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MARRIAGE AND THE ENDINGS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVELS

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Marriage and the Endings of Nineteenth-Century Novels

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
the Degree doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University

1984

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INTRODUCTION

I can only say that if some critic, who thoroughly knows his work, and has laboured on it till experience has made him perfect, will write the last fifty pages of a novel in the way they should be written, I, for one, will in the future do my best to copy the example. Guided by my own lights only, I confess that I despair of success.

Anthony Trollope, _Barchester Towers_

Considering the critical distaste expressed both then and now for the happy endings of so many nineteenth-century novels, Trollope was probably right to despair. He and many of his contemporaries knew that the tried and true ending of the romance, in which the hero marries the heroine and good triumphs over evil, had become too familiar and in some case inappropriate, but what could or should replace it?¹ Trollope certainly did not know what could be done artistically, or for that matter what the critics wanted, but he did understand his audience. As a professional writer he knew that whatever critics might say about the inadequacy of conventional conclusions, novels needed at the very least what Frank Kermode calls the "sense of an ending."² Even if marriage as a method of closure had become outmoded, it was at least a signal which his readers both expected and understood. Despite what I take to be Trollope's rhetorical question in
the case of *Barchester Towers*, in which an ending complete with the distribution of "sweetmeats" was, as I hope to show in some detail later, perfectly appropriate, the problem he perceived was a real one.\(^3\)

The question of endings has received considerable critical attention since the publication of Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending*. More recently a special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Marianna Torgovnick's *Closure in the Novel*, and D.A. Miller's *Narrative and Its Discontents*, among others, have continued the discussion. Most of the books and articles have concentrated on the problem of open as opposed to closed endings, and indeed whether or not the whole notion of closure itself is artificial. What I will discuss is not the completeness or incompleteness of closure, but what is suggested by Kermode's phrase, "the sense of an ending," namely readers' acquiescence to the appropriateness of a particular ending for a particular novel.

I begin with the assumption that the romance ending which troubled Trollope, the happily-ever-after so well known to us, was and is an appropriate ending for many tales and novels. However, in order to be appropriate, certain conditions must be present. Much of the first chapter of this dissertation is devoted to an exploration and analysis of those conditions. If, however, the author fails, neglects, or for some reason does not establish within the novel those structures which support and make meaningful the romance ending, then the
conclusion will seem, as so many nineteenth-century endings do, inappropriate, mechanical, or simplistic. These endings seem to be aimed, unlike much of the plot which precedes them, at the kind of audience which the narrator of John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* believes needs to be reminded "that a thousand violins cloy very rapidly without percussion."\(^4\)

Trollope, Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot, like Fowles' narrator, were writers very much in control of their art. Yet they all have been criticized, along with less notable artists of the age, for the inadequacy of their conclusions. Through letters and in their published works, which I will cite in the course of my discussion, each of them indicates an awareness of the problem of the appropriateness of endings. Although the problem apparently stems from a generic conflict, the mixture of romance and realism frequently presents no grave technical problems in the course of a given novel, as I will illustrate with both Austen and George Eliot. The mixture was, in fact, very much a part of the Victorian vision. However, it is within the context of this vision that I will discuss the changing sense of the adequacy of endings. The problem is not necessarily a chronological one, since both romance and realism are still very much with us. But the moral, social and artistic climate of England did change in the years which separate Austen from Conrad. Thus the way the endings were framed also underwent subtle, but significant changes, although frequently the
formula (marriage and the assumption of continued happiness) appears to remain constant.

The techniques and assumptions of realism as interpreted by George Levine in *The Realistic Imagination* did, in fact, strain the limits of the romance form. Whether realism was an ideal to be achieved is not relevant; it was by mid-century the wave of the future, and one which we have come to accept as a defining characteristic of serious nineteenth-century fiction. The romance by contrast had had its day as the predominant genre in what appears to us to be a far less complex time. Why then, when the assumptions and techniques of literary practice were clearly changing, did many writers retain marriage, the most typical "sweetmeat," and try to use this fragment of romance convention while the rest of the form gave way to a more complex and less schematic view of human nature and society? Marriage was, of course, a quick, easy, and pleasant way to conclude a novel, as Jane Austen parodically illustrated at the conclusion of *Northanger Abbey*. Her parody was an early indication of an author's recognition of the problem which Trollope later addressed. However, although expediency and reader expectation are surely in part responsible, they do not fully explain the persistent and pervasive practice of authors who took pains to present realistic visions of society throughout their novels and who understood from personal experience that the ideal marriage was as much a myth as we find it to be in their fiction.
I would suggest that the change under consideration involves not merely technical, but historical and, in a particular sense, moral issues. Discussions of nineteenth-century fiction usually try to establish some relationship between form and content. Barbara Hardy's description of the relationship is quite typical: "The novelist, whoever he is and whatever he is writing, is giving form to a story, giving form to his moral and metaphysical views, and giving form to his particular experience of sensations, people, places and society." In the eighteenth century the Providential design as illustrated in fiction provides an example of the conscious conflation of form and moral vision. Probably the best illustration of this conflation is Martin Battestin's reading of Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Battestin believes that Fielding's conclusion of *Tom Jones* achieves "that final, miraculous resolution of every complication" which "is the expression and emblem of the author's coherent, Christian vision of life." *Tom Jones* is thus an example of a particular harmony between form and moral and metaphysical views. What I see happening at the conclusion of many nineteenth-century novels is a disjunction of the two, a particular tension between form and moral vision.

In *The Sense of an Audience: Dickens, Thackeray and George Eliot at Mid-Century*, Janice Carlyle maintains that at this period as in "no other time in its history were [the
novel's] moral intentions and their implications so insistently at the forefront of its aesthetics." Our sense of the technical success or failure of Victorian endings frequently stands, I believe, in direct opposition to the Victorian writers' sense of the moral appropriateness of their endings. Although we may never come to a position where we find these endings logically or technically appropriate, by discussing them in their cultural context we can at least sense what they were intended to mean or accomplish.

The Victorian writers did not choose between realism and romance as two mutually exclusive and self-contained genres, as some modern genre critics would maintain, but between two different and equally appropriate ways of expressing artistic vision. Each genre expresses a particular vision of human experience. In general terms realism tries to talk about what is, and romance what might be. In an era when moral vision dominated the aesthetic, the idealizing aspects of the romance were undoubtedly attractive and useful. Many of the authors who used these idealized and idealizing conclusions understood that those conclusions might not be the most logical or technically appropriate way of ending a particular novel, but felt that by using them, they conveyed a vision of society which was morally appropriate and expected. The juxtaposition of realism and romance at closure is not merely a technical problem in the history of the novel, but illuminates an important aspect of the Victorian frame of mind.
George Levine in *The Realistic Imagination* discusses the difficulty in defining realism and to some extent romance as well. One way around the problem would be to define realism as that which was written by declared realists and date the entire movement from the mid-nineteenth century. Levine, on the other hand, begins his study with Austen, for he chooses to work with realism as a set of practices rather than an espoused theory. As such he sees that those techniques and assumptions necessary for realism developed quite early in the English novel. None of these suggestions, of course, actually defines realism. The common sense definition falls back on some version of Erich Auerbach's notions about mimesis, about plausibility and ordinariness, or what Levine calls "'middling' condition" (p. 5). Levine sees realism defining "itself against the excesses, both stylistic and narrative, of various kinds of romantic, exotic, or sensational literatures" (p. 5). But, as Levine points out, "The history of English realism obviously depended in large measure on changing notions of what is 'out there,' of how best to 'represent' it, and of whether, after all, representation is possible or the 'out there' knowable" (p. 6). Practices changed accordingly. There is for Levine and for my purposes another crucial ingredient: "The history [of realism] was further complicated by the artist's sense of responsibility to the
audience, by conventions of propriety, and by the nature of earlier literary imaginations of the 'real'"(p.6).

Once we talk about writers being influenced by a sense of responsibility to adjust to their audience's desires and expectations, once a sense of propriety or moral vision enters the process, then I believe, as Levine does, that generic distinctions become confused. Those conventions which in his words "bend reality to the shape of desire," or impose a consistent moral vision like Fielding's, belong to the romance(p.134). Yet, both are present in many of the great so-called realistic novels of the century. Northrop Frye stresses the romance's concern with "an idealized world," and notes that as a form "which deals with heroes [the romance] is intermediate between the novel which deals with men, and the myth, which deals with gods." Trollope would certainly have maintained that he was dealing with ordinary men and women, and not god-like heroes and heroines, even as he insisted on the necessity of dispensing "sweetmeats" at the conclusion of his novel because his audience expected them.

Levine's work confirms the problems involved in making generic distinctions and trying to impose clear-cut definitions on Victorian fiction. The entire process, to which he devotes a great deal of attention, "runs counter to the very mixed condition of Victorian thought"(p.10). Recognizing this "mixed condition" of thought is crucial to understanding of the endings of so many novels. Victorian
novelists were willing and able to combine their emerging interest in realism and the moral certainty of the romance in ways which spoke meaningfully to their audience and to do so in ways which did not violate their sense of the integrity of their own art. Their artistic vision was unaffected by the more rigid notions of the demands of realism which have developed in the course of this century.

In examining this tension between romance and realism I am reminded of Jessie Weston’s fascinating piece of literary archaeology, From Ritual to Romance, which traces those bits and pieces of the older form as they were transferred, sometimes without adequate context or sometimes in peculiarly circumscribed ways, into their new literary form. The choice of elements transferred had more to do with the power associated with the ritual than its appropriateness to the particular tale. The transfer of the marriage ritual from romance to realism presents some interesting parallels. There are other romance elements present in the novels of Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot, but none is so troubling to the modern reader as the idealized marriage. As powerful images of happiness and stability those marriages are particularly at odds with the socially critical realism modern readers value in nineteenth-century fiction.

Ritual carries a specific meaning derived not purely from the act, but from the context in which the ritual is set. Marriage in the context of the romance marked the conclusion
of an adventure. It was tied to the defeat of the villain and the restoration of the kingdom. The complete form of the romance for Frye is the successful quest for which the hero is usually rewarded by marriage to the heroine. This sequence leading to marriage is an essential action in the "idealized world" which Frye describes, and which readers expect to discover in the novels they read. The comic novel as written by Jane Austen, for example, is related to the romance, but can be differentiated from it by its depth of characterization and degree of idealization. In the true romance the completion of the quest assumes the defeat of the opposing evil force. In more realistic novels the villain, defeated so absolutely in romance, was replaced by human institutions and historical forces hopelessly flawed and beyond human control: it is difficult to imagine a hero capable of defeating Dickens' Chancery.

If evil were not therefore vanquished, if the quest hopeless, the hero not a hero but a flawed human being, what was the purpose of that final marriage? Did it carry any meaning at all beyond the traditional signal of closure, now used purely for expediency? From our perspective as modern readers and critics the tension between realism's supposed dictates and the seeming inappropriateness of conventional endings used by so many nineteenth-century realists is inescapable. The purpose of this study is to examine that tension, its possible causes, and its final resolution.
Among the necessary conditions for the romance which Frye specifies the idealized landscape was predictably the first part of the form to disappear. Our surroundings may in some way be part of what we all, like David Hume, declare to be the foundation of reality. We cannot talk about real human dilemmas unless they are placed in identifiable locations. There is and was, of course, some considerable nostalgia for the lost, if not necessarily golden or edenic, past. The rural settings of novels like Adam Bede suggest a desire to keep at least some vestige of the preceding century's notions of rightness, order, design, or at least simplicity in nature as a signal of stability. However, most writers did not live or work in the easily idealized rural landscape, but rather in the rapidly expanding cities, a world which was experiencing the complexity and confusion described by J. Hillis Miller in The Disappearance of God. The city as Miller describes it is a place which "mirrors back to man his own image, and nowhere can he make vivifying contact with what is not human." While the disappearance of the idealized landscape caused and causes none of the obvious problems that the retention of those final marriages does, the absence of that landscape, as vital component of romance, deprives that marriage of its moral force. The world of the romance had as its prime virtue its ultimate capacity for regeneration or
reform. Once evil had been defeated all could live happily ever after. The celebration of the marriage symbolized in the act of two the fates of many. In the Victorian city, a place devoid of transcendental meaning, the nature and description of evil becomes radically different from that which occurs in the idealized world of the romance.

In the first section of Chapter I, I will discuss the conditions necessary for the successful use of the romance conclusion. Trollope's *Barchester Towers*, despite his protestations to the contrary, is a good example of the successful use of the form through a careful limitation of subject and setting in the absence of the idealized landscape. Scott's *Ivanhoe*, despite all its romance trappings, fails as romance because the author inadvertently produces, at least for the modern reader, a pervasively anti-Semitic and therefore morally corrupt society. Readers are left with the feeling that the happily-ever-after is not shared by all as the ending suggests, and thus the conclusion is for us inappropriate. In order to make the romance conclusion work, evil must be overcome and therefore must be isolated in a single figure or group capable of being defeated. Only after this defeat does that final marriage really carry the message of restoration and regeneration characteristic of the romance.

We do not object, after all, to the individual marriages, but to the wider implications of these unions and the unsettled feeling that something has been left unsaid or that
some important issues have been left unresolved even as the "hero" is assured continued happiness. This is, to use Levine's words, an example of Victorians writing "against the indeterminacy they tended to reveal" (p. 4). Marriage at closure, although it may stand at the end of what appears to some as formless fiction, makes reference to a larger and more complex pattern of relationships in the romance, and as such carries some of the assumed moral certitude of the older form. Levine in his analysis of Sir Walter Scott begins to suggest what lies behind the persistence of the romance ending: "The romance conventions come in handy here in resolving issues that realistic technique would make too painful" (p. 102). The issue which Scott and the Victorians found too "painful" is exactly that "indeterminacy" which their growing interest and reliance on realistic techniques revealed. The idealized marriage, as a romance convention, provided the last bit of insurance against that indeterminacy, and held at bay the deep and real fear that Victorian writers did not wish mirrored in their created world: that the Creator of the world had in fact abandoned it, and that evil humanly conceived and supported was beyond their power to rectify. The fearful fact found its best expression in Dickens' *Bleak House* in which Chancery becomes an image of the pervasive and persistent power of evil which precludes any real justice and therefore any closure, either real or imagined, to the problem.

As my use of Scott and Trollope would indicate the choice
of romance or realism was not necessarily determined by the
time in which an author wrote, although the changing moral and
social conditions made one or the other more dominant at a
particular moment. Early in the century Austen's works
provide good illustrations of the changes taking place in the
current of the villain as Austen attempts to give the stock
romantic figure some realistic motivations. While pervasive
evil cannot be defeated, just as no hero can defeat Chancery,
so too is human responsibility somewhat diminished in the face
of such great odds. The real issue dealt with in Chapter I is
how exactly romance conventions were used in novels which
portrayed a world of pervasive evil to add moral stability and
counter despair. The conclusions of Dickens' *Bleak House* and
George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* do not rectify the effects of
evil, much less its causes, but merely focus readers' attention elsewhere. While both provide a happily ever after for the so-called good characters, they do so in such a way as to create a morally ambiguous situation. For while the romance ending suggests a triumph of good over evil, in reality the worlds of these novels remain untouched. They are not capable of regeneration. The good people simply move elsewhere. Thus, the power of evil is not countered by these idealized romance conclusions; the conclusions are merely a suggestion of what might be rather than what is truly possible. Alexander Welsh discusses these endings in terms of
an inherent conflict between "the program of realism" and the
"sense of an ending" expected by readers. Welsh reminds us that

Realism takes as its true subject history, or the ongoing life of society; yet in the heyday of realism individual marriages and deaths provide the favorite ending of novels. All such problems, finally, are haunted by the possibility that the language and logic in which they are posed dictate conclusiveness where none may really exist.14

The tension between such an ending and the plot which precedes it is partially alleviated through a change of focus. If the good cannot defeat evil, then at least the good can be protected from its effects. The rather ingenious and, in some respects, ingenuous way that Victorian writers did this was to remove their happy couple from the main scene of the action when they marry. Chapter II treats the creation and utility of what I will call the enclave, a specific location, a great house or charming cottage which is effectively sealed off from the world without. These places exist in practically all the novels I will discuss. They may look like Pemberley, the new Bleak House or Ferndean, they may be marginally accessible to devoted friends and family or totally inaccessible, but they exist and ironically their existence acknowledges the strength of evil. No longer is evil to be fought and defeated, but the characters' efforts are rewarded by being placed in a safe and secure retreat where, like Wemmick's Walworth, the drawbridge may be tightly secured. The enclave, intended as a symbol of moral certainty, is simply a retreat from evil.
While use of the enclave appeared to solve some difficulties, its inconsistencies did not go unnoticed. Chapter III begins with a discussion of Thackeray who used conventional romance conclusions to fulfill reader expectation, but in ways which made it clear that they were neither moral nor morally appropriate for his novels. In *Vanity Fair* Thackeray's satiric exposure of Amelia, a parody of the angelic wife, gives her marriage to Dobbin a very different meaning from the expected bland moral affirmation. They are two flawed beings joined in a less than an idyllic marriage. However, because of the elaborate framing device used by Thackeray, the artificiality of the enclave is not fully exposed in that novel. Subsequently, Thackeray seems to retreat from the satiric mode of *Vanity Fair* to take refuge in the sentimental mood of *Pendennis*. Even in *Pendennis*, however, Thackeray undercuts the idealized morality and stasis of the enclave. He rewards his flawed and not very attractive protagonist, Pen, with marriage to the far more morally consistent and worthy Laura. He does so at Laura's expense. She begins the novel as an independent character capable of clear moral decisions and critical judgments, and ends as just another angelic wife. The conclusion questions the justice of giving Laura to Pen and the morality of allowing Pen a retreat into the enclave when he really has never come to terms with his faults. Marriage in the romance was meant to signal the triumph of good, not the protection of mediocrity at the
expense of others.

At this point the usefulness and meaning of the enclave must be weighed against its costs. When the tension is merely technical, when the ending is only logically or stylistically inappropriate, then the moral gained, through use of the enclave, seemed certainly worth the price. Thackeray's seemingly careless and casual use of the enclave to conclude *Pendennis* illustrates one of the factors which influences how successful an enclave is. In one way or another those entering the enclave must be, unlike Pen, morally prepared for it. For example, Jane Eyre and Rochester have clearly earned their protected years at Ferndean. Dickens sends his flawed male characters far from the scene of their temptations only after considerable anguish. As a further precaution against their flawed humanity disturbing the peace of the enclave, Dickens provides his men with unrealistic angelic wives who can blindly accept their husbands' faults. In *Pendennis* Thackeray fulfills neither condition, and therefore the happily-ever-after supposedly guaranteed by the enclave is left open to doubt. This is especially true in the case of Laura, who throughout the novel has loved another man.

The enclave as an adaptation of the romance conclusion was supposed to suggest moral stability in the face of a chaotic world. Frank Kermode, using the term "fictions" for non-romance novels, distinguishes the two modes: "Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the needs of
sense-making change. Myths are agents of stability, fictions are the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent. What realism "found out" about the nature of society, especially about the nature of evil, caused novelists to try to retain a bit of romance stability. The desire of the writers of so-called realistic novels to find out about the nature of society also prompted them to try to make sense out of the hither to sacrosanct subject of marriage. Interestingly, once the enclave became a standard method of closure it also became the object of artistic attention and elaboration. Chapter III concludes with a discussion of the "Finale" to George Eliot's *Middlemarch* which proclaims marriage as the subject, not merely the conclusion of novels. Eliot's heroine Dorothea Brooke marries twice and even the concluding happy marriage offers neither real security, or stasis "for the fragment of a life, however typical is not the sample of an even web." If Dorothea's life were to be seen as an even web the second marriage might be as disastrous as the first.

Once marriage becomes the subject of the novel, not its final reward, then life within what was thought to be a secure haven is brought under scrutiny. George Meredith in *The Egoist* uses the perspective of the intended wife to examine the enclave being prepared for her at Patterne Hall. The walls built to protect the angelic wife were far too constraining for a real woman, even in fiction. Clara, the
bride-to-be flatly refuses to make the sacrifices necessary to form the enclave. She will take her chances with the world of pervasive evil rather than submit to permanent enclosure. The enclave has become not a retreat but a microcosm of the world where all social evil and imperfection are magnified under close scrutiny.

Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* also looks at the enclave as an artistic device which achieved its power at the loss of humanity and realistic characterization. Sue Bridehead is a woman who demands freedom, but also wishes the security and purity of the angelic wife in the enclave. The result is self-destructive. Hardy portrays a woman who tries to live the ideal of selfless isolation with the beloved and thereby avoid the imperfect and frequently evil world, but is doomed to failure and disillusionment. This realization effectively destroyed the enclave as a meaningful technique for closure. In demythologizing marriage Eliot, Meredith, Hardy and others destroyed the enclave and in a very real way helped develop the open-ended conclusion as we recognize it in the modern novel.

The destruction of the enclave is not a victory for realism over romance; both are still viable forms. But it is a signal of the movement away from a consistent moral aesthetic. The abandonment of the enclave is a defeat for hope in the face of overwhelming evidence that providential design was illusory. The construction of the enclave was
tangible evidence of the Victorians' energy and commitment to reform, however misdirected. The particular and realistically expressed vision of the actual nature of society characteristic of the great realistic novels testifies to their honesty. It seems to me perfectly understandable that, when first confronted with the world which they helped to create and were now mirroring in their fictions, writers and public alike preferred security to indeterminacy. Levine sums it up: "The impelling energy in the quest for the world beyond words is that the world be there, and that it be meaningful and good; the persistent fear is that it is merely monstrous and mechancial, beyond the control of human meaning. Realism risks that reality and its powers of disruption"(p.22).
Notes to the Introduction


5 George Levine, The Realistic Imagination (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Quotations from this source will be followed by page references to this edition in the body of the text.

6 Austen compresses the essence of the happy ending into one sentence: "The event which it authorised soon following: Henry and Catherine were married, the bells rang and everybody smiled; and as this took place within a twelve month from the first day of their meeting, it will not appear, after all the dreadful delays occasioned by the General's cruelty, that they were essentially hurt by it." Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p.247.

7 Biographical information suggests that Austen, Dickens, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Thackeray and Eliot could not have believed that ideal marriages and uneventfully placid family life were the rule rather than the rare exception.


15 Kermode, p.39.

Chapter I

Evil and the Disappearance of Absolutes

"The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means"

Miss Prism, the author of a three-volume novel, was unfortunately as careless with her literary terms as she was with her employer's child. She had the formula correct, but applied it too generally. What Miss Prism wrote was a romance, not fiction in its narrower designation as a novel, and the conditions she described are those which Frye would attribute to the traditional romance form. Thus although Miss Prism would not have approved of its tone, the plot of Tom Jones, concluding with the banishment of Blifil, the marriage of Tom to Sophia, and the return to the ideal neo-classical site, Paradise Hall, would have proved very satisfactory. Indeed, Miss Prism would have wasted no tears on that villain Blifil, for she also is quite sure about the distribution of punishment as a necessary part of the romance's scheme of poetic justice: "I am not in favour of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice." Her
preference for categorical good and evil is sound, critically
given her devotion to the romance. Surely there is something
very comforting about being able to get rid of evil, of
executing or banishing the villain. Literary conversions are
more often than not gratuitous, and worse, there is always the
possibility that the job was not well done. It is this
ability to deal conclusively with evil which to a great extent
accounts for the tight closure of the romance form. Once evil
has been banished, a new higher order is established.

Yet neither we nor Miss Prism need look back to the
preceding century to find an example of a novel which used the
basic conventions of the romance, tired, but tried and true,
to good advantage. It is important to remember that with the
rise of realism, romance did not disappear, but simply ceased
to be the dominant form of the artful fiction which we have
come to value. As in our own day the "best sellers" depended
heavily on the romance formula in its more traditional form.

Barchester Towers, a novel which Miss Prism could have read to
the Reverend Chasuble, skillfully combines the realistic
impulse for questioning motives and situations within the
romance's idealism and ability to deal conclusively with evil.

Julia Brown in analyzing Jane Austen's novels maintains
that "Austen's novels explore the transition into the
nineteenth-century. The eighteenth-century novel, derived
from allegory and romance, still sought to define social
experience in relation to an absolute."\(^1\) It is this sense of
an absolute which allows for the working out of "poetic justice." There must be a standard implied and more importantly a belief, so well illustrated by Battestin, that there is a Providential design and that it will guarantee that standard. Trollope in a very subtle way reasserts this missing sense of an absolute and approximates the tight closure of the romance, and yet at the same time does not sacrifice the realistic goal of dealing with moral issues of some complexity. Barchester's absolutes come with the territory or, if you will, the gift: they are the precepts of the Christian faith which its chief inhabitants, most of whom are clergy, are both aware of and expected to maintain. There is also a set of hierarchical values at least suggested: a good man or woman in a position of leadership can do a certain amount of good in the community.

Most critics of Barchester Towers, like Robert Polhemus, characterize the struggle which goes on in the novel as that of a "religious, provincial society that has to adapt itself to the world's accelerating rate of change and secularizing thrust and find ways of retaining and developing its moral values, its continuity, its harmonies, and its faith."² The crisis of the novel occurs when the two major spiritual leaders of Barchester, the Bishop and the Dean, must be replaced. In this situation, the "secularizing thrust" of the world comes into direct conflict with the standards and practices which "the moral values" and "faith" require. The
set of standards and practices applied by both Grantly and Slope in attempting to fill the two vacancies are those familiar and accepted in the political world, but absolutely at odds with what is demanded by the precepts by which both men are supposed to live. Archdeacon Grantly’s prayer at the deathbed of his father, the bishop, is his admission of how far his ambition had overcome his better instincts. His contrition does not, however, stop him from having a telegram sent immediately after his father’s death in hopes of getting the appointment before the government changed. As our all-too-understanding narrator comments: "Our archdeacon was worldly--who among us is not so?" Yet, even as this question is asked the narrator protests that

Sidney Smith truly said that in these recreant days we cannot expect to find the majesty of St Paul beneath the cassock of a curate. If we look to our clergymen to be more than men, we shall probably teach ourselves to think that they are less, and can hardly hope to raise the character of the pastor by denying to him the right to entertain the aspirations of a man.3

A complex comparison has already begun.

The mention of St. Paul reminds the reader of a standard, and while we are not expected to believe that the pastors and curates can achieve such "majesty" Paul’s standard clearly must be part of their "aspirations" as men. Even while human frailty is acknowledged and treated sympathetically, it cannot at the same time be accepted as the guide for judging conduct. For in contrast to Grantly is, of
course, Mr. Harding, whom Polhemus calls the novel's "moral heart." Polhemus goes on to say that as "a deferential man, Harding lacks the conventional strong qualities of a hero," and adds that "there is a touch of the holy fool about Harding and his innocence." Polhemus resists accepting the obvious point which Trollope goes to some length to emphasize with rather Austen-like irony: Harding is to be seen "Not as a hero, not as a man to be admired and talked of, not as a man who should be toasted at public dinners and spoken of with conventional absurdity as a perfect divine, but as a good man without guile, believing humbly in the religion which he has striven to teach, and guided by precepts which he has striven to learn" (p.449). At first the narrator seems unwilling to call Harding a hero because he does not seek success in "worldly" terms when he rejects the offer of the warden's post. He does not seek public notice; instead his values are private. Those values for which the author admires Harding, are precisely those qualities which make him a truly Christian hero, a nineteenth-century saint, whose miracle is being able to resist Grantly's urgings time and time again. His steadfastness and humility eventually triumph, while Slope and Mrs. Proudie cross each other, and Grantly's maneuvers never really succeed as he hoped or expected. Harding must give way in the end to Arabin, a younger man more energetic in combatting the ways of the world, but equally pious and careful. Harding's praise is telling: "he is noble and good
and high-minded; he is all that a woman can love and a man admire" (p.473). As Dean, Arabin will diminish some of the power Grantly had during the term of his father and the weaker Dean, but it is power Grantly finally does not begrudge him, considering the appointment might have gone to Slope.

Our satisfaction, like the archdeacon's, is not only in the triumph of good, but in the defeat of evil. It is rather hard to imagine a villain more delightfully odious than Obediah Slope, who combines a marvelous Dickensian villainous energy with just enough genuine motivation to keep him from falling into caricature. This combination of comic villainy and genuine threat is important, because he cannot be seen as merely a straw man or a purely comic villain who is defeated by having his ear boxed by the heroine, but as the representative of a set of values and a way of proceeding which truly threaten Barchester. After Slope's defeat Mrs. Proudie will have to express her organizational ability and enthusiasm on the bishop's life outside Barchester; Arabin will guide the cathedral city. To clarify the ideal is not enough; Trollope uses Harding to illustrate that the church must live up to its preachings and maintain its values even at the cost of personal loss. Equally necessary, however, is the defeat of those forces within the church which have made the way of the world the method of advancement. Barchester Towers is inherently a conservative novel, and as such its romance form is very appropriate.
At mid-century Trollope asserts a set of standards, or absolutes, and uses the romance form successfully to embody his moral vision; much earlier, Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe illustrates the inability of the form to deal with complex and pervasive evil. To choose Ivanhoe as an example is probably enough to make many readers want to turn the page immediately. Thackeray pinpointed the problem in his parody, Rebecca and Rowena, when he made it quite clear that Ivanhoe married the wrong woman. Speaking of Rebecca, Thackeray's Mr. Titmarsh said: "nor can I ever believe that such a woman, so admirable, so tender, so heroic, so beautiful, could disappear altogether before such another woman as Rowena, that vapid flaxen-headed creature, who is, in my humble opinion, unworthy of Ivanhoe, and unworthy of her place as heroine." The implications of Thackeray's parody are far more important than a preference for blonde over brunette or angelic vapidity over passionate activity, particularly when they come from Thackeray, who in Vanity Fair did so much to develop new possibilities for closure.

Surely Ivanhoe has all the trappings which we have come to associate with the chivalric romance: ancient setting, pomp and circumstance, castles, heroine, virtue at risk, dashing hero and King Richard and Robin Hood thrown in for good measure. There are many aspects of the work worthy of criticism: any romance whose hero is confined to bed for three-quarters of the narrative will lose readers' interest.
In fact, we finally don't really care for the hero or the heroine, but only for the woman who saves Ivanhoe's life, Rebecca. Thus, the conclusion in which Scott has England restored to Richard and reconciles Norman and Saxon leaves us unsatisfied. There is a chink in Ivanhoe's armor, and Scott knows it. Scott wonders whether in years to come Ivanhoe's thoughts will not turn to Rebecca and her fate. She who saved his life is forced to flee with her father because of the anti-Semitism of Richard's jolly old England. Thackeray offers the only solution when his narrator in *Rebecca and Rowena* says: "had both of them got their right, it ever seemed to me that Rebecca would have had the husband, and Rowena would have gone off to a convent and shut herself up, where I, for one, would never have taken the trouble of inquiring for her." Indeed, whether she married Ivanhoe, Athelstane, or "shut herself up in a convent," Rowena's safety and security are assured: only Ivanhoe's protection saves Rebecca.

Modern readers, and some nineteenth-century readers like Thackeray, cannot completely assent to traditional romance closure when at the conclusion we, like Ivanhoe, are concerned with the most interesting character in the novel and her unspecified future. Poetic justice certainly has not been achieved although romance form has been strictly adhered to. When Scott locates evil in a cast of recognizable villains: Brian de Bois-Guilbert, King John and the Templars, it is only
a partial description, and the subsequent death of Brian and the banishment of the Templars does not restore the kingdom to an idealized state under Richard. The problem is of Scott's own making: even while he caricatured Isaac, he clearly portrays the hardships endured by the innocent Jews at the hands of the Christian population. Marriage at closure and the death of the villain are insufficient to make the formula work, for goodness in the person of Rebecca has also been exiled, albeit for her own safety. Scott does not solve the moral problems he uncovers and does not even attempt to acknowledge them. While critics do not really take Ivanhoe too seriously nor attempt to use it as part of a serious examination of Scott's craft, this novel does show the strains that the romance form can be under even in very experienced and conservative hands. The point of stress is important. It is not the marriage, no matter how we feel about Rowena, but in the character of evil which cannot be isolated in a group of villains but has been shown to be part of the fabric of society itself. In such a world the heroes of a romance are wounded early and make slow recoveries, and the truly heroic modern man is a seemingly passive cleric who does no more than try to be a good Christian.
The preceding examples of the use of romance in the nineteenth century indicate the problem of handling moral absolutes when the structures which guaranteed the triumph of good over evil had disappeared. Julia Brown, as noted earlier, saw the transition from the eighteenth- to the nineteenth-century novel occurring in a very noticeable way in Austen's novels. In fact, Angus Wilson "blames" Austen for the disappearance of metaphysical evil from the English novel, although it is safe to say that she was merely reflecting the attitude long since held by her society. Wilson maintains that once "the transcendental element disappears, the religious quality disappears, it becomes almost entirely social: what was evil and good almost [becomes] entirely right and wrong." Part of Wilson's lament is the reaction of a novelist who wishes to be able to write novels like Clarissa which promise rewards greater than this world can offer and portray moral struggles waged at least from one perspective without reference to societal influences and pressures. However, the move from "evil" to "wrong" did not, at least at the outset, change the nature of the crime: rape was still rape, and seduction still seduction, but the primary focus moved from a simple statement of the fact of the crime as a major element in the plot to an examination of motivation.
and responsibility. Austen is searching in a transitional period for a way to deal with evil, a way for her both moral and realistic.

More often than not the confrontation with evil in the romance is very focused: in its most simplistic form opponents duel one another. A more realistic treatment of evil includes the possibility that even good characters, through mistake, misinformation, or omission can inadvertently cause harm, and admits unmitigated evil is very rare. The novel which deals with men and women, as opposed to heroes and heroines, emphasizes education and experience as corrective forces. Austen's novels are, as Brown suggests, transitional in this sense: her characters are frequently caught between the determinate power of nature and the effects of education as shaping forces. In her female characters she most often achieves a workable and credible balance. By nature Elizabeth Bennet has all the attributes of a heroine, clearly gifted and superior to her sisters, but by education she is a flawed young woman in need of correction. The theme of faulty education runs throughout Austen's novels, and parents receive the harshest criticism for their failure to provide moral guidance. Most of the novels have at least one character, usually a young woman, not very gifted, but still capable of improvement, who ruins her own life. That ruin is traced directly to parental neglect, indulgence, or false education. These characters include not only Maria Bertram and Lydia
Bennet, but the falsely proud Miss Elliott, and to an important extent Austen's villains, particularly Willoughby, Wickham, and Henry Crawford.

The real dilemma for Austen, once she has acknowledged the relationship between education and conduct and the gifts of nature and the inclination to certain kinds of activity, is how to deal with evil. Are her villains evil by nature and therefore to be banished or at least avoided at all cost, or are they merely the next step in the descending order of young people with faulty education and therefore capable of reeducation or correction? We frequently see Austen caught in contradiction, trying to balance a precise moral vision which emphasizes the importance of human responsibility and perceptiveness in the absence of absolutes, at the same time that she is reluctant to admit the loss of those absolutes which provided the basis for the standard of conduct so firmly maintained throughout her novels. While her heroines become more realistically fallible and must learn to correct their errors, particularly in judgment, her villains never finally emerge from the figure of the conventional romance and frequently react in ways at odds with the more realistically developed motivations Austen provides for them.

Wickham, for example, is a thoroughly corrupt and ungrateful young man who rewards the Darcy family's kindness by running away with Georgianna. This first effort at seduction may well have been a kind of understandable
opportunism, Wickham seizing the chance to marry into the family through social necessity and thereby insuring himself more than a cleric’s or a soldier’s living. The seduction of Lydia when he is hopelessly in debt and has nothing to gain but social ostracism, since he knows Bennet to be poor and cannot foresee Elizabeth’s marriage to Darcy, is unexplained villainy. Here Austen retreats to a vision of a villain corrupt by nature and therefore irrational in his moral behavior. He has moved from the character of more realistically explained vice (spoiled by the senior Darcy, educated to please in order to gain favors, and finally making a desperate attempt to secure a place once his patron has died) to a romance villain motivated by the desire for pleasure and satisfaction and thoroughly heedless of consequences even as they may adversely affect him. If we are to believe that he was clever and calculating enough to gain early favor, we cannot simultaneously believe that he was so thoughtless and unperceptive as to run off with Lydia. If Austen cannot admit that he could be reformed, she does at least suggest that there is no effective means of banishing him and keeps him on the periphery. The fact that it is Darcy and his estate, through Elizabeth, who is forced to support Wickham in crisis suggests that Austen wishes to acknowledge, at least in part, where some of the responsibility for the formation of his character lies. In the final analysis, however, she does insist that Wickham must be viewed as being
evil by nature in order to reaffirm the conservative values of her provincial and providential world.

Far more interesting in this transition is the frequently misunderstood *Mansfield Park*, a novel whose form alternates between realism and romance as Austen tries to deal with evil in a realistic matter and still maintain her conservative vision of the moral nature of human experience. Avrom Fleishman aptly says that "Whereas Elizabeth Bennet ends a century, Fanny Price begins one." The conflict between Fanny Price, Austen's unprepossessing protagonist, and Henry Crawford, her most interesting villain, is the author's most ambitious attempt to portray realistically individual moral development. In each of her novels there is a character or a combination of characters who, although not perfect, offer correction and support to the heroine. Darcy and Knightley are both perceptive and would not have missed the early signals of the Crawfords' faults, but Edmund is not as morally sensitive as Fanny. There is no Lady Russell or Charlotte Lucas to turn to in a moment of doubt or crisis. In Fleishman's words: "Fanny is the first English heroine we can observe in the process of coming to know the moral world," and she must do it on her own. The reader is left not only to judge how successful and accurate she is, but to create standards by which her actions might be measured. In this novel Austen clearly faces the problems and implications of education and personal responsibility in a world unlike
that of *Pride and Prejudice* where Pemberley represents not only the ideal landscape, but the values by which human conduct can be judged. (Her use of Pemberley as model will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.)

One way to understand what is both successful and unsuccessful in this novel’s treatment of evil, is to contrast it with the work of an acknowledged realist, George Eliot. Sixty years later in *Daniel Deronda* Jane Austen’s successor is struggling with the same questions of human concern and responsibility in the face of evil and with the same problems of romance or realism as the appropriate forms to express a moral vision. The pairing of these two novels is not as gratuitous as it might at first appear. In an article entitled "*Mansfield Park, Daniel Deronda* and Ordination," David Carroll points out that George Henry Lewes and Eliot were reading *Mansfield Park* aloud while she was writing the first part of *Daniel Deronda*.*¹⁰* Whereas Carroll compares Edmund’s and Daniel’s vocations, I want to concentrate on the two recipients of charity and compassion, Fanny and Daniel, and the two villains, Crawford and Grandcourt, the former the author’s most consistent attempt at explained villainy and the latter the sole example of pure villainy produced by a writer of tremendous compassion.

It is primarily compassion which Austen wants us to feel for Fanny. She is not intended to be a "prig."*¹¹* In order to understand Fanny and indeed to view Crawford sympathetically
we must feel the contrast implicit in the worlds of the novel: Mansfield Park, Portsmouth, and London. Unfortunately, as we shall see, Austen asks us to view Portsmouth and London realistically, but expects Mansfield Park to represent in romance convention an ideal landscape, the representation of the values on which her moral vision depends. While critics like Alistair Duckworth have argued for the positive value of the estate, far too little attention has been given to Austen's attempts to make her readers conscious of the effects of physical deprivation on Fanny. Austen's other women, even the slightly faded Anne Elliott, are used to comfortable homes, good food, exercise, and to a great degree their own space and privacy, the last of which Austen herself did not always enjoy. Fanny, sensitive and perceptive, has been deprived of all of these. It is easy to imagine Austen's horror at the contrast between Chawton and the row after row of terraced houses of Portsmouth filled with children, noise, and confusion. Visiting her seafaring brothers who rose to the rank of Admiral in the navy she would no doubt have seen drunken and depressed men on half-pay loitering the streets of the great port. Sir Thomas' decision to send Fanny back home for what Tony Tanner calls "a salutary reminder of what poverty is like" can only be viewed as less than cruel, if we believe him to be incapable of imagining what that experience would be like for Fanny. The unimaginative aristocrat sees poverty as the absence of luxury. Everything
Austen tells us about him confirms this assumption. He cannot understand that what Fanny accepted and endured as the given of her parental home as a child would now be intolerable to her as a perceptive young woman. He cannot imagine her feelings of guilt at having known and desired better than her siblings and indeed her parents.

Daniel Deronda by contrast was, from his earliest memories, used to luxury and is, therefore, stunned by the thought that he might not be intended to live as a gentleman, just as, conversely, Fanny is equally stunned by the requirements of a lady's education. In both cases the worth of that distinction, clearly based as it is upon birth and superficial accomplishment, is criticized by the authors in their portrayal of those who hold it. Class as a way of assessing individual worth is part of the evil of both worlds. This criticism is evident in the way these ladies and gentlemen dispense charity to their "wards." Aunt Norris gives at the expense of others, Sir Thomas Bertram without warmth, and Sir Hugo Mallinger without trying to imagine what the mystery concerning his parentage is costing Daniel. Yet, once revealed, the problem involved and the secrecy Sir Hugo was sworn to partially absolve him, as does his continued affection, however conventionally expressed, for Daniel. Eliot's portrait of Sir Hugo is far more sympathetic than Austen's of Sir Thomas and as such forces Eliot to concentrate more of the evil she finds in the aristocracy in the figure of
The rather overly sympathetic character of Sir Hugo is not the only example of Eliot's use of idealization in an otherwise realistic novel. The novel is criticized for its split plot: the realistic section devoted to Gwendolen and the romantic Jewish section. To a great extent this description of the novel's division is accurate, although Sir Hugo, a recreation of the benign, if unperceptive, eighteenth-century squire, and Grandcourt, Eliot's only true villain, both appear in the "realistic" plot, which deserves further discussion in another context. This impulse, and I will argue, necessity to idealize is nowhere more obvious than in the description of two homes and locations which provide an almost exact social equivalent for Austen's Portsmouth. The first is the home of the Meyricks, who live in a tiny row house which turns out to be a jewel box: simple, clean, and elegant, housing a family of ladies so diminutive that overcrowing is simply unthinkable. Here there is no drunken father to beget more unwanted and unprovided-for children, only an ineffectual brother who, thanks to Daniel, seems always to be in residence elsewhere. They are what the poor should be like, but even they in their loving and compassionate home are capable of real misunderstanding of the Jewish ward, Mirah. It is not surprising therefore that, if Eliot feels it necessary to idealize the middle class poor in order for her readers to see beyond the poverty of their
surroundings, she must work even harder to widen her readers' horizons. She wants us to see beyond the facade of the Jewish pawnbroker's shop to the strength of a loving home behind it and the faith and learning which characterize that home.

Austen uses realistic description to expose the worst, the chaos of human life that her readers were so often sheltered from before the rise of the great industrial cities. She pictures in microcosm the kind of existence which destroys human meaning and thus gains sympathy and understanding for Fanny. Eliot's city readers frequently saw the "realistic" surface of Jewish life and are given idealized moments in order to overcome their prejudices and thus gain sympathy and understanding for the Jews. Both authors were clearly confronting different kinds of "knowledge" and assumptions on the part of their readers. They moved in one case, from romance to realism and in the other from realism to romance to make their readers see where and what the evil was which needed correction. Yet, the question remains: after having our capacity for understanding and sympathetic response broadened, what are we given in place of the vanished absolutes which will help us or the characters to deal effectively with evil? And, if evil cannot be dealt with, to what extent does each author either acknowledge or avoid the fact that evil cannot be overcome?

In *Mansfield Park* precisely because we are being asked to sympathize and examine how care, guidance, and compassion are
administered the final vision, the standard seemingly evolved, is so unsatisfactory. Julia Brown goes so far as to say, when considering the last glimpses we have of the future lives of the characters: "The social resolution revealed in these different destinies is horrifying." She perceptively underscores the real failure: "Fanny and Edmund, and the values they represent, fail to redeem the Crawfords, either by example or by the influence of love." Education through reading, compassionate conversation and guidance from Edmund, do much for Fanny, because she has within her, as a realistic character must, the capacity for growth and change and, as a fallible character, the need for improvement. And, if Fanny is no stock heroine, neither is Crawford a conventional villain. He is a young man used to luxury certainly, but suffering as much from the lack of moral guidance as Fanny suffered from physical deprivation. In one brief passage Austen tells us the nature of the home Crawford came from: his guardian kept a mistress, and Crawford's own sister could not live there for fear of scandalous involvement. This kind of revelation from Austen must carry weight.

Yet Crawford in many respects comes on the scene no more corrupt than his contemporaries, even those raised at Mansfield Park. The heir to that estate, Tom, gambles and leads a spendthrift life; he doesn't bother to flirt only because it would take time away from horse racing. Crawford's original flirtation with Maria Bertram proves both equally
foolish. His conduct is such that only the perceptive and perhaps overly scrupulous Fanny has her attention and suspicions aroused; Edmund doesn't see the flirtation, possibly because he is used to that kind of "harmless" behavior among his contemporaries, or more likely because he is being flirted with in a much more refined manner by Mary. Crawford is merely bringing London manners to the country. He is wrong, and Austen is very critical, but even her own nephew believed that Fanny would marry Henry.\textsuperscript{14} In other words, who he was, where he came from, and how he was educated, helped to explain his actions, and at the same time those actions were not so wicked or extraordinary for ordinary readers to expect that reformation was impossible. Austen, of course, wanted to educate those ordinary readers, but she gives them precious little guidance here. Frequently the great estate in some way embodied or represented a reference to an earlier set of standards which their owners tried to maintain. When Tanner says of Tom Bertram that "it takes a nearly fatal illness to bring him to some consciousness of true Mansfield values"\textsuperscript{15} I am at a loss to understand what those values are. And, if they exist at all, who by living at Mansfield has absorbed them?

Austen's inability to establish a set of workable values is nowhere more apparent than in the interaction between Fanny and Henry Crawford. While finally the readers' understanding that Fanny loves Edmund must be the one deciding factor
against her marrying Crawford, Austen does suggest that Fanny's disapproval of Crawford softens as he appears to reform. If her resistance to him were put in terms of her love for Edmund and not her constant remembrance of his former conduct she would appear far less priggish. She held out against the theater when Edmund did not, but she does not have the courage to reveal Henry's flirtation to Edmund, a very necessary action if her fears are based on the assumption of continued misconduct. If she believes the past to be a portent of the future, then she must inform the proper authorities as Elizabeth Bennet should have when she wonders in conversation with Jane whether to inform her father of Wickham's past. While the threat to Lydia who was following the regiment was a real possibility, Crawford's reestablishing a relationship with Maria at the same time he was so actively courting Fanny was highly unlikely.

Ultimately, Austen proves Fanny right in a way which violates the spirit of realistic examination of motives and behavior which permeate the novel and at the outset gained our sympathy for Fanny. It is impossible to believe that the married Maria was a target for adultery for Crawford. Neither the supplanting of the ineffectual Rushworth nor the company of the extremely limited Maria would be sufficiently flattering to Crawford's vanity—the explanation given for his actions—to make him risk social ostracism and the chance of ever being able to marry a woman who could even visit his
sister. If we are to believe that he proposes to Fanny because he has learned, although imperfectly, to value her, then we cannot believe that he would ruin his chances for future happiness by running away with Maria. Fanny's dismissal of him, sending him back to London without compassion, is analogous to Sir Thomas' sending her home to Portsmouth. Fanny was right to reject Crawford, but she handles the situation as if she were a romance heroine and he a villain, never considering more than her action, never imagining the wider implications for better or worse of her conduct. Edmund's wife, who will be expected to dispense charity in the neighborhood, has shown moral rectitude, but little more. Because Austen has taught us to be critical of those who have dispensed charity and compassion to Fanny by the letter and not in the spirit of the law of charity, we now must be critical of Fanny who can only hate the sin with no compassion for the sinner. She has protected her moral integrity, and her chances of marrying Edmund, the way Aunt Norris protects her money, without counting the cost to others. It is almost as if Austen were saying, and clearly she does not intend to do so, that in a world so flawed the best one can do is to avoid evil one's self. The simple avoidance of evil certainly is a kind of absolute, but one which is not consonant with the theme of a novel whose primary focus is on the benefits of learning, education, and compassion, and the evils of false charity—all of which
demand both an acknowledgment of human frailty as well as personal responsibility.

What exactly are the costs of compassion and what are its limits in dealing with evil or human frailty? The final scene in *Daniel Deronda* between Daniel and Gwendolen addresses this question directly. "Deronda's anguish was intolerable. He could not help himself. He seized her outstretched hands and held them together and kneeled at her feet. She was the victim of his happiness." Gwendolen is, of course, equally the victim of her society which has fashioned and supported her in the role of "princess in exile." But Deronda at least acknowledges that his choices, his decisions about how to spend his energies, have consequences for those with whom he is involved. Discussion of the cost, limits, and worthy objects of compassion, inevitably forces us to ask: how much can one do to counteract pervasive evil? Eliot at the close of *Daniel Deronda*, accepts the limits of reformation and compassion. As I have said there is a far greater incidence of idealization in the so-called Jewish plot and, considering that there is over sixty years separating the publication of *Daniel Deronda* and *Mansfield Park*, the prevalence of idealization might at first seem to counter my argument. But I make no claim for a steady development, or irreversible move towards realism; rather I wish to highlight the use of the romance technique in the closures of nineteenth-century novels as safeguards against "indeterminacy." In many ways we are
looking at two ends of a spectrum. **Mansfield Park** risks more realism, because Austen still believes in a set of values, human and social, but nonetheless the basis for conduct and the continuance of community. The failure of **Mansfield Park** is that we are asked to find in the familiar landscape of the great estate a set of values which the novel does not articulate. The strong resurgence of aspects of the romance located in idealization in **Daniel Deronda**, shows us that Eliot has lost hope, feeling that the bonds of human sympathy with their web-like fineness have been broken, that further energy and human talent expended on the world of Gwendolen will produce very little positive result.

Part of the readers' confusion with the novel has to do with the great difference in emotional response elicited by romance as opposed to realistic characterization. Carole Robinson states the dichotomy in its more extreme form:

> The reason that the novel as a whole represents itself provokingly as curiously distorted is that its moral judgment is contradicted by its aesthetic judgment. The disparity between the splendid Gwendolen and the spurious Daniel as literary creatures causes the ethical distinction between them to appear an absurdity. But the truth is that Gwendolen is not only superior to Daniel as a fictional invention, a brilliant Satan to his innocent archangel; she is his moral superior as well. Gwendolen is fully engaged in a dilemma: Daniel's only dilemmas are abstractions, the fruits of the novelist's self-doubts. Daniel is represented as totally free—the Jewish fantasy requires this—while Gwendolen confronts the pressures, social, economic, familial, of an actual environment.

While most of her criticism concerning the inequality of
characterization seems justified, I would never call Gwendolen "Satanic." Instead, I would maintain that much of what Kathleen Blake says of Rosamond Vincy in Middlemarch can also be said of Gwendolen: that our sympathy for Gwendolen "depends less on our feeling that she is wronged than our understanding that the wrong she does proceeds from her position as a woman. 18 She is what society and her natural gifts have made her: she is narrow and selfish, but seems even worse when contrasted with the constant altruism and the spiritual superiority of the characters in the idealized portion of the novel. Rosamond is set in a world of equally flawed human beings and is given credit for recognizing Dorothea's strength, and finally is not punished for her part in Lydgate's failures. Eliot does not see fit to punish Gwendolen either. At the conclusion of the novel she is back in the home she loved, resuming in a more deserved way her role as "princess in exile" with her beloved mother beside her. She is deprived of Daniel's company and moral support which, in fact, may best be given by the letters he promises. What we know of Gwendolen, particularly after her marriage to Grandcourt, convinces us that prolonged contact with a man capable of physical intimacy would become intolerable to her. Daniel's breakdown in their last interview acknowledges the complex emotional relationship which has grown up between them. The teacher-pupil relationship between an attractive male and a young woman is always dangerous. Daniel recognizes
his attraction to Gwendolen as well as its implications early on when he says in answer to Sir Hugo's suggestion that Gwendolen was a girl worth pursuit: "I should rather be inclined to run away from her." (p.201). And, of course, he does precisely that at the conclusion of the novel. An exploration of what and why he is fleeing as much as what he is seeking helps to clarify Eliot's vision of the evil in her society.

The romance plot with Daniel as hero, Mirah as heroine, and the Jewish homeland as their yet-unrealized ideal land has a primary value to Eliot as it extends the bonds of human sympathy to a despised part of the English population which she had come to admire. The move to romanticize is not an attempt to lie about the "real" nature of the Jews, but, as I have observed in her use of descriptions of place, as antidote to her society's prejudices based on conventional "truth," ironically based on realistic details derived from their "experience" filtered through the prism of prejudice. As a result Victorian readers came to see Scott's Isaac and Eliot's Lapidoth as characters and not caricatures. Eliot reminded them if they accept the "truth" of those two they must also be willing to accept the fact that such men father Rebecca, Mirah, and Mordecai. She also provided young Jacob being educated in his religion by Mordecai and yet happily pursuing a premature career as trader as a mixture of both worlds. Why in this attempt to have her readers extend their horizons to
include the Jews did Eliot feel she had to turn her sincere, if enigmatic, English gentleman into a Jewish hero? Couldn't he have been used to bridge the two cultures, to do what Ivanhoe dared not, marry the Jewess and face the prejudices of his society straight on? Conventional Christianity had very little hold on Daniel. This solution would have brought the romance and realistic plots together and his choice of Mirah over Gwendolen would have none of the complications of his seeming to run away and abandon a woman dependent on him.

The preceding speculation is not another version of Rebecca and Rowena. It is not meant as an exercise in writing an alternate ending to Daniel Deronda, but as a way of acknowledging another set of options and values open to Eliot, which she firmly rejected. The plots are finally left separate and Daniel sets out, not because he must not stay, but because there is nothing further he can do in England; the limits of useful compassion have been reached. The romance plot does here what Levine suggests romance conventions accomplish in Scott: they "resolve issues that realistic technique would make too painful." However, the Jewish plot does not offer "resolution" as such, but in its hopefulness offers an alternative to the despair of the realistic conclusion. The England Daniel leaves is past redemption. Gwendolen may believe that her life will be better "because I have known you" (p.882) but what constitutes that "better" is hard to say. Perhaps, she will be kinder to
her mother and sisters. By using the romance plot, Eliot indirectly confesses that she has lost hope for England. Levine believes that:

By the time of Daniel Deronda, George Eliot had in effect renounced the limits of realism by renouncing the possibility of satisfactory life within society, the sanction of meaning conferred by a community organically coherent. The ultimate realistic project in George Eliot becomes the projection of community into fictions from which her realist's integrity has banished it. Daniel is sent off, in fact, to create a community, outside the reaches of society and of the novel whose language can no longer evoke one.  

Through Gwendolen and Grandcourt we come to understand the full depravity of the world in which no community is possible. Gwendolen's attraction to Grandcourt as an ideal gentleman is a revelation of the values of that world. The prevalence of those values is the primary reason why Daniel must spend his talents in search of new values, new roots, and a new homeland. England's power is concentrated in Grandcourt's narrow circle of those privileged with birth and money. Hugo Mallinger is the last of a dying breed of well-intentioned aristocrats. His willingness to take and raise Daniel, his care for his wife and daughters, his concern for Gwendolen, and the rights of Grandcourt's illegitimate family all mark him as a good man. He is without heir; there is no future for the reasonably responsible squire. In many ways he has survived beyond his time, living by a set of standards no longer recognized by the next generation.

Grandcourt who spurns even political activity will
inherit all. Grandcourt is Eliot's complete aristocrat: heir
to more than one title, overbred, self-centered, and delighted
by his own power of mastery, particularly as it gives him the
opportunity to inflict pain. To a great extent Grandcourt
does not really belong in the realistic plot; he is too much
the figure of unfathomable and unaccountable evil. Yet Eliot
must have felt that this kind of evil was present and operated
in her world, even as she wanted to define and limit its
existence. The fact that he dies the way he does, the death
of a romance villain—the serpent returning to the
depths—shows how correct Robert McCarron is when he says that
"Whatever Grandcourt's roots in Eliot's intellectual-cultural
heritage, however, her mature moral theories could never
accept such a figure."

And, so, he remains a figure of
evil, a representative of all that she had come to fear in her
world. She uses the villain of romance, just as Austen did,
when a realistic portrayal would have forced Eliot to deny all
she believed about human nature.

In the romance plot Grandcourt functions as a latter day
Brian de Bois-Guilbert, only this time the Rowena figure has
committed the folly of marrying him. Although our Jewish
Ivanhoe could not have considered marrying her himself, he
cannot leave with his Rebecca while Rowena is subject to
torment. It is Eliot herself, through Sir Hugo, who
introduces the theme of Daniel as knight errant. The use of
Gwendolen's necklace as the lady's colors to be redeemed by
the hero cannot be accidental. Gwendolen uses the same necklace Daniel redeemed from the pawn shop to signal her distress, and Daniel again answers the call and acknowledges her claim to his services as friend and advisor. Grandcourt calls the gesture romantic and vulgar, but recognizes it as part of her symbolic communication with Daniel. Until Grandcourt's death the claim which that necklace represents is strong enough, for Gwendolen's distress is real enough to keep Daniel close to her. Eliot makes it quite clear that there is nothing evil enough in Gwendolen to merit her being punished by being the lifelong victim of Grandcourt's sadism. Daniel, as hero, is not required to kill him, but it is his presence in Genoa which makes Grandcourt want to get Gwendolen out of Daniel's reach. He thus takes a boat out and refuses to listen to warnings of extremely changeable winds. After Grandcourt's death all Daniel can do is help Gwendolen accept her rightful although limited inheritance which will provide the security which was the motive for her marriage in the first place.

The novel appears to end on a very hopeful note; even Gwendolen's final letter seems to be looking forward. Daniel's marriage is full of love and the common purpose of finding the Jewish homeland; yet not since The Mill on the Floss has the vision of the real world, of society as Eliot knew it, been so full of despair. In Daniel Deronda, Eliot acknowledges the completely and hopelessly corrupt nature of
society and its values. Grandcourt's death makes no
difference; it merely frees a particular individual from a
nasty marriage. Eliot ends Daniel Deronda as Austen
inadvertently concludes Mansfield Park, acknowledging the
disappearance of absolutes, of religious, social or humane
standards by which to measure right action and guide human
conduct. Mansfield Park is so realistic that Austen cannot
use the estate as symbol for conservative, provincial values.
Instead what we see are the unsupported efforts of a young
woman who tries to find the right path of action and who falls
short of a standard which can only be intuited from the
insights gained in other of Austen's novels. Eliot despairsof reforming her world by exercising human sympathy and
instead acknowledges the supremacy of the purely societal
values that support Grandcourt and both create and threaten to
destroy Gwendolen. Marriage with all that it should represent
can only occur in the romance plot which takes Daniel out of
England. There can be no marriage for Gwendolen, but her
story is nonetheless complete, for there is nothing worth
pursuit or interest in the land which Daniel leaves.
If Mansfield Park and Daniel Deronda are viewed then as examples, not of the best novels produced by either writer, but as the most significant attempt by each to deal with evil in a realistic manner and simultaneously to acknowledge the restrictions which realism puts on an informing moral vision, then the career of Charles Dickens in the mid-century can provide the logical bridge between the two. Barbara Hardy maintains that "what distinguishes Dickens' moral questioning from that of Thackeray, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, and Hardy, is his combination of social despair and personal faith, his capacity to distrust both society and social reform while retaining and perhaps deepening a faith in the power of human love." Certainly his characteristic uneasy balance of the two contradictory impulses of his moral vision has always drawn much criticism of Dickens' endings. For after describing pervasive and seemingly unconquerable evil throughout the novel, he provides in the final marriage between his flawed male character and angelic heroine an ending which suggests romance closure and all that it implies about the regeneration of the kingdom. Eliot's portrait of the aristocracy in Daniel Deronda, which was for her a statement of despair, seems far less harsh than most of Dickens' descriptions of his world. To admire Dickens, modern
readers must either forgive him his conclusions or learn to admire the spirit in which they are written: to hope in the face of evil so forcefully delineated. Dickens more than most nineteenth-century novelists had to construct enclaves or sanctuaries to protect his marriages. His enclaves seem more artificial than most because the world he creates outside is so effectively evil, so able to affect all facets of society however minute, however isolated. I will discuss the nature and use of those enclaves in the following chapters, after examining here Dickens' portrayal of the nature of evil.

Dickens goes beyond Austen's attempts in *Mansfield Park* to make us not only see the streets he knew so well but actually to feel them. Donald Fanger refers to him as a "romantic realist" which accurately assesses his constant use of the techniques of the romance in the cause of realistic moral and social questioning.\(^{22}\) Certainly his use of the rhetorical devices, of the figurative language once used to describe the idealized landscape, is consonant with the realistic spirit, if not with the practice as we have come to define it. Dickens' London is palpably full of the breath of corruption even as it appears to teem with life. In a novel like *Bleak House*, there is no real need for a villain as the single representative of evil, because evil is present throughout, given physical reality in the London fog, the infection spreading in Tom-all-Alone's, the rain on the Deadlock estate, and the workings of Chancery.
Robert McLean in a unpublished dissertation traces the development of Dickens' villainous characters from his use of stock figures borrowed from theatre and other literary works to his mature and unique representation of the collective nature of evil. So while the mature Dickens may use a character like Orlick, his defeat or destruction makes no difference to the moral state of the society, although it does provide the reader with some small satisfaction in a symbolic victory of good over evil. Dickens' world is so "monstrous and mechanical" that ironically the figure of the villain in the traditional role of a representative of pure evil gives hope rather than adds to the despair, because he may be overcome. Dickens is simply using another part of the romance plot deprived of its absolute moral value to lessen the overwhelming feeling of compromise and futility which pervades the novels. In Levine's words Dickens is doing the same things as Scott in using romance conventions to help in "resolving the issues which realistic technique would make too painful." Dickens offered no real resolution to the problems posed within the context of the novel and his marriages and the defeat of the villain implies rather than provides an adequate "sense of an ending." His use of romance convention allowed his readers to hope when everything else in his novels told them to despair.

If Dickens does not and indeed cannot deal effectively with the pervasive nature of evil, he does take pains to
lessen its impact. The use of romance convention, Dickensian caricature, and comedy render his world a little less savage. By depriving characters of a bit of reality through caricature Dickens renders them less painful to behold, at least at first glance. Although we laugh for a moment at the plans for Borrioboola-Gha or at the young Pockets who alternatively tumble and nap, we gradually begin to see the situation from the perspective of Peepy with his head caught in the fence, of Caddy smeared with ink, or of young Jane being scolded and humiliated for saving the baby from the nutcrackers. The humor becomes quite black on closer consideration, especially when the only reaction to the intolerable situations is a habitual gesture of impotence by the father, the Victorian figure of absolute authority, who now leans in resignation against the wall or attempts to lift himself by his hair. In Dickens, as in Austen, the father, like God, has disappeared, or at least has stopped exerting his authority.

While we may learn from these situations the lesson Esther Summerson does in Bleak House: "It is right to begin with obligations at home, . . . while whose are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them," Esther seems to be the only one to take the lesson to heart.²⁴ Those who are in a position to act for the most part do not, and the evils of neglect and self delusion go on unabated. For every Pip who is confronted with truth of his "expectations" there are a thousand Mrs. Pockets who continue
in their folly. Her children, ladies and gentlemen by birth, are neglected to such an extent that they are receiving no better care or education than is Pip who was "brought up by hand." Indeed, the plight of the little Pockets is parallel to Pip's since Mrs. Pocket does not seem to be able to get her hands on her children without doing them some bodily harm; Pip had the advantage of Joe who was always there to catch him. So the Pockets will grow up without real expectations and indeed may like Herbert spend far too much time "looking about" in search of expectations, like his mother, rather than setting to work at "obligations of home." Marriage to an "ideal" woman is the only solution for Herbert and for most of Dickens' men.

These comic incompetent parents are villainous for the harm they do. Villains like Orlick or Heep are easily identified and dealt with. There seems to be no effective way of dealing with the Jellybys and the Pockets, and the harm they do, like Chancery, is visited upon succeeding generations. All the Pocket children want to marry, perhaps so that they can for the first time in their lives enjoy the "privileges of acting like children. Dickens sees his world even through the actions of the well-meaning Jarndyce as practicing a false benevolence and supporting men and women like Skimpole who live by the charity of others and at the expense of the truly innocent. Those vanished absolutes, the laws of God represented by Providence and the effective
fathers, have been replaced by the law of Chancery and the practice of false benevolence which refuses to stop evil in the name of kindness. What have been substituted in effect are sets of expectations, humanly devised and ordered, those same values which created Gwendolen Harleth as surely as Miss Havisham fashions Estella.

Yet, despite the dismal picture, Dickens still holds out hope for individual reform for those who have the luck to be shown, like Pip, the true source and nature of their desires and expectations as well as their costs. The love of Joe and Biddy as well as Magwitch finally reaches Pip. This is the "faith" which Barbara Hardy sees in Dickens. When contrasted with George Eliot's Dickens' faith is quite striking, even though on the surface a novel like Daniel Deronda appears far more hopeful than Great Expectations. Certainly the view of human nature seems less grim. Consider for a moment the differences and similarities in the characters of Estella and Gwendolen. Neither Daniel's advice nor for that matter her painful marriage can bring Gwendolen to more than a slightly better understanding of her world, whereas Estella has both the ability to learn the lessons Miss Havisham teaches, and through bitter experience come to realize their destructive power for herself and others. This growth is true for both endings of Great Expectations. Their marriages also provide some interesting parallels. Both misjudge the men that they are about to marry. Grandcourt and Drummle have the capacity
to enjoy inflicting pain: they are powerful, if stereotypical portraits of vicious, self-centered aristocrats. Yet both young women have received a very specialized "education," whose result, willed or not, is to produce "heartless" creatures who are finally attracted to even more heartless men. Eliot suggests that the treatment Gwendolen received from her stepfather, as well as her own unhappiness at being replaced by him as the prime object of her mother's concern, only completed the training which her mother's spoiling had started so well. She has contempt for men, and fears their power to dominate a situation. She is ready, in fact far more ready than Estella, to break hearts, as Rex Gascoigne finds out. Estella finally wants to escape from the game of heart-breaking and marries Drummle, lacking Jaggers' insight into Drummle's character. Gwendolen also misjudges the power relationship in her marriage, but her reason for marrying is not that she had tired of the game but that she desperately needs financial security, something Estella is guaranteed. Estella's motive for marrying suggests that she is not as heartless as even she thinks, and allows us to believe that she can unlearn through bitter experiences Miss Havisham's lessons. Although Dickens is far more brutal with his characters than Eliot is, his characters can learn through experience. Eliot, for all her human sympathy, really allows her character very little growth, perhaps because she is more realistic, and finally because she had less faith in mankind.
This belief in the capacity for real growth and maturity on the part of the major characters allows critics to say, for example, that to a great extent both endings of *Great Expectations* accomplish the same thing: they show us a wiser Pip. Critics have asserted that Pip is worthy finally to marry Estella, and, equally, that he is unworthy of this reward. Estella's fate as such is not so vital a part of the plan of *Great Expectations* as significantly to affect the outcome. Why then are most modern readers so insistent about their preference for the first ending?

Surely it is not simply that we are tired of marriages, since we accept them in so many other novels. I believe the preference for the first ending is not based on the rightness of keeping Pip from finally marrying Estella, for all agree that they are hardly the same people they once were. It is simply that the ending is more true to the vision of the world Dickens has presented in a very specific way. Those coincidences in *Great Expectations* which might have been seen as Providential in the romance (Magwitch and Pip's meetings, Pip returning to Biddy on her wedding day, etc.) in this novel do not lead to reward and reconciliation. The help Pip gives Magwitch leads him astray, the lost chance to marry Biddy does not mean he is destined for Estella. The lesson is: do not expect some personal, providentially ordained future. Thus, the second meeting in the published ending when Estella is free to marry violates the consistent pattern of Pip's
experience. The only plan which includes Pip and Estella was Miss Havisham's, then only a practice for the real game of heart-breaking. It is precisely this consistent vision of a world without Providence which I believe prompted Bulwer-Lytton to urge Dickens to revise the conclusion.

We will probably never know what Bulwer said to Dickens to persuade him, but Edwin Eigner makes some interesting guesses based on the advice Bulwer gave George Eliot through her publisher. Eigner, using both the writings of Dickens and Bulwer as well as other popular contemporaries, points out that there was no objection to an unhappy ending, the kind that brought tears to readers' eyes. In this context Pip's presenting Joe's son to Estella and allowing her to believe him to be his own so that she might not sense his continued unhappiness is a Sydney Carton gesture on a small scale. It is the only kind of heroic gesture possible from a man no longer harboring great expectations and desiring those he loves to live in peace, if not complete happiness. Clearly the gesture was not enough for Bulwer to constitute an agreeably unhappy ending. In commenting on The Mill on the Floss Bulwer made the following observation: "In studying plot and incident--this very remarkable writer does not eno' weigh what is Agreeable or Disagreeable. You may have the painful, the terrible, the horrible even: but the disagreeable should be shunned." Given his use of the word in this context I think it is safe to say that what is
disagreeable is that which exposes too much of the world which the Victorians did not want to see mirrored in their fiction, that which realistic technique made too painfully obvious. In both *The Mill on the Floss* and *Great Expectations* as originally concluded the mechanical and monstrous world has its way, and both main characters, though wiser, are left to make final gestures which neither change their fate, nor reconcile them to their loved ones. Death or isolation are disagreeable, if realistic, ways to end a novels.

Thus Eigner sees Bulwer encouraging Dickens not to publish his first ending, but "to substitute for it a conclusion more in keeping with what looked in 1861 like the time-tested rules of English narrative romance." Any comparison with a genuine romance, or for that matter with most of the marriages which signal the close of Dickensian novels, demonstrates that the new ending only makes an oblique reference to conventional romance closure and as such lacks its power. The ending is not so much open as ambiguous. The conventional expectation is that the final words signal a marriage and therefore a "happy" ending, but Dickens deliberately withholds all those references to the establishment of domestic bliss, home, hearth and children, which "comfort" the reader at the conclusion of his novels. He called the new ending a "pretty piece of writing," but deprived it of all the power that such an ending might have had in another context, trying as best he could only slightly
to veil realism with the suggestion of a romance closure. The romance by 1861, despite Bulwer's judgment, had become inadequate to express the moral vision of both Dickens and Eliot, and in their two very autobiographical novels, Great Expectations and The Mill on the Floss, they come as close to breaking completely with the old form as they do in any other novels they wrote.

Perhaps going back to Barbara Hardy's formulation of what a novelist does, we have in this case a good example of a conflict between the desire to give "form to his [her] moral and metaphysical views," and the necessity of expressing "his [her] particular experience of sensations, people, places, and society." In the case of Daniel Deronda and Mansfield Park, Austen and Eliot used a combination of forms, moving between romance and realism and finally relying on romance conventions, violating realistic elements of their novels, in an effort to sustain their hopeful moral and metaphysical views. They resisted acknowledging the pervasive nature of evil by using romance convention. To have done otherwise would have forced them to admit to a vision of society which they and their readers found extremely disagreeable. In Great Expectations and The Mill on the Floss because of the biographical nature of the material and the identification of author with protagonist, the authors produced conclusions which coincided more with their "particular experience of sensations, people, places and society." If the death of
Maggie Tulliver may seem contrived, it is nonetheless a far more realistic statement of the future which the world holds for her than a happy marriage to either of her suitors would have been. Even in the revised ending of *Great Expectations* there is a sense that marriage to Estella may prove a more "real" and perhaps "disagreeable" experience for Pip than sharing the fairy-tale happiness of Joe and Biddy or Herbert and Clara. Perhaps it is inevitable that only when working through very painful memories of personal development were both Eliot and Dickens willing at least to attempt to see their realism through to the bitter end.
Notes to Chapter I


3 Anthony Trollope, Barchester Towers (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), p.8. All further quotations from the novel will be followed in the body of the text by page numbers from this edition.

4 Polhemus, p.175.

5 William Makepeace Thackeray, "Rebecca and Rowena" from The Christmas Books of Mr. M.A. Titmarsh (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1911), p.111. Thackeray himself uses the blonde and brunette contrast in Amelia and Becky in Vanity Fair.

6 Thackeray, p.111.


8 Avrom Fleishman, A Reading of Mansfield Park (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), p.73.

9 Fleishman, p.72.


13 Brown, p.96.
14 R.W. Chapman, ed., *Jane Austen Letters 1796-1817* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 159. Writing to her sister Cassandra about Henry Austen's reaction to the novel Austen indicates he was unsure of how the novel would end as he started to read the third volume and that "he defied anybody to say whether H.C. would be reformed or would forget Fanny in a fortnight." Reformation was for her nephew at least an option for Henry Crawford.

15 Tanner, p. 18.


19 Levine, p. 46.


26 Eigner, p. 107. The letter was written in 1860 to John Blackwood and was to be shown to Eliot.
Chapter II

Retreat to the Enclave: The Avoidance of Evil

Four grey walls, and four grey towers
Overlook a space of flowers
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shallot.
Alfred, Lord Tennyson,
"The Lady of Shallot."

Tennyson's poem, "The Lady of Shallot," explores the relationship between life and art, and between enclosure and experience. If the lady leaves the sanctuary of the tower where she sings and weaves she will experience not only life but death as well which will end her song. The mutually exclusive states of enclave and experience which Tennyson describes in his poem have their parallel in the nineteenth-century novel. Many of the good men and women of nineteenth-century fiction find themselves at the end of their adventures separated from the world in tiny enclaves frequently as timeless as the lady's bower. This dilemma is particularly true of Dickens' main characters. The evil of the world has proved too strong and pervasive; the only
salvation is to be found in the retreat to some domestic bower surrounded by children and flowers. Set against Dickens' vibrant urban world, these domestic enclaves seem particularly artificial to modern readers and significantly may carry a meaning quite opposite from that which the romance convention of marriage at closure is intended to have. Marriage was meant to signal the restoration of the kingdom, the final victory over evil. The formation of these enclaves acknowledges the inability of the characters to deal effectively with evil; they are escapes rather than solutions. George Kennedy points out in his article on "Dickens' Endings" that Dickens' enclaves are deliberately separated from the corruption of society not only in location but in time as well, through a change in the verb tense used in the narration. Kennedy uses Frank Kermode's term aevum (which Kermode borrowed from St. Thomas Aquinas) to describe a third order of time which is in Kermode's words: "distinct from the time and eternity" and "participating in both the temporal and the eternal." Kermode goes on to explain that "It [the aevum] does not abolish time or spatialize it; it co-exists with time, and is a mode in which things can be perpetual without being eternal." This is the state which Kennedy believes characterizes the domestic enclaves of Dickens' conclusions. He goes on to demonstrate how "this time-shift is indicated by a simple change from the normal narrative past tense into a present tense." He concludes
that; "Like Esther Summerson at the new Bleak House, all characters who dwell in this special environment are able to escape the increasingly overwhelming pressures of the outer, public realm and 'begin the world' again at a new and higher level." The exact nature of that life "at a new and higher level" needs some careful consideration in light of the moral vision which found it necessary to construct those enclaves. The function of those enclaves in Dickens' novels is for me ambiguous at best. The difference between Pemberley and the new Bleak House is vitally important in the move from romance to realism.

In the preceding chapter we examined the change in the romance form which occurred when writers attempted to describe evil and the struggle against evil without relying on absolutes. To avoid the continued confrontation with pervasive evil the authors have their characters form enclaves, have them retreat into a sanctuary. Alistair Duckworth summarizes the movement we have been observing in this way:

...whereas the eighteenth-century novelist, generally speaking, can accept society whole, as a given structure within whose terms the individual must act, the nineteenth-century novelist tends to question the ethical constitution of society and to set against it a morality generated by the interaction of two people or a small group. On the one hand to make the point quickly, we have the man of the hill in Tom Jones, whose withdrawal is wrong both as strategy and as morality; on the other, we have Wemmick's moated "castle" at Walworth in Great Expectations, a pocket carefully separated from the taint of surrounding London. From Fielding's comprehensive affirmation of society, the English novel, moves to Dickens' circumscribed ethic in which a small enclave is purified through love amid a world of wickedness.
The move from Paradise Hall, or Pemberley, to the new Bleak House needs to be analyzed in some detail. It is the transition from a place used as emblem for a set of values which the hero and heroine share and which are acknowledged to be a correct standard, to a place used as refuge for two people who now must live apart from a world hostile to their values. Using Kennedy's formulation we might say that in true romance closure all moved into the "happy-ever-after" of the aevum, into what he also calls mythic time; the entire kingdom raised to a new and higher order. In nineteenth-century novels which use romance convention, the values of the characters within the enclave are those necessary for the reestablishment of community. If the novel is realistic enough to admit that not everyone will live happily ever after, the enclave represents the possibility of happiness for some, and, more importantly, its effects as emblem of ideal standards are felt by those without as well as those within. It is not the dwelling of the man of the hill in Tom Jones. When, however, realism exposed the pervasive nature of evil, the enclave moved from the world where it had served a moral function to the aevum, or at least a separate place, where it provides a haven, but a haven which, unlike the "happy-ever-after" of the romance, has no wider moral effects other than individual self-preservation. This is the morality which Austen appears to endorse in Mansfield Park, and which Alistair Duckworth, even as he defends Fanny, as a
heroine, characterizes as a morality which "savors too strongly of a concern for salvation of self to the exclusion of a concern for others." It is therefore a much more nineteenth- than eighteenth-century reaction to evil, and occurs, I believe, because Austen fails to describe Mansfield Park as she did Pemberley, as a physical representation of the absolutes she clearly believed in.

Bridging two centuries, Austen is an illuminating writer to follow as the nature of the enclaves she constructs around her characters changes in reaction to her awareness of the nature and complexity of evil and its effects on the particular characters in question. The great estate provides Austen with a ready-made enclave. Duckworth who analyzes her use of the great houses and their parks makes three interesting observations in the course of his study which are best considered together:

Her metonomy extends beyond simple metaphorical convenience, for by locating traditional systems in the fabric of the house, or in the landscape of the park, she has affirmed her faith in the substantial existence of certain preexisting structures of morality and religion.

Throughout Jane Austen's fiction, estates function not only as the settings of action but as indexes to the character and social responsibility of their owners.

The estate as a structure in time is valid only as it is actively supported by the individual. Separately each of these claims seems to me useful and helpful, but when taken together they contain contradictory
assertions. These contradictions will be dealt with in the course of the discussion of Austen's use and final abandonment of the estate as an effective embodiment of moral absolutes.

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* uses romance structure effectively. Although she does not banish her villain, she does finally characterize him as a true villain, corrupt by nature and therefore unlike the self-serving Miss Bingley or the foolish Lydia Bennet. What allows the novel to retain much of the moral force of the conventional romance even as it moves away from stereotypical characterization is the presence of an absolute standard of conduct carefully articulated in the design of Pemberley. Pemberley is not a retreat from evil, but is a well-established representation of a set of standards by which evil and folly can be judged, and in a limited way corrected.

Of Elizabeth's first visit to Pemberley we are told: "She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste." Man's art and nature's gifts in just the right proportion are what Austen wants us to notice; the specific architectural period is not important. While Darcy has made many "improvements" at Pemberley those improvements indicate a natural taste which his manners do not reveal: the river has been widened and flows freely, whereas Darcy is both stiff and silent. Elizabeth, whose spontaneous spirit immediately responds to the naturalness of the Pemberley park,
is unable because of her lack of real education to appreciate its paintings. In the "picture gallery ...were many good paintings; but Elizabeth knew nothing of art," and consequently is not capable of valuing them. So Elizabeth will help to draw out the taste and qualities in Darcy which informed his improvements at Pemberley but do not govern his manners and actions. Residence at Pemberley with Darcy as teacher will help to supplement Elizabeth's faulty education. The educative process in equal shares will bring both into balance and make them the ideal master and mistress for Pemberley. The housekeeper reminds Elizabeth that whoever the mistress of the estate is her position will bring with it obligations as well as comforts. Darcy has taken his duties as master very seriously. With the example of Elizabeth, who ignored convention and walked through the muddy fields to visit her sister, Darcy will do better. Even before their marriage he acts without hesitation and places himself in the undignified position of tracking down Lydia and Wickham. His response to Elizabeth's distress is swift and instinctive. Elizabeth once married takes over the education of her two unmarried sisters using the ideals Pemberley embodies to shape their values, and thus counter the faulty education provided by their parents.

Pemberley then represents God-given gifts preserved and improved through human endeavor. It is a conservative ideal in so far as it seems to stress the importance of birth and
inheritance, and to a large degree it does. Yet at the same time Austen's characterization of the Gardiners who have made up by natural gifts and education those things presumed to come with the inheritance of Pemberley stresses the importance of individual worth as being separable from social position. What Wickham did not have by birth he had the opportunity to achieve in a more limited way through education and application, but his expectations were too grand, and he was simply too lazy and self-indulgent. Darcy learns not to allow his sense of the importance of his inherited social status to govern his actions. His false sense of his family's dignity did not permit him to inform against Wickham early, and thus he is partially responsible for Wickham's success with Lydia as his father was for Wickham's great expectations. Darcy's actions (not his birth) are what make him a worthy master for Pemberley. Austen presents Pemberley as an ideal, using it to help measure the extent of human folly and responsibility for evil. (The Darcy family's dedication to the preservation of the great woods over several generations for example contrasts to Mr. Bennet's inability to manage his estate sufficiently well to provide for his daughters.) The standards which Austen carefully sets up with Pemberley as emblem help her to conclude the novel satisfactorily. Not everyone in the novel will live wisely or well, but the reasons they will not are carefully stated. Charlotte Lucas is an example of a character who does not harbor great expectations, but at the
same time knows how far from the ideal her husband is and works as best she can for improvement. Pemberley and its inhabitants are not moved into the aevum: Austen makes it clear that Mr. Bennet comes to visit too often. And, if Mrs. Bennet is not made wise by Pemberley and what it represents, its magnificence at least silences her for a time.

In contrast to Pemberley, Norland Park in Sense and Sensibility and Mansfield Park seem to have no positive effects on their inhabitants. The new owner of Norland Park is unwilling to help his step-mother and sisters because he and his wife value the inheritance, but not its obligations. Similarly, Sir Thomas guards Mansfield Park's dignity, but learns too late the lesson Elizabeth teaches Darcy about the necessity of naturalness and openness in human discourse, and thus fails to transmit his standards to his children. In Sense and Sensibility the estate provides a symbol of lost opportunity rather than guiding principles. As noted in the preceding chapter Austen assumes rather than illustrates the values supposedly embodied in Mansfield Park. In neither instance, however, can the estate provide an enclave at the conclusion of the novel for neither Mansfield Park nor Norland usefully represents Austen's values. They provide neither shelter from nor solutions to the problems of human folly or vice. Ironically and significantly Fanny will administer the "Mansfield" values from the parsonage, the traditional source of moral guidance. However, the church as represented by the
empty chapel at Sotherton does not play an active part in the world of Austen's novels. The only practicing clergyman we ever meet is Mr. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice*, a thoroughly silly and self-important man. In place of the church, estates like Pemberley stand for a set of human values aimed at the preservation of community and a standard of human conduct. Evil for Austen is the disruption of that community and the lack of care, management, and education which threaten to exclude her heroines from finding a secure place in society.

Whereas Pemberley is admired, Mansfield Park is considered old fashioned by the young men who visit it. Elizabeth Bennet with her faulty education recognizes the values which Pemberley represents. What is unclear in the case of Mansfield Park is whether the young men are rejecting traditional values represented by the estate and/or the overly austere manners of its present owner. Austen wants to attack the London morality which Crawford represents, but she does not clearly delineate a set of values which could stand in opposition to urban sophistication. This is Austen's major problem in the structure of *Mansfield Park* and the basis for the contradiction in Duckworth's generalizations about the use of the estate. As Austen uses more realistic characterization and makes the owner of the estate less ideal Duckworth's assertions that the estate functions as a representation of absolute values and as an index to the character of its owner come into conflict. Austen has not abandoned the values
articulated in *Pride and Prejudice*, but she does not find a satisfactory way of making a distinction between the owner and the estate. Her short architectural analysis of Pemberley provided the needed separation between owner and estate, between emulation and perfection. Mansfield Park saved from the theatrical renovations, like Sir Thomas, retains its dignity, but like him fails to be an effective model and guide.

Only in *Emma* does Austen once again successfully fuse values and place, but significantly her emphasis has shifted from the description of place and values to their preservation. At the conclusion of *Emma* Austen is willing to separate the values from the place in order to make those values more effective in the wider community. This separation appears to present a final marriage without an enclave. What has really occurred is that the Donwell values have such an effective representation in Knightley that the community of Highbury has become the extension of the estate. This is the fullest expression Austen gives of her conservative provincial ideal. However, this seemingly perfect state is achieved as much through the absence of evil as through the strength of the values. The novel contains no Mr. Elliott, Henry Crawford, Wickham or Willoughby, but only the foolish Frank Churchill. The real emphasis is not on the articulation of absolute values in the face of evil, but on the preservation of old values in their proper context. The name Donwell Abbey
is quite suggestive, for it implies both the past success of the estate as a focus for parish and community, and the religious heritage which helped to shape the values which now govern it. Even its owner's name, Knightley, suggests chivalry and a long-gone code of behavior. Knightley's actions, principally his devotion to his responsibilities in the community, prove his chivalry and his right of inheritance. He is also, of course, among the oldest of Austen's heroes.

The great difference between Pemberley and Donwell is financial. Knightley is a working farmer who "keeping no horses, having little spare money and a great deal of health, activity and independence, was too apt, in Emma's opinion, to get about as he could, and not use his carriage so often as became the owner of Donwell Abbey." Knightley has none of the chilling dignity, the pride of inherited station, which characterize both Sir Thomas and Darcy. It is Emma who stands on her dignity and is guilty of awful snobbery toward Robert Martin. This snobbery is even more harmful than personal insult, for it is a means of division within the community and is thus a positive evil. While Duckworth maintains that Emma "differs from all previous Austen heroines in having no sense of insecurity, social or otherwise," I would argue that Emma's treatment of Martin, Jane Fairfax, and Miss Bates suggests that she is not as socially secure as he would have her.
Consider for a moment her position in the community. Her home, Hartfield, is merely the best home in Highbury; it is not an estate or a farm and clearly does not account for her income or her inheritance. There is no indication that the family has owned the house for more than a generation. Mr. Woodhouse and Knightley are described as being old friends, not lifelong acquaintances, much less having ties through several generations. Mr. Woodhouse, a lifelong hypochondriac, is probably not a self-made man; he lacks the energy. It is safer to assume that he either inherited his money from his family with no land attached, or is living on money which came through his marriage, which might explain why there is no entail involved in this novel. Whatever the reason, Emma has social standing without the corresponding responsibilities, or a sense of responsibility like that so carefully instilled in the master of Donwell. The fact that she urges him to use his carriage more in order to prove that he is a gentleman is a clear indication in Austen's world that Emma's sense of social hierarchy and its importance is a false one. Much of the action of the novel, including the flirtation with Frank Churchill, helps to bring Emma to a better understanding of social relationships based on tolerance and responsibility. Whatever his faults, Knightley has by his efforts earned the right to be the master of Donwell to such an extent that he can leave it, take up residence in a less prestigious house and suffer no loss of
dignity, for his worth is not conferred by a place, but by a set of values which all respect. He moves from what could have been a protective enclave into a closer relationship with the community. His marriage to Emma helps her to find larger responsibilities than the care and amusement of her father and herself. Through marriage, she is now in a special way responsible for the community, and ironically the charity now given from Donwell will not come, as the apples did for Miss Bates, from Knightley's own table, but will be provided by Emma's money which will help to preserve the old estate.

*Emma* may well be the most hopeful of Austen's novels, but only because, like Trollope in *Barchester Towers*, she has so carefully limited her world. The wicked young men who seduce and destroy lives do not appear and are replaced by examples of human folly and fairly harmless self-importance. The very ordinariness of characters like Miss Bates keeps us from realizing how close to the complete closure of romance, with a sense of the truly happily ever after in a regenerated community this ending really is. Emma is not cured of all her self-importance, Miss Bates will continue to annoy, and the world of Highbury will continue in its flawed but wholesome way with help from Donwell Abbey. Highbury itself is an enclave against a world which has greatly changed in the twenty years since Austen wrote her first version of *Pride and Prejudice*. In many ways *Emma* is a vision of what Austen may have hoped would be a solution to rural England's uncertain
future: the marriage of new money and old values. Not long after, when writing *Persuasion*, Austen was willing to admit how much of a dream that was. It is not finally the lack of money which causes Sir Walter Elliott's fall, but the disappearance of the values which held that world together. Donwell, like Pemberley, was a moral force in the community; Kellynch-hall is a self-centered enclave. Evil and folly are within as well as without. The mere fact of inheritance rather than its values and responsibilities has become primary. Sir Walter Elliott sees his values reflected in his mirror and the Baronetage rather than in his house and the affection of his family and retainers.

When the Elliotts leave Kellynch they rent it to the Crofts, who clearly appreciate it but who, in fact, will only live there for a time. Kellynch will pass into the hands of Mr. Elliott who has proven himself to be a true villain in his conduct toward Mrs. Smith. The estate can no longer be either the moral center of the community or provide an enclave for the worthy characters in the novel. I believe Duckworth is correct when he asserts: "With the marriage of Anne and Wentworth we are on the brink of the Victorian, especially Dickensian, resolution in which the love of two people (or at most the affection of a small group) purifies an enclave within society, while society as a whole remains unredeemed." While Austen abandons the estate as model and enclave she still does not attempt to enclose and distance her
characters as Dickens will. Austen creates a society far less corrupt than Dickens', and Anne and Wentworth have proven themselves capable of coping with the world and its trials. There can be no question of retreat for them into the aevum. The touch with the real world is maintained in an important way by Wentworth's profession which allows him no retreat from public duty. The novel ends happily, yet with a warning that Anne is not guaranteed the perpetual happiness granted to Dickensian characters. In the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, readers had to take seriously the realistic warning with which the novel ends: "the dread of future war was all that could dim her sunshine." In fact, we know now that England was on the brink of an extended peace. The war to be fought was a political and moral one against corrupt social institutions and practices. This was Dickens' struggle.

That retreat into the private world of perpetual sunshine, the aevum, is a measure of both Dickens' recognition of pervasive evil and his belief in the transforming power of love on an individual level. The moral implications of that dichotomy are troublesome. Novel after novel exposes the
brutality and corruption of individuals and institutions. Reform is clearly necessary. In each case the only possible reformers are transported, not like Macawber to Australia where he does, in fact, prove a useful citizen, but into a realm where they are effectively cut off from the society which needs its good people so desperately. Dickens is very clear, however, about the price of remaining in the world, no matter for what reason. That price is put before us in the figure of Wemmick. While we come to love him, his Aged Parent, and the castle at Walworth which is in every sense an enclave fortified against the world, we must at the same time acknowledge that he is only a partial human being. Wemmick is a version of the New Testament Pharisee in reverse: he is good within while being a sepulcher without. The first description we get of Wemmick is that of a tombstone, a walking memorial to the convicted clients of his employer. Pip's description of him suggests a large memorial decorated with smaller reminders of the dead:

"...I found him to be a dry man, rather short in stature, with a square wooden face, whose expression seemed to have been imperfectly chipped out with a full-edged chisel. There were some marks in it that might have been dimples, if the material had been softer and the instrument finer, but which, as it was, were only dints,...and he appeared to have sustained a good many bereavements; for, he wore at least four mourning rings, besides a brooch representing a lady and a weeping willow at a tomb with an urn on it. I noticed, too, that several rings and seals hung on his watch chain, as if he were quite laden with remembrances of departed friends."

As the novel progresses, the nature of the portable
property (memorial rings, etc.) is not emphasized, and Dickens softens the entire portrait by transforming him into a postbox rather than a walking tombstone. Even in his more appealing state as postbox Wemmick is only capable of receiving and not giving. Dickens wants his readers to realize that what Wemmick does for a living cannot be done with impunity. Despite his attractiveness as a character he is a moral schizophrenic. To prosper in the corrupt world requires accommodation, and that accommodation has its ultimate price. The Aged Parent must be supported, but at a human cost exacted from Wemmick. One of the advantages of the aevum is that it precludes the necessity of having to earn a living in real time. The employers of the aevum are best represented by the cherubic brothers Cheeryble, in Nicholas Nickelby.

Is there any moral justification for life in the aevum other than avoidance of evil? Is there any truth in Kennedy's claim that like Esther Summerson in the new Bleak House all the characters who dwell in the aevum are able "to escape the increasingly overwhelming pressures of the outer, public realm and 'begin the world' again at a new and higher level"? The question left unanswered is: why will they begin again especially when faced with the world which Dickens presents? Esther Summerson best illustrates the moral dilemma. She is one of Dickens' most tireless and effective workers. If the novel has exposed the evils of Chancery and urged attention to "obligations at home," then what is the purpose of Esther's
new life which effectively removes her from London? From the old Bleak House Esther did what the ineffectual Jarndyce could not: she worked as an active agent for limited reform. Jarndyce's false benevolence kept Bleak House from representing, like Pemberley, the strength and values necessary for effective reform. Esther may use self-deprecating rhetoric, but she consistently acts to correct the folly which surrounds her. When faced with a hard decision or called upon to render an unpleasant judgment, Jarndyce retreats and his usefulness disappears as the wind blows from the wrong quarter. If Esther cannot effect sweeping reform, for no one in the novel is that powerful, she does have the energy to solve individual problems. In doing so she begins to create around her a small community of caring and cared for individuals who, although broken and partial, appreciate and profit from her care. She tends to the duties close "at home" and has usefully started to "begin the world" again. The supposedly happy ending with the new Bleak House and Esther's marriage to a doctor, whom shipwreck has forced back to duties nearer at hand, takes them from the places where she and he are most needed. Thus Dickens in the conclusion is morally ambiguous to say the least. Although he graphically shows the need for reform and parades before his readers a host of needy characters, once he creates characters able to cope to some degree with the problems around them, he removes them from the scene of their most effective work. The
conclusion destroys the community which had Esther as its center, and in doing so affirms structurally what those who would see Dickens as a crusading reformer could never admit: Dickens acknowledged the power of evil over good as an abiding characteristic of his society.

The exception to this pattern, Great Expectations, does not show the triumph of good, but goes one step further than the conclusions of other Dickens novels in denying Pip the comfort of the aevum in both endings. Julian Moynahan describes Pip in the first ending as being "a sort of exile from his society's power centres." He must try "to devote his remaining life to doing the least possible harm to the smallest number of people, so earning a visitor's privileges in the lost paradise [the aevum] where Biddy and Joe, the genuine innocents of the novel, flourish in thoughtless content." Kennedy also believes that at the conclusion of Great Expectations, although Pip has become "morally mature," he is not offered the chance to be saved "within the domestic context of redemption posited in the earlier novels." Kennedy maintains that even in the second ending "whatever domestic happiness awaits them is embodied only in the pure undifferentiated potential of the unbuilt house that will arise on the site of Satis House." It is rather ironic that the aevum which Pip hopes for is, like Satis House itself, an attempt to cut its inhabitants off from time and place and therefore from the chance of moral growth as well as
corruption.

The moral problem inherent in Dickens' conclusions arises from his attempt to combine, in Barbara Hardy's word, "the individual story with the social indictment." While reader expectation and his own hopeful vision required a happy ending for the individual story, Dickens' social indictment seemed to make that ending impossible. So in order to achieve the "sense of ending" appropriate to both he separated his concerns at the conclusion of his novels. Indeed, only in Great Expectations does Hardy see a "fusion of the individual story with the social indictment." The separation of the two, achieved through retreat into the aevum for the individuals, only serves to heighten the readers' sense of the pervasiveness of evil and the disappearance of those powers which once seemed to be able to hold it in check. The use of an enclave as protection against pervasive evil is therefore a very characteristic structure when used to express the tension which so many nineteenth-century novelists felt between the demands of realism and their moral and metaphysical views. However, the use of enclaves does not necessarily require retreat into the aevum. If the novel does not, for example, try to fuse the social indictment with the personal story, but rather concentrates on the personal story set in a social context, with pervasive evil acknowledged but personal reformation or development the only goal, then the enclave can function without some of the moral ambiguity which
characterizes Dickens' use of the technique. This is closer to what Duckworth sees as happening at the conclusion of *Persuasion* and which he characterizes as being quite like the stance of the couple in Arnold's "Dover Beach."²⁴

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems,
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help from pain;
Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach"

Lovers who seek peace and a stay against the world's confusion in a retreat must agree on the terms upon which their retreat or enclave can be constructed. In *Persuasion* Wentworth courted Louisa Musgrove seeking a relationship based on the qualities he believed Anne Elliott lacked. Ultimately he found that Anne had been true to him and would remain so without changing. Lady Russell was wrong in her judgment, but Anne in yielding to persuasion was only following the judgments of one who had loved and helped to raise her. Lady Russell had, after all, provided Anne with the only guide she had to a set of principles other than those at Kellynch-hall. In asking Anne to refuse Wentworth Lady Russell's standards were wrong; they were based on the very conservative social model which valued birth and inherited wealth over individual
initiative. This struggle to find what is required in order to be true "to one another" in the world is at the center of both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*.

The sad fact is that the lovers' constancy in the face of opposition and evil will not change the world about them. There will be no restoration or regeneration of society as a whole which is the telling difference between true romance structure and novels which use romance techniques. Although both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* have the heightened emotions characteristic of what we call the romantic as opposed to the realistic novel, I think Robert Heilman's careful analysis of Charlotte Bronte's use of gothic conventions to move away from "stereotypical" characterization of the gothic romance to "new levels of human reality, and hence from stock responses toward a new kind of passionate struggle is significant."^25^ Heilman shows that the conventions of the gothic were undercut and used in the service of what Alexander Welsh sees as the concern of the realistic novel: "the ongoing life of society."^26^ The Brontes emphasized the interplay of the emotional with the social, bringing to the developing cause of realism a neglected element of human existence. The passionate engagement in *Jane Eyre* is centered on some very real social issues of finance and class. The same, of course, can be said of *Wuthering Heights* where self against society and the necessity and value of education are frequently obscured by readers' infatuation with the wild
freedom of the moors. For all their seemingly unconventional characters, both novels are very conventional in their conclusions and their attitude toward evil. The novels end in the establishment of enclaves based on the ability of individual characters to find secure relationships and ways of being true to one another in the face of a society acknowledged to be hopelessly flawed. Unlike Dickens' aevum, these enclaves make clear statements about the terms under which the characters have agreed to "begin the world" again together. It is important to note that these enclaves contain two flawed individuals who have come to terms with one another, even if they cannot be effective in society. Neither novel builds its final enclave around a stereotypical hero or an angelic-wife heroine.

Structurally Jane Eyre is a series of microcosms of Victorian society (Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor House and Ferndean), each dominated by a male figure who attempts unsuccessfully to master Jane. It is only Rochester whom she refers to as "my master," but she makes it quite clear to him at the outset that his title is based purely on their economic relationship: "I smiled: I thought to myself Mr. Rochester is peculiar--he seems to forget that he pays me 30 pounds per annum for receiving his orders." Her growing love for him clearly confuses and blots out her very careful distinctions until she finally admits what she clearly sees as a grave error: "I could not, in those days see God for his creature:
of whom I had made an idol" (p. 241). The problem for Jane, complicated, but not solely defined by the madwoman in the attic, is to find a relationship with Rochester based on equality. To understand the basis for that final enclave at Ferndean it is necessary to separate Rochester's desire to have and to hold Jane physically, as a sexual partner, which she understands and appreciates, and his desire for social and economic control over her which frightens and distresses her. Jane is amused by the sexual game; she rather delights in the teasing way she avoids situations which might lead to a premature consummation of their marriage. She becomes embarrassed and offended by Rochester's preparations to turn "poor, obscure, plain and little" Jane into an elegant Mrs. Rochester (p. 222). That process is summed up in his insistence that "'once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I'll just--figuratively speaking--attach you to a chain like this' (touching his watch-guard). 'Yes, bonny wee thing, I'll wear you in my bosom, lest my jewel I should tyne'" (p. 238). Although he may have in a moment of passion agreed with Jane that they are equal in the sight of God despite what custom and convention may dictate, once she has agreed to be his bride his treatment of her is a model of conventional male domination and class distinction.

It is Rochester's conventionality, not his sexuality, which poses a threat to Jane at Thornfield. Bronte has carefully separated Rochester's sexual and social identities
to such a point that there seems to me to be no grounds for calling the loss of his arm and sight a symbolic castration as Richard Chase and G. Armour Craig have. Bronte gives us adequate reasons for feeling a great deal of sympathy for Rochester as a sexual being. He was tricked into a mockery of a marriage, the victim of his family's economic needs and desires. His real crime is trying to trick Jane, whom he believes to be his social and economic inferior, into marrying him. She is in his opinion so insignificant that marriage to him, even a bigamous marriage, would be better than the life she is destined for by birth and education. When the deception is revealed, Jane is far less angry than might be expected. What really hardens her resolve to leave, taking nothing of his with her, is his description of his attitude toward his mistresses even as he offers Jane the place of wife in all but law, thus in reality a mistress. Jane has always accepted his sexual desires and needs: she does not accept the social and economic framework which defines his sense of relationship: "Hiring a mistress is the next worse thing to buying a slave; both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior; and to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading" (p. 270). Jane can hardly help applying his judgment to herself and is again brought face to face with the real impediment to their mutual happiness. Even without Bertha his assumptions about her social status would in themselves have been enough to destroy any enclave created
between them.

Bertha is destroyed, however, at the same moment that Rochester is blinded and crippled. His real losses are directed at his social and economic, not his sexual identity, although part of his punishment is his continued desire for Jane. His house, the symbol of his inherited station and wealth, is destroyed; his arm, the symbol of his power to dominate, to bend others to his will, is crippled; and he is blinded so that he might, like Jane, know what it is to live as a dependent. Bronte traces the transfer of power from Rochester to Jane in a very particular way. Jane, of course, comes back a wealthy woman, a woman desired, as Rochester learns, by another man. Jane has refused St. John Rivers because he too did not offer her equality in relationship but merely the privilege of serving his goals. Rochester is now ready to accept Jane on very different terms. On their first walk out into the garden at Ferndean Rochester gives Jane his watch, the same one to whose chain he had earlier threatened to fasten his "bonnie wee thing." He says to her: "Fasten it into your girdle, Jane, and keep it hence-forward: I have no use for it" (p. 393). He is now Jane's dependent and fastened as securely to her by his blindness as he once wanted to keep her linked to him. This is a period of penance for him as their previous roles are reversed. When he recovers his sight, and is thus ready to live with her as equal and not as dependent, the first thing he sees is a watch chain: "'Jane,
have you a glittering ornament round your neck?" I had a gold watch-chain: I answered, 'Yes'"(p.397). It is now time for them to "begin the world" again, a second Adam and a new more powerful Eve in the garden at Ferndean. As with Dickens' retreat into the aevum the violence deemed necessary to achieve Rochester's reformation testifies to the strength of Bronte's vision of the evil of her society's conventional assumptions.

The lush vegetation surrounding the lodge at Ferndean secludes Jane and Rochester from the rest of the world. Bronte leaves no doubt that this enclave is formed on the basis of hard-won equality. She has also done her best to show that a marriage contracted under the rules of society and subject to its pressures is doomed to the failure of conventional inequality and dominance. Jane's two suitors provide examples of the effects of society's structures and assumptions. Rochester as a callow and inexperienced young man is urged by his family into a financially advantageous marriage to a woman who has inherited her family's mental instability as well as their money. He finds himself financially secure, but wed to a woman who becomes progressively more mad. If in this marriage love and indeed health are subordinated to financial considerations, the other possibility, equally common, is that in which love and equality are subordinated to duty. St.John Rivers suppresses a real attraction to Rosamond Oliver in order to propose to
"poor, plain" Jane for utilitarian reasons. He believes Jane can be more useful in his chosen calling. With such assumptions about the considerations upon which marriage is contracted there is no possibility of equality. On one hand woman is a financial prize and on the other a handmaiden for her husband's cause. Both Rochester and Rivers feel even more certain of their right to impose their desires and ideals on Jane because in addition to being a woman she is a poor governess who has neither social status nor alternative options.

Under such conditions it is no wonder that the only place where a marriage had any chance of survival was the enclave. Although Bronte does not move them into the aevum, it is also true that they cannot return to Thornfield. Neither Jane nor Rochester want to. While the original references to Ferndean suggest that it is a damp place, it is far more conducive to human growth than the world without. Jane's success and Rochester's regeneration are part of the reason that this novel was for so long dismissed as a "romance" outside of the mainstream of Victorian fiction. Its conclusion was seen as pure wish-fulfillment. It is, in my opinion, a rather desperate wish that finds its fulfillment in a maimed and blinded lover. Rochester's final state represents for me a very real assessment on Bronte's part of what it would take to overcome the obstacles to true equality.

There is finally the added irony that the vanished
Providence does make an appearance in the novel in support of Jane, guiding, warning (if she had been able to read the sign of the split tree). When she proclaims her equality to Rochester, it is with the assumption of equality of souls before God. Social conventions, the patriarchal design of Victorian society, are the evils which Jane must battle. As she moves from one confrontation with the opposition to another, it becomes clear that if Providence seems to have disappeared from society it is because the structure of society no longer reflects providential design. Thus Jane's providence can do no more than lead her into a safe enclave with her redeemed lover as husband and companion. She and he can do nothing to change the values outside the enclave.

Social conventions and expectations are as surely the basis of evil in the world of Wuthering Heights as they are in Jane Eyre. While we may not assent to the sweeping generalization of James Hafley's assessment that "...Ellen Dean is the villain of the piece, one of the consummate villains in English literature," she represents conventional values and self-preservation and is certainly responsible for a good deal of harm. Yet, she is only partially to blame for the destruction of what Hafley inappropriately terms the "tragic innocence of Heathcliff and Cathy." On closer examination they are not innocent, for they ruthlessly bring doom on themselves. Early in the novel Heathcliff and Cathy have a close and exclusive relationship which is very
emotional and in many respects childish. Theirs is a children's conspiracy against the adult world, a conspiracy as tight as any of the enclaves which we have considered. For all its immaturity it is a relationship based on mutual understanding and affection and is distinct from the ungoverned license of the Heights and the artificial civilization of the Grange. When Cathy and Heathcliff leave the Heights to peer in at the window of the Grange they see a world as false as the one they left at home. Emily Bronte makes us aware of the independence they have achieved and are capable of exercising from the vantage point of their own private world. Together as outsiders they judge the society which surrounds them and are not led astray by material considerations. Heathcliff explains

"We laughed outright at the petted things, we did despise them! When would you catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted? or find us by ourselves, seeking entertainment yelling, and sobbing and rolling on the ground, divided by the whole room? I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange...."31

The enclave of trust begins to disintegrate when Cathy comes home from the Grange a young lady. Cathy continues to seek out Heathcliff, but she has also acquired some new social values which change the way she views him. The new perspective she has gained causes her to recognize that he is an outsider. When she says that she wants to marry Edgar to help Heathcliff and get him out of her brother's power she
also admits to a new awareness of the social implications of marriage to the man she admits she loves:

"I've no more business to marry Edgar than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am" (p. 121).

Cathy both acknowledges and betrays their enclave at the same moment, and she does so in terms of the values of conventional society.

Heathcliff has himself abandoned the one thing which would have allowed him to maintain his relationship to Cathy in a way that her new conventional standards would have accepted; he has stopped trying to learn and thus falls victim to Hindley. Nelly describes the process with more sympathy than is usual for her: "he struggled long to keep up an equality with Catherine in her studies, and yielded with poignant though silent regret: but he yielded completely; and there was no prevailing on him to take a step in the way of moving upward, when he found he must, necessarily, sink beneath his former level" (p.108). Like Austen, Bronte is careful to stress the ability to rise through effort. When he has lost Cathy, Heathcliff leaves the Heights and acquires a different sort of education, the kind that renders a gentleman acceptable and skillful, although not wise. Heathcliff returns knowledgable in the ways of the world and gentlemen's vices in order to have his revenge. There is a clear contrast
between the two types of education. The first involving books and learning provides a way out of his brutish existence and a chance to continue his relationship with Cathy. Cathy herself admits as much. The second kind of education gained seemingly without much effort while he was away provides the means for revenge and nothing more. Heathcliff comes back having accepted the values which made him an outcast. Arnold Shapiro says that Emily Bronte "admires Heathcliff, but she condemns him when he ruthlessly accepts the values of the people he hates and seeks fulfillment through empty revenge."\(^{32}\)

The second generation must find a better and more lasting basis for establishing their enclave. Education, the key to Heathcliff's downfall, is the basis for their equality. Cathy begins to educate Hareton whom Heathcliff has done his best to turn into a brute. Not only has Heathcliff deprived Hareton of education, but has tried to make him despise it, thereby doing a more thorough job of human destruction than Hindley. When Heathcliff comes home to find Hareton and Cathy reading together and Hareton transformed "because his senses were alert, and his mental faculties wakened to unwonted activity" (p.352) he announces to Nelly his inability or his unwillingness to complete his revenge. He will not complete the revenge he meant to take on Hareton by turning him into the brute he himself had escaped becoming, perhaps to become something even worse, a man consumed by his own revenge. Heathcliff recognizes that Hareton has found the means of
escape. By providing no opposition Heathcliff allows, consciously or unconsciously, true education to take effect and thus gives to the two young people the chance he never had to reestablish a relationship with his Cathy. Once he has rejected society's values, the world has no hold on him and he joins Cathy in what seems more like a spiritual aeon rather than eternal bliss, for its happiness consists of wandering the moors and thus maintaining a very physical relationship with the world. They are in death as unconventional as they were in life. The more conventional second generation is left to "begin the world again" like a good Victorian couple reading by the fire.

Like Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights provides a series of marriages which establish the conventional norm. There is the exclusive and excluding love of Hindley for his ethereal bride. His love for her shuts out even his sister and in no way makes him more compassionate to those around him. Heathcliff's marriage to Isabella is both spiteful and sadistic, and does more than anything else in the novel to reveal the depths of Heathcliff's depravity. Cathy's marriage to Edgar is less physically cruel, but equally manipulative. The relationship between young Cathy and Linton hardly deserves to be called a marriage, although since many marriages were contracted to preserve and expand property holdings the rationale for it was quite conventional. Indeed the early stormy interaction between young Cathy and Hareton
exhibited many of the worst characteristics of the other unions in the novel.

Hareton clearly idolized Cathy as a creature from another world. His early attempts at self-education were clearly imitative although they obviously became for him pleasurable in themselves as the "anguish" on "his countenance" as the books are burned proves. Nelly observes:

He had been content with daily labour and rough animal enjoyments, till Catherine crossed his path. Shame at her scorn, and hope of her approval were his first prompters to higher pursuits; and instead of guarding him from one, and winning him the other, his endeavors to raise himself had produced just the contrary result (p. 239).

Cathy uses her intellectual and social superiority to humiliate him and he responds with the only weapon he has, physical strength. Nelly keeps silent as he administers a "manual check to her saucy tongue,...the only mode he had of balancing the account and repaying its effects on the inflicter" (p. 239).

This is a struggle neither can win. There can be no relationship between them based on dominance. Cathy must acknowledge that her talents come from privilege as his lack of skills come from deprivation. They are in Jane Eyre's words equal in the sight of God, and education becomes the tool by which equality can be achieved and a relationship established. The same possibility was suggested earlier in the novel as a means of maintaining the relationship between the older Cathy and Heathcliff. Cathy was neither wise nor
humble enough to see it; she preferred to "take care of" Heathcliff by marrying Edgar. Heathcliff became an "educated" gentleman too late to win Cathy, for she clearly did not believe in the possibility of his transformation. The marriage between Cathy and Hareton will thrive within the park at the Grange. The early descriptions of the walls surrounding the park give a sense of enclosure, but, more to the point, all the other powerful characters in the novel are dead, or at least wandering the moors content to leave the more conventional lovers to their own pleasures. They are thus free to "begin the world" again in a place according to Lockwood, civilization's representative, almost as remote as Dickens' aevum.

The marriage enclave is not then in the eighteenth-century tradition of the microcosm of a larger Providential design, but the exception which unintentionally proves that chaos is the rule. These enclaves in Levine's words represent Victorians writing "against the indeterminacy they tended to reveal." A careful examination of those marriages as they moved from romance to realism yields a very different meaning from that which was intended by both the romance tradition and the writers' continued use of its conventions. Those marriages trouble the attentive reader, for they serve two very contradictory functions: they fulfill our conventional expectations as readers, even as they confirm our worst fears as members of society. The persistent use of
enclaves as a structural technique acknowledged what would have been abhorrent to both nineteenth-century readers and most writers as the concluding moral vision of a novel: that not only was their world without providential design, but "beyond control of human meaning" as well.
Notes to Chapter II


3 Kermode, p.72.
4 Kermode, p.72.
5 Kennedy, 284.
6 Kennedy, 286.


8 Duckworth, p.74
9 Duckworth, p.57.
10 Duckworth, p.38.
11 Duckworth, p.59.


13 Pride and Prejudice, p.271.


20 Kennedy, 283.
21 Kennedy, 283.


23 Hardy, p.21.


30 Hafley, 214.

Chapter III

Life in a Flawed World: the Enclave Exposed

"Let the high Muse chant loves Olympian:
We are but mortals, and must sing of man."
George Eliot, Chapter 27, Middlemarch

To sing of men and not of gods one must move from myth through romance to realism: from the idealized landscape protected and ordered by providential design to the flawed society created by men. The last chapter explored the uneasy transitional state in which authors acknowledged that the world was hopelessly flawed and evil pervasive at the same time as they protected their central characters from that world by creating an enclave. The enclave as a literary device is directly opposed to the development of realism for it artificially isolates characters from what Alexander Welsh calls realism's "true subject": "The ongoing life of society." Through the use of the enclave characters are placed in a timeless or separate state which has no corresponding state in reality. It does, however, provide authors with a means of concluding novels which does not fully
acknowledge the threatening realistic vision. This chapter will explore some of the ways in which novelists questioned and finally rejected the enclave and its reference to romance closure. This rejection is the first step toward openendedness in the novel as we know it, the beginning of a new harmony between form and rendered experience.

Moral vision, supported by the technical device of romance closure, was a vital element in Victorian fiction. In her study of The Sense of an Audience: Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot at Mid-Century Janice Carlyle analyzes the crucial relationship between author and reader at that period:

Although the form of the novel might be said to have arisen out of the moral debate between Richardson and Fielding, although the genre may be, as Lionel Trilling has claimed, the primary vehicle of the "moral imagination," at no other time in its history were its moral intentions and their implications so insistently at the forefront of its aesthetic.²

Thackeray in Vanity Fair tried not to violate these moral intentions even as he questioned and rejected the standard romance closure. Thackeray knew his society too well as a journalist and a social satirist not to recognize the artificiality of conventional endings. Yet that very work had made him aware of the necessity of fulfilling his readers' very conventional moral expectations. In describing his own skepticism to John Chapman he made it clear that he did not intend to "lessen his popularity" or to "martyrize himself for the sake of his views."³ Thackeray's comic approach to his material is in Janice Carlyle's opinion "an attempt to adapt..."
himself to the attitudes of an audience which he found fundamentally alien," but which he knew he must take into account. There also may have been within Thackeray himself a desire for the moral order of which his skeptical nature frequently despained.

The attitude most alien to his skeptical nature and difficult personal experience was the bland confidence in the workings of providence, the unquestioning belief in the ultimate triumph of goodness, as asserted in part by conventional closure. Although he may have wished the world to be governed by a benign Providence, observation of the world around him was enough to suggest otherwise. The Victorian association both of morality and aesthetics and of literature and life was fraught with contradiction for Thackeray. Thackeray perceived the Victorian vision of moral aesthetics to be at odds with his emerging realism. While he acknowledged the necessity of maintaining a vision of an ultimately moral world to keep his audience, he indicated by the very structure of his fiction that idealization undercut a realistic or mimetic relationship between art and life. Thus, as a novelist he tried to keep that unrealistic allusion to the triumph of good at some distance from his realistic conclusions. The conclusions of novels like Vanity Fair and Pendennis questioned the notion of the perpetually blissful marriage which was the mainstay of the conventional ending. His novels sought through the use of realistic details and
unidealized characterization to establish that mimetic relationship between art and life which became the hallmark of realism. Thackeray balanced his realism with a strong enough reference to moral order to avoid the financial "martyrdom" he feared as well the vision of chaos which he too found frightening.

At least one of his contemporaries saw the results of his achievement clearly, if not sympathetically. Elizabeth Rigby, who also objected to the morality implied in *Jane Eyre*, said of *Vanity Fair*: "With few exceptions the personages are too like our everyday selves and neighbors to draw any distinct moral from." Although she did not approve, Rigby seized upon the techniques which distinguished the nineteenth-century realistic novel from its eighteenth-century predecessors so solidly grounded in the romance tradition: the details and characterization that precluded any easy moral solutions. The accumulation of accurate details is, in fact, the very thing that helped to break down the tightness of the romance form which Thackeray admired, but could not imitate. Thackeray used details, as Levine points out, in ways that are frequently "nonstructural" and "apparently thematically irrelevant." The result is that while these details contribute to verisimilitude and point to "the artificiality of the materials of nonrealistic narrative," they also break down the tight form associated with the romance. These details make idealization impossible and create instead the sense of
ongoing and chaotic life. Levine sums up the problem quite well when he says of Thackeray that "his baggy monsters did indeed become monstrous in the solidity and intensity of their resistance to idealizing literary energies." Thackeray's situation was quite complex. He saw the world of pervasive evil and as a novelist felt the duty to portray it realistically. He also understood the power and influence of reader expectation. However, the very accuracy of his descriptions made it impossible for him to use a conventional ending, even were he tempted to do so. The combination would have been not merely artificial, but ludicrous. He had to try to balance the two. This balance of realistic vision and moral expectation is the triumph of the conclusion of *Vanity Fair*.

When Levine relates this tension between form and descriptive detail within the novel to moral vision, he contrasts Thackeray's and Newman's attitude toward the complexity and particularity of their world:

> When Newman . . . looks at the world in its secular reality—that is, without a supporting metaphysical context—it becomes terrifying to him, and meaningless. The particular, without ideal sanction, is equivalent to the deprivation of self, and Newman describes the condition as what it would be like to see no reflection in the mirror. Only when he begins looking at the particular by assuming a God can he cope with reality, or even believe in it.

> Thackeray's novels often read like Newman's particulars without a prior assumption of God.  

The romance closure is then a way of coping with the
threatening vision of reality which had begun to dominate life as well as the novel. Lacking Newman's faith, Dickens, for example, substituted the power of human love for a belief in a providential God, but love was not sufficient to order the corruption of the world, so he created the illusion of the enclave with its allusion to past certainties. In contrast, Thackeray, both sentimental and cynical, faced reality in *Vanity Fair* and then retreated from it, but refused to posit the enclave that Dickens so repeatedly created.

Margaret Kenda in her article, "Poetic Justice and the Ending Trick in the Victorian Novel," incorrectly credits Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* with the "invention of the 'open' ending." While there are unresolved questions and a certain sense of "ongoing life" in the final paragraphs of the novel, there is also a very definite conclusion. This conclusion effectively terminates not only the novel, but the readers' sense of the possibility of continued struggle and even existence for the characters. Thackeray through his narrator tells us that these characters are not to be viewed even as fictional representations of real people but as mere puppets of the author! What Thackeray did accomplish with his rather complex ending was to expose the artificiality of romance closure, and thus leave open for others the possibility of alternate conclusions. This acknowledgment was not always seen as an accomplishment, for Ford Maddox Ford (following the Jamesian model) objected to Thackeray's intrusions into the...
novel which broke the necessary illusion of reality. It is remarkable that twentieth-century critics have discovered in *Vanity Fair* mutually exclusive accomplishments: the open ending which requires a sense of ongoing life, and the exposure of the illusion of reality which precludes an open ending. In fact, he achieved a delicate balance between the two seemingly opposed goals by acknowledging the artificiality of ending techniques and asserting that in art as in life it was necessary to admit that real happiness and justice itself were elusive commodities. Thackeray stopped short of doing what real openendedness requires; he did not use realistic detail to suggest ongoing life which moves beyond the limits of closure.

Even before completing *Vanity Fair* Thackeray had written a preface, which was published with the last number and then appropriately placed when the novel was issued. The preface, "Before the Curtain," counters both the realism of the novel's descriptive details and the cynicism of Thackeray's moral vision. The preface contains moral judgments far more didactic than any which occur in the narrative itself. Specifically, the puppet figures undercut the openness of the narrative ending, which is morally ambiguous, and through them Thackeray renders the moral judgment which he deliberately avoids in the narrative. The puppets are a way of imposing a moral vision on the narrative while allowing Thackeray to undercut the techniques of the romance conclusion which he
seems to employ.

If we look at the final chapter, "Which Contains Births, Marriages, and Deaths," we will observe as the title warns us all the familiar forms of plot resolution. Amelia, who certainly is "not worthy of the love" which Dobbin has devoted to her, has done her tearful penance and will marry Dobbin after all. Thackeray distances us from her even as she learns the truth about her husband's character: "Emmy's head sank down, and for almost the last time in which she shall be called upon to weep in this history, she commenced at that work" (p.790). Even as she sees herself as a victim of her own illusions, she is not transformed into an angelic heroine; she remains a naive, self-deluding woman. Nevertheless the marriage of Dobbin and Amelia is followed by the traditional tying up of loose ends into the next generation. Yet the one we are most curious about is never quite tied up. Our final vision of Becky is anything but conclusive. Having gotten what money she could at Jos' death, the cause of which remains a mystery, Becky has become an angel of mercy in fashionable watering places. Is this Becky's newest game, her current role? Clearly Dobbin and Amelia think so as they flee her booth at the fair.

Readers, however, are left to wonder only for a moment about Becky's future and possible reformation. Our attention is quickly turned to Dobbin and Amelia as the narrator reminds us in the final paragraph that their marriage is not the
perpetual bliss of the aeon. Dobbin sees his wife's limitations, and his daughter is the primary object of his affections: he is "fonder of her than anything in the world—fonder even than of his 'History of the Punjab'" (p.797). Amelia understands that she is no longer first in his affection, and Thackeray subtly acknowledges the truth of her assumption: "But he never said a word to Amelia that was not kind and gentle; or thought of a want of hers that he did not try to gratify" (p.797). Such thoughtfulness was probably not mutual.

Further speculation about Becky's moral state or Dobbin's happiness is cut short, for just as the vision of marriage protected by an enclave in a flawed world is rejected, so too the illusion of reality is shattered by the reintroduction of the puppet image in the concluding lines. In spite of the prior use of realistic detail we cannot finally think about the characters as though they were real people. We are thus expected to agree that the novel has direct analogies in life ("Which of us is happy in this world?"), and simultaneously to admit that the world of the novel is not real ("Come children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out"). The apparent correspondence between the novel and life is, like the idealized marriage at closure, an allusion and illusion. There is no openendedness here, for puppets have no life of their own. We cannot imagine what might be or question whether or not Becky is ever punished. Does she
really bury herself "in works of piety" from genuinely sincere motives? Thackeray as narrator refrains from the kind of judgmental asides or direct undercutting he used with Amelia. His novel remains full of moral ambiguity, even as his conclusion fulfills conventional expectation by affirming the moral order of the universe. His frame for the novel and his final illustration are the ways Thackeray chooses to fulfill expectations, but he does so outside of the narrative framework. The complexity of this balance between reality and moral vision should not be underestimated.

In the prologue the Manager of the Performance describes the puppet of the "richly dressed figure of the Wicked Nobleman" which he says "Old Nick will fetch away at the end of this singular performance" (p.34). Thackeray's illustration for "Finis" shows two children putting away the puppets and beginning to close the box. Two puppets are left outside: one is Lord Steyne and the other is Becky. They are the sinners excluded from the childlike world of idealized morality. Most readers using modern unillustrated editions miss Thackeray's careful almost allegorical iconography where the moral conclusion is left to the illustration, to the world outside the narrative. The prologue after all only promises that the "Wicked Nobleman" would be punished. Thackeray's world of Vanity Fair has no providential design, and he is too honest to impose an order on the chaos that his realism exposes. Yet, the conclusion is more than just coping with
threatening reality or selling out to conventional morality. Those final lines create no enclave, leave no possibility for a truly happy ending, and expose the artificiality of those endings which constitute a moral vision on such assumptions. But if the puppet frame precludes an openendedness it does emphasize the author's control and design. The author as opposed to the narrator is willing to pass judgment and thus in a particular, although limited, manner make reference to the vanished providence which could order the social chaos of the real world. However, until providence reasserts itself the moral inequities described in the novel will remain uncorrected. So, we watch Thackeray confronting the moral implication of the world of Vanity Fair even before the conclusion was written.

Thackeray did, in fact, retreat from the cynical and broadly comic vision of Vanity Fair to the more sentimentalized world of Pendennis. In contrasting Vanity Fair with Thackeray's later novels, Robert Bledsoe points to a split in Thackeray's creative vision:

Thackeray created two mutually exclusive fictional worlds: the desperate social world of Vanity Fair and the domestic world of emotional security. Although one must pay the price for living in either world, Vanity Fair is clearly the worse because it leads inevitably to universal human isolation. Thackeray developed the negative implications of this possibility in Vanity Fair (1848), but was appalled at his own accomplishment and felt compelled to investigate the alternative, and that alternative to the cynicism of Vanity Fair was the sentimentality which dominates Pendennis.
The dominant sentimentality of Pendennis is surprising in a novel which proclaims to use Tom Jones as a model. Thackeray makes quite clear at the outset the standard he wishes to emulate: "Since the author of Tom Jones was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a Man. We must drape him, and give him a certain conventional simper."\(^{13}\) While the tone of the narrator and his asides to the reader are clearly modeled on Fielding's accomplishment, the final moral vision owes more to Richardson, but lacks his degree of forthrightness in sexual matters. So despite Thackeray's proclamation of the attempt at honesty in depicting a "man" the portrait of Pendennis which emerges from the novel is incomplete in one at least important aspect. The incomplete portrait is due in part to both Thackeray's reluctance to return to the cynical world of Vanity Fair and his perception of his audience's unwillingness to accept the adult sexual world in which Becky Sharp made her way so capably.\(^{14}\)

Thomas Jeffers in an article appropriately titled "Thackeray's Pendennis: Son and Gentleman" asks the crucial question about Pen: "Does a fellow of such average moral stuff, who at Oxbridge loses hundreds of pounds to blacklegs, who in London rarely gets home before dawn, who venially indulges himself in a thousand ways--does such a fellow reach his late twenties sexually uninitiated?"\(^{15}\) Pen's purity stands in sharp contrast to Tom Jones' promiscuity, but for
all his sexual misbehavior Tom is clearly the better man. It is not just that Tom has the excuse and the luxury of being seduced rather than the seducer, but that Tom both suffers for and learns from his mistakes. This poetic justice is, of course, the often cited providential design of the novel, a design which Fielding asserted was more "real" than surface verisimilitude for it embodied his vision of the underlying truths of human experience. Commenting on the unrealistic plotting of Tom Jones Martin Battestin says: "Such 'extraordinary accidents' and happy improbabilities are not so much a convenience to Fielding the author providing him with easy escapes from the difficulties of his plot, as they are calculated demonstrations of providential care and design in the world. Most of these coincidences in Tom Jones are so gratuitous that an author of Fielding's inventive skill could easily have avoided them . . ." Fielding's design is a very specific example of what Levine terms "idealizing literary energies" which Thackeray in his "baggy monsters" resisted as he portrayed human chaos and purposelessness. The only saving grace for Pen is finally his purity, for it allows Thackeray to reward him with a marriage in the end and allow Pen to escape the adult world of sexual activity in London. Whatever else Pen is guilty of in his Oxford and London days he maintains the sexual identity of an early adolescent.

If Vanity Fair with its pervasive evil is the world in which Becky Sharp is most at home, in Pendennis the angelic,
non-sexual woman is all powerful. Thackeray retreats from his consistent exposure in *Vanity Fair* of Amelia and all that she represents. Helen, Pen's mother, is in many ways the most influential character in *Pendennis*. In choosing her son Pen as a character worthy of interest if not always sympathy and concern Thackeray repudiates the type of young Rawdon and opts for the young Georges of this world, mother's boys who whatever their faults are protected and forgiven. Bledsoe argues that: "Pen does not grow up and away from his mother, as in a more conventional Bildungsroman. On the contrary, he grows up and back to her, rejecting the great world for Laura, whose arms are 'as tender as Helen's.'"\(^1\) In the course of the novel Pen's childhood companion Laura is transformed from a character with independent judgment and concerns into a mother substitute for him. Early on the narrator, in what seems to be a cruel and callous remark, reflecting Pen's own habit of speaking "lightly and laxly of women in general" (Vol. 1, p.257), says of Laura: "These women were made for our comfort and delectation, gentlemen,—with all the rest of the minor animals" (Vol. 1, p.259). The conclusion of the novel affirms that Laura was indeed created to serve Pen.

Laura moves from the position of friend and critic to angelic, mother-wife for Pen. Early in the novel she resembles Esther Summerson in the accuracy of her insights into Pen's failings, after Helen's death she assumes her role and becomes supportive rather than critical. The constant
support and sacrifices of his mother and then Laura allow Pen to harbor certain expectations about his rights and privileges. What is most distressing to the reader is the ease with which Pen finally achieves these unrealistic expectations. In his search for love, social status, and personal comfort Pen never seems to have learned from his mistakes, and finally is never forced to. He must beg his mother's forgiveness. He makes a ritual out of confession and forgiveness without any real amendment of life. In fact, the sentimental vision which dominates the novel does not require reformation. In contrast Tom Jones is rescued from the gallows only after he has learned his hard lessons and can return to Paradise Hall not because he has discovered his right to it by birth, but because he has learned to act in a way which will make him worthy of his inheritance. Pen's lessons merely result, as Jeffers points out, in his reaching "an accommodation with early Victorian society which vindicates his lifelong certitude that he is a gentleman. He learns politeness, treasures friends, collects entrees, makes money, resists temptation, and marries happily." 18

The positive efforts Pen actually makes "to resist temptation" are few. Salvation for him is not in confrontation, but in unreflecting retreat. Pen's sexual relationships are never mature; his marriage to Laura is a return to his mother. If a character remains emotionally or morally immature, an author can avoid dealing with pervasive
evil. Pen's purity allows him, despite the mess he has made of his life in other areas, to return to his family home and marry Laura. Thus, *Pendennis* is in some ways a retreat into the *aevum* but, like the conclusion of *Vanity Fair* which exposes the artificiality of the conventional ending, a critical reading of *Pendennis* exposes its basic injustice. No matter what is said in Pen's defence, Laura deserves a better man. She does, in fact, love someone else. However, George Warrington, the man she loves, committed the folly from which Pen's sexual immaturity saved him: he married a lower-class young woman and now is doomed to live alone because he cannot stand to live with her. His crude young wife does not have the grace and good taste to die young and free him to marry Laura. Warrington's experience contains a degree of realistic disappointment which Pen's life lacks.

Pen who narrowly escapes disastrous marriages throughout the novel gets the reward he in no way deserves, as the narrator cynically observes: "If the best men do not draw the great prizes in life, we know it has been so settled by the Ordainer of the lottery" (Vol. 2, p.495). While Thackeray acknowledges George's misfortune, he does not delve too deeply into the even more obvious injustice—how Laura as "prize" must feel. While pointing out the obvious injustice of the mediocre man getting the angelic woman the narrator passes it off as the work of Providence, or more accurately the "Ordainer of the lottery." God is implied as First Cause, but
not active agent. Because life is a lottery there is no design only an outcome over which an honest Ordainer has no control. This is as much an excuse for injustice as Thackeray could allow his narrator to make, seeing the world around him as clearly as he did, where surface realities masked no providential design. For Thackeray God was a beginning; the chaos which followed was man made. He therefore asks us to love and forgive Pen not because like Tom Jones he was by Nature a good man, but because he was "a man and a brother ..." "with all his faults and shortcomings" (Vol.2, p.495).

*Pendennis* is not a great, nor even, in my opinion a very good novel. Yet, it is fascinating to watch Thackeray once again attempt, in a very different milieu from *Vanity Fair*, to balance his vision with his readers' expectations in such a way as not to "martyrize" himself. The broad comic vision which is the triumph of *Vanity Fair* is missing in *Pendennis*, a novel modeled on the comic genius of Fielding. Technically, however, *Pendennis* does move toward openendedness in a very particular way. We can envision Pen's continued life as a man and a brother, more settled, yet interspersed with "faults and wayward moods," a life clearly not interesting enough for another novel, but nonetheless incomplete. In his very ordinariness which will contribute to a less than perfectly happy marriage lies part of the possibility for openendedness, the sense of ongoing life. Pen's sexual immaturity allows
Thackeray to provide him with a retreat into a marriage with an idealized woman. Unlike the characters who are reformed and reeducated in the Brontes' novels, or the Dickensian heroes who are transported into the timelessness of the aevum where their imperfections cease to matter Pen remains much the same flawed character married to an idealized woman. However, since Laura becomes an angelic self-sacrificing wife only after she had rendered harsh criticisms of Pen's shortcomings and had loved another better man, the enclave created by their marriage and retreat to the family home is an uneasy one. (This sense of not having finished or perfected Pen may be what allowed Thackeray to use him as the world-weary narrator of The Newcomes.) Thackeray questions, if he does not reject, the artificiality of the enclave and its assumed conclusiveness.

Alexander Welsh when discussing "the ongoing life of society" points out that traditional marriages at closure "dictate conclusiveness where none may really exist." Like Trollope, many nineteenth-century novelists looked in vain for someone to tell them how to write those last fifty pages which would both end the novel but not deny "ongoing life." Many nineteenth-century novelists using romance closure knew that it did not solve the problems exposed by realistic technique,
but if Thackeray himself drew back from the moral implications of the more open conclusion of *Vanity Fair* others were no more willing to allow the vision of pervasive evil to stand as the conclusion to their novels. Thus even while Thackeray might, in Levine's judgment feel the moral "insincerity of the most sincere fictions," most writers were willing to "bend reality to the shape of desire" by the use of romance closure.\textsuperscript{20} They produced happy endings to situations which could not in reality yield such an outcome.

That sense of "ongoing life" which might continue after marriage in a realistically imaginable way, as opposed to the fairy tale happiness of the *aevum*, appears in the novel early in the nineteenth century. In *Emma* Austen uses details and characterization to allow for and encourage a sense of life which continues in a very specific way beyond the limits of her "perfectly happy ending." When I discussed *Emma* in Chapter Two I said that it may well be the most hopeful of Austen's novels, because like Trollope's *Barchester Towers* it deals with such a limited world in which problems are solvable and stability of the community is assured. Romance closure works well for the world of Donwell Abbey and Highbury because evil there is not pervasive. The wicked young men who seduce and destroy lives do not appear and are replaced by examples of well-meant, but misguided desire to influence the lives of others, and of fairly harmless self-importance. For a moment I would like to concentrate on a few details of plot and
characterization in *Emma* which could in another context have led to true openendedness, details which highlight the difference between the romance and the novel.

Wayne Booth makes the strongest case for the completeness of closure in *Emma*:

But it is precisely because this ending is neither life itself nor a simple bit of literary irony that it can serve so well to heighten our sense of a complete and indeed perfect resolution to all that has gone before. If we look at the values that have been realized in this marriage and compare them with those realized in conventional marriage plots, we see that Jane Austen means what she says: this will be a happy marriage because there is simply nothing left to make it anything less than perfectly happy.

While Booth is certainly correct in his reading of the virtues and values which will provide that marriage and community with the basis for happiness, his is also a very schematic reading of the novel. Booth ignores both context and realistic detail. His emphasis is justified, but it does not really explain *Emma*’s reputation as the most sophisticated and modern of Austen’s novels. The tightness of its closure would suggest a far more simple work. Even *Persuasion*’s conclusion is far more romantic as it gives Anne Elliott not only the man she loves, but releases her from her unpleasant family. There is in *Emma* no such dramatic release, no handsome frigate captain to marry Emma and take her away from her hypochondriacal father. Knightley has been almost a father figure for Emma, and Emma loves and understands her father no
matter how tiresome. Her lack of understanding and frequent lack of patience with those around her stands in contrast to her care for and patience with his whims. We recognize Emma's real dilemma as a young woman trying to care for a difficult aging parent; when Elizabeth Bennet urges her father to do his duty the situation seems more conventional and artificial. While not denying the carefully defined virtues and values, the moral scheme of the romance, there is a real sense throughout *Emma* of daily life and its sameness. The anxieties are not monumental, but trivial and quite real. Emma cannot go to the ball for lack of a coach, horses, or gown, but because she must first find someone to sit with and entertain her father.

By the end of the novel Emma may have a better sense of herself and of her responsibilities in the community, but Austen is quite clear about the difference between the acknowledgement and the practice of the virtues which Booth discovers. Surely Miss Bates is a good woman, but just as surely Austen does not spare the details which convince us that no matter how worthy, she is also a bore. We as readers can skim over bits and snatches of her conversation; Emma is obliged to sit, listen, and respond appropriately. Unless Emma is far more patient and charitable than I she has not lost her temper for the last time with gentle Miss Bates. In future she will probably have the sense to hold her tongue and complain in private to Knightley. Even the stalwart Knightley
may find his courtly manners strained when he is constantly being offered gruel instead of meat and wine and having his evening meal's conversation being dominated by Mr. Woodhouse's health warnings. A paranoid Surgeon General is not everyone's idea of an ideal dinner companion. The novel certainly resolves the problems of the instability within the community and personal relationships by defining those qualities and values needed to live in harmony in a small community, but it does not solve the problems of daily life which Austen realizes are insoluble, for they are constant and ongoing.

What delights modern readers are Emma's individuality and her faults, neither of which will be "cured," although they may be tempered and improved by marriage to Knightley. The novel contains just enough well illustrated irritations, inextricably joined to "obligations at home" for readers to sense both happiness and continued tension in individual lives. This is not a Dickensian retreat into timelessness, nor is it openendedness, but it contains some of the elements of description and characterization which will finally produce the sense of openness that we tend to value. The closure is tight because Austen, as noted earlier, examines a community free from pervasive evil. Her task is to illustrate how relationships can be made better, not how to deal with the worst in human nature. She does not in the end need to say that the constant practice of virtue is easy, just that to a
greater extent than before virtue will be practiced. If one reads as Booth does for the values represented in the final union as ends in themselves then there is no sense of openendedness at the conclusion. However, I believe, Austen describes in the character of Emma and the community which surrounds her enough flaws and interest to have readers imagine an ongoing struggle rather than stasis. In fact, Austen's own family was very interested to know how long Mr. Woodhouse survived after the marriage, so it is clear that for contemporary readers all the important ends had not been tied up. There is, however, a very real difference between the sense that characters might continue to live interesting lives after the close of the novel, and real openendedness which indicates that both characters and plot are still very much in process and that the outcome is uncertain.

It is to this uncertainty that Eliot alludes in her "Finale" to *Middlemarch* which she opens with the often quoted statement: "Every limit is a beginning as well as an ending." This is not merely a rhetorical flourish, but the beginning of an exploration of the meaning and use of the traditional form of closure. Eliot acknowledges that traditional closure is used to suggest an end to the life of a character and finds it unsatisfactory: "for the fragment of a life, however typical is not the sample of an even web" (p.607). In a letter to John Blackwood Eliot displays the kind of insight into the problems of closure which accounts
for Marianna Torgovnick's description of her as "a model of the self-aware author during closure." Eliot admits to Blackwood that "Conclusions are the weak point of most authors, but some of the fault lies in the very nature of a conclusion, which is at best a negation." What romance closure principally negates in an otherwise realistic novel is the sense of complex character and the individual's ability to cope with a world of pervasive evil. The flaws as well as the character's strengths disappear, the former seemingly forgotten and the latter no longer necessary as the character retreats into the timelessness of the aevum.

Despite her admiration for Eliot's sophistication as an author Torgovnick finds her argument about the absence of an "even web" "essentially misleading." Her basis for this objection is that "The sketches of the characters' later lives merely follow through on marriages and decisions made in the body of the novel, and the future of each character is totally consistent with his past as recorded in Middlemarch...."

While Torgovnick's observation about the consistency of character is very accurate, Eliot's claims are by no means "misleading." When Eliot insists that the part does not equal the whole she is not saying that characters will change radically, but that the situations in which they find themselves will alter or enhance their ability to achieve their ambitions. The example she uses is Adam and Eve "who kept honeymoon in Eden, but had their first little ones among
the thorns and thistles of the wilderness" (p.608). In fact, the after-history of the "Finale" does offer a "long-waited opportunity" for Dorothea who can be of real use to Ladislaw, and surely in the eyes of the Middlemarchers at least Lydgate's later career must have seemed a "grand retrieval." To have given us more, to have changed the characters' opportunities by radically changing their natures would have been to destroy the entire accomplishment of Eliot's psychological realism and fall into the kind of negation which is a byproduct of romance closure. The way to avoid the problem would have been to delete the "Finale" which would have produced a partially open ending. Unfortunately, we would have been left in Dorothea's case with a more romantic vision of her union with Ladislaw than we get in the "Finale." Eliot uses marriage as a conclusion and divests it of the meaning it derived from the romance. Marriage for Eliot was no guarantee of happiness although she still saw it as a central theme for a novelist: "Marriage which has been the bourne of so many narratives is still a great beginning...."

The crucial difference was that those who entered into that state in her realistic world did so without the benefit of the hope of an edenic enclave. They must be prepared to face a world full of thorns, where evil is pervasive and misunderstanding of even the purest motives abounds.

In order to understand the effort Eliot made to put marriage in a realistic context and keep it there, to offer no
retreat into the *aevum* it is necessary to appreciate her understanding of the power and pervasiveness of evil in the world. Evil in *Middlemarch* is very little affected by the efforts of her characters to deal with it. The conclusion contains no allusion to justice, poetic or otherwise. Mr. Brooke will remain a liberal slumlord and the good Mr. Farebrother does not get the woman he deserves. Rosamond is not punished for being a basil plant "which flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains" (p.610), for she is what the world expects her to be and has lived by the only standards she knows. Eliot forces the acceptance of the existence of evil even further. She carefully follows Bulstrode as he struggles with and finally succumbs to the temptation to murder Raffles. While Bulstrode must leave Middlemarch because of the suspicions of those around him, his crime goes legally unpunished. Those who will, in fact, bear the brunt of the punishment are his wife and family who must leave their relations and the place they love to follow him. Bulstrode is given the support of his family's continued presence which he really does not deserve.

Fred Vincy and Will Ladislaw are far more familiar types. They are for no real reason rewarded with superior women who will give direction and purpose to their lives. Far from trying to "dictate conclusiveness" with these marriages Eliot wanted her readers to see that they will be fraught with the same contradictions and disappointments which characterized
their previous lives. The good that they do will be misunderstood and their basic talents undervalued. Mary "must" have written Fred's book, and Fred Mary's. The fact that Dorothea has found in Will's career a fitting outlet for her energy and idealism is not understood by her family and her neighbors and to a great extent by Eliot's readers as well. Eliot sensed that her readers would object that "so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another" (p.611), but she also knew that this is typically a woman's lot. Eliot did not idealize an alternative which is clearly not there: "But, no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done..." (p.611). Her "wifely help" which so threatened Casaubon is now aimed at supporting Will in a "struggle" against wrongs in Parliament. In the "real" world of Victorian England without Eliot's own immense talent there was little more Dorothea could have hoped to do.

Eliot rejects marriage as the symbol for perfect happiness and complete reconciliation and also admits what it means to live in the world of men, both as a woman and as a man. The good finally accomplished is not victory over pervasive evil, but merely assures "that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been" (p.613). With this admission Eliot brings the moral vision of her conclusion into harmony with the depiction of ongoing life crucial to the realistic novel. It is useless to object that Will does not
deserve Dorothea, for that is exactly the point. If Eliot wanted to make him a hero she would have made him a successful politician rather than one who was distinguished by "getting at last returned to Parliament by a constituency who paid his expenses" (p.611). In the real world lacking providential design we do not get what we deserve either for good or ill. Once this lack of justice is recognized then marriage at closure becomes the beginning which may yield "the gradual conquest or irremedial loss of that complete union which makes the advancing years a climax" (p.608). Romance is effectively outgrown by both reader and writer alike. The fact that some readers and critics continue to object to Will, and wish him to be more like a "real" hero is an admission that we still want at times to "bend reality to the shape of desire." How many modern readers would be satisfied if that final lightning bolt had struck Rosamond and Will as they played by the piano leaving Lydgate free to marry Dorothea? That Eliot avoided such a final union, which she obviously knew tantalized her readers, only confirms the real directions of those marriages in her "Finale."

Eliot presents marriage as a concluding act in a purely social context without reference to the wider moral implications derived from the romance. Eliot realized that when she rejected the possibility to "chant loves Olympian" her lovers had to share in the flawed nature of human experience. The realistic and consistent moral vision
necessary for true openendedness is present in the conclusion of Middlemarch even as its form remains quite traditional. Thus, I believe that Torgovnick underestimates Eliot's accomplishment when she says that "She doesn't just write an after-history, she provides multiple justifications for doing so." Those justifications are the very things which point the way out of romance closure, which direct her readers' attention to life beyond marriage. At the same time Eliot provides us with the one fact which does for all intents and purposes dictate conclusiveness: she looks ahead to the deaths of both Lydgate and Dorothea. Perhaps she provides this information just to show how inconclusive marriage really is. While the "Finale" exposes the limits of romance closure it does not move to real openendedness—although it does admit that the personal and community problems posed by the novel will to a great extent go unresolved.

In the transition between romance and realistic closure Middlemarch provides an excellent illustration that "Every limit is a beginning as well as an ending." Significantly now, marriage as a social institution comes under close scrutiny and is seen to share in the flawed and frequently evil nature of social institutions. Eliot, of course, begins this process with her portrait of Lydgate and Rosamond, but balances it with that of the ordinary but decent Chettams and the lovable but idealized Garths. Authors like Meredith and Hardy among others set about and complete the work of demythologizing
marriage.
Notes to Chapter III

1 Alexander Welsh, Forward to "Special Issue: Narrative Endings," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 33 (1978), 1.


4 Carlyle, P. 34.

5 Elizabeth Rigby, Quarterly Review, 84 (December, 1848), p. 156.

6 Levine, pp. 151-2.

7 Levine, p. 168.

8 Levine, p. 153.


10 Ford Maddox Ford, The English Novel, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1929), p. 84-104. To say that Ford objected to Thackeray's experiments is an understatement. He does in fact call Thackeray a "child-murderer."


14 A specific example of Thackeray's perception of his audience's demands is provided by Lionel Stevenson in his biography of George Meredith, The Ordeal of George Meredith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 78-79. When Thackeray as editor of the Cornhill Magazine was offered a poem of Meredith's dealing with an unwed mother and a "young man yearning for his mistress," he rejected the poem although he said it had "the ring of truth." Thackeray explained the rejection to Thomas Peacock who had shown him the poem: "Were it not my fate to make enemies of so many of my contributors by not always being able to meet their views, I should ask you to let your friend fill many pages of The Cornhill." Janice Carlyle also notes that Thackeray "was indeed troubled by the infamous though exaggerated prudery of the mid-Victorian audience" p. 57.


16 Battestin, p. 311.
17 Bledsoe, p. 882.
18 Jeffers, p. 190.
19 Welsh, 1.
20 Levine, p. 134. Equally useful is Levine's formulation which appears on p. 139: "Romance is the form in which plotting projects upon the narrative screen the lineaments of desire."


22 J.E. Austen-Leigh, Memoir of Jane Austen (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), pp. 157-58. "She would, if asked, tell us many little particulars about the subsequent career of some of her people. In this traditionary way we learned...that Mr. Woodhouse survived his daughter's marriage, and kept her and Mr. Knightley from settling at Donwell, about two years...."


26 Torgovnick, p. 21.

27 Torgovnick, p. 21.


29 Torgovnick, p. 21.
Chapter IV

Marriage Demythologized: The Enclave Destroyed

Well, husband, poor plain man; I've lost life's battle!—
Come--let them look at me.
O damn, don't show in your looks that I'm your chattel
Quite so emphatically!
Thomas Hardy, "A Beauty's Soliloquy During Her Honeymoon."

Hardy's "Beauty" learns all too late that her powers could have brought a greater return on the marriage market and in the world at large. She now realizes that by dwelling "too much on duty" she has destroyed her options, and will now pay the consequences.\(^1\) Her life is no longer her own, and there is no redress. Always "for better or worse," but never "for richer" (before the Married Woman's Property Act of 1870) and therefore always "poorer," she was her husband's chattel.\(^2\) Hardy sees a potentially bad marriage from a woman's point of view, asking how the "prize" feels, knowing that she is a prize. This is a new perspective on marriage which begins to appear in the novels of the latter part of the century, effectively destroying the enclave by demythologizing marriage.

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Middlemarch, as I tried to show in the previous chapter, attempts to apply realistic observation and description to the hitherto sacrosanct area of the heroine's marriage. Dorothea's marriage to Ladislaw is certainly not protected by an enclave and is constantly subject to both the world's and her readers' misinterpretation. This misinterpretation about the nature of marriage as a concluding act is what Eliot works so hard to overcome in her "Finale." Early in the novel Eliot explores the enclave at Lowick which Dorothea believes will shelter her and Casaubon from a philistine world. She finds life within their enclave anything but ideal. There is no value in an enclave which from the point of view of one of the inhabitants imprisons and limits human possibilities. The enclave which seemed to protect the idealized marriage can now also be viewed as a wall enclosing a social institution as flawed as any other. Under such circumstances romance closure using the protection of the enclave necessitated by the recognition of pervasive evil becomes an anachronism and a confession of failure, both moral and artistic. Novels may end with marriages, but those marriages cannot carry any more meaning than the union of imperfect, flawed individuals might be expected to have at a particular time and place. Since this realization occurred at a time when a struggle for women's legal rights was being waged, the view of marriage which emerges is particularly grim because women's legal rights in marriage were shown to be almost non-existent.
While the novels I will be discussing in this chapter do not preclude the possibility of happy marriages, they show us couples making their worst mistakes as they choose marital partners. In such cases it becomes impossible to use marriage to imply happiness or as the ending most likely to bring happiness. As a human institution in a world of pervasive evil marriage is fraught with peril. The danger is greater for the woman who never enters the union with equal status; thus it is her point of view which is so devastating to the stability of romance closure, and in late-century novels finally see marriage through her eyes.

Unhappy marriages certainly have been depicted in literature from its earliest stages. We are very familiar with the comic handling of mismatched couples from Socrates and Xanthippe to Punch and Judy. Novels following a well-established theatrical tradition frequently treat the assertive women like Mrs.Pardiggle or Mrs.Pocket comically. In more realistic novels the comedy is muted as novelists attempted to create characters rather than caricatures. Austen's Mr. Collins is at his least amusing when his pomposity is clearly painful to Charlotte Lucas, a woman of perception and sense, for whom Austen establishes no small amount of sympathy. Mrs. Gaskell deals with the same kind of unhappiness without the comic overtones in Wives and Daughters. She investigates the heroine's father's unwise second marriage in which he allowed his need for domestic
tranquility to influence his choice of a wife. The first blush of romance fades all too quickly, and he is faced with a self-centered and untrustworthy mate. In Mr. Murdstone Dickens creates a man so evil that no matter how tiresome and foolish we may find Mrs. Copperfield we understand that she has by her poor choice created a hell for herself which is beyond human endurance. However, in all these cases and in others like them, either tragic or comic, the unhappy marriages met with in the course of the novel are overshadowed by the final idealized happy marriage which concludes these novels in the romance tradition.

Both Wuthering Heights and Jane Eyre go further than most novels in mid-century in exposing the corruption of the social basis upon which marriages are contracted, especially the rights and privileges it confers upon the husband. The brutality which characterizes the wedding of Heathcliff and Isabella and the sham of Cathy's marriage to Linton are set against the more idealized relationship between young Cathy and Hareton. Even this couple begins with a struggle for power and ascendancy pitting social standing against male dominance, both of which eventually give way to a mutual acceptance of the value of education as an appropriate leveling force. The conclusion of the novel indicates that a new kind of marriage will be contracted within that enclave, an enclave which must exist for that relationship to flourish. The society which surrounds their enclave has by its pressures
blighted the lives and marriages of all the other characters in the novel.

Like Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre comments directly on marriage as union contracted under very particular social pressures and expectations. His family's financial needs sealed the marital fate of the young Rochester. St. John Rivers rightly assumes that his demands that a wife be subservient to his cause will be blessed by society and its God. Rivers fails to understand how Jane can have a separate providence, for like most of his contemporaries he confuses social structures with providential design. The novel does at its conclusion balance society's practice against another vision of human possibilities within the enclave which surrounds Jane and the "reformed" Rochester. As noted earlier, Jane Eyre marks the brief reappearance of a version of eighteenth-century providence.

For every Jane Eyre who is presented by her providence with a reformed mate forced to recognize equality, the nineteenth-century novel is populated with Lauras who are given as "prizes" to the unworthy Pendennis. These young women, like Hardy's "Beauty," do their duty and in the concluding pages of novel after novel accept their role of prized possession and chattel. The inclusion of the "prize's" point of view, the realization on the part of women of the day-to-day price of being a prize, either before or after marriage, is essential to the move from romance closure to
techniques more in keeping with the spirit and indeed the practice of realism as it appears in novels describing the world of pervasive evil.

As long as women did not dispute the words of the narrator of *Pendennis* who maintains that "women were made for our comfort and delectation,...with all the rest of the minor animals" then there is no reason to ask whether a marriage was personally satisfactory for the woman. Women did not complain, and the men who were rewarded with them as "prize" certainly did not, since the women were created to fulfill their most idealized notion of angelic wife. In such circumstances, though technically anachronistic and morally unjustifiable, romance closure still held emotional force based on traditional reader assent. Only when we see women making choices, limited by the extent of their own perceptiveness about men, equally flawed and unperceptive, do we acknowledge the possibility and indeed the probability of bad marriages. The additional question of the indissolubility of marriage can then at least be posed. There is for women like Hardy's "Beauty" the possibility that "life's battle" may not be irretrievably lost. The recognition that marriages may be made either in heaven or hell allows them to be a starting point, a subject for investigation, but no longer a secure resting place and an unquestioned method of closure. Marriage then does resemble Chancery because it is fraught with risk and all too frequently the cause of disaster for more than one
It is interesting and, I believe, significant that George Meredith in The Egoist echoes the language of lottery and prize which Thackeray used to conclude Pendennis. Jenni Calder describes The Egoist as a novel "about a woman's discovery that she cannot be a prize awarded to a man, whatever the man has to offer, although her youth and beauty conventionally characterize her as this." While it is clear that Meredith admired Thackeray and liked him personally, his affection was for the author of Vanity Fair and a witty dinner table companion and not the sentimental writer of Pendennis. In Meredith's "An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit" he makes it abundantly clear that he is opposed to sentimentality and that women should be equally opposed to "swelling the ranks of sentimentalists." According to his biographer, Lionel Stevenson, Meredith believed that "Pure comedy can flourish only...in a society which permits mental equality between the sexes." Meredith holds that sentimentality does not further true civilization and equality between men and women because it does not allow for the exposure of folly and takes from women the possibility of equal exchange on an intellectual
level with men, substituting instead a "sentimental version" of women's character. This view of women does not allow for individuals and instead makes assumptions based on what one of the women in The Egoist calls in quite familiar language a "generic" version of woman. Laetitia Dale perceptively remarks that: "The generic woman appears to have an extraordinary faculty for swallowing the individual." The generic, angelic heroine is created to be "swallowed" by marriage and the enclave in which she will lose whatever little individuality and identity she might have had.

Clara, the heroine of The Egoist, refuses to be drawn into the enclave; in fact, it is her fiancee's rejection of the world which first causes her to have doubts about their compatibility. Willoughby wants her to shut out the world so that "...we two have an inner temple where the worship we conduct is actually, if you would but see it, an excommunication of the world" (p.40). She quickly understands that the real worship required is the immolation of herself at the shrine of his egoism: "She would not burn the world for him; she would not, ...reduce herself to ashes, or incense, or essence, in honour of him, and so, by love's transmutation, literally be the man she was to marry" (p.41). Her definition of her own worth is quite different from his. He clearly views her as a "prize," for when she tries to break the engagement she is told quite clearly that "Not many men would give up their prize for a word; Willoughby the last of
any" (p. 172-3). She realizes that she must understand her value to him as a prize, and asks if she is be "treated as something won in a lottery?" (p. 173). The traditional answer to this question in the sentimental world of Pendennis was emphatically yes. Meredith working with what turn out to be remarkably similar characters proposes a very different answer.

Willoughby and Pendennis, despite their financial differences, are quite similar in their sentimentality, assumption of personal worth, and vision of the proper relationship between men and women. In The Ordeal of Richard Feverel Meredith offers a damning, and I believe, perceptive definition of sentimentalists as "...they who seek to enjoy without incurring the Immense Debtorship for a thing done." The major problem with Pendennis as a novel is that at the same time as we are critical of Pen for his actions and attitudes which frequently render him thoroughly unpleasant, we are also asked to forgive him and love him as his mother does. The initial function of Laura as Pen's critic helped to give readers what appeared to be a trustworthy view of his character, one which Pen himself might have been expected to come to terms with at the conclusion of the novel. However, when Laura is moved into the uncritical role previously played by his mother, the last barrier to the completely sentimentalized vision is removed. Readers are asked to forgive Pen who has not earned forgiveness, and do so
partially because not only has Laura forgiven him, but has agreed to marry him. The distance achieved through comedy in *Vanity Fair* is totally lacking in *Pendennis*.

Meredith, on the other hand, never allows readers to doubt the foolishness and egoism of Willoughby. The comedy he uses is, however, of a very mixed kind. The denouement with young Crossjay hidden under the cover, multiple proposals, unexpected guests, and grand disclosures, is surely based on the conclusion of the eighteenth century comedy of Moliere and Congreve so often cited in Meredith's essay. Robert Adams claims that the "best of his comedy is made with phrases, usually dropped by the wayside, in the midst of syntactical or psychological distractions." As an illustration Adams quotes that wonderful line describing Willoughby's greeting Laetitia on his return to England. Gazing into her eyes: "He found the man he sought there, squeezed him passionately, and let her go" (p. 24). The novel is witty, but I agree with Gillian Beer who asserts that "The Egoist becomes an exploration of the boundaries beyond which comedy cannot venture." Quoting Meredith's essay which maintains that "Life', we know too well, is not a Comedy, but something strangely mixed...", she concludes that "The Egoist ranges beyond what Meredith had earlier declared to be the province of comedy; social follies rather than man's inescapable nature." While Willoughby's love making with its outrageous rhetoric and blind egotism is amusing in itself, it is so
clearly painful to Clara who understands its real object that
the comic effect is muted. A parallel can be drawn here to
Austen's treatment of Mr. Collins and Charlotte Lucas. Clara
like Charlotte is not a comic heroine. Seen from her point of
view the situation holds neither real promise or the potential
for amusement. So while the seduction of Dr. Middleton by
vintage port is funny, the conclusion of the episode in so far
as it seals Clara's fate is horrifying:

A fresh decanter was placed before the doctor.
He said: "I have but a girl to give!"
He was melted.
Sir Willoughby replied: "I take her for the
highest prize this world affords" (p. 161).

The comedy which Meredith achieves does little more than
temporarily distract us from the all too painful truth, and
does not lead to the kind of resolution and restoration which
Frye and others see as a defining characteristic of true
comedy which makes sense of the use of romance closure.
Meredith in his essay admitted that the world he depicted was
incapable of pure comedy. Adams, one of the few critics who
tries to make sense of the conflicting elements in the novel,
concludes:

This comedy of sexual shuffling and matching clearly
ends in an act of hard sexual conquest, as if to
make evident that the traditional matrimonial knot
could not suffice to tie up the comic problems and
insights present in the story. Another way to say
this would be that The Egoist takes the comic
socializing process too seriously to represent
contemporary society, or its institutions, as a
triumphant solution to the needs of contemporary
people.
The final marriages are unsatisfactory and even disturbing because of the revelations of the nature of marriage which have preceded Clara's and Laetitia's unions.

The strength of the novel, in my opinion, is its revelation of the nature of life within the enclave for the "prize." Clara is right to wonder: "Can a woman have an inner life apart from him she is yoked to?"(p.166). She sees the problem, as Hardy's "Beauty" did, in terms of duty. Eventually she comes to a new understanding of that word as she examines the difference in social position of men and women: "The difference, the cruel fate, the defencelessness of women, pursued her, strung her to wild horses' backs, tossed her on savage wastes. In her case duty was shame: hence, it could not be broadly duty. That intolerable difference proscribed the word"(p.166). Yet, in the end Meredith has her marry, for there is no viable alternative. This is the crucial difference between women and men, the economic and social defencelessness which Clara recognizes, but cannot change. She marries Vernon Whitford, Meredith's version of George Warrington, a scholar with a previous unhappy marriage to a lower-class woman. The best that can be said for Vernon is that he will probably not infringe on Clara's freedom any more than he does on the consciousness of Meredith's readers, which is very little indeed.

Their decision to marry is in every way a pro forma use of marriage, purely a way of ending the piece. In fact, it is
paired with the heartless union of Laetitia and Willoughby which promises nothing but a more comfortable life for Laetitia and her father. Willoughby believes that he saves face by finally marrying which is ultimately all he is really concerned with. The conclusion is poor because it works only in terms of the last part of the novel. Those final scenes, the frantic comings and goings and the revelation of overheard conversation are consistently comic and derived from the eighteenth-century stage. Those moments could provide an amusing if stylized conclusion for a novel, but not this one. While it is clear that Willoughby, his sisters and the provincial society which surrounds him are familiar and for the most part one-dimensional comic types, the same cannot be said for Laetitia and Clara. They are not merely angelic heroine and literary-lady spinster. In order to create the equality necessary to reestablish the true comic spirit, Meredith moves both women out of the realm of stereotype and thus creates an imbalance in his characterization. Both women possess more moral insight and suffer more real anguish over social conditions and strictures that cannot be remedied than the conventions of comedy usually allow. The marriages of these two couples have no meaning except to demonstrate the awful triumph of convention and financial necessity. The traditional Cinderella story, the romance ending, was in fact a triumph over convention and the financial considerations. Neither marriage can or will exist within an enclave and
neither carries any real expectations of happiness. Meredith
tell us too little about Vernon to even make speculations
possible. The two more traditional comic heroes are both
rejected, Crossjay because he is too young and DeCraye for no
specific reason other than I suspect that he is too
conventional and therefore represents traditional male
expectations about marriage in a more acceptable form. DeCray
is superior to Willoughby because he perceives his egotism and
the pomposity of his rhetoric, not because he rejects in any
profound way Willoughby's basic assumptions about the
relationship between men and women.

Those final hectic moments change both the tone and
direction of the novel. Its obvious and logical ending (the
Middletons boarding the train for London and Sir Willoughby
left alone to admire his china) never takes place. The fact
that this kind of ending seemed logical proves Beer's claim
that The Egoist pushes beyond the boundaries of comedy.
Instead of following his plot to its logical conclusion
Meredith retreated back into the highly stylized comic
conclusion resembling that of his favorite English play, The
Way of the World.

When we stop to consider that at the conclusion nothing
substantial in society has changed and Clara has merely
avoided one disastrous marriage only to have contracted a more
ambiguous one, the ending may more accurately portray the way
of his world than the rather open ending full of unexplored
possibilities for Clara which suggests itself to a modern reader. Yet, we can recognize in the novel's depiction of Clara's character and its exploration of the nature of marriage the possibility of openendedness. The form and the society whose expectations that form had fulfilled have developed to a crucial point. While society refused to admit the necessity of divorce the novel could not abandon romance closure; yet at same time it continued to portray a world at odds with that conclusion. In order to make the two disparate parts coalesce the enclave which protected that concluding marriage was a necessity. The enclave seemed to guarantee that marriage would remain untouched by pervasive evil of the world in which it was supposed to exist. In those novels which depicted evil as most pervasive, as illustrated by Dickens' fiction, the enclave, even further from reality, moved into the aevum. The angelic wife was the stabilizing force in this situation. Two flawed people within the enclave could only have recreated the world which they were escaping. A growing recognition of the plight of real women in marriage, due at least in part to novels like The Egoist, created a climate in which a serious examination of marriage as an institution could begin. What actually happened within the enclave became a subject rather than a conclusion. Thomas Hardy began to describe characters and relationships in his novels which realistically reflected their society and its conventions, and ended without denying their insights.
Although Thomas Hardy was certainly in the vanguard of what a contemporary critic called "The Anti-Marriage League" he was also quite conscious of the fact that his society was still unwilling to accept the legal remedy of divorce which was increasingly open to those who suffered from unhappy marriages.\(^{13}\) He understood that even those who needed and took this way to dissolve what they knew to be impossible conditions frequently suffered from a destructive sense of guilt for defying religious, if not legal, strictures. Their guilt was not only self-imposed, but sanctioned and demanded by society. In his final novel, *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy explored the effects of this conflict through the character of Sue Bridehead. Reflecting on his attitude at the time he wrote *Jude*, Hardy said: "My opinion at the time, if I remember rightly, was what it is now, that marriage should be dissolved as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the parties—being then essentially and morally no marriage—and it seemed a good foundation for a fable of a tragedy...."\(^{14}\) He saw the effect of bad marriages as nothing less than tragic and recognized a similar view in Meredith whom he admired. Hardy remarked that Meredith "did not forget (though he often conveniently veiled his perception of it), that, as I think Ruskin remarks, 'Comedy is Tragedy if you only look deep enough.'"\(^{15}\) Clara Middleton and Sue Bridehead
have much in common, for both are modern women seeking individuality and separateness. Clara responds coldly to Willoughby's advances, whereas Sue finally is incapable of having satisfactory sexual relations with any man. The difference in degree of aversion reflects the distance between the comic and tragic description of similar situations.

Hardy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and in *Jude the Obscure* comes nearer to writing tragedy in its classical form than any other nineteenth-century writer. At the heart of his novels, especially the later ones, are bad marriages. These marriages do not fail because the characters are all evil, but because social pressures and expectations are misunderstood and misinterpreted, which is the case in *Jude*. Hardy said that he was blamed for "shop-soiled" condition of the marriage theme. If the marriage theme and marriage itself appeared to be "shop-soiled" Hardy knew it wasn't entirely his fault. The novel from *Moll Flanders* on portrayed the majority of marriages as at least in part financial arrangements which awarded the woman as "prize" in return for the financial security which she could not provide for herself. After that many years of financial dealings, it is no small wonder that the coin was somewhat debased.

When reading *Jude* it is certainly possible to wonder whether Jude's aunt's advice is not universally applicable to contemporary life: "Jude, my child don't you ever marry. Tisn't for the Fawleys to take that step any more." Are we
all Fawleys, is marriage really like Chancery, not worth the time or risk since happiness like justice is never served by the institution? Probably not. One of the implications of the novel's move to realism and away from romance, due in part to the particularizing detail used so successfully by Thackeray, is that such sweeping generalizations cannot be made. If marriage at closure no longer means that this couple, let alone the kingdom, will survive happily ever after, then the advice given to Jude and Sue cannot be generalized. Indeed, given Jude's patience with Sue and his compassion for Arabella when she is in need, a case for him as a good husband could be made. That, of course, is beside the point. What Jude is unable to do is to choose a mate intelligently. His aspirations have cut him loose, he has lost a sense of place and position in his society and therefore like many of Hardy's heroes is defenseless. Jude, the young stone mason who dreams of the university, belongs to neither world. He rejects one and is barred from the other. Since he does not understand his own society, marriage as a product of that society and its institutions is a mystery to him.

In contrast Arabella is very much a woman of this world whose conventions and expectations she understands perfectly. Like Rosamond Vincy Arabella should not be scorned for actions which she and her peers recognize to be acceptable parts of the marriage game. Arabella knows that it is her obligation
to find a man who will give her financial security. Arabella's interest in Jude is about as unpremeditated as his being hit with the pig's pizzle. She gets less than she bargained for in Jude, acknowledges her mistake by leaving him, and rectifies her error by finding another man. A man of far less intelligence than Jude, securely rooted in his world, would have seen through Arabella, and taken her for what she was on his terms, not hers. Hardy says that the novel is "of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit" which I take to mean more than the simple choice between Arabella and Sue. Certainly Jude's spirit would rise to the higher state which he believed to characterize Christminster, scholarship, and the service of God even as his flesh was drawn to Arabella. However, the same conflict between flesh and spirit is also waged within Sue in a far more complex and devastating way. Jude may die broken in health and bitter in spirit, but he is sane and self-aware. He understands what has happened to him and to Sue:

"Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke, and she veered round in darkness....And now the ultimate horror has come--her giving herself like this to what she loathes, in her enslavement to forms!...As for Sue and me when we were at our own best, long ago--when our minds were clear, and our love of truth fearless--the time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me!" (p.318).

Jude's assertion that Sue is "fearless" is clearly wrong, although we cannot begrudge Jude his idealized version of
their love on his deathbed. She certainly seems strong enough early in the novel, but the strength of her unorthodox convictions is never matched by equally strong and consistent actions. Earlier, Jude accuses her of this moral inconsistency and she admits to the justice of his charge:

"I have sometimes thought, since your marrying Phillotson because of a stupid scandal, that under the affectation of independent views you are as enslaved to the social code as any woman I know!"

"Not mentally. But I haven't the courage of my views, as I said before"(p.192).

This basic moral inconsistency is the most troubling part of Sue's character, and extends into all aspects of her life. She is at one moment loving, vulnerable, and sympathetic and the next, teasing, self-assured and self-centered. She needs the reassurance of love, but repulses its physical expression. Her explanation to Jude of her reasons for marrying Phillotson is full of contradictions, and therefore true to character:

"But sometimes a woman's love of being loved gets the better of her conscience, and though she is agonized at the thought of treating a man cruelly, she encourages him to love her while she doesn't love him at all. Then, when she sees him suffering, her remorse sets in, and she does what she can to repair the wrong"(pp.192-3).

Robert Heilman devotes an entire article to Sue's inconsistencies, but concludes that despite our inability to define her in simple terms as a character she is a successful creation. He expresses it quite well when he says: "She simply is, and it is up to the reader to sense the inner truth that creates multiple, lively, totally conflicting
impressions." Heilman's belief that she is a "rather familiar being whose resources are not up to the demands made upon them," serves to remind us that Hardy himself admitted that Sue was based on a kind of woman whom he found very attractive but could not fully understand.

As a human being Sue may well be familiar, but as the heroine of a nineteenth-century novel she is certainly unique. There have been efforts like those of Michael Steig to analyze Sue's sexual problems in light of modern psychology, and it is a tribute to Hardy's acute observations of human behavior that he got the symptoms so right. Sue Bridehead is, however, a literary creation complete with symbolic name, and any analysis of her problems is best carried out, for the purposes of this study, within the literary tradition whose direction she as a character helped to change. For me she is a startling image of the woman who actually tried to live the mythic role of the angelic wife, who tries to bring into the real world of human relationships the moment frozen in the perpetual time of the aevum, the union of unreal woman and real man. She is thus guiltier than most readers of the confusion of literature and life. This may be a unique charge to bring against a fictional character, I admit, but Hardy certainly refers here to the effects on life of idealized literature. Although Sue sees her inspiration as coming from ancient pagan Greece, and finds its modern expression in the Neo-Platonism of Shelley very attractive, the separation of
flesh and spirit which characterized the angelic wife supported by orthodox Christian society comes from exactly the same tradition inherited from Neo-Platonism through Augustine. The Neo-Platonic hierarchy converted into the so-called Great Chain of Being certainly valued spirit over flesh, but only in its development within the context of Christian theology was flesh conceived of as being gross and an occasion of sin rather than merely a step lower on the chain.

I believe that it is very likely that Sue's original notions about the grossness of the flesh were absorbed early in her conventional Christian upbringing which Hardy stresses. Even Sue's first job is connected with the church. Her idealistic nature believed and internalized the image of the angelic woman and later through her readings found an unorthodox expression for her beliefs which from her point of view provided her with a satisfactory means of rejecting conventional mores and yet living them in their most idealized form. Thus, Jude's accusation that she is really bound to convention is quite accurate. In her analysis of both Sue and Isabel Archer Elizabeth Sabiston concludes that some of these characters' emotional and intellectual limitations "result of their having 'internalized' the values of their society." Sue does not fully recognize the extent to which she subconsciously shares her society's values. On the surface she seems quite independent and demands that she be allowed to support herself, but she is unable simultaneously
to be emotionally and financially independent.

The icons of Sue's life express her identity in a way in which her inconsistent actions do not. Sue's early rebellion is expressed in her purchase of the Greek statues. We are told that she has the choice among others of Apollo, Venus, and Diana. Logically one would assume that she would have chosen Diana, the virgin huntress, and Apollo also associated with purity would seem consistent and theoretically attractive. Her choice of Venus and Apollo seem to represent the opposition between flesh and spirit which will be her downfall. This would seem to be a gesture full of insight on Sue's part or irony on Hardy's. It turns out to be neither, although Hardy can still be credited with some irony. Sue chooses them because they are "the largest figures on the tray"(p.77), not for what they represent. Sue is far more intent on making a shocking gesture than she is in making an aesthetic, moral, or even symbolic choice. Even her shocking gesture is made in the privacy of her room.

The other aesthetic reference point in Sue's life is her desire to be thought of as the heroine of Shelley's "Epipsychidion." Her choice of poetry in this case is clearly based on content. Sue wants Jude to pretend that her favorite lines describe her, and Jude asserts that the picture is "exactly like you!":

"A seraph of Heaven, too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman..."
(p.196).
The picture may be accurate, but Jude's reaction is not Shelleyan ecstasy, but frustration. Realizing this Sue then asks: "You do care for me very much, don't you, in spite of my not—you know?" (p. 196). Sue's idea of bliss creates a small hell for Jude. The essence of Sue's ideal existence is nicely summed up by the quotation which opens "Epipsychidion": "The spirit that loves projects itself beyond the created world and creates in the infinite a world all its own, very different from this obscure and fearful abyss." That world in the realm of perpetual time is very much like Kermode's aevum. Alexander Welsh, on the other hand, talks about that final state, not in terms of another time frame, but as the "death" of the hero. Jude contains the possibility of both readings in so far as the major characters react to the attempt to create a "real" version of that final separate enclave. Sue sees in that infinite world a haven created with another bright, rebellious spirit which is both a rejection of conventionality and at the same time a source of support and protection which she needs. She proves by her expectations that she is a good reader who understands how the enclave in the aevum really functions. She sees it as a timeless, asexual state. How Dickensian heroes father those succeeding generations on their angelic wives in the last few lines of many of his novels has always seemed to me the ultimate affront both to realism and biological probability.

Sue gets the messages straighter than most. The sexual
world of Arabella and Jude may require a show of virginal modesty, but the demands of the flesh are to be contended with. Arabella uses sex to catch Jude and then force a proposal. Sex means domination to Sue and the world about her confirms her belief. It is usually the domination of men over women in part because women are forced to play a hypocritical role in the sexual game. Young women must cultivate at least the appearance of purity while preparing themselves for the only vocation they are allowed, that of wife and mother. Their moment of highest achievement and power is when they are still virgins, but desired by a man as wife. This is that moment that the aevum seeks to capture, and which Hardy explores and rejects. What Sue reads in the Shelleyan world is a love expressed in spirit, not in flesh, the relationship also suggested by the retreat into the aevum with the angelic wife who is never quite flesh enough to make a sexual partnership a reasonable possibility. The irony of that moment is explored by Keats in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn." To live that moment of constant expectation, as Keats and Sue’s undergraduate companion would agree, is death, for truth and beauty are finally a less than satisfactory substitute for love. While Sue expounds the gospel of truth and beauty, her action are not those of a porcelain beauty, but are frequently flirtatious, and arousing, exacerbating the paradox. Poor Jude is left "panting" with "A burning forehead, and a parching tongue."26 This exploration of what it might mean to
try to live the conclusion offered by more than one otherwise realistic novel is one of Hardy's triumphs in *Jude*. The enclave in the *aevum* is not only unrealistic, but immoral, for it posits a form of existence which is directly at odds with human nature. I would make a distinction here between an enclave in the *aevum* and the kind of enclaves created by Austen and the Brontës which merely are places of retreat from a flawed world. They do not guarantee perpetual bliss; Mr. and Mrs. Bennet may pay an unexpected call, but the threats to happiness in such an enclave are few and remote. Even such a retreat is ultimately unrealistic, for as Meredith illustrates in *The Egoist* the retreat can itself become a prison. The enclave is only secure when one of the characters is the angelic wife who is fit only for such a rarified existence, or when the author has successfully illustrated the grounds upon which both parties have agreed to "begin the world" again in unrealistic isolation.

Sue has tried her best to become such an ethereal creature. Her motivation must in part be natural inclination, for even as a girl she is sensitive, high-strung and contradictory in her relationship with boys. She preferred the role of tomboy, an early version of her later desire for comradeship. She is also the product of her culture and has internalized its most idealized stereotype of woman, even as she is drawn to the emerging image of the "new woman." The way Sue chooses to reconcile the seemingly contradictory images
creates a situation which is emotionally and psychologically destructive for her and those who love her. Yet, for all the harm her vision causes she can point to the models which her society provides, through literature and art, to confirm the rightness of her desires. No one after reading Bleak House would happily take a case into Chancery. Watching the destruction of Miss Flight and Richard Carstone as well as the Jarndyce fortune is a powerful deterrent. Yet, reading many nineteenth-century novels is hardly an adequate warning that the demands of marriage are made on flesh and spirit alike. Arabella and her friends know the world first hand, but those like Sue who gather their experience second hand through literature are surely unprepared for what the world really has in store for them.

Marriage like Chancery in Sue’s case not only destroys her, but her children. It is her inability to come to terms with the demands of marriage and the birth of another child which ultimately causes Father Time to kill himself and the other children. Father Time may be an unrealistic character, but he represents a very real problem: the effects of unhappy marriages on the next generation. If the internal pressure were not enough, Sue is constantly aware of society's judgment against her as an unwed mother. It is yet another proof of how much she has internalized the values of the society which she rejects that she cannot accept the legal dissolution of her marriage as being effective. Finally, of course, she
rejects the newly won legal answer of divorce as being wrong and succumbs to a very orthodox view of her situation, presenting herself as a martyr to the legal rights of her husband in marriage. The novel ends with no enclave, except of course the Phillotsons' bedroom where Sue accepts the realities of marriage in the flesh. The conclusion brings not only death to Jude, but spiritual and emotional death to Sue. Mrs. Edlin seems justified in her assertion that "Weddings be funerals 'a b'lieve nowadays" (p.316).

If Eliot allows us at the conclusion of *Middlemarch* to see the probability of less than ideal lives after marriage, Hardy exposes the possibility of real tragedy. As a form of closure with an universally accepted meaning, marriage was not only "shop-soiled," but rendered meaningless. The vision of marriage as an unassailable enclave was even more horrific for it imprisoned its victims for life, and thus allowed no escape from tragic unhappiness. This is, of course, exactly the opposite vision of marriage from that presented in the romance or preserved in the enclaves created by Bronte and Austen. Hardy rejected the use of romance conventions and concluded his novels realistically. The results were as Levine suggests "too painful" for many readers, especially Hardy's contemporaries who sensed the implications of his rejection of that last vestige of romance security, the myth of the perpetually happy marriage. Alan Friedman summarizes the situation which we have been exploring this way:
And the attack on marriage--Hardy's alleged "responsibility...for the present 'shop-soiled' condition of the marriage theme"--was more than an onslaught against the institution of matrimony; it was also a reductive strategy which denied a widely cherished form for life and for narrative: an attempt to tamper with an influential if invisible matrix of assumptions about possible ends and possible endings.27

As a result of the tampering by writers like Hardy the possibilities for endings open to writers of fiction multiplied. Conclusions could portray a world devoid of providential design and "beyond the control of human meaning." When they abandoned the enclave as a technical device novelists were able to complete realism's task of accurately depicting the "ongoing life of society." In doing so, however, writers and readers alike lost that last reference to vanished providence: novelists who impose a final moral order on their narrative in direct contradiction to the world they realistically portrayed. Of course, what Friedman calls a "reductive strategy" changed nothing in the world, just as the novelists who used the enclave in no way corrected the wrongs their realistic technique exposed. If not morally, technically at least, the result of this tampering was salutary for modern readers. Technically novelists were able to maintain a morally consistent approach to their material. They had open to them the option to leave unsolved moral, social, or personal problems which were indeed insoluble. Thus a particular harmony between form and moral vision could be achieved. This harmony now ironically takes on the
appearance of chaos as the modern novel reflects both in form and detail the chaos of our world. The romance is still on the scene; we still seem to need to read novels which "bend reality to the shape of desire," but we are now guiltily aware that that is what we are doing. There was no such guilt attached to Victorian novelists' efforts to preserve at least the illusion of former certainties in the use of romance technique; indeed for them it was a conscious and a moral act, whatever its aesthetic deficiencies.
Notes to Chapter IV

   "I was too young. I dwelt too much on duty:
   If I had guessed my powers
   Where might have sailed this cargo of choice beauty
   In its unanchored hours!"

2. The Married Woman's Property Act gave women the right to own property and have money in their own name.


21. -------------- The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 2, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 99. Hardy in a letter to Sir Edmund Gosse, November 20, 1895, admits: "Sue is a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me-- but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it till now."


25. Alexander Welsh, *The City of Dickens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). See Chapter XIII: "The Novel and the End of Life." Welsh asserts that: "Novels imply that marriage is the most important epoch in life; they pretend that the years between coming of age and marriage are the whole of life; and therefore conceive of marriage as equivalent to death" (p. 222).


Conclusion

Charles did not know it, but in those brief poised seconds above the waiting sea, in that luminous evening silence broken only by the waves' quiet wash, the whole Victorian Age was lost. And I do not mean he had taken the wrong path.

John Fowles, The French Lieutenant's Woman

John Fowles concludes Chapter Ten of his remarkable and insightful novel with this rather sweeping generalization. Was the Victorian Age really lost when Charles startled the sleeping Sarah? Was her gaze, like the Medusa's, fatal? From Charles' point of view the answer was certainly yes. Fowles begins the next chapter with an excerpt from Aruthur Clough's poem "Duty" which questions the slavish adherence to "the form conforming duly/Senseless what it meaneth truly." However, as the novel shows, once those forms are abandoned, those last constraints of attitude and custom recognized as artificial, as they were, then the Victorian Age was indeed lost.

One of the most fascinating things about the French Lieutenant's Woman is Fowles' conscious exploitation and exploration of the assumed point of view of Victorian novels. Despite the title most readers assume the novel to be Charles' story and the story seems to concentrate on his needs and desires. So, it comes as a shock, or for some an authorial
blunder, when quite late in the novel the narrator explains: "My problem is simple—what Charles wants is clear? It is
indeed. But what the protagonist wants is not so clear; and
I am not at all sure where she is at the moment." Most of us
find it difficult to remember that Sarah as the French
Lieutenant's woman is the protagonist. Like many heroines of
nineteenth-century fiction it is hard to find out what she
wants because until late in the novel she has no voice. When
Jane Eyre's voice was heard in mid-century it was shocking,
for her tones were hardly angelic and her words did not
reinforce the version of reality which was a necessary stay
against confusion for the Victorian reader. Her final happy
marriage was achieved through the rejection and not the
acceptance of societal values. When Sarah finally does speak
it is clear that while Charles has lost the Victorian Age;
Sarah has entered the modern world.

I like to think of The French Lieutenant's Woman as a
Darwinian romance which has as its conclusion not a marriage,
but the judgment as to which of the lovers has adapted most
successfully to the changes in their environment. Fowles uses
Darwin and evolutionary language throughout the novel. We
watch the "it" on the Cobb, literally still in the midst of
the ocean, begin the long crawl up the beach. At first
Sarah's is only a story within Charles' story, but it becomes
increasingly clear that she is herself a storyteller and as
such is influencing Charles' life until her narrative has
evolved to the point where his is lost or at least becomes secondary. Thus, the first Victorian ending is satisfactory only in terms of Charles' story, and as such is consistent with its historical models. Charles in fact wishes to form an enclave with Sarah. Charles' version of the aevum is to run away to the Continent with Sarah. Only in the second ending is the entire concept of the enclave rejected through Sarah's assertion of her individuality and desire for freedom.

The novel could be read as an allegory of the evolution and the destruction of the enclave. Fowles establishes through historical documents and characterization a sense of the Victorians' fear of the evil of the world around them, particularly the evil of sex. In Victorian literature all too often morality meant simply avoidance of sex. Ernestine, as angelic woman, offers Charles the ideal, enclosed marriage. As protected daughter Ernestine, like Sue Bridehead, has been raised within an enclave which has sheltered her from the world. Her expectation is that she will move from one enclave to another, like her angelic wife predecessors. Ernestine herself describes the pleasures which await Charles:

"I know I am spoiled. I know I am not unusual. ...Perhaps I am just a child. But under your love and protection...and your education...I believed I should become better. I should learn to please you" (p.296).

This is the essence of life within the enclave with the angelic wife which Charles rejects. What brings Charles to the point of rejection is nothing more or less than sexual
desire, but in this case desire for a woman, not a child-bride, a woman who held a "strange assumption of intellectual equality in her" (p. 351). That strange assumption is what ultimately makes Sarah's rejection of Charles so necessary, for even as Charles becomes aware of equality we are convinced of Sarah's superiority and her "spirit's [willingness] to sacrifice everything but itself...in order to save its own integrity" (p. 364). This is the spirit which determined the loss of the enclave.

What finally is the gain? Fowles wants us to understand Sarah's triumph in historical terms with reference to the quotation from Marx which acts as preface to the novel: "Every emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself." If the novel in a way enacts the destruction of the enclave what is the gain then for readers and writers? Jenni Calder sees the problem this way: "In the last twenty years or so of the nineteenth century the awareness of the failures and injustices of marriage and family life was both bitter and exciting. Attitudes changed of course, but on the whole nothing much came of this awareness, nothing to shake seriously the established institutions of society--apart, that is, from a number of remarkable novels."

It is too much to ask that literature permanently affect life, although the Victorians clearly hoped that it might. The enclave was a result of that hope, for as they depicted
life more and more accurately it became harder to make a happy conclusion seem plausible. Calder is asking for the same kind of relationship between art and society that Dickens despaired of. The gain is not to be found in the relationship between life and art, but in the emancipation of the novel from a moral vision which had become oppressive and limiting. The entire impetus of realism, the desire to mirror the "ongoing life of society," was held in check by the last vestiges of romance convention used to support Victorian hope, although hope is too strong and positive a term. The use of enclave is a tangible sign of the loss of that hope and an admission of their inability to order their world. The enclave is the novel's equivalent to the Albert Memorial, a monument to the loss of what the age held most dear, now an anachronism in prominent view from a busy street.

Our lack of appreciation for the enclave and for the Albert Memorial is understandable, for those things which we value from the Victorian Age, realism and industry, are directly opposed to the values they attempted to preserve and memorialize. Yet any serious student of the age must come to the point of at least amused tolerance for the memorial's architecture, which in its gothic revival splendor is like the enclave, an attempt to recreate the former glories and certainties of another age. The enclave too is fascinating if accepted in its wider cultural implication, rather than as the technical problem it clearly is.
The enclave and the aevum still appear in escapist fiction, but with a sense of unreality and usually distanced by time and place. The historical romance and science fiction are premised on unreality. The real world of marriage looks more and more like John Updike's Couples, in which marriage is the subject as well as the conclusion, the reward and the punishment. That conclusion is no more than a reshuffling of couples and therefore testifies to the inconclusiveness of marriage. In "serious" fiction realism has triumphed, and the enclave has, like providence, disappeared. The vision in fiction is that of a world "beyond the control of human meaning." Thackeray's fear of financial martyrdom was justified. Novelists were no longer able to support themselves by expressing in their fiction their own personal moral visions so frequently at odds with the view of their society. As modern readers we are as unwilling as the Victorians were to pay for an accurate and critical vision of the world we have made. So Barbara Cartland sits in her great house writing degenerate romances, "bending reality to the shape of desire," while most serious novelists are forced to make money lecturing rather than writing. Thackeray's balancing act seems all the more remarkable, for very few others have been able to both hold up the mirror and have us take more than a fleeting glance, much less pay for a repeated look.

Could it be that in the enclave we have the last element
which joined serious and popular fiction in such a way as to allow the novel to challenge and comfort us simultaneously? There is no question of moving back from where we are technically. But, the widening gulf, both financial and artistic, between popular and "serious" fiction should give us pause. The best seller list of the nineteenth century was full of the same kind of escapist and exotic romance that predominates today, but it also included Thackeray, Dickens, and Eliot. These popular giants of the nineteenth century which the academy holds dear were remarkable for the fact that they kept faith with their art and their audience's expectations in ways which cause the critical modern reader only moderate discomfort and at the same time give the general reader pleasure. Only a few of us today even know about, much less have a preference for, the first ending of Great Expectations.

Perhaps like devotees who praise the beauty of the Albert Memorial through too long an acquaintance and not a little misplaced nostalgia I have begun to see in the enclave value and utility where there is none. Like Fowles I would never say that the novel like Charles "had taken the wrong path," but I have begun grudgingly to admire the spirit of the age which so clearly manifested itself in the creation of the enclave. For me the enclave is a marvelous symbol of the ingenuity and the naivete of a very particular moment in literary history. I say this even as I find it an awkward,
artificial, and limiting fictional technique which frequently depends on a distorted or unrealistic portrayal of women. Thus, I make no claim for the value of the enclave, just a suggestion of why and how it came to be and why finally it was rejected. Its evolution was gradual and when writers finally found that it retarded and limited the growth of their art the selection of other alternatives was certainly necessary. While it may be argued, hypothetically, that the novel may have developed better without it, I am prepared to say that the enclave did respond to a real need, which was why it was selected in the first place. On those grounds, as a memorial to a successful artistic effort to balance moral vision and reader expectation, the enclave is far more meaningful and successful than Albert's Memorial. We cannot and should not retreat into fantasy, but the modern novel for all its technical complexity frequently loses touch with readers' needs for at least a little encouragement. As readers we cannot believe in the aevum, but we still need to be told "that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been."
Notes to the Conclusion


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