WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

Adam Bede

GEORGE ELIOT

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

ADAM BEDE

George Eliot

Introduction and Notes by

DOREEN ROBERTS

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藏书章

So that ye may have
Clear images before your gladdened eyes
Of nature's unambitious underwood
And flowers that prosper in the shade. And when
I speak of such among the flock as swerved
Or fell, those only shall be singled out
Upon whose lapse, or error, something more
Than brotherly forgiveness may attend.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth Classics are inexpensive editions designed to appeal to the general reader and students. We commissioned teachers and specialists to write wide ranging, jargon-free introductions and to provide notes that would assist the understanding of our readers rather than interpret the stories for them. In the same spirit, because the pleasures of reading are inseparable from the surprises, secrets and revelations that all narratives contain, we strongly advise you to enjoy this book before turning to the Introduction.

General Adviser
KEITH CARABINE
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INTRODUCTION

> A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbours, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread out not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood. At five years old, mortals are not prepared to be citizens of the world, to be stimulated by abstract nouns, to soar above preference into impartiality.
>
> (*Daniel Deronda* [1876], opening of Ch. 3)

So wrote George Eliot towards the end of her career and her life, when she was established as England's foremost living novelist. Though her belief in the importance of 'early memories' remained constant, and determined the settings of her early fictions, it was a commitment sustained in the face of a long experience of social alienation and family rejection. Indeed, if the reading public had been aware at the start who 'George Eliot' really was, it might never have accepted *Adam Bede*, her first full length novel.

When the book appeared (in three volumes) on 1 February 1859, 'George Eliot' was known only as the author of three novellas, 'The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton', 'Mr Gilfil's Love-Story', and 'Janet's Repentance', published collectively as *Scenes of Clerical Life* on 5 January 1858, after anonymous publication from January to November 1857 in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. These had been well though not rapturously received, and the author was popularly supposed to be a cleric, though a few, like Dickens, suspected a woman's hand. Even the publisher, John Blackwood,

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was initially in the dark, for the author did not reveal her true identity to him until 28 February 1858 – a year after the first appearance of 'Amos Barton', and more than four and a half months after completing the third Scene, by which time the writing of *Adam Bede* had already been in progress for over four months.

What prompted such a hugger-mugger proceeding on the part of a writer whose first novel turned on the disaster arising out of the machinations of secrecy? In fact the thirty-nine year old author of *Adam Bede*, in real life Marian (or Mary Ann) Evans) had for the last five years been living with a man, George Henry Lewes, who already had a wife and children.[1] When in May 1857 Marian finally informed her only brother Isaac of this relationship (by then three years after its inception), he renounced her and never saw her again, though he sent formal congratulations twenty three years later on her marriage to John Cross, after Lewes's death. He also prevented her two sisters from communicating with her. This was not the first family rupture, for early in 1842, at the age of twenty-two, she had come close to a permanent estrangement from her father, following her announcement of her loss of Christian faith, and refusal to accompany him to church. But the Lewes relationship brought more serious social consequences, for after she began living openly with him, in July 1854, she had to face years of social ostracism and disapproval, which her later fame as a novelist only gradually overcame.

In 1859 Marian Evans had no national celebrity, but she was already known to the London intelligentsia as the former editor of the *Westminster Review*, the nation's most radical and intellectually progressive major periodical, which she had edited (in fact, though

1 It is impossible to find a name to refer to George Eliot in all her incarnations. She was baptised Mary Ann Evans, but at some points spelled her middle name with an 'e', and she conflated the first two names into 'Marian' (or, sometimes, 'Marianne') after her move to London in 1849. Her close friends called her 'Polly' or 'Pollian'. After the union with Lewes she used his surname (though not for her fiction). Lewes, who was a journalist, biographer, critic, and theorist of science and philosophy, could not divorce and remarry because he had countenanced his wife Agnes's adultery with Thornton Leigh Hunt, by whom she had already had two children that Lewes had accepted, along with his own four sons. The Evans-Lewes union lasted until Lewes's death in 1878, and the couple supported Agnes and her children (including two more by Hunt). For the last six and a half months of her life, until her death on 22 December 1880, Eliot was Mrs Cross.

not in name) between 1852 and 1854. The inner circle also knew that she had translated two of the century's most devastating critiques of Christianity: F. D. Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (1835–6, the English translation appearing in 1846 as *The Life of Jesus*) and Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christenthums* (1841, translated as *The Essence of Christianity* and published under her own name in 1854). She had also published many essays and reviews (unsigned, as was the convention in many periodicals) whose heterodoxy would have alarmed most of those who had enjoyed *Scenes of Clerical Life* in the belief that its author was a pious and practising Christian.

There were, then, already reasons for using a pseudonym, and these were reinforced by Marian Evans's reluctance to compromise her existing literary reputation, if she should fail as a fiction writer, as well as her awareness that her fiction might not be fairly evaluated were its author known in advance to be female. (The tone of the reviews of the Brontës' novels, for instance, had changed after their real identities were revealed).) Nor did she want her work to be carelessly bracketed with those 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' which she herself had already wittily attacked only three months before her own fictional debut.[2] All of this, likewise, helps to explain why the authorial stance adopted in her earlier works is male.

It was G. H. Lewes who conducted the initial negotiations with John Blackwood over the publication of the 'Scenes' and *Adam Bede*, representing the aspiring author as a shy, retiring country clergyman who would be easily disheartened by adverse criticism, heavy-handed editorial interference, or any threat to his anonymity. The pseudonym 'George Eliot' (which was not needed for magazine purposes) was chosen in February 1857 and thereafter used in the correspondence with Blackwood. He had probably already penetrated the incognito some time before Marian Evans lifted it in a meeting with him at the end of February 1858, but he maintained his official ignorance for as long as she desired it. And he was eager to keep the secret from the public, since he knew as well as she did that disclosure might injure his new author's prospects.

Eventually, however, her hand was forced by other developments. Ever since the first publication of the 'Scenes', their north Warwickshire settings had been recognised, and locals had detected certain

2 *Westminster Review*, October 1856, reprinted in the modern selections of G. E.'s essays by Pinney, Byatt and Warren, and Ashton (1992). For full details of works cited, see the Select Bibliography.

similarities in the careers of Amos Barton and Mr Gilfil to those of two former clergymen of the area, the Rev. John Gwyther and the Revd Bernard Gilpin Ebdell. Further alleged identifications followed, and rumours began circulating that the real author was one Joseph Liggins of Nuneaton, who had once studied for ordination. He encouraged the accreditation, which was supported by (among others) a member of the Newdigate family of Arbury Hall (which had employed Marian's father Robert as land manager, and had inspired the Cheverel family of the second Scene). For two years the real author and her publisher tried to squash this story without giving away her identity, but gossip only intensified after *Adam Bede*, for which Liggins even claimed payment. Meanwhile, in London, a more educated guess was being promulgated by Marian Evans's erstwhile friend John Chapman, owner of the *Westminster Review*, and by summer of 1859 Evans and Lewes has more or less given up the effort to preserve the secret. It was by this time of equal concern to them to establish that George Eliot's fiction was not a mere lifting of true-life events, and to withstand a malicious suggestion from the *Athenaeum* that the whole authorship mystery had been fabricated simply as what today would be called a publicity stunt.

But George Eliot had staved off identification for long enough to ensure not only that her earliest fictions had an unprejudiced initial reception, but that her later ones were received in the light of it. *Adam Bede* was, indeed, an immediate success, selling fifteen and a half thousand copies and going through nine editions within eighteen months, and it continued to sell well, remaining in her lifetime her most popular work, though never approaching the figures for the period's blockbusters (thirty five thousand in one year for *Bleak House*, or one hundred and fifty thousand in 1852, in Britain alone, for *Uncle Tom's Cabin)*. George Eliot's literary reputation, at least, was well assured when the *Times* reviewer declared 'There can be no mistake about *Adam Bede*. It is a first-rate novel, and its author takes rank at once among the masters of the art'.[3]

3 Carroll, *Critical Heritage* (hereafter referred to as *C. H.*), p. 77.

II

'Don't go home', Mr Wemmick warns Pip at a crisis point in Dickens's *Great Expectations*; and Pip, like Thomas Hardy's Clym Yeobright in *The Return of the Native*, and many another fictional or actual exile, discovers that in truth he can not. Either home is not there any more (as Oliver Goldsmith finds, in 'The Deserted Village') or the departed native has changed too much to be able to reintegrate into the old community. D. H. Lawrence never resettled in Nottinghamshire, nor James Joyce in Ireland. When in 1851 the thirty year old Marian Evans, who had already rejected the religion of her youth, made the then extraordinary and courageous decision to go to London as a single, unchaperoned woman in quest of a broader intellectual life and a career in letters, she was making what proved to be a definitive break. Three years later came the estrangement from her family.

Adam Bede, like the Scenes and *The Mill on the Floss*, is an attempt to re-establish continuity with her early life and her rural past. She had come to believe, with Wordsworth, to whose poetry she always remained devoted, that the ties, habits and associations built up unreflectingly as the product of the first environment were the basis of the later personality. Feelings and moral obligations did not have their first existence as abstract systems, but as part of 'that familiar hearth, where the pattern of the rug and the grate and the fire-irons were "first ideas" that it was no more possible to criticise than the solidity and extension of matter' (as she was to put it in her second novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, Book II, Ch. 1).

Accordingly, in *Adam Bede*, George Eliot's most leisurely paced book, the slow unfolding of the story is at the same time the accretory specification of where and how. The conditions and the values of the characters' lives are defined by the carefully registered material particularities of their diurnal world: their dialect, their food and drink, their clothing, both workaday and holiday, their head-gear (a paper cap for Adam, a Quaker-like bonnet for Dinah, a 'pure linen cap with a black band round it' for Lisbeth, a rose-scented dressing for Arthur's hair), their dwellings, furniture, crockery and means of interior lighting (from rush-lights to wax candles), their tools, livestock and pets, their means of transport, and their different ways of measuring and responding to the passage of time. In such a densely detailed book, a few examples, relating to

meals, will give a sense of the method. The Rector, with his volume of Aeschylus at his elbow, breakfasts in his study, on coffee from a silver coffee-pot, eggs, cold fowl and ham, served by his man-servant Carroll, and with his all-female collection of household pets in attendance: the red setter Juno, who has recently pupped, and the maiden lady-like Pug on her cushion (Ch. 16). Lisbeth gives Seth a supper of oat-cake and 'a drop o' warm broth', but saves for Adam in his workshop a meal that she brings him on 'the brown and yellow platter, containing the baked potatoes with the gravy in them', and some bits of meat, for 'those were dear times, when wheaten bread and fresh meat were delicacies to working people' (Ch. 5). The breakfast porridge (garnished with marigolds) is another signifier of Lisbeth's relation to her family: her husband, to her resentment, neglects it in favour of the more costly ale that his sons drink only on holidays, and Adam eats the porridge unnoticingly, though she points out that he would notice if it were burned or under-salted. Bartle Massey's 'one extravagance' is 'bread once a-day instead of oat-cake', accompanying his supper of cheese and ale in a quart jug. He bakes the loaves himself, according to a never-varying formula. But his meticulously structured routines, wholly superior, in his view, to those of Lisbeth or Mrs Poyser, stand in contrast to his manner of emphatically rapping the table with the haft of his knife, and smoking his pipe in 'fierce and rapid puffs', as if to punish it for going out (Ch. 21).

A generation before George Eliot, Wordsworth had done much to create a climate in which the lives of obscure and lowly people could become acceptable and respect-worthy subjects of serious literature addressed to the educated; but his memorable figures are solitaries, and he had not added much to the stock of knowledge either about the life of communities or about 'all those cheap common things which are the precious necessaries of life' (p. 153).[4] In her presentation of whole rural societies George Eliot was truly a pioneer, as well as an important influence on Thomas Hardy. Dickens, Charles Kingsley and Elizabeth Gaskell had recently been engaged in opening the eyes of the reading public to the daily conditions of the industrial urban masses, but until *Adam Bede* there were no fictional studies of English provincial life, and certainly nothing to rival the achievement of Sir Walter Scott in

4 The verse tales of George Crabbe (1755–1832), in heroic couplets, were the most pioneering studies in the field, before the Victorian novel.

his re-creation of the lives of the Scots peasantry. Scott's work had made a deep impression on the young Marian Evans, and he was the only novelist of whom she could unreservedly approve during the period of ascetic Evangelicalism that she went through in her teens. Indeed his *The Heart of Midlothian* has a central situation akin to that of *Adam Bede*: a young woman is found guilty (in fact wrongly) of murdering her illegitimate child, but is saved from the gallows by her sister Jeanie Deans, who walks from Edinburgh to London to plead for Queen Caroline's intercession.

Later on, in one of her reviews, Evans linked Scott with Harriet Beecher Stowe as inventors of a new regional fiction, and of 'another element equally grand', in which Mrs Stowe had 'in some respects, surpassed him':

> This is the exhibition of a people to whom what we may call Hebraic Christianity is still a reality, still an animating belief, and by whom the theocratic conceptions of the Old Testament are literally applied in their daily life . . . The strength of Mrs Stowe's own religious feeling is a great artistic advantage to her here; she never makes you feel that she is coldly calculating an effect . . . [5]

When that was written, the author was only four months from becoming George Eliot. Her own attitude to Christianity, particularly in its Evangelical and Nonconformist manifestations, had by then already undergone two major shifts. Her earlier hostile reaction away from it, following her 'deconversion' in her twenties, is still evident in a piece that she wrote for the *Westminster Review* for October 1855, 'Evangelical Teaching: Dr Cumming'. This was a caustic attack not merely on a particular popular preacher but on what he represented: not only a disregard for truth and evidence, and an unscrupulous readiness to twist the words of the scriptures, but a narrow and intolerant exclusivity that confined God's approval to the favoured sect, and a concentration on personal salvation that substituted egoistic for altruistic motives. Cummings 'insists on good works as the sign of justifying faith, as labours to be

5 This review of Beecher Stowe's *Dred* appeared in the *Westminster Review*, October 1856, less than two years before Eliot began *Adam Bede*, and is reprinted in Pinney and Byatt and Warren. The Dr Cumming article appears in all three modern selections. For further information on Evangelicalism, see the contextual essay following this Introduction.

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achieved to the glory of God, but he rarely represents them as the spontaneous overflow of a soul filled with the Divine love'.

Whilst this type appears in George Eliot's fiction as late as *Middlemarch*, in the figure of Mr Bulstrode, it is outnumbered by the more attractive evangelisers: Mr Tryan ('Janet's Repentance'), Rufus Lyon (*Felix Holt*), and, of course, Dinah Morris, in all of whom she muffles the 'fierce denunciations of wrath' and the emphasis on Calvinistic dogma (benightedness, conviction of sin, election, justifying faith, and Mosaic law). For by the time that George Eliot created these figures, she had rethought her position and come to accept, with Strauss and Feuerbach, not only the enduring importance of Christianity as a historical, social and what we would now call anthropological phenomenon, but its value as myth, and its potency as a source of symbols. 'Speculative truth', she wrote in 1843, 'begins to appear but a shadow of individual minds, agreement between intellects seems unattainable, and we turn to the *truth of feeling* as the only universal bond of union' (*Letters*, I, p. 162). The Jesus of Dinah Morris is a literal reality, the incarnate son of God, but to the author of *Adam Bede* he is a personified projection of humanity's best self: most essentially, the sympathising love that binds wives and husbands or parents and children, and extends beyond them to Samaritans and strangers. Hence Eliot could write in 1859 'I have no longer any antagonism towards any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves . . . I have not returned to dogmatic Christianity . . . but I see in it the highest expression of the religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind, and I have the profoundest interest in the inward life of all sincere Christians in all ages' (*Letters*, II, 230-1). She was by now doubtful whether in the minds of most ordinary people the message, the emotional and moral 'essence' of Christianity, could survive the destruction of its medium.

If Dinah Morris's Methodism represents the 'Hebraic' heritage of Christianity, the mainstream Anglicanism of the Hayslopeans represents its social function, as a source of the symbols, traditions, rituals, ceremonies and prescribed forms of utterance through which a conservative and pre-industrial community articulates its interrelationship and expresses its continuing sense of its own past. Hence the close detailing of events like the visit of the parish clerk Joshua Rann to the Rector (Chapter 5), Thias Bede's funeral (Chapter 17), and the wedding of Adam and Dinah (Chapter 55).

For in the villagers (but much less in the case of Dinah) values and beliefs exist not as an extrapolable, discursively formulable theology, but as a body of concrete practices; though for everyone, including the author, feelings depend for their continuing life on the presence or memory of familiar objects.

All these aspects of Hayslope connect not only with George Eliot's sense of religion but with her theory of realism and her interest in what the period called 'Natural History', in the sense of the term as used in one of her most important pre-Scenes essays, 'The Natural History of German Life', inspired by her reading of two books by Wilhelm von Riehl.[6] A precursor of sociology and anthropology, this kind of study was an attempt to apply the methods of the natural sciences to the investigation of cultural phenomena – history, society, religion, myth and folklore, ideas, even language itself – in the hope of discovering their structure and 'laws' of development (viewed as analogous with the scientific laws governing the physical universe and its evolution). Eliot saw this aim as in some ways setting a programme for art and literature also: 'How little the characteristics of the working classes are known to those outside them, how little their actual history has been studied, is sufficiently disclosed by our Art as well as by our political and social theories'.

This echoes complaints already made in her review of John Ruskin's *Modern Painters, Vol. III*. But in neither piece does she really confront the problem of reconciling realism ('a humble and faithful study of nature', for 'Great art accepts Nature as she is') with a Ruskinian idealism that 'directs the eyes and thoughts to what is most perfect in her', or with the neo-Wordsworthian doctrine that 'The greatest benefit we owe the artist, whether painter, poet or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies' and hence of 'our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot'. Similarly, if realism precludes the pastoral conventions attacked in the Riehl essay, it hardly points inevitably to the judgements precipitated in the suggested antidote: 'We need to be taught to feel . . . for the peasant in all his coarse apathy, and the artisan in all his suspicious selfishness'.

Chapter 17 of *Adam Bede*, 'In which the Story Pauses a Little',

6 *Westminster Review*, July 1856, also reprinted, along with the Ruskin review, in the modern essay selections. Riehl was a German cultural historian, author of *Die Bürgerliche Gesellschaft* (1851) and *Land und Leute* (1853).

revisits these issues,[7] and its sometimes strident defensiveness of tone is partly explicable from Eliot's epistolary clashes with her publisher while the novel was still in progress. Blackwood (who had already been worried by the references to Janet's drinking, in 'Janet's Repentance'), anticipated the early reviewers in his praise for the 'very lifelike' scene in the carpenter's shop, and other set-piece scenes, the vivid creation of regional idiom, especially Mrs Poyser's (though Lisbeth Bede's was rather too much of a good thing), and the skilful management of the potentially embarrassing open-air sermon. But he was anxious about certain other features: notably the hint that Bessie Cranage was no better than she should be, the claims in Chapter 3 about the close relation between sexual and religious or aesthetic feeling, the unidealistic comments in Chapter 4 on family disharmonies, the unspiritual character of the Rector, and above all, the seduction story itself (*Letters*, II, 444–6). The author's unwillingness to 'soften' these features was what prevented Blackwood from serialising the work in his family magazine, as he had originally intended, before publishing it in book form.

Chapter 17 commends Dutch genre painting as exemplifying a less squeamish 'truthfulness' than Blackwood's. But the narrator is hardly reliable in implying that its homely, detailed, realistic surface is always as innocent of contempt or satire, or indeed of symbolic or emblematic implications, as it is of 'picturesque' stylisation. Nor is *Adam Bede* a guileless book. It angles a version of pastoral to accord with a theory of realism that has a mixed heritage in Romantic humanism and Victorian scientism. It exploits the historical, cultural and intellectual gap between narrator and characters to conceal an even wider ideological divergence between them. And narratorial sympathy for Adam's position that 'religion's something else besides doctrines and notions' camouflages the fact that the narrator shares the 'feelings' without accepting the 'notions'. It would be possible to read Chapter 42, 'The Morning of the Trial', in a more or less literalistic way. But a Victorian reader more responsive to its allusiveness would not necessarily find anything unorthodox in the account of how Adam (named after the first man), alone in an 'upper

7 As a literary manifesto, it can be compared with the Preface to the 1800 series of *Lyrical Ballads*, in which Wordsworth defends his choice of 'common life' subjects as best revealing 'the primary laws of our nature' and 'the essential passions of the heart'.

room', undergoes a 'baptism' of suffering that culminates in a supper of bread and wine, shared with a loving friend. These are, nonetheless, secularised, Feuerbachian sacraments.

III

Even after the identity of George Eliot became known, *Adam Bede* maintained its popularity, not only because of its respectful extraction of the fruit of the religious spirit from its dogmatic shell, but because of its pastoralism. She herself had rejected the genre, as connoting jocund ploughmen driving their teams afield, and idyllic shepherds making bashful love under hawthorn trees or dancing in the chequered shade. And it is a similarly falsifying idyllicism that is invoked in the love scenes between Hetty and Arthur in the wood (Chapters 12 and 13). He is rapt by his image of a 'little frightened bird! little tearful rose!', and as he kisses 'those pouting child-lips', time vanishes: 'He may be a shepherd in Arcadia for aught he knows, he may be Eros himself, kissing the lips of Psyche – it is all one'. He wants a moment in Arcadia, but she is dreaming of a metamorphosis: 'It was as if she had been wooed by a river-god, who might any time take her to his wondrous halls below a watery heaven. There was no knowing what would come, since this strange enchanting delight had come' (pp. 116).

Arcadia is an unfallen world where sexual love, though it may be sorrowful, is innocent. This love is not innocent, yet *Adam Bede* is pastoral in that it offers the image of a rural society seen as simpler and more wholesome than the life of courts or cities. And it suggests that in some ultimate but reassuringly unrevolutionary sense (which happily chimes with George Eliot's version of realism), we are all siblings under the skin. Early reviewers like E. S. Dallas and Anne Mozley responded to this by praising the book for looking through social differences to the 'grand fact of an underlying unity' (*C. H.*, p. 77). The effect is reinforced in the way the narrator uses Adam and Dinah, especially Adam. Reversing the traditional pastoral convention of having the simple rustic borrow the graceful rhetoric of the court to express universal truths of the heart, Eliot has these two characters utter in an unsophisticated and non-erudite language ideas that are related to ones she holds herself. Most notably, there are Dinah's interpretation of Christianity as essentially a religion of suffering and pity for suffering, Adam's ethic of work and duty and his conviction that 'You can never do what's wrong without

breeding sin and trouble more than you can ever see' (Ch. 16).[8] And, not least, his conservatism and his view of theory (whether in religion or politics) as but an arid thing when divorced from practice:

> Adam, I confess, was very susceptible to the influence of rank, and quite ready to give an extra amount of respect to every one who had more advantages than himself, not being a philosopher, or a proletaire with democratic ideas, but simply a stout-limbed clever carpenter . . . He had no theories about setting the world to rights, but he saw there was a good deal of damage done by building with ill-seasoned timber, – by ignorant men in fine clothes making plans for outhouses and workshops and the like, without knowing the bearings of things . . . [Ch. 16]

It is not as straightforward as it looks to disentangle the attitudes here. The irony in the 'simply' is the narrator's, as is the term 'proletaire', with its glance both at the French Revolution and at much later urban socialistic intellectuals (such as Riehl attacks). The authorial 'I confess' is far from wholly apologetic, but the dismissive colloquialism, tinged with philistinism, of 'theories about setting the world to rights' is made to sound like Adam's. Commentator and character share the building metaphor: all the characters in the book are given an outlook on the world and a fund of metaphor conditioned by their work; but educated gradualists, such as Edmund Burke, had used the building metaphor to image the French revolutionaries as tearing down in a moment a cultural edifice that had taken centuries to build up. Then there are the black-and-white suggestions that theory and practice are mutually exclusive alternatives, and that radical ideas reflect not the interests of the workers (to whom they are unwelcome), but those of dilettante fellow-travellers. And yet the narrator goes on to dissociate herself from such views to the extent of emphasising 'that Adam had the blood of the peasant in his veins, and that since he was in his prime half a century ago, you must expect some of his characteristics to be obsolete'.

8 This should be compared with Mr Irwine's warnings to Arthur, concerning Nemesis (Ch.16). In all G. E.'s novels there is a prominent theme of what her 1851 review of R. W. Mackay's *The Progress of the Intellect* calls 'the inevitable law of consequences'. Her early contact with Evangelicalism (with its stress on Original Sin), her exploration of Greek tragedy, and her acceptance of 'inevitability of sequence' as the basic law of science, all underlie this preoccupation.

Half a century ago sets the action at the turn of the century, in fact, as the opening chapter carefully specifies, in a period starting on 18 June 1799 – something over twenty years before George Eliot's own birth. Rural, pre-industrial Hayslope is a simpler society than the one the narrator moves in. Its ethos is based on custom and tradition and, (as in the Raveloe of *Silas Marner)* the livelihoods of its inhabitants tend to be inherited rather than chosen. Adam the carpenter is (like Christ) the son of a carpenter, and 'The Tholoways had always lived on the common, time out of mind, and had always worked for the Poysers' (Ch. 53), just as the Poysers have for generations been tenants of the Donnithornes. The characters' habit of expressing their ideas through images derived from their occupations is a sign that their work is, unlike the modern kind, a way of life. (Though the habit also supports George Eliot's Romantic and Feuerbachian belief that objects of thought have no affective force unless imaginatively rendered as objects of sense.) In this world (as distinct from the Snowfield one) there is no alienation from the production process, and even the rheumatic old Kester rejoices in his rick-making as an expression of himself (p. 445). Only Adam and Dinah, however, ideologise work in the spirit of the Protestant ethic. The primary demarcation for the villagers is between labour and rest; not, as for urban moderns, between job and private life. Indeed the idea of privacy is a suspect one in Hayslope, where only two characters have anything to hide. For the reader, this makes the coming of age feast, in which Arthur accepts the tributes of Mr Poyser and drinks Adam's health even as he is betraying them, one of the book's most powerfully ironic occasions.

This is a rigidly hierarchical society, yet one without class consciousness (fatal to pastoral). Instead there is an acceptance of rank (a different concept) as given, and largely fixed. The French Revolutionary context is thus truly ironic. To the villagers, the Revolution and the ensuing conflicts are distant events that fail to impinge on their lives, save in so far as they raise the price of corn, or render Seth Bede liable to conscription into the militia. The causes and ideology of the Revolution are impenetrable, and the 'Frenchies' are simply the Other: a deviant and physically contemptible race.

There is no conscious political criticism of the existing social order, or identification of the landowning classes as generically exploitative, even in the scene in which 'Mrs Poyser "Has Her Say

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