by his side in fami­
liar talk, or look at him in his home" (p. 111). It is interesting here
that whereas in "Janet's Repentance" George Eliot had felt it necessary to
defend Tryan against anti-Evangelical prejudices, here she assumes that
her readers will criticise Irwine as a clergyman according to criteria
actually established by the impact of Evangelicalism. There is also a dis­
tinction being made, not only between past facts and present prejudices,
but between the differing impressions a man may make on his contemporaries
in his public and in his private life: Mr Irwine, an unabashed pluralist,
but "tender to other men's failings, and unwilling to impute evil," is "one
of those men ... of whom we can know the best only by following them away
from the market place, the platform, and the pulpit, entering with them
into their own homes" (p. 113), while the private lives of some "great
reformers of abuses" do not bear enquiring into. This stress on private as
distinct from public life will emerge again in the novel's treatment of
Adam Bede and Arthur Donnithorne.

In many ways however both characters and their way of life in Hayslope
are broadly characteristic of rural life of the late eighteenth and early
nineteenth centuries. The Poysers have been tenant-farmers for some gene­
rations, as were many farmers of the period: Batchelor, in his General
View of the Agriculture of Bedfordshire (1808), notes that the large farmers
are "secure in their possessions," so that the farms "generally descend from father to son through a long series of years; and perhaps as frequently change their owners as their occupiers."\(^1\) Although most tenants were tenants-at-will, they were seldom evicted except in cases of serious misbehaviour\(^2\) — and we find in *Adam Bede* that the old Squire's veiled threats to turn out the Poysers are never put into practice. The interest of both Mr and Mrs Poyser in the practical details of farming are also characteristic of prosperous farmers and their wives of the period. This concern is shown in their conversation in Chapter 18 (234ff), in Martin Poyser's strictures on the bad husbandry of Luke Britton, in Mrs Poyser's interest in butter and cheese making, and the household's brewing and spinning of their own linen.\(^3\) Writing in 1808, Charles Vancouver saw the farmer's wife's contribution as the real foundation of farmhouse life because of the money earned from her butter, cheese, and eggs,\(^4\) and this view is echoed in the novel's comment that "[t]he woman who manages a dairy has a large share in making the rent" (p. 234). Shops were only starting to be set up in villages towards the end of the eighteenth century\(^5\) (cf. Mrs Poyser's contempt for "shop-rag" linen, p. 270), while the bad state of most roads meant that villages tended to be self-sufficient in food, drink and cloth.\(^6\) By 1859 however new habits had emerged among the more prosperous class of farmer, and were described by George Eliot in her more theoretical discussion of the peasantry in "The Natural History of German Life": they no longer do farm-work themselves, eat in the company of their servants, or

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2 Mingay, p. 45.
6 Bovill, p. 55.
spin their own table-linen, but imitate the middle classes, having drawing-
rooms filled with pianos and old annuals, and driving vehicles with springs.

Exactly when this development occurred is difficult to determine, since a
"Country Farmer" writing in 1786 criticises farmers' elegant entertainments,
delicate food, and expensive wine, and their daughters' opulent dress, while
only a few years later Arthur Young attacks wealthy farmers who try to ape
the aristocracy by investing in post-chaises, pianos, liveried servants,
expensive boarding-school for their daughters and University for their sons.

On the other hand, "George Bourne" in his history of a Surrey parish, dates
the decline of the yeomen who were on easy terms with their labourers
(like Martin Poyser) and shared their traditions, mainly from the enclosure
of the parish, which occurred in 1861. In any case, to the readers of
1859, the Poysers, who assume "no rigid demarcation of rank between the
farmer and the respectable artisan" (p. 142) would probably have seemed old-
fashioned. Similarly Lisbeth Bede's horror of the "workhouse" and her an-
xiety that Thias get a decent burial was typical of peasantry of the period
being noted by Southey in 1807, but by 1830 Miss Mitford was to observe
that this pride was becoming rarer.

Throughout the novel, a contrast is made between the rich agricultural
county of Loamshire where Hayslope is situated, and the bleak, bare, impo-
verished and industrialised county of Stonyshire adjacent to it, where
Dinah Morris works in a cotton-mill. Except for Adam's quest for Hetty
and his later visit to Dinah, the novel is not set in Stonyshire, but the

1 Essays, p. 197.
2 Remarks on Inclosures, quoted in Martin, p. 128.
3 Report on Agriculture (1795), quoted by John Addy, The Agrarian
4 [George Sturt], Change in the Village (London: Tuckworth & Co., 1912
pp. 152-53.
6 Mary Russell Mitford, Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and
harshness and poverty of life there are brought out in Dinah's disputes with Mrs Poyser (Chapters 6 and 49), and her conversations with Seth (Chapter 3) and Mr Irwine (Chapter 8). The references to the cotton mill and the people who work there reflect the growth of factory production in the late eighteenth century, particularly in the cotton industry, brought about by such inventions as Richard Arkwright's water-frame (used in his mill at Cromford, mentioned by Adam in Chapter 1), and Crompton's mule, which produced a stronger and finer thread than was possible on a spinning-wheel. 1 By 1790 there were 150 factories in England driven by water-power. 2 The invention of the steam engine by Boulton and Watt meant that textile factories no longer had to be built near sources of running water, however. This new development led to the concentration of the textile and other industries into towns, and the growth of these towns as people from the surrounding areas settled there to work. The terrible living conditions in the industrial slums and the long hours and unhealthy conditions of the textile factories are well-known, and were so by the mid-nineteenth century, from parliamentary reports, Blue Books such as those Pendennis reads, and accounts such as J.P. Kay's The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes (1832), Peter Gaskell's The Manufacturing Population of England, its Moral, Social and Physical Conditions (1833) and W. Cooke Taylor's Notes of the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire (1842) 3 as well as from the "condition of England" novels such as Disraeli's Sybil (1845), Dickens' Hard Times (1854) and Mrs Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848) and North and South.

3 Mantoux, p. 431.
(1855). At the period in which Adam Bede is set, the use of the steam engine was not general or extensive, and the population was still nearly two-thirds rural. By 1841 sixty percent of the population lived in conurbations of 5,000 or more, and this number grew by 1.8 million in the next ten years. However Dinah's description of Leeds, where there were twenty steam engines operating by 1800, as "high-walled streets, where you seemed to walk as in a prison-yard, and the ear is deafened with the sounds of worldly toil" (p. 137) recalls Aikin's account of the working class areas of Manchester before 1800, with its "dismal narrow streets and tumbledown houses," affected by damp, and cellars without light or air. If Adam Bede, focussing on an agricultural area but with an adjacent industrial area which occasionally emerges in description or characters' comments, shows the relative importance of the two main contrasting landscapes and ways of life in the 1799-1807 period, North and South, concentrating on the industrial town of Milton-Northern with some reference to and description of southern agricultural areas, demonstrates the change in the balance of population and economic activity which occurred during the next fifty years.

In making Loamshire a "north midland county" however (p. 337), George Eliot is using geographical and historical conditions to highlight the contrast between the county's fertility and prosperity, and the bareness and poverty of Stonyshire. The midlands contained the most fertile and prosperous counties, while the workers in the northern agricultural areas tended to command higher wages than those in the south because the farmers had to compete with mill-owners for employees, and fuel was cheap because of the

3 Mantoux, p. 335.
4 Quoted in Mantoux, pp. 430-31.
proximity of the industrial areas. In view of the conditions prevailing in the agricultural areas during the Napoleonic Wars, too, Loamshire is rather privileged. Because of a series of bad harvests during the late 1790's, and reductions in imports due to the war, the prices of agricultural products rose dramatically, and George Eliot noted from the Gentleman's Magazine that the cost of a quarter loaf increased from 8d in 1798 to 13d in 1799. Increase in the prices of grain and meat continued into 1800, till in March 1801 famine seemed imminent. High prices benefitted farmers, but they made life more difficult for the farm-labourers who did not produce their own food. In the part of his diary covering this period, the Rev. Woodforde refers several times to the complaints of the poor about the price of bread, and also to their risings in protest. During the Napoleonic Wars rural wages went up seventy-five percent, but prices more than doubled, and F.M.L. Thompson has argued that the general economic trend of the period involved a transfer of income from the labouring and consuming sections of the population to the landowners and farmers. In the novel the rise in bread prices is seen explicitly from the point of view of the farmers, who were not "such exceptional farmers as to love the general good better than their own ... they were not in very low spirits about the rapid rise in the price of bread" (p. 337). But even the farm-workers, insofar as they come into the story at all, are not shown to be suffering any privations, and there is no evidence in Hayslope of the poverty described by Southey:

2 Addy, pp. 36-38.
4 Woodforde, Diary, p. 308.
5 Horn, p. 46.
The numbers who perish from diseases produced by exposure to cold and rain, by unwholesome food, and by the want of enough even of that, would startle as well as shock you. Of the children of the poor, hardly one third are reared.

Such poverty as exists is located in Stonyshire. In *The Antiquary* Scott, although dealing with the part of the war slightly before economic condition worsened, does pay more attention to poverty in his treatment of the Mucklebackits and Edie Ochiltree, while Mrs Gaskell's *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863) was to draw attention to the hardships arising from the famine of 1799–1800 (Chapter 44). It is possible that readers who generalised from Hayslope about rural life of sixty years before would have idealised the past. As it is, the very real evils dealt with in the novel arise less from social conditions than from errors in the conduct of individuals.

Hayslope is also very little influenced by the war itself. Local events and people are as important as - or more important than - events of national significance. The "news from Egypt" (of Nelson's victory over the French at the Battle of the Nile in August 1798) and "the King's health" (the beginnings of George III's attacks of insanity) are of the same conversational interest as Mrs Irwine, "the sweet new patterns in cotton dresses" and "Lord Dacey's law-suit, which was fretting poor Lady Dacey to death" (p. 110). Later Mrs Poyser's verbal assault on the Squire makes the news of Bonaparte's return from Egypt "comparatively insipid" while to the Hayslope mind "the repulse of the French in Italy was nothing to Mrs Poyser's repulse of the old Squire" (p. 396). When Arthur hears of the planned marriage between Adam and Hetty, he "greeted every one who spoke to him with an eager gaiety, as if there had been news of a fresh Nelson victory" (p. 485). The most extended comments on political and military events are in the conversation at the harvest supper, after the crises in the characters' lives.

lives have been resolved — there is talk of Pitt's resignation and of the war, but the emphasis even here is not on the facts, but on the characters' prejudice (notably Craig's criticism of the Cabinet, and his smug assertion of the superiority of the English over the French, pp. 565-67). Arthur's captaincy in the local militia has more status in local eyes than a captaincy in the "regulars" (p. 105) — but it means that he will not have to fight outside Britain. When he does finally join the regular army, it is only because he wants to spare Adam and the Poyzers his continued presence at Hayslope and to discourage them from leaving. Furthermore, although the stranger in Chapter 2 thinks Adam the kind of man needed "'to lick the French'" (p. 61), the latter never becomes a soldier, and uses his savings to pay for a substitute for Seth when his brother is called up (p. 89). This was a common practice at the period, and volunteers were hard to raise, even for county regiments, and even when invasion was feared in 1798: the ballots were sometimes destroyed, or substitutes found in other counties. Yet George Eliot is possibly underestimating the actual impact of the war on rural areas, as Woodforde's diary for the period contains frequent references to its progress, as well as to fears of an invasion at a time just before Hayslope's harvest supper in 1801. In Adam Bede the war is more peripheral to the characters' concerns than in The Antiquary, and the political disaffection of the period is not even mentioned.

George Eliot's notes for the novel show that she read up the Gentleman's Magazine of 1799 for details of the Duke of Rutland's majority, as background for Arthur's coming-of-age party, and checked the fashions of the

1 Horn, 61ff.
2 See the entry for 6 August 1801, in Diary, V, 329.
period, the seasons, as well as major events and historical figures. The bulk of the notes however concern religious history, specifically the parliamentary reports, letters and book reviews in the Gentleman's Magazine of 1801-2 about the problems of the non-residence of the clergy, and the encouragement this gave to the growth of Methodism, and extracts from Southey's Life of Wesley. Polemic against Methodists such as the following

a set of self-constituted, itinerant, uneducated apostles, who arrogate to themselves the character of the apostolic founders, the first preachers of Gospel truths, without the smallest pretension or qualification

is echoed in Joshua Hann's complaints to Irwine about Will Maskery in Chapter 5, but George Eliot is also using her knowledge of anti-Methodist prejudice to highlight Irwine's good-natured tolerance. As far as the treatment of Dinah is concerned, Kathleen Watson has shown that her diction is typical of Methodists of the period, including that of the woman on whom she was based, George Eliot's aunt Mrs Samuel Evans, while Valentine Cunningham has pointed out how many features of late eighteenth-century Methodism as discussed in Southey's Life of Wesley are brought into the novel: her use of the same text in her sermon as Wesley used in his first open-air meeting, her technique of seeming to address a particular individual in her sermon, as Wesley did, her trust in random opening of the Bible for guidance, the practice of prison-visiting, the physical convulsions involved in conversion, the short-lived nature of many conversions (such as Granage's), the difficulty of converting the farmers and the greater

1 Gentleman's Magazine, 73 (1802), 608.
receptivity of townspeople towards the Methodist message, the Quaker-like dress and asceticism of the Methodists. However despite this historical authenticity, George Eliot's own beliefs colour her presentation here as they did in *Scenes of Clerical Life*; in quoting hymns she omits stanzas so as to exclude specifically Christian terminology (as in Seth's hymn, p. 437), or to alter the theme of the hymn to fit the situation in the novel (as in Dinah's hymn, p. 535). And when Hetty is actually converted, she expresses no sense of joy or repose in God's pardon, and, like Janet in relation to Tryan, leans more on Dinah as a fellow human-being than as a source of divine comfort.

The deference towards Arthur Donnithorne as the Squire's heir in Hay-slope is sometimes mentioned as peculiar to the past, and is explained to the reader of 1859 as a cause for behaviour not otherwise explicable. Mrs Poyser curtseys to Arthur and Irwine, since "in those days the keenest bucolic minds felt a whispering awe at the sight of the gentry - such as of old men felt when they stood on tip-toe to watch the gods passing by in tall human shape" (p. 124). Adam has an "instinctive reverence" for Arthur and his grandfather, and even if criticising estate management to the Squire, would have felt a strong "impulse to a respectful demeanour towards a 'gentleman.'" The narrator explains this attitude by pointing out that since Adam "was in his prime half a century ago, you must expect some of his characteristics to be obsolete." (p. 209). The opening of Mrs Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*, set in about 1620, observes that Lord and Lady Cumnor "expected to be submitted to, and obeyed," and in the country near their

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1 *Everywhere Spoken Against*, 146ff.
2 *Everywhere Spoken Against*, pp. 165-66.
3 *Everywhere Spoken Against*, pp. 168-69.
seat "a very pretty amount of feudal feeling still lingered." Even the liberal-talking inhabitants vote for their Cumnor landowner, and this is described as "no unusual instance of the influence of the great landowners over humbler neighbours in those days before railways." In the same year as *Adam Bede* was published John Stuart Mill observed that, on account of changes in education, increased mobility (due largely to the development of railways), the diffusion of the advantages of easy circumstances and the growing scope for the ambitious to rise provided by the expansion of commerce and manufactures, the extension of the franchise, and the increasing power of public opinion, the gap between the ranks was narrowing, such that they lived in much the same world. Yet in *Adam Bede* it is implied that in 1859, people still defer to men like Arthur because of their status as "gentlemen" - a view with which Thackeray would have agreed:

we don't inquire too closely into character in the case of a handsome generous young fellow, who will have property enough to support numerous peccadilloes ... we use round, general, gentlemanly epithets about a young man of birth and fortune (p. 170)

F.M.I. Thompson argues that respect for landowners was not much affected by the industrial revolution before about 1880. The change that had occurred between 1799 and 1859 was perhaps not so much a diminution of the deference shown to squires and landowners in rural society, but the burgeoning of urban-based industrial society to embrace a larger proportion of the population, where the relationship between social classes might be purely economic.

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3 *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 290.
Arthur's attitude to agriculture locates him as a progressive thinker in his historical context. In Chapter 16 he explains to Irwine that when he comes into the estate, he would like to carry out Arthur Young's ideas, "putting the farmers on a better management of their land; and, as he says, making what was a wild country, all of the same dark hue, bright and variegated with corn and cattle" (p. 215). This last comment is a reference to Young's 1770 account of the improvements made by Thomas Elliot of Fremington, who enclosed some uncultivated land and ran twenty horses, forty cows, and 1,200 sheep on it: "[a] noble parcel of cattle to be kept upon a wild spot, which once maintained scarce anything; and was not distinguished from the unvarying dark hue of the whole country." Young was the best-known advocate during the last third of the eighteenth century of the enclosure of wild, uncultivated land, and also of the common land which was attached to each parish and used by the villagers for feeding their animals and as a source of firing. Enclosure was particularly rapid during the Napoleonic wars, in order to make more land productive, hence mitigating the food shortage while allowing advantage to be taken of both the high returns on agricultural products and the high rents which resulted from them.

Arthur also plans to show a "wonderful knowledge of agriculture" as "the patron of new ploughs and drills" and to undertake drainage (p. 483). The late eighteenth century saw many efforts towards agricultural improvement under the aegis of Young and the Board of Agriculture, including crop rotation, experiments with drainage, treatment of the soil with marl, chalk


2 Acts permitting the enclosure of two thousand parishes were passed between 1793 and 1815 — see Addy, *The Agrarian Revolution*, p. 26.
and bones, improvements in stock-breeding, the development of more efficient ploughs, and the invention of the seed-drill (first used in 1730, but slow to take on).

Enclosure of the commons had its disadvantages as well as its benefits, especially for the poor, as Young himself had realised by 1801. Since enclosed common land was distributed according to the amount a villager already owned, those with little or no land would acquire little or none of the common land, and hence would not have room to graze their cows, as well as losing the access to the furze or timber on the common for firing. Irwine warns Arthur that his friend Gawaine has attracted the "curses of the whole neighbourhood" because of his enclosure activities (p. 215), and the reader of 1859 might, with hindsight, also feel that Arthur is too sanguine about his plans. Yet because of his seduction of Hetty Arthur cannot personally effect the progressive changes he has planned, or move in the public sphere as a speaker at election dinners and a "severe upbraider of negligent landowners" (p. 483). In fact his ambitions are treated ironically throughout the story: when in the dairy waiting for a chance of private conversation with Hetty, he has to improvise opinions for Mrs Poyser on "wede turnips and short-horns (p. 129), while in the discussion of his enclosure plans with Irwine he is really trying to avoid confessing his more worrying and urgent preoccupation with Hetty. Most heavily ironic is the flashback to Arthur's thoughts as he rides to Hayslope after his grandfather's death: he is full of ambitions for his future as a landowner, but the reader already knows that Hetty is to be condemned to death for the murder of their child and that the Poysers will consider leaving Hayslope.

On the other hand, although he has to overcome his tendency to be hard and unsympathetic towards others when they have offended him - exemplified in his attitude to his father and later to Arthur - Adam does nothing in his personal relations with others which nullifies his ambitions. Like Arthur's schemes of agricultural improvement, Adam's interest in technological developments -

plans for seasoning timber at a trifling expense, calculations as to the cheapening of bricks per thousand by water-carriage, and a favourite scheme for the strengthening of roofs and walls with a peculiar form of iron girder (p. 401)

defines him as progressive for his time. The late eighteenth century had seen a spectacular increase in estate profits from timber, while the great growth in canal transport from the 1760's onward drastically reduced the cost of transporting heavy materials, and led to an eighty-percent increase in the output of bricks in the twenty years after 1769. Cort's puddling process, developed in 1763-84, had enabled the production of cheap, malleable iron, and the metal began to replace copper and brass in engine parts, stone or brick in bridges, and timber in beams and pillars in factories. The period was a productive one for new inventions in general, with 655 patents granted between 1791 and 1800, ninety-six in 1800 alone. In his reference to "coal-pit engines" (p. 53) as one of the worthwhile advances of modern technology, Adam shows his awareness of what was to be the most revolutionary of these patented inventions, the steam-engine, which, as well as being used in cotton mills, facilitated coal mining from deeper seams.

1 Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 57, 90
3 Deane, p. 130.
5 Ashton, pp. 107-8.
Moreover, although Adam is concerned with possible future technological developments, he remains mentally attached to the past. This is evident in his response to his father's funeral, where he reacts not just to the "bare object" of the service but to its "subtle relations" to his "entire past" (p. 245). By contrast, Arthur fails to respect the past in that he contravenes traditional social and moral laws, even at a time when his coming-of-age party is embodying and reaffirming the social hierarchy and continuity of Hayslope life. Similarly Hetty feels no attachment to her past life, as she looks forward to marriage with Arthur, and part of her suffering during her journey derives from a belated awareness of the comfort and security which her past life offered (pp. 417, 424-25). In view of these characters' experiences, it is clear that Adam's attachment to the past is meant to be valued.

Furthermore, despite the fact that Adam likes to live in a northern hilly county so as to see a lot, and "'feel the world's a big place, and there's other men working in it with their heads and hands!'" (p. 165), he has no ambitions to make an impact on the world outside Hayslope. Neither a genius nor merely an average man, he has his counterparts in each generation of peasant artisans:

with an inheritance of affections nurtured by a simple family life of common need and common industry, and an inheritance of faculties trained in skilful courageous labour . . . Their lives have no discernible echo beyond the neighbourhood where they dwell, but you are almost sure to find there some good piece of road, some building, some application of mineral produce, some improvement in farming practice, some reform of parish abuses, with which their names are associated one or two generations after them . . . (pp. 258-59)

1 See the discussion of this section by Stephen Gill in his Introduction to the Penguin edn, pp. 26-30.
This recalls her earlier definition of the "real heroes" of the modern world to include Tryan, a flawed man who also has a temporary influence over a small area. George Eliot derived some elements of Adam's personality from Samuel Smiles' *Life of George Stephenson*; both can lift sixty stones' weight, both are good at figures, both are frugal and use their savings to pay for military substitutes (in Adam's case, for Seth rather than himself), both are practical, hard-working and sober.\(^1\) The implication is that there have been throughout history many men with the same qualities as Stephenson who have not become famous but whose work has been nonetheless valuable.

Even someone like Dinah, who tries unsuccessfully to have an impact on large numbers with her preaching and later has to give it up because of the 1803 Methodist Conference ban on women preachers, can succeed on the personal level with Hetty, as well as eventually becoming a good wife and mother. Meanwhile the contrast between Adam's achievement and Arthur's failure is I think meant to show how misconduct in private life can spell the end of ambitious plans for change. At the time George Eliot wrote *Adam Bede*, the view that moral reform of the individual had to be effected before more wide-ranging social change was possible, was becoming increasingly prevalent.

Perhaps the most famous evocation of the recent past in the novel is the passage at the end of Chapter 52, lamenting the passing of "Old Leisure" and contrasting contemporary life with that of sixty years previously (pp. 557-58). "Old Leisure" is characterised by complacency, serenity, an indifference to metaphysical issues, and a view of religion as social convention rather than spiritual experience, and his era by canals, "spinning

\(^1\) David Moldstad, "George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and Smiles' *Life of George Stephenson*," *English Language Notes*, 14 (1977), 189-92.

wheels ... pack-horses ... slow waggons, and the pedlars who brought bargains to the door on sunny afternoons." On the other hand, people of modern times are interested in newspapers, "art-museums, periodical literature, and exciting novels," in the "causes of things" and "scientific theorising," and live in an age of railways. The references to Exeter Hall and Tracts for the Times evoke the religious controversies of the period between 1801 and 1859, while the allusion to Carlyle's influential Sartor Resartus (1833-34) brings to mind the self-analysis, soul-searching and religious doubt expressed in this work. Sylvia's Lovers was to make a similar kind of contrast between the people of the 1790's and those of the second half of the nineteenth century: in those days people "felt, they understood, without going through reasoning or analytic processes" and few knew what manner of men they were, compared to the numbers who are now fully conscious of their virtues, qualities, failings, and weaknesses, and who go about comparing others with themselves... with a vivid self-consciousness.

The "Old Leisure" passage certainly pinpoints some of the most important changes which had occurred between 1801 and 1859. Most significant of these was, as we have seen, the growth of the railways after 1830. Several important periodicals had also been founded between 1801 and 1859, notably the Edinburgh Review (1802), the Quarterly Review (1809), Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (1812), the Westminster Review (1824), Fraser's (1830) and the North British Review (1844), and Pendennis of course bears witness to the flourishing of journalism in the 1830's and after. By the 1840's too novels had replaced poetry as the dominant literary form. Moreover, some features of the period of "Old Leisure" were disappearing: spinning wheels had even-

actually been ousted by the development of machine-spinning centred in factories, and by the wide availability of cheap factory-produced clothes; in the areas penetrated by railways the latter replaced the "slow waggons" and pack-horses; pedlars became less common with the spread of shops. Even the canals, which Adam recognises as a sign of progress in 1799, were often superseded by the faster railways.

At the end of the chapter the narrator urges the reader with mock seriousness not to be severe on Old Leisure, "and judge him by our modern standard" - but the tone of the preceding passage is nostalgic, celebrating Old Leisure at the expense of this "modern standard". George Eliot actually told Blackwood that she hoped Carlyle would read the novel "because the pre-philosophic period - the childhood and poetry of his life - lay among the furrowed fields and pious peasantry." But if Hayslope is fertile and prosperous, and the characters relatively free of "doubts and qualms" and of interest in "the causes of things," the "Old Leisure" passage is hardly a complete embodiment of the recent past as it is presented in the novel. Hayslope is disrupted from within by the consequences of Arthur's and Hetty's affair, and the potential for suffering in an apparently idyllic world is suggested before the actual tragedy by the image of the Cross suddenly encountered by the roadside in a foreign country (pp. 409-10).

In any case, it is not a life of leisure which is being celebrated so much as the dedication to hard work and the useful, practical wisdom of Adam and Mrs Poyser.

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1 This decline is lamented by W.B. Donne in his Old Roads and New Roads (1852), quoted by E.W. Bovill, English Country Life 1780-1830, p. 58.  
2 24 February 1859, in Eliot Letters, III, 23. Carlyle was born in 1795.
The events of the novel tend in fact to question the value of the complacency and serenity of "Old Leisure." Both after Thias's death and after Hetty's trial, Adam is forced to re-evaluate his own nature and to learn to overcome his hardness and complacent self-righteousness, while it is partly Arthur's lack of rigorous self-analysis which leads to his seduction of Hetty. He habitually sees himself as his neighbours see him, in terms of the social stereotype of the young gentleman, and as the "good fellow" that all his College friends believe him to be (p. 171). Moreover, the interest in the inner life and in psychological analysis, demonstrated in *Sartor Resartus* and shared by many novels of the 1840's and 1850's, is present in the narrator of *Adam Bede*. With reference to Arthur, the narrator warns that, "until we know what has been or will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitutes a man's critical actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character" (p. 359), and goes on to trace in detail Arthur's hesitations, rationalisations and excuses before and during the affair with Hetty.

Near the end of the book, Adam journeys to Snowfield to hear Dinah's decision about marriage, and as he goes over the area he passed through on his earlier quest for Hetty, he finds that the landscape "seemed to be telling him afresh the story of that painful past which he knew so well by heart" (p. 573). But the new thoughts he has gained since the first journey alter the significance of this story of the past. The past does not change, but for Adam the lapse of time has made its story different. He has gained a "fuller life" from his "sad experience" and wider sympathies because of his own suffering and his comprehension of others' suffering, and now feels a new strength in the mutual love between him and Dinah: it turns out to have been the "distant unseen point towards which that hard
journey from Snowfield eighteen months ago had been leading him" (pp. 573-74). In Pendennis Thackeray also points out the difference between an experience as it is felt at the time and the way it is recalled, but for him the past is all too fleeting, living only in memory, while for George Eliot, as Wilfil's story shows, it produces the present. For Adam the effect of the past is ultimately beneficial, but in Arthur's case his early sin blights his whole life, or what we hear of it - his character has been determined by his deeds. But the passage about Adam's journey also hints that for the reader as well the passing of time - such as that between 1799 and 1859 - inevitably changes the perspective on events: "no story is the same after a lapse of time; or rather, we who read it are no longer the same interpreters."

GEORGE ELIOT — 3. THE MILL ON THE FLOSS

According to Daniel P. Deneau, the events recounted in *The Mill on the Floss* take place between February 1829 and September 1839, except of course for the Conclusion. In an early scene of the story, Riley is said to have been "an auctioneer and appraiser thirty years ago" (p. 23) — that is, in about 1830, since the novel was published in 1860 — while the conversation between Deane and Tulliver about the Duke of Wellington's "conduct in the Catholic Question" (p. 65) points to 1829. Wellington, the Tory Prime Minister, had initially opposed measures aimed at removing Catholics' civil disabilities — allowing them to vote, stand for election, and hold public office — but by the late 1820's had come to feel that Catholic Emancipation was advisable if only to avert civil war in Ireland. The bill was finally carried in the Lords on 13 April 1829 and signed by the King on the 16th, while Deneau dates Deane's and Tulliver's discussion at some time between 22 and 25 April (i.e. Easter Week of 1829 — p. 37). Meanwhile the later reference to Tulliver's talks with Stelling on "'Swing' and incendiarism" (p. 120) brings to mind the machine-breaking and rick-burning by agricultural labourers which broke out in the second half of 1830: landlords used to receive mysterious threatening letters signed "Captain Swing" before the riots erupted, while the disturbances themselves, actuated by the bad winter of 1829-30, the subsequent bad harvest, the harsh administration of the Poor Law, could involve attacks on J.P.'s, landlords and parsons. The dating of 1839 for the last two books of the novel is suggested by the fact that Maggie has


"gone nine" at the beginning (p. 12) and is nineteen in Book VI (p. 382). However, since the "Swing" riots did not break out till August 1830, that year may be a more probable starting-point: hence the timing of the talk about the Catholic Question reveals the provincial backwardness of St. Ogg's society. On the other hand, the inconsistency may not be intentional - Deneau points out several other inconsistencies in the early books concerning the children's ages (pp. 468-69).

After these early allusions to well-known historical events, the setting in the 1830's is evoked mainly by references to musical and literary works. Stelling is said to read "one of Theodore Hook's novels" (p. 149), Hook (Wagg in Thackeray) having been a very popular novelist of the 1820's and 1830's as well as a journalist: he died in 1841. In Book VI we find references to Southey's Life of Cowper, which was prefixed to his standard edition of the poet's works published over 1833-37, and to "Buckland's Treatise" - William Buckland's Geology and Mineralogy Considered With Reference to Natural Theology, the last of the Bridgewater Treatises, published in 1836 (p. 334). Three operas referred to in the same section also evoke the period: Stephen, looking for a pretext for visiting Deanes' when he knows Maggie will be alone, brings over some music for Lucy from M.W. Balfe's Maid of Artois, which was first performed in 1836 (p. 356). A little later Philip and Stephen sing a duet from D. F. E. Auber's Masaniello (or La Muette de Portici), which was first performed in 1828 and gained a certain notoriety after a performance in Brussels in August 1830, when its portrayal of revolutionary fervour had inspired a riot in which the Dutch conquerors were driven out of the city. Meanwhile La Somnambula, a Bellini opera of 1831, gives Philip Wakem the opportunity to express his

devotion to Maggie by singing the aria "Ah! perché non posso odiarti" (p. 366). The fact that Southey's and Buckland's books, as well as all three operas, were written a few years before they became popular in St. Ogg's, is perhaps meant to suggest how provincial fashions lagged behind those of the capital.

But George Eliot does not make use of literary and musical allusions merely to establish the period. Hook's novels were full of homely comedy and farce and also of descriptions of fashionable life which made readers outside high society feel as if they were learning the secrets of those inside; hence Stelling's taste for them underscores both the superficiality of his professed evangelicalism and his anxiety to get ahead in the world. Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise, meanwhile, was part of a series aiming to show "the Power, wisdom and Goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation," and hence provide a reassuring world-view in opposition to that suggested by Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology (1830-33): Lyell's geological discoveries implied a much larger time-span for the earth and the life on it than seemed warranted by Biblical accounts, but Buckland, following in the tradition of eighteenth-century divinity, presented the new discoveries as a marvellous new demonstration of the purpose and providence of an almighty Creator. The Mill on the Floss was however published the year after The Origin of Species, which was in part an extension of Lyell's work, so for contemporary readers George Eliot's allusion to Buckland is an oblique reference to the contemporary controversy over Darwin, but one which would also have reminded them how the reassurance that Buckland had seemed to offer in 1836 had since been seriously challenged.

2 For Buckland and Darwin and their impact see Chadwick, The Victorian Church, I, 55ff, II (1970), lff.
Philip uses an aria from *La Somnambula* to convey his devotion to Maggie, and this is actually a response to the growing attraction towards Stephen which he has recognised in her reaction to the duet from *Masaniello*:

all her intentions were lost in the vague state of emotion produced by the inspiring duet — emotion that seemed to make her at once strong and weak: strong for all enjoyment; weak for all resistance. "hen the strain passed into the minor, she half-started from her seat with the sudden thrill of that change... (p. 366)

*Masaniello* in fact differs from all of Auber's other operas in its bold effects in instrumentation, original harmonies, and dramatic characterisation. On the other hand Philip's rendition of the Bellini aria suggests to Maggie "distinct memories and thoughts" and "quiet regret," rather than "excitement" (p. 367). It is even possible that Lucy's interest in songs from *The Maid of Artois* is a comment on her pleasant but rather superficial character, given that Balfe's main talent was for "facile melody." Moreover, as William J. Sullivan has shown, the plots of the three operas can be related to that of the novel. Most interesting is the analogy with *La Somnambula*: in the opera the heroine (whose family owns a mill) is suspected of having an affair with a dashing and cosmopolitan stranger, on account of her habit of sleep-walking. She is however innocent, the misunderstanding is cleared up, and she is reunited with her rustic sweetheart in a happy romantic ending. The allusion to the opera in the novel hence highlights the difficulty and complexity of Maggie's predicament: she is not entirely innocent in her relation with Stephen, the slanders of public opinion are not easily refuted and overcome, and the main misunderstanding (with her brother Tom rather than her first suitor Philip) is cleared up only at the cost of their lives.

1 *Grove's*, I, 253.
2 *Grove's*, I, 371.
Despite Deane's and Tulliver's talk of the Catholic Question, and the latter's discussion with telling over the "Swing" riots, the events of public history do not have a great impact on St. Ogg's. Moreover Deane's and Tulliver's opinions are coloured by their degree of personal prosperity. Tulliver's fears of "Papists and Radicals" reflect his distrust of elements within his own environment which his experience and education do not qualify him to understand, notably lawyers and lawsuits, while Deane's "more lively view of the present" is attributable to his being "attached to a firm of which the returns were on the increase" (p. 65). In any case Tulliver has no first-hand knowledge of the riots, and Hobsbawm and Rude point out that the "incendiarism" which for Tulliver is the leading feature of the riots, was actually less prevalent than machine-breaking, but was the aspect which the press concentrated on. Although the nearby rural parish of Basset is neglected and impoverished (p. 68), this gives a poor farmer like Moss "the depressed, unexpectant air of a machine-horse" (p. 72) rather than feelings of discontent and rebelliousness. The riots were concentrated in the south of England, whereas the dialect suggests that the novel is set in Warwickshire, where George Eliot grew up.

The two main passages focussing on the beliefs and traditions of St. Ogg's - the opening of Book I, Chapter 12, and Book IV, Chapter 1 - do in fact stress the community's lack of interest in political and religious issues. Attention to business is what is valued, and "men who busied themselves with political questions were regarded with some suspicion, as dangerous characters" (p. 104). Religious belief has ossified into an unquestioning adherence to tradition, and also involves "many pagan ideas,"

1 Captain Swing, p. 12.
2 See Appendix A. The physical details of the setting are based on the Gainsborough area of Lincolnshire.
although the people "believe themselves good church-people" (p. 240) — as is demonstrated by Tulliver's curse on Wakem in the fly-leaf of his Bible, and the mutton-bone which women keep in their pockets to protect them from cramp (p. 105). Faith is no longer a force in anyone's life, and the memory of Wesley's preaching has almost faded. Even when introduced to a less complacent and worldly form of religion in the Tractarian Dr. Kenn, who gives away most of his money, attacks the selfish motives behind the charity bazaar, and tries to encourage a more tolerant and sympathetic attitude towards Maggie, the people of St. Ogg's reassert their intolerant and egoistic attitudes to thwart his purposes. Dissent, like Churchmanship, is an inherited custom common in trade circles, and is considered by Church people as "a foolish habit that clung greatly to families in the grocery and chandlering lines" (p. 104) — an accurate enough perception of the social make-up of Dissenting groups, but showing no awareness of their actual beliefs.

The religious beliefs and political attitudes of St. Ogg's are not presented as typical of the period, for "the religious and moral ideas of the Dodsons and Tullivers were of too specific a kind to be arrived at deductively, from the statement that they were part of the Protestant population of Great Britain" (pp. 238-39), while in the political sphere the citizens of St. Ogg's do not participate in the widespread agitation for parliamentary reform of the early 1830's, which George Eliot was later to show as affecting even a poor and ignorant farmer like Dagley, in Middlemarch. However such religious feeling as exists in St. Ogg's does reflect attitudes prevalent at the period. The English population was in

1 Chadwick, The Victorian Church, I, 407-8, 371-72.
general anti-Catholic, especially in rural and remote areas, although the feeling was, like Tulliver's, passive rather than active, and the "monster-meetings" organised by the Ultra-Tory peers to mobilise public opinion were only occasionally successful. The St. Ogg's conviction that the "Catholics... would lay hold of government and property, and burn men alive" (p. 104) echoes the message of cartoons and placards used in anti-Catholic agitation, showing Queen Mary burning heretics, the atrocities of Judge Jeffries, and Wellington and Peel carrying rosaries and kissing the Pope's toe - as well as general fear of being ruled by a "Popish" king. The contrast between the Dissenting minister's support for Emancipation and his flock's opposition to it is also characteristic of the time: in the view of Dissenters, Catholicism was a "harmful superstition," but the ministers felt they could hardly deny them religious liberty without seeming inconsistent, in view of their campaign against their own disabilities. Mr Spray's "fervent belief in the right of the Catholics to the franchise and his fervent belief in their eternal perdition" (p. 104) echoes a comment in the *Christian Observer*, that to give Catholics civil rights "is not the same thing as to actively support a corrupt Church, denounced by God and proved most bane-ful to man." 

The discussion of the "emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers" (p. 238) presupposes on the part of the reader a feeling of dislike, even revulsion, towards them:

> It is a sordid life, you say... irradiated by no sublime principles; "no active, self-renouncing faith ... Here, one has

2 Machin, pp. 140-44.
3 Chadwick, i, i.
5 29 (1629), 129, quoted by Cowherd, p. 34.
conventional worldly notions and habits without instruction and without polish - surely the most prosaic form of human life... I share with you this sense of oppressive narrowness...

This feeling was so strong in some contemporary reviewers' responses, that George Eliot felt obliged to defend her characters. E.S. Dallas wrote in *The Times* that most of them were "unpleasant companions - prosaic, selfish, nasty... a world of pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy, envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness," comprising a "degraded species of existence". In response, George Eliot wrote to William Blackwood:

> I have certainly fulfilled my intention very badly if I have made the Dodson honesty appear "mean and uninteresting," or made the payment of one's debts appear a contemptible virtue in comparison with any sort of "Bohemian" qualities... no one class of persons or form of character is held up to reprobation or to exclusive admiration.

Within the novel, too, the narrator undermines any tendency in the reader to assume an attitude of condescension towards the characters, or indeed to believe that his own time is an advance on the recent past. Tulliver's "narrow notions" that one should pay one's debts "may perhaps excite a smile on the faces of many readers in these days of wide commercial views and wide philosophy, according to which everything rights itself without any trouble of ours" for the narrator is "telling the history of very simple people, who had never had any illuminating doubts as to personal integrity and honour" (p. 244). Earlier, Tulliver's strong attachment to the mill where he had grown up, his "clinging affection for the old home as part of his life, part of himself" had been contrasted favourably with

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Our instructed vagrancy, which has hardly time to linger by the hedgerows, but runs away early to the tropics, and is at home with palms and banyans — which is nourished on books of travel, and stretches the theatre of its imagination to the Zambesi (p. 229).

These comments reflect the great increase in travel and emigration from Britain since the 1830's — by the early 1850's more than a quarter of a million people were leaving the British Isles each year1 — and probably also the great public interest in David Livingstone's travels round the Zambesi and its tributaries from 1856 onwards.

After the opening chapter of personal reminiscence, the first allusion which locates the story in the past is to Mrs Tulliver's "fan-shaped cap" of which the narrator says, "I am afraid to think how long it is since fan-shaped caps were worn — they must be so near coming in again" (p. 9). The allusion, trivial as its subject is, suggests that change can be more apparent than lasting. Several other features of St. Ogg's in the 1830's could well apply to 1860 as well. Anti-Catholic prejudice had re-emerged more recently in controversy over the allegedly "Popish" practices of Tractarian clergy, such as wearing surplices to conduct services and putting a cross or candlesticks on the communion table2 — one of the features of Kenn's services in the novel which "set the Dissenters and the Church people by the ears" (p. 333), and violent demonstrations were still going on in the London parish of St.-George's-in-the-East in 1859-60.3 Kenn's criticisms of charity bazaars as "making vanity do the work of charity" are also pertinent to 1860, especially as the practice of holding bazaars to raise money for church projects expanded throughout the century.4 In his book of advice

1 Briggs, The Age of Improvement 1783-1867, p. 388.
2 cf. the opposition to Honeyman engineered by Bayham in The Newcomes.
3 Chadwick, I, 495-500.
to parish priests, first published in 1856, the Rev. J.J. Blunt urges that the practice of the parishioners' bringing gifts to the altar on Sundays and holy-days is much preferable to "a Ladies' bazaar, and the attendance of Mr So-and-So's quadrille band!" Similarly, if evangelicalism was the "telling thing" in Stelling's diocese of 1630, the party within the Church most likely to advance his worldly ambitions, this was certainly the case in many dioceses of the late 1850's, as the Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, under the guidance of Lord Shaftesbury, tended to appoint evangelical bishops.

This technique of making oblique allusions to the present while ostensibly dealing with the past is most evident in the novel's treatment of Tom's and Maggie's education. The state of both boys' and girls' education in the late 1820's and early 1830's is criticised, and the contemporary situation is - apparently - seen as an improvement. As Maggie becomes disillusioned with the gypsies, the narrator explains that she had only been to school for a year in St. Ogg's, and that her mind "hence contained the most unexpected ignorance as well as unexpected knowledge" (p. 98), unlike that of "that well-trained, well-informed young person that a small female of eight or nine necessarily is in these days." Her boarding-school education is later described as consisting of "shreds and patches of feeble literature and false history - with much futile information about Saxon and other kings of doubtful example" (p. 252). An enquiry into elementary schooling in 1833 stressed the lack of facilities and the poor quality of such as did exist, such that two fifths of children attended no school at all, and most of the rest went to dame-schools (often mainly a child-minding establishment) or to Sunday schools, which concentrated on religious tea-

1 The Acquirements and Principal Obligations and Duties of the Parish Priest (London: John Murray, 1856), pp. 258-60; noted by Chadwick, II, 174.
ching, and on reading rather than writing. By 1860, government grants for school-building had begun (1833), school inspections had been initiated (1839), and a system of pupil-teacherships followed by full-time college training introduced (1846). From 1847 schools received funding for books and equipment, and capitation grants were introduced during the 1850's.

Tom's education in Latin grammar and Euclidian geometry exemplifies what was thought at the time to constitute the education of a gentleman, while its focus on rote-learning and on rules and abstractions rather than on concrete objects was mentioned by Spencer in 1854 as a feature of past education which was then in decline. In 1836 William Hamilton had complained of the way a predominantly classical education was offered to boys of different aptitudes and temperaments, while Tom's only alternative to Stelling at the period, is described in the novel without much exaggeration:

> a grammar-school as yet unvisited by commissioners, where two or three boys could have all to themselves, the advantages of a large and lofty building, together with a headmaster, toothless, dim-eyed, and deaf, whose erudite indistinctness and inattention were engrossed by them at the rate of three hundred pounds a-head (p. 148)

The "commissioners" would be the Charity Commissioners who inspected grammar-schools from 1819 onwards, but who had not finished their work by 1832: they found that many were in absolute or comparative decay. The conditions under which they had been founded (often during the Renaissance) generally confined their teaching to the classics, while an 1806 judgment


4) "Pillans on Classical education," Edinburgh Review, 64 (1836), 106-124, at 123.

by Lord Eldon meant that the curriculum could not be changed without an Act of Parliament. Teaching as a profession lacked social prestige, and hence attracted few men of talent, so that the schools tended to teach even the classical languages badly. The situation had improved somewhat by 1860; there were more private schools offering a broader curriculum than the grammar—schools were able to provide, a Normal School of Design had been founded in 1837 to offer training in art, design, and industrial techniques for craftsmen, skilled workers and manufacturers — "schools of design." are mentioned in the novel as an improvement on the kind of art education Tom gets from Mr Goodrich (p. 147).

Yet George Eliot's treatment of Tom's and Maggie's education also contains a more veiled criticism of contemporary practices. This was quickly recognised by the Blackwood's reviewer, who in a (predictably) favourable review of the novel singled out the commentary on the methods and content of Tom's education as the few pages that could be skipped, since the subject had been done to death already in the Quarterly, Edinburgh and Westminster. In any case the references in the novel to the "necessarily" well-informed and well-trained "young female of eight or nine" and to contemporary schoolmasters as "invariably men of scrupulous integrity," and the clergy as "all men of enlarged minds and varied culture" (p. 147) are clearly aimed at satirising through exaggeration self-confident assumptions that education of 1860 is superior to that of the 1830's. Collins is presumably referring in his review to articles such as G.R. Gleig's "National Education," William Ellis's "Classical Education," and Herbert Spencer's

3 Ogilvie, pp. 97-98.
4 [Sir Lucas Collins], "The Mill on the Floss," Blackwood's, 87 (1860), 611-23, at 61e.
"What knowledge is of most worth?". Leig had criticised grammar-schools of his period for remaining under-used despite rapid population growth around them, and for continuing to offer classical education which no longer met the needs of the population. The quality of the schoolmasters remained a problem as well: as late as 1850 the Rev. H. Moseley observed that they tended to be men unfitted for better jobs "by reason of some feebleness of character, or perhaps of intellect, or some bodily defect." Meanwhile Ellis's article, quoting with approval the views expressed in a pamphlet by "M.E.", argues that a classical education has little practical application to man's present condition — what he needs to know is history, the sciences, and geography, so as to understand the physical circumstances of his surroundings, the causes of his present circumstances, the laws of nature through which he can carry on his work of civilization and progress. Herbert Spencer argues a similar case at greater length, and his comment that classical education is still thought to constitute the "education of a gentleman" calls to mind Philip's defence of Stelling's curriculum to Tom on the grounds that "'t's part of the education of a gentleman" (p. 143) as far as elementary education and girls' secondary education is concerned too, the position in 1860 was in many respects similar to that of 1830. In 1861 the Newcastle Commission reported that elementary education for many children was both brief and superficial, while the Schools Inquiry Commission, reporting on girls' education in 1868, complained that cheap day schools and boarding schools for daughters of farmers, tradesmen and shop-

1 "National Education," Edinburgh Review, 95 (1852), 321-57, at 353. Quoted by Hurt, Education in Evolution, p. 117. cf. Riley's comment that schoolmasters are "men who have failed in other trades, most likely" p. 20.
3 "What knowledge is of most worth?" Westminster Review, 72 (1859), 1-41; rpt. as Chapter 1 of Education, at pp. 2-3.
4 Warnard, Short History, p. 127.
keepers still concentrated too much on rote-learning of miscellaneous information, and that after their schooling the girls forget quickly all they have learnt, and their lives before marriage, like Maggie's for some time after her schooling is cut short, are "listless and purposeless."¹

Spencer also notes that girls are still made to learn "the births, deaths, marriages of kings, and other like historic trivialities."²

For all the aversion that they often felt for the citizens of St. Ogg's contemporary reviewers of the novel believed that their ilk were still flourishing in the England of their own time. E.S. Dallas claims that the book shows "the sort of life which thousands upon thousands of our countrymen lead,"³ while for John Chapman the Dodsons are "a picture in little of nine-tenths of the world we live in,"⁴ and Dinah Mulock averred that "we feel that we all are haunted by some of the race, could name them among our own connections."⁵ Maggie's frustration with her constricting environment was also related to the present. According to the Spectator,

A woman's natural impulses; all the wild fancies and self-torturing thoughts of a young girl vivid in imagination, but not strong in any mental exercise, and obliged to live a life at first very narrow, and then very mean - are described exactly as they might happen, as they do happen, in thousands of English homes.

The novel itself attacks the contempt felt by "good society" for "unfashionable families" (pp. 254-55) as if Maggie's suffering and need for "emphatic belief" result from her social position rather than from her historical

¹ quoted in Gosden, How They Were Taught, pp. 155, 158.
² Education, p. 3.
situation, and assumes a great social gulf between Maggie and the readers. She is part of a wide and arduous national life condensed in unfragrant deafening factories, cramping itself in mines, sweating at furnaces, grinding, hammering, weaving under more or less oppression of carbonic acid — or else, spread over sheepwalks and scattered in lonely houses and huts on the clayey or chalky corn-lands, where the rainy days look dreary.

Although, as Graham Martin has pointed out, Maggie's suffering involves emotional and cultural deprivation rather than the physical hardships of work in factories, mines, or farming,¹ her predicament is presented as characteristic of the present as well as of the recent past. People living in such conditions, the passage goes on, need belief in gin, or in something that will present motives in an entire absence of high prices, something that will give patience and feed human love when the limbs ache with weariness, and human looks are hard upon us — something, clearly, that lies outside personal desires, that includes resignation for ourselves and active love for what is not ourselves.

The narrator's later satirical attack on the narrowness and intolerance of public opinion, as embodied in the attitude of the St. Ogg's women towards Maggie after her return to the town, is also relevant to the present. If Maggie had returned as Stephen's wife, she would have been accepted, since "public opinion, which at St. Ogg's, as elsewhere, always knew what to think, would have judged in strict consistency with those results" (p. 431). The narrator then moves into the present tense, observing that "[p]ublic opinion, in these cases, is always of the feminine gender — not the world, but the world's wife," so that the subsequent passage, which

quotes the women's comments and exposes their petty-mindedness and superfi-
cial values, can also be seen as a criticism of "Society" of 1660. The
intolerant attitudes of "public opinion" of his own time towards unconven-
tional, uncustomary behaviour of any kind was a major theme of Mill's On
Liberty, published in 1859. Society, he argues, imposes its own ideas,
rules of conduct and practices on those who dissent from it, preventing
the formation of individuality not in harmony with its ways, and compelling
all characters to fashion themselves on its own model, so that "the man,
and still more the woman, who can be accused either of doing 'what nobody
does' or of not doing 'what every body does,' is the subject of as much
deprecatory remark as if he or she had committed some grave moral delinquen-
cy." Like the Dodsons, most people of 1859 do what is customary, since
"[i]t does not occur to them to have any inclination, except for what is
customary" And his argument that people of strong desires and feelings
are capable of both more evil and more good than others, that the strong
susceptibilities which make personal impulses vivid and powerful are also
the source of the "most passionate love of virtue" and the "sternest self-
control" can be related to Maggie's character, and particularly to her
criticism of Tom, after he has discovered her clandestine meetings with

"Sometimes when I have done wrong, it has been because I have
feelings that you would be the better for, if you had them... You have
not even a vision of feelings by the side of which your shining virtues are mere darkness!" (p. 305)

1 On Liberty, p. 68.
2 On Liberty, p. 126.
3 On Liberty, p. 119.
4 On Liberty, p. 118.
Sometimes, as in *Dam Bede*, the use of generalisation to relate the recent past to the present can be more explicit. For example the narrator draws attention to the difference between Maggie's internal struggles, with the slain shadowy antagonists "for ever rising again," and Tom's "dustier, noisier warfare, grappling with more substantial obstacles, and gaining more definite conquests" (p. 271). This kind of contrast between the male and female roles is then said to have persisted throughout history:

So it has been since the days of Hecuba, and of Hector, Tamer of horses: inside the gates, the women with streaming hair and uplifted hands offering prayers, watching the world's combat from afar, filling their long, empty days with memories and fears: outside, the men, in fierce struggle with things divine and human, quenching memory in the stronger light of purpose, losing the sense of dread and even of wounds in the hurrying ardour of action.

Perhaps then the novel can be seen as an implicit qualification of the assumptions of contemporary writers like Spencer and Macaulay that the development of society is always progressive. It recalls in fact Froude's definition of history as:

>a study, not of institutions, not of progress of the species, not of development of ideas, or other loud sounding nonentities; but of personal character in conflict with the circumstances of life, and crushed by them or rising over them triumphant

The novel obviously does deal with "personal character in conflict with the circumstances of life" — a theme not only of Maggie's story but also embodied in Tulliver's struggles against legal complications he cannot understand and in Tom's unhappy education and his later efforts to retrieve the family fortunes. Yet at the same time, the novel seems to endorse a progressive view of social development. In the famous first chapter of Book

IV the narrator, after comparing the life of the Dodsons and Tullivers with the "narrow, ugly, grovelling existence" once lived on the banks of the Othone, goes on to say that we must feel the "oppressive narrowness" of this kind of life, so as to understand how it acted on Tom and Maggie,

how it has acted on young natures in many generations, that in the onward tendency of human things have risen above the mental level of the generation before them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the strongest fibres of their hearts (p. 238)

Tom's and Maggie's predicament is hence both a recurrent problem, and a stage in the gradual progress of society. Their suffering is both part of an "historical advance of mankind" and representative of the suffering which occurs "in every town, and by hundreds of obscure hearths." Their story is to be taken as representative of the lives of many people of both past and present, for "there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which every single object suggests a vast sum of conditions."

This poses the question of exactly how Tom's and Maggie's lives illustrate an "historical advance of mankind" — more specifically, the particular advance which occurred between about 1829 and 1860. The issue is made more complicated not only by the indications that many aspects of society have not changed, but also by the positive value attached to the past per se by both narrator and characters. The very opening sentence of the novel, lacking a main clause, evokes an almost a-temporal world, so strongly does the past feel present to the narrator: "A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green banks to the sea, and the loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its passage with an impetuous embrace."\(^1\)

Two particularly lyrical passages which convey a strong personal note of
nostalgia, celebrate feeling for the past, and the way that the past lives
in the present. The thoughts and loves of Tom's and Maggie's first years
will always be part of their lives, since

We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no child­
hood in it, - if it were not the earth where the same flowers
come up again every spring, that we used to gather with our tiny
fingers as we sat lisping to ourselves on the grass ... What
novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known,
and loved because it is known? (p. 36)

The narrator then speaks of walking in the wood "on this mild May day," and
of how "the young yellow-brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue
sky, the white star-flowers and the blue-eyed speedwell and the ground ivy
at my feet" touch more "deep and delicate fibres" than exotic tropical
scenery which evokes no memories.

Our delight in the sunshine on the deep-bladed grass to-day,
might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls,
if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off
years which still live in us, and transform our perception
into love.

The later passage expresses the same idea, but gives it an ethical as well
as an emotional force, pointing out that we prefer humble plants to fine
ones, and ugly furniture to fashionable, if they are associated with "early
memory": continual "striving after something better and better in our sur­
roundings" would be dangerous "if our affections had not a trick of twining
round those old inferior things" (p. 133). We have already noted Mr Tul­
liver's strong attachment to the mill where he was born, and other charac­
ters also feel such powerful ties: Tom is determined that the mill come
back into the family, the Dodson sisters adhere closely (albeit unthinki­
ly) to family traditions, Mrs Tulliver's grief after the family downfall is due to the loss of her linen and china, and of the family furniture, which are literally her past life, and she spends her days in a "perpetual ruminating comparison of the past with the present" (p. 242). For Maggie however the past, embodied in her life in St. Ogg's, her love for Tom, and her sense of duty towards Lucy and Philip, is a moral imperative, expressing what she sees as the best part of her nature, As she tells Stephen just before they part, her feeling for him is in conflict with "memories, and affections, and longings after perfect goodness," and "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment" (pp. 417-18). In view of the great value Maggie herself sets on the past, and of the social ostracism she incurs when she tries to remain loyal to it, it is difficult to see how her story exemplifies any "historical advance of mankind." I shall return to this subject later.

Tom's career after his father's ruin can however be related to various aspects of the economic progress which was occurring around the 1830's, and which is represented in the novel largely by the career and character of Mr Deane. The lives of Tom's uncles and of his father suggest the different careers open to him in St. Ogg's, and demonstrate as it were different stages of economic progress. Uncle Pullet's wealth is in land, and as a gentleman farmer with his own land he is part of the large proportion of English society of the time who depended on agriculture for their livelihood. However, as we have noted in reference to Adam Bede this proportion declined throughout the century. Pullet's mentality is also old-fashioned: he knows nothing of the clergy, the government, or even a famous figure like the Duke of Wellington, and believes that the only secure form of investment is in land. In the early nineteenth century more than half of
all investment was in land, but by 1860 it was a less attractive proposition than before, as the interest on land securities was only $3\frac{1}{2}-4\frac{1}{2}$ percent, as compared with returns on commercial investment of 8-9 percent or higher. Consequently the percentage of total investment which went into industry increased, especially after 1820.

The careers of Tom's other two uncles, Glegg and Deane, have been in business. As a (retired) wool-stapler, Glegg has depended on the prosperity of agriculture. Having risen slowly in his business (p. 196) he retains his early penny-pinching habits in his prosperity (pp. 106-7): saving as an end in itself "belonged to the industrious men of business of a former generation" and their race is "nearly lost in these days of rapid money-getting, when lavishness comes close on the back of want" (p. 106). Deane on the other hand has risen rapidly in Guest & Co., a "great mill-owning, ship-owning business ... with a banking concern attached" (p. 55) which has the "largest oil-mill and the most extensive wharf in St. Ogg's" (p. 319). Deane himself recounts the changes he has seen in his own lifetime:

"forty years ago ... The looms went slowish, and fashions didn't alter quite so fast ... Everything was on a lower scale, sir - in point of expenditure, I mean. It's this steam, you see, that has made a difference: it drives on every wheel double pace ... it's a fine thing, too, to further the exchange of commodities, and bring the grains of corn to the mouths that are hungry" (pp. 347-48)

In the early nineteenth century the increasing population in America and Ireland had led to a rising capacity in these countries to absorb British manufactures, and to supply raw materials such as cotton, flax, and grain.

Exports, mainly of textiles, had increased tenfold from 1800 to 1810, as compared with the 1780's, and had trebled again by 1815. New markets opened up or expanded in South America in the 1820's and in the East in the 1830's, and trade with southern Europe, Africa and Central America also increased. The 1820's also saw a rise in the rate of capital formation which continued into the 1830's. Steam power was applied in textile factories, mines, ironworks and railways, and its potential in brewing, flour-mills and paper-mills was clear. In the 1820's too steamships travelled round the British coasts, across the Channel and the Irish Sea, and to Spain; I.K. Brunel's Great Western crossed the Atlantic in 1838.

Tulliver's ruin is partly due to the complicated system of law which had grown up around the vagaries of water-power in milling, but Deane proposes to replace the mill's water-power with steam-power (p. 349). When Mrs Tulliver points out to him that the Tulliver family had been carrying on Dorcote Mill before the oil-mill of Guest & Co., had been thought of, he has to tell her that this is not "precisely the relation between the two mills which would determine their value as investments" (p. 213).

The economic developments outlined by Mr Deane would have been recognised by George Eliot's readers as having continued up to their own period: the 1840's and 1850's saw a massive increase in production in manufacturing industry, and a corresponding rise in exports, which increased by 130 per-

1 Deane, The First Industrial Revolution, p. 89.
4 Deane, "Capital Formation..." p. 112; Checkland, p. 11.
cent between 1842 and 1857, with new markets opened up in the Middle East, Singapore and Australia. Moreover, as knowledge of the world outside Britain expanded, the risks involved in overseas investment could be calculated more accurately, and investors became dissatisfied with the kind of low returns considered good by Mr. Glegg, who considers five percent a sound profit (p. 187). And, by 1860 the railways had of course greatly expanded.

The passage we have already noted referring to people in factories, mines and iron-works shows that George Eliot was aware of the human suffering involved in the growth of industrialisation. However, by choosing to emulate his uncle Deane rather than his father or any of his other uncles, Tom adapts himself to changing social and economic conditions. He also adds Dodsonian prudence and restraint to the more daring spirit he emulates in Deane and has inherited from his father, saving his earnings carefully, and, unlike his father, making a good profit when he speculates (on Bob Jakin's "Laceham goods"). On the other hand it is doubtful whether outside his business activities, Tom can be said to represent an advance on the preceding generation: he agrees to write out his father's curse on Wackem in the Bible, and keeps up his father's enmity towards Wackem in his own attitude to Philip. For Maggie he is a major embodiment of the "oppressive narrowness" of St. Ogg's life, rather than a sharer in her struggles to transcend it.

Maggie is however unable to participate in these economic developments because she is a woman. She has indeed "risen above the mental level of the

2 Checkland, pp. 40-41; Chambers, p. 145.
3 cf. his father's unsuccessful speculation in corn, p. 274.
generation before" her, in her quick intelligence, her imaginative responses to what she reads, and her aspiration towards a more satisfying life than her society can offer her. Philip can satisfy her longing for companionship and talk about literature, but has no sexual attraction for her, while, although marriage to Stephen would connect her with the rising economic forces of the period, her attraction to him is partly the result of the contrast between her "third-rate schoolroom, with all its jarring sounds and petty round of tasks" and his "world of love and beauty and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all the poetry and romance she had ever read, or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries" (p. 338), not to mention her vanity, her "excessive delight in admiration and acknowledged supremacy" (p. 383). On the other hand, when she rejects Stephen, and responds to the "stronger" feelings of "passion, and affection, and long deep memories of early discipline and effort, of early claims on her love and pity" she is ostracised by much of St. Ogg's.

In her efforts to come to terms with her trivial and emotionally-starved life after her father's ruin, Maggie sometimes thinks that "she could have been contented with absorbing fancies; if she could have had all Scott's novels and all Byron's poems! - then, perhaps, she might have found happiness to dull her sensibility to her actual daily life" (p. 251). Maggie sees Scott here as offering an escape from reality, but she eventually realises that such an escape into a "dream-world" is not enough - she needs "some explanation of this hard, real life", a "key" enabling her to understand and endure "the heavy weight that had fallen on her young heart", the real learning and wisdom of great men, and these she does not find in Scott. George Eliot's own comments on Scott in "The Natural History of German Life" show that she believed that such descriptions as that of
Luckie Mucklebackit's cottage in Chapter 31 of *The Antiquary* could serve to extend the reader's sympathies to that which was apart from themselves. That is, Maggie's response to Scott may be inadequate—she is too preoccupied with her own suffering to extend her sympathies to that of others. She feels that the "privation of all pleasant things" which had resulted from her family's ruin "had come to her more than to others" (p. 250). When later she talks to Philip about Scott, it is to complain that the dark-haired heroines like Rebecca, Flora Mac-Ivor and Minna Troil (in *The Pirate*; as well as Corinne in Mme de Stael's novel of that name, never find happiness, while the blonde-haired ones do (p. 292). In this case Scott is not providing escapism enough, not allowing the brilliant, impulsive and unconventional heroines with whom Maggie identifies to win out. Philip predicts jocularly that one day she will avenge the dark-haired heroines herself, supplanting her cousin Lucy in her lover's heart. This is of course exactly what happens, but winning Stephen's love away from Lucy does not make Maggie happy. If she had read to the end of *The Pirate* (see p. 269) she would have learnt that Minna, although separated from her lover Cleveland (the pirate) does find some content staying at home and doing her duty. It is arguably George Eliot who provides the more escapist ending, in Maggie's reconciliation with Tom in the flood.¹

Maggie seems to find a solution to her discontent in her reading of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, from which she takes a belief in self-renunciation, in the repression of personal desire, and in concern for the greater sufferings of others. Hence she puts herself in contact with the "active, self-renouncing faith" which St. Ogg's has lost and forgotten.

since the time when people gave up their possessions for conscience's sake in the civil wars and "went forth beggared from their native town" (p. 103). The chapter describing Maggie's conversion is actually called "A Voice From the Past." A Kempis was of course a medieval Catholic rather than a seventeenth-century Puritan or Loyalist, but, as Barbara Hardy has pointed out, Maggie adopts his ideas as an ethic rather than as a religious belief, a Feuerbachian creed of duty and selflessness. Although a Kempis's work was designed to enkindle a strong personal love for God, Maggie is never shown to feel this, and this slant to her interpretation of the book—unlike her pride and self-dramatisation in her application of its creed—is never mentioned by the narrator. And the relevance of a Kempis to 1860 is suggested by the narrator's observation that his book "works miracles to this day" because it "was written down by a hand that waited for the heart's prompting," and is a "record of human needs and human consolations" (p. 254).

Maggie's impulse towards self-renunciation is unconsciously egoistic—she conspicuously gets her plain-sewing at a linen-shop in St. Ogg's, instead of "in a more quiet and indirect way" (p. 256). In any case her Tulliver inheritance means that her efforts fail, and she allows herself secret meetings with Philip in the Red Deeps. After this connection has been broken off, she starves her feelings again by teaching in a dreary girls' school, and her elopement with Stephen is a fulfilment of Philip's prediction that when she is thrown into the world "every rational satisfaction" of her nature which she denies will "assault" her "like a savage appetite" (p. 289).


2 Kathleen Watson, "The Use of Religious Diction..." p. 166.
After Maggie has renounced Stephen, and is suffering from the vindictiveness of St. Ogg's, Dr. Kenn endorses her attachment to her past ties, and sees it as part of an ethic which makes the community "a family knit together by Christian brotherhood under a spiritual father." He laments the "want of fellowship and sense of mutual responsibility" among his own flock, and also what he feels is a tendency "towards the relaxation of ties - towards the substitution of wayward choice for the adherence to obligation, which has its roots in the past" (p. 435). For Kenn, as a Tractarian, this ideal would have its model in the early Church of the Fathers, or of the medieval period in which à Kempis lived. The Oxford Movement feared that the secularising tendencies which had emerged from the French Revolution, the growth of economic individualism and the rise of political liberalism, would lead to "the final destruction of the idea of a corporate society with given, mutual responsibilities, and the arrival of a disordered régime in which the mutual ties and relations of men would disappear in a greedy scramble."¹

One solution to Maggie's predicament seems then to be an ethic of self-renunciation which involves a return to an ideal based on a kind of secularised medieval Catholicism, a "progress" based on a return to a forgotten past. Self-renunciation as an ideal seems to be endorsed too by an earlier passage describing Maggie's state before she reads à Kempis: she is "unhappily quite without that knowledge of the irreversible laws within and without her, which, governing the habits, becomes morality, and developing the feelings of submission and dependence, becomes religion" (p. 252).

irreversible laws was, as we have noted, expressed elsewhere by George Eliot, and was common at the time she was writing. Like Arthur Donnithorne Maggie tries to evade the conditions imposed on her by external circumstances and often acts without due regard for the consequences of her behaviour. But it is not really clear how an ethic based on "feelings of submission and dependence" and obedience to "irreversible laws" will allow Maggie any scope for activity. Dr Kenn, for all his personal goodwill and social idealism, is forced to ask Maggie to leave his household because of the ill-natured local gossip her presence there has attracted, and in any case his analysis of St. Ogg's society is not borne out by the way it is presented in the novel. It is not characterised by a tendency to "wayward choice" at all — it is rather intolerance and narrow materialistic standards which caused the community to neglect the Tullivers after their ruin (p. 275) and to ostracise Maggie. Given her society's unthinking adherence to what is customary, it is difficult to see what progress, other than economic, it is likely to make. The Dodsons and Tullivers were "reared in the praise-worthy past of Pitt and high prices" (i.e. during the early years of the Napoleonic Wars), and "there had been no highly modifying influence to act on them in their mature life" (p. 240). In any case it has been suggested in various ways throughout the novel that there had also been little progress since the 1830's. Morally, Maggie would seem to be the "fittest" in her society, but she is not; in Darwinian terms, the most adapted to her environment — rather the reverse.

Just before the end of the novel it appears that self-renunciation, stripped of all egotism, can be beneficial. Maggie confronts "the long penance of life, which was all the possibility she had of lightening the load to some other sufferers, and so changing that passionate error into a new force of unselfish human love" (p. 451), and, after resisting the appeal in Stephen's letter, she prays, "'O God, if my life is to be long, let me live to bless and comfort -'" (p. 453). It is shown too that her self-renunciation extends Lucy's sympathies, making her aware of what she calls a "'better'" nature than her own (p. 449), while Philip has found that his love for her has released him from "painful self-consciousness," planted the seed of sympathy; of "'that enlarged life which grows and grows by appropriating the life of others'" (p. 443). But the flood still appears a deus ex machina, since the only possible future which seems open to Maggie is one of sheer endurance, gradually living down the slanders against her reputation and "lightening the load to some other sufferers," and this is both vaguely defined and appallingly dreary. Moreover the ending implies that the only way she can be reconciled with Tom is to make the ultimate self-sacrifice. In any case, given what we know of Tom, it is improbable that he would at any time have been capable of feeling a "new revelation to his spirit, of the depths in life, that had lain beyond his vision which he fancied so keen and clear" (p. 458). It is as if George Eliot, unable to envisage any gradual, progressive social evolution operating in St. Ogg's to which Maggie could become adapted, has had to revert to a theory of change through sudden catastrophe.

GEORGE ELIOT – 4. SILAS MARNER

While writing *Silas Marner* in 1861 George Eliot explained to John Blackwood how the idea for the novel had come to her "quite suddenly, as a sort of legendary tale, suggested by [her] recollection of having once, in early childhood, seen a linen-weaver with a bag on his back." But as she considered it further, she felt inclined to attempt "a more realistic treatment."¹

An important element of this "realistic treatment" is the setting of the novel at a specific period, or rather at three particular points in history. Part 1 focusses on "the early years of this century,"² but contains a retrospect to Silas's exile from Lantern Yard about fifteen years earlier – i.e. in the late 1780's. The events of Part II take place sixteen years after those of Part 1 – in 1817 at least, since the edition of Mant's Bible which Nancy is reading in Chapter 17 was published in that year.³ However the opening paragraph of the novel evokes a past which is both more distant and more vaguely defined than these three periods: it is the era "when the spinning-wheels hummed busily in the farmhouses – and even great ladies, clothed in silk and thread-lace, had their toy spinning-wheels of polished oak..." (p. 3), and a "far-off time" when "superstition clung easily round every person or thing that was at all unwonted, or even intermittent and occasional merely" (p. 2). The distrust and suspicion with which immigrant country weavers were viewed is said to reflect the outlook of "the peasants of old times" and at this apparently-distant time,

¹ 24 February 1861, in *Eliot Letters*, III, 382.
² *Silas Marner; the Weaver of Ravelog*, by George Eliot (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1861), p. 3. All subsequent citations will be from this edition.
the linen-weavers themselves seem to be already obsolescent, appearing like "remnants of a disinherited race" (p. 3). In the next paragraph the setting is made more specific ("the early years of this century"), but the dating is never as precise as in Adam Bede, and the opening paragraph suggests that Raveloe maintains traditions of generations before which were shared by peasant communities in general. Later it is in fact described as "a village where many of the old echoes lingered, undrowned by new voices" (p. 6).

The most prominent of the "old echoes" in Raveloe life is the villagers' habitual recourse to supernatural explanations for natural phenomena. To the boys of Raveloe, Silas's protuberant eyes and "dreadful stare" portend cramp, rickets, or a wry mouth, while their parents believe he can cure rheumatism (pp. 4-5). His actual cure of Sally Oates' heart-disease and dropsy through herbal medicine had encouraged them to think he could take over the magical office of the dead Wise Woman of Tarley, who had muttered strange words and tied red thread round children's toes to keep off water in the head, and given prospective mothers little bags to hang around their necks to prevent their having idiot children (pp. 29-31). Although Marner is too honest about his own abilities to exploit this role, his refusal to do so means that they attribute subsequent accidents and attacks to his "ill-will and irritated glances." His fits of catalepsy intensify their fear and their sense that he must be in league with the devil (pp. 8-9). Later, when his money is stolen, some people, notably Mr Macey, assume that the robbery in fact signals the break-up of this intimacy, and hence that it was committed by some "preternatural felon" (p. 111). In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries local wise men and women used incomprehensible formulae like those employed by the Wise Woman of Tarley to cure diseases,
and their obscurity added to their power in the minds of those being treated. Similarly there was a common belief that the devil could enter into semi-feudal contracts with people to ensure their worldly success, and his supposed intervention could be a convenient way of explaining strange diseases, motiveless crimes, or unusual success. The superstitions described in *Silas Marner* can hence be seen as survivals from an earlier period, but they continued into George Eliot's day and even beyond. Southey attests to their survival into the period in which Part 1 of the novel is set: "a Cunning-Man, or a Cunning-Woman ... is to be found near every town, and though the laws are occasionally put in force against them, still it is a gainful trade," while Edward Peacock in 1856 declared that

Those who are not in daily intercourse with the peasantry can hardly be made to believe or comprehend the hold that charms, witchcraft, wise-men, and other like relics of heathendom have upon the people.

Recalling a period only a few years before the time of writing (1879), William Henderson writes of a Kirk elder at Berwick-upon-Tweed who applied to a wise woman in order to retrieve a stolen web of linen, but then did not want to know who the thief was, for fear of being brought into contact with the Devil. He also observes that it is believed throughout the country that baptism benefits a child physically as well as spiritually — an idea which recalls Dolly Winthrop's equation of christening and inoculation. Hardy's novels too are full of evidence as to the prevalence of superstition.

2 Thomas, pp. 473-77.
4 *Notes and Queries*, 24 May 1856, p. 415.
6 Henderson, p. 15.
in rural districts. In Return of the Native (1878), set in the 1840's, some of the peasantry think Eustacia Vye a witch, and Susan Nonsuch is convinced that she causes her son's illnesses, while Christian Gantle thinks that Damon Wildeve's dice have the power of charms and spells.\(^1\) In The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), set at the same period, several farmers consult a "weather-prophet" about the likely outcome of the harvest, and he is also thought to be able to charm away warts and cure the evil (scrofula).\(^2\)

And just as Silas arouses the superstitious fears of his neighbours because of his isolation from them and his supposed cleverness in possessing a skill (weaving) which they cannot understand, Dr Fitzpiers in The Woodlanders (1887), set in the 1850's or possibly later,\(^3\) is rumoured to have sold his soul to the "wicked one" since he lives apart from his neighbours and is a "'strange, deep, perusing gentleman'" (pp. 40, 61).

Moreover Little Hintock in The Woodlanders is like Raveloe in other ways as well. It is described as

one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation; where reasoning proceeds on narrow premisses, and results in inferences wildly imaginative" (pp. 39-40)

Raveloe, with its speculations about Marner continuing unchanged for fifteen years, and its repeated discussions of events such as old Mr Lammeter's marriage and the fate of the would-be gentleman Cliff, shows a predilection for "more meditation than action," while the Casses' idle lives are characterised by "more listlessness than meditation." Their "sporting, drinking,

1 Book III, Chapters 2 and 7; Book V, Chapters 2 and 7.
2 Chapter 26.
card-playing" is in fact described as "the half-listless gratification of senses dulled by monotony" (p. 55). Meanwhile the "narrow premisses" of the villagers' reasoning and the "wildly imaginative" inferences which result from them are highlighted in their reaction to the robbery of Silas's gold: they are unable to conceive that Dunsey could be the culprit because of the "prescriptive respectability of a family with a mural monument and venerable tankards" (p. 149), and hence infer a "preternatural felon," or a pedlar whom everyone suddenly remembers as having worn large ear-rings when this possibility is suggested to them (120ff).

The analogies with Hardy's novels suggest then that superstitious beliefs persisted into George Eliot's own time, and the narrator does in fact declare that "strange lingering echoes of the old demon-worship might perhaps even now be caught by the diligent listener among the grey-haired peasantry" (p. 5). The survival of old-fashioned beliefs in Raveloe results from its isolation from the influence of new ideas and from the rapid technological changes taking place at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Being "an hour's journey on horseback from any turnpike" Raveloe "was never reached by the vibrations of the coach-horn, or of public opinion" (p. 6), and hence remained "aloof from the currents of industrial energy and Puritan earnestness" (p. 40). As such it is not intended as representative of rural villages of the early nineteenth century, simply because no village or type of village could be made to embody the rural life of the period:

our old-fashioned country life had many different aspects, as all life must have when it is spread over a various surface, and breathed on variously by multitudinous currents, from the winds of heaven to the thoughts of men, which are for ever moving and crossing each other with incalculable results (p. 40)
George Eliot is pointing out the variety to be found in early nineteenth-century rural life to those who, like the social theorists criticised in "The Natural History of German Life," tend to generalise about it. Similarly Cobbett in his *Rural Rides*, writing of the 1820's, could not generalise about the condition of agricultural labourers, since in some areas they were well-housed, well-fed and able to produce some of their own food, whereas elsewhere they were poor, dirty, starving, unemployed, and living in hovels. The reader of 1861 would possibly have compared Raveloe to Hayslope, since *Adam Bede* is set in the same period as the first part of *Silas Marner*. Raveloe shares Hayslope's material prosperity, and in both cases this prosperity is related to the village's geographical setting: Hayslope is in a "north midland county" while Raveloe, although further south, is situated "in the rich central plain of what we are pleased to call Merry England" (p. 6). Both areas are also well-wooded, providing an avenue of profit for landlords and a source of firing for the poor: Cobbett often points out that the labouring populations are better off in wooded areas because of this. In both places too the squires command a great deal of respect because of their social pre-eminence. In *Silas Marner*, Squire Cass, although not much different in dress or habits from other prosperous farmers, is considered their superior by virtue of having a couple of tenants, and is the only landed parishioner given the title of Squire (pp. 39, 133-34). Because of his social position Dunsey is not suspected of robbing Silas, while Silas himself is habitually in awe of the

1 William Cobbett, *Rural Rides During the Years 1821 to 1832*, ed. and notes by Pitt Cobbett (London: Reeves & Turner, 1893), I, 34, 58, 108, 229, 283; II, 123, 250.


gentry, whom he considers "tall, powerful, florid men, seen chiefly on horseback" (p. 332). Moreover, although the people of Hayslope are not nearly as superstitious as those of Raveloe, the role of the Church is similar in both parishes. Both Mr Irwine and Mr Crackenthorp are easygoing, lacking "Puritan earnestness" and interest in doctrine, while Church attendance and participation in its customs bear witness to an individual's membership of the community: In Hayslope the church on Sunday afternoon is partly a meeting-place where social contacts are kept up and local gossip exchanged, while in Raveloe an important part of Silas's integration into the community is his christening and attendance at church - the first time he appears in Part II, he is emerging from church with Eppie.

However, Hayslope is in a hilly region, which enables Adam to "'feel the world's a big place,'" while Raveloe, situated in a "snug well-wooded hollow" (p. 6) seems to Silas to be "hidden even from the heavens by the screening trees and hedgerows" (p. 24). This geographical difference is paralleled by the far more limited awareness which the people of Raveloe have of the world outside. No-one in Raveloe mentions, as Adam does, coal-pit engines or Arkwright's cotton mills at Cromford, and even a well-established machine like Silas's hand-loom arouses a "half-fearful fascination" in the Raveloe boys.¹ Although Mrs Poyser is very critical of Dinah for wanting to stay in an industrial area like Stonyshire, she feels no suspicion or fear of the people who live there, but the people of Raveloe, knowing nothing of the industrial north where Silas grew up, treat him with awe and distrust for fifteen years. And by contrast with Arthur Donnithorne,

¹ The power-loom, which was gradually to replace the hand-loom during the first half of the nineteenth century, had already been invented by Edmund Cartwright in 1785.
Squire Cass is content to let his tenants "get into arrears, neglect their fences, reduce their stock, sell their straw, and otherwise go the wrong way" until his rent returns suffer (p. 131). He is in fact a landowner of the type that Young and other advocates of agricultural improvement habitually criticised for negligence and old-fashioned habits. As far as religion is concerned too the two villages differ: the Hayslope area does boast a few Methodists, and twenty years after the events of the story Evangelicalism has arrived in the shape of Irwine's successor Ryde. In Raveloe, on the other hand, Dissent is so unfamiliar that Dolly Winthrop, never having heard the word "chapely" is afraid that it may refer to "some haunt of wickedness" (pp. 165-66), while Mr Crackenthorp is apparently still there to marry Eppie to Aaron at the end.

Nor do the inhabitants of Raveloe ever refer to the events of the Napoleonic Wars or to contemporary politics. The war is mentioned only as a factor determining the prosperity of the lazy Raveloe farmers, as "that glorious war-time which was felt to be a peculiar favour of Providence towards the landed interest" (p. 39). In *Adam Bede* Mrs Poyser refers to a Lord Jacey whose eldest son lost thousands of pounds to the Prince of Wales, and the extravagance and scandalous private life of the future George IV was a recurrent theme of popular newspapers and cartoons of this period, but the gossip at the Rainbow focusses on purely local concerns and traditions.

The transition between the two parts of *Wives Warner* involves a gap of sixteen years, so that we might expect some reference to social and historical changes over this period. In Chapter 3 the narrator foreshadows the

"fall of prices" which would "come to carry the race of small squires and yeomen down that road to ruin for which extravagant habits and bad husbandry were plentifully anointing their wheels" (pp. 39-40), and this decline in the prosperity of agricultural areas after the end of the war in 1815 is then registered in Part II by the conversation of Godfrey and the Lammeters about the "increasing poor-rate and the ruinous times" when things invariably turn out wrong (p. 301). During the war both profits and rents increased "by amounts in no way commensurate with any additional efforts, new practices or fresh outlays which were put into farming" but with the renewal of corn imports after the war, prices fell, and many small landowners could not repay debts they had incurred from buying land at inflated war-time prices. For landowners with tenants, low prices affected the rent the latter could pay, and since many farmers could not afford to employ as many labourers as they had beforehand, poor-rates went up as these labourers, their numbers swelled by returning soldiers, went on parish relief. Labourers' wages often declined, and had to be supplemented by the poor-rates. By the mid 1830's the decline in the number of owner-occupiers among farmers since 1815 was noticeable, as they were forced to sell out to larger landowners or to would-be landowners among merchants and industrialists. Cobbett's Rural Rides are full of comments on the decline of the yeomanry and smaller gentry. In the novel the narrator points out however that this decline occurred only in "aveloe "and the parishes that resembled it" (p. 40).

1 F.M.L. Thompson, English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century, p. 215.
2 Mingay, p. 95.
3 Horn, The Rural World 1780-1850, 71ff.
4 Horn, p. 73; F.M.L. Thompson, pp. 122, 233.
5 e.g. I, 12, 38, 45-46, 76, 126, 159, 222, 391, 395-97; II, 151, 210-211. cf. also "Occurrences at Nuneaton," November 12, 21, p. 46: "very great complaints from the Farmers, several sold up for rent, & c"
Nevertheless, although these economic changes are mentioned, they are seen mainly from the point of view of the substantial farmers and gentry like the Lammeters and Casses – the poor-rates are "ruinous" to those who have to pay them rather than those who have to live on them. Nor is there any reference to discontent among the poor of the kind that resulted the East Anglia "Bread of Blood" riots of 1616. Only Aaron Winthrop's comment that "'there need nobody run short o' victual; if the land was made the most on, and there was never a morsel but what could find its way to a mouth'" (pp. 277-78) could be taken as a sign of working-class resentment of agricultural practices at this period. Far outstripping the pace of change in rural life is the transformation of urban life over the thirty or so years covered by the story: when Silas visits his former home he finds that the Lantern Yard community has gone, the place had become a "great manufacturing town" with houses close together, noise, movement, bad smells, and a "multitude of strange indifferent faces"; a large factory has replaced the old chapel (pp. 353-37).

In any case the economic changes which occur during the sixteen years when Eppie grows up are not shown as having a significant influence in themselves on the yeomen and gentry. Godfrey Cass's draining of the Stone-Pits reflects a progressive trend of the period, but its effect is not to lead Godfrey towards future prosperity but to bring back the past he has tried to escape. For the drainage reveals the skeleton of Dunsey and Silas's stolen money, and convinces Godfrey that he had best tell Nancy the story of his first marriage, as he thinks that too will inevitably be revealed. The novel is essentially the story of two private lives, that of Godfrey Cass who abandons his child and lives to regret it, and that of Silas Marner, who through his decision to adopt the child, regains contact with his own past and is integrated into maveloe life. George Eliot's intention in the
novel was to set "in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations," and both the rather vague dating and the limited impact of historical events and trends on the story ensure that these "remedial influences" are not seen as dependent on historical circumstances or as confined to any one period.

However, given that the highlighting of such influences is George Eliot's aim, the period she has chosen does allow for a very strong contrast between Silas's life in Raveloe during his first fifteen years there and the position he attains in the community in the sixteen years after his adoption of Eppie. By placing Silas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries rather than in an earlier period, George Eliot makes his extreme solitude plausible: if he had lived in the first half of the eighteenth century, he would probably have needed an assistant in his work, since before the advent of John Kay's flying-shuttle (invented in 1733) a weaver could not throw the shuttle across the cloth with one hand and catch it with the other. However a handloom weaver living at a later period than that dealt with in the novel would probably have lived in or near a large industrial centre, and been employed as an outworker: by the agent of a large mill rather than by individuals in a country village: the numbers of independent customer-weavers like Marner were declining even in the eighteenth century. The historical setting also means that Silas, as a weaver, can be seen as an individual rather than as part of a near-contemporary social problem. Silas lives at a time when handloom weavers could earn

high wages, since new technology in weaving had not kept pace with that in spinning, but with the increasing use of the power loom, especially after 1820, their wages declined, until during the 1830's and 1840's they came to live in appalling poverty before they almost disappeared in the 1850's. The plight of the handloom weavers had been a prominent social issue, such that in Israelis's Sybil (1845) the desperately poor weaver Warner laments his sufferings and points out that he is one of 600,000 enduring the same privations (Chapter 13). A contemporary review praises George Eliot for not doing what other novelists do, treating the poor merely as "so many subjects for experimenting on, for reclaiming, improving, being anxious about, and relieving," and ignoring them completely if above the reach of "occasional destitution."  

The aspect of the past with which the novel is most concerned is Silas's personal past, and his story is an illustration of the importance of integrating an individual's past with his present. It is because Eppie's influence puts him back in touch with aspects of his past life that Silas becomes absorbed into Daveloe life. This has long been recognised by critics, so a brief discussion should suffice here. When Silas first settles in Daveloe he finds nothing there to remind him of the place he had left, so that the past "becomes dreamy because its symbols have all vanished," while "the present too is dreamy because it is linked with no memories" (p. 22). When he is able to use the herbal medicine he had once practised to relieve his mother's heart disease to cure Sally Oates, he feels for the first time "a sense of unity between his past and present life, which

1 This was especially the case between 1786 and 1803, according to E. P. Thompson (p. 304).

might have been the beginning of his rescue from the insect-like existence into which his nature had shrunk" (p. 29). But because he refuses to pretend to be able to charm away illness, he comes to be distrusted by the villagers even more than before, and his alienation is "more complete" (p. 32). His reaction to the breaking of the brown earthenware pot also shows his capacity to become attached to things because of their connection with the past. Since it has been his companion for twelve years, he cannot bear to part with it even when it is useless for practical purposes, and he sticks it together and leaves it in its old place "for a memorial" (pp. 35–36). The incident shows that his "sap of affection was not all gone" and it begins to flow strongly again with the advent of Eppie, who reminds him of his dead sister and brings back to him a vision of his home and the "streets leading to Lantern Yard":

he had a dreamy feeling that this child was somehow a message come to him from that far-off life; it stirred fibres that had never been moved in Raveloe — old quiverings of tenderness — old impressions of awe at the presentiment of some Power presiding over his life (p. 223)

Later, Eppie's interest in flowers encourages Silas to look again for the herbs which had been familiar to him in childhood: remembrances crowd upon him, so that, as she acquires knowledge, "his mind [is] growing into memory and his soul "into full consciousness" (p. 254). The sensibilities that she awakens in him also cause him to blend his impressions of the religious faith in Raveloe with his old faith, so that he recovers "a consciousness of unity between his past and present," involving a "sense of presiding goodness and ... human trust" (p. 284). Because of Eppie, too, Silas becomes an object of interest to the villagers, and calls forth their latent kindness and willingness to help. The superstition and fear which once
surrounded him are dissipated, to be replaced by "open smiling faces and cheerful questioning" (p. 242), and all the local mothers offer advice, Dolly Throp giving continual practical assistance. Silas is finally regarded as "an exceptional person, whose claims on neighbourly help were not to be matched in Raveloe" (p. 231).

In his anxiety to do the best for Eppie, Silas gradually comes "to appropriate the forms of custom and belief which were the mould of Raveloe life" (p. 283). This involves such things as pipe-smoking, church-going, and christening for both Eppie and himself. It may seem contradictory that Silas both reawakens to his past life and takes on Raveloe customs and beliefs, given that life in Raveloe is shown to be so different from that in Lantern Yard, but what Silas in fact does is to integrate the best of the past with the best of the present. The herb-lore which he regains through his upbringing of Eppie had derived, after all, from his mother, and had been rejected by the Lantern Yard sect (p. 13). Since the herbs are demonstratively beneficial, Eppie, by renewing Silas's interest in them, is enabling him to adopt the better of the two contradictory attitudes suggested by his past experience. Similarly, in gaining a renewed religious faith, Silas does not resume his Lantern Yard beliefs, but does come to feel again a sense of belonging to a close-knit community. In any case the religion of Raveloe is preferable to that of Lantern Yard, since it cannot be interpreted so as to justify the sort of criminal behaviour shown in William Dane, which could be the result of the doctrine of assurance in which the sect believes: if he is convinced that he will be saved no matter what he does, he could well come to see the morality of his actions as immaterial.

By contrast, an inarticulate Raveloe villager like Dolly Throp is
humbler and less certain of the intentions of "'Them above'" - she decides simply to "'trusten'" (pp. 288-89). This is the attitude Silas adopts, and his confidence is justified by the course of events. Moreover the religion of Raveloe is in a sense more sophisticated than that of Lantern Yard. The story of Mr Lammeter's marriage to Miss Osgood (told by Macey at the Rainbow in Chapter 6), in which Mr Crackenthorp's predecessor Mr Drumlow had mixed up the words of the service, shows that the people of Raveloe can distinguish between the form and the meaning of the ceremony; they let it go ahead, since everyone knows the true intentions of the parties involved. Drumlow however goes one further, declaring to Macey that the "'regester'" is the binding force in the marriage (pp. 95-98) - that is, couple's willingness to become a permanent part of Raveloe tradition and history by signing their names in a permanent record of local events. On the other hand, in their practice of drawing lots, the Lantern Yard community shows its inability to see a possible difference between the ritual they use to determine guilt and the Divine Will it is supposed to express. Silas accepts their equation of the lot-drawing with the voice of God - only that, knowing he is innocent, he postulates from the result "'a God of lies'" (p. 21).

Silas is careful however to keep Eppie away from "the lowering influences of the village talk and habits" (p. 291), and his own influence on the village serves to undermine the worst of its habits and traditions. Because of Eppie the villagers' dislike and fear of him is replaced by sympathy and interest, and the superstitions which have been shown as endemic to small isolated societies like Raveloe are dissipated. The impact which the villagers and Silas are to have on each other during the sixteen years after the robbery, is foreshadowed by the two scenes in which Silas bursts in on a crowd of Raveloe people - firstly, when he announces the robbery to
the surprised group at the Rainbow (106ff), and secondly when he interrupts
the Casses' New Year's Eve party, with the news of his discovery of Eppie
and her mother (228ff). Silas feels the need of the community's aid, and
this signals the beginning of his dependence on Raveloe help and sympathy.
But by coming in on the two groups he is also interrupting social occasions
which are in a sense rituals celebrating Raveloe tradition. In the Rainbow
Inn the lower orders listen to the story of one of their most respected
"betters," Mr Lammeter, and hear too in Cliff's oft-repeated history how
social climbers never prosper. The scene reaffirms the popular confidence
in the "Raveloe status quo. At the Casses' New Year's Eve party the dancing
of the higher orders, carried on in familiar style - the Squire leading off
Mrs Crackenthorp, and "joining hands with the Rector and Mrs Osgood" -
seems to be a renewal of the "charter of Raveloe," with its traditional
visiting habits, jokes, and compliments (p. 204). By interrupting both
these scenes Silas presents himself as it were to the two main social
groups of Raveloe as the element of which their conventions do not take
account, and as a result of his influence, the villagers' idea of social
duty comes to embrace a more active and practical kindness and sympathy.
And as in the cases of Tryan and Adam, progress on a small scale is effected
by a man, flawed in character, who achieves no fame or influence outside
his local community, and, unlike The Mill on the Floss, Silas Marner shows
how an individual can effect social change for the better.

For Godfrey Cass however the personal past functions as a Nemesis-
albeit a "very mild" one, as George Eliot put it in a letter to Blackwood.¹

¹ 24 February 1661, in Eliot Letters, III, 382
Molly's timely death makes him believe he can put the past entirely behind him, and he lets Marner bring up his child, salving his conscience by helping the weaver with furniture. "When the ghastly discovery of Dunsey's skeleton forces visions of the past back on Godfrey, he is not able to retrieve what is most valuable in it - Eppie - and has to admit that "'there's debts we can't pay like money debts, by paying extra for the years that have slipped by'" (p. 348).

The two main ways in which the narrator of Silas Marner relates the recent past to the present are through generalising from the characters' experience to make it relevant to that of the readers - a technique with which we are familiar from the earlier works - and through detailed explanations which try to make the beliefs of the uncultured minds of the past comprehensible to the more sophisticated readers of the present. "When Silas's life has reduced itself to the functions of weaving and hoarding," the narrator points out that

The same sort of process has perhaps been undergone by wiser men, when they have been cut off from faith and love - only, instead of a loom and a heap of guineas, they have had some erudite research, some ingenious project, or some well-knit theory (pp. 34-35)

Later Godfrey's worship of Chance is said to be a characteristic which "can hardly be called old-fashioned," since

Favourable Chance, I fancy, is the god of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe in. Let even a polished man of these days get into a position he is ashamed to avow, and his mind will be bent on all the possible issues that may deliver him from the calculable results of that position (p. 145)

Most interesting perhaps is the brief comment on Silas's continued attach-
ment to the hearth where he found Eppie: he refuses to have it replaced by a grate and oven, and loves it as he had loved his pot. The narrator goes on: "The gods of the hearth exist for us still; and let all new faith be tolerant of that fetishism, lest it bruise its own roots" (pp. 281-82). Another aspect of this fetishism was described in the account of Silas’s flight from Lantern Yard: his attitude was seen as akin to that of primitive men who believed that the influence of their native gods could not be felt beyond their own area, since the Power Silas had trusted in Lantern Yard seemed to have no effect of Raveloe life (pp. 25-26).

According to the philosophy of Comte, as described and advocated by Lewes four years before Silas Marner appeared, fetishism is the earliest form which religious belief takes:

In the Theological stage, the mind regards all effects as the productions of supernatural agents ... Nature is animated by supernatural beings, every unusual phenomenon is a sign of the pleasure or displeasure of some being adored and propitiated as a God. The lowest condition of this stage is that of the savages, viz. Fetishism.

In Silas Marner George Eliot is appealing for tolerance of modern survivals of fetishism, as it is the source from which more advanced kinds of religious belief have developed, and can be valuable in its own right as an expression of an individual’s attachment to his past. Ruskin makes a similar point in his Seven Lamps of Architecture: "Our God is a household God, as well as a heavenly one; He has an altar in every man’s dwelling; let men look to it when they rend it lightly and pour out its ashes."

It is arguable too that the mental capacities of the Raveloe villagers of the early nineteenth century are similar to those of the novel's educated readers of 1861, with only their power and means of expression differing. R.H. Hutton in his review of the novel drew attention to the fact that the talk of the villagers at the Rainbow Inn "has almost always a distinct relation to the intellectual forms of the same questions as discussed in modern times by the educated classes."¹ As evidence of this he cites Macey's distinction between "'the 'pinion a man has of himsen, and ... the 'pinion other folks have on him,'" in the latter's rebuke of Tookey (p. 91). The difference he perceives between the subjective and objective point of view shows "a faint shadow of the intellectual phases of 'modern thought'"²

The error in the vows at the Lammeter-Osgood wedding, meanwhile, raises "the difficult question as to the relation between 'substance' and 'form.'"³

"Here such similarities between the mental habits of characters and readers are not evident, however, the characters' beliefs and attitudes have to be explained. It is true for example that Silas's appearance would not have been strange to "people of average culture and experience," - but for the villagers of Raveloe, "it had mysterious peculiarities which corresponded with the exceptional nature of his occupation, and his advent from an unknown region called 'North'ard" (p. 7). Later Marner's simple assumption that the result of the lot-drawing expresses the divine nature, which the reader may find hard to believe, is explained with reference to his lack of education, and his inability to think independently, especially

² Hutton, p. 61.
³ Hutton, p. 61.
when "all his energies were turned into the anguish of disappointed faith" (pp. 21-22). In describing the effect of Raveloe on Marner, the narrator begins by suggesting that his feelings could be shared by people like the reader:

Even people whose lives have been made various by learning, sometimes find it hard to keep a fast hold on their habitual views of life, on their faith in the Invisible, nay, on the sense that their past joys and sorrows are a real experience, when they are suddenly transported to a new land, where the beings around them know nothing of their history, and share none of their ideas - where their mother earth shows another lap, and human life has other forms than those on which their souls have been nourished (p. 23)

The effect on Silas of his new environment is even more intense and dislocating, however:

But even their experience may hardly enable them thoroughly to imagine what was the effect on a simple weaver like Silas Marner, when he left his own country and people and came to settle in Raveloe (pp. 23-24)

And because of the growth of a more complex sensibility since the time in which the novel is set, it is sometimes necessary to make an effort to understand a past state of mind even where a character from a social class similar to that of the reader is concerned. In the account of Godfrey's dilemma over his first marriage, the narrator compares people of "higher sensibility" who have the "higher culture" of the present with the "ruder minds" of "our rural forefathers" such as Godfrey, and claims that the "subtle and varied pains" attributable to the former are "perhaps less pitiable than that dreary absence of impersonal enjoyment and consolation which leaves ruder minds to the perpetual urgent companionship of their own griefs and discontents" - presumably the obverse side of "Old Leisure." The squirearchy of the recent past may seem prosaic, but their monotonous, sensual lives were affected, like the reader's, by calamities and by errors which had "hard consequences" (pp. 55-56). The reader of Silas Marner is guided towards a comprehension of the limited mentality of people of the recent past, as well as towards a recognition that he may share their feelings.
**George Eliot - 5. Felix Holt, the Radical**

**Felix Holt, the Radical** is set in the period from "the 1st of September, in the memorable year 1832,"¹ and May 1833, when Felix and Esther marry (p. 398); that is, from about three months after the passing of the First Reform Bill (June 1832) till soon after the first elections under the reformed constituency (December 1832). Since it was written between March 1865 and May 1866, a period when a further extension of the franchise was under discussion in Parliament, the novel can obviously be seen as an oblique comment on the politics of the 1860's, and has generally been treated as such. After reading most of it in manuscript, John Blackwood wrote enthusiastically - "[Her politics are excellent and will attract all parties. Her sayings would be invaluable in the present debate.]² The "debate" at this time concerned the bill put forward by Gladstone under Russell's government in March 1866, to extend the franchise in boroughs from £10 to £7 householders (i.e. to people paying at least £7 per annum rent), and in counties, to tenants paying at least £14. This measure was defeated three days after the novel was published on 15 June 1866. However in August 1867 the new Conservative government under Lord Derby put through a more wide-ranging measure enfranchising more or less all householders in boroughs and hence adding large numbers of the working class to the electorate, so Blackwood asked George Eliot to write for Blackwood's an article addressed to the working men on their new responsibilities. The article she produced, "Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt,"³ makes it clear that Felix's


³ Blackwood's, 103 (1868), 1-11; rpt. pp. 412-22 of Thomson's edn.
speech to the crowd at Treby in 1832 had expressed her own views on the implications of an extension of the franchise in the 1860's, since it re-iterates at greater length the arguments that education and individual moral reform, involving the subjection of selfish interests to the common good, are essential before the vote, or any measure it may be used to enact, is of any value. Moreover the similarities between George Eliot's political thought and the ideas put forward in Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) have often been pointed out. Arnold claims that "our besetting danger" is "faith in machinery," that is, a blind belief in particular slogans adopted without thought as to what they really mean or what they might lead to in practice - stock notions like "freedom," and "wealth," he says, tend to be seen as ends in themselves. The believer in "culture" should rather try to create a frame of mind from which schemes of really fruitful reform may grow, eschewing involvement in public life and direct political action, to make others scrutinise their usual ideas and habits, and learn to think more clearly. Moreover the working classes, (or "Populace" as he calls them) are still ignorant and given to violence, passion, envy and the adoration of mere power and success, and so need, not the franchise, but an increased spiritual activity and more extended sympathies. Similarly for Felix "schemes about voting, and districts, and annual Parliaments" are just "engines" and whether they do good or bad depends on the "force that is to work them" which "must come out of human  

1 Felix's speech is on pp. 248-51 of the novel.  
4 *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 221, 226.  
5 *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 109, 144-45.
nature - out of men's passions, feelings, desires'' (p. 250). Hence if working men were enfranchised, and most of them spent all their money on drink or accepted bribes, they would return to Parliament only men given to "'dirty work'" (pp. 250-51). He himself prefers not to become involved in politics, but to "'try to make life less bitter for a few within [his] reach,'" as a "'demagogue of a new sort, ... who will tell the people they are blind and foolish,'" and oppose their tendency towards social climbing (pp. 224-25).

The question of whether George Eliot is presenting in Felix characteristics and points of view typical of the 1860's but anachronistic for 1832 is one to which I shall return later. A passage within the novel explains the essential difference she sees between the spirit of 1832 and that of her own time:

At that time, when faith in the efficacy of political change was at fever-heat in ardent Reformers, many measures which men are still discussing with little confidence on either side, were then talked about and disposed of like property in near reversion. Crying abuses - "bloated paupers," "bloated pluralists," and other corruptions hindering men from being wise and happy - had to be fought against and slain. Such a time is a time of hope. Afterwards, when the corpses of those monsters have been held up to the public wonder and abhorrence, and yet wisdom and happiness do not follow, but rather a more abundant breeding of the foolish and unhappy, comes a time of doubt and despondency. But in the great Reform-year Hope was mighty: the prospect of Reform had even served the voters instead of drink; and in one place, at least, there had been a "dry election." . . . Some dwelt on the abolition of all abuses, and on millennial blessedness generally; others, whose imaginations were less suffused with exhalations of the dawn, insisted chiefly on the ballot-box. (pp. 157-58)

In her research for the novel George Eliot had been amazed at the "strong language ... used in those days, especially about the Church."\(^1\) It was a

\(^1\) "Letter to John Blackwood," 27 April 1866, in Eliot Letters, IV, 248.
period, recalled J.S. Mill, of "almost unbounded confidence in the efficacy of two things: representative government, and complete freedom of discussion," this confidence being created in part by the influence of the Utilitarian thought of Bentham and James Mill, who believed that extension of the suffrage would create a legislature which "would aim at the general interest, honestly, and with adequate wisdom."\(^1\) In treating the "great Reform-year" in *Felix Holt* George Eliot aims to show why hopes were disappointed, and thus suggest to her contemporaries that any renewal of confidence in purely political change roused by the prospect of further extension of the franchise would also be misplaced.

The famous Introduction to the novel describes a journey by stagecoach through the midlands of thirty-five years earlier. The evocation of the days of coaching, "the great roadside inns ... still brilliant with well-polished tankards, the smiling glances of pretty barmaids, and the repartees of jocose ostlers," the "enviable memories" of the elderly man who can recall "a long journey in mid-spring or autumn on the outside of a stage-coach" (p. 5) can of course be compared to Thackeray's nostalgic reminiscences of the days before railways. But George Eliot also relates the stage-coach journey to specific social and political conditions. She is dealing with the England of about 1831, that is, unreformed England, where "there were pocket boroughs, a Birmingham unrepresented in Parliament and compelled to make strong representations out of it, unrepealed corn-laws, three-and-sixpenny letters, a brawny and many-breeding pauperism, and other departed evils." The penny-post was introduced in 1840, while the Reform Bill gave two seats to Birmingham and abolished most pocket

boroughs (i.e. those with very few or even no electors, controlled by a landed magnate or closed corporation), as well as providing the impetus for further reforms such as the Poor Law of 1834, which forced able-bodied paupers into the workhouse rather than letting them receive outdoor relief or work for wages subsidised out of the poor-rates (cf. the shepherd's resentment of "pauper labourers" - p. 6). Meanwhile the widened franchise meant that the House of Commons had to become more receptive to middle-class opinion, and in 1846 this was one reason for the repeal of the corn-laws (the duties charged on imported corn) which had benefited the landed interest at the expense of the commercial and manufacturing sectors.

But developments since the 1830's have not been an unmixed blessing; just as "spick-and-span, new-varnished efficiency" yields "endless diagrams, planes, elevations, and sections, but alas! no picture," the end of coaching has meant that it is no longer possible to gather through travel "enough stories of English life, enough of English labours in town and country, enough aspects of earth and sky, to make episodes for a modern Odyssey" (p. 5). In any case the railways which had superseded coaches by the 1840's could be destructive - they killed Mr Huskisson (p. 9) who had in fact made one of the earliest efforts to get Birmingham represented in Parliament, proposing in 1828 that it be given the seats freed by the disenfranchisement of the notoriously corrupt borough of East Retford.¹

The description of the midlands in 1831 highlights the immense variety of English life and the rapid transitions between sharply-contrasted landscapes and types of people: it is still "spread over a various surface, and breathed on variously by multitudinous currents." There are prosperous

¹ He was killed by a train at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in September 1830.
farming districts with "golden corn-ricks" and "full-uddered cows," driven by shepherds with no interest in affairs outside the parish — isolated hamlets of dingy labourers' cottages, untouched by Dissent and "safely in the via media of indifference" (p. 6), the "trim cheerful villages full of busy craftsmen and wealthy farmers unaffected by the rick-burning which had swept through many southern counties of England during 1830-31, a "district of clean little market-towns without manufacturers, of fat livings, an aristocratic clergy, and low poor-rates" (p. 7). Later the coach would pass through villages of miners and handloom weavers, many of them Dissenters whose belief in predestination makes their life of dirt and hard work more bearable. Then there was the manufacturing town, whose breath "made a cloudy day and a red gloom by night on the horizon," also full of Dissenters, but in this case of people dissatisfied with the status quo, and wanting their rulers to "alter many things which now made the world perhaps more painful than it need be, and certainly more sinful" (p. 8). With these scenes following each other in quick succession,

it was easy for the traveller to conceive that town and country had no pulse in common, except where the handlooms made a far-reaching straggling fringe about the great centres of manufacture; that till the agitation about the Catholics in '29, rural Englishmen had hardly known more of Catholics than of the fossil mammals; and that their notion of reform was a confused combination of rick-burners, trades-unions, Nottingham riots, and in general whatever required the calling-out of the yeomanry. It was still easier to see that, for the most part, they resisted the rotation of crops and stood by their fallows... (pp. 8-9)

This draws attention to the complexity of pre-Reform society and to the coexistence of widely different types of community, from the traditional rural parish almost unaffected either by national events or by the industrial developments of the nineteenth century, overhung by a "low grey sky ... as
if Time itself were pausing" — just like Raveloe thirty years before, in fact — through the mining and weaving villages which burgeoned during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, to the manufacturing towns which achieved their greatest rate of growth in the 1820's, and were the foci of agitation for Reform and attacks on the religious Establishment. George Eliot is I think also setting up a contrast between the disparateness of this society, showing as it does different stages in the development towards industrialisation and political consciousness, and the simple, arbitrary plans for change advocated later by both Harold Transome and the Duffield trades-union leader. Moreover, readers of 1866 would have been aware that not all change in the previous thirty-five years had been for the better: although the great upsurge in agricultural improvements from the late 1830's onward would have made successful resistance to crop rotation more rare, and a smaller proportion of agricultural labourers' cottages would have been dark and dingy in 1866, a greater percentage of the population could no longer enjoy the meadows silvered by the morning, or the beautiful hedgerows of the rural landscape, but were crowded into ugly insanitary cities. The handloom weavers, as we have seen, had been starved out by competition from the factory-based power looms, and by 1862 there were only three thousand left in the cotton trade.

The development of a traditional market-town almost entirely dependent on agriculture into a community containing a tape-manufactory and surrounded by coal-mines and a stone-quarry, is traced at the beginning of Chapter

1 Weavers were the largest occupational group from 1820 to 1840, apart from agricultural labourers and domestic servants (E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, p. 344).
4 In 1831 42.5% of the population was urban, and in 1866, between 54.6% and 61.6% (the figures for 1861 and 1871 respectively) — see R. Lawton "Rural Depopulation in Nineteenth Century England," p. 195.
5 A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England (London and
3 in the account of the history of Treby Magna from early in the century till 1832. It resembles the change from the world of "Old Leisure" — prosperous, satisfied with itself, with an accepted social hierarchy headed by the long-established Debarry family who "as lords of the manor, naturally came next to Providence" and who always supply a rector who in turn is expected to associate only with county families (pp. 40-41) — to one whose relationship with the rest of the world was complicated by new conditions which awoke in it "that higher consciousness which is known to bring higher pains" (p. 41). A major aspect of this change is the alteration in the kind of Dissenters in Treby, from a small Independent congregation of "quiescent, well-to-do" people with little interest in doctrine, to crowds of "erger men and women" from the stone-pits, coal-pits and tape-weaving hamlets, "to whom the exceptional possession of religious truth was the condition which reconciled them to a meagre existence," and who attacked the rector as a "blind leader of the blind" (p. 43). The period from the late eighteenth century to the 1830's had seen a rapid spread of Dissent, not only of the Methodism dealt with in Adam Bede but also of Congregationalism, especially among artisans, the largest proportion of whom were weavers. 1 Moreover the Catholic Emancipation Bill of 1829 exacerbated religious tensions between Church and Dissent, since, as we noted with reference to St. Ogg's, Dissenters often supported Catholic claims for relief, while opponents of Emancipation feared further attacks on the position of the Church of England and on the government. In Treby, "Mr Tiliot, the Church spirit-merchant, knew now that Mr Nuttwood, the obliging grocer, was one of those Dissenters, Deists, Socinians, Papists, and Radicals, who were in league to

destroy the Constitution" (p. 43). The sympathetic presentation of Philip Debarry, who insists to his uncle that Lyon's request for the religious debate be granted, and who is said to have died a convert to Catholicism in Rome about fifteen years after the time in which the novel is set (p. 136), suggests that people of Catholic inclinations could be less bigoted than their opponents. Catholic Emancipation also paved the way for Reform in the sense that it set a precedent for sweeping changes, while Dissenters, like Lyon in the novel, supported Reform in the hope that it would lead to such things as the abolition of their liability to Church rates (which had in fact ended in practice by the time the novel was published), the right to hold their own marriage services and bury their own dead in the parish graveyards, and their admission to the universities. The controversy surrounding Catholic Emancipation and the passing of the Reform Bill was also intensified by agricultural depression, which had continued on and off since 1815, and by the accompanying distress in the manufacturing districts. In Treby it is the discontent which arises because "prices had fallen, poor-rates had risen, rent and tithe were not elastic enough, and the farmer's fat sorrow had become lean" that makes the town ready to "vibrate" when political agitation sweeps the country: before the advent of working-class Dissent and economic distress the town, like Hayslope and Raveloe, had remained impervious to the effects of the French Revolution, Paine's defence of it in his Rights of Man, the Napoleonic Wars, and Cobbett's Radical attacks on the Church and aristocratic misgovernment in his Political Register (p. 44).

According to Samuel Warren in 1841, the Reform Bill was widely seen as

1 Philip Debarry was presumably influenced by the Tractarian movement, which led to several conversions, notably that of J.H. Newman in 1845.

2 See Raymond G. Cowherd, The Politics of English Dissent, pp. 86, 91. Felix and Esther have to marry in the parish church in 1833 - the change came in 1836. Cunningham argues that the tone of Lyon's political radicalism is more characteristic of the period between 1832 and 1866 than of 1832 itself (Everywhere Spoken Again!, 182ff).

3 Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement 1763-1867, p. 245.
the "great bill for giving everybody everything,"\(^1\) while Harriet Martineau claimed in 1850 that the hungry and ignorant believed the Bill would feed and clothe them, bring them work and good wages, and remove taxes.\(^2\)

According to Froude, "Reform in Parliament was the symbol of a general hope for the introduction of a new and better order of things."\(^3\) For all this however the shaky alliance between the middle and working classes which had been largely instrumental in forcing the Reform Bill through Parliament in June 1832 broke down very quickly; by the end of the year the Whig leader Lord Grey was calling Thomas Attwood, leader of the Birmingham Political Union (a major Radical force in agitating for the Bill) "a coxcomb and a knave," while Melbourne thought he deserved to be "torn to pieces."\(^4\) The Bill had enfranchised mainly middle-class people, but the Radicals had hoped that subsequent measures would extend the franchise further, and were incensed when Grey made it clear that he considered the Bill a final measure. On 25 October 1832 the Poor Man's Guardian claimed that the Bill merely aimed at consolidating aristocratic institutions by "a reinforcement of sub-aristocracy from the middle classes,"\(^5\) and it is this kind of feeling that George Eliot draws on when she has the Radical trades-union leader from Duffield argue that

"the Reform Bill is a trick - it's nothing but swearing-in special constables to keep the aristocrats safe in their monopoly; it's bribing some of the people with votes to make them hold their tongues about giving votes to the rest" (p. 247).

He goes on to declare that what the working class needs is "universal

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\(^1\) Ten Thousand A Year, quoted by Briggs, The Age of Improvement 1783-1867, p. 260.

\(^2\) The History of the Thirty Years' Peace 1816-1846, II (London: Charles Knight, 1850), p. 25.

\(^3\) Carlyle's Life in London (1891), I, 310; quoted by W.L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise, p. 65.


\(^5\) Briggs, p. 258.
suffrage, and annual Parliaments, and the vote by ballot, and electoral districts" (p. 248). The particular measures supported by the Radical Harold Transome are not outlined in any detail, but as his uncle Lingon put: it, he opposes "'whiggery, with its rights of man stopping short at ten-pound householders'" (p. 31), and he supports the ballot, at least as a long-term aim (p. 158). As readers of 1866 would have been aware, the Radicals had not succeeded in getting any of these measures through Parliament; after the severe Radical losses of the 1837 election, the working classes had to pin their hopes for change on the agitation of the extra-Parliamentary Chartist movement, but this had in turn failed by 1848.

More importantly, as far as the novel is concerned, the Reform Bill did not encourage a higher standard of morality among either candidates or voters. Harold Transome for all his Radicalism condones the continuation of Johnson's "treating" of the non-electors and inciting them to violence, and assumes his own tenants will automatically vote for him. At one stage he says to his mother that he wishes she had kept on three more old tenants, for then he would have had "'three more fifty-pound voters'" (p. 95). This is probably an allusion to the notorious Chundos amendment to the Reform Bill which enfranchised £50 tenants-at-will in counties - that is, tenants who paid £50 or more in rent each year but who had no security of tenure and hence risked eviction if they voted against the candidate supported by their landlord. This clause was deliberately designed to restore some of the illegitimate power of landlords undermined by the Bill's other provision and Harold is aiming to exploit this. Later his tenants are brought to the polls to vote for him (p. 258) - a continuation of the family's Tory tradition.

1 Ten-pound householders were the main new category of borough voters enfranchised by the Reform Bill. "electoral districts" meant constituencies with an equal number of voters; "the ballot" is what we would now call secret ballot.

of driving their tenants to the poll "as if they were sheep" as Felix puts it (p. 63). In any case Reform has not affected Treby conservatism enough to change Mr Libbs' or Mr Hose's views that voting for one's landlord is a natural duty (pp. 181, 256), or Nolan's opinion that "the Whigs should always be in opposition, and the Tories on the ministerial side!" (p. 182). The publican Chubb will merely sell his vote to the highest bidder (pp. 112-13).

Furthermore, the religious and party-political polarisations of the period are seen to create artificial barriers between people and to encourage simplified and distorted views of their characters. One of the attractions for the audience of the planned debate between Lyon and Sherlock is not the likely polemic of the combatants but the chance of seeing old friends from whom they had been sundered by religious differences -

One or two Dissenting ladies were not without emotion at the thought that, seated on the front benches, they should be brought near to old Church friends, and have a longer greeting than had taken place since the Catholic Emancipation (p. 203)

Nor do the actual personalities of the inhabitants fit neatly into political stereotypes: Reformers are not all "large-hearted patriots or ardent lovers of justice," and all Tories either "oppressors, disposed to grind down the working classes into serfdom," nor likely regenerators of a society under threat from the "hypocrites, Radicals, Dissenters, and atheism" which they abuse (pp. 44-45). One reason for Felix's anger against Johnson for his bribery of the Sproxton workers is that Johnson is politically on his own side, so that the intricacies of life "would certainly be greatly simplified if corrupt practices were the invariable mark of wrong opinions" (pp. 128-29). Earlier the narrator has contrasted the complex nature of Harold's Radicalism
with the strident clichés used to describe him in the politically partisan Press (pp. 96-98), and when he is reeling with the news that Jermyn is his father, he finds himself supported by Sir Maximus Debarry, hereditary Tory and father of his political opponent (p. 383). Meanwhile Mrs Transome's person is described as "too typical of social distinctions to be passed by with indifference by any one," while her "high-born imperious air ... would have marked her as an object of hatred and reviling by a revolutionary mob," but it is made clear to the reader, if not to anyone in Treby, that she exercises the power she derives from her social class over her tenants not for its own sake, but in order to dull her feelings of discontent and fill the emotional void in her life (pp. 27-29).

The 1835 Report from the Select Committee on Bribery at Elections, which George Eliot read as part of her research for the novel, deals with many forms of intimidation and illegitimate influence operating at election times; direct money bribery of voters, paying the registration fees for them to become freemen (a category of voters in boroughs), payment of their rates, promises of premises, situations, accommodation or land, "treating" them with food and drink at public houses, dealing only with tradesmen and shopkeepers who support one's own party, intimidation by landlords of tenants and smaller freeholders, intimidation of workers by employers and of customers by bankers and solicitors, clergy refusing charity to people of opposing political views, candidates paying to transport voters to the poll, refusal of non-electors to deal with publicans, tradesmen or shopkeepers who vote against their favoured candidate, and violence against their customers, violence directed by non-electors against electors at the poll.¹

This kind of behaviour continued well past 1832, but George Eliot is mainly concerned with that of the non-electors. This is probably one reason why she deals with a county rather than a borough election - as she noted from Farkes's evidence to the Bribery Committee, direct bribery of county voters was impossible because of the size of the constituency. The colliers, navvies and stone-cutters heed Johnson because he appeals to their self-interest, and believe that "Reform, if it were good for anything, must at last resolve itself into spare money - meaning 'sport' and drink, and keeping away from work for several days in the week" (p. 120); they hustle, pelt, roar and hiss on Transome's behalf at the nomination-day (p. 244) and at the actual election go on the rampage, attacking Spratt the mine-overseer and damaging Tory property. There were many riots during the 1832 elections at Bolton, Nuneaton, Walsall, Huddersfield, South Shields, Sheffield, Kendall, Wolverhampton, Halesowen, Frome, Norwich, Bury, Stamford, Preston, Carmarthen and Coventry, and George Eliot transcribed into her notes for the novel the Annual Register account of the Bolton riot. She had also witnessed the Nuneaton riot as a girl: according to the Times, the mob beat up Tory voters and stopped them going to the poll, broke into and smashed the windows of the house of the Tory committee, and pelted the windows of the Town Hall. George Eliot presumably read this account, as among her notes from the Times is "N. Rioters tried at Warwick, April 5" (p. 401). However the anonymous diarist of "Occurrences at Nuneaton" puts

1 Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, 105ff.
4 Annual Register, 74 (1632), 304.
6 Times, 9 April 1833, p. 3.
the blame on the Tories, who, seeing the tide going against them, suspended
the poll and called in a detachment of Scots Greys which proceeded to cut
and trample the people down. As a result the Tory candidate won, although
the spirit of the town was strongly Radical. That is, insofar as George
Eliot is drawing on her own experiences for Felix Holt, she is stressing the
violence of the pro-Radical crowd rather than the Tories' dishonesty or
the brutality of the military. Election riots were common long after 1832 —
there was even a notorious disturbance at a Nottingham election in 1865,
so that the "Nottingham riots," mentioned in the Introduction as one pheno­
menon which rural voters associated with Reform (p. 6), may not simply have
recalled the riot which broke out in Nottingham in October 1831 when the
Lords threw out an earlier version of the 1832 Reform Bill.

In any case, the novel's focus on the non-electors is probably attri­
butable to the fact that in 1865-66 it seemed increasingly likely that
many of those who were not enfranchised by the 1832 Bill would soon get
the vote, for there was much discussion going on as to whether they were
fit for it. On 3 May 1865, Robert Lowe, the M.P. who over the next two
years was to become the most virulent opponent of any further electoral re­
form, opposed a Borough Franchise Extension Bill partly on the grounds that
the working class were given to heavy drinking and wasting money on sensual
enjoyment with no thought for the future, and that any power given to them
would be a threat to "the institutions and property of this country." In
a later speech, on Gladstone's 1866 Bill, on 13 March of that year, he said

1 "Occurrences at Nuneaton," 21-24 December 1832, pp. 68-70; noted by
Gordon S. Haight in his George Eliot: A Biography (Oxford, New York,
2 Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, pp. 137-153; rowdyism by organised
mobs of non-electors is a feature of the election episode of The Newcomes,
(Chapter 69), but is treated quite indulgently as it mainly works in the
Colonel's favour and against Barnes.
3 Rt. Hon. Robert Lowe, Speeches and Letters on Reform, 2nd edn
of the poorest of those who were already electors:

I have had opportunities of knowing some of the constituencies in this country, and I ask, if you want venality, ignorance, drunkenness, and the means of intimidation; if you want impulsive, unreflecting violent people, where will you go to look for them - to the top or to the bottom?

This was taken as a slur on the working class in general, and actually did a lot to arouse popular enthusiasm for Reform. Lowe also feared the powers of trades unions to force their demands on Parliament, as did many orthodox spokesmen, who saw them as tyrannical and seditious organisations, so that the references in the novel to the dread of trades-union power are probably meant to evoke contemporary apprehensions: manufacturing towns are described in the Introduction as the scenes of "riots and trades-union meetings" (p. 8), and later young Joyce claims that the radicals "want us to be governed by delegates from the trades-unions, who are to dictate to everybody, and make everything square to their mastery" (p. 180).

Lowe's dim view of the working class's capacity to exercise the vote peacefully or honestly called forth a letter of protest from his own constituents, who claimed that he had ignored the providence, self-reliance and perseverance of the lower classes, and other writers also sprang to their defence. For example F.D. Maurice, in his book The Workman and the Franchise, claimed that workers who wanted the vote despised and repudiated mob violence, that the trades-unions served as a preservative against destructive force by making their members feel that they were part of a
commonwealth, and that representation of the unmoneyed class was needed to sustain the intelligence, dignity and unity of the country, and to prevent Parliament from reflecting merely the views of the capitalist and landed interests. Contributors to the 1867 Essays on Reform argued meanwhile that the working class was less selfish than the other classes, and was prepared to make sacrifices for great ideas - for example they supported the North in the American Civil War despite the cotton famine which had caused such hardships to the workers in the Lancashire cotton districts - and that more people now possessed knowledge, self-respect and a capacity for combined action than were allowed to possess the political privileges to which these qualities entitled them. A longer work by the Christian Socialist J.W. Ludlow and the workman Lloyd Jones, Progress of the Working Class 1832-1867 goes into much detail about the improvements they believe the working class has undergone since the passing of the first Reform Bill, discussing not only the legislation regulating employment in factories and mines and providing better sanitary conditions and more education facilities, but also the workers' own initiatives towards self-improvement, such as Friendly and Benefit Societies, Penny Savings Banks, Building Societies, Co-operative stores, evening classes, Working Men's Clubs with reading rooms and libraries, and trades-unions. The latter, it is claimed, both support their members when ill, incapacitated or unemployed, and promote forethought, sobriety, and the growth of mutual trust and confidence, as well as discouraging heavy drinking. Writing of colliers in particular they observe that, although still "one of the most ignorant classes of our

population," they have become more eager for education for their children and less given to violent sport.¹ Finally John Bright, the Radical M.P. who had been campaigning for electoral reform since the late 1850's, asserted that the working classes were not "too degraded, too vicious, and too destructive to be entrusted with the elective franchise,"² and drew attention to the thrift and industriousness of the people of Yorkshire and Lancashire, as demonstrated by their establishment of co-operative societies and their reliance on savings rather than poor-relief during the cotton famine.³

Felix Holt does not comment on whether the working classes were more fit for the franchise in 1866 than they had been in 1832-33, but the "Address to Working Men" strongly suggests that George Eliot believed they had improved little, if at all, since Felix begins by asserting that "as a body we are neither very wise nor very virtuous" (p. 412), and goes on to talk of "'a set of Roughs, who have the worst vices of the worst rich — who are gamblers, sots, libertines, knaves, or else mere sensual simpletons" (p. 417). She makes more allowance than does Lowe for the social evils partly responsible for their condition,⁴ but her treatment of the miners in the novel takes little account of the circumstances of their lives which fostered boozing, thriftlessness and ignorance, such as irregular and unpredictable working hours, dangerous work, the habit of paying wages in public houses (and even in the form of drink), and bad housing conditions.⁵

³ Speech of 23 April 1866, in Speeches, II, 151-84, at 175-77.
⁴ cf. Felix's comment on "'a poor voter named Jack" (p. 251), and, in the "Address," on the evils that can be blamed on past and present rulers (p. 414).
However, the important point is I think that the reform debate of the mid-1860's focussed on the issue of whether the working classes were morally fit or sufficiently educated for the vote, and that their worthiness or otherwise tended to be judged according to whether they exemplified the mid-Victorian virtues of self-help and moral improvement through thrift and self-restraint — hence all the discussion of co-operative societies, savings-banks and the beneficial qualities fostered by trades unions. By the 1860's it was widely believed that moral reform was a prerequisite to social reform, that human nature had to be changed before institutions could be altered for the better. ¹ "It is of little use to alter the suffrage unless we alter ourselves," argued Walter Bagehot in the final installment of his English Constitution.² Supporters of Reform generally made an exception for the very lowest and most ignorant classes of society,³ while one popular argument used in favour of extension of the suffrage was that the vote actually encouraged moral and intellectual improvement. For Mill, the opportunity to participate in the constitution had an invigorating effect on the individual — the performance of public duty gave a largeness to his conceptions and sentiments, since he was called on to weigh interests not his own and to apply principles and maxims based on the common good.⁴ While Maurice argued that if the worker saw the franchise as a trust, it might itself be "a better discipline, morally and intellectually, for

¹ Brantlinger, The Spirit of Reform, pp. 1-9, 13.
⁴ Representative Government, pp. 216-17, 277-79.
the English citizen than the knowledge, however desirable in itself, which some would demand as the condition precedent to his acquisition of it.¹

Geddes's preoccupation with individual moral reform is hence very characteristic of the 1860's, and reflects too the point of view which several former Radicals of the 1830's had come to hold by that decade. For example by 1858 Matthew Davenport Hill, a pro-Radical barrister of the 1830's, saw little hope in appealing to the masses, and favoured granting an extra vote for the attainment of an educational standard,² while the Chartist leader William Lovett lost his faith in political agitation and developed a growing interest in popular education and self-improvement, coming to believe that political and general instruction should be a prerequisite for a share of political power.³ In fact the mid-Victorian apostle of self-help, Samuel Smiles, had himself once been a Radical. In the 1840's he had advocated the extension of the suffrage and the repeal of the corn-laws, but later came to feel the inadequacy of political formulae and collective striving in an atmosphere of ignorance and poverty, and turned to thrift and self-help as the best channels for working-class improvement. His books such as Self-Help (1859) and Character (1871) argue that social evils are largely the outgrowth of man's perverted life, and that

No laws, however stringent, can make the idle industrious, the thriftless provident, or the drunken sober. Such reforms can only be effected by means of individual action, economy, and self-denial, by better habits rather than by greater rights.⁴

¹ The Workman and the Franchise, p. ix.
² J.L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise, p. 75.
³ Burn, p. 77.
The parallels between Felix and Smiles and other former Radicals do not necessarily mean that Felix is anachronistic, since Joseph Parkes, a leading figure in the Birmingham Political Union and father of George Eliot's friend Bessie Rayner Parkes, was already by 1839 an opponent of Chartism, having come to feel that he had had "many Radical prejudices, or rather ignorances, removed," and that "much liberty, and still more social happiness and illumination can be spread by Education than by mere forms of Government."\(^1\) Similarly Samuel Bamford, whose *Passages in the Life of a Radical* was also part of George Eliot's research for *Felix Holt*, had been very involved in Radical agitation in the period after the Napoleonic Wars, but by the time he wrote his memoirs (1839-40) had become very critical of the violence and dishonesty habitual in elections, and felt the overriding need was for education in the knowledge of right and wrong.\(^2\) He praises workers who have used their initiative to educate themselves, and his comment that this is "radicalism with a vengeance, and aims at the deep root of one of our great social evils"\(^3\) possibly suggested to George Eliot Felix's remark to Lyon that he is a Radical, but one who wants "to go to some roots a good deal lower down than the franchise" (p. 226).

George Eliot is generally criticised for creating in Felix an idealised character and a spokesman for her own views, both of which he is, but his unsatisfactoriness is not due simply to this, or even to the fact that his outlook is more characteristic of the 1860's than of the 1830's, but rather to the lack of any real sense of the past experience that has led him to

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1 Quoted by Burn, *The Age of Equipoise*, p. 74. Emphasis Parkes's.


his opinions. He seems never to have been influenced enough by Radical
ideas to have become disillusioned with them — a point made by J.R. Wise
in the review in the Westminster: "many a village Hampden" was created in
the 1830's by the starvation, brutality and injustice endured by the poor
at the hands of the wealthy and privileged. The problem is exacerbated
by the fact that so many of the other major characters — Harold and Mrs
Transome, Esther and Rufus Lyon — have to learn from difficult experiences.

The novel also reflects the belief common by the 1860's, but less so
in the 1830's, that the relationship of past and present was a steady or­
ganic growth, that societies evolve gradually and inevitably through a
chain of causes and effects in accordance with discoverable natural laws,
that society was so complex and interdependent that it was difficult to
change one aspect of it without damaging another. That this point of view
underlies Felix Holt is suggested of course by Felix's attacks on plans
for sweeping change, and also by his strictures on the vague Romantic aspi­
rations towards the infinite embodied in the eponymous hero of Chateau­
briand's René (p. 108), Romanticism having been an important impetus
behind the hopes of the 1830's and 1840's for social and political trans­
formations through wide-ranging reforms. The point of view implicit in
the novel is made explicit in the "Address". Here society is compared to
"the human body, with all its various parts depending on one another, and
with a terrible liability to get wrong because of this delicate dependance"
(p. 415), and in this body there are

1 "Felix Holt — the Radical," Westminster Review, NS 30 (1866), 200-
207, at 203.
2 Burn, The age of Equipoise, pp. 62-64.
old institutions, and among them the various distinctions and inherited advantages of classes, which have shaped themselves along with all the wonderful slow-growing system of things made up of our laws, our commerce, and our stores of all sorts, whether in material objects, such as buildings and machinery, or in knowledge, such as scientific thought and professional skill (p. 416).

It is a view with which Scott would have agreed. Radical change by the working classes would be dangerous not only because of their own ignorance, drunkenness and self-interest, but also because "the nature of things in this world has been determined for us beforehand" (p. 417), many of the evils of their condition are not such as they can blame others for (p. 421), and much of what has grown up as part of the aristocracy's way of life is worth preserving—"that treasure of knowledge, science, poetry, refinement of thought, feeling, and manners, great memories, and the interpretation of great records, which is carried on from the minds of one generation to the minds of another" (p. 418).

As I noted in the Introduction, the belief held by thinkers such as Spencer, Comte and Buckle that not only the natural world but also historical change was governed by irreversible laws meant that the role attributed to the "great man" in history was minimised. For George Eliot in *Felix Holt* small-scale change is all that is either possible or indeed desirable, and individual initiative is the source of improvement. Since "'great things can't happen,'" Felix cares for "'very small things, such as will never be known beyond a few garrets and workshops'" (p. 364). Like Adam Bede and Silas Marner in the simpler life of the early nineteenth-century village, Felix represents a possible instrument of social progress for the towns of the 1830's and after. Interestingly, in their account of working-class advances since 1832, Jones and Ladlow point out that these are difficult to determine accurately because of the "unrecorded, the
unremembered, the undiscoverable" - the short-lived mutual improvement societv, the healthy influence of one or two men in a shop, the grip of one thought by one tenacious mind, may have been the germ of some remarkable organisation now worked by men unaware of its origin. Felix aims "'to do small work close at hand, not waiting for speculative chances of heroism, but preparing for them'" (p. 245). That he is potentially heroic in the conventional sense is suggested when the narrator remarks, as Felix starts the risky business of leading the riotous mob, "we hardly allow enough in common life for the results of that enkindled passionate enthusiasm which, under other conditions, makes world-famous deeds" (p. 269). An earlier passage, relating to Lyon's illusions about the likely effect of his words on Harold when the latter has come to canvass him, reminds the reader of the respect due to each man in history who has played a small role in forwarding "the onward tendency of human things":

what we call illusions are often, in truth, a wider vision of past and present realities - a willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces - a movement towards a more assured end than the chances of a single life. We see human heroism broken into units and say, this unit did little - might as well not have been. But in this way we might break up a great army into units; in this way we might break the sunlight into fragments, and think that this and the other might be cheaply parted with. Let us rather raise a monument to the soldiers whose brave hearts only kept the ranks unbroken, and met death - a monument to the faithful who were not famous, and who are precious as the continuity of the sunbeams is precious, though some of them fall unseen and on barrenness (p. 161)

George Eliot's portrayal of Felix and Lyon reflects in fact a characteristic of contemporary thought to which E.S. Dallas (who reviewed the novel in the Times of 26 June 1866) drew attention in another work of the

1 The Progress of the Working Class 1832-1867, p. 24.
same year. "The private virtues are becoming public," he remarked, while "the private life is rising into public importance,"¹ such that "we recognise the fact that the action of every unit of a nation or a party tells upon the total result of human achievement."¹ Consequently, "[h]orny-hand is now a hero as much as any knight of old that placed his lance in rest for the golden lilies, or for the roses, white and red."³ Thackeray's novels have, he says, encouraged the trend, by urging upon us the idea that we are all alike, and that the differences between the extremes of human-kind are very trifling - although in Thackeray's work this tendency often serves to present a pessimistic view of human nature rather than to highlight the heroism inherent in private life.⁴ Partly because of female novelists' greater interest in domestic relations, too, their recent literary ascendancy has meant that "the individual as a great public character withers. The individual as a member of society and in all his private relations grows in importance."⁵

That slow and steady change is not necessarily progressive is however suggested by the implied contrast between the semi-rural midlands of 1831 and the more urbanised area of 1866, and by the final satirical comments on Treby Magna:

"...it has since prospered as the rest of England has prospered. Doubtless there is more enlightenment now. Whether the farmers are all public-spirited, the shopkeepers nobly independent, the Froxton men entirely sober and judicious, the Dissenters

² The Gay Science, II, 274.
³ The Gay Science, II, 272.
⁵ The Gay Science, II, 299.
quite without narrowness or asperity in religion and politics, and the publicans all fit, like Gaius, to be the friends of an apostle—these things I have not heard... "whether any presumption may be drawn from the fact that North Loamshire does not yet return a Radical candidate, I leave to the all-wise—I mean the newspapers (p. 399)

Although no supporter of sweeping political change, George Eliot, as we have seen in *The Mill on the Floss*, does not endorse mid-Victorian complacency about progress. In February 1864 the economist Bonamy Price delivered a paean to the increasing prosperity of the previous thirty years— for him the period had seen the reduction of the "reforming flood into the steady and calm stream of prosperous progress." All that was necessary had been done, and most Englishmen had now attained "a broader civilization, a purer and more generous humanity, a more cultivated intelligence, a softer spirit, a richer, more sustained, and more ennobling prosperity."¹ Lowe also believed that since 1832 the House of Commons had "revised every institution of the country" such that "everything that was complained of, everything that had grown distasteful, has been touched with success and moderation by the amending hand."² On the more personal level in the novel, Esther's education, like that of Mrs Transome about thirty-five years before, fails equally to provide her with any moral principles to guide her life,³ — she becomes preoccupied with matters of accent, taste, and style, just as Mrs Transome had been eager merely to show off her playing, singing, painting, and daring quotations from "the lighter parts of dangerous French authors," and had adopted "correct" pro-Tory, pro-Church of England opinions.

¹ "The Political Temper of the Nation," *Fraser's*, 69 (1864), 135-59, at 137.
³ cf. Maggie Tulliver's education at a slightly later period.
without either thinking about them or letting them govern her conduct (pp. 27-29). The two women even read at least one author in common, Chateaubriand, Mrs Transome to talk in company of his eloquence (p. 27), Esther presumably because she is dissatisfied with her life in Treby and, like his hero René, is inclined to ask, "Est-ce ma faute, si je trouve partout les bornes?" (p. 108). Meanwhile the change in Jermyn since his youth prompts the narrator to ask rhetorically, as the lawyer prepares to avert ruin by revealing Mrs Transome's secret to their son, "[s]hall we call it degeneration or gradual development - this effect of thirty additional winters on the soft-glancing, versifying young Jermyn?" (p. 381).

It is a weakness in the novel however that, given the emphasis placed on the choices faced by both Felix and Esther between a future of progress and one of degeneration, Harold Transome has so little control over his own fate. George Eliot is obviously concerned to contrast Harold's political Radicalism, which seeks widespread change but is contaminated by his class prejudice and condoning of corruption, with the almost apolitical Radicalism of Felix, which works honestly for small ends, and the point is made effectively as far as it goes. Nevertheless the two discoveries that most deeply affect Harold, that Esther has a prior claim to the Transome estate, and that he is Jermyn's illegitimate son, are circumstances which he can have done nothing to prevent, and seem like rather arbitrary punishments for his egoism. Moreover, despite the famous statement that "there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life" (p. 45), what happens to Harold is not really determined by social

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1 René, part of Le Génie du christianisme (1802) was his second successful work after Atala (1801). There was a new English translation as late as 1854. Chateaubriand was apparently a "sublime poseur, a sublime egotist, and a sublime day-dreamer, seeing the world in and through himself, much as Felix suggests (Oxford Companion to French Literature, comp. and ed. Sir Paul Harvey and J.E. Heseltine, 1959, p. 126).
conditions or political developments: Esther's claim to the estate and the way it is brought to light are based on a complicated and improbable series of events which have little connection with any "wider public life." And the most powerful part of the novel, the story of Mrs Transome, depends little on any social or political context. Towards the end of the Introduction in fact the narrator moves away from the detailed description of the midlands of 1631 to a series of generalisations about the many consequences of wrong-doing and the pain, hatred, and robberies which remain secret, "breathed into no human ear" (p. 11) — that is the narrator, obviously foreshadowing the part of the story concerning Mrs Transome, focuses on a kind of life that is both private (in the most extreme sense of the word), and unrelated to any particular period. The final paragraph of the Introduction breaks completely free of any setting in time or place, and in an extended allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Inferno*, imbues Mrs Transome's plight with an a-historical and even religious significance:

The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the under world. The thorn-bushes there, and the thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable. (p. 11).
Like *Felix Holt*, *Middlemarch* (1871-72) deals with the period dominated politically by the issues of Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform, but in this case all the events in the novel (apart from the "Finale") take place before the passing of the Reform Bill in the first week of June 1832.

The first political reference is in Chapter 1, where provincial families are said to be "still discussing Mr Peel's late conduct on the Catholic Question," which suggests a date soon after the passing of Catholic Emancipation in January 1829, and slightly further on Celia tells Dorothea that it is the "last day of September" (I, 10). Later we learn that Mr Brooke collects "documents on machine-breaking and rick-burning" (I, 34-35), and although such expressions of discontent reached their height in the winters of 1830-31 and 1831-32, they had been going on sporadically since the beginning of the economic depression in 1815. In 1829 the handloom weavers in several places, including the silk-weaving centres of Coventry, Bedworth and Nuneaton, rioted and destroyed the new machinery which they believed to threaten their livelihood. By the time Dorothea is on her honeymoon, and the novel has turned to focus on Lydgate's plans for medical reform, it is said to be "the end of 1829" (II, 264). Later, before reading Featherstone's will, Mr Standish talks of "the last bulletins concerning the King" (IV, 201), a reference to the long illness of George IV which ended in his death on 26 June 1830: according to Harriet Martineau the news given to the public on

1 *Middlemarch A Study of Provincial Life*, by George Eliot (8 parts; Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1871-72). All subsequent citations will be from this edition, which appeared from December 1871 to December 1872.

2 Horn, *The Rural World 1780-1850*, p. 88; Hobsbawm and的学习，*Captain Swing*, p. 16.

the subject over April–June 1830 was misleading, playing down the seriousness of the illness. Soon afterwards Mr Vincy cites the ruinous state of the country as the reason why he cannot give Rosamond a dowry:

"Parliament going to be dissolved, and machine-breaking everywhere, and an election coming on ... Some say it's the end of the world, and be hanged if I don't think it looks like it" (IV, 237-38)

and later the narrator elaborates:

The doubt hinted by Mr Vincy whether it were only the general election or the end of the world that was coming on, now that George the Fourth was dead, Parliament dissolved, Wellington and Peel generally depreciated and the new King apologetic, was a feeble type of the uncertainties in provincial opinion at that time. With the glow-worm lights of country places, how could men see which were their own thoughts in the confusion of a Tory Ministry passing Liberal measures, of Tory nobles being anxious to return Liberals rather than friends of the recreant Ministers... (IV, 244-45)

Parliament had been dissolved on 24 July 1830, and according to W.N. Molesworth, the political atmosphere was "charged with electricity." Many Tories were still disaffected with Wellington and Peel for their support of Catholic Emancipation, while Vincy's apocalyptic visions were later to be shared even by Dr Arnold, who feared that the Reform agitation and the revolutionary mood of the period heralded the end of one of the great epochs of the human race. 3

In the midst of this political excitement, Mr Hackbutt announces

"I myself should never favour immoderate views — in fact I take my stand with Huskisson — but I cannot blind myself to the consideration that the non-representation of large towns..." (IV, 247)

1 History, I, 552.
He is alluding here to the Bill introduced by Lord John Russell a few months earlier (23 February 1830) providing for the enfranchisement of Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester. Huskisson had supported it but did not favour any further extension of the franchise, for fear that democracy would lead eventually to a military despotism.¹ The Tory Hawley declares however that quashing pocket-boroughs and enfranchising "every mushroom town in the kingdom" would only increase the expenditure of getting into Parliament (IV, 247) — a view which Felix Holt suggests George Eliot would endorse.

Political issues move to the forefront of the novel in the chapters dealing with Mr Brooke's candidacy for Middlemarch. When the election of August-September 1830 is imminent the Tory Trumpet attacks Brooke's bad management of his own estate, highlighting the contrast between his public statements and his private conduct (IV, 292-93) and recalling George Eliot's treatment of the same kind of theme in Adam Bede and Felix Holt. The force of the paper's criticisms is brought home to Brooke himself when he visits the farm of his tenant Dagley, with its ivy-choked chimney, "worm-eaten shutters", "mouldering garden wall," "pauper labourers in ragged breeches," "scanty dairy of cows," spiritless, underfed pigs and ducks (IV, 312). Dagley himself abuses Brooke, and declares that the "Reform" will send Brooke and his ilk "a-scuttlin'; an' wi' pretty strong-smellin' things too," giving voice to the hostility towards the landed interest which prevailed at the time of the 1830 election,² and the great but misplaced optimism of many of the poor about the effects of Reform. Public interest in the issue increased further when an actual Bill was proposed in March 1831: according to Harriet Martineau even in rural hamlets and scattered farm-

¹ Martineau, History, I, 550.
² Brock, The Great Reform Act, 86ff
steads labourers would club together to buy papers to read—or hear read—the Parliamentary debates, and rural artisans walked miles to towns to read posters or hear what was said in public houses. At the beginning of Chapter 46 we have reached this period: there is "a new political animation in Middlemarch, and a new definition of parties which might show a decided change of balance if a new election came" (V, 55). The Commons rejected the Bill in effect by passing a motion against any decrease in the representation of England and Wales, and the King (William IV) dissolved Parliament amid uproar on 22 April. Brooke, who did not after all stand in the 1830 election, decides to do so in that of May 1831, and Will has to urge him to support the Bill wholeheartedly instead of adopting his usual attitude of not wanting to go "too far." The country, Ladislaw explains, "wants to have a House of Commons which is not weighted with nominees of the landed class, but with representatives of the other interests" (V, 57). The 1831 election was fought almost wholly on the issue of the Reform Bill—most people wanted it, and candidates were asked to pledge their support for "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." Later Ladislaw fails to learn of the codicil to Casaubon's will because "[t]he famous 'dry election' was at hand, in which the depths of public feeling might be measured by the low flood-mark of drink," and "more private noises were taken little notice of" (V, 127). As in *Felix Holt* however the narrator points out that agitation for Reform was not universal, since Lowick is "not more agitated by Reform than by the solemn tenor of the Sunday sermon" (V, 79), while in the nearby parish of Frick,

1 *History*, II, 39.
the rumour of Reform had not yet excited any millennial expectations ... there being no definite promise in it, as of gratuitous grains to fatten Hiram Ford's pig, or of a publican at the "eights and Scales" who would brew beer for nothing, or of an offer on the part of the three neighbouring farmers to raise wages during winter (VI, 230)

Vizetelly recalled that the public preoccupation with Reform at this period was so great that even news of public interest such as Scott's final illness was hardly mentioned in the papers, but on the other hand, in 1836 he met an old shepherd at Stonehenge, near the notorious rotten borough of Old Sarum, who had never heard of Reform. ¹

Even if Brooke's candidature had been successful, his election as a representative for Middlemarch would have been a dubious honour. Mrs Cadwallader had remarked that the last unsuccessful candidate had failed because he did not bribe enough, and her husband had quoted the opinion that East Retford, a well-known corrupt borough whose disenfranchisement had been much discussed in Parliament in 1828-30, "'was nothing to Middlemarch!" (IV, 294). It is clear from Brooke's attempt to canvass the grocer Mawmsey that candidates generally undertake to do business with their political supporters alone; the means of enlisting the ignorance of the Middlemarch voter on the side of the Bill "were remarkably similar to the means of enlisting it on the side against the Bill" (V, 135).

The treatment of Brooke's candidacy shows then that, as in Felix Holt, George Eliot is doubtful about the value of political reform when it is not accompanied by moral reform. Before the election Lydgate accuses Ladislaw of "'crying up a measure as if it were a universal cure, and crying up men who are part of the very disease that wants curing,'" and although Ladislaw

¹ Glances Back, pp. 77, 133.
argues that "'your cure must begin somewhere,'" and that it is no use wait­ing for "'immaculate men to work with'" (V, 67-68) in his mind he is uneasy about his relations with Brooke, both because the latter is obviously an incompetent candidate and because he knows he himself is only using his work on the Pioneer as an excuse to stay near Dorothea. Vincy's and Mawm-sey's attitudes to politics are also obviously governed by self-interest. Moreover political concerns tend to be swept aside by local and personal interests. Sir James and Mrs Cadwallader cease to be concerned about Brooke's intention to stand when they learn he has consented to Dorothea's marrying Casaubon; Lydgate and Bulstrode talk about cholera and the chances of the Reform Bill in the Lords after Raffles' death so as to avoid the subject of how he died (VII, 141) and when the scandal finally breaks, "all public conviviality, from the Green Dragon to Dollop's, gathered a zest which could not be won from the question whether the Lords would throw out the Reform Bill" (VII, 155). Later there is a meeting of the Middlemarch Board for the superintendence of sanitary measures against the cholera, which had appeared in London in February 1832, but the significance of the meeting lies in the occasion it provides for publicly exposing and ostracising Bulstrode, and forcing Lydgate to help him, thus confirming the other citizens in their suspicions that Bulstrode has bribed him to cover up the murder of Raffles. Towards the end of the novel a public issue is displaced again when Brooke arrives to tell the Chettams and Cadwalladers that Doro-thea has resolved to marry Ladislaw. The others assume his despondency is due to the fact that the Lords have in fact thrown out the Reform Bill (which happened in May 1832), but Brooke is totally preoccupied with his niece's impending marriage, and the others also soon forget politics in
their consternation. We hear nothing of the Middlemarch reaction to the rejection of the Reform Bill, although in the country as a whole this, together with Lord Grey's resignation, two days later, aroused much indignation, with large meetings of the Political Unions and many pro-Reform petitions. Nor is there any reference in the novel to any Middlemarch response to the Lords' rejection of an earlier version of the Bill on 8 October, 1831, which had stimulated the formation of Political Unions and led to attacks on leading anti-Reform peers, disturbances at Derby and Nottingham, and three days of serious rioting at Bristol. George Eliot is if anything underemphasising the interest in the Reform issue in the early 1830's.

In Felix Holt, as we have seen, proposals for political reforms were compared unfavourably with the small-scale individual efforts which Felix undertakes. In Middlemarch it is the characters with modest aims who lead the most successful lives. Sir James Chettam, for example, contents himself with being a generous paternalistic landlord, doing the best for his land and tenants during the agricultural depression of the period (I, 27; IV, 288) Caleb Garth, who has much in common with Adam Bede, is proud to be part of the "myriad-headed, myriad-handed labour by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed" (III, 44). Garth's daughter and son-in-law Mary and Fred Vincy lead similar lives of limited but worthwhile achievement: Fred becomes "rather distinguished in his side of the county as a theoretic and practical farmer" and writes a book on the Cultivation of Green Crops and the Economy of Cattle-feeding, thus playing his part in the drive towards farming improvements which occurred from the late 1830's onward, while Mary

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1 The displacement of public issues by private concerns in the latter part of Middlemarch has been well covered by Jerome Beaty in his "History by Indirection: The Era of Reform in Middlemarch," Victorian Studies, I (1957), 173-79.

2 Brock, 294ff.
becomes a contented wife and mother, as well as the author of a children's book (VIII, 359). She and her brother Jim are also great readers of Scott: she talks playfully of Brenda Troil and Mordaunt Mertoun, Minna Troil and Cleveland (all from The Pirate), and Waverley and Flora Mac-Ivor, when Fred claims that "a woman is never in love with anyone she has always known" (II, 244-45), and it emerges later that Fred has brought her Anne of Geierstein (1828) to read at Featherstone's (III, 162-63). In Chapter 57 Jim reads from Ivanhoe, by "that beloved writer who has made a chief part in the happiness of many young lives" (VI, 201). This all tends to suggest that Scott's novels are valuable largely for the diversion and entertainment they provide, a view which was becoming increasingly common by the time Middlemarch was written: in April 1872 a writer in the London Quarterly Review contrasted the "wide intellectuality and profound soul-lore" informing "Amos Barton" with "the simple, healthful interest in lives of adventure" which young people find in reading the Waverley Novels, "unencumbered as those books are by any didactic or other purpose ulterior to the original nature of romance."¹ George Eliot's own epigraph for Chapter 57 hints however at a deeper connection between Scott and the characters in the novel Scott stirs in children motions like those which "thrill the buds and shape their hidden frame/at penetration of the quickening air" and makes "the little world their childhood knew/Large with a land of mountain, lake, and scaur/And larger yet with wonder, love, belief." And then, when separated from the book, "[i]n lines that thwart like portly spiders ran,/They wrote the tale, from Tully Veolan." This I think foreshadows Fred's and Mary's future, writing books and passing a productive but uneventful life at Stone Court, just as Waverley ends up living peacefully with Rose at Tully-Veolan.

The "Finale" pays tribute to people like Caleb, Fred, Mary, and (eventually) Theoria —

for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs

George Eliot's letters from the period in which the novel was written also express confidence in the value of individual small-scale effort. In January 1870 she wrote to Oscar Browning that "[o]ne must care for small immediate results as well as for great and distant ones," and to Mrs Mark Pattison she observed in September, "[i]t seems to be more than ever that in our affectionate relations we have some of the moral treasure of the world under our charge." However this belief was partly a refuge in the face of the horror of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71: the preceding sentence of the letter just quoted reads, "the painful, too engrossing thoughts raised by the War urge me to counteracting thoughts of all friendly bonds." The next year, writing to François d'Albert-Durade, she speaks of

the myriad sorrows produced by the regression of barbarism from that historical tomb where we thought it so picturesquely buried - if indeed we ought not to beg pardon of barbarism, which had no weapons for making eight wounds at once in our body, and rather call the present warfare that of the devil and all his legions'

Middlemarch itself contains nothing as desponding as this comment, in which George Eliot is forced to have recourse to a supernatural explanation of human evil. However two years earlier, when European war already seemed imminent, she had told d'Albert-Durade that "[t]he want of public spirit is

1 31 January 1870, in Eliot Letters, V, 76.
2 15 September 1870, in Eliot Letters, V, 117.
one of the crying defects in our countrymen,\(^1\) and in the novel this lack of public spirit is I think treated more critically than in *Adam Bede* - we learn that Dorothea's son declines to stand for Middlemarch, "thinking that his opinions had less chance of being stifled if he remained out of doors" (VIII, 369) - while there is a greater sense of regret over the failure to create improvement by political means than in *Felix Holt*. However the main failures dealt with in the novel are of course those of Lydgate, who in his medical and scientific career does not manage "to do good small work for Middlemarch, and great work for the world" (II, 265), and Dorothea, who cannot live an "epic life" in the England of her time. The prominence of their stories made many contemporaries feel that the novel was very melancholy. According to R.H. Hutton in the *Spectator* George Eliot "steadily discourages the hope that there is any light for us behind the cloud,"\(^2\) while the *Athenaeum* claimed that the novel was "from prologue to epilogue tinged with melancholy," such that "'all is vanity and vexation of spirit' seems to be for ever ringing in our ears."\(^3\) In the *Quarterly* Robert Laing notes the "profound despondency" of the general tone, and responds with the characteristic mid-Victorian assurance in steady progress:

> Humanity as such makes progress ... the stream of human life has adapted itself to general needs, it obeys uniform laws, it has renounced all fury and eccentricity ... it flows deeply and persistently without storm or spray\(^4\)

But *Middlemarch* points out how gradual change could also work in the direction of degeneration, that "in the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them much in the same way

1 30 January 1868, in *Eliot Letters*, IV, 419.
3 *Athenaeum*, 7 December 1872, pp. 725-26, at p. 725.
as the tie of their cravats, there is always a good number who once meant
to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little" (II, 257).

One reason for setting Lydgate's story in the recent past is to show
the beginnings of his "gradual change," and to make the reader aware of the
great youthful hopes that may lie buried in the commonplace middle-aged men
they see around them (cf. "Mr Gilfil's Love-Story"), and even of the part
they may themselves have played in thwarting them through "conforming falsi­
ties" and "silly conclusions. And to have left Lydgate even in 1832, without
spelling out his subsequent decline into conformity and acquiescence in
Rosamond's demands, would not have been satisfactory, since

the fragment of a life, however typical, is not the sample of an
even web; promises may not be kept, and an ardent outset may be
followed by declension; latent powers may find their long-awaited
opportunity; a past error may urge a grand retrieval (VIII, 358)

More specifically, however, by setting the crucial, determining stage of
Lydgate's career in 1829-32 George Eliot intensifies the tragedy of his fai­
lure, since he is living at the beginning of a period of great medical and
scientific reform, so that if he had overcome his early problems, he would
have found his ideas and techniques accepted within about a generation.

For example, his diagnosis of Fred's illness as typhoid fever, which
so much arouses the ire and jealousy of French, is based on his reading of
P.C.A. Louis' 1829 book on the subject (II, 293-94), while the disease was
later distinguished from typhus fever in 1837 by William Wood Gerhard of
Philadelphia. The work of both had become generally known in England by

1 Charles Singer and E. Ashworth Underwood, A Short History of Medicine
Fiction, 4 (1950), supplement, I, 17, where George Eliot gives the date
as 1836.
Meanwhile the dispute over the surgeon's right to prescribe drugs and take fees for attendance alone causes much ill-feeling between Lydgate and the other doctors (see esp. Chapter 45) and has Mawmsey telling Gambit that "Lydgate went about saying physic was of no use" (V, 30). Because of a legal decision in the case of Handey vs. Henson in January 1829—referred to by Hawley as "'a damned judge's decision!" (V, 34), Lydgate was entitled to charge for attendance rather than drugs, and, as he had hoped, the change led to a rise in doctors' social status by mid-century.² Lydgate's difficulty in getting dead bodies to dissect for research leads him to request the corpse of Mrs Goby, arousing the indignation of Mrs Dollop, who predicts that "there would be no limits to the cutting-up of bodies, as had been well seen in Burke and Hare" (V, 24). She is alluding to a horrific series of crimes in Scotland, revealed in 1828, in which Burke and Hare had murdered at least fifteen people and sold their bodies to a doctor for dissection; Hare turned King's evidence, and Burke was hanged in January 1829. As a result of the case, "dreadful stories of murder" were current in every town, and gangs of murderess thought to be at large.³ However in 1833 an Anatomy Act was passed, legalising the dissection of unclaimed workhouse corpses, and thus protecting doctors from accusations of fostering crime, as well as raising their status in the public eye.

Also innovatory are Lydgate's use of the stethoscope to examine Casaubon, and his up-to-date method of treating Raffles' delirium tremens.

Using the stethoscope, it is pointed out, "had not become a matter of course

¹ Singer and Underwood, pp. 387, 722.
³ Martineau, History, I, 561.
in practice at that time" (III, 112). Laennec had invented the device in
1819, and discussed its uses in a book on auscultation in the same year,
while its use had been advocated by the leading London doctor John Elliotson
in a clinical lecture of 15 October 1829, 1 in which he had discussed hyper-
trophy of the heart, that is, the "fatty degeneration" from which Casaubon
suffers, and, like Lydgate, recommended low diet, rest, and the avoidance
of all excitement. However the fact that he also prescribes the old-fashione
remedy of bleeding, whereas Lydgate does not, again highlights the modernity
of the latter's methods (III, 112-13): we have already been told that "the
heroic times of copious bleeding and blistering had not yet departed" (II,
252) 3 . By 1831 the fleeting interest aroused by Laennec's work of 1819 had
in fact largely died out, but the stethoscope was eventually to be adopted
by Dr. Addison at Guy's in 1836 and had become commonplace at King's by 1853. 3
Developments such as the use of the stethoscope and easier access to corpses
for morbid anatomy promoted the actual physical examination of the patient
(as distinct from the mere investigation of symptoms) - the main medical
advance of the nineteenth century - and hence helped to undermine the pen-
chant for "thorough-going theory" of the period in which the novel is set. 4

It is made clear in the novel that Lydgate's treatment of delirium
tremens is also advanced for his time. Whereas the traditional approach
involves large doses of opium and alcohol, Lydgate recommends small doses of
opium and abstinence from alcohol (VII, 117-18), and Bulstrode causes
'daffles' death by allowing Mrs Abel to continue with the traditional mode

1 Lancet (1829-30), I, 141-44. In "Quarry," I, 2, George Eliot noted
the Lancet review of Elliotson's book on diseases on the heart of 9 October
1830 (1830-31, I, 64-66). This is the same Dr. Elliotson to whom Thackeray
was to dedicate Pendennis twenty years later.
3 Newman, 88ff.
4 Newman, pp. 96, 105-107.
of treatment. In the early 1830's treatment of this illness was very contro-
versial; in most cases cited in the Lancet the old approach was used and
recommended, but on 16 March 1833 there was a heated argument at a meeting
of the Westminster Medical Society about the value of opium and stimulants
in curing the condition. On 26 October the Lancet reports four cases, in
which their use had been successful in only one. Lydgate himself bases his
approach on the American experience of Dr John Ware, whose Remarks on the
History of Treatment of Delirium Tremens had been published in Boston in
1831. In the novel the uncertainty about the treatment of the disease
works against Lydgate, in that it contributes to his own unwillingness to
question Bulstrode about Raffles' death, since he thinks his own prescription
may have been wrong (VII, 140-41). And the fact that the medical men, when
they learn what Mrs Abel has really done, cannot according to their own
lights fault what they assume to have been Lydgate's orders, means that
their "vague conviction of indeterminable guilt"... had for the general
mind all the superior power of mystery over fact," since "conjecture soon
became more confident than knowledge, and had a more liberal allowance for
the incompatible" (VII, 157).

Lydgate is also concerned about the state of medical education in his
time. At the top of the hierarchy were the physicians who, in the Middle-
march view, "alone could offer any hope when danger was extreme" (II, 253).
To become a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians one had to be a gra-
duate of Oxford or Cambridge, but the medical training offered at these

1 For example, Lancet (1830-31), II, 257-56, 336, 522-23; (1831-32), II,
392; (1832-33), II, 539, 719.
2 Lancet (1832-33), II, 819.
3 Lancet (1833-34), I, 172-74.
universities was minimal, with an "absence of anatomical and bedside study" (II, 329), and the College was mainly concerned that its members had the "education of a gentleman" (i.e. a knowledge of Classics and mathematics) rather than medical training. The physician's chief professional asset was an impressive manner, bolstered by experience and guarded by elaborate etiquette. In Middlemarch Drs Minchin and Sprague "enjoyed about equally the mysterious privilege of medical reputation, and concealed with much etiquette their contempt for each other's skill" (II, 327-28). At this period the physicians, like Minchin and Sprague, were anxious to maintain their social superiority over surgeons. The older Middlemarch surgeons, Toller and French, probably qualified before 1815, and hence would only have had to serve an apprenticeship and attend one course on each of surgery and anatomy, and (after 1813) attend hospital surgical practice. With the passing of the Apothecaries' Act of 1815 however it became necessary to hold the licence of the Society of Apothecaries to practise outside London, and the training for this required an apprenticeship followed by attendance at lectures in anatomy, physiology, the theory and practice of medicine, and study at a hospital for six months. By 1834 most of the eight thousand Licentiates of the Royal College of Surgeons were also apothecaries, and, like Lydgate, practised as General Practitioners. Lydgate's education is more advanced than this, however: unlike most G.P.s, he has been to Edinburgh, long recognised as offering the best medical education available in Britain - according to the Lancet of 8 January 1831, the Edinburgh Medical

2 Reader, p. 19.
3 Reader, pp. 39-40.
5 Cline, p. 275.
6 Cline, p. 276.
School was "filled by a greater number of professors of eminence, and attended by more numerous classes of medical pupils, than any one of the British universities." And Paris, where Lydgate also gets part of his medical education, was the undisputed leader in medicine in the first half of the century. By the time the novel was written medical education had greatly improved. Medical degree requirements and facilities at Oxford and Cambridge became better, and the 1858 Medical Act had broken down what Lydgate considers an "irrational severance between medical and surgical knowledge" by creating the category of "registered medical practitioner" who could practise in any branch of the profession provided he had satisfied one of twenty-one licensing bodies, some of which were provincial medical schools of the kind envisaged by Lydgate. Moreover the General Medical Council set up by the Act regulated the quackery of the kind rife in the early 1830's and after, by making it illegal for unqualified practitioners to sign statutory certificates or prescribe dangerous drugs. The school at Edinburgh University was however in decline by 1865.

An important part of Lydgate's ambition is his plan to use the cases he comes upon in his medical practice to further his scientific research—he is "fired with the possibility that he might work out the proof of an anatomical conception and make a link in the chain of discovery." This is the reason behind his enthusiasm for the fever hospital, and hence the main cause of his involvement with Bulstrode. He hopes to follow up the work of François Bichat (1771-1802), who at the beginning of the century

1 Lancet (1830-31), I, 503; "Quarry," I, 6-7.
2 Newman, pp. 47-49.
3 Newman, pp. 127, 279-60, 284f.
5 Reader p. 67.
first carried out the conception that living bodies, fundamentally considered, are not associations of organs which can be understood by studying them first apart, and then as it were federally; but must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues, out of which the various organs — brain, heart, lungs, and so on — are compacted...

and by studying these tissues in detail showed "new connections and hitherto hidden facts of structure which must be taken into account in considering the symptoms of maladies and the action of medicaments" (II, 263-64). In a medical lecture of 1833 on "The Classification of Diseases" Mr Wardrop paid tribute to the contributions made by Bichat's enlightened views to the advancement of pathological science, since he had shown how the tissues of the same material have the same functions, regardless of the part of the body in which they are to be found, and that the modifications of structure in the different organs are due to the diversity of possible tissue combinations. But the outline of the way in which Lydgate seeks to progress beyond Bichat's work brings out again how the decline of his research after his marriage in 1830 means that he just fails to get on to the right track towards important discoveries. His hypothesis is that the tissues have "some common basis from which they have all started" that is, a "primitive tissue" (II, 264-65). But he puts the question "not quite in the way required by the waiting answer." The crucial development here was the discovery that organisms were composed of cells. In 1829 Lydgate offers Farebrother the botanist Robert Brown's Microscopic Observations on the Pollen of Plants, published the preceding year; however it was not till 1831 that Brown described the nucleus of plant cells, and by this

1 *Lancet* (1833-34), I, 50-55.

time Lydgate is too enmeshed in marital and financial problems to give
time to research. After pioneering work in cell theory by G.G. Valentin
(1836), Friedrich Henle and Johannes Purkinje (both 1837), Matthias
Schleiden's *Beiträge zur Phylogenesis* of 1838, on the microscopic structure
of plants, drew attention to the nucleus as a characteristic part of the
cell, and, drawing on his work, Theodor Schwann showed in his *Mikroskopische
Untersuchungen über die Übereinstimmung in der Struktur und dem Wachstum
der Thiere und Pflanzen* (1839) that even complex animal tissues develop
only from cells. From about 1850 cells came to be seen as the essential
living substance, and Rudolf Virchow's *Cellulopathologie* of 1858 enunciated
the idea that all cells derive from other cells, as well as applying cell
theory to pathology and morbid histology. In 1860 Lewes could declare that
"[t]he last twenty years ... will be known in history as the cell-epoch,
so manifold have been the researches, and so striking the results, with
respect to the parts played by cells." The cell is the "true biological
atom," and, instead of Lydgate's primitive tissue, there are now myriad
centres of vital activity.¹

Although Lydgate is very interested in medical reform, his attitude
to political reform is a mixture of cynicism and indifference. However
two doctors mentioned in the novel, Thomas Wakley and François-Vincent
Raspail, did try to combine political and medical careers. In 1823 Wakley
founded the *Lancet*, on which George Eliot drew for much of the novel's
medical background, and in the early years of the journal attacked wrong
hospital practice and opposed the exclusiveness, nepotism and incompetence

¹ "quarry," I, 9; Singer and Underwood, 320ff; Harvey, p. 36.
rife in the Royal Colleges, especially the Royal College of Surgeons.¹ However his frustration over this latter campaign made him decide to enter Parliament, and after two unsuccessful efforts in 1832 and 1834 he managed to become M.P. for Finsbury in 1835.² Despite the fact that his main motivation was to urge on the House the need for medical reform, he also supported Radical principles such as religious liberty and free trade, and actually made his reputation as a speaker on 25 June 1835 with a defence of the "Tolpuddle Martyrs" (six Dorsetshire labourers transported for administering illegal oaths to fellow members of a union) which was instrumental in achieving their pardon the following year.³ Medical and political reform were for him parts of the same movement.

Nevertheless by the time his biography appeared in 1897 - and hence possibly also by 1871/2 - "akley was best known for having been coroner for West Middlesex from 1839 to 1862, and it is in the context of his struggle to make the coronership a medical rather than a legal office that he is mentioned in the novel. When in a discussion of the hospital chaplaincy issue Lydgate argues that "'in general, appointments are apt to be made too much a question of personal liking"' Mr Chichely, a lawyer and the local coroner, says he hopes Lydgate is "'not one of the 'Lancet's' men ... wanting to take the coronership out of the hands of the legal profession.'"

Dr Sprague then interposes that he disapproves of "akley:

"he is an ill-intentioned fellow, who would sacrifice the respectability of the profession, which everybody knows depends on the London Colleges, for the sake of getting some notoriety for himself"

² Sprigge, 224ff.
³ Sprigge, pp. 236, 263ff.
but on the other hand he "'could mention one or two points in which "akley
is in the right'" (II, 279-80). Sprague's mixed feelings about Wakley
were in fact very characteristic of doctors of his period.¹ Lydgate goes
on to offend Chichely further by claiming that "'legal training only makes
a man more incompetent in questions that require knowledge of another
kind'' and that "'[a] lawyer is no better than an old woman at a post mortem
examination'' since he had no knowledge of how a poison acts. It was
on such grounds that Wakley campaigned for years in the Lancet for the
coronership to be made a medical office; he stood himself as coroner for
East Middlesex in 1830, to be narrowly defeated at the poll.² His campaign
succeeded to the extent that between 1829 and 1839 about twenty medical
coroners did receive appointments, but he had to wait till 1839 to obtain
one himself. By supporting Wakley's innovatory views Lydgate runs foul of
Middlemarch vested interests and general resistance to change, but he
arouses more anger than he need by losing sight of "the fact that Mr
Chichely was His Majesty's coroner" (II, 282); he manages to be controver-
sial, without really achieving anything.

But it is a measure of how far Lydgate is misunderstood by Middlemarch
that he is later compared to one of Wakley's arch-enemies, the quack St.
John Long, whom Sprigge in 1897 could still call "one of the most notorious
charlatans of this century."³ In Chapter 45 the narrator observes that
"[i]n those days the world was agitated about the wondrous doings of Mr
St John Long, 'nobleman and gentleman' attesting his extraction of a fluid
like mercury from the temples of a patient." Sprague and Minchin have

¹ Sprigge, p. 498.
² Lancet (1829-30), II, 930-38; (1830-31), I, 40-54; "Quarry," I, 1.
³ p. 360.
suggested that Lydgate is "given to that reckless innovation for the sake of noise and show which was the essence of the charlatan," and, "the word 'charlatan' once thrown on the air could not be let drop"; Mr Toller tells Mrs Taft that St. John Long is "'the kind of fellow we call a charlatan, advertising cures in ways nobody knows anything about; a fellow who wants to make a noise by pretending to go deeper than other people,’” since "'[t]he other day he was pretending to tap a man's brain and get quicksilver out of it’" - thus implying that Lydgate indulges in similar practices. Hence "it came to be held in various quarters that Lydgate played even with respectable constitutions for his own purposes, and how much more likely in his flighty experimenting he should make sixes and sevens of hospital patients”(V, 46-47). Long's technique was to prophesy the imminent death of his (usually wealthy or titled) clients and frighten them into trying his treatment, which involved using his ointment to create a wound, allowing it to heal, and pronouncing the patient cured.\(^1\) Between July 1829 and July 1830 he made £13,400. In January 1630 Wakley had denounced him in the \textit{Lancet} as the "King of Humbugs," and quoted the testimony of a noble lord high in the naval service, that Long could extract a fluid like mercury from the head of a patient.\(^2\) Some months later however a Catherine Cashin died under his treatment and in October he was convicted of manslaughter, largely on account of Wakley's medical evidence.\(^3\) Unfortunately he was merely fined £250, which he paid on the spot, and was only defeated by consumption, of which he died in 1834.

\(^1\) Sprigge, pp. 361-62.
Unlike that of Wakley, the career of Raspail suggests the difficulty of combining campaigns for political and medical reform with scientific research. When Lydgate tells Farebrother that he is "more and more convinced that it will be possible to demonstrate the homogeneous origin of all the tissues," he goes on to observe that "Raspail and others are on the same track" (V, 48). In "Quarry" I, George Eliot transcribes a passage from Raspail's *Nouveau Système de chimie organique* (1833) which confirms this, discussing as it does "une substance blanche comme l'albumine coagulée, que les alcalis ou les acides concentrés ... ne dissolvent jamais entièrement," and observing that "les membranes de tous les organes animaux, même les plus disparates par leur (sic) fonctions, sont donc d'une homogénéité désespérante pour la physiologie, l'anatomie et la chimie microscopique."¹ This book, soon translated into English, established Raspail's reputation as a scientist. He had published too fifty scientific papers before 1830, some of which showed that he was working towards the ideas which would later—and in other minds—become the Cell Theory.²

Still alive when *Middlemarch* was written, he was involved all his life in left-wing politics, especially in the early years of the July Monarchy (1830 —) and in the 1848 Revolution—the *Nouveau Système* was actually written in prison. He connected his ideas for political reform with his campaigns for medical reform, believing that as biology proved men to be similarly constituted, it pointed to their political equality,³ and, since he thought health and hygiene inalienable human rights, campaigning for cleaner and wider streets, sewage disposal, better diet and ventilation

¹ "Quarry," I, 21-22.
³ Weiner, p. 10.
(cf. Lydgate's interest in "'ventilation and diet, that sort of thing,'" as Brooke puts it, I, 159), and attacking industrial prisons, insanitary working conditions in factories,¹ as well as the routine of medical academies and the negligence and greed of doctors.² However his growing preoccupation with politics and social medicine more or less put a stop to his original scientific research in the early 1830's, and he became an advocate of particular idées fixes (notably the value of camphor as an antiseptic) rather than a researcher working through experiment, observation, statistical analysis.³ Lewes in fact seems to have been doubtful about the possibility of combining a medical career with scientific research: in his 1862 article "Physicians and Quacks," he attacks what he sees as the still-too-prevalent habit among doctors of acting on unproveable hypotheses and discredited authorities, and argues that there should be a special cadre of scientific doctors devoting their full time to research.⁴

The novel is obviously concerned with the education and social role of women, and with the preconceptions men have about women's nature which cause much of the unhappiness of marriages like those of the Casaubons and the Lydges. Rosamond Vincy, as well as being very beautiful, has been educated so as to become the embodiment of the contemporary male's image of the ideal wife; having learnt at Mrs Lemon's school "all that was demanded in the accomplished female - even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage" (I, 166), so that she becomes

¹ Weiner, pp. 274-75.
² Weiner, p. 16.
³ Weiner, pp. 2-3, 139ff, 162-63.
that combination of correct sentiments, music, dancing, drawing, elegant note-writing, private album for extracted verse, and perfect blond loveliness, which made the irresistible woman for the doomed man of that date (III, 78).

concealing her social ambitions and making statements which were "no direct clue to fact." In the class above Rosamond's Dorothea has a very limited education, made up of the "small tinkling and smearing" in which "domestic music and feminine fine art" consisted "at that dark period" (I, 108-9) and a "toy-box history of the world adapted to young ladies" (I, 147), and it is her ignorance, as well as her yearning for "some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there" (I, 3) which makes Casawbon's knowledge seem so impressive. By the time the novel was written Rosamond's taste for the poetry of Lady Blessington, L.E.L. and annuals like the *Keepsake* would have been anachronistic, and there had been some progress in improving women's education, notably the foundation of Bedford College in 1849, the North London Collegiate School in 1850, Cheltenham Ladies' College in 1853, and, in 1869, of the Cambridge College which would become Girton four years later. George Eliot supported this last initiative, telling Mrs Nassau Senior that she believed women were entitled to the same educational opportunities as men, so as to be able to acquire the same faith as to their duty and its basis. But education for girls of the upper middle-class and gentry still often consisted of rote-learning of disconnected facts and the pursuit of superficial accomplishments: in 1868 the Report of the Schools Inquiry Commission was to find "want of thoroughness and foundation; want of system;"

slovenliness, showy superficiality ... undue time given to accomplishments, as well as

a vast deal of uninteresting task work, rules put into the memory with no explanation of their principles ... a very false estimate of the relative value of the several kinds of acquirement, a reference to effect rather than to solid worth, a tendency to fill or adorn rather than strengthen the mind.\(^1\)

Kathleen Blake has pointed out the similarities between the consequences of Rosamond's education in the late 1820's and Margaret Fuller's criticism of women's upbringing in her *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, reviewed by George Eliot in 1855: "[u]nacquainted with the importance of life and its purposes, trained to a selfish coquetry and love of petty power, she does not look beyond the pleasure of making herself felt at the moment."\(^2\)

Mrs Sarah Ellis's books of 1842-43, *The Daughters of England, The Wives of England*, and *The Mothers of England*, which had stressed that women were mentally inferior to men and should always defer to their husbands, were still popular in 1871/2,\(^3\) but issues concerning the status and opportunities of women were controversial by this time, more so than in the early 1830's. In June 1870 George Eliot wrote to Lady Amberley, commending her on a lecture advocating female suffrage, equal rights for women in education, the professions, and employment, equal wages, and property rights for married women.\(^4\) In the same year a bill providing for women's suffrage was defeated. Novels like Jane Brookfield's *Influence* (1871) and Eliza Lynn Linton's

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\(^4\) 2 June 1870, in *Eliot Letters*, VIII, 477, and n. 3.
owing the wind (1867) dealt with the possibilities for higher education and careers for women as alternatives to marriage, while Mrs Linton's novel, as well as Trollope's He Knew He Was Right (1868-69) and Florence Wilford's Nigel Bartram's Ideal (1869) focussed on the problems faced by women who tried to achieve some kind of independence within marriage. By 1868 Mrs Linton already felt however that women were seeking too much independence, and set off a counterblast in her famous Saturday Review articles, "The Girl of the Period," which regretted the replacement of the "tender, loving, retiring, or domestic" girl of the past by the modern girl who dyed her hair, painted her face, loved strong, bold talk, pleasure, and money, was indifferent to duty, discontented with ordinary life, and had a horror of useful work. In 1869 Mill's widely-read The Subjection of Women was to present a comprehensive argument for better education and more employment opportunities for women, and his view of the consequences for marriage of girls' upbringing as it was in 1869 has much in common with George Eliot's presentation of Rosamond's effect on Lydgate in 1830-32:

In fact a young man of the greatest promise generally degenerates after marriage:

2 Saturday Review, 14 March 1866, pp. 139-40, quoted by Gail Cunningham, pp. 8-9.
3 1st edn (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869), pp. 70-71.
He ceases to care for what she does not care for; ... his higher faculties both of mind and heart cease to be called into activity ... after a few years he differs in no material respect from those who have never had wishes for anything but the common vanities and the common pecuniary objects.

He becomes, in other words, one of the middle-aged men who are "shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross" (II, 257). The way women's influence could hamper progress is also suggested by Huxley's strictures in a letter to Lyell of 1860, on "man-traps for the matrimonial market," forced to "stop in the doll stage of evolution to be the ... drag on civilization, the degradation of every important pursuit with which they mix themselves."² The British Quarterly Review described Rosamond as "the deadliest blow at the common assumption that limitation in both heart and brain is a desirable thing for women, that has ever been struck."³

Between 1832 and 1872, then, what has changed is not so much women's social lot as the public awareness of the "Woman Question" as an issue. As Barbara Hardy has pointed out, the feminist consciousness of the novel belongs to the narrator, not to Dorothea.⁴ She is "struggling in the bonds of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither" (I, 40), and is the victim of "the stifling oppression of that gentlewoman's world, where everything was done for her and none asked for her aid" (III, 89), but she does not protest against her own lot as the consequence of social restrictions on women. That George Eliot felt that

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1 The Subjection of Women, pp. 176-77.
her problems were just as characteristic of 1871/2 as of 1829-32 is nevertheless made clear in the "Prelude" and "Finale." The "Prelude" describes the lot of girls like St Theresa, who are still born "here and there," but are "helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul" (I, vi-vii), and the "Finale" asserts:

A new Theresa will hardly have the opportunity of reforming a conventual life, any more than a new Antigone will spend her heroic piety in daring all for the sake of a brother's burial: the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is for ever gone. But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know (VIII, 370)

In the original part-issue and the first edition of the novel more weight was given to the social conditions, still present in 1872, which made Dorothea's first marriage possible. Earlier in the paragraph from which I have just quoted, George Eliot wrote:

"Among the many remarks passed on her mistakes, it was never said in the neighbourhood of Middlemarch that such mistakes could not have happened if the society into which she was born had not smiled on propositions of marriage from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age, - on modes of education which make a woman's knowledge another name for motley ignorance, on rules of conduct which are in flat contradiction with its own loudly-asserted beliefs. While this is the social air in which mortals begin to breathe, there will be collisions such as those in Dorothea's life...

In the 1874 edition and thereafter, all this is summarised and generalised as "the conditions of an imperfect social state," as many reviewers had pointed out that most people who commented on Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon had not smiled on his proposal. On the other hand the concern that a girl should not marry below her social class and accustomed standard of living
which is one motive behind her family's opposition to Dorothea's second marriage, was still prevalent in the early 1870's: John Morley claimed in 1874 that money, social position, and good connections were considered important in marriage, but not temper or intellectual quality, while in 1872 Blackwood's even published an article called "Old Maids," arguing that novelists were not paying sufficient attention to the fact that "[m]oral and religious worth ... cannot be entertained as valid reasons for union, until its worldly suitableness is satisfactorily proved."¹

Had Dorothea lived forty years later, she would have had more opportunities for philanthropic activity, on account of the expansion from the 1840's onward of endeavours such as nursing, ragged-school teaching, superintendence of hospitals and reformatories, and workhouse and prison visiting among women.² The novel makes much of the lack of contact between the county gentry and the townspeople, one cause of Dorothea's frustration in 1829-32 which would not have existed in the early 1870's. At the dinner to celebrate Dorothea's engagement, since, "in that part of the country, before Reform had done its notable part in developing the political consciousness, there was a clearer distinction of ranks and a dimmer distinction of parties," Mr Brooke invites only the men of Middlemarch, not their wives and daughters (I, 152, 154). At Featherstone's funeral the gentry watch from an upper window, and Mrs Cadwallader, who makes it her business to know all about the affairs of her own parish, cannot identify Mrs Vincy or Fred. Dorothea regrets that she knows nothing of her neighbours, apart from the cottagers, and her predicament is attributed to the fact that

² Thomson, The Victorian Heroine, 15ff.
The country gentry of old time lived in a rarefied social air: dotted apart on their stations up the mountain they looked down with imperfect discrimination on the belts of thicker life below (IV, 185)

"when Dorothea pays her first visit to Rosamond, "there was a sort of contrast not infrequent in country life when the habits of the different ranks were less blent than now" (V, 5). This separation of country and town, gentry and middle class, was however already breaking down:

Some slipped a little downward, some got higher footing; people denied aspirates, gained wealth, and fastidious gentlemen stood for boroughs; some were caught in political currents, some in ecclesiastical, and perhaps found themselves surprisingly grouped in consequence; ... Municipal town and rural parish gradually made fresh threads of connection — ... while squires and baronets, and even lords who had once lived blamelessly afar from the civic mind, gathered the faultiness of closer acquaintanceship (I, 164-65)

In 1859 Mill was to notice how the circumstances of the different classes were becoming more similar, and the widening of the franchise in the two Reform Bills meant that aristocrats and gentry who sought to become borough M.P.'s had to take even more account of middle and working class views than does Brooke in the novel. Moreover after the mid-nineteenth century country communities tended to become satellites of towns, reliant on urban areas for goods and services, especially after the decline of cottage industries. 2

It is nevertheless doubtful how much the possibility of being more closely involved in Middlemarch life would have benefited either Dorothea or the townspeople. Lydgate's career, after all, shows how difficult it

1 On Liberty; rpt. Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government p. 130.
could be to break free of the limits of one's class background and carry out reforms in a medium resistant to change, without becoming fatally entangled in its web of intrigues, jealousies, gossip, and complex personal relationships. Dorothea is able to relieve Lydgate of his debt to Bulstrode and to give him great emotional support by expressing her belief in his innocence and persuading her circle to believe in it too. Later she is able to overcome the great personal distress caused by her misunderstanding of the relationship between Rosamond and Ladislaw, by coming to feel that she is part of "the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance" (VIII, 282-83), but she is soon at a loose end again, finding nothing to do in the village, and unable to concentrate on the books on "political economy and kindred matters, out of which she was trying to get light as to the best way of spending money so as not to injure one's neighbours" (VIII, 313). She is only rescued from this restless inertia by the appearance of Will, and, as I noted earlier, their son declines to stand for Middlemarch because he feels the town would stifle his opinions. Nor does Dorothea's intervention in the Lydgate marital crisis protect Lydgate from his wife's "torpedo-like contact" or enable him to continue his career in Middlemarch. Dorothea always felt "that there was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better" (VIII, 365), and it is presumably Ladislaw, rather than she, who in his career as an "ardent public man" is able to connect "political economy" with "the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance." But, as Felix Holt had shown, even the "young hopefulness of immediate good" with which he embarked on his career "has been much checked in our days" (VIII, 366).
Reviewing the novel for Blackwood's, W. Lucas Collins observed that

Though the story itself dates back to the days of "Mr Peel" and the Catholic Question, we see some of the political and social problems of our own times already casting their shadows before them, and they are evidently present to the author's mind.

He does not elaborate, but, apart from the condition-of-women problem, one set of issues he may have had in mind were the questions of landlord-tenant relations and the plight of agricultural labourers. Dorothea is eager to have cottages built for the labourers on the Freshitt estates, and Sir James arranges for her plans to be carried out, eventually by Caleb Garth. She is also anxious for Mr Brooke to have the farms on his estate repaired; as well as the poverty-stricken Dagleys there is, she says, "Kit Downes, ... who lives with his wife and seven children in a house with one sitting-room and one bedroom hardly larger than this table!" (IV, 303). In Frick the old labourer Timothy Cooper declares to Garth that he can see no benefits for himself in the railway being laid out in the area, since none of the changes during his lifetime have ever improved his lot:

"I'n seen lots o' things turn up sin' I war a young un - the war an' the peace, and the canells, an' the oald King George, an' the Regen', an' the new King George, an' the new un as has got a new ne-ame - an' it's been all aloike to the poor mon. What's the canells been t' him? They'n brought him neyther me-at nor be-acon, nor wage to lay by, if he didn't save it wi' clemin' his own inside. Times ha' got wusser for him sin' I war a young un. An' so it'll be wi' the railroads. They'll on'y leave the poor mon furder behind..." (VI, 240-41)

This is an argument which neither Caleb nor the narrator attempts to refute, as it is an "undeniable truth" which Timothy knows "through a hard process

1 "Middlemarch," Blackwood's, 112 (1872), 727-45, at 742.
of feeling" (VI, 241). Cobbett in his Rural Rides frequently highlights the plight of the ill-fed, ill-housed agricultural labourers of the post-war depression period, and on 26 April 1830 describes their cottages in the Leicester area as "hovels, made of mud and of straw; bits of glass, or of old cast-off windows, without frames or hinges," with furniture consisting of "bits of chairs or stools; the wretched boards tacked together, to serve for a table."¹ Dorothea's and Sir James's interest in cottage-building reflects the paternalistic backlash of the early 1830's against the proposals which were to be embodied in the 1834 New Poor Law. In Blackwood's in 1829-30 Michael Sadler and David Robinson advocated protective tariffs on agricultural imports. The local institutions of church and squire could alleviate the conditions of the working poor by granting tenants long leases of land for cottage building, with small holding attached to each for cow, potatoes, and other crops. The schemes generally failed because they tended to attract weavers, who disliked outdoor work.² There were further initiatives in cottage-building during the 1840's and 1850's, and Prince Albert even arranged for model labourers' cottages to be shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851.³ Nevertheless at the time Middlemarch was written agricultural labourers still often suffered from low wages, inadequate food, and wretched, insanitary housing. In his The Economic Position of the British Labourer (1865), which George Eliot had read before writing Felix Holt, Henry Fawcett had argued that the agricultural labourer had not benefited at all from Britain's increased wealth - what the novel calls "that gorgeous plutocracy

¹ Rural Rides, II, 348.
which has so nobly exalted the necessities of genteel life" (I, 5). A labourer's life, he says, is one of "incessant toil for wages too scanty to give [him] even a sufficient supply of the first necessaries of life," ending with a "pittance from parish relief." Labourers often live on tea and bread and butter, in cottages which are "frequently so bad, that they scarcely deserve the name of human dwellings."\(^1\) Hence Cooper's speech was possibly intended to remind readers of 1871/2 that, although the growth of the railways since the early 1830's had meant cheaper travel and lower transport costs, and opposition to them had been based on the kind of ignorance and self-interest exemplified by Solomon Featherstone, Mrs Waule, and the Frick labourers, the change had not necessarily improved the labourers' lot. By 1872 too the labourers had organised to make their grievances known — at Wellesbourne on 14 February Joseph Arch addressed the first meeting of the Warwickshire (later National) Agricultural Labourers' Union. The period from 1868 onwards had also seen an increase in tension between tenants and landlords, especially over the financing of farm improvements by tenants,\(^2\) and Wagley's outburst to Brooke may well have brought this issue to mind. Moreover Vincy's references to the bad state of the silk-manufacturing business in the early 1830's possibly reminded contemporary readers that the ribbon-weaving industry centred in Coventry had more or less collapsed when the duty of French silk ribbons was lifted in 1860: by 1865 fifty of the city's seventy manufacturers were bankrupt, and by 1870 the annual value of ribbons sold was down to less than £1 million, from £2½ million in the last 1850's.\(^3\)


Fred Vincy catches typhoid fever from walking through a back street of Houndsley "where you might as easily have been poisoned without expense of drugs as in any grim street of that unsanitary period" (III, 22). The cholera epidemic of 1831/2, mentioned several times in the novel, gave great impetus to efforts to clean the streets, improve sewage disposal, water supply, and housing standards. In 1831 the Manchester voluntary Board of Health instructed Dr J.P. Kay (later Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth) to investigate the causes of the disease, and in 1833 the Manchester Statistical Society studied social conditions in the city. In 1842 Edwin Chadwick's Report to the Royal Commission on the Health of Towns was a best-seller, and by 1844 the Health of Towns Association, formed five years earlier, had branches in fourteen towns. The influence of local doctors was important in this field, which suggests another opportunity Lydgate misses when he declines into a fashionable London practitioner. Manchester began sewerage in 1845, and the Sanitary Act in Liverpool (1846/7) appointed the first medical officer of health, a lead followed the next year in London with the appointment of Dr John Simon as the City of London (later National) Medical Officer. A Public Health Act was passed in 1866. Also significant was the work of the Local Government Act Office, which between 1858 and 1871 helped local sanitary authorities by mounting 1,200 enquiries, approving over 1,600 schemes, promoting thirty-four Bills, and spending more than £7 million, mainly on drainage and water supply. However the burgeoning of the industrial slums through the century meant that sanitation problems persisted - there was another cholera epidemic in 1866, and the disease remained a "hotly debated mystery" and when enquiries of the 1860's revealed the physical and moral

1 cf. Kingsley's Dr Tom Thurnall in Two Years ago (1850).
2 Perkin, p. 335.
3 as Briggs, Middlemarch and the Doctors," p. 756.
degradation of the city slums there was a conscious revival of the paterna­
listic attitudes which had motivated the supporters of cottage-building and
more generous poor relief in the 1830's,¹ but now applied to an urban con­
text. In 1865 Octavia Hill, grand-daughter of the leading fever expert and
sanitary reformer Dr Southwood Smith, set herself up as a benevolent land­
lady in the Marylebone slums, and in 1869 she, Edward Denison and others
founded the Charity Organisation Society, which at the end of 1870 organised
the Walmer St. Industrial Experiment under the supervision of the Rev.
William Fremantle. Ruskin bought the houses, and Octavia Hill managed them
for the benefit of the poor. George Eliot expressed her enthusiasm for the
scheme to Mrs Congreve in December 1870, describing it as "a plan which is
being energetically carried out for helping a considerable group of people
without almsgiving, and solely by inducing them to work"² – that is, the
charitable impulse of Dorothea, combined with the work-ethic of Caleb Garth.
The project was in fact supported by few landlords, most people involved
being urban business and professional men and their children.³

Another aspect of Middlemarch which may still have been recognisable
to the readers of 1871/2 is the type of mental habits exemplified by Mr
Brooke, with his desultory talk, his indefinite opinions, and his anxiety
not to go "too far." In Blackwood’s Collins described his conversation as
"the sort of talk to which we have all listened in a country house, the
master of which has travelled a little, and read a little, and dabbled a
little in accomplishments in his younger days,"⁴ while George Eliot herself

¹ Perkin, p. 445.
² "Letter to Mrs Richard Congreve," 2 December 1870, in Eliot Letters
V, 124. For Octavia Hill’s scheme, see Perkin, pp. 263-64, 446-47. Her
sister Gertrude was married to Lewes’ son Charles.
³ Perkin, pp. 263-64, 447.
⁴ Collins, p. 728.
evidently had Brooke-like traits in mind when in her review of Lecky's *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Nationalism in Europe* in 1865 she claimed that the contemporary "general reader ... does not exactly know what distance he goes: he only knows that he does not go 'too far'," and is fond of "disembodied opinions, that float in vapoury phrases above all systems of thought or action," since he has "a spongy texture of mind, that gravitates strongly to nothing."\(^1\) And although Brooke in 1831 fails to be returned to Parliament, "after Bagehot felt that many elected M.P.'s of the mid-1860's lived in an "intellectual haze":

> "without committing myself to the tenet that 3 & 2 make 5, though I am free to admit that the hon. member for Bradford has advanced very grave arguments in behalf of it, I think I may, with the permission of the Committee, assume that 2 & 3 do not make 4, which will be a sufficient basis for the important propositions which I shall venture to submit on the present occasion."

More tentative is a possible connection between Casaubon's views on mythology and ideas on the subject which still had some influence when *Middlemarch* was written. In his *Key to All Mythologies* Casaubon aims to show that "all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed" (I, 32). Later the narrator says of this theory that it "floated among flexible conjectures no more solid than those etymologies which seemed strong because of likeness in sound, until it was shown that likeness in sound made them impossible" (V, 92). Will Ladislaw points out to Dorothea that Casaubon's work is already out of date since he has not read the German scholars, who "'have taken the lead in historical inquiries'" (II, 376-77). Later he elaborates,


telling her that Casaubon has no first-hand oriental knowledge, and that in a subject which is "as changing as chemistry"

"it is no use now to be crawling a little way after men of the last century - men like Bryant - and correcting their mistakes? - living in a lumber-room and furbishing up broken-legged theories about Chus and Mizraim" (II, 402-403)

Casaubon is working in the tradition of the seventeenth and eighteenth century mythographers who saw the myths of antiquity as corrupted records of the persons and events of the Old Testament, the process of corruption and diversification having occurred as a result of the scattering of the peoples of the world and the loss of their original language after the destruction of the Tower of Babel. In two of the notebooks she kept while writing Middlemarch George Eliot spelt out the theories of Jacob Bryant set out in his _A New System, or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology_ (1774-76). For him the deluge is the ultimate fact for all nations, and Gentile accounts of the Flood, and Egyptian chronology, coincide with the Mosaic version - the resemblance of rites and names among various nations all over the world is due to the wide settlement of one family, the children of Ham, or Amonians (hence the Egyptian sun-god Amon). Collateral branches of this family included the descendants of Chus and Mizraim. Later she notes from Ersch and Gruber's _Allgemeine Encyclopaedie der Wissenschaften und Künste_ (Vol. 82) other eighteenth-century mythographers' views that mythology all derives from a primitive religion revealed in the Old Testament, and also notes the _Divine Legislation of Moses_ (1737) by William Warburton, one of the critics

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2 Folger Notebook, ff. 87-88, in Pratt and Neufeldt, p. 48; Berg Notebook, f. 61v, in Pratt and Neufeldt, p. 228.
with whom Casaubon takes issue. A contemporary of Casaubon's who worked along the same lines was J.C. Prichard (1766-1848), whose Analysis of Egyptian Mythology aimed to show the unity of mankind on philological grounds. The German work both should have read was Karl Otfried Müller's Prologomena to a Scientific Mythology (1825), which ruled out etymological proofs that tried to trace diverse myths to a common Hebrew origin, showing that the Greek and Germanic peoples had developed independently when separated from the Indian Aryans. Three years earlier the second edition of Jacob Grimm's Deutsche Grammatik, which dealt with the shift from General Germanic to Old High German, had enunciated the law that "identity rests in constant fashion on exterior diversity" - that is, when spellings agree, there need be no relationship between the words. In the forty years between Casaubon's death and the publication of Middlemarch, the vague theorizing of the kind entombed in Casaubon's notes for his Key came to seem increasingly implausible as more actual research was done into other ancient civilisations and languages, - for example, in Egyptology by Mariette and Richard Lepsius, and in the translation of Persian and Babylonian by Sir Henry Rawlinson, while Darwin's evidence as to the antiquity of human society as such in The Descent of Man (1871) put out of court any efforts to trace civilizations back to the scattering of peoples after the destruction of the Tower of Babel. In the 1860's comparative mythology became fashionable in England on account of the popularity of F. Max Müller's two series of Lectures on the Science of Language (1861, 1864), from which

1 Wolger Notebook, ff. 91-92, in Pratt and Neufeldt, pp. 50-51.
4 Neff, pp. 107-108.
5 C.P. Gooch, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century, 419ff.
George Eliot took notes.¹ In these and his earlier book *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (1859), Müller had stressed the importance of knowing about the language and ancient literature of India in order to understand "the first germs of the language, religion, and mythology of our forefathers."² The other development which had made Casaubon's type of research even more irrelevant was the growth of Biblical criticism, and George Eliot had of course provided the first English translations of D.F. Struass's *Das Leben Jesu* in 1846, and of Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* in 1854.

Casaubon's ideas were not quite dead in 1871/2 however. In a book of 1869, *Huventus Mundi: The Gods and Men of the Heroic Age*, the then Prime Minister W.M. Gladstone suggested that the pagan deities of the Greek and Roman pantheon might be distorted or depraved copies of the primitive system revealed by God to man. The god who embodies the highest conception (Athene) represents, he says, the impairment of the pure and lofty traditions of the primitive revelation shown in its greatest purity in the Holy Scriptures.³ Her characteristics, and to a lesser extent those of Apollo, can be explained by recourse to Hebrew traditions, while Zeus in many points is formed on the conception of the One and Supreme God.⁴

The portrayal of the clergy in *Middlemarch* sets up a contrast between Farebrother, the "sweet-tempered, ready-witted, frank" clergyman devoted to his family and given to preaching non-doctrinal, "ingenious and pithy" sermons,

⁴ *Huventus Mundi*, pp. 219, 267ff, 287-88.
"like the preaching of the English Church in its robust age" (II, 319), and the narrow-minded Evangelical Tyke, preoccupied with doctrine and with making his own presence felt (V, 124). This contrast is similar to those between Gilfil and Barton, and Irwine and his successor Ryder. The main representative of Evangelicalism in the novel is of course Bulstrode, whose career in Middlemarch more or less coincides with the early nineteenth-century Evangelical revival, but, as has often been noticed, George Eliot is careful to point out that his immoral behaviour is not a consequence of Evangelicalism as such, nor any less characteristic of the present than of the past (VI, 352-53). His switch from Dissent to Anglicanism which accompanies his increase in prosperity and respectability was characteristic of both periods too: a writer in the Congregational Magazine in 1820 complains of the defection of opulent Dissenters to Evangelicalism, and in 1874 Morley notes how Leeds manufacturers tend to become Churchmen for respectability's sake.¹ In the Church of England as a whole from the early 1830's onward there was an increased concern over the pastoral and spiritual role, as distinct from the worldly respectability, of the clergyman, and this is reflected in the novel. Before this period the Church was seen as the natural occupation of gentlemen of bookish tastes or a scientific turn of mind but no private fortune;² No religious vocation was thought necessary, and this traditional style of clergyman of good birth preoccupied with gentlemanly pursuits is represented in the novel by Cadwallader, and recalled nostalgically by Mrs Farebrother (II, 304-306). Farebrother himself differs however from clergy of an earlier generation like Gilfil and Irwine by

¹ Jay, The Religion of the Heart, p. 25; Morley, On Compromise, pp. 16-17.
² Reader, p. 12.
feeling uneasy in his role, frustrated that he has to give a theological 
veneer to his articles on natural history and play billiards for small sums 
of money. Hence he advises Fred Vincy, whose father sees a Church career 
as a form of social advancement, not to become a clergyman merely for this 
reason. Mary Garth is even firmer in her views, refusing to marry Fred if 
he enters the Church "'for gentility's sake" (V, 163). The increasing anxi­
ety from the early 1830's onward that the clergy be devout, dedicated, 
and hardworking, was the result of both the evangelical and Oxford movements, 
attacks by Whigs, Radicals and Dissenters on the wealth of the Church and 
the unequal way it was distributed, and, (after the 1851 religious census), 
by the awareness that a majority of the English people were either Dissenters 
or attended no place of worship at all. Yet in the novel the change of out­
look seems to occur on the individual level, unmotivated by wider political 
and religious currents, and evangelicalism is if anything detrimental in 
its effects, while George Eliot herself felt by 1869 that there was no 
longer enough good preaching of Farebrother's kind—writing to Harriet 
Beecher Stowe:

The great vocation of the preacher ... has a melancholy emptiness 
among us. My soul is often vexed at the thought of the multitu­
dinous pulpits ... for the most part filled with men who can say 
nothing to change the expression of the faces that are turned up 
towards them.

The most ardently devout character in the novel is however Dorothea, 
and it is interesting that the reviewer in the British Quarterly felt in 
1873 that her portrayal did not show the religious fervour possible in the 
early 1830's so much as the "low-tide mark of spiritual belief among the 

1 10 December 1869, in Eliot Letters, V, 72.
literary class in the nineteenth century.\(^1\) George Eliot was writing at a period not only influenced by Darwin, but also finally feeling the effects of Strauss's ideas - a new edition of the translation of Das Leben Jesu had appeared in the 1860's, and the controversy over Biblical criticism came to involve many of the rank and file of Church and chapel communities.\(^2\) Historically none of this can have any influence on Dorothea, of course, but the reviewer points out that she is "denied a great life within as well as without" - the Divine Spirit lives in her, but she does not live in Him: a life hidden in God as a resource and a refuge, can sometimes be grandest "when the outward field of opportunity is poorest."\(^3\)

On the other hand, Sidney Colvin saw the novel as pervaded by a contrast between subject matter and treatment which was the result of historical change. He described it as "all saturated with modern ideas, and poured into a language of which every word bites home with a peculiar sharpness to the contemporary consciousness." He goes on:

She has taken the lead in discussing the ways and lives of common folks ... in terms of scientific thought and the positive synthesis. She has walked between two epochs, upon the confines of two worlds, and has described the old in terms of the new. To the old world belong the elements of her experience, to the new world the elements of her reflection on experience ... the many-sided culture which looks back upon prejudice with analytical amusement; the philosophy which declares the human family deluded in its higher dreams, dependent on itself, and bound thereby to a sadder brotherhood; the habit in regarding and meditating physical laws, and the facts of sense and life, which leads up to that philosophy and belongs to it; the mingled depth of bitterness and tenderness in the human temper of which the philosophy becomes the spring ... The matter is antiquated in our recollections, the manner seems to anticipate the future of our thoughts.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Middlemarch: A Casebook, p. 13.
\(^2\) A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England, p. 177.
\(^3\) Middlemarch: A Casebook, pp. 61-62.
She perpetually applies her own intelligence to the "broad problems and conclusions of modern thought." For example the fact that Fred Vincy feels his own dishonour more than the losses he had brought on the Garths, leads to the reflection, "we are most of us brought up in the notion that the highest motive for not doing a wrong is something irrespective of the beings who would suffer the wrong."\(^1\) Or, what a character himself thinks and feels will receive a simultaneous commentary showing what the modern analytic mind has to remark upon such thoughts and feelings – he cites here the account of Casaubon's motives before marriage and experiences after it, in Chapter 29.\(^2\) More specifically, he finds that scientific and physiological language is used to explain or illustrate the character's spiritual processes – for example Bulstrode's misdeeds are said to be:

> like the subtle muscular movements which are not taken account of in the consciousness, though they bring about the end that we fix our minds on and desire. \(^3\) And it is only what we are vividly conscious of, that we can vividly imagine to be seen by Omniscience.

He also observes that much stress is placed on the physiognomy of characters like Rosamond, Lydgate and Garth, in the manner of Darwin, and that George Eliot has a medical habit of "examining her own creations for their symptoms."\(^4\) The reviewer in the *Athenaeum* praised George Eliot's power of laying bare the "whole anatomy of a soul" in a few words, and asked rhetorically, "[o]f whom have we heard the more, and whom do we know the better, – Fred Vincy or Pendennis?"\(^5\) The use of scientific and medical terminology even in parts of the novel where it is not obviously related to the subject matter

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\(^2\) *Casebook*, p. 50.
\(^3\) VII, 53. *Casebook* p. 50.
\(^4\) *Casebook*, p. 51.
\(^5\) *Athenaeum*, 7 December 1872, pp. 725–6, at p. 726.
was much more noticeable to readers of 1871/2 than it is now, and Colvin's comments reflect the great expansion of science and of scientific habits of thought which had occurred since the 1830's. The narrator's command of scientific terminology unavailable to the characters in Colvin's case clearly added to his sense of the historical and intellectual distance between them, but, as the Athenaeum's comment suggests, it also enabled the narrator to offer a more searching analysis of the characters—and, according to George Eliot, greater knowledge generally means greater sympathy. In introducing Lydgate, the narrator claims

>At present I have to make the new settler Lydgate better known to any one interested in him than he could possibly be even to those who had seen the most of him since his arrival in Middle-march (II, 251)

Meanwhile, the fact that the narrator can describe Lydgate's research of the early 1830's in similar terms to those used by the 1870's scientist John Tyndall to characterise his own endeavours, would have drawn attention to how far advanced Lydgate's projects are: Lydgate aims to use

>the imagination that reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any sort of lens, but tracked in that outer darkness through long pathways of necessary sequence by the inward light which is the last refinement of energy, capable of bathing even the ethereal atoms in its ideally illuminated space (II, 245)

while "Tyndall writes

>From a few observations of a comet when it comes within the range of his telescope, an astronomer can calculate its path in regions which no telescope can reach; and in like manner, by means of data furnished in the narrow world of the senses,

1 W. Seer, *Darwin's Plots*, p. 149.
we can make ourselves at home in other and wider worlds, which can be traversed by the intellect alone.

Like the narrators of Thackeray's novels, the Middlemarch narrator sometimes consciously adopts the role of historian, observing, for example, that although Joshua Rigg is a "low subject" he could be elevated by "historical parallels":

since there never was a true story which could not be told in parables where you might put a monkey for a margrave, and vice versa - whatever has been or is to be narrated by me about low people, may be ennobled by being considered a parable . . . Thus while I tell the truth about loobies, my reader's imagination need not be entirely excluded from an occupation with lords

A passage a few chapters later points out how a stone may "lie face downmost for ages on a forsaken beach, or rest quietly under the drums and tramplings of many conquests," but may eventually yield "the secret of usurpations and other scandals gossiped about long empires ago." But such things also happen on a much smaller scale, "in our petty lifetime," such that

a bit of ink and paper which has long been an innocent wrapping or stopgap may at last be laid open under the one pair of eyes which have knowledge enough to turn it into the opening of a catastrophe.

This "lofty comparison" is however being used once again to draw attention to Rigg, one of the "low people by whose interference, however little we may like it, the course of the world is very much determined" (IV, 347).

Rigg's importance to the plot is that he draws Raffles to Stone Court, where the latter comes upon and steals a letter addressed to Rigg from Bulstrode. This of course sets going the course of events which leads to Bulstrode's

and Lydgate's disgrace, and to the revelations about Ladislaw's family background, but this whole aspect of the novel depends much more on a series of coincidences than the "lofty parallel" would suggest. The passages justifying the introduction of Digg are rather laboured, like the defences of characters in humble life in the early fiction, but they are perhaps warranted by the reaction of some contemporary critics: Theodore Bentzon in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* criticised George Eliot for "obstinately evading the exceptional" and showing "open hostility to anything resembling heroism, the ideal," while the reviewer in the *Standard*, referring to Lydgate's story, claimed that it was "really impossible to enter into the narrative of dishonoured bills with anything like that feeling which our best novelists have accustomed us to entertain."

Sometimes the narrator queries the assumption that the present is necessarily an improvement on the recent past, as in the sarcastic comment, just after the passage on "historical parallels," that "any provincial history in which the agents are all of high moral rank ... must be of a date long posterior to the first Reform Bill" — or implies a criticism of the kind of history which consciously looks at past ignorance from the standpoint of modern knowledge and progress. From the account of Brooke's inability to predict the attack he will later make on bishops' incomes, the passage goes on:

> What elegant historian would neglect a striking opportunity for pointing out that his heroes did not foresee the history of the world, or even their own actions? — For example, that Henry of Navarre, when a Protestant baby, little thought of being a Catholic monarch; or that Alfred the Great, when he measured his laborious nights with burning candles, had no idea of future gentlemen measuring their idle days with watches (I, 110-11)

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In a more serious vein, the very first words of the novel, "[w]ho that cares much to know the history of man, and how that mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time, has not dwelt, at least briefly, on the life of Saint "heresa..." introduces both the novelist's role as historian and the scientific terminology which contemporaries were to find so characteristic of the novel, as well as spelling out the assumption underlying the generalising commentary throughout, that human nature remains basically the same but responds differently to varying historical circumstances. Later a famous passage compares the narrative commentary to that of Fielding:

A great historian, as he insisted on calling himself, who had the happiness to be dead a hundred and twenty years ago, and so to take his place among the colossi whose huge legs our living pettiness is observed to walk under, glories in his copious remarks and digressions as the least imitable part of his work... (II, 250-51)

"his hints that it is partly the lapse of time itself which has made Fielding seem so great by comparison with modern writers, such that the passage can be related to the comment later in the same chapter, that each of the great discoverers, the "Shining Ones" of the past, such as Herschel, seemed commonplace to his contemporaries, who "perhaps thought much more of his gait and his garments than of anything which was to give him a title to everlasting fame" (II, 260-61). Furthermore, since Fielding lived at a time "when summer afternoons were spacious, and the clock ticked slowly in the winter evenings," he could linger over long digressions; but for one of the "belated historians" like the Middlemarch narrator:

I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe (II, 251)
That is, the provincial society of the recent past being described in the novel is complex enough, with all its aspects so interrelated, and sufficiently illustrative of what is earlier described as "the stealthy convergence of human lots," and the "slow preparation of effects from one life on another" (I, 164) to be an absorbing subject in itself, while the "historian" of the 1870's is able to make this history interesting and relevant to contemporaries without recourse to the wide-ranging generalisations which often characterised eighteenth-century historiography. A passage much further on even implies that the novelist has a greater power than the historian to unravel the complex web of old provincial society. Caleb Garth tells Hawley that he has given up working for Bulstrode, and Hawley concludes that Saffles had told his story to Garth, so that Garth had relinquished Bulstrode's affairs as a result:

The statement was passed on until it had quite lost the stamp of an inference, and was taken as information coming straight from Garth, so that even a diligent historian might have concluded Caleb to be the chief publisher of Bulstrode's misdemeanours...

(VII, 152)
CONCLUSION

Early in *Middlemarch* Dorothea hopes that Casaubon's teaching about people like the Stoics and Alexandrians would eventually satisfy her "eagerness for 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" (I, 147). Casaubon's kind of knowledge does not of course satisfy Dorothea's eagerness, and George Eliot is habitually sceptical about binding theories, but later in the novel Dorothea learns that his experience in Rome has enabled Will to overcome the tendency to see history as "a set of box-like partitions without vital connection" (II, 385).

As Barbara Hardy has shown, George Eliot is, in her treatment of Dorothea and Will, internalising the historical consciousness, the need felt to relate past and present, which was so common among nineteenth-century writers, and which owes so much to the influence of Scott. George Eliot shares Scott's sympathetic apprehension of the people of the recent past, of the ways in which they differ from and are similar to contemporary readers, or the way they are affected by their historical conditions, but by comparison with Scott makes much more use of the omniscient narrative voice to relate past and present, thus emulating the practice of Thackeray. There is often a substantial intellectual and social distance between narrator and readers on the one hand, and characters on the other, which, combined with the time-gap, can militate against the reader's sympathy, but at her best, George Eliot can draw the reader into the mental and emotional effort required to understand the people of the recent past and to perceive what she had early in her career termed "identity of nature under variety of manifestation". We have

already discussed this in relation to Silas Marner; ten years later, in Middlemarch, where the sensibility and articulateness of some of the characters are closer to those of the narrator, the narrative can modulate subtly from a character's experience to its relevance to contemporary readers, and back again:

Lydgate turned, remembering where he was, and saw Dorothea's face looking up at him with a sweet trustful gravity. The presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again in their larger, quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be seen and judged in the wholeness of our character. That influence was beginning to act on Lydgate... (VIII, 233-34)

The setting of her fiction in the recent past enables George Eliot to evoke feelings of nostalgia for customs and habits of thought which were within her readers' experience either through memory or through hearsay - as in the description of Shepperton Church in "Adam Barton," the "Old Leisure" passage in Adam Bede, the recollection in The Mill on the Floss of the greater sense of attachment felt by people of the recent past for the places in which they had grown up, the retrospective of the coach journey at the beginning of Felix Holt. This nostalgic tone is also frequent in Thackeray's evocations of the recent past. The implication is of course that change has not necessarily been for the better. That change is also sometimes more apparent than real, is brought out not only by the many generalisations from the characters' experience, but also by oblique allusions to the present - the reference to anti-Catholic prejudice in The Mill on the Floss, Felix Holt's speech on the hustings, the treatment of women's upbringing and social role in Middlemarch, and the same novel's allusions to the condition of agricultural labourers.

A comparison between Hayslope and Aveley on the one hand and Trelawney and Middlemarch on the other, shows that George Eliot saw society as developing
in the direction of greater complexity and mutual interdependence: Treby between 1800 and 1832 "took on the more complex life brought by mines and manufactures, which belong more directly to the great circulating system of the nation than to the local system to which they have been superadded" (p. 43), while in the Middlemarch area of the early 1830's there are "fresh threads of connection" developing between municipal town and rural parish. These processes continued up till the time in which George Eliot was writing but the ending of Felix Holt makes it clear that Treby has altered little, while in the cases of St. Ogg's and Middlemarch it is difficult to see exactly how progressive change has occurred. St. Ogg's is resistant to innovation and has been so for a long time, while Lydgate's story shows how easy it is to become entangled in the complex web of Middlemarch life.

When change has been beneficial it has not been the simple result of legislation or of some innovation generally accepted as progressive: Fred Vincy's career as an agricultural innovator at Stone Court results ultimately from the complicated ramifications of the Rigg-Raffles-Bulstrode connections, and from his encounter with Garth during the conflict between labourers and railway surveyors. That is, the advent of the railways supplies an occasion for Fred to decide on his future career, but this career is not related to the railways themselves. And as in both Scott and Thackeray, political issues are interpreted according to private interests and motives, or even ignored because of them. The interaction between individual and society to the benefit of both is clearest in Silas Marner, partly because of the double time-shift. However contemporary readers of the other novels would have been aware of the changes between recent past and present without having to be reminded of them — developments such as the expansion of steam power, improvements in medical practice and education, and the greater philanthropic opportunities open to women by the 1870's.
Scott's novels of the recent past introduce the great men of history very sparingly, and often focus on characters in humble life. Thackeray shows a subtle awareness of how the actions of great men really do affect the lives of others, but feels that the contrast between true nature and pretensions present in most people also applied to "great men." George Eliot often looks back on seemingly-ordinary people of the recent past, and draws attention to the contributions they have made to the "growing good of the world". Her belief in the complex organic nature of social development governed by invariable law meant that she thought that any one individual could have only a limited impact on events, while, like Thackeray, she was conscious of the divergence possible between public professions and private conduct. These factors, together with her distaste for the idealised heroes of much contemporary fiction, led her to stress the value of the limited but beneficial impact of virtuous but unknown figures like Edgar Tryan, Adam Bede, Felix Holt, Caleb Warth and Silas Marner: she urges the people of her own time to realise what they owe to the hitherto-unsung heroes of the recent past. On the other hand, the social conditions of the recent past did not enable more remarkable people like Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Lydgate - and, it is implied, many like them - to develop their potential, so that George Eliot's novels provide as it were the only history for her time of their "unhistoric lives". 
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