

IMAGERY AS A LINKING DEVICE IN GEORGE
ELIOT'S MIDDLEMARCH

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CHAPTER I

APPROACH TO THE STUDY

The analysis of imagery in George Eliot's mature novel Middlemarch is one encompassing method for dealing with this novel as an organic unit. A panorama of early nineteenth-century provincial life, Middlemarch consists of four subplots involving diverse characters and situations; yet, an investigation of the images that pervade the novel yields a sense of thematic unity inherent in George Eliot's aim. Thus, the intention of such a study emphasizes not only the aesthetic effect of the imagery but also its functional use as revelation and reinforcement of George Eliot's observations of human nature. A rhetorical study of Middlemarch in terms of recurrent images in various contexts should reveal, indeed, some kind of illumination of character and theme.

Many critics have studied imagery in recent years as they have concentrated on this stylistic device as a key to the organization and content of particular works. For example, in the field of Shakespeare Carolyn Spurgeon initiated great interest in a study of imagery with her cataloging and brief explications of dominant images

recurrent in Shakespeare's plays.¹ Similarly, George Eliot scholars have delved critically into the imagery existent in her works. In an overview of George Eliot's seven novels, Barbara Hardy² has considered imagery in relation to scene and irony as W. J. Harvey³ and Reva Stump⁴ in separate studies have examined the significance of web imagery pertinent to Middlemarch. Also, Hilda C. Hulme⁵ and Mark Schorer⁶ in independent treatments of imagery in Middlemarch have each taken a linguistic approach. Yet, imagery in this mature novel of George Eliot has not received extensive critical attention but has functioned in a general picture of the author's style.

¹Carolyn F. E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1935).

²See Chapter IX, "The Scene as Image," and Chapter XI, "The Ironical Image," in her book, The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form (The Athlone Press, 1959).

³See Chapter X, "Image and Symbol," in his book, The Art of George Eliot (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962).

⁴See Chapter VIII, "Middlemarch: The Window and the Web," in her book, Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1959).

⁵See her article, "The Language of the Novel: Imagery," in Middlemarch: Critical Approaches to the Novel, ed. Barbara Hardy (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967).

⁶See his article, "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy,'" The Kenyon Review, 11 (Autumn, 1949), 539-60.

The importance of imagery to George Eliot is evident in some of her comments concerning art in general and her art in particular. First, a notable authorial comment in Adam Bede points up her desire for verisimilitude and accompanying pictorial effort.

. . . my strongest effort is to avoid any . . . arbitrary picture, and to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you as precisely as I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath.¹

Apparently the quest for truth moved George Eliot to portray graphically life as she saw it; indeed, in Middlemarch the stylistic device of imagery enhances pictorially the complexity of life, here depicted by a variety of subplots and characters. Similarly, in a later letter George Eliot makes this related statement:

I think aesthetic teaching is the highest of all teaching because it deals with life in its highest complexity. But if it ceases to be purely aesthetic--if it lapses anywhere from the picture to the diagram--it becomes the most offensive of all teaching.²

¹George Eliot, Adam Bede, ed. Curtis Dahl (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1947), p. 165.

²George Eliot, The George Eliot Letters, ed. Gordon S. Haight, IV (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955), 300. The underlining is my own and is done for emphasis in the text.

Here in a personal reflection seems implied George Eliot's desire for truth and her pictorial orientation to her craft. If George Eliot considered novel-writing as a type of instruction, in her eyes the instruction must embody and strikingly reveal, not merely outline, the fullness of life. If, indeed, George Eliot is didactic in Middlemarch, she is didactic with a flair for recreating vividly through the senses the moral aspect of life that she felt compelled to convey. Thus, her emphasis on the picture as opposed to the diagram underlines the necessary concreteness of her imagery. In retrospect, it is curious that John Blackwood, George Eliot's publisher, should have been so dismayed when a contemporary, Alexander Main, called Eliot "concrete" in her writing.¹

If imagery aesthetically adorns her work, more importantly it reflects with sensitivity aspects of human experience beyond the limits of one's individual situation. As George Eliot stated in an early essay while she was still a literary critic,

Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.²

¹John Blackwood in letter to William Blackwood, The George Eliot Letters, V, 206.

²George Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life," in Essays of George Eliot, ed. Thomas Pinney (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), p. 271.

Although the relationship of art to imagery is not explicitly mentioned, it can be inferred since later in Middlemarch George Eliot artistically conveys a variety of lifelike situations accompanied by recurrent images, these images magnifying concretely her characters' experiences and emotions. Indeed, her images border on the realm of objective correlatives as they illuminate new emotive insights into life or make one feel again what he already objectively knows.¹ Thus, the recurrence of images in Middlemarch contributes to the artistry of the novel as well as to its verisimilitude: the recurring imagery creates a connecting quality inherent in the novel, and this sense of continuity transcends the work to be applicable to the interactions of life itself.

Correspondingly, in a significant comment from her notebook George Eliot elaborates the role of imagery in the art of storytelling:

The modes of telling a story founded on these processes of outward and inward life derive their effectiveness from the superior mastery of images and pictures in grasping the attention--or, one might say with more fundamental accuracy, from the

¹Laurence Perrine, Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1970), p. 103. Perrine's discussion of interpretive fiction and its two means of revelation influenced this statement.

fact that our earliest, strongest, impressions, our most intimate convictions, are simply images added to more or less of sensation.¹

Here George Eliot specifically acknowledges the value of imagery that evokes understanding through feeling. Moreover, it appears that she touches on a concept of imagery similar to one which Florence Marsh later concisely endorsed in her statement that in imagery "the sensuous, the emotional, and the intellectual merge, and the vision of life is whole."² Expressly, in Middlemarch George Eliot holds one's attention in creating outward recurrent images which call upon the inward senses, emotions, and consequently the imagination and intellect so that, ultimately, the concreteness of her pictorial effort does broaden and reinforce one's awareness of his world.

At this point, a brief clarification of terms seems pertinent to an understanding of this detailed analysis of imagery in its context in Middlemarch. Since this study examines symbolic imagery in the novel, the terms imagery and symbolism should be distinguished or, more appropriately for the basis of this investigation, should be shown to be

¹George Eliot, "Leaves from a Notebook," in Essays of George Eliot, ed. Thomas Pinney, p. 445. The underlining is my own and is done for emphasis in the text.

²Florence Marsh, Wordsworth's Imagery: A Study in Poetic Vision (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1952), p. 19.

literary equivalents. By definition, "an image is a literal and concrete representation of a sensory experience or of an object that can be known by one or more of the senses."¹ Furthermore, an image "is the means by which experience in its richness and emotional complexity is communicated." It is "a portion of the essence of the meaning of the literary work, not ever properly a mere decoration." In Middlemarch particular "literal representations" do communicate "sensory experience," yet the varying contexts of the images create their symbolic value, this value being enhanced as the images recur. Now by definition, "a symbol is something which is itself and yet stands for or suggests or means something else."² In Middlemarch it seems that only a fine line distinguishes imagery and symbolism since they merge in the common ground of context. As William York Tindall states in The Literary Symbol,

No constituent image is without context, and every image owes context part of what it bears By reciprocal limitation and expansion, image and context, two interacting components of what they create, carry feelings and thoughts at once definite and indefinite. This composite of image and context constitutes that symbol.³

¹William Flint Thrall, Addison Hibbard, and C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), p. 232. All the quotations relating to a definition of imagery are cited from this source and page.

²Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman, p. 478.

³William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 9-10.

The image, then, transcends its concrete representation to take on symbolic suggestion relative to its context.

The image of the web prevalent in Middlemarch serves as an appropriate example of the overlapping, the complementing of image and symbol in the novel. In a brief authorial comment George Eliot uses the web image to convey her aim and limit the scope of Middlemarch:

I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they are 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.¹

First, it is significant that George Eliot turns to imagery in expressing her plan for the novel. Second, her comment illustrates the web, a concrete representation, acting as a visual image that calls up thoughts of connection and interconnection. Actually, the web itself conveys the concepts of "limitation and expansion" inherent in the interplay of image and context. While using the web image to limit the scope of the novel, George Eliot also allows it to express the expansion within the web that she observes. Thus, finally the context of this passage complements the web image so that it takes on symbolic import of George Eliot's scope for the novel. The figurative language of "unravelling,"

¹George Eliot, Middlemarch, ed. Gordon S. Haight (Boston: The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1956), p. 105. The underlining is my own and is done for emphasis.

"woven," and "interwoven" enhances the web image as George Eliot implies her determination to examine only the relationships and interrelationships of fates of a particular group of individuals. Indeed, the symbolism of the web image here directly touches on the sense of connection, previously mentioned, that both unites the novel as a work of art and reveals not the fragmentation but the interwoven nature of life even for individuals from diverse backgrounds. William York Tindall's statement on symbol is especially pertinent to the web image in context:

For author and reader the symbol is unitive. . . . Taken from one realm of experience, a vegetable nature for example, to serve in another, let us say the moral, the symbol joins those realms. By uniting the separate it can organize experience into a kind of order and, revealing the complex relationships among seemingly divided things, confer peace.¹

Thus in relation to the web image, George Eliot's characters in Middlemarch reside in different social spheres and experience various circumstances in life; but at crucial moments the lives of some characters intersect with the lives of other characters to reinforce common truths about men.

One logical approach to a study of imagery in Middlemarch involves an examination of particular images as they enhance the three recurrent themes throughout the main plot and its subplots. Yet before a consideration of the

¹Tindall, p. 16.

text itself, Chapter Two deals with various critical studies, which in broad overviews or in individual studies on Middlemarch treat different facets of George Eliot's style in Middlemarch including characterization, theme, structure, and, specifically, imagery. Subsequently, Chapter Three turns to the text in analyzing the imagery integral to the main plot of Dorothea Brooke. Here web, water, yoke, labyrinth, vision, and landscape images point up the three dichotomous themes of entrapment versus freedom, egoism versus selflessness, and self-deception versus valid perception. Likewise, Chapter Four examines web, yoke, water, vision, and related imagery as these images intensify the dichotomous themes recurrent throughout the three subplots involving, first, Fred and Mary; second, Bulstrode; and finally, Lydgate and Rosamond.

Ultimately Chapter Five attempts to point out the unifying effects of imagery in Middlemarch. Although other critics have not made such an extensive study of imagery in this novel, the present analysis examines in Middlemarch both recurrent and isolated images that together underscore the consistent themes interwoven throughout four superficially different story lines. Thus, Chapter Five stresses the organic quality of the images as they seem to complement

the various characters and situations to create the integrated nature of Middlemarch in style and universal themes of human nature.

CHAPTER II

MIDDLEMARCH REVISITED: A REVIEW OF CRITICAL STUDIES

Critics have approached Middlemarch from several literary standpoints; moreover, as certain critics have ignored a consideration of imagery, other critics have studied this stylistic device in varying degrees. Some scholars have examined the work of George Eliot in surveying her fiction as one segment in the development of the English novel. Others have considered Middlemarch in general studies of such aspects as characterization, theme, and style common to all of George Eliot's novels. From these broader approaches, based on treatments of Middlemarch either in relation to the growth of the novel or within the context of her other works, certain critics have applied themselves solely to Middlemarch. Some of these particular investigations constitute general perspectives on this later novel of George Eliot, including such areas as aesthetics, theme, and background. On the other hand, additional critics have focused on more specific novelistic concerns in Middlemarch in their examinations of particular characters, their considerations of theme, and their studies of structural

elements. Indeed, all of the studies surveyed in this chapter which do not consider the images in Middlemarch still provide pertinent background for the plots, themes, and characters related to this examination of imagery. But finally and most significantly for this study, analyses of the imagery employed have revealed the value of textual studies of Middlemarch. These examinations have contributed new insights for weighing the merits of imagery as a linking device among the four narrative threads of this novel.

In treating classic English novels, Dorothy Van Ghent and F. R. Leavis have offered enlightening observations about George Eliot's work. In her discussion of Adam Bede Van Ghent has indirectly contributed to a keener awareness of George Eliot's approach to fiction in Middlemarch by indicating the relevance of an authorial comment in Adam Bede to George Eliot's role as an author.¹ In this personal reflection, George Eliot states her aim as a novelist: "to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind"; her intent is one of realism as she pledges herself to the accurate portrayal of common men and situations. George Eliot's aim manifests itself in Middlemarch where a wealth of detail concerning

¹Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1953) p. 209.

insignificant daily activities and minor characters serves as the background for her intense study of particular individuals in an ordinary provincial society. Van Ghent emphasizes the realism inherent in the mirror analogy in this authorial comment.¹ Here George Eliot cites her mind as a defective mirror that will reflect its perceptions as truthfully as possible. It is significant that George Eliot employs the mirror image also in Middlemarch. Yet in this latter context, the mirror does not reveal an awareness of possible error in perception but rather stresses the latent self-deception of certain egoistic characters.

In The Great Tradition, F. R. Leavis implies the value of realism in Middlemarch in deeming this novel the peak of George Eliot's genius.² Leavis notes the depth of George Eliot's knowledge and understanding of the Middlemarch society that she so fully develops; specifically, he lauds George Eliot's "profound analysis of the individual" which stands in relief to this provincial community.³ Thus, he examines the characterizations of Casaubon and Lydgate, the former revealing the frustrations and the latter conveying

¹Van Ghent, p. 210.

²See his book, The Great Tradition (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 61-79.

³Leavis, p. 61.

the idealism of the intellectual life that George Eliot knew so intimately. Leavis also considers the characterization of Rosamond, whose egoistic nature supports Lydgate's narrow view of women's intelligence.

In treating the characterization of Bulstrode, Leavis finds traces of George Eliot's early background; indeed, Leavis implies that it is this background which accounts for George Eliot's keen depiction of Bulstrode's inner conflicts as a religious hypocrite. Leavis also comments on the weakness he finds in the characterizations of Dorothea and Will. As he sees too much of George Eliot's early immaturity in her subjective portrayal of Dorothea, he views Will as a mere spokesman employed to further George Eliot's idealizations of Dorothea. Leavis, however, ultimately stresses George Eliot's sympathetic capability kept within bounds and so accounts for her brilliant characterization in Middlemarch.

Joan Bennett also elaborates on characterization in her book George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art, which concentrates first on George Eliot's life as it influenced her genius and then turns to the resulting seven novels. In the chapter on Middlemarch, Bennett notes the organic unity of the novel which she attributes to the complementary portrayals of Lydgate and Dorothea, who experience similar

fates in Middlemarch society.¹ Originally intended as different stories, the Lydgate and Dorothea plots of Middlemarch are variations on the theme of frustration created by a restricting environment. The provincial society simultaneously limits both the medical aims of Lydgate and the vague humanitarian ideals of Dorothea. Moreover, the interaction of these two characters as they contend with unfortunate marriages enhances the unity of the novel. George Eliot also vividly characterizes the foils, Rosamond and Casaubon, who come alive in their own right. Similarly, Bennett discusses how George Eliot depicts a realistic Bulstrode, who both outwardly benefits and inwardly suffers from his own hypocrisy.

Also relevant to George Eliot's characterization is Bennett's observation of the author's creative power. Specifically, George Eliot fully empathizes with each character; indeed, the author's intentions are so apparent in her characters that little authorial comment is needed. Finally, Bennett answers the charge of excessive melancholy in Middlemarch. She comments that George Eliot's purpose is "to arouse compassion for the human predicament."² Thus, the

¹See Chapter X of her book, George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1948), pp. 160-180.

characterizations of Lydgate, Dorothea, and Bulstrode necessarily carry tragic elements felt by the reader; however, these situations are offset by such happy lives as those of Celia and Sir James, Mr. and Mrs. Vincy, Fred and Mary, and Mr. and Mrs. Garth. Hence, George Eliot's characters and their situations together reflect a realistic vision of life, the full circle of existence.

Jerome Thale in The Novels of George Eliot approaches Middlemarch from the standpoint of character in relation to theme.¹ His study concerns George Eliot's changing concept of the individual and his relationship with society in Middlemarch. George Eliot does not depict society as antagonistic to a character's growth, but rather she acknowledges society as the necessary background against which a character must act. Thale's thematic study of aspiration relevant to Dorothea, Lydgate, Casaubon, Rosamond, and Bulstrode demonstrates that individual character flaws, not environment, bring about some degree of personal failure.

Another broad study of George Eliot, Experiments in Life, pursues George Eliot's intellectual development as

¹See Chapter VI, "The Paradox of Individualism: Middlemarch," in his book, The Novels of George Eliot (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 106-120.

manifested in her novels.¹ Here Bernard J. Paris examines the relevance of George Eliot's fiction to human nature; particularly, he investigates in Middlemarch the effects of the characters' subjective and objective approaches to reality on their behavior and moral fates.

A more technical study by S. L. Bethell emphasizes the mature style of Middlemarch evidenced in George Eliot's novelistic development.² Briefly, Bethell explicates a descriptive passage concerning Rosamond as he notes sentence structure and diction. He also comments on the effects of George Eliot's epigrams and scientific metaphors in formal context.

Characterization and theme in Middlemarch have lent themselves to critical examination in comparative studies concerning George Eliot's novels. Darrell Mansell, Jr., considers the potential of the main characters who fail to live up to their possibilities.³ This failure constitutes the tragic quality underlying George Eliot's fiction; and

¹See Chapter IX, "The Three Stages: Middlemarch," in his book, Experiments in Life: George Eliot's Quest for Values (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 169-192.

²See his article, "The Novels of George Eliot," Criterion, 18 (1938-39), 39-57.

³See his article, "'Possibilities' in George Eliot's Fiction," English Studies, 49 (April, 1968), 193-202.

for Dorothea, Casaubon, and Lydgate, their individual failures evoke the common realization that they are not heroic. Moreover, Mansell discusses the characteristic "collapse into marriage" which accompanies this realization as in Dorothea's marriage to Will.¹ Mansell's final point involves Ladislav's essential thematic significance. Will, alone, does not test the possibilities laid before him; thus, he does not fail. Being the antithesis of Casaubon, who tries and miserably falls short of his literary goal, Ladislav is still armed with potential and represents some degree of hope for the idealistic Dorothea.

Similarly, Ian Adam, George Levine, and Thomas Pinney have considered the internal and external influences which motivate George Eliot's characters. Adam interprets an anti-deterministic spirit in George Eliot's characters.² Indeed, a latent Evangelicalism in her novels promises the possibility of salvation; thus, Dorothea attains a "humanist conversion" after experiencing the disenchantment of a doomed marriage with Casaubon and the self-deception of believing Will loves Rosamond.³ Adam accordingly notes that choice

¹Mansell, p. 198.

²See his article, "Character and Destiny in George Eliot's Fiction," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 20 (September, 1965), 127-145.

³Adam, p. 129.

and experience figure predominantly in the possibility of a character's goodness; moreover, George Eliot's characters fall into a dichotomy of those who choose to rise above their selfishness as opposed to those who do not attempt to avoid their own egoistic destruction. Likewise, George Levine considers the question of human responsibility and morality in the development or lack of development in George Eliot's characters.¹

Thomas Pinney specifically sees a character's intensity of feeling as the basis for his actions.² George Eliot emphasizes strong emotion formulated in the past as the determining factor in the values that direct one's actions. Thus, Pinney cites the fine character of Mary Garth, whose enduring loyalty and sense of duty can allow her to do little else but choose for a husband her childhood sweetheart, Fred, over Farebrother.

Other critics have dealt only with Middlemarch in general approaches to such concerns as characterization, theme, background, and overall technique. David Daiches' inclusive study constitutes a critical summary of the novel

¹See his article, "Determinism and Responsibility in the Works of George Eliot," PMLA, 77 (June, 1962), 268-279.

²See his article, "The Authority of the Past in George Eliot's Novels," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 21 (September, 1966), 131-147.

as Daiches touches on theme relevant to the four plots and to the significant parallels between the main characters.¹ Daiches makes a pertinent observation concerning the structure of Middlemarch in noting the "funnel technique" employed.² George Eliot first develops in detail Dorothea's story for involving the reader's sympathy before presenting the panorama of human activity inherent in the three subplots. Such a structural method in Middlemarch informs this present study, which first examines the use of imagery in the main plot of Dorothea and then considers its relationship to the imagery employed in the three subplots. In relation to imagery, Daiches also points out water imagery, which suggests the range of one's possibilities for increasing the purpose of his life, and mirror imagery, which implies the theme of egoism.

Sumner J. Ferris and Newton P. Stallknecht also have done similar critical summaries of Middlemarch in considering characterization and theme. Ferris examines the contributions of setting and characterization to theme.³ He specifically

¹See specifically pp. 8-21 in Daiches' study, George Eliot: Middlemarch (Great Neck, N. Y.: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1963).

²Daiches, p. 9.

³See his article, "Middlemarch: George Eliot's Masterpiece," in From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, ed. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1958), pp. 194-207.

considers the movement "from innocence to disillusionment to experience to happiness" in Dorothea's maturing process.¹ Likewise, Stallknecht investigates the correspondence of character and theme in Middlemarch but particularly in relation to Dorothea's ultimate decision to marry Ladislaw.² Because Dorothea must make a choice in finally marrying Ladislaw, she must first be confronted by alternatives as embodied in Middlemarch society.

Quentin Anderson also expressly approaches Middlemarch in his consideration of voice.³ He views George Eliot's presence as pervasive and essential to the movement of the novel. Her intellectual and sympathetic passages of insight illuminate the characters' actions and thoughts as these comments reveal her vision which informs the novel. Anderson also mentions particular elements in these reflective passages such as the master image of the web, an image stressing the relationship of the individual to others in Middlemarch society, and the pier-glass image, an image reinforcing the

¹Ferris, p. 205.

²See his article, "Resolution and Independence: A Reading of Middlemarch," in Twelve Original Essays on Great English Novels, ed. Charles Shapiro (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1960), pp. 125-152.

³See his article, "George Eliot in Middlemarch," in George Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. George Greger (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1970), pp. 141-160.

weblike interdependence which underlies George Eliot's conception of life in Middlemarch.

In relation to George Eliot's presence in Middlemarch, Isobel Armstrong investigates the contribution of authorial comments to this novel.¹ Armstrong observes that George Eliot's personal reflections are essential to the novel, that they are the nucleus of the novel. Armstrong, thus, discusses numerous examples in illustrating how George Eliot draws on common experience in eliciting the reader's imaginative participation. Specifically, the image of generalization containing some aspect of shared experience and often existing within George Eliot's authorial comments is another means of increasing the reader's empathy.

In a different light, Jerome Beaty treats Middlemarch in two separate studies, one involving the historical setting of the novel and another considering in great detail the actual development of Middlemarch. In the former instance, Beaty records the events of political reform in England occurring in 1829 and 1830, events which George Eliot alludes to only indirectly in focusing intently on her created

¹See her essay, "Middlemarch: A Note on George Eliot's 'Wisdom,'" in Critical Essays on George Eliot, ed. Barbara Hardy (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1970), pp. 116-132.

world of Middlemarch society.¹ Beaty's latter study charts George Eliot's creative procedure in Middlemarch, including the fusion of the Dorothea plot with the "Middlemarch" story, the effect of serialization on the novel, George Eliot's notebook revealing her literary plan and subsequent changes in Middlemarch, and a specific study of the revisions made in Chapter 81.²

Sister Jane Marie Luecke and Russell M. Goldfarb in more narrow approaches have studied the characterization of one individual in Middlemarch. Luecke discusses the consistency of Ladislav, his intentionally deficient character, in terms of Dorothea's frustrated life in a nineteenth-century provincial world.³ Caleb Garth is the focus of Goldfarb's examination.⁴ Goldfarb stresses the parallel between the character of Caleb and the nineteenth-century reverence for work. He also points up the integral function of Caleb in the structure and plot of Middlemarch.

¹See his article, "History by Indirection: The Era of Reform in Middlemarch," Victorian Studies, 1 (December, 1957), 173-179.

²See Middlemarch from Notebook to Novel (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1960).

³See her article, "Ladislav and the Middlemarch Vision," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 19 (June, 1964), 55-64.

⁴See his article, "Caleb Garth of Middlemarch," Victorian Newsletter, 26 (Fall, 1964), 14-19.

Realism of theme is the major concern of Calvin Bedient and Frederick Willey in their studies of Middlemarch. Bedient traces George Eliot's successful pursuit of truth in the novel as she portrays the egoism which arouses aspiration in the main characters.¹ Similarly, as Willey discusses the realism of Middlemarch, he elaborates on the theme of appearance and reality intimately associated with the recurring idea of reform germane both to Middlemarch society and to its inhabitants.² Moreover, this critic studies the concept of reform in those individuals who aspire and subsequently suffer disenchantment as well as those characters who are realists made wiser by experience. Finally, a different facet of realism evolves in Lloyd Fernando's discussion of George Eliot's feminism in Middlemarch.³ After treating her feelings about the woman's role in society based on her letters, Fernando examines George Eliot's views integral to the theme of feminism pervading Dorothea's emotional nature.

¹See his article, "Middlemarch: Touching Down," Hudson Review, 22 (Spring, 1969), 70-84.

²See his article, "Appearance and Reality in Middlemarch," Southern Review, NS 5 (Spring, 1969), 419-435.

³See his article, "George Eliot, Feminism and Dorothea Brooke," Review of English Literature, 4 (January, 1963), 76-90.

Structural studies have been particularly enlightening for this examination of imagery as a linking device between the main plots and the subplots. Henry James and George Steiner find little intentional structure in Middlemarch; indeed, it is such early studies challenging the not-easily-observed organization in Middlemarch which have stimulated closer and more profitable inspection of the novel in terms of structure. In briefly analyzing characterization, James cites George Eliot's lack of a conscious plan.¹ He sums up his critical opinion in the often-quoted statement: "Middlemarch is a treasure-house of detail, but it is an indifferent whole."² George Steiner's criticism of this work finds Middlemarch falling below the artistic standards essential to the genre of the novel.³ In treating particular weaknesses in Middlemarch, Steiner finds no focal point, no central theme, which provides a sense of structural unity; thus, for him, the four plots appear disparate and not uniformly stressed. Ultimately, as Steiner distinguishes between the novelist and the storyteller, he places George

¹See his article, "George Eliot's Middlemarch," Galaxy, 15 (March, 1873), rpt. in Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 8 (December, 1953), 161-170.

²James, p. 162.

³See his article, "A Preface to Middlemarch," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 9 (March, 1955), 262-279.

Eliot in the latter class in which the technique is episodic, not artistically formal.

By contrast, Walter Naumann finds the absence of a visible organizing principle essential to George Eliot's art.¹ Noting George Eliot's lack of a preconceived form in Middlemarch, Naumann discusses form as it is integrally connected with her content; George Eliot's organization is "the confusion of life."² Implicitly, moral considerations within a social atmosphere bind the diverse elements of Middlemarch and impose a sense of unity.

Characterization has also been examined in technical considerations of structure. Jerome Beaty briefly treats the complex heritage of Ladislav and his necessary existence in joining the initially separate stories of "Miss Brooke" and "Middlemarch."³

In a consideration of form, Neil D. Isaacs cites a philosophical and structural principle relevant to the organization of Middlemarch.⁴ After tracing George Eliot's

¹See his article, "The Architecture of George Eliot's Novels," Modern Language Quarterly, 9 (December, 1945), 37-50.

²Naumann, p. 37.

³See his article, "The Forgotten Past of Will Ladislav," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 13 (September, 1958), 159-163.

⁴See his article, "Middlemarch: Crescendo of Obligatory Drama," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 18 (June, 1963), 21-34.

pattern in displaying sympathy, Isaacs discusses the two kinds of scenes alternating chapter by chapter in Middlemarch. From drama George Eliot borrows the conglomerate and obligatory scenes, the latter scenes increasing in number as they build toward the climax and denouement in Middlemarch. Isaacs accordingly lists the chapters containing the conglomerate or obligatory scenes. He discusses how the large social scenes both unify the community by including various representatives of Middlemarch society and unify the novel by linking several main characters and their respective plots. He then elaborates on the personal scenes involving conflicts between main characters and, thus, constituting minor climaxes that rise toward an inclusive resolution of the novel.

Similarly, Mark Schorer acknowledges the one large social scene of every book in Middlemarch as a means of external unity.¹ However, he traces three internal structural elements--theme, character, and dramatic development in the novel. Schorer especially treats the dichotomous theme of "social idealism" versus "self-absorption."² He also

¹See his article, "The Structure of the Novel: Method, Metaphor, and Mind," in Middlemarch: Critical Approaches to the Novel, ed. Barbara Hardy (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 12-24.

²Schorer, p. 13.

discusses three methods of characterization employing social caricature, sentimental caricature, and ironic sympathy. Schorer finally elaborates on the structural device of metaphorical language as evidence of George Eliot's logical thought processes so integral to the organization of Middlemarch.¹

More specifically, Richard S. Lyons attempts to reveal the organization of Middlemarch by explicating Chapter 39.² Arguing against the arbitrary separation of the four plots, Lyons illustrates how in Chapter 39 the plots closely, inextricably overlap one another. Also Lyons, like Schorer, sees theme as a method of organization; he extensively examines the themes of reform, religion, and art, three recurring ideas that unify the chapter as well as the novel.

Finally, analogy is central to the structural studies of David R. Carroll, Suzanne C. Ferguson, John Hagan, and Darrell Mansell, Jr. These investigations of organization in Middlemarch have proven most significant for this present study concerning the correlation of imagery and structure in

¹Schorer, pp. 22-24. Schorer develops this principle in fuller detail in his article, "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy,'" The Kenyon Review, 11 (Autumn, 1949), 539-560. This latter article is pertinent to other imagery studies discussed later in this chapter.

²See his article, "The Method of Middlemarch," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 21 (June, 1966), 35-47.

the novel. Carroll's treatment of Middlemarch focuses on Dorothea's search for a unifying principle in her life as the thematic basis for key analogies involving diverse characters in the novel.¹ Carroll follows Dorothea's ultimate gaining of self-knowledge through self-deception, suffering, and disenchantment as she finally recognizes the simultaneous unity among men and individuality within men. The lives of Casaubon, Ladislav, Lydgate, and Bulstrode provide significant analogies as they present similarities and differences with Dorothea's fate. Carroll also indicates that similar analogies based on the search for unity are evident even in the lesser characters. Moreover, the setting of the provincial Middlemarch community and the time reference of the Reform movement are two final parallels corresponding to Dorothea's quest for and gradual approach toward self-knowledge.

Likewise, Ferguson considers analogy as the key to the structural unity of Middlemarch.² She discusses the Laure incident relevant to the Lydgate subplot as this incident provides two comparisons, one between the characters

¹See his article, "Unity Through Analogy: An Interpretation of Middlemarch," Victorian Studies, 2 (June, 1959), 305-314.

²See her article, "Mme. Laure and Operative Irony in Middlemarch: A Structural Analogy," Studies in English Literature, 3 (Autumn, 1963), 509-516.

of Rosamond and Laure and the other between Rosamond's relationship with Lydgate and Laure's relationship with the husband whom she kills. Also, within this analogy promoting character and theme, operative irony evolves as part of the ironic structure of the entire novel. Lydgate's inability to perceive the tragic similarities between Rosamond and Laure points up Rosamond's evil nature, Rosamond and Lydgate's unhappy marriage, and Lydgate's failure to meet his professional potential. Finally, Lydgate's failure in his plan to search for the primitive tissue underlines by contrast the central theme of Middlemarch evident in Dorothea's successful search for a unifying principle that recognizes the individual's role in society. Moreover, Hagan looks specifically at the unity of the main plot in analyzing both Dorothea's growth subsequent to her marriage with Casaubon and the parallels within and without the main plot which support its unity.¹

Mansell summarizes the analogy theory relevant to the structural unity of Middlemarch in a general article touching on all of the novels.² He lends support to this

¹See his article, "Middlemarch: Narrative Unity in the Story of Dorothea Brooke," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 16 (June, 1961), 17-31.

²See his article, "George Eliot's Conception of 'Form,'" Studies in English Literature, 5 (Autumn, 1965), 651-662.

theory by discussing various letters and notes of George Eliot which indicate her desire for organic unity in her works. Mansell makes the pertinent comment that George Eliot's form involves internal relationships, not external appearance; thus, the beginnings and endings of her novels are often artificial and unemphasized. Tracing George Eliot's development, Mansell also notes that in her later novels, such as Middlemarch, the internal relationships are implied, being left to the reader's interpretation; thus, the "Prelude" of Middlemarch does not appear to be directly related to Dorothea's fate although the aims of St. Theresa and Dorothea are intimately connected.

Analyses of imagery have shed much light on this crucial stylistic device in Middlemarch. Whether these studies have focused upon general patterns of imagery, specific matters of diction, or the relationship of images to other novelistic elements in Middlemarch, they have all emphasized the numerous aspects of imagery still to be investigated. Thus, in revealing the value of textual studies in Middlemarch, these examinations have stimulated this present study of imagery as a means of interconnection between the main plot and its subplots.

In a penetrating treatment of imagery in George Eliot's novels from the perspectives of scene and irony,

Barbara Hardy first discusses the symbolic scene in which imagery reveals the crisis essential to the growth of a character.¹ Pertinent to Middlemarch, Hardy graphically describes the parallel between Dorothea's narrow boudoir with its faded furniture and her necessary disenchantment, and between the open window revealing a world of activity and her ultimate revelation about her relationship to others. As Hardy perceptively notes, George Eliot often employs imagery which is dependent upon scene and which thus bears symbolic significance: "in George Eliot the scenic method is inseparable from the habit of metaphor. The interplay between scene and image fixes a symbolic frame around the scene and gives visual intensity to the imagery."²

Hardy also examines the contribution of ironic imagery to theme in this mature work of George Eliot.³ In this novel, Hardy notes, George Eliot uses less overt authorial comment and relies on recurrent imagery to connect the diverse actions as it emphasizes theme. That the

¹See Chapter IX, "The Scene As Image," in her book, The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form (London: The Athlone Press, 1959), pp. 185-200.

²Hardy, p. 200.

³See Chapter XI, "The Ironical Image," in The Novels of George Eliot, pp. 215-226.

images recur in varying contexts makes them symbolic; moreover, the implicit irony arises from the same images moving among different characters. As Hardy treats the twofold theme of egoism and frustration, she explicates the three images of the water, the labyrinth, and the mirror. For example, Hardy discusses water and labyrinth images which reinforce the concept of frustration in the Dorothea-Casaubon marriage. From a broad expanse of ocean to a stagnant swamp, from a promising place for learning to a prison, these image patterns chart Dorothea's lack of growth with Casaubon. Hardy also considers the parallel between this instance of water imagery and the water images conveying the same unfortunate situation in the Lydgate-Rosamond marriage. Moreover, labyrinth imagery relates to the common problem of faulty vision in Middlemarch as well as to the theme of egoism, both ideas reinforced by mirror imagery. Not only do mirror images convey Dorothea's egoistic illusions about Casaubon, but Hardy implies that the pier-glass image used in relation to Rosamond recalls Casaubon's self-centeredness and foreshadows Bulstrode's selfishness. Thus, Hardy notes that in Middlemarch "we find single images and clusters of images . . . acting as a mnemonic which helps author and reader to see and remember

the book as a whole, weaving the separate actions by clear or oblique cross-reference."¹

As he examines web imagery in Middlemarch, W. J. Harvey, like Barbara Hardy, notes George Eliot's dependence on imagery in a character's consciousness rather than on imagery of comment embedded in the omniscient viewpoint.² Harvey indicates that the use of imagery in this novel corresponds to George Eliot's view of the interrelationships in life as web imagery with its connotations of connection complements both this vision and the structure of the novel. Thus, the web effectively conveys the complexity and change in life, exemplified in Middlemarch society; moreover, the use of this image also indicates the need for bestowing form on this everpresent disorder.

Harvey briefly traces different kinds of webs in Middlemarch, such as Bulstrode's spider webs that insulate him from a guilt-ridden past and the gossamer web of Lydgate and Rosamond which moves toward the future. Harvey also comments on the web image as a symbol of the integration within George Eliot's imagery itself: "one strand of language connects with or crosses another, so that at whatever

¹Hardy, p. 215.

²See Chapter X, "Image and Symbol," in his book, The Art of George Eliot (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 237-248.

point we start we are led, by intersections and interactions, to perceive the pattern of the whole."¹

Correspondingly, Harvey warns against the study of images out of their linguistic context; only a consideration of situations and key words surrounding an image can illuminate its full significance relative to the entire novel. Thus, the gossamer web of Lydgate and Rosamond appears to offer a union of love but ultimately becomes a yoke of entrapment. Likewise, Dorothea, Fred, and Farebrother each experience a sense of imprisonment conveyed by related metaphorical language. Similarly, Bulstrode's web recalls Casaubon's labyrinth since both images imply a restriction which each man desires because of his questionable past or doubtful present.

Reva Stump also investigates the significance of web imagery in Middlemarch as she considers its thematic function in the characters' movements toward and away from moral vision.² Like Harvey, Stump agrees that the web structurally informs the novel; at the same time, she sees the web as reinforcing idea in Middlemarch. Paradoxically, web imagery conveys the ideas of expansiveness and hindrance, two states

¹Harvey, p. 243.

²See Chapter VII, "Middlemarch: General Patterns of Meaning," in her book, Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1959), pp. 136-171.

central to the kinds of movement inherent in the characters' actions. Appropriately, Stump discusses how the web image directly illuminates the negative movement of characters whose egoism produces the illusions which impede growth.

After a brief, perceptive treatment of gossip and its correspondence to the restricting web image, Stump discusses the related images of confinement. She elaborates on the vision image of the telescopic view, an image revealing the weblike texture as it implies restriction through illusion. Also Stump touches on the spider webs which consume, the yokes which bind, and the mazes which frustrate.

Moreover, Stump considers the four characters--Lydgate, Rosamond, Casaubon, and Bulstrode--who finally fail in life and, significantly, who spin webs. Each of these characters is a variation on the theme of egoism that generates movement away from moral vision. Rosamond's web of illusion stresses her selfishness as Lydgate's spinning with her signals his weak resolve in the company of women. Casaubon weaves illusions in his defense against reality as Bulstrode also seeks protection in webbing that aids him in justifying with religious zeal his dishonest business practices.

Stump also examines in detail vision imagery associated with the moral progress of one character, Dorothea.¹ Through vision imagery and its integrally related window imagery, Stump traces Dorothea's gradual movement toward outward vision, the progress which lends Middlemarch its affirmative tone. Stump discusses Dorothea's illusive first visions of Casaubon, her visions associated with a growing awareness of Casaubon's inadequacy, her visions as a disillusioned widow, and her final visions of an outer world in which she must participate. The climactic image here is the scene of a traveling family which Dorothea views from her bow window. Stump interprets this scene as an allegory of life; now the imagery applied to the static blue-green boudoir fades before this road-of-life metaphor which implies Dorothea's acknowledgement of her role in the active world.

Hilda Hulme, on the other hand, does not treat image patterns; rather, in her article, "The Language of the Novel: Imagery," she gives careful attention to isolated images as applications of George Eliot's ideas on imagery.² In

¹See Chapter VIII, "Middlemarch: The Window and the Web," in Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels, pp. 172-214.

²See her article, "The Language of the Novel: Imagery," in Middlemarch: Critical Approaches to the Novel, ed. Barbara Hardy, pp. 87-124.

analyzing the effectiveness of the imagery in Middlemarch, Hulme considers George Eliot's notebook and letters as well as the influence of Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes.

Examining the text closely, Hulme indicates the economy and concreteness of particular images as she notes the consistency of surrounding metaphorical language, words which reinforce the vivid figures of speech. Also, Hulme discusses George Eliot's use of everyday language in her imagery; Hulme elaborates on cliché-images appropriate to particular characters as she notes that George Eliot employed many of these minor images in her personal letter-writing. Finally, Hulme comments on the priority which George Eliot accords to feeling above knowledge in art: George Eliot felt that "progress rests upon a willing submission to innate susceptibility of feeling."¹ Hulme illustrates how George Eliot linguistically through imagery evokes and guides the emotions in order to teach.

In a more recent article, Hulme traces the influence of contemporary scientific theory in George Eliot's time on the imagery of Middlemarch.² For example, Lydgate's endorsement of Bichat, a French surgeon, spurs him to want

¹Hulme, p. 107.

²See her article, "Middlemarch as Science-Fiction: Notes on Language and Imagery," Novel, 2 (Fall, 1968), 36-45.

to find the basic tissue common to all life. Here the parallel is explicit between the common tissue and the web imagery with their common implications of interdependence. Moreover, Lydgate's professional failure after his marriage can be explained by Bichat's scientific statement concerning the clash of overpowering external forces and weak internal drives in life. Hulme also indicates George Eliot's awareness of the psychological concept that one's halting of everpresent change constitutes death. This attitude appears in the make-up of death-like Casaubon; and Hulme analyzes Casaubon's language as evidence of his existence, once-removed from reality.

Mark Schorer takes a similar linguistic approach to the imagery of Middlemarch.¹ Focusing on diction, he classifies the metaphors present according to connotations of unification, antithesis, progress, structure, and revelation. For instance, in considering the metaphors of unification, Schorer examines the wealth of verbs which imply a sense of merging. Although he does not explore the usually noted image patterns, Schorer does indicate the mingling of images in Middlemarch. Moreover, he perceives thematic unity in the structural function of metaphor: by recurring in

¹See his article, "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy,'" The Kenyon Review, 11 (Autumn, 1949), 539-560.

association with various characters, metaphor reveals the interrelationships central to the purpose of the novel.

D. R. Carroll examines the ruins imagery as symbolic of character development in Middlemarch.¹ After tracing images depicting ruin in George Eliot's earlier novels, Carroll discusses the epitome of her ruins images associated with Dorothea's trip to Rome. Since George Eliot viewed character development as the crux of her novels, Carroll investigates the consistency of George Eliot's use of ruins imagery in Middlemarch as this imagery reveals different facets of the characters--Dorothea, Casaubon, and Ladislav. For Dorothea the ruins imagery reinforces one segment of her moral progress through disenchantment to self-knowledge. Her recognition of the Roman decay during her wedding trip appropriately coincides with her growing disillusion with Casaubon as a wise husband. Carroll indicates that in Dorothea's thoughtful appreciation of the Roman ruins, "George Eliot has passed emphatically from the merely adjectival description of a mental phase to the truly symbolic realization."² For Casaubon, the ruins image emphasizes his vain work and lifeless existence. That Casaubon

¹See his article, "An Image of Disenchantment in the Novels of George Eliot," Review of English Studies, NS 11 (February, 1960), 29-41.

²Carroll, p. 36.

literally works among decayed remains in Rome as he figuratively lives among ruins "allows George Eliot to combine utmost verisimilitude of incident with a symbolic interpretation."¹

By contrast, Carroll notes that the Roman remains stimulate Ladislav's imagination. Unlike Casaubon, Ladislav feels his mental powers challenged by the disparate ruins; thus, the imagery underlines the contrast of character implicit in these two men. Perceptively, Carroll indicates that the ruins imagery in Middlemarch not only describes one facet of character growth but also helps "to create it and to externalize it symbolically. And because of the reality and complexity of this symbol, its significance changes with its relationship to each character."²

Bert G. Hornback views imagery as a tool of unity in Middlemarch.³ He discusses the novel as divided into two parts, one involving the spiritual Dorothea and the other encompassing the social, economic Middlemarch community. Hornback first notes George Eliot's fusion of these two parts with web imagery and mentions the weaving connotations used with Lydgate, Casaubon, Bulstrode, and Dorothea.

¹Carroll, p. 38.

²Carroll, p. 39.

³See his article, "The Organization of Middlemarch," Papers on Language and Literature, 2 (Spring, 1966), 169-175.

Moreover, Hornback cites the beginning of the "Middlemarch" portion of the novel as occurring with the pier-glass image that implies the weblike arrangement of this society. In the "Middlemarch" segment, Lydgate, the one character having connections with all of the other main characters, sits at the center of the Middlemarch web.

Although Dorothea acts on a personal level and does not participate in this circular association, George Eliot gradually, through imagery, places her in the "Middlemarch" portion. Besides the mutual web image, water and yoke images occur in conjunction with Dorothea as they occur with Lydgate, the Vincys, Bulstrode, and the Garths. Hornback notes that since the novel is concerned with the interdependence of life, Dorothea's sharing of images is a logical structural device. Moreover, Dorothea finally gains full admittance into the social world of Middlemarch society through a dramatic incident foreshadowed by imagery. Images of shortsightedness, unique to Dorothea, stress the problem which causes her to misinterpret a meeting between Will and Rosamond. Yet, this crisis awakens Dorothea to her purpose in the outside world.

Finally, in a recent study, P. Di Pasquale, Jr., considers the relationship of imagery and structure in

Middlemarch.¹ Specifically, he examines the web imagery as George Eliot employs it to unify plot, character, and setting. Citing often-quoted passages containing web images, Di Pasquale notes the complex web that informs the various strands of plot. Moreover, he indicates that George Eliot's consistent use of web imagery with each of the main characters fuses character with plot. In passing, Di Pasquale also notes the contribution of web imagery to character development. As for the interrelationship of setting to plot and character, Di Pasquale points to several key passages in which main characters stand in relief against a background suggesting a weblike organization. Significantly, he indicates that the Middlemarch community is at the center of the web and that the four place-names--Tipton, Freshitt, Lowick, Stonecourt--are the "anchor-points."² Di Pasquale, in reviewing much of the criticism already discussed in this chapter, then treats the implications of vision imagery for the central metaphor of the web.

Thus, Di Pasquale's investigation is an appropriate point of departure for the present study which analyzes imagery as a linking device between the main plot and its

¹See his article, "The Imagery and Structure of Middlemarch," English Studies, 52 (October, 1971), 425-435.

²Di Pasquale, p. 430.

subplots. As Di Pasquale perceptively notes, "three of the 'elements' which need to be unified in a novel are the traditional ones of plot, character, and setting; and by some novelists, such as George Eliot, they are fused primarily by the imagery employed."¹ Inherent in this statement is the concept of structure; moreover, the later critical studies reviewed in this chapter have indicated an essential correlation between structure and imagery in Middlemarch. For example, Di Pasquale, Harvey, and Stump have briefly considered web imagery as informing the novel, as Hornback has concisely treated web, yoke, and water images in terms of unifying Middlemarch.

The following two chapters examine, first, the main plot and, second, the subplots collectively in analyzing the imagery which enhances the recurrent themes of entrapment versus freedom, egoism versus selfishness, and self-deception versus valid perception. Thus, by examining extensively within the four story lines those images already touched on by other critics and several images not previously treated, this study reinforces the unifying contribution of imagery to Middlemarch. Indeed, Di Pasquale puts it succinctly when he comments "that it is by a consideration of the imagery as it fuses plot, character, and setting that we shall come closest to grasping the structure of Middlemarch and holding it fast."²

¹Di Pasquale, p. 426.

²Di Pasquale, p. 427.

CHAPTER III

SIGNIFICANT IMAGERY IN THE DOROTHEA PLOT

The main plot of Dorothea Brooke is the logical basis for an initial study of significant images as they emphasize theme and character in Middlemarch; the integral nature of imagery present in this plot reflects the function of similar imagery in the other narrative threads of the novel. Indeed, imagery enhances the three dichotomous themes of entrapment and freedom, egoism and selflessness, self-deception and valid perception, conflicts which Dorothea shares with other main characters. Specifically, in the unfolding of Dorothea's fate, the images of the web, the water, and the yoke signal Dorothea's entrapping relationship with the frustrated scholar Casaubon. Complementary to these images of confinement is the labyrinth image connoting the stifling existence created by the egoism of both marriage partners. Finally, images of perception and the surroundings of Lowick Manor suggest the self-deception generated by such egoistic concerns. Yet the imagery of the web and the surroundings of Lowick Manor ultimately reveal Dorothea's new sense of freedom as she

suddenly perceives her narrow self-absorption and escapes its entangling limits to join the expansive web of man's interrelationship with man.

Here in the main plot George Eliot's use of imagery is spontaneous; the images do not fall into convenient compartments but rather mingle in eliciting the various related themes. For example, this overlapping of image is apparent in the use of the web and the labyrinth since both imply simultaneously darkness, isolation, and confinement for Dorothea; and accordingly they suggest the egoism, self-deception, and consequent but temporary entrapment which plague her. Indeed, the "Prelude" of Middlemarch foreshadows Eliot's use of these two related images reflecting Dorothea's lot. After recounting the story of a fervent St. Theresa who found her epic goal in a religious order, George Eliot describes the disparity between conditions and desires for many less fortunate St. Theresa figures: "With dim lights and tangled circumstance they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement."¹ These references to semi-darkness and enmeshed situations calling up the labyrinth

¹George Eliot, Middlemarch, ed. Gordon S. Haight (Boston: The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1956), p. 3. Hereafter all further references to the text will be cited in the body of the paper. Any underlining of key words or phrases is my own and is done for emphasis in relation to the image under discussion.

and web respectively preview the background of Dorothea's experience against which she naively, futilely embraces her idealistic intentions.

Specifically, the web image depicts the tragic marriage of Dorothea and Casaubon founded only on the assumption of a propitious marriage; yet this image implies the possibilities of both freedom and entrapment. Along with her vague desire to acquire some benevolently noble philosophy that would somehow benefit those around her, Dorothea looks solely on a husband as one who could improve her mind. To this end, the mature Casaubon, who speaks with circumlocution about his actually fruitless studies, attracts the inexperienced Dorothea. Moreover, Casaubon also falls prey to the inconsistencies of appearance and reality. He feels Dorothea could provide him with brief rests from a study overly complicated and generally suspected as worthless. Thus, the Dorothea-Casaubon confusion of appearance and reality stimulated by their egoism begins weaving an ensnaring web in courtship; and it is in reference to Dorothea's groundless hopes for her marriage that Eliot sympathetically comments:

Dorothea's inferences may seem large; but really life could never have gone on at any period but for this liberal allowance of conclusions, which has facilitated marriage under the difficulties of civilization. Has any one ever pinched into its pilulous smallness the cobweb of prematrimonial acquaintanceship?

(Chapter 2, (p. 16)

The bond is tenuous during the first premarital encounters between Dorothea and Casaubon since they engulf themselves in a web woven purely from supposition; thus, the cobweb image aptly captures the insubstantial quality of their relationship.

Moreover, if the cobweb image underlines the tenuousness here, it also enhances the unyielding essence of the aging scholar's egoism as seen in a related web image: "It was that proud narrow sensitiveness which has not mass enough to spare for transformation into sympathy, and quivers thread-like in small currents of self-preoccupation or at best of any egoistic scrupulosity" (Chapter 29, p. 206). The fibers of Casaubon's existence seem to all turn inward toward self as he appears hampered by mental cobwebs that entrap a willing Dorothea in a deceptive network of marriage. Once the marriage has taken place, Casaubon's threads of self-preoccupation continue to be active: "Suspicion and jealousy of Will Ladislaw's intentions, suspicion and jealousy of Dorothea's impressions, were constantly at their weaving work" (Chapter 42, p. 307). Underlining Casaubon's petty fears concerning his nephew's demands for financial aid and his wife's ardent insistence on being helpful in his work, the web image emphasizes Casaubon's insecurity that helped to snarl his marriage.

The backdrop for Dorothea's unfortunate condition is the theme of growing interdependence between urban town and provincial society. Eliot uses the web image here to imply a positive connection: "Municipal town and rural parish gradually made fresh threads of connection" (Chapter 11, p. 71). Implicit in this weaving image are the financial and social benefits to be gained through the assimilation of parish by town. Thus, this image provides a contrasting affirmative tone as the web image depicting the union of Dorothea and Casaubon carries a somber note. As Dorothea marries to worship a wise man and Casaubon marries to possess a submissive young wife, neither appears capable of spinning threads of connection toward each other or the outside world.

Yet the correcting nature of the web image becomes a constructive force for Dorothea in her association with Will Ladislaw. Although web imagery is not explicit in the recounting of this relationship, suggestions of connection recall the web that is expansive in nature as well as delimiting. While Casaubon willingly isolates himself from people and entangles himself in a study of meaningless material, Ladislaw reveals a definite inclination for social intercourse. On meeting the Casaubons in Rome during their wedding trip, Will praises "the very miscellaneousness of Rome" (Chapter 22, p. 157). He finds satisfying stimulation

in the mental exercise of comparison offered by the great diversity of history evident in this classic city; indeed, such a state "saved one from seeing the world's ages as a set of boxlike partitions without vital connection"

(Chapter 22, p. 157). Significantly, Ladislav's denial of categorization that excludes meaningful relationships makes him Casaubon's antithesis. Appropriately, this image of partition calls up a related labyrinth image in Casaubon's preference for "pigeon-holes" as an organizing principle for his papers (Chapter 21, p. 14). The association of the latter two images suggests the contrast of light and dark existing between these two characters. Indeed, this complementary linking of the web and the labyrinth images reinforces Dorothea's plight as the web of deception ensnaring her can only constitute a dark, gloomy existence.

Dorothea, however, finally grasps this expansive connection, tending away from egoistic interest to encompass other life, which is inherent in Ladislav's image. After sadly recognizing her mistaken preconceptions about the pathetic Casaubon, Dorothea learns through hard-earned experience the import of George Eliot's observation in the "Finale" relevant to the overriding web image: "Every limit is a beginning as well as an ending For the fragment of a life, however typical, is not the sample of

an even web" (Chapter 86, p. 607). Here the web image corresponds to the community of man concept which Dorothea embraces only after a sudden revelation.

Truly in love with Will following Casaubon's death, Dorothea first deceives herself that Will has fallen in love with the fair, shallow Rosamond; and a web image underlies this self-deception. At this point, her own egoism continues to fetter her existence as she misconstrues a personal scene between Will and Rosamond. Yet when she dismisses her own grief to worry about the fates of Will, Rosamond, and her yoked husband, Lydgate, Dorothea sees the limits of her life as the beginning for others with her help. The web image is implicit in her awareness that this affair "might be a turning-point in three lives--not in her own; no there the irrevocable had happened, but--in those three lives which were touching hers with the solemn neighborhood of danger and distress" (Chapter 81, p. 582). Thus, Dorothea, feeling her bond with others, perceives the positive, social sense of connection relevant to the web image as she unselfishly returns to Rosamond to encourage her to avoid a broken marriage. It is this act of spinning out a thread to grasp another for the benefit of another that distinguishes appearance and reality for Dorothea; through Rosamond she learns finally of Will's love for herself. From Dorothea's

standpoint, then, the web rightly signifies the freedom of the egoistic individual.

As the web image initially implies the limiting entanglement of Dorothea and Casaubon's marriage, images of water contribute to the concreteness of their entrapment. In Dorothea's early self-deceptions about Casaubon, she stands in awe of his apparently great potential for feeling and experience; she accordingly exclaims in contrasting their respective passions, "'What a lake compared with my little pool'" (Chapter 3, p. 18). In an ironic sense "lake" is an appropriate analogy for Casaubon's passion since it denotes an enclosed body of water that could eventually dry up as Casaubon's emotions have done. Moreover, both the images of the "lake" and the "pool" hint at the restriction of the union between Dorothea and Casaubon: Casaubon's limited ability for love inhibits Dorothea's emotive expressions towards him.

Correspondingly, a water image is central in conveying Casaubon's deficiencies in yielding to passion in his new relationship. After feeling the need to justify the time spent in courtship with excuses of old age and laborious study, Casaubon "determined to abandon himself to the stream of feeling, and perhaps was surprised to find what an exceedingly shallow rill it was" (Chapter 7, p. 46).

Immersed in a study of dead documents, Casaubon is hardly capable of the strong emotion to which he almost grudgingly exposes himself. Indeed, pedantry and a constant concern for reputation prevent him from sustaining the steady current implicit in "the stream"; it is no wonder he can only muster a "rill" or temporary flow of feeling for Dorothea.

In addition, water imagery in this passage continues to enhance Casaubon's sparsity of emotion with a reference to symbolic baptism: "As in droughty regions baptism by immersion could only be performed symbolically, so Mr. Casaubon found that sprinkling was the utmost approach to a plunge which his stream would afford him (Chapter 7, p. 46). The baptism simile here lends immediacy to Casaubon's dire shortcomings in marriage. For him, there can be no full initiation into a true loving relationship. His scarcity of intense emotion precludes a capacity for growing affection as he manages to eke out only a scattering of feeling. Thus, this marriage in which one partner lacks a constant flow of emotion can only provide inner barriers between Dorothea and Casaubon.

Similarly, an inauspicious beginning is inherent in water imagery related to a voyage: "Having once embarked on your marital voyage, it is impossible not to be aware that you make no way and that the sea is not within sight--that,

in fact, you are exploring an enclosed basin" (Chapter 20, p. 145). At this point, a water image distinctly reveals the disparity of appearance and reality which, as an unfortunate basis for marriage, is responsible for Dorothea and Casaubon's insular relationship. On their wedding trip, Dorothea's ill-founded dream of serving Casaubon with the dutifulness of Milton's daughters quickly fades before her new awareness of his stuffy, limited perspectives. How disconcerting it is for Dorothea as she begins to discover that only a small, bordered realm of experience awaits them, not an expansive ocean for exploration. Thus, the image of the "enclosed basin" settles the question of an earlier water image suggesting a better possibility for marriage than the condition which Dorothea and Casaubon find: "The early months of marriage often are times of critical tumult--whether that of a shrimp-pool or of deeper waters--which afterwards subsides into cheerful peace" (Chapter 20, pp. 144-145). The early clash of appearance and reality in this marriage does not constitute a temporary gulf, shallow or deep, to be hurdled by Dorothea and Casaubon. Instead, this clash traps them in a narrow relationship that will not promote their movement or growth.

In this regard, a related water image signals the wanting quality of Casaubon's soul itself: "It went on

fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying" (Chapter 29, p. 206). If the "enclosed basin" image implies the still, horizonless essence of the Dorothea-Casaubon union, the swamp image aptly depicts the stagnating origin of Casaubon's listless, apathetic spirit. His soul recalls a winged creature born of the swamp who has found itself too bogged down for movement. Moreover, as a swamp is water-saturated land, so Casaubon's soul is saturated with self-consciousness. Indeed, this egoism, which prods him to labor over a worthless study for salvaging a doubtful scholarly reputation, combines with Dorothea's initial self-centeredness to check their possible mutual growth.

As web imagery reflects the antithesis of Casaubon and Ladislaw in terms of limitation and expansion for Dorothea, so a water image implies a similar dichotomy. Casaubon's dullness finds itself counterpointed by Will's vitality. Thus, Dorothea reacts favorably to Will's unexpected visit after the return from Rome: "It seemed like fresh water at her thirsty lips to speak without fear to the one person whom she had found receptive" (Chapter 37, p. 266). While Casaubon inhibits Dorothea's thoughts and feelings by his cold disinterest, Will seeks Dorothea's companionship. In Rome, he had been a willing listener for Dorothea's pent-up musings;

he had welcomed her stifled comments on art and scholarship. Thus, the water image here implies the growing bond between Will and Dorothea; with a brisk active nature, Will is the apt complement for Dorothea's fervent spirit, not the spiritless, passive Casaubon who cannot satisfy Dorothea's insistent craving for personal exchange.

Significantly, another water image reinforces Casaubon's unproductive nature integral to his sadly limited relationship with Dorothea. Here the water image relates the gross inconsistency between his efforts to make progress with his "Key to all Mythologies" and his negligible results: "One knows of the river by a few streaks amid a long-gathered deposit of uncomfortable mud" (Chapter 42, p. 306). Casaubon's bogged-down state implicit in the swamp image surfaces here in the parallel made between his futile endeavors with the "Key" and the accumulation of "uncomfortable mud." Moreover, inherent in this image are Casaubon's two chief fears concerning others' lack of interest in his grand pursuit and his own confession he has actually achieved nothing more than the harm his self-preoccupation inflicts on his marriage. Indeed, this water image emphasizes the presence of Casaubon's proud fear of failure which insulates him against Dorothea's earnest desire to share in his work.

In addition, a related water image relegates to obscurity the significance of Casaubon's very existence, "a significance which is to vanish as the waters which come and go where no man has need of them" (Chapter 42, p. 310). Here Lydgate, the doctor, finds nothing moving or awe-inspiring in the pathetic Casaubon, who labors over a futile work ignored by men as unnecessary water which passes by unheeded. This image equates the questionable work with the man himself; thus, this useless "Key" to which Casaubon has devoted much of his life has sorely limited his chances for a noted reputation and has contributed to a constraining marriage through the egoism it encourages in him.

Finally, for Casaubon two water images work together to emphasize the immediacy of death, the universal entrapment of man. After hearing from Lydgate that he will probably die in a short time because of heart disease, Casaubon suddenly feels the presence of death rather than just being aware of it, "as the vision of waters upon the earth is different from the delirious vision of the water which cannot be had to cool the burning tongue" (Chapter 42, p. 311). The proximity of death makes the sensation concrete so that "to Mr. Casaubon now, it was as if he suddenly found himself on the dark river-bank and heard

the splash of the oncoming oar, not discerning the forms, but expecting the summons" (Chapter 42, p. 311). Even at his realization of near death, Casaubon allows his mind to wander in dark places unfavorable to growth; he does not ponder the spiritual horizons now ahead of him but dwells on thoughts reminiscent of damp, limited areas. Thus, the "river-bank" image reinforces the self-entrapment of Casaubon, which has fostered the negatively confining quality of his marriage.

A third image, the yoke, also stresses the entrapment inherent in the ill-fated marriage of Dorothea and Casaubon. An epigraph to an early chapter in Book One, entitled "Miss Brooke," implies the bondage of the yoke image relevant to Dorothea:

"1st Gent. Our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves.

2nd Gent. Ay, truly: but I think it is the world

That brings the iron."
(Chapter 4, p. 25)

This image reflects the twofold condition of Dorothea's decision to marry Casaubon. She is determined to marry someone who is "above me in judgment and in all knowledge" (Chapter 4, p. 30). Thus, she chooses the dry, apparently erudite Casaubon over the young, lively Sir Chettam and actually shackles herself to a hopeless relationship. In addition,

she acts freely in her naivete because the world has not yet provided the needed experience for counteracting her unrealistic attitudes about marriage. Indeed, this image conveys the irony of Dorothea's situation; she willingly chooses to be hampered by Casaubon's unloving nature and his stubborn dedication to the vague "Key," which if ever completed would be a useless history of dead traditions. It is these unfortunate tendencies of Casaubon that lend "the iron" to the marriage enfettering for both partners.

The yoke image appears specifically in reference to Dorothea's possible promise to Casaubon concerning his vain work. Here the yoke implies the entrapment of their marriage, a sense of imprisonment which might haunt Dorothea even after Casaubon's death. When Casaubon broaches the subject of Dorothea's carrying out his wishes, she anticipates an additional sense of entrapment: "Many incidents had been leading her to the conjecture of some intention on her husband's part which might make a new yoke for her" (Chapter 48, p. 350).

Correspondingly, an allusion to the yoke in conjunction with a labyrinth image appears as Dorothea reviews Casaubon's tedious work after his death. Casaubon had gradually gained faith in Dorothea's sincerity in wanting to help him; and had he lived, he would have exacted from

her that promise of finishing his work: "He willingly imagined her toiling under the fetters of a promise to erect a tomb with his name upon it (Chapter 50, p. 362). But unfortunately for Dorothea, Casaubon procrastinates in asking for this binding promise so that she does not have time to respond before his death: "He had only time to ask for that promise by which he sought to keep his cold grasp on Dorothea's life" (Chapter 50, p. 362). This tactile image reinforces the yoked condition which Dorothea suffers during Casaubon's life and which she could have continued to struggle under as a widow; yet the revelation of Casaubon's codicil, jealously forbidding her to marry Ladislaw under the penalty of her disinheritance, releases Dorothea from any sense of loyal bondage.

Complementary to these images of confinement, labyrinth imagery suggests both a stifling quality void of warmth and the antithesis of darkness and light in particularly enhancing Dorothea's egoism and Casaubon's egoistic, bleak existence. The labyrinth image is quite suitable for revealing Dorothea's initial state:

The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent: and with such a nature, struggling in the bands 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, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency.

(Chapter 3, p. 21)

Here there seems to be an overlapping of images with implications of the confining web, water, and yoke complemented by the intricate network indicative of Dorothea's restricted, purposeless life. Hampered by inexperience in a provincial society, Dorothea finds her goals for noble achievement frustrated by maze-like dead ends.

But ironically Dorothea, in seeking to escape the aimless, trivial paths of her life, flees to a darker existence with Casaubon: "Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought" (Chapter 3, p. 17). Her desire for a marriage which would allow "the freedom of voluntary submission" leads her to see mirrored in Casaubon the desirable Milton-like figure she could serve and worship as a husband (Chapter 3, p. 21). Thus, the labyrinth imagery here underlines Dorothea's egoism as it is the dubious "labyrinthine extension" of Casaubon's mind which deceives her because of her own vague desires. Indeed, the Miltonic allusion to Paradise Lost in the epigraph to Chapter Three underlines Dorothea's innocence:

"Eve
The story heard attentive, and was filled
With admiration and deep muse, to hear
Of things so high and strange."

(Chapter 3, p. 17)

Dorothea listens naively in awe to Casaubon, her "'affable archangel,'" and his impractical plan for collating mythical fragments (Chapter 3, p. 17). Like Eve, Dorothea does not listen well and precipitates her own fall.

Hence, where Dorothea should perceive the negative qualities, darkness and restriction, of the labyrinth in Casaubon, she sees quite the opposite: "Now she would be allowed to live continually in the light of a mind that she could reverence" (Chapter 5, p. 32). Thus, she misses the underlying revelation of a statement made by Casaubon himself in answer to Sir Chettam's insistence to know Dorothea's reason for disliking horsemanship: "We must keep the germinating grain away from the light" (Chapter 2, p. 16). This image of growth in darkness parallels Casaubon's own existence and that of his "Key"; he cultivates his cryptic work in a gloomy atmosphere lacking illumination where no significant growth of ideas can occur. Moreover, that Dorothea overlooks the ominous note of this image underlines her egoistic approach to marriage.

Yet any light which Casaubon can offer his relationship with Dorothea finds itself accurately described in

Celia's thoughts: "His face was often lit up by a smile like pale wintry sunshine" (Chapter 3, p. 19). This image implies the dimness common to a labyrinth of winding passages as well as the lack of great warmth to be found in such enclosed places. Thus, weak and fleeting, Casaubon's spark of life cannot attain the spirit and intensity of living which Dorothea's fervent nature craves.

Celia again perceptively reflects on this relationship when she learns of Dorothea's acceptance of Casaubon: "There was something funereal in the whole affair, and Mr. Casaubon seemed to be the officiating clergy man" (Chapter 5, p. 36). The reference to a funeral calls up the labyrinth image since Casaubon often dwells in subterranean tunnels; moreover, he has spent many unproductive years researching his fruitless "Key" in deserted catacombs. Indeed, he has acquired the somber mannerisms reminiscent of one dispensing the last rights for making final this union. A related image emphasizes the ego-stimulated confusion of appearance and reality in Dorothea. Ignoring the obvious hints of his limited nature, Dorothea awesomely compares the vague, abstract comments of Casaubon to "a specimen from a mine, or the inscription on the door of a museum which might open on the treasures of the past ages" (Chapter 3, p. 24). This imagery recalls the subterranean atmosphere inherent

in the funeral image, yet Dorothea ironically misinterprets the dismal application. Indeed, she seems to applaud Casaubon's preoccupation with the buried past, with a museum-like existence, at the expense of the vital present.

Unfortunately, it is not until their wedding trip in Rome that Dorothea begins to sense Casaubon's Minotaur existence. The mythical allusion to Ariadne, a statue by which Dorothea stands as she visits the Vatican, corresponds to the labyrinth image and provides a fitting contrast in relation to Dorothea's lot (Chapter 19, p. 140). Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, helped Theseus to successfully escape the labyrinth with the aid of a thread. Dorothea, however, cannot help Casaubon shun his labyrinthine existence; indeed, he seems to cling to what security he finds in an atmosphere removed from reality. Casaubon's own egoism is implicit in this allusion as he marries Dorothea solely for reasons of companionship and brief rests from a work that too often nags his buried awareness of its dispensable nature. He relies on Dorothea's admiration and enthusiasm as sources of encouragement, but he always returns to submerge himself in the work that dominates his life and insulates him from his wife. Thus, Casaubon is not reminiscent of Theseus but rather he recalls the Minotaur, who perpetually resides in the labyrinth and devours the sacrifices sent to him; then

Dorothea, in this context, is a willing sacrifice, who consents to Casaubon's Minotaur grasp.

Dorothea's own egoism appears in an udder image secondary to the labyrinth image. Although this image does not connote the darkness and narrowness of the labyrinth, the udder image does emphasize the motivating self-interest which places Dorothea in a restricting relationship. In an authorial comment reflecting on Dorothea's approach to marriage, George Eliot uses the udder image as illustrated in Francis Quarle's Emblems: "We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves" (Chapter 21, p. 156). As Gordon Haight indicates, this image implies free will.¹ Voluntarily, Dorothea encourages her union with Casaubon because she thinks he will be her guide in a rewarding life of valuable learning; indeed, "she was looking forward to higher initiation in ideas, as she was looking forward to marriage, and blending her dim conceptions of both" (Chapter 10, p. 63). The dimness of her thought is typical of the labyrinth of illusion in which she dwells at this point; as she anticipates only the intellectual nourishment she will derive from this marriage, she egoistically disregards Casaubon's desires, "that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence

¹Haight, p. 156, n. 1.

the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference" (Chapter 21, p. 157). Labyrinth imagery mentioned earlier has shown the lack of light in Casaubon's existence; thus, his "centre of self" has only a shadowy essence to offer Dorothea. Hence, the udder image particularizes Dorothea's moral shortsightedness, which combines with Casaubon's scholarly insecurities and contributes to their hopeless marriage.

Another labyrinth image stresses the contrast between these two "equivalent centre[s] of self," one holding bright expectations of her husband and the other nurturing a gloomy existence:

How was it that in the weeks since her marriage, Dorothea had not distinctly observed but felt with a stifling depression, that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither?

(Chapter 20, p. 145)

Implicit here is the antithesis of darkness and light. The imagery pictures Casaubon's mind as a maze-like series of small waiting rooms that never enter into more spacious, purposeful rooms but constitute only a chain of twisting passages without a destination. Inherent in the negative connotations of the imagery is the egoism which prevents Casaubon's clear thinking. Yet Dorothea's egoism has

nourished the idea of finding broad horizons in Casaubon's mind; now she must accept the suffocating, musty existence which she has anxiously agreed to share.

Further labyrinth imagery emphasizes the disparity between the minds of Dorothea and Casaubon: "What was fresh to her mind was worn out to his; and such capacity of thought and feeling as had ever been stimulated in him by the general life of mankind had long shrunk to a sort of dried preparation, a lifeless embalmmment of knowledge" (Chapter 20, p. 146). Implicitly, darkness and light are present here; as Dorothea eagerly absorbs new knowledge, Casaubon's aging, listless mental processes contribute to his dark, somber essence. Moreover, the image of his capacity for knowledge and feeling as diminished and spiritlessly preserved recalls the earlier funeral image as it suggests Casaubon's pre-occupation with himself even above a serious regard for his work. The implicit catacombs in the funeral image, filled with winding tunnels and ancient tombs, can be no more lifeless than Casaubon's own thoughts of and reactions to the world around him.

Appropriately then, labyrinth imagery continues to underline egoism and the consequent absence of illumination in Casaubon's study habits:

Poor Mr. Casaubon himself was lost among small closets and winding stairs, and in an agitated dimness about the Cabeiri, or in an exposure of other mythologists' ill-considered parallels, easily lost sight of any purpose which had prompted him to these labours. With his taper stuck before him he forgot the absence of windows, and in bitter manuscript remarks on other men's notions about the solar deities, he had become indifferent to the sunlight.

(Chapter 20, p. 147)

Recalling the Minotaur myth, this imagery emphasizes the narrow, labyrinthine quality of Casaubon's mind. He buries himself in minutiae that distract him from a significant goal; egoistically he seems to wear blinders as he accustoms himself to faint light in pursuing the trivial at the expense of the relevant. Refusing to acknowledge the learned conclusions of others, he creates and sustains his state of dim perception. Also, Casaubon's self-conscious nature is integral to his bleak egoism. Accordingly, another image of gloom and restriction underlines Casaubon's egoistic reaction concerning others' criticisms about his questionable work. Hints of negative critical judgments by his peers threaten Casaubon's scholarly attempts but do not jolt him out of his obscure, tedious thought processes; instead he keeps such painfully perceptive comments in "a dark closet of his verbal memory" (Chapter 29, p. 206). Labyrinth imagery also conveys the backdrop for Casaubon's reminders of this criticism: "Even when Mr. Casaubon was

carrying his taper among tombs of the past, those modern figures came athwart the dim light, and interrupted his diligent exploration" (Chapter 42, p. 308). Although Casaubon recognizes the validity of his peers' comments, he still prefers to remain hidden away while composing his "Key." The imagery here stresses the murkiness of Casaubon's study; he trudges through a dismal academic atmosphere and ignores any contradicting light that might interrupt him.

It is Will's appearance in Rome during Dorothea and Casaubon's wedding trip that reveals the labyrinthine influence on Casaubon's faded physical condition. Moreover, the imagery employed reinforces the antithesis of Will and Casaubon in terms of darkness and light. Casaubon appears "all the more dimmer and faded" in contrast to Will, whose appearance "was one of sunny brightness"; indeed Casaubon "stood rayless" (Chapter 21, p. 155). Thus, as his constant plodding through the valueless "Key" takes its toll on Casaubon's physical condition, Dorothea becomes naturally attracted to the lightness of Will's spirit; to her, "the mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air" (Chapter 37, p. 265). This imagery stresses Dorothea's stifling, restricted feelings in her life with Casaubon; his self-centered determination to dwell in the

musty corners of useless knowledge causes Dorothea's sense of suffocating, dark imprisonment. Moreover, a labyrinth image reveals Will's strong distaste for this marriage between an aging pedant and a young vibrant woman: "if he [Casaubon] chose to grow grey crunching bones in a cavern, he had no business to be luring a girl into his companionship" (Chapter 37, p. 264). The auditory image here adds an eerie dimension to Casaubon's musty existence and also reinforces the decaying quality of his life.

Additional labyrinth imagery implies Dorothea's sharing a living grave with Casaubon and his futile "Key": "Now it appeared that she was to live more and more in a virtual tomb, where there was the apparatus of a ghastly labour producing what would never see the light" (Chapter 48, p. 348). Indeed, the struggling itself to complete the worthless "Key" seems reminiscent here of the monstrous Minotaur ready to consume its victims. Dorothea dreads the endless time she might be forced to spend in vainly attempting to finish the "Key" herself. Labyrinth imagery vivifies the diverse, unrelated materials that must be sorted: the documents are like "shattered mummies, and fragments of a tradition which was itself a mosaic wrought from crushed ruins" (Chapter 48, p. 351). The image of "mummies" links with the earlier image of Casaubon's thought as "a lifeless

embalmmment of knowledge" (Chapter 20, p. 146). The preservation of irrelevant, piecemeal knowledge, whether in the mind or in voluminous notes, cannot result in a finished, orderly compilation. In addition, the fact that "shattered mummies" and "crushed ruins" are common to labyrinthine enclosures emphasizes the gloomy futility of the task. It is no wonder that Casaubon seems to move in "a dim and clogging medium" as he plods through his dull, monotonous work (Chapter 50, p. 361). The imagery here recalls the faintly lit labyrinth with its stuffy atmosphere inhibiting growth much as Casaubon's ego-oriented mind impedes the evolution of meaningful ideas.

Similarly, as labyrinth imagery connotes the stifling egoistic state of marriage for Dorothea and Casaubon, images of vision and reflection convey the self-deception aroused by the egoism of both partners. A notable vision image emphasizes the effect upon Casaubon of suspicions and jealousy concerning Ladislav and Dorothea. In an authorial comment on Casaubon, George Eliot considers the consequences of one's self-preoccupation: "Will not a tiny speck close to our vision blot out the glory of the world, and leave only a margin by which we see the blot? I know no speck so troublesome as self" (Chapter 42, p. 307). Actually, this

image coincides with the labyrinth image in a mutual underlining of egoism. Yet the latter image stresses the theme of self-deception as the particle representing the self obstructs one's full view. Such is the case with Casaubon. He has no chance for valid perception because of his constant self-brooding. He allows petty worries about himself to distort his vision; wrapped up in his own insecurities occasioned by the worrisome "Key," Casaubon cannot accurately perceive Ladislav's future intentions or Dorothea's true sentiments concerning his scholarly attempts.

Yet George Eliot's imagery reveals a somewhat sympathetic portrayal of Casaubon. A mirror image in an authorial comment emphasizes the deceptiveness of appearances: "I am not sure that the greatest man of his age . . . could escape those unfavorable reflections of himself in various small mirrors: and even Milton, looking for his portrait in a spoon, must submit to have the facial angle of a bumpkin" (Chapter 10, p. 62). George Eliot stresses the inaccurate reflections of "small mirrors" for even a great man like Milton. Thus, as Casaubon is not physically appealing, George Eliot cautions against the self-deception inherent in judging a man on the sole basis of his physical appearance. Rather Casaubon's flaw is egoism, universal to all men, which

encourages his evaluation of people and actions only in relation to himself.

A second image of reflection emphasizes the weakness in judging one by outward appearance. Mrs. Cadwallader, the matchmaker among the parishes of Freshitt and Tipton, shares Sir James' disgust for the imminent marriage of Dorothea and Casaubon. When Sir James implies that Casaubon does not seem like a red-blooded man, Mrs. Cadwallader exaggerates, "No. Somebody put a drop under a magnifying glass, and it was all semicolons and parentheses" (Chapter 8, p. 52). This image conveys a supposedly close inspection of Casaubon, but it actually reveals Mrs. Cadwallader's cold indifference to her fellowman as what she assumes would be reflected is founded on the hearsay of other Middlemarchers. In addition, her hurt pride, her egoism, in not being the key ingredient in this match tinges her perception of the aging bridegroom.

A mirror image also enhances Dorothea's self-deception in her attraction to Casaubon. While still enthusiastically impressed by Casaubon's apparently vast learning, Dorothea belittles her own knowledge by contrast: "'He thinks with me . . . or, rather, he thinks a whole world of which my thought is but a two-penny mirror'" (Chapter 3, p. 18). Dorothea's mirror is indeed faulty

since it reflects only the great wealth of knowledge she wants to see in the dry Casaubon. Moreover, this image stresses Dorothea's self-deception by implying an eagerness to discount her own learning, an education which is inextricably mingled with intense emotion.

Finally, a mirror image underlines Dorothea's susceptibility to self-deception in an epigraph beginning Book Eight, "Sunset and Sunrise":

Full souls are double mirrors, making still
An endless vista of fair things before,
Repeating things behind.

(Chapter 72, p. 537)

In spite of her sad experience as Casaubon's wife after impulsively marrying him with misguided zeal, Dorothea rushes in to salvage Lydgate's reputation. The townspeople have linked Lydgate with Bulstrode, the bank president, whose name has fallen into disrepute since his questionable past became known. Bulstrode's large loan to Lydgate, the debt-ridden doctor, at the same time that Bulstrode cares for a critically ill enemy, appears to be a bribe after the death of the patient. Impetuous and intensely concerned for her friend, Dorothea hastens to Lydgate's defense without the least doubt of his innocence. Just as her emotions convinced Dorothea of Casaubon's valid learning before their marriage, so feelings persuade her to defend Lydgate.

The mirror image particularizes Dorothea's essence--an intense nature makes her repeat what was with Casaubon a mistake in blind faith as she optimistically anticipates the pleasant situation of aiding Lydgate in the financing of his hospital.

Likewise, imagery in the surroundings of Lowick Manor reveals the restricting consequences of Dorothea's self-deception; yet this imagery finally signals Dorothea's release into a world of social interaction made possible by her valid perception. "Lowick," the name of Casaubon's manor, itself carries significance relevant to Dorothea's unfortunate condition after marrying the frustrated scholar. The name images a nearly extinguished candle with its dim light by which the staid Casaubon persistently strives to complete a futile work. "Lowick" also implies Casaubon's low spirits, his low capacity for empathy with Dorothea which eventually contributes to her sense of anxiety and imprisonment as his wife.

Moreover, images of the landscape of Lowick complement its solemn name. When Dorothea first visits the manor before her marriage, the estate and the house present themselves in melancholy terms with the "sombre yews" of the grounds and the "greenish stone" and "small windowed"

quality of the building (Chapter 9, p. 54). Traditionally symbolic of grief, the yew significantly foreshadows Dorothea's unhappiness. In addition, the green color of the stone reinforces the melancholy Dorothea experiences in the manor-house as Casaubon's wife; the small windows also preview her sorrowful state as they admit only faint light, symbolizing the illumination which her relationship with Casaubon will yield. Indeed, Dorothea is oblivious to the fact that the house seems to reverberate with "autumnal decline," an image which foreshadows the sense of immobility in her coming marriage (Chapter 9, p. 54). Having deceived herself by confusing appearance and reality in Casaubon, Dorothea is blind to the unmistakable compatibility of the aging scholar with his house; in fact, "Mr. Casaubon . . . had no bloom that could be thrown into relief by that background" (Chapter 9, p. 54). Thus, this marriage ultimately follows a similar pattern since not even the vibrant Dorothea is able to elicit any vigor from Casaubon.

Even the interior of the house portends the darkness and limits of Dorothea's future. The "dark book-shelves" in the constantly shuttered library and "the carpets and curtains with colours subdued by time" suggest the sense of futility under which Dorothea gradually suffers as Mrs.

Casaubon (Chapter 9, p. 54). Moreover, the implicit absence of light and the neutrality of color brought on by age recall the labyrinth imagery connoting musty indifference as manifested in Casaubon. Indeed, the trivial design in the "bird's-eye views on the walls of the corridor" presages the lack of growth in this relationship as Dorothea hopes to find a commitment through marriage and Casaubon pursues his life's goal in isolation (Chapter 9, p. 54).

The imagery descriptive of Dorothea's boudoir at Lowick implies gloom; faded blue furnishings and a tapestry bearing a "blue-green world with a pale stag in it" foreshadow Dorothea's melancholy when she must resign herself to a marriage far different from the one she has egoistically envisioned (Chapter 9, p. 55). Also, the condition of the furniture forebodes the precarious state of Dorothea and Casaubon's relationship: "The chairs and tables were thin-legged and easy to upset"; based on thin misconceptions, their marriage is similarly fragile (Chapter 9, p. 55).

Correspondingly, imagery in the surroundings and interior of Lowick reinforces the hopelessness of this marriage after Dorothea, finally disillusioned, returns from the wedding trip in Rome. Both the landscape and the interior

seem to reaffirm the futility inherent in Dorothea's role as Casaubon's wife:

A light snow was falling as they descended at the door, and in the morning, when Dorothea passed from her dressing-room into the blue-green boudoir . . . , she saw the long avenue of limes lifting their trunks from a white earth, and spreading white branches against the dun and motionless sky. The distant flat shrank in uniform whiteness and low-hanging uniformity of cloud. The very furniture in the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before: the stag in the tapestry looked more like a ghost in his ghostly blue-green world; the volumes of polite literature in the bookcase looked more like immovable imitations of books.
(Chapter 28, p. 201)

What Dorothea had blindly overlooked or misinterpreted in her idealism during courtship is now painfully evident to her. The neutrality basic to the snow-laden land and gray, static sky corresponds to Casaubon's indifference, his unproductive activity, which breeds the dreaded sense of confinement for Dorothea. Moreover, the seeming diminished quality of the landscape and the furniture of her melancholy boudoir complement Dorothea's now inescapable notion of a narrow existence, void of rewarding intellectual horizons. To Dorothea, the "pale stag" in the blue-green tapestry is ghostlike now, a vestige of life just as Dorothea's disappointing marriage is a vestige of her naive expectations. Appropriately, the image of the books implies Casaubon's very nature since his life has been uselessly spent in dark

libraries. For nearly thirty years he has conducted the pretense of a study while fearfully aware that its insignificance might be openly revealed. Yet Casaubon remains unyielding to a change in his ideas or academic approach. Along with this sense of inflexibility apropos of Casaubon, this image of the motionless books reflects the very nature of the "Key," itself an "immovable imitation" of a book.

It is this sense of immobility originating in Casaubon which carries over into Dorothea's widowhood as evidenced in further landscape imagery. After Casaubon's death, Dorothea contemplates her future while looking out of her boudoir window: "Every leaf was at rest in the sunshine, the familiar scene was changeless, and seemed to represent the prospect of her life, full of motiveless ease--motiveless, if her own energy could not seek out the reasons for ardent action" (Chapter 54, p. 394). The landscape seems to portend the dreaded inactivity bequeathed to Dorothea as Casaubon's widow. The changelessness implicit in the imagery indicates the definite possibility of stagnation for Dorothea; yet it is this recognition which spurs Dorothea to acknowledge her own responsibility in finding a productive life.

Dorothea discovers the tactic for renewal of her life in the emotional crisis of assuming she has lost

Ladislaw's love to Rosamond. Significant imagery in a landscape scene, which Dorothea views from her boudoir window, enhances her sudden revelation:

On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving--perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining.

(Chapter 80, p. 578)

Ironically, Dorothea's last instance of confusing appearance and reality, i. e., believing Ladislaw was making love to Rosamond, helps awaken Dorothea to a new role in life. The "light piercing into the room" at dawn is full of import now; Dorothea looks out the window to see and appreciate practical activity since she is not a "spectator," but involuntarily an active member (p. 578). Moreover, the bow window from which she watches this activity signals Dorothea's readiness to reach out to others. The father, mother, and baby seem to symbolize the journey of life in which Dorothea realizes her duty to participate despite past griefs and losses. Dorothea wakens to acknowledge the "labour," "endurance," and forward movement in life; now she actively accepts the challenge.

Ultimately, landscape imagery pictures Dorothea's final happiness with Will after her vivid recognition of the necessity for interdependence in life. "Looking at the evergreens which were being tossed, and were showing the pale underside of their leaves against the blackening sky," Will and Dorothea stand before a window and watch an approaching storm, the first time they have met since Dorothea's misconception about Ladislav and Rosamond (Chapter 83, p. 592). This imagery reflects the inner passion they both feel for one another; the tossing movement here underscores their inward conflict of both exhilaration and hesitation in being so close. Yet the storm continues to move in: "leaves and little branches hurled about, and the thunder was getting nearer. The light was more and more sombre, but there came a flash of lightning which made them start and look at each other, and then smile" (Chapter 83, p. 593). The forceful thrusting about of the leaves and branches corresponds to the growing intensity of emotion in Dorothea and Will; moreover, as the thunder is imminent so is their inevitable coming together. The dimming light, indeed, offsets the streak of lightning that forcefully initiates their first look at each other. Then they begin to talk obliquely of their love when "a vivid flash of lightning . . . lit each of them up for the other" (Chapter 83, p. 593).

The light in this landscape image illuminates that attachment which they cannot ignore; the lightning ultimately seems to crystallize for them the knowledge that they can overcome any obstacles in marriage because of their all-consuming love. In spite of "the rain . . . dashing against the window-panes as if an angry spirit were within it" and "the [accompanying] great swoop of the wind," Dorothea and Will finally pledge their faithful love to each other (Chapter 83, p. 593). The gloomy, climactic conditions point up by contrast the lasting fulfillment they find together. Moreover, as they stand "with their hands clasped, like two children, looking out on the storm" (Chapter 83, p. 593), George Eliot's allusion to John Donne's poem, "The Good-Morrow," in the epigraph underlines this rewarding sense of fulfillment in one another:

"And now good-morrow to our waking souls
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room, an everywhere."
(Chapter 83, p. 589 II. 8-11)

Dorothea and Ladislav's unrestrained love is just awakening; they are like children beginning a new life together, a life of love devoid of petty jealousies such as Casaubon suffered. Moreover, the simplicity of Donne's metaphysical conceit, "for love all love of other sights controls, and makes one

little room, an everywhere," accurately captures the basic concept of interdependence which Dorothea recognizes first in watching the interactions of men from her boudoir and then in her finding with Will a satisfying mutual dependence based on love.

Thus, in the main plot the images of the web, water, and yoke underline the restraining marriage of Dorothea and Casaubon as labyrinth imagery reinforces the egoism of both partners. Also, images involving vision and the surroundings of Lowick Manor illuminate first the self-deception occasioned by their egoism. Yet, web and landscape images finally signal Dorothea's transformation in character as she suddenly acknowledges the entangling self-absorption which she now escapes to join the expanding web of interrelationships with men.

Likewise, Chapter Four in examining the three subplots analyzes similar image patterns which enhance variations on the three dichotomous themes of entrapment versus freedom, egoism versus selflessness, and self-deception versus valid perception, three sets of alternatives also open to the other main characters, Fred and Mary, Bulstrode, and Lydgate and Rosamond.

CHAPTER IV

SIGNIFICANT IMAGERY IN THE INTERTWINING SUBPLOTS

In the three subplots of Middlemarch involving the Mary-Fred relationship, the Bulstrode dilemma, and the Lydgate-Rosamond marriage, George Eliot employs in varying degrees imagery similar to the imagery of the main plot. In the supporting narrative threads, George Eliot concentrates on particular aspects of the three dichotomous themes already established in the main plot--entrapment versus freedom, egoism versus selflessness, and self-deception versus valid perception--as she uses related images of the web, water, yoke, and mirror to underscore the themes inherent in the characters' actions. In the same way that the imagery of the main plot emphasizes both positive and negative thematic elements, these subplots contain similar images which at once recall by comparison or contrast situations in the main plot and intensify the development of particular supporting plots. Moreover, the overlapping of image basic to the related themes in the Dorothea story is also central to the elaboration of each subplot. Specifically, recurrent images primarily correspond to the positive aspect of each two-fold

theme in the Garth-Vincy narrative thread. On the other hand, the supporting plots concerning Bulstrode and the Lydgate-Rosamond marriage yield recurrent images pointing up the tragedy of each situation.

In the Garth-Vincy subplot, George Eliot uses relatively few images in creating a moral point of contrast for the other narrative threads of Middlemarch. Thematically, Mary and the accompanying characters of Caleb, Mrs. Garth, and Mr. Farebrother are not entrapped in life since they are not self-centered and, thus, suffer no consequent self-deceptions. Instead of relying heavily on imagery to depict these characters' noble qualities, traits which constitute a model for comparing the other characters, George Eliot uses sparingly recurrent images of the main plot and includes a few reinforcing but isolated images. Although George Eliot carefully stresses through imagery the tragic faults suffered by other characters, she apparently felt it not as necessary to portray graphically the qualities inherent in the praiseworthy characters of this subplot.

Yet, despite the keenness and regularity with which the central images of the web, yoke, water, mirror, and landscape underscore the negative thematic elements of entrapment, egoism, and self-deception elsewhere in the

novel, in a scattering of instances within the Garth-Vincy subplot these recurrent images emphasize the positive themes of freedom, selflessness, and valid perception. Thus, for Mary, Caleb, and Mr. Farebrother, web and yoke imagery does not connote a life of restriction, as these images stress for Dorothea and Casaubon, but implies a busy, useful life. Likewise, whereas landscape imagery points up Dorothea's temporary egoism and self-deception, this kind of imagery reinforces Mary's constant selflessness. Moreover, for Mary and Mrs. Garth vision imagery does not foreshadow self-deception and hindrance, evident in Dorothea and Casaubon, but corresponds to the consistently valid perception of both mother and daughter.

Yet contrast is present within this subplot in the characters of Featherstone and Fred Vincy; they are not admirable characters but rather are typical egoists. Although George Eliot uses few images pertinent to these two characters, the images have great bearing on the theme of egoism. Images apropos of Featherstone particularly illuminate the character of Fred. Also the few images employed in relation to Fred accentuate his entrapping egoism and illusion as well as his final achievement of valid perception under the influence of the Garths and Mr. Farebrother.

Web and yoke imagery connotes either entrapment or freedom for the characters involved. The earliest image pertaining to this subplot occurs in the epigraph of Chapter 12, an allusion to Chaucer's Miller's Tale which is applicable to the devious Featherstone:

"He had more tow on his distaiffe
Than Gerveis knew."
(Chapter 12, p. 77)

Here a Middle English quotation carries a related web image; specifically, it is an image of spinning which appropriately reflects Featherstone's selfish desire to spin trouble for Fred, a nephew by marriage, who groundlessly hopes to collect an inheritance at the old man's death. Also, this spinning or knitting image points up the entangling web that Featherstone attempts to weave as he makes out two wills and plans his own elaborate funeral in manipulating and vexing his equally selfish relatives. Indeed, Featherstone's perverse nature is evident in his very name, a surname carrying two irreconcilable opposites and, thus, a condition underlining his stubbornness.

Another web image relative to Featherstone occurs in his own speech. After Fred brings the demanded confirmation that he has not, in Bulstrode's belief, gambled on Featherstone's name, Featherstone gloats to Fred over

Mr. Vincy's financially trapped condition: "He's [Bulstrode] got a pretty strong string round your father's leg" (Chapter 14, p. 100). This image connoting a binding web appears to reinforce the sense of monetary restriction which Featherstone enjoys imposing or seeing imposed on someone else. Ironically, although Featherstone despises Bulstrode, the two men have much in common since they both find satisfaction in controlling the purse strings of others; indeed, they are very much like the purseweb spiders who trap their victims in their purse-shaped webs.

In contrast, as Fred is hampered by supposition, Mary's constant sewing corresponds to that connotation of the web image that implies busy, purposeful activity; Mary's kind of web symbolizes the interconnection of life, an interdependence which Mary finds gratifying. On one of his trips to Stone Court for a visit with Featherstone, Fred stops to talk with Mary whom he adores. As they talk of Fred's future, which Mary realizes he is basing on an uncertain inheritance, Fred unintentionally gets Mary to agree that in a suitor she would admire wisdom, a trait Fred lacks. At this point, George Eliot narrates: "Mary was sewing swiftly, and seemed provokingly mistress of the situation. When a conversation has taken a wrong turn for us, we only get farther and farther into the swamp of

awkwardness. This was what Fred Vincy felt" (Chapter 14, p. 102). Mary's rapid sewing signals her earnest actions in a life of appreciated interrelationships. On the other hand, the water image complements the restricting sense of the web image as the image of the "swamp" stresses Fred's entrapment, his potential stagnation while delaying his life's plans for only the unconfirmed possibility of an inheritance from Featherstone. Moreover, that Mary appears as "mistress of the situation" implies a yoke image applicable to Fred's constant lovelorn state in her presence.

Another image related to Fred's binding, unfounded supposition occurs in connection with Featherstone's greedy relatives who also thrive on the possibility of inheritance: "Probabilities are as various as the faces to be seen in fretwork or paper hangings" (Chapter 32, p. 224). This image of a bordered design of intricate interlacing, reminiscent of web imagery, underlines Fred's bounded existence; Fred is trapped by his uncertain future actions that hinge on the wealth he may receive at Featherstone's death.

Moreover, after he learns that Featherstone's second will has left him nothing, that he must earn a living, Fred is slow to adjust to his apprenticeship under Mr. Garth. He works diligently but gladly jumps at the chance to play

billiards at the Green Dragon while Mary is visiting friends elsewhere. Here a yoke image conveys Fred's temporary but only partial release from responsibility: "Fred like any other strong dog who cannot slip his collar, had pulled up the staple of his chain and made a small escape" (Chapter 66, p. 491). Although Fred is grateful to be working for Mary's father since this position saved him from a Church vocation, he still feels hampered and somewhat trapped by the unceasing sense of duty he must fulfill before his marriage to Mary. Yet Fred is still unaware of his serious competition in the person of Mr. Farebrother.

Yoke imagery corresponds to Mr. Farebrother's nature in both terms of entrapment and freedom. An amateur entomologist and an avid whist player, Mr. Farebrother sometimes finds himself struggling emotionally with his vocation of clergyman, an occupation that sorely limits him from fully enjoying his hobbies with a clear conscience. Yet when Dorothea offers Mr. Farebrother a second parish, the Lowick living, and more financial security, he is more willing to be harnessed to duty now that the harness has been loosened: "His was one of the natures in which conscience gets the more active when the yoke of life ceases to gall them" (Chapter 52, p. 375).

Thus, Mr. Farebrother, who is an unselfish, sensitive man, dutifully speaks to Mary for Fred despite his own growing feeling for her. His name even symbolizes his generous, objective approach in his dealings with others; he is certainly fair-minded and brotherly toward Fred and Mary. In attempting to have Mary commit herself one way or the other concerning Fred as a potential husband, Mr. Farebrother uses related metaphorical language: "'I understand that you resist any attempt to fetter you, but either your feeling for Fred Vincy excludes your entertaining another attachment, or it does not'" (Chapter 52, p. 379). His statement suggestive of the yoke image foreshadows Mr. Farebrother's key role in joining Fred and Mary in marriage; not only does he suppress his own love for Mary, but he actively encourages their relationship. In the epigraph to this chapter, "His heart / The lowliest duties on itself did lay," George Eliot's allusion to William Wordsworth's sonnet on Milton underlines Mr. Farebrother's magnanimous quality. Both his collecting spiders and his inviting Mary to view an especially good specimen in his den so that she and Fred can be alone symbolize the positive action which Mr. Farebrother takes in weaving this union.

Likewise, Caleb sees the binding quality of marriage as a positive influence, and he hopes to facilitate

the marriage of Fred and Mary. In telling Mrs. Bulstrode of his plan for Fred to manage Stone Court at Bulstrode's departure, Caleb fittingly employs a yoke image: "Marriage is a taming thing. Fred would want less of my bit and bridle" (Chapter 68, p. 506). Caleb acknowledges the reins by which he controls Fred in his apprenticeship, yet he appreciates the subduing, curbing influence which a marriage of love can exert over Fred in toning him down into a stable wage earner.

Mary's constant selflessness which gradually aids in Fred's full acceptance of responsibility finds itself reflected in the landscape surrounding Stone Court, where Mary unselfishly spends much time caring for the crotchety Featherstone. In a passage which Gordon Haight cites as autobiographical, George Eliot describes "the pool in the corner where the grasses were dank and trees leaned whisperingly; the great oak shadowing a bare place in mid-pasture; the high bank where the ash-trees grew; the sudden slope of the old marl-pit making a red background for the burdock" (Chapter 12, p. 77). The physical characteristics of this serene setting correspond to Mary's strong, generous nature; the bending trees parallel Mary's willingly helpful attitude

¹Gordon S. Haight, George Eliot: A Biography (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 4.

toward others, the oak and ash-trees symbolize her emotional strength, and the burdock plants with their heart-shaped leaves and hooked bristles reflect Mary's generosity and loyalty.

Accordingly, a later epigraph consisting of two verses from William Blake's poem "The Clod and the Pebble" highlights Mary's unselfishness:

"Love seeketh not itself to please
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a heaven in hell's despair."

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Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a hell in heaven's despite."
(Chapter 25, p. 186)

This epigraph introduces the scene in which Fred confesses to Mary his debt which will cause financial suffering for Mary's modest family. The two contrasting personifications of love here point up Mary's virtuous quality; the first stanza embodies Mary's kind of self-sacrificing attitude evident in her anxiety for her family, her sympathy for Fred, and her quick willingness to give her meager earnings to her needy parents. On the other hand, the second stanza presents the opposing, self-serving kind of love absent in Mary and implying the hampering of others for one's benefit.

Unfortunately, Fred's nature initially corresponds to this second personification of love so that he and Mary represent opposing sides in the dichotomous theme of egoism and selflessness. Moreover, another kind of isolated image reinforces Fred's brand of egoism. When Fred visits Mrs. Garth to learn of her reaction to his apprenticeship under Caleb, Mrs. Garth feels compelled to inform Fred of his selfishness; she is appalled "that this blooming youngster should flourish on the disappointments of sadder and wiser people--making a meal of a nightingale and never knowing it" (Chapter 57, p. 418). This predatory image, though not a recurrent image of egoism, accurately captures Mrs. Garth's frustration at Fred's thoughtlessness of others in asking Mr. Farebrother, who cares for Mary, to speak to her on Fred's behalf. Also this image which implies action is effective because Fred's egoism involves his careless aggressiveness, first in his gambling and then in his approach to Mary.

Vision imagery usually connotes the valid perception of particular characters in this subplot; however, one significant vision image conveying illusion applies to the community of Middlemarch and its view of Fred. In spite of his own shiftless attitude about his future, the community has expectations for Fred concerning Featherstone's will

and, thus, can rationalize Fred's immoderate ways: "just as when a youthful nobleman steals jewellery we call the act kleptomania, speak of it with a philosophical smile, and never think of his being sent to the house of correction as if he were a ragged boy who had stolen turnips" (Chapter 23, p. 172). This image conveys the same kind of faulty vision which Fred possesses in placing so much value on the mere possibility of an inheritance; the illusion stems from believing what one wants to believe. Moreover, a second image relating to imperfect vision reinforces Fred's self-deception. In describing Featherstone's elaborate plans for his own funeral, George Eliot comments: "We are all of us imaginative in some form or other, for images are the brood of desire" (Chapter 34, p. 237). Indeed, what Fred envisions for himself is a direct descendant of his desire for an easy life.

Contrastingly, vision imagery for Mary emphasizes her valid perception of herself. When she and Rosamond look at their reflections in a mirror, Mary honestly observes: "What a brown patch I am by the side of you, Rosy!" (Chapter 12, p. 84). This unassuming, nondescript image underscores Mary's lucid observation of herself and intensifies an earlier allusion to Rembrandt: "Rembrandt would have painted her with pleasure, and would have made her broad

features look out of the canvas with intelligent honesty" (Chapter 12, p. 84). In a discerning study of character, he could have easily captured Mary's sincere, open expression of common sense. Moreover, George Eliot significantly does not rely on imagery in a related passage as she conveys Mary's admirable lack of self-deception: "For honesty, truth-telling fairness, was Mary's reigning virtue: she neither tried to create illusions, nor indulged in them for her own behoof, and when she was in a good mood she had humour enough in her to laugh at herself" (Chapter 12, p. 84). As if an image might cloud the expression of this desirable trait in Mary, a standard by which to judge the perception of others, George Eliot states Mary's keen perception directly.

Yet vision imagery does emphasize in other instances Mary's sharp understanding of her surroundings. When Fred tries to court Mary at one point, he notices that her "eyes were nothing more than clear windows where observation sat laughing" (Chapter 14, p. 103). This metaphor concisely points up the clarity of Mary's view, a clarity of perception evident also in Mrs. Garth. At Caleb's telling Mrs. Garth of his hope to get Stone Court for Fred, she practically considers the possible failure to do so: "But suppose

the whole scheme should turn out to be a castle in the air?" (Chapter 68, p. 507). Underlining the absence of illusion in Mrs. Garth, this image conveys her realistic, perceptive consideration of alternatives.

Relevant to vision imagery, notable imagery depicting the atmosphere in which Mary watches over Featherstone on the night of his death points up by contrast Mary's acute vision. She sits in "the subdued light" where "the red fire with its gently audible movement seemed like a solemn existence independent of the petty passions, the imbecile desires, the straining after worthless uncertainties, which were daily moving her contempt" (Chapter 33, p. 232). The images of dimness illuminate ironically Mary's constant ability to see clearly. Moreover, the self-containment of the steadily burning fire reflects Mary's own earnest existence unaffected by trite desire or foolish possibility.

Even Mary's thoughts, as she sits in the twilight with Featherstone, bear significant vision imagery: "people were so ridiculous with their illusions, carrying their fool's caps unawares, thinking their own lies opaque while everybody else's were transparent, making themselves exceptions to everything, as if when all the world looked yellow under a lamp they alone were rosy" (Chapter 33, p. 232).

Mary's sharp power of discernment is evident in this imagery which underlines her awareness of those who see their own weaknesses as an impenetrable part of their promising lives in contrast to others whose faults are easily detected amid their jaundiced living.

Finally, a related vision image corresponds to the climactic moment when Fred sees completely the positive action he must take in life. Mr. Farebrother honestly tells Fred of the undesirable alternative if Fred should resume his bad habit of gambling, that Mr. Farebrother believes then he himself could gain Mary's favor. This plausible statement by Mr. Farebrother suddenly jolts Fred's possessiveness concerning Mary, and his reaction bears an image which reflects the shock: "It seemed to Fred that if Mr. Farebrother had had a beak and talons instead of his very capable tongue, his mode of attack could hardly be more cruel" (Chapter 66, p. 495). Fred's exaggerated perception of Mr. Farebrother as predatory at this moment emphasizes his abrupt awakening to a life of diligence if he is to be worthy of Mary. Moreover, the image involves Fred's seeing Mr. Farebrother in somewhat the same kind of existence that he himself has been leading; now Fred perceives accurately the effect of thriving on others without a care for their wants.

Like the Garth-Vincy subplot, the Bulstrode story line employs fewer images than the main plot; yet here recurrent imagery also enhances the three dichotomous themes predominant throughout Middlemarch. Expressly, imagery in this second subplot lends immediacy to the hopeless dilemma of Nicholas Bulstrode, successful banker and religious bigot. Images of the web, yoke, water, and mirror point to his plight, a sad lot which centers around his own egoism as this self-centered attitude promotes both self-entrapping hypocrisy and unwelcome and sometimes limited vision.

Appropriately, imagery connoting entrapment is the most prevalent type in the Bulstrode subplot. Web, yoke, and water images each underscore some aspect of the trapped existence which Bulstrode avidly desires. Indeed, as Bulstrode vainly tries to maintain a life of restriction that separates him from his immoral past, the binding imagery employed seems to be a vital part of his very nature.

A notable web image in this subplot reflects Bulstrode's constant rationalization of his illegal past in religious terms:

Mentally surrounded with that past again, Bulstrode had the same pleas--indeed, the years had been perpetually spinning them into intricate thickness, like masses of spider-web, padding the moral sensibility;

nay, as age made egoism more eager but less enjoying, his soul had become more saturated with the belief that he did everything for God's sake, being indifferent to it for his own.

(Chapter 61, p. 451)

If initially Bulstrode as a devoutly religious person had doubts about a pawnbroking business that accumulated wealth by criminal means, his self-interest in prayer gradually convinces him that he has been chosen as an instrument of God, that he should have this wealth for spreading God's word. Self-interest has woven Bulstrode's hypocritical prayers so thickly that egoism insulates his awareness against a discrimination between right and wrong. Moreover, this webbing imagery points up Bulstrode's entangling himself in rationalization for refuge from any pangs of conscience.

Thus, Bulstrode is intimately connected with a web of deceit, a network which is not vicious but self-serving, as he uses a thread image in talking with Mr. Vincy: "It is not an easy thing even to thread a path for principles in the intricacies of the world--still less to make the thread clear for the careless and the scoffing" (Chapter 13, p. 96). As Bulstrode responds here to Vincy's charge that some of Bulstrode's present business associations are not honorable, the ascetic banker ironically describes his hypocritical condition in trying to walk the narrow line between past

evil and present virtue. "The intricacies of the world" to Bulstrode are the niggling conflicts of honesty and dishonesty, of legal occupation and theft; these complexities are the basis for his haven of tangled rationalization, a religious reconciliation that shields Bulstrode from the ugly truth of his past. Moreover, he does not want to reveal to those persons who could be rightfully critical of this fiber of his existence, a thread which keeps him suspended between right and wrong.

Yet after Raffles' mysterious death when Bulstrode's dark past and his association with this stranger become known to the town fathers, Bulstrode's indirect admission of guilt bears a web image:

"Say that the evil-speaking of which I am to be made the victim accuses me of malpractices . . . who shall be my accuser? Not men whose own lives are unchristian, nay, scandalous--not men who themselves use low instruments to carry out their ends--whose profession is a tissue of chicanery" (Chapter 71, p. 534).

Caught up in a restricting web of hypocrisy which includes both his immoral actions and moral facade before others, Bulstrode naturally resorts to web imagery in citing the probable network of trickery in others. Since he has voluntarily lived a narrow life to hide a questionable past, Bulstrode automatically suspects a mesh of dishonesty in others.

Also, it is significant that Lydgate in speaking of the fallen Bulstrode to Dorothea should employ a thread image: "He is hunted down and miserable, and has only a poor thread of life in him" (Chapter 76, p. 558). Bulstrode's protective web in which he sought the entangling rationalization of his past and present has now unravelled; barely a fiber of his former life remains; the dispelling of his web, the destruction of his defensive cocoon, furnishes Bulstrode with the dubious freedom of humiliation and ruin.

Moreover, an epigraph alluding to John Bunyan's allegory Pilgrim's Progress emphasizes by contrast the inherent pity of this "poor thread of life" metaphor:

Then went the jury out, whose names were Mr. Blindman, Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-light, Mr. Implacable, who every one gave his private verdict against him among themselves, and afterwards unanimously concluded to bring him in guilty before the judge.

(Chapter 85, p. 602)

In this last chapter dealing with Bulstrode's tragedy, George Eliot recalls the condemnation of Faithful, a man of honorable conscience, by the weakest elements of society. The personification here intensifies the pity felt for a man found guilty because of his goodness. Moreover, this

pity offsets the kind of compassion felt for the morally weak Bulstrode, who is justly ostracized for his hypocrisy.

Related yoke images suggesting entrapment and restriction also emphasize the narrow life which Bulstrode hopes to maintain. Throughout his life as he convinces himself that he has justified with religion his evil past and self-centeredness, Bulstrode actually harnesses his self-interest to appear as a vehicle for God's work. Yet Raffles' appearance in Middlemarch poses the possibility that Bulstrode's true self might come to light:

"I am sinful and nought--a vessel to be consecrated by use--but use me!" had been the mould into which he had constrained his immense need of being something important and predominating. And now had come a moment in which that mould seemed in danger of being broke and utterly cast away.

(Chapter 61, p. 453)

This image of confinement reinforces Bulstrode's determination to remain fettered in his hypocrisy. Out of countless prayers, he constructs a frame which shapes and contains himself and his selfish needs as this mold gives Bulstrode the semblance of an ardent religious bent.

Another image of restraint reinforces this mold imagery; it specifically underlines Bulstrode's desperation in anticipating a shadow over his righteous, religious existence. While tending to the ailing Raffles, Bulstrode wishes that he had lent the needed money to Lydgate, who

out of obligation would have defended Bulstrode against any unpleasantness occasioned by Raffles' presence:

Strange, piteous conflict in the soul of this unhappy man, who had longed for years to be better than he was-- who had taken his selfish passions into discipline and clad them in severe robes, so that he had walked with them as a devout quire, till now that a terror had risen among them, and they could chant no longer, but threw out their common cries for safety.

(Chapter 70, p. 517)

Significantly, this image first reflects the ceremonial quality basic to a religious life such as Bulstrode attempts to lead. Bulstrode's chanting choir, however, is actually his yoking of self-centered passions under the pretense of a devout faith until he reverts to innate selfishness when threatened. Indeed, this image stresses Bulstrode's role in dressing and keeping his desires in their ritual of rigid asceticism until Raffles' appearance. Implicit here is Bulstrode's frenzied state in relation to Raffles, who as a reminder of a dishonest past, disrupts Bulstrode's strict discipline of passion and his monotonous repetition of Christian doctrine.

Accordingly, several images of restriction employed in connection with Raffles imply an entrapment that Bulstrode detests. While rationalizing his past errors in religious terms after Raffles' presence forebodes disclosure

of Bulstrode's immoral past, Bulstrode contemplates two rhetorical questions:

Those misdeeds even when committed--had they not been half sanctified by the singleness of his desire to devote himself and all he possessed to the furtherance of the divine scheme? And was he after all to become a mere stone of stumbling and a rock of offence?

(Chapter 53, p. 385)

This imagery connoting rigidity and immobility reflects the kind of restraint dreaded by Bulstrode. If his past error becomes a millstone that frustrates his present success, if his past error becomes an immovable obstruction, Bulstrode will find himself unalterably hampered by a life of disgrace and ruin.

Moreover, Bulstrode ironically employs binding language with Raffles, who symbolizes the imminent possibility of an enfettered life of shameful destruction: "'Although I am not in any way bound to you, I am willing to supply you with a regular annuity . . . so long as you fulfill a promise to remain at a distance from this neighborhood'"

(Chapter 53, p. 389). As Bulstrode postures a firm stance in denying any obligation to Raffles, metaphorical language underscores his certain dilemma. Whether Raffles agrees to stay away for a price or whether he topples Bulstrode's high standing in Middlemarch, Bulstrode will be inextricably yoked to this coarse opportunist.

Yet Bulstrode has no reservations about shackling others in Middlemarch; he spins a web of power in which the entangling threads are the financial obligations that Bulstrode manipulates to snare many of the townspeople. Surprisingly, George Eliot does not employ a web image to stress the extent of power which Bulstrode exerts over others; yet the frequency and integral nature of web imagery throughout the novel make it implicit here in considering Bulstrode's commanding effect in the town.

However, a yoke image does convey Bulstrode's moral burdening of Mr. Vincy, who asks for a written confirmation clearing Fred of any betting on Featherstone's name: "He [Mr. Vincy] felt his neck under Bulstrode's yoke; and though he usually enjoyed kicking, he was anxious to refrain from that relief" (Chapter 13, p. 95). Emphatically, this yoke image visualizes Mr. Vincy's submission as the image here corresponds to Bulstrode's scolding him for having prepared idle Fred for a Church vocation. Bulstrode with his financial power never misses an opportunity to harness others by preaching to them about their weaknesses. Although Mr. Vincy usually resists these subduing sermons, his need of a letter to protect Fred's chances for an inheritance necessitates his passive submission to this instance of Bulstrode's subjugation.

Water imagery also underlines Bulstrode's role of constantly burdening others with reproof: "A full-fed fountain will be generous with its waters even in the rain, when they are worse than useless; and a fine fount of admonition is apt to be equally irrepressible" (Chapter 13, p. 97). The alliterative quality of this image stresses the excess of the metaphor as well as Bulstrode's overweening compulsion to lecture others on morals. As Bulstrode is an influential banker in Middlemarch society, he intemperately doles out unwanted advice and criticism with little concern for the resentment he stirs up in people. Thus, this water image signals one aspect of his narrow existence that Bulstrode finds satisfying to his self-righteous nature.

A second water image suggests Bulstrode's paradoxical state, his desire to remain free to live a restricted life. Bulstrode watches over the dying Raffles until the end: "At a glance he knew that Raffles was not in the sleep that brings revival, but in the sleep which streams deeper and deeper into the gulf of death" (Chapter 70, p. 521). The water image here marks the hampering by death of Raffles' blackmail attempt; thus, Raffles' demise seems to represent Bulstrode's chance to keep concealed a past which, if known, would make his infamous. Yet, this water image

indirectly signals Bulstrode's ruin since his intentional negligence precipitates Raffles' passage "into the gulf of death" and the consequent revelation of Bulstrode's true nature. As Raffles finds some kind of rest in his engulfment, Bulstrode finds only a torturous life in his engulfment of shame.

Vision imagery illuminates several aspects of Bulstrode's attitude toward his life and inevitable fate. A particular image relevant to vision imagery pictures his plans to leave Middlemarch to avoid disgrace after Raffles has made his menacing presence known: "He [Bulstrode] continually deferred the final steps; in the midst of his fears, like many a man who is in danger of shipwreck or being dashed from his carriage by runaway horses, he had a clinging impression that something would happen to hinder the worst" (Chapter 68, p. 505). With his reputation in imminent danger, Bulstrode willingly yields to a self-deluded intuition that something will intervene to protect his name. The element of chance inherent in this image of a near shipwreck or narrowly overturned carriage reinforces Bulstrode's self-interested inclination to depend on good luck and not on any theory of determinism for resolving his plight.

In an obvious vision image Bulstrode's perception of himself is clear though he finds the reflection undesirable: "This was not the first time that Mr. Bulstrode had begun admonishing Mr. Vincy and had ended by seeing a very unsatisfactory reflection of himself in the coarse unflattering mirror which that manufacturer's mind presented to the subtler lights and shadows of his fellow-men" (Chapter 13, p. 97). After sternly lecturing Mr. Vincy on the moral upbringing of his family, Bulstrode accurately perceives the unfavorable impression he has registered with this businessman. Despite the unwelcomeness of this reflection to egoistic Bulstrode, Mr. Vincy is a keen judge of character. Indeed, this image points to the unflattering but genuine picture of Bulstrode in Mr. Vincy's earlier discerning statement, a comment quite cutting to the proudly moral Bulstrode: "'You like to be master, there's no denying that; you must be first chop in heaven, else you won't like it much'" (Chapter 13, p. 97). It is no wonder Mr. Vincy's mirror appears uncomplimentary to Bulstrode since it rightly captures the self-seeking quality of him who claims to be a devout follower of God as he is selfishly insincere in his actions.

The final vision image vividly conveys an effective analogy for Bulstrode's haunting past, those deplorable

deeds that relentlessly pursue him after Raffles' emergence in Middlemarch:

Night and day, without interruption save of brief sleep which only wove retrospect and fear into a fantastic present, he felt the scenes of his earlier life coming between him and everything else, as obstinately as when we look through the window from a lighted room, the objects we turn our backs on are still before us, instead of the grass and the trees.

(Chapter 61, p. 450)

Bulstrode's frenzy in the face of a persistent, defiant past is implicit in this image as the comparison stresses an inescapable quality; looking out of a window from a lighted room always produces images from behind on the glass. Thus, as Bulstrode tries to lead a normal life, his awareness of Raffles' ominous existence in Middlemarch, like the light in the room, blocks out what is before him in his daily routine and instead projects remorseful past actions on his mind's eye. Overlapping of image is also present since sleep does its weaving work for Bulstrode; spinning together fear and painful hindsight, sleep provides no rest for Bulstrode but only makes his regrettable past loom in giant perspective.

Thus, Bulstrode's two lives clash in this last vision image; the epigraph to this chapter succinctly captures the inherent disparity: "'Inconsistencies," answered Imlac, 'cannot both be right, but imputed to man they may both be

true'" (Chapter 61, p. 447). An allusion to Samuel Johnson's didactic romance Rasselas, this quotation reinforces the fact of Bulstrode's past and present as two irreconcilable modes of living. The incompatibility of Bulstrode's earlier and later lives is evident in the last vision image as the imagery emphasizes the impossibility of two different perspectives existing simultaneously. Moreover, Imlac's observation that such inconsistencies cannot both be right underlines Bulstrode's guilt-ridden sleep.

The Lydgate-Rosamond marriage constitutes the third subplot of Middlemarch and also parallels the main plot by means of recurrent imagery. As in the Bulstrode story line, the negative themes of entrapment, egoism, and self-deception abound in this tragic union of a weak-willed husband and his coyly domineering wife. Accordingly, web, yoke, and water imagery for Lydgate emphasizes the entrapment and frustration he encounters in marriage; yet web images apropos of Rosamond reflect the intentional network she weaves. Moreover, the famous pier-glass parable, a vision image, overlaps Rosamond's web imagery as this vision image illustrates her self-centeredness and vivifies her spinning of webs. Finally, one vision image and one journey-of-life metaphor underline the tragedy of Lydgate's lamentable existence.

From the outset, web imagery conveys Lydgate's medical interest in the physiological implications of webs. The precursor in this area, Alexander Bichat, had considered the bodily organs "as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues" (Chapter 15, p. 110). The web image here finds itself complemented by a light image revealing the value of this leading structural study; Bichat's work was illuminating "as the turning of gas-light would act on a dim, oil-lit street, showing hidden new connections and hitherto hidden facts of structure" (Chapter 15, p. 110).

Yet Lydgate wants to pursue Bichat's work, to find and concentrate on the mutual foundation of these primary structures: "but it was open to another mind to say, have not these structures some common basis from which they all started, as your sarsnet, gauze, net, satin, and velvet from the raw cocoon?" (Chapter 15, p. 110). This imagery underlines Lydgate's desire of getting to the root of Bichat's weblike structures; moreover, "the raw cocoon" foreshadows the source of an entangling web such as snares Lydgate in his marriage. Another light image occurs this time to illuminate Lydgate's expected discovery: "Here would be another light, as of oxy-hydrogen showing the very grain of things" (Chapter 15, p. 110). As the brilliance of a gas-light illumined new connections between primary

tissues for Bichat, the burning intensity of a torch light will floodlight the fibrous texture of these basic tissues for Lydgate. Thus, he wants to discover the very source of the weblike structures in the human body; "he counted on quiet intervals to be watchfully seized, for taking up the threads of investigation" (Chapter 15, p. 110). While web imagery here directly implies the active mode of Lydgate's study, it also suggests his passive restriction in another kind of binding web.

Lydgate, however, is unaware of his expected participation in the fabric of Rosamond's web. When he affably greets Mr. Vincy, he looks forward to seeing again the pretty Rosamond but not because he has "like her . . . been weaving any future in which their lots were united" (Chapter 13, p. 94). This early web image hints at Rosamond's approach to life, her egocentric way of seeing all people and actions in sole terms of herself.

Accordingly, the pier-glass image is appropriate here for visualizing in weblike fashion the motivating egoism of Rosamond:

Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round

that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection.

(Chapter 27, pp. 194-95)

The overlapping of vision and web imagery reinforces Rosamond's sad condition of deceptive self-centeredness. The seeming concentric circles in the image collectively picture the meshwork that Rosamond believes she weaves and controls. Moreover, the light imagery of the candle enhances Rosamond's pitiable state as she actually supposes herself as a "little sun" around which all her interests revolve.

Lydgate had already experienced one unfortunate love-relationship with Laure, a woman very much akin to Rosamond. Laure carelessly snared Lydgate with her beauty only to jolt him out of his illusions by her admission of the self-serving murder of her husband. His return to galvanic experiments in studying electric currents after this episode symbolizes Lydgate's shocking awareness of selfish women.

Yet Lydgate is generally unguarded in his meetings with Rosamond, who unlike the elusive Laure appears innocently talkative and clever in her beauty. Lydgate admires "her wondrous hair-plaits" which Rosamond often touches; indeed, her braided hair suggests the web with which she

plans to catch Lydgate (Chapter 16, p. 118). Also, the entrapping web is implicit in Rosamond's "netting" as she coyly chats with Lydgate about clever men like himself (Chapter 16, p. 121). However, Lydgate still sees himself as an unattached bachelor as he returns home to read a new book on fever (Chapter 16, p. 122). Contrastingly, as his work with electric currents represents his being jolted out of a naive love for self-centered Laure, Lydgate's study of fever here underlines his future agitated state as he unsuccessfully struggles to free himself from Rosamond's tangled web.

Metaphorical language connoting filaments and networks continues to point up the disparity between Lydgate's interest in the medical progress with tissues and his entanglement in Rosamond's web. The inherent irony of this situation is evident in a narrative passage that reveals Lydgate's faulty attitude about women:

If Lydgate had been aware of all the pride he excited in that delicate bosom, he might have been just as well pleased as any other man, even the most densely ignorant of humoral pathology or fibrous tissue: he held it one of the prettiest attitudes of the feminine mind to adore a man's pre-eminence without too precise a knowledge of what it consisted in.

(Chapter 27, p. 197)

Although Lydgate is an intelligent doctor versed in human physiology and keenly aware of the impact of a primitive

tissue study on further scientific research, he mistakenly prefers blind admiration and weak intelligence in women. That he is not "densely ignorant of . . . fibrous tissue" points up his incognizant attitude about women, who by playing a meek role actually gain the upper hand. Specifically, Rosamond assumes innocence while weaving an enticing network, a "fibrous tissue" which Lydgate does not recognize until Rosamond has permanently entrapped him in her egocentric world.

Indeed, as Lydgate believes "the primitive tissue was still his fair unknown" above and beyond the flirtatious Rosamond, she continues to sew by hand during their meetings, this sewing underscoring her gradual construction of a web that ultimately stifles Lydgate's professional goals (Chapter 27, p. 200). At one point she entertains Ned Plymdale and Lydgate as she continues "her tatting all the while" (Chapter 27, p. 199). Her making of lace by successive knotting corresponds first to her enjoyment of playing off one suitor against another; she manipulates them as effortlessly as she works the thread in her sewing. Also, the knots in her tatting forecast both her union with Lydgate and the hindrances she creates for him in their married life.

Even Rosamond's reticule, a purse of netted fabric, signals her determination to spin that web with herself at the center and Lydgate struggling within its filaments to satisfy her every want. When Mrs. Bulstrode tries to dissuade her interest in Lydgate, "Rosamond looked down and played with her reticule. She was not a fiery young lady and had no sharp answers, but she meant to live as she pleased" (Chapter 31, p. 219). Needless to say, Rosamond's independent, self-centered nature prompts her to finger obstinately the netted fabric, itself symbolic of her self-serving web.

Mrs. Bulstrode is not the first outsider to involve herself in Lydgate's affairs; moreover, web imagery underlines other such intrusions. When Lydgate first comes to Middlemarch and before his liason with Rosamond, the town has already worked him into its scheme of living: the people "counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably" (Chapter 16, p. 114). Suggested here is spider and web imagery which reinforces the absorption of Lydgate by Middlemarch for its own purposes. Indeed, the weblike structure of Middlemarch is similar to Rosamond's web: both the town and Rosamond weave Lydgate into their respective networks since he can be manipulated to serve their ends.

For example, another web image underscores the effect on Lydgate of his assimilation by this provincial town. Faced with a dilemma, Lydgate must vote in the decision between either his friend, Mr. Farebrother, or Bulstrode's candidate, Mr. Tyke, as the chaplain of the New Fever Hospital, a project supported by powerful Bulstrode: "For the first time Lydgate was feeling the hampering threadlike pressures of small social conditions, and their frustrating complexity" (Chapter 18, pp. 133-34). Already Middlemarch thwarts Lydgate's independence; he had planned to remain free of political bonds and concentrate on his further study of fevers in an adequate hospital. Yet the web of Middlemarch possesses constraining filaments that impede Lydgate's purpose and entangle him in a trite but intricate involvement as he votes against Mr. Farebrother to maintain Bulstrode's financial support.

Accordingly, Lydgate's vote initiates gossip concerning himself and Bulstrode; and appropriately, a web image emphasizes the dubious value of this innuendo: "Mrs. Taft, who was always counting stitches and gathered her information in misleading fragments caught between the rows of her knitting, had got into her head that Mr. Lydgate was a natural son of Bulstrode's" (Chapter 27, p. 194). First, it is significant that George Eliot revised her original

sentence from a reference to a deaf lady to this inclusion of a knitting image.¹ Here Lydgate's name is caught up in the woolgathering of absentminded Mrs. Taft, who is more attentive to the number of stitches she adds than careful of the rumors she casts.

Another related web image ties in with gossip about Lydgate and Rosamond as Mrs. Bulstrode is quite shocked to learn of their seriousness. Mrs. Plymdale, who tries to appear indifferent about this relationship, is actually eager to impart to Rosamond's aunt this meaty tidbit: "'Well, people have different ways but I understand that nobody can see Miss Vincy and Mr. Lydgate together without taking them to be engaged. However, it is not my business. Shall I put up the pattern of mittens?" (Chapter 31, p. 218). Like Mrs. Taft whose idle talk about Lydgate is enmeshed in knitting, Mrs. Plymdale passes on rumor about Lydgate and Rosamond while she works with a pattern of knitted mittens. This pattern in stitching parallels the design involving Lydgate and Rosamond that she expects to materialize simply because of the gossip to which she has knit a few more stitches.

¹Haight, ed. Middlemarch, p. 194, n.1.

Web imagery continues to enhance Lydgate's hampered existence brought about by others' implications concerning his feelings for Rosamond. After unsuccessfully approaching Rosamond about Lydgate, Mrs. Bulstrode subtly informs Lydgate himself that he threatens Rosamond's chances for a profitable match in marriage. Thus, Lydgate stops his visits to the Vincy home as he recalls his innocent flirting with Rosamond: "it must be confessed . . . that momentary speculations as to all the possible grounds for Mrs. Bulstrode's hints had managed to get woven like slight clinging hairs into the more substantial web of his troubles" (Chapter 31, p. 221). The fibers of Lydgate's own restricting network are beginning to snare the very assumption first rumored by others about him and Rosamond. Indeed, this web image emphasizes the effect of power of suggestion on Lydgate; specifically, the silently-stitching Rosamond and the vocally spun gossip of the town together enmesh Lydgate in an entrapping marriage; Rosamond's egoism and the town's insinuations foster Lydgate's very real network of problems.

Temporarily, Rosamond seems to be caught up in a web of disappointment not to her liking when Lydgate does not see her for ten days. Her fear of losing Lydgate "grew into terror at the blank that might possibly come--into the foreboding of that ready, fatal sponge which so cheaply wipes

out the hopes of mortals" (Chapter 31, p. 221). The sponge image corresponds to the web which absorbs and digests Lydgate; however, the sponge image suggests an indiscriminate gesture as the web which ensnares Lydgate is self-serving. Nevertheless, Rosamond remains outwardly composed during Lydgate's absence: "she plaited her fair hair as beautifully as usual, and kept herself proudly calm" (Chapter 31, p. 221). Her meticulous plaiting here, unfortunately for Lydgate, signifies her determined calculation to enmesh him in her self-centered web.

The overlapping of web, yoke, and water imagery as Lydgate yields to temptation intensifies his sealing of his own fate by wrapping himself in Rosamond's fibers. He returns to the Vincy home to deliver a message to Mr. Vincy, whom Lydgate realizes will not be there; this visit is Lydgate's opportunity, so he thinks, to enjoy some innocent flirting with Rosamond. When he first speaks to her quite formally, Rosamond is hurt:

Rosamond who at the first moment felt as if her happiness were returning, was keenly hurt by Lydgate's manner; her blush had departed, and she assented coldly, without adding an unnecessary word, some trivial [sic] chain-work which she had in her hands enabling her to avoid looking at Lydgate higher than his chin. In all failures, the beginning is certainly the half of the whole. After sitting two long moments while he moved his whip and could say nothing, Lydgate rose to go, and Rosamond, made nervous by her struggle between mortification and the wish not to betray it, dropped

her chain as if startled, and rose too, mechanically. Lydgate instantaneously stooped to pick up the chain. . . . At this moment she was as natural as she had ever been when she was five years old: she felt that her tears had risen, and it was no use to try to do anything else than let them stay like water on a blue flower or let them fall over her cheeks, even as they would.

That moment of naturalness was the crystallising feather-touch: it shook flirtation into love. Remember that the ambitious man who was looking at those Forget-me-nots under the water was very warm-hearted and rash. He did not know where the chain went; an idea had thrilled through the recesses within him which had a miraculous effect in raising the power of passionate love lying buried there in no sealed sepulchre, but under the lightest, easily pierced mold.

(Chapter 31, p. 222)

The chain-work which Rosamond continues during this meeting foreshadows the resulting engagement at the end of the scene. As always, she is weaving things to her satisfaction; here she uses this sewing to reveal her embarrassment with Lydgate's unexpected formality. Moreover, that her sewing particularly involves chair stitching emphasizes the hold she is about to exert over Lydgate. As a man, he should be the aggressor here; and significantly during this encounter, he holds the whip. Yet yoke imagery is clearly apparent when he bends down to pick up Rosamond's chain. Automatically, Lydgate obliges Rosamond by retrieving her sewing and accepting the bit that she expects him to wear during their marriage.

Water imagery associated with Rosamond's tears represents the final entrapment of Lydgate. Her eyes

emphatically reminiscent of forget-me-nots and full of tears are irresistible to sensitive Lydgate, who is sadly impulsive in matters of love; indeed, the "feather-touch" that clinches the relationship could easily have been a featherstitch in Rosamond's ensnaring web. Finally, Lydgate's not remembering where the chain has fallen symbolizes his lack of insight into Rosamond's motives in marriage; this forgetfulness also reinforces his willingness to be harnessed as he allows his passion to be retrieved from its temporary disuse as quickly as he recovers Rosamond's foreboding chain.

Thus during their courtship, web imagery complemented by water imagery underscores the network built on promises and intangible conditions:

Young love-making--that gossamer web! Even the points it clings to--the things whence its subtle interlacings are swung--are scarcely perceptible: momentary touches of finger-tips, meetings of rays from blue and dark orbs, unfinished phrases, lightest changes of cheek and lip, faintest tremors. The web itself is made of spontaneous beliefs and indefinable joys, yearnings of one life towards another, visions of completeness, indefinite trust. And Lydgate fell to spinning that web from his inward self with wonderful rapidity, in spite of experience supposed to be finished off with the drama of Laure--in spite too of medicine and biology; for the inspection of macerated muscle or of eyes presented in a dish . . . and other incidents of scientific inquiry, are observed to be less incompatible with poetic love than a native dulness or a lively addiction to the lowest prose. As for Rosamond, she was in the water-lily's expanding wonderment at its own fuller life, and she too was spinning industriously at the mutual web.
(Chapter 36, p. 253)

The web imagery here reflects the filmy, thin cobweb quality of Lydgate and Rosamond's relationship; this entangling web seems to float without substantial anchors. Indeed, the web consists of the mutual unfounded assumptions of both partners who together eagerly weave their restricting nexus. Irony is inherent in Lydgate's rationalization of his spinning with Rosamond: the water image of macerated muscle reveals a subject to which Lydgate pays objective scrutiny unlike his careless impulsiveness in dealing with the calculating Rosamond. Lydgate would certainly benefit from allowing this relationship figuratively to soak into his scientific mind so that he might perceive Rosamond's selfish nature. Moreover, the water image connected with Rosamond enhances Lydgate's entrapment; as the beauty of a water lily unfolds on the surface of the water, so Rosamond's beauty in love blossoms outwardly at the same time that she inwardly perceives her arbitrary control over an ardent admirer.

After Lydgate's ensnarement in marriage, he meets more snarling obstruction in the affairs of the New Hospital. The provincial citizens, leary of change and innovation, distrust Lydgate for his alliance with the zealous Evangelist, Bulstrode, and for his inclination to autopsy in studying the effects of fever; indeed, "the entanglements of human action" frustrate Lydgate at every turn (Chapter 45; p. 323).

Yet Lydgate feels no discouragement; he confidently tells Mr. Farebrother: "I am more and more convinced that it will be possible to demonstrate the homogeneous origin of all the tissues" (Chapter 45, p. 333). Perhaps Lydgate's weakness lies in his belief that all people consist of the same basic qualities. Yet he and Rosamond are prime examples of rash generosity and scheming selfishness, respectively. Moreover, his own life is not one of homogeneous consistency: the tissue of his life bears both an inordinate love of luxury and, when it comes to his patients, a sensitive understanding of poverty. Apropos of this disparity in Lydgate, George Eliot sympathetically comments with a web metaphor: "is it not rather what we expect in men, that they should have numerous strands of experience lying side by side and never compare them with each other?" (Chapter 58, p. 429).

For Lydgate these fibers constitute two different lives, his medical profession and his home life. Since he does not apply his objective examination to Rosamond until after their marriage, he suffers extensively. For example when Rosamond goes horseback riding with Sir Godwin's prominent son despite Lydgate's warning and loses her baby, Lydgate acknowledges "the terrible tenacity of this mild creature" and her fearsome egocentric web: "He had regarded Rosamond's cleverness as precisely of the receptive kind which

became a woman. He was now beginning to find out what that cleverness was--what was the shape into which it had run as into a close network aloof and independent" (Chapter 58, p. 427). Rosamond's mesh of self-centeredness is tightly woven as she relies only on Lydgate when he promotes her desires and ignores him when his advice runs against the grain of her self-serving web.

Lydgate, however, is fully entangled by the filaments of Rosamond's web even when their problems involve the embarrassing debt that means they must move to more modest quarters. As Lydgate speaks to Trumbull about advertising their house for sale, Rosamond, without consulting her husband, coolly dismisses Trumbull's services and writes to Lydgate's relatives about a loan. When she finally tells Lydgate about Trumbull's dismissal, he can only remember her alluring ways when he has helped to fasten her plaited hair: "fibres still astir in him, the shock he received could not at once be distinctly anger; it was confused pain" (Chapter 64, p. 482). The threads of Rosamond's web, symbolized in her braids, have thoroughly enmeshed Lydgate so that her selfish actions arouse first his painful bewilderment about her utter disregard for him. Significantly, when Lydgate had first warned Rosamond against horseback riding, he had at the same time complied with her request and adjusted her

hairplaits: "Lydgate had often fastened the plaits before, being among the deftest of men with his large finely formed fingers. He swept up the soft festoons of plaits and fastened in the tall comb (to such uses do men come!)" (Chapter 58, p. 426). Symbolically, Lydgate entangles himself in Rosamond's egoistic ways as the parenthetical expression underlines his pathetic state.

Finally, a Chaucerian allusion to the Wife of Bath in the epigraph to Chapter 65 underlines a significant web image and implies Lydgate's yoking by Rosamond:

"One of us two must bowen doutless;
And, sith a man is more reasonable
Than woman is, ye men moste be suffrable."
(Chapter 65, p. 485)

A reply from Sir Godwin Lydgate about Rosamond's request for a loan has arrived, and she waits anxiously for Lydgate to read it. Significantly, Rosamond does "light stitching" as she waits (Chapter 65, p. 485). Like the Wife of Bath who berated four out of five husbands into submission to suit herself, Rosamond continues to weave the situation to meet her desires. Moreover, as the Wife of Bath ironically claims that man's superior rationality necessitates his tolerance of women, so Rosamond allows Lydgate to believe that he makes the important decisions while her contradicting independent actions ceaselessly try his patience. Moreover, the irony in this allusion reinforces Lydgate's

paradoxical yoking. After reading Sir Godwin's rebuking letter, he shies away from "the hideous fettering of domestic hate" (Chapter 65, p. 488). Instead, he is understanding of Rosamond's unthinkable act in writing to Sir Godwin as Lydgate yields to her once more: "He wished to excuse everything in her, if he could--but it was inevitable that in this excusing mood he should think of her as if she were an animal of another and feebler species. Nevertheless, she had mastered him" (Chapter 65, p. 489). Ironically, it is Lydgate who realizes "one of us two must bowen douteless."

Other yoke imagery specifically reflects Lydgate's restrained condition after his ensnaring marriage. Some of Mr. Farebrother's first words to Lydgate foreshadow the limitations placed upon the doctor by his profession and his wife; the Vicar advises: "you must keep yourself independent. Very few men can do that. Either you slip out of service altogether, and become good for nothing, or you wear the harness and draw a good deal where your yoke-fellows pull you" (Chapter 17, p. 129). This binding imagery previews the unfortunate situations in which Lydgate later finds himself with Bulstrode and Rosamond; Lydgate becomes financially shackled to the banker, whose shady past threatens the doctor's reputation, as he is emotionally bound to the independently selfish Rosamond.

In alluding to Eros, Mr. Farebrother again underscores Lydgate's imminent yoking. When he visits Lydgate, Mr. Farebrother notices the extreme disorder of Lydgate's equipment and specimens; he comments: "Eros has degenerated; he began by introducing order and harmony, and now he brings back chaos" (Chapter 36, p. 255). This reference to Cupid signals the binding pattern of Lydgate's relationship with Rosamond; she first brings him a feeling of balance as a female partner, but she ultimately creates hindering confusion for Lydgate in his work.

A related light image enhances this hampering quality of Rosamond as she eagerly agrees to the early marriage proposed by Lydgate: "An unmistakeable delight shone forth from the blue eyes that met his, and the radiance seemed to light up all his future with mild sunshine" (Chapter 36, p. 257). Lydgate wants to marry early, so he can return full attention to his work; yet in anticipating his future he does not perceive the very faint contribution that Rosamond will make to his studies. The diminishing effect of "mild sunshine" on Lydgate's future stresses Rosamond's tendency to confine him whenever her self-interest is not served.

Later, Mr. Farebrother's words again carry binding connotations for Lydgate. As Lydgate becomes more and more restrained by his profession and his marriage, the Vicar

gives him two pieces of advice. First he warns Lydgate against making too close of an alliance with the much disliked Bulstrode: "don't get tied" (Chapter 45, p. 334). Also, this yoking idea carries over into Mr. Farebrother's statement: "take care not to get hampered about money matters" (Chapter 45, p. 334). Unfortunately, Lydgate learns all too soon the adverse limiting effects of Bulstrode's infamous reputation as well as his own embarrassing debts.

Lydgate exists too long under the deceptive assumption that he and Rosamond will follow the usual pattern of man and wife: "Lydgate relied much on the psychological difference between . . . goose and gander; especially on the innate submissiveness of the goose as beautifully corresponding to the strength of the gander" (Chapter 36, p. 261). The irony of this implied yoke imagery in view of Lydgate emphasizes his plight; as he assumes that Rosamond's earnest listening to his future plans is indication of her affectionate, agreeable admiration for him, she is actually planning his future where she will be happy, outside of plebian Middlemarch.

Indeed, Rosamond's egoistic calculation about her marriage includes an intimate association with Lydgate's sophisticated, well-to-do relatives. A binding image

emphasizes her determination to secure this influential relationship at the risk of losing her baby: for Rosamond riding horseback with Captain Lydgate and "riveting the connection with the family at Quallingham" constitute more prestige than bearing a child. Moreover, this image reinforces the tragedy of Lydgate's yoked condition to a woman whose values are completely out of perspective.

Rosamond's means of harnessing Lydgate are, indeed, brutal. When Lydgate questions her about the devious letter sent to Captain Godwin, Rosamond paralyzes him with her "torpedo contact" (Chapter 64, p. 483). Continually ego-centric, she works the debate around to the implication that Lydgate deceptively promised a happy marriage which he cannot now provide. The image here implying a numbing attack underlines the blow to Lydgate's male ego.

Lydgate's weaknesses in relation to women and money are his downfall. When debt occasioned by his extravagance plagues him, he is abhorred that such a condition "should have lain in ambush and clutched him when he was unaware" (Chapter 58, p. 430). Appropriately, this related yoke image describes not only the surprise attack by debt on a careless spender but also underlines Rosamond's devious attachment to an imperceptive, passionate Lydgate. As a

result of his binding debt, Lydgate must wriggle under Rosamond's yoke, too, as he hopes to recover somewhat by selling her jewels.

Indeed, he is "a man galled with his harness" when he approaches Rosamond on this sensitive subject (Chapter 58, p. 431). The vexation for Lydgate is doubly keen since he is bound by debt and Rosamond and, thus, trudges under two constraining yokes. A succeeding yoke image emphasizes Lydgate's long-suffering willingness to blame himself completely for their debt: "Lydgate was bowing his neck under the yoke like a creature who had talons, but who had Reason too, which often reduces us to meekness" (Chapter 58, p. 435). The context of this image reveals Lydgate's gradual recognition of Rosamond's selfish nature; yet a Shakespearean allusion to Sonnet 93 underscores Lydgate's love of Rosamond in spite of her shortcomings: "Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be, / Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness tell" (Chapter 58, epigraph, p. 423). Although Rosamond's expensive tastes have contributed to their debt and now she wishes for impractical solutions, Lydgate lovingly yields to her as he foresees dire consequences.

Yoke imagery continues to reveal Lydgate's bondage to debt; indeed, "Lydgate writhed under the idea of getting his neck beneath this vile yoke" (Chapter 64, p. 474). He

painfully struggles with the commanding wretchedness of this lowly problem until Bulstrode, for self-serving reasons, relieves his debt with a generous loan. Lydgate, feeling financially unburdened, discusses his future professional plans with Mr. Farebrother; he says he might apprentice someone to ease costs if Rosamond will not mind. Corresponding yoke imagery reveals the pitiful submission he naturally displays before his wife: "Poor Lydgate! the 'if Rosamond will not mind,' which had fallen from him involuntarily as part of his thought, was a significant mark of the yoke he bore" (Chapter 71, p. 524).

But Lydgate's yoking by Bulstrode returns to haunt him when the town discovers the banker's immoral past and questionable role in Raffles' death. Obligated monetarily to Bulstrode, Lydgate as Raffles' attending physician also finds his reputation slandered. In his depression, Rosamond's hold on him seems stronger than ever; now his marriage seems like a "yoked loneliness" (Chapter 66, p. 489) as he anticipates telling her the ugly truth: "How would Rosamond take it all? Here was another weight of chain to drag, and poor Lydgate was in a bad mood for bearing her dumb mastery" (Chapter 73, p. 543). Yoke imagery here stresses Lydgate's burdensome marriage; Rosamond's subjugation of Lydgate makes for their individual loneliness instead of a happy mutual

sharing. Moreover, the chain image emphasizes Lydgate's restriction as Rosamond nearly tames him in animal fashion.

Ultimately, Lydgate accepts Rosamond's shortcomings in the permanent yoke that he humbly, resignedly bears: "For he had almost learned the lesson that he must bend himself to her nature, and that because she came short in her sympathy, he must give the more" (Chapter 75, p. 555). This image pictures Lydgate's yielding to Rosamond's demand to leave town instead of remaining strong in his determination to stay on in Middlemarch to clear his name.

Water imagery, like web and yoke imagery, underlines Lydgate's stifling existence with Rosamond as his spouse. A swimming image early in this subplot before Rosamond engulfs Lydgate's life presents his professional alternatives:

He was at a starting-point which makes many a man's career a fine subject for betting, if there were any gentlemen given to that amusement who could appreciate the complicated probabilities of an arduous purpose, with all the possible thwartings and futherings of circumstance, all the niceties of inward balance, by which a man swims and makes his point or else is carried headlong.

(Chapter 15, p. 111)

This movement image vividly depicts Lydgate's opportunity either to actively pursue and achieve his goal of identifying the primitive tissue or to passively allow himself to be diverted from this purpose. Unfortunately, the context of the image foreshadows his failure as "the possible

thwartings . . . of circumstance" embodied in Rosamond impede Lydgate's resolute effort implicit in this physical image. Moreover Lydgate, himself, cannot provide the necessary balance for swimming to a destination; his infirmities in relation to women and money foster his aimless drifting from an intentional objective.

A second swimming image emphasizes Lydgate's rewarding sense of achievement in study and, thus, by contrast points up the kind of life which Rosamond denies him. After a vigorous reading of his new book on fever, Lydgate yields to that satisfying moment "when thought lapses from examination of a specific object into a suffusive sense of its connections with all the rest of our existence--seems, as it were, to throw itself on its back after vigorous swimming and float with the repose of unexhausted strength" (Chapter 16, p. 122). Again, an image of activity reveals Lydgate's professional potential as strenuous mental exercise seems to promise tireless, intense inquiry in him; here his progress is not deterred and his floating signifies only brief rest from future spirited study.

Indeed, Lydgate, himself, employs a related water image as he emphasizes his professional horizon. In admiring Mr. Farebrother's "anencephalous monster," Lydgate comments: "I was early bitten with an interest in structure,

and it is what lies most directly in my profession
I have the sea to swim in there" (Chapter 17, p. 128). The vastness of this sea image underscores Lydgate's belief that he has worlds to conquer in his structural studies. Yet as he examines an animal's brain, the immensity implicit in his sea metaphor points up the irony of Lydgate's obliviousness to the interrelationships hovering over and about to engulf him.

Early in the courtship of Lydgate and Rosamond, water imagery deceptively signals the hampered state of Lydgate's married life. Specifically, as they sit motionless after having decided to marry as soon as possible, a water image ironically foreshadows the wasted time which Lydgate spends wrestling with debt and Rosamond's self-interest: "they sat quite still for many minutes which flowed by them like a small gurgling brook with the kisses of the sun upon it" (Chapter 36, p. 258). By contrast, the image of a bright pleasant stream belies the dark gulf of money problems and selfishness that would destroy their marriage without Lydgate's sacrifice of his professional goals.

Another revealing water image occurs in Lydgate's response to Rosamond, now his wife, who comments that Ladislaw appears to be in love with Dorothea: "What can a man do when he takes to adoring one of you mermaids? He only neglects

his work and runs up bills" (Chapter 43, p. 319). "Mermaid" is an apt description of Rosamond; as the fabled creature of the sea is purely fictitious, so Rosamond lives in a dreamland where she believes that all is arranged to suit her desires. She is, thus, an unrealistic wife who hinders Lydgate's work and generously contributes to their debt.

In their early marriage, water imagery still belies Lydgate's future. As he sits with Rosamond and contemplates with satisfaction the work yet to be done, "Rosamond's presence at that moment was perhaps no more than a spoonful brought to the lake" (Chapter 45, p. 334). This image stresses through contrast Rosamond's central role in Lydgate's professional failure; because she lends little emotional support to Lydgate, his "lake" of possible scientific achievement ultimately becomes a mere rill of mediocre accomplishment.

After Rosamond's almost casual reaction to losing their child, a water image reflects Lydgate's gradual awareness of Rosamond's independent, thoughtless nature: "Lydgate was much worried, and conscious of new elements in his life as noxious to him as an inlet of mud to a creature that has been used to breathe and bathe and dart after its illuminated prey in the clearest of waters" (Chapter 58, p. 427). Where Lydgate had felt a sense of unbounding freedom in the pursuit

of work and in his relationship with Rosamond, now he feels the stifling quality occasioned by this rash display of self-centeredness. Indeed, Rosamond's unceasing selfishness is like stagnant water that pollutes Lydgate's spirited stream of enthusiasm in study and marriage; now Lydgate finds himself bogged down by her devious self-interest.

But Rosamond is not Lydgate's only stagnating force; debt also rushes in to stifle him: Lydgate finds it painfully difficult to ignore "that he was every day getting deeper into that swamp, which tempts men towards it with such a pretty covering of flowers and verdure" (Chapter 58, p. 428). As yoke imagery indicates Lydgate's two burdens in Rosamond and his debt, water imagery also doubly reveals his suppression. Here the water image pictures Lydgate's debt as marshlike quicksand that deceptively attracts him into its realm for swallowing him up. Like the flourishing greenery that belies the stagnation of the swamp, enticing expenditures lure the luxury-prone Lydgate into the suffocation of debt.

A later swamp image reveals Lydgate's temporary rationalization of debt in the face of Rosamond's suddenly happier spirits. After she has dismissed Trumbull's services for selling the house, her self-satisfaction in mastering the situation is evident; thus, Lydgate naively feels their

lot is on the mend: "'If she will be happy and I can rub through, what does it all signify? It is only a narrow swamp that we have to pass in a long journey'" (Chapter 64, p. 479). Ironically, Lydgate diminishes the engulfing marsh as Rosamond's deception actually aggravates the smothered state that they will continue to experience throughout their marriage. Yet in this conciliatory mood toward debt, Lydgate enjoys Rosamond's music "which was a help to his meditation as the plash of an oar on the evening lake" (Chapter 64, p. 479). Contrastingly, this serene water image underscores Rosamond's deceitful, self-serving nature; she has little intention of purposely aiding anyone unless it furthers her own desires.

Thus, when Lydgate justifiably scolds her for dismissing Trumbull without his consent, the water image in her "voice that fell and trickled like cold water-drops" bears her unfeeling manner for the frustrated Lydgate (Chapter 64, p. 482). This tactile image emphasizes Rosamond's total indifference to a situation contrary to her own selfish expectations.

Finally, after the revelation of Bulstrode's infamous deeds and suspected acts, when Lydgate is afraid and ashamed to broach the subject with Rosamond, she makes it no easier for him. A water image appropriately pictures

their plight as Rosamond heartlessly remains silent: "it was if they were both adrift on one piece of wreck and looked away from each other" (Chapter 75, p. 554). The wreck is symbolic of their marriage principally destroyed by Rosamond's egoism; moreover, Lydgate feels suffocated by a sea of guilt also fostered by her destructive self-interest.

One vision image conveys Lydgate's original enthusiasm in viewing his studies: "there must be a systole and diastole in all inquiry . . . a man's mind must be continually expanding and shrinking between the whole human horizon and the horizon of an object-glass" (Chapter 63, p. 468). Using a medical metaphor of the contraction and dilation of the heart, Lydgate initially is lucid about the mode of perceiving his work. To stand back and evaluate the whole as well as to make a close examination would yield valid perception. Lydgate, however, does not follow his own plan in dealing with personal relationships and, thus, denies himself the chance to thoroughly pursue his studies. Never standing back to see his love for Rosamond against the "whole human horizon," he does not consider the affairs of the heart objectively. Not applying a microscopic examination to Rosamond's nature until too late, Lydgate suffers under her domination. Moreover, the pulse of life implicit

in this image connotes the totality of living, yet Lydgate never explores the affairs with Bulstrode and his own debts. He seems to lead two separate lives, scientist and man; and mistakenly, Lydgate never applies his scientific scrutiny to those personal areas that demand accurate perception if he is to live happily as a successful doctor. Rather, he brings "a much more testing vision of details and relations into . . . pathological study than he had ever thought it necessary to apply to the complexities of love and marriage" (Chapter 16, p. 122).

Finally, a gloomy journey-of-life metaphor emphasizes his failure in life: "Lydgate had accepted his narrowed lot with sad resignation. He had chosen this fragile creature, and had taken the burthen of her life upon his arms. He must walk as he could, carrying that burthen pitifully" (Chapter 81, p. 586). This image pictures Lydgate's trudging through life as a result of an impulsiveness that bound him to self-centered Rosamond. The archaism of "burthen" also seems to underline the immutability of the laborious plodding such as Lydgate shares with other people who have passed encumbered through this life.

Appropriately, Chapter Four rounds out an analysis of imagery in the subplots with a treatment of images relevant to the Lydgate-Rosamond subplot. This story line

incorporates the recurrent web, yoke, and water imagery which conveys the inherent tragedy of Lydgate and Rosamond's marriage as well as Bulstrode's disastrous fate. Yet the recurrent imagery of the Lydgate-Rosamond subplot also emphasizes by contrast the final happiness of Fred and Mary whose story is embroidered with positive connotations of similar imagery. Chapter Five accordingly undertakes to discuss the thematic similarities and differences in the use of imagery throughout all four of the story lines in this novel and thus to reveal imagery as a unifying device in Middlemarch.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

An examination of imagery as it points up the three dichotomous themes of entrapment versus freedom, egoism versus selflessness, and self-deception versus valid perception in the main plot and its subplots reveals a distinction between primary and secondary images in Middlemarch. Together primary recurrent imagery and secondary isolated imagery foster the integration of four different story lines by underscoring the various themes common to each plot. Web, yoke, water, and vision images constitute primary imagery; each type recurs throughout Middlemarch for particular thematic emphasis. In the same way, certain secondary images that involve the labyrinth, the landscape, the pier-glass parable, as well as the udder, speck, and journey-of-life metaphors, point up different aspects of the three dichotomous themes.

The web is the predominant image throughout Middlemarch. Its connotations of expansion and shrinking correspond to the recurring dichotomous theme of freedom versus entrapment. In the main plot of Dorothea Brooke, the web image first signals her restricting marriage with the stale

pedant Casaubon; yet web imagery here ultimately pictures her release into the community of man, a world of inevitable interrelationships as envisioned in the web.

The web image also has a dual function in the Garth-Vincy subplot. Related web images apropos of Featherstone emphasize his narrow selfishness in wanting to impose financial restriction on Mr. Vincy and Fred. Indeed, both Featherstone and Bulstrode enjoy webs of financial power in their respective social spheres; they are able to pull monetary threads that entangle others. Moreover, web imagery stresses Fred's binding situation, one much like Dorothea's restricted life after marrying Casaubon since both Fred and Dorothea act only on assumption. On the other hand, web imagery associated with Mary reveals her constant awareness of the need for purposeful activity in a world where interdependence is an indispensable part of living; thus, the web image for Mary implies an inherent freedom in needing and being needed by others.

In regard to Bulstrode's plight as well as Lydgate and Rosamond's unfortunate marriage, web imagery connotes only the negative theme of entrapment. Bulstrode entangles himself in hypocrisy woven by his Evangelical rationalization of an illegal past. Likewise, web imagery signals

only an ensnaring marriage for Lydgate whose professional aims are ultimately hampered by the cunning weaving of Rosamond.

The second primary image of the yoke underlines either restriction or freedom in the lives of particular characters. Within the main plot, the yoke consistently reinforces Dorothea's trapped state in her marriage to Casaubon as it especially emphasizes her near entrapment by Casaubon's fruitless "Key." Yet, yoke imagery in the Garth-Vincy subplot carries both connotations. While the yoke image reveals Fred's hampered feeling as he must wait for Mary's hand in marriage, the yoke image implies a sense of freedom for Mr. Farebrother as he appreciates his binding when it keeps a loose rein on him. Mr. Farebrother particularly feels relief from the yoke of life after Dorothea grants him the Lowick living, an action which loosens the financial bind often hampering the Vicar. Also, yoke imagery implies a positive concept for Caleb, who perceives the stabilizing influence of yoking in life; it is likewise a positive force for Mary, whose rational nature justifies her wise yoking of Fred.

In contrast, imagery of harnessing in the Bulstrode subplot stresses first his desire, unlike Dorothea and Fred, to live a restricted life, an ascetic existence which

will hide his immoral past. As Casaubon wants to remain in hiding from the real world in a labyrinth of purposeless study, so Bulstrode wants to hide from guilt in a narrowly religious life. Yoke imagery here also conveys Bulstrode's dreaded binding by Raffles yet his own contradictory readiness to subjugate others.

Like the main plot, yoke imagery in the Lydgate-Rosamond subplot consistently emphasizes undesirable entrapment. Because of his impulsiveness in love and weakness for luxury, Lydgate is bound to Rosamond's egoism and to inescapable debt, both of which enfeeble him in an existence falling far below his original expectations of success.

Water imagery, similar to web and yoke imagery, is a primary type that recurs throughout the four story lines; it always stresses entrapment for certain characters. Indeed, it significantly foreshadows the tragic failings of Casaubon, Bulstrode, and Lydgate. In the main plot, water imagery first reinforces the entrapment, already established by web imagery, of the Dorothea-Casaubon marriage. The water imagery also underlines Casaubon's deficiency in emotion as related swamp imagery signals the stagnation of his working state. Similarly, a swamp image appears in the

Garth-Vincy subplot to point up Fred's potential stagnation as he waits for the unconfirmed possibility of an inheritance.

Water imagery applicable to the Bulstrode subplot emphasizes the basis of Bulstrode's restricted, guilt-ridden life as his overweening compulsion to lecture others; yet, a significant water image foreshadows his ultimate fall just as water imagery indicated Casaubon's innate dullness even when death is imminent. Bulstrode's looking out a window only to see the reflection of objects behind him, an action symbolic of his inescapable past, is reminiscent of Casaubon's constant habit of unproductive thought even in the face of death.

Images of water pertinent to the Lydgate-Rosamond subplot enhance Lydgate's entrapment both by Rosamond and debt. First, water images combine with web and yoke imagery to reveal Rosamond's trapping and stifling of this rash, emotional man during their courtship and marriage. Also, swamp images recur here to picture the debt which haunts Lydgate and contributes to the stagnation of his professional aims.

As web, yoke, and water images convey the theme of entrapment versus freedom, vision imagery underscores the theme of self-deception versus valid perception. Vision

imagery especially points to Fred's positive transformation with a valid perception of duty as well as to Bulstrode's and Lydgate's individual failures particularly accounted for by their own self-deception. In the main plot George Eliot refers to a magnifying glass and reflections in a spoon in pointing out the self-deception in others who judge Casaubon solely on physical appearance. Moreover, mirror imagery illuminates Dorothea's self-deception about Casaubon before their marriage. A mirror image also reinforces her constant impulse to act on first impressions and chance self-deception as she later does with Lydgate in automatically defending him against the town's accusations and lending him needed financial support for the hospital.

Vision imagery connotes both invalid and valid perception in the Garth-Vincy subplot. As vision images reveal the community's self-deception about Fred's future and Featherstone's self-deceived assumptions about his own funeral, mirror imagery accentuates Mary's honest perception of herself, her objective acknowledgement of her modest life, and her awareness of others not so wise as she. Significantly, for Fred vision imagery signals his redemption from a useless life; like Dorothea, he finally acknowledges his responsibility so that his and Mary's lives

point toward fulfillment as do the lives of Will and Dorothea.

For Bulstrode, vision imagery underlines first his self-deception that a questionable past will not be discovered as well as his valid but personally distasteful perception of himself in the minds of others. A significant vision image also pictures Bulstrode's haunting past which is all too vivid for the ardent Evangelist who would much rather deceive himself about his life through rationalization and hypocrisy. As Bulstrode wants to maintain a restricted life that entails secrecy, a narrow existence evidenced in web, yoke, and water images, so he also wants to foster his self-deception for his own peace of mind.

In contrast, a vision image in the Lydgate-Rosamond subplot reveals Lydgate's deviation from a practical way of perceiving life. He does not follow through with his scientific scrutiny in dealing with his personal affairs; instead, he deceives himself about the wileful Rosamond and accrues expenses until he is forced to accept a fate much less satisfying than his anticipated success.

Secondary images support the primary imagery already mentioned to emphasize the recurrent themes of Middlemarch. These secondary images usually occur in isolation but at strategic points within the various story lines for

particular emphasis. For example, the labyrinth image is unique to the main plot concerning Dorothea and Casaubon. This image, recurrent only throughout the main plot, points up the stifling quality of a marriage founded on the egoism of the two partners, especially the egoism of Casaubon, who is determined to dwell in dark places apart from daily life for a work that will never see the light. The antithesis of darkness and light which the labyrinth suggests also illuminates the presence of vibrant Ladislav in Dorothea's life. Indeed, labyrinth imagery here aptly complements the entangling web, the restricting yoke, and the smothering water imagery, which together accentuate the ominous marriage of Dorothea and Casaubon.

Moreover, another secondary image, the metaphor of the speck, reinforces Casaubon's egoism as he remains so wrapped up in his own insecurities about his worthless "Key" that he cannot be a worthy, selfless husband for Dorothea. Likewise, the udder image in the main plot stresses Dorothea's egoism as the labyrinth imagery points up Casaubon's narrow self-centeredness. In all her idealism, Dorothea mistakes motivating self-interest for a desire to aid the Milton figure that she misconceives in Casaubon.

Related to these secondary images underlining the egocentric theme is another secondary image revealing the

supreme egoism of Rosamond. The pier-glass parable concretely pictures Rosamond's faulty self-centered attitude toward life, that all people and actions strictly revolve around her desires. Moreover, the overlapping of web imagery in the concentric circles is another example of George Eliot's reinforcement of theme through compression of imagery.

Landscape images constitute another example of secondary imagery as they significantly occur in the main plot and the Garth-Vincy subplot. In connection with Dorothea, the landscape and surroundings of Lowick Manor as well as the interior reflect her self-deception nurtured by naive self-interest; this imagery accurately foreshadows the hopelessness of her marriage to Casaubon, a futility that she does not validly perceive until her wedding trip. Yet landscape imagery surrounding Stone Court reflects Mary's constant selflessness. Mary does not gradually come to acknowledge this responsibility in her life as Dorothea does after her tragic marriage; like the unchanging oaks, ash-trees, and burdock, Mary is unceasing in her loyalty and generosity in life.

Finally, the journey-of-life metaphor, a secondary image employed twice, points up the contrasting fates of Lydgate and Dorothea. Ultimately, George Eliot pictures

Lydgate trudging laden down through life as he is encumbered by Rosamond's self-centered domination of their marriage. Too late, Lydgate realizes his self-deception concerning women and money, weaknesses that promote his restricted lot. Yet the journey-of-life metaphor for Dorothea illuminates her sudden and valid perception of the interrelationships basic to life. In watching the progress of a family along a road, Dorothea acknowledges her duty to participate in practical activity as she finds in this scene the tactic for renewal in her own life.

As this study investigates imagery as a promoting agent of thematic unity in Middlemarch, such an examination indirectly suggests a wealth of ideas still to be considered and analyzed in this novel. For instance, theme alone provides a broad field for investigation in Middlemarch; such concepts as expectations and possibilities are other points of view that could be analyzed as central to the four story lines of the novel. Also, characterization offers a fertile area for study; a combined characterization of Dorothea and Lydgate, themselves contrasting portraits in idealism, would furnish an especially significant examination of Middlemarch. Indeed, imagery in this novel has by no means been exhausted, as other kinds of pertinent images abound and suggest extensive linguistic treatments. An image which

George Eliot uses in commenting on a person's inability to foresee the future aptly encompasses the vast scope of veracity everpresent in Middlemarch: "Here is a mine of truth, which however vigorously it may be worked, is likely to outlast our coal" (Chapter 7, p. 49).

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