George Elliot and the Westminster Review

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Abstract of

George Eliot and the Westminster Review (M.A.Thesis)

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The thesis is concerned with the formative years during which Marian Evans was associated with the influential radical quarterly, the Westminster Review, first as editor and later as contributor. The work attempts primarily to trace the development of Miss Evans' ideas, and to set it against the background of contemporary thought. Her years as journalist represent the climax of her intellectual career. The work does not set out to be primarily a critique of the novels.

There are three chapters. In the first the personal and ideological background to her work with the Review is explored; the history of her friendship with John Chapman, its proprietor; the previous history of the Review, and the direction in which Miss Evans influenced its editorial policy. The influence upon Marian Evans of the writings of the Historical Critics, especially of Hennell and Strauss is considered in detail.

Chapter II is concerned with the nature of Miss Evans' editorial duties, and the interesting new ideas she encountered during her editorship. She was intimately friendly with the philosopher Herbert Spencer, and with Harriet Martineau. She read the recently published Philosophie Positive by Comte with interest and reserve. She wrote a translation of Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity, a book which influenced her greatly, and enabled her to reconcile a belief in the validity of religious feelings with an agnostic creed.

In the third chapter the articles and reviews written by Marian Evans between 1854 and 1856 and published in the Westminster Review and various other periodicals, are assessed critically. An attempt is made to establish a coherent picture of Miss Evans' beliefs at the time; her relation to the Feminist Movement; her philosophical beliefs; her views on contemporary novels. In the Epilogue the relevance of her earlier work as a journalist to her later work as novelist is examined.

GEORGE ELIOT AND THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW

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CHAPTER I. THE BACKGROUND

I The history of Marian Evans' association with John Chapman, the proprietor of the Westminster Review. . p.1

II The previous history of the Westminster Review. . . p.10

III The editorial policy of John Chapman and Marian Evans. p.16

IV Marian Evans and Historical Criticism p.19

V Agnosticism accomplished: Marian Evans' review of The Progress of the Intellect. p.32

CHAPTER II. MARIAN EVANS AS EDITOR OF THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

I The Nature of Miss Evans' editorial duties. p.41

II Chapman's advisor. p.44

III Marian Evans and Herbert Spencer. p.47

IV Marian Evans and Harriet Martineau p.58

V Marian Evans and Comte's Philosophie Positive . . . p.62

VI The Westminster Review under Marian Evans' Editorship p.67

VII Marian Evans' reasons for resigning from the editorship of the Westminster Review p.81

VIII Marian Evans and Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity p.92

CHAPTER III ARTICLES AND REVIEWS WRITTEN BY MARIAN EVANS (FROM JULY 1854 UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1856).

I Marian Evans as reviewer p.104

II Marian Evans and the Feminist Movement p.124

III Marian Evans' philosophical and religious position. p.133

IV Marian Evans' views on the nature and place of morality in fiction. p.140

V "Art is the nearest thing to life": Marian Evans and the concept of realism. p.151

EPILOGUE: Critic into Novelist p.172

List of books consulted p.180

GEORGE ELIOT AND THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW

CHAPTER 1. THE BACKGROUND

I

The history of Marian Evans' association with John Chapman, the proprietor of the 'Westminster Review'.

On May 1st 1851 the proprietor of the Westminster Review, a certain Mr.Hickson, called upon the London publisher John Chapman, and asked him whether he would like to buy the Review. An agreement was soon reached, and the proprietorship of the Westminster Review or, to give it its full title, the Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review passed to Chapman, in whose family it remained until it went out of print on the eve of the First World War.

Marian Evans' connection with Chapman had begun before he became proprietor of the Westminster Review. It was he who in 1846 had published her translation of Strauss's Das Leben Jesu. It is almost certain that she met him when she went to London in May 1846 to see her friend Sara Hennell[1] about the proofs of her translation. A letter she wrote to Sara Hennell in February of the following year contains an interesting allusion to Chapman, and suggests that she knew him sufficiently well to be alive to his faults. After mentioning

[1]Sara Hennell was the sister of Mrs Caroline Bray and Charles Hennell. She was seven years older than Marian Evans, and was one of her closest friends. She was cultured and intelligent, and a prolific writer. She helped Miss Evans to correct the manuscripts of the Strauss and Feuerbach translations.

Chapman in a business connection she wrote,

> "I hope Mr Chapman will not misbehave, but he was always too much of the interesting gentleman to please me. Men must not attempt to be interesting on any lower terms than a fine poetical genius."[1]

It is easy to imagine why the 'serious souled translator of Strauss should not at once have appreciated the flamboyant charms of this handsome 'Byron' of a publisher. The character and career of the 'interesting gentleman' were both extraordinary. He was the son of a druggist, born near Nottingham when Marian Evans was just two years old. After a spell as a watchmaker's apprentice he ran away to Australia where he claimed to have made and lost a fortune. He returned to England and may have studied medicine at St. Bartholomew's. Although he did not qualify as a doctor at this time, he did practise as a surgeon. In 1843 he married Susanna Brewitt, the daughter of a Nottingham lace manufacturer. The marriage brought him money and enabled him, in the same year, to buy Green's publishing business, and to publish a book he had just written:

> "Human Nature: a Philosophical Exposition of the Divine Institution of Reward and Punishment which Obtains in the Physical, Intellectual, and Moral Constitutions of Man: ..."

Chapman inherited from Green a quarterly Review, the Christian Teacher, a Unitarian publication which was rechristened in 1845 the Prospective Review. He was the main publisher for Unitarian works in the country. He published religious and philosophical works called by

[1] Letters, 1 p.231. G.E. to Sara Hennell 28 Feb 1847 The whole passage is lightly overscored.

Carlyle "Liberalisms, 'Extant Socinianisms'".[1] It was characteristic of his sympathy with 'progressive' thought that he published Marian Evans' translation of Strauss. During Miss Evans's association with the Westminster Review a serious rift developed between the Unitarians and the 'progressive' thinkers whose agnosticism was repugnant to them.

Miss Evans had decided to lodge with Chapman before there was any suggestion of his taking over the Westminster Review. The emotionally unsettled state of mind which drove her to seek a new life in London ~~is~~ was an interesting prelude to her work for the Westminster Review. The motive for her move to London was personal security rather than intellectual opportunity. When her father died in May 1849, Miss Evans, who had nursed him with loving care through his last illness found herself, for the first time in her life, free from family ties.

[1] Letters of Thomas Carlyle to John Stuart Mill, John Sterling, and Robert Browning, ed. Alexander Carlyle, (1923) p.288.

The good-natured Charles Bray[1] suggested a trip to the continent to recruit his protegé, who was exhausted by the long ordeal. That she should have chosen to stay on in Geneva (she did not return until March 18th 1850) suggests that convalescence was not her only need. She evidently felt that she must isolate herself from the hospitality of the Bray family, and come to some decision about her future. Hitherto family duties had kept her by her father's side. She was now thirty-one years old she was free, but there was no immediate

[1]Charles Bray (born 1811) was the son of a prosperous Coventry ribbon manufacturer. He succeeded his father in the business in 1835. His family was strictly evangelical, but Charles' early reading included such rationalist and psychological works as Bentham's Deontology and George Combe's Phrenology. In 1836 Bray married Caroline Hennell, sister of Charles Hennell the author of the Inquiry. Rosehill, the house on the outskirts of Coventry which Bray bought in 1840, became a centre for anyone of odd or outlandish ideas who was in the district. Marian Evans first visited Rosehill in November 1841. She developed a close friendship with the Brays, and with Sara Hennell. (The majority of the letters quoted here are written to Sara or the Brays). Bray's kindly and convivial nature, his active and divertingly eccentric mind, and his interesting visitors combined to make Marian Evans regard Rosehill as a second home.

Bray bought a local newspaper the Coventry Herald in 1846. Miss Evans' first work as a journalist appeared in this paper.

The influence of Bray on Miss Evans' thought is considered below.

For more details about Bray see Marian Evans and George Eliot by L.& E. Hanson, Chapter V.

prospect of marriage. Keenly conscious as she was of her own lack of physical beauty, she may well have felt that she would remain always a spinster.

The letters she wrote on her return shew her to have been in a restless and dissatisfied state of mind. Like Dorothea Brooke, and so many of the women in her novels, she ardently longed to immerse herself in some great enterprise, and yet personally she was diffident and insecure. She wrote to Sara Hennell on March 26th 1850

> "I want you, dear, to scold me and make me good. I am idle and naughty - on ne peut plus - sinking into heathenish ignorance and woman's frivolity - remember you are one of my guardian angels." [1]

The almost puritanical contempt of 'woman's frivolity' indicates that although she longed to loved and needed, she had no intention of marrying and settling down to a conventional life of quiet domesticity.

She was disillusioned and undecided as to her future. Her obligations to her father had hampered her, but she now found that the very freedom from binding personal ties was a source of worry and insecurity. On the fourth of April 1850 she wrote

> "My return to England is anything but joyous to me, for old associations are rather painful than otherwise to me. We are apt to complain of the weight of duty, but when it is taken from us, and we are left at liberty to choose for ourselves, we find that the old life was the easier one." [2]

[1] Letters, 1,332

[2] Letters, 1,333. G.E. to Martha Jackson, 4th April 1850.

A week later she wrote to Sara Hennell enquiring about Mr Chapman's prices for lodgers, and asking if she knew of any other boarding houses in London. Half pettishly, half in earnest, she resolved to lead a life of bohemian independence

> "I am determined to sell everything I possess except a portmanteau and carpet-bag and the necessary contents and be a stranger and a foreigner on the earth for ever more." [1]

In October Miss Evans renewed her acquaintance with her prospective landlord. He and Mackay[2] paid a visit to Rosehill where she was staying. It was during their visit that she was asked to review Mackay's new book (published by Chapman) The Progress of the Intellect. Her impressions of Chapman must have been more favourable this time, for the following month she went for a two week trial visit to his home in the Strand. In a letter to the Brays[3] she gives an interesting glimpse of her life in London. She was throwing herself wholeheartedly into the intellectual life of the capital. She went to a lecture on the magnetism of oxygen, dined with Mackay, and was attending Professor F.W.Newman's[4] lectures on

[1] Letters 1, 335, G.E. to Sara Hennell, 11th April 1850. The bohemian dream was almost realized later, when G.E. left the country with G.H.Lewis.

[2] Robert William Mackay (1803-1882) published his most elaborate work, The Progress of the Intellect in 1850. It was the first of a number of works he wrote on theological topics. His books were remarkable for their thorough research into detail. As a theologian Mackay followed Baur and Strauss.

[3] Letters, 1, 341, 28 January 1851

[4] He was the brother of John Henry Newman.

Geometry at the Ladies' College.

Although she was making every effort to prevent herself sinking into 'heathenish ignorance' her life was not free from 'woman's frivolity'. Chapman resembled Byron not only in his strikingly good looks, but in his keeping a mistress, one Elizabeth Tilley, who was ostensibly the housekeeper. The ménage à trois apparently worked quite well, but the appearance of a third young admirer in the person of Marian Evans proved to be an insuperable complication. She had been giving her landlord German lessons, and before long Chapman confided to his diary that Susannah and Elizabeth were of the opinion that Miss Evans and he were "completely in love with one another". Their jealousy of the young provincial intellectual compelled Miss Evans to return to Coventry on March 24th. A somewhat furtive entry (the first sentence was deleted) in Chapman's diary for that day, can leave no doubt that Marian Evans had fallen in love with Chapman.

> "I told her that I felt great affection for her, but that I loved E. and S. also, though each in a different way. At this avowal she burst into tears. I tried to comfort her, and reminded her of the dear friends and pleasant home she was returning to, - but the train whirled her away very very sad.-"

It was just over a month later[1] that Hickson called on Chapman to offer him the proprietorship of the

[1] On May 5th J.C. received a letter from Hickson "making it almost certain that I shall become proprietor of the Westminster." Hickson originally asked £350 for the Review, but J.C.'s offer of £300 was accepted. The deed of sale was not signed until Oct 8th 1851.

Westminster Review. The fortunes of the Review were at a low ebb at this time, and it was certain that it would require a great effort to restore to it its former high reputation. Chapman with his want of feeling for English style and his limited academic ability lacked the qualities necessary for an editor of a prominent review. Furthermore he was already very busy running his publishing business. The proprietorship of the Prospective Review must have consumed much of his time. The financial side of his business was far from satisfactory. A month before he came to an agreement with Hickson he complained

> "I feel very anxious for an efficient assistant on many accounts. I am weary and unable to get through the business which now necessarily devolves upon me!" [1]

Miss Evans with her wide knowledge of and sympathy with progressive thought was an obvious choice as an assistant. Her review of Mackay's book shewed that she could write well, and that she had vision and discretion as a critic. He had already persuaded her to help him with an Analytical Catalogue of Mr Chapman's publications. [2] Nevertheless he could not rely on her continued co-operation. There is a note of self-righteousness and offended pride in the letter she wrote him on 4th April.

> "If I continue it (the Catalogue) it will be with the utmost repugnance, and only on the understanding that I shall accept no remuneration." [3]

Chapman was certainly in no position to ask favours of Marian Evans, and determined to edit the Westminster

[1] J.C. Diary April 12th 1851
[2] This was published in June 1852
[3] Letters, 1, 348, G.E. to J.C. 4th April 1851

Review himself. He noted in his diary for May 23rd that George Combe was "very glad to learn that I intended to be chief editor of the review myself." Four days later he was in Coventry where he found Miss Evans "shy calm and affectionate." The next day Miss Evans and he returned early from an amateur concert in order to begin the Prospectus for his newly acquired Review. The day after

> "She agreed to write the article on foreign literature for each Number of the Westminster which I am very glad of. Wrote the greater part of the Prospectus today, and then gave it to M.(arian) to finish."[1]

A week after Chapman had declared his resolve to be chief editor himself, he wrote of Marian Evans as "an active co-operator with me in Editing the Westminster." On the second of June he recorded that "M. is going without dinner in order to progress rapidly with the Prospectus."[2] She finished the first draft that night and read it to him. He "liked it extremely as a whole" and "after some alterations at my suggestion I sent it to the press."[3]

When he returned to London on June 9th, matters were more or less settled. Miss Evans' coldness towards him had thawed and they had made a "solemn and holy vow" to "bind us to the right."[4]

[1] J.C. Diary, 29th May 1851
[2] J.C. Diary, 2nd June
[3] J.C. Diary, 3rd June
[4] J.C. Diary, 5th June

Miss Evans, who had never had any illusions about Chapman's serious lack of feeling for, and inability to write, good prose, had evidently convinced him that he was not the person to edit the Review. It seems that Chapman could not trust himself to write even the Prospectus. Miss Evans' evident interest and ability must have persuaded Chapman that her assistance in editing the Westminster Review would be most valuable: so valuable that he was willing to break with all precedent and employ a woman as editor, and, what probably touched him more nearly, to risk losing his own peace of mind by inviting back the third woman who had already proved such a dangerous catalyst in his potentially unstable household. In a letter (now lost) Chapman asked the 'active co-operator' to become 'nominal editor'. Miss Evans accepted: "I am quite willing to agree to your proposition about the nominal editorship, or anything else really for the interest of the Review."[1] The Westminster Review was a famous and well-established quarterly with a strongly medical ideological tradition. In order to see the direction in which Miss Evans influenced the Review, and how far she maintained its radical bias, it is necessary to consider the past history of the periodical.

II The previous history of the Westminster Review.

The first number of the Westminster Review was issued in January 1824, when Marian Evans was just five years old. The Review was founded by Jeremy Bentham, the father of English Utilitarian thought. He had reached the age of

[1] Letters, 1, 351, G.E. to J.C. 2nd June 1851

67 without securing a large following, and had decided that it was time to set about the systematic propagation of his ideas. Bentham financed the enterprise himself, and offered the Editorship to James Mill, one of his main disciples. Because of his India House appointment, James Mill was obliged to decline the offer, and the editorship went to Mr (later Sir John) Bowring, an ardent admirer of Bentham's ideas.

The Westminster Review was founded when the influence of the periodical was at its greatest. In 1824 the field was dominated by the two giants, the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review. The influence of the great reviews on the intelligent reading public to which they appealed was colossal. Their influence on public taste has been likened to that of the Académie in France. Lord Cockburn's description of the effect of the first number of the Edinburgh is enlightening:

> "It taught the public to think. It opened people's eyes. It gave them periodically the most animated and profound discussions on every interesting subject that the greatest intellects in the kingdom could supply."[1]

Although the politics and philosophy of the Westminster Review were sharply opposed to the Whig politics of the Edinburgh and the staunch toryism of the Quarterly, in its form it owed much to its predecessors. Like them it was very long (nearly 300 pages with 10 long reviews and 6 to 10 shorter notices), and was issued quarterly. It resembled them also in being closely aligned with a

[1] Quoted in Scrutiny Vol.VI, No.1, The Great Reviews by R.G.Cox.

political creed.

Literary criticism was a feature of the great Reviews of the period, but in all of them it was coloured by the political bias of the Review. The determined stand made by the more conservative reviewers against Wordsworth and the younger generation of Romantic poets is notorious.

Like the Edinburgh and the Quarterly, the Westminster devoted some space to literary criticism. Henry Southern[1] was literary editor. Literature which did not actively propagate Utilitarian ideas was not kindly looked upon by the early Philosophic Radicals. Bentham spoke slightingly of 'literary insignificancies' and J.S.Mill records in his Autobiography that he dismissed all poetry as 'misrepresentation'. The antipathy to literature which was primarily ornamental is largely to be explained by the radical bias of the Review; the pursuit of literature was regarded with suspicion as an aristocratic pastime. The Utilitarians followed Plato in realizing that literature could have a morally bad effect. In general, poetry, novels, and even music were valued in so far as they tended to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. However valid the Utilitarian philosophy, the quality of the literary criticism inevitably suffered.

The editors of the Westminster Review shared with the editors of the other great Reviews a determination that the Review should have a definite and consistent policy

[1]Henry Southern (1799-1853) is chiefly remembered for having founded the Retrospective Review in 1820. He spent much of his life in the diplomatic service.

which would be promulgated by each and every individual contributor. Bowring wrote

> "the Westminster Review must speak the opinions of the Westminster Reviewer, and not the opinions of any individual when those opinions differ from those of the Westminster Review!"[1]

The editors maintained absolute control, and preserved the right not only to reject, but even to 'correct' or alter what they thought fit. They were the guardians, and their rule was absolute. The excellence of the Review therefore depended directly upon their diligence and ability.

It was a feature of all the great Reviews that all articles should be unsigned and anonymous. Essays and reviews were put forward not as the opinions of a single erring mortal, but as the infallible utterance of the Review as a whole. It would seem that the practice of leaving all articles unsigned was responsible to a large degree for the great authority the Reviews had with their readers. And there was a reassuring finality in the use of the plural 'we'.

The form of the early Westminster was conventional, but its policy was strident and challenging. James Mill's article in the first number was a veritable bombshell.

> "So formidable an attack on the Whig party and policy had never before been made; nor so great a blow been ever struck, in this country, for Radicalism; ....."[2]

There gathered round the nascent Review a little knot of sectarian young men who, taking as their creed 'the

[1] Quoted by G.L.Nesbitt, Benthamite Reviewing, (1934) p.134
2 J.S. Mill, Autobiography, Ch.IV p.79 (World's Classic's Ed.)

greatest happiness of the greatest number', zealously aimed at becoming a 'school' like the French 'Philosophes' of the eighteenth century. The bias of the early Westminster Review was strongly political. There was a great faith in representative government and in complete freedom of discussion. Hereditary and aristocratic institutions were strongly criticised, as was the established church. There was however little criticism of Christianity as such, probably because Bowring himself was prominent in Unitarian circles. Free trade was strongly upheld.

The attitude of the Review towards women's rights was enlightened. It held from the beginning that women should have equal political rights with men. "Every reason which exists for giving the suffrage to anybody, demands that it should not be withheld from women."[1] Furthermore it was in favour of increased freedom in the personal relations between the sexes, which it held would lead not to sexual promiscuity, but to a balanced appreciation that the physical relation is not the most important. Sexual morality was relegated to a position among the virtues "which are of least importance to society."[2] It was held that women should become"our companions and cooperators in intellectual pursuits."[2]

In Psychology the influence of Hartley was clearly seen. The Review believed in

"the formation of all human character by circumstances,

[1] J.S.Mill, Autobiography, Ch.1V.
[2] Nesbitt, Benthamite Reviewing, p.90.

> through the universal Principle of Association, and the consequent unlimited possibility of improving the moral and intellectual condition of mankind by education."[1]

The mention of 'improvement' highlights what is at once one of the most important of the assumptions of the Review, and yet, because of its omnipresence, one of the most easily overlooked. The Westminster Reviewers were the first to attempt systematically to spread the idea of progress. There was an optimistic belief in the almost boundless improveability of the human lot.

In 1828 the Westminster Review was sold to Colonel Thomas Perronet Thompson who had previously assisted Bowring to edit the Periodical. The sale was secretly negotiated by Bowring, and James Mill and his son John Stuart withdrew their support as a protest against what they considered dishonourable conduct. Jeremy Bentham died in 1832 and the Review inevitably lost impetus by the death of its leader. In 1834 Sir William Molesworth proposed to start a new Review, the London Review, providing that J.S.Mill would agree to act as editor. Two years later Molesworth bought the Westminster Review which he amalgamated with the London Review. Between 1834 and 1840 J.S.Mill records that "the conduct of this Review occupied the greater part of my spare time."[2] The Review was still intended to express the views of the Philosophical Radicals, but J.S.Mill was moving away from ~~the~~ Bentham's narrower Utilitarianism. Although the old doctrines still formed the staple of the Review, he wanted it to express his

[1] J.S.Mill, Autobiography, p.91
[2] Autobiography, p.169

own shade of opinion which had a width of sympathy and tolerance unknown in the early days. To this end he boldly abandoned the magisterial and august anonymity, and made it "one of the peculiarities of the work that every article should bear an initial, or some other signature." [1]

In 1840 the Review was transfered to Hickson, a retired shoe manufacturer who had been "a frequent and very useful unpaid contributor" under J.S.Mill's management. In Hickson's time the practice of publishing contributions anonymously was reintroduced. Hickson strove hard to maintain the standards of the Review, editing and contributing reviews gratuitously. But he offered a lower scale of payment to contributors than previous proprietors [2] (all of whom had lost financially on the Review) and the Review suffered a decline in quality during the decade of his proprietorship.

III

The editorial policy of John Chapman and Marian Evans.

The Westminster Review was founded to propagate a definite social ideal and to popularise the doctrines of the Philosophical Radicals. This programme gave it homogeneity and strength of purpose. The subsequent history of the Review up till the time when Chapman became proprietor shews no decisive change of policy, but a gradual abandonment of Benthamism in its raw extremes, and a widening of tolerance especially towards literature and the arts. This widening of the aims of the Review gave

[1] Autobiography, p.169

[2] Alexander Bain records in his Biography of James Mill, (1882), that in the early days contributors were paid 10 guineas a sheet.

it a greater comprehensiveness, but it lost the incisive andacity of the early numbers.

The Prospectus which was printed at the beginning of Miss Evans' first number of the Westminster Review (January 1852), is a most interesting document, indicating as it does the complete eclipse of Bentham's slogan "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" and adopting as the "fundamental principle" an idea which had always been characteristic of the Review, but which now assumed new importance: the Law of Progress.

> "The fundamental principle of the work will be the recognition of the Law of Progress. In conformity with this principle, and with the consequent conviction that attempts at reform - though modified by the experience of the past and the conditions of the present - should be directed and animated by an advancing ideal, the Editors will maintain a steady comparison of the actual with the possible, as the most powerful stimulus to improvement."[1]

But the editors are quick to deny any revolutionary sympathies with swift and sweeping reforms, holding that

> "the institutions of man, no less than the products of nature, are strong and durable in proportion as they are the results of a gradual development . . ."

As we shall see this belief that social change should be slow and organic rather than planned and swiftly implemented is a feature of the new Review, and of Miss Evans' own contributions.

The radical political bias of the Review was still prominent, but less uncompromising than it had been in the early numbers. Gradual reform rather than sweeping

[1]This and the following quotations are taken from the revised draft of the Prospectus which was printed in the Westminster Review for January 1852.

change was called for. The Review was intended to shew how far the teachings of politico-economic science "may be sustained and promoted by the actual character and culture of the people." The editors realized that an organ of progress could not consistently pledge itself to a definite political creed, but they did venture to declare their support for the following reforms; a progressive extension of the suffrage "in proportion as the people become fitted for using it, with a view to its ultimate universality; ... the extension to all our Colonies of a Local Constitutional Government;" free trade in every department of commerce, and a radical reform in the Administration of Justice. They also declared their intention of supporting a thorough revisal of the Ecclesiastical Revenues, which should be fairly used " in promoting the intellectual and spiritual advancement of the people."

In the treatment of religious questions the editors pledged themselves to

> "unite a spirit of reverential sympathy for the cherished associations of pure and elevated minds" (Bentham would not have approved of this) "with an uncompromising pursuit of truth. The elements of ecclesiastical authority and of dogma will be fearlessly examined, and the results of the most advanced Biblical Criticism will be discussed without reservation." The editors are explaining tactfully but unequivocally their intention to discuss the fundamental issues of religious belief, topics which the preponderance of Unitarian thinkers had made taboo in the early Westminster Review. A few years later the atheistic tendency of the Review was to become a bone of contention between the still powerful Unitarian faction

(headed by James Martineau), and the progressive agnostic thinkers. Acrimonious disagreement on this issue was one factor which helped to decide Miss Evans to relinquish the editorship.

Although it would be unwise to infer the state of her own ideas from a declaration of editorial policy she wrote in collaboration with another, it is clear that the Prospectus was broadly in harmony with Miss Evans' beliefs. One would expect the translator of Strauss to stress the importance and relevance of contemporary works of Biblical Criticism. The unusual mixture of boldness and caution, of a faith in progress and reform, and an anxiety not to break the cherished associations of the past is also peculiarly characteristic of Miss Evans' thought at the time. Her influence on the policy of the Review was probably considerable.

In order to understand more fully Miss Evans' own creed at the time it is necessary to consider some aspects of the peculiarly mid-nineteenth century 'progressive' thought with which she became so closely associated, and to attempt to indicate the ways in which she was influenced by 'progressive' thinkers.

Marian Evans and Historical Criticism.

When she became editor of the Westminster Review, Miss Evans was pledging herself to support and popularise many of the exciting new ideas which had been born in her lifetime. It had been a time of intellectual exuberance. During these years the modern approach to the study of History was born and the Bible was shewn to be a historical document relating to the life and beliefs of

a primitive people, not the infallible word of God. The works of the Geologists exploded the old-fashioned view that time begun with the Biblical 'Creation', and proved that the world was millions of years older than Adam. The motive force, the seminal idea behind these manifold advances was an extension of the application of the idea of empirical law into spheres of thought to which it had not formerly been applied.

The new movement has its roots in the empirical and rationalist tradition of seventeenth century thought. It shews an almost unbounded confidence in scientific experimental method, combined into a scorn of metaphysical speculation. The extension of the concept of law, previously applied mainly to scientific investigations into the nature of physical phenomena, to the study of history and geology necessitated a change in the nature of the concept itself. What has previously been a static principle of empirical generalization used to analyse the observed phenomena of the physical universe, becomes by its application to the organic changing fields of the history of the earth and its human, animal and vegetable life, a dynamic evolutionary principle. During these years the concepts of Progress and Evolution became prominent.

The historical critic seeks to understand a phenomenen by tracing its history. He assumes that the present is related to the past by inexorable laws of cause and effect. In this view sudden, freakish or miraculous events are discounted. Change is seen to be slow and organic and predictable, and it is the task of the investigator to

reveal the laws which govern it. No event is isolated - each is conceived as part of a larger process. George Brimley, writing in 1855, sums up the new spirit. The age was one

> "when absolute and universal solutions are sought, not only for physical phenomena, but also for mental and social, - when not only the movements of heavenly bodies and the complex relations of the constituent elements of organic matter, but the course of thought, the growth, decay, and character of states, - in a word, the whole life of the individual, and the collective life of humanity, are supposed to be traceable to the orderly operation of fixed principles."[1]

The new historical criticism[2] made itself felt in many fields of thought. Its effects were felt most keenly when its critical technique was applied to the Bible, for here it threatened not only to cause grave doubts about the authority of what was popularly considered to be the divine word of God; it was feared that in so doing it might undermine morality itself. Thus the new criticism, when it was applied to the Bible, grew from being a purely academic matter, and assumed the proportions of a major public concern. The debate spread from the privacy of the study to the publicity of the pulpit.

The first rumblings were heard when Lyell published his Principles of Geology (1830-33), a work almost certainly read by Miss Evans. The book undermined the

[1] George Brimley, Essays, (1855) pp.85-6.

[2] It should perhaps be emphasized that historical criticism was not specifically English in origin. The origins of the new movement are to be found in the works of Lessing, Herder, Niebuhr and Savigny.

orthodox idea that the world and its various species had been created by a succession of catastrophes caused by divine interference. Lyell postulated that the world was vastly older than had been supposed and shewed that its present state could better be explained by a uniformitarian theory which assumes no sudden cataclysmic event, but adopts the more rational explanation that it was caused by the gradual and orderly operation of fixed causes. The book put forward the natural explanation for phenomena previously believed to have been due to supernatural agency.

Miss Evans had certainly read Nichol's Architecture of the Heavens (1841) which reinforced and supplemented Lyell's argument. Another of the most influential works was Robert Chambers' Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844). Chambers accepted Lyell's theory but took it further. He was prepared to admit the possibility that life itself might be a development of inorganic matter, and that mankind need not be believed to have been created by God. The book provoked a violent reaction. It was attacked from many sides. It is, however, significant that it was welcomed by the Westminster Review[1]

Lyell and Chambers were both very anxious not to damage religious faith. They were writing as scientists, not as theologians. But it was not long before the authenticity of the Bible became the focus of the debate. German scholars had already subjected the Bible to a painstakingly thorough historical investigation, applying to it the most advanced methods of textual criticism. They had shewn that it was full of errors, exaggerations and

inconsistencies. Reimarus interpreted the whole Bible as an example of human depravity and error. Scleiermacher cast doubt on the authenticity of all gospels but that of St.John. Since German scholars had already criticised the Bible with such thoroughness, it was quite natural that the introduction of Biblical criticism into this country should have been largely a matter of translating the relevant works into the language, and of making them available to English readers.

There was however one work of English authorship which, although concerned with matters already investigated by German scholars, was written in ignorance of their work. This was Charles Hennell's An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity published in 1838. It was this book which was chiefly instrumental in provoking Miss Evans to challenge the beliefs of her orthodox religious upbringing. She became closely acquainted with the author - Charles Bray's brother-in-law. Hennell began the book

> "with the expectation that, at least, the principal miraculous facts supposed to lie at the foundation of Christianity would be found to be impregnable; but it was continued with a gradually increasing conviction that the true account of the life of Jesus Christ, and of the spread of his religion, would be found to contain no deviation from the known laws of nature, nor to require, for their explanation, more than the operation of human motives and feelings, acted upon by the peculiar circumstances of the age and country whence the religion originated."[1]

The method of the work, "a laborious method of sifting and examining" [2] was par excellence the method of

[1] Charles C.Hennell, An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity, 1838, (hereafter referred to as the Inquiry), Preface, p.111-1V.
[2] Inquiry Preface, p.1V.

historical criticism. In his critical assessment the author took into account the date of the text, the general character of the author, and his peculiarities as a writer. He compared his account of an event with the accounts given by later writers, and ascertained how far it was consistent with historical records.

Close textual examination shewed that many of the supposedly miraculous events were in fact capable of a natural explanation (German critics had reached the same conclusion); and yet the tone of the book was not pessimistic. Hennell admits that (for instance) the doubts he has about the authenticity of the Resurrection imply "that a future state is thereby rendered a matter of speculation instead of certainty." [1] But this is what he says about the disappearance of Jesus' body:

> "The disappearance of the body of the crucified Nazarene .... shrinks into a comparatively poor and trifling incident when we approach for close inspection: but the sublime views which it was in part the occasion of bringing forth, and the moral revolution which it continued to promote, are in themselves deeply interesting facts, ..." [2]

Throughout his book, Hennell is careful to suggest that a rejection of many of the miraculous incidents of the Bible in no way prejudices the truth of Christian morality. This belief was shared by Miss Evans and many other agnostic thinkers of the day. Although the spirit of the work is frankly humanist, even agnostic, the author hesitated, indeed declined, to push his arguments to their

[1] Inquiry p.153
[2] Inquiry p.153

natural conclusion. This ~~is~~ was a feature of progressive writers of this period, and is to be accounted for by the fact that to the majority of people, the words and stories of the Bible were closely associated with the fundamentals of morality. It was feared that to destroy faith in the former would undermine the latter, and lead to moral anarchy. There ~~is~~ was a reticence, similar to Hennell's, in the Prospectus of the new Westminster Review. Miss Evans herself, though she accepted the main findings of the Biblical critics, was careful never to undermine religious faith. Her reaction to the one contemporary book which was frankly atheistic[1] was reserved.

Miss Evans' own contribution to the new Biblical Criticism was a distinquished one, for it was she who translated D.F.Strauss' Das Leben Jesu into English. Strauss was the fairest and most thorough of the German Biblical critics and Miss Evans' translation of this outstandingly important work is said to have become a best seller. Strauss' work, though similar in method to Hennell's, is distinquished from it by greater depth and thoroughness of scholarship. The spirit of the work is humanist. Like the Geologists, and like Hennell, Strauss shews that events believed to be supernatural are in fact capable of a natural explanation.

> "The mythical and the allegorical view (as also the moral) equally allow that the historian apparently relates that which is historical, but they suppose him, under the influence of a higher inspiration

[1] Atkinson and Martineau, Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development, 1851.

> known or unknown to himself, to have made use of this historical semblance merely as the shell of an idea - of a religious conception. The only essential distinction therefore between these two modes of explanation is, that according to the allegorical this higher intelligence is the immediate divine agency; according to the mythical, it is the spirit of a people or a community."[1]

Strauss adopts the 'mythical' view. He does not deny that the New Testament contains a nucleus of fact, but he believes that there grew round the simple historical truth an encrustation of legend, and that it was on the latter that the Gospel writers based their accounts. He writes of the New Testament 'myths' that

> "these narratives like all other legends were fashioned by degrees, by steps which can no longer be traced;" and that they "gradually acquired consistency, and at length received a fixed form in our written Gospels."[2]

The evolutionary concepts which Miss Evans had encountered in the works of the geologists and biblical critics assume that in the sphere of human conduct as well as in the realm of inanimate objects all events are rigorously determined. Her friend Charles Bray based his philosophy on determinism, and set it forth in a work entitled The Philosophy of Necessity. The influence of the book on Miss Evans' ideas at the time has, I believe been underestimated.

[1] The Life of Jesus Critically Examined by Dr David Friedrich Strauss. Translated from the Fourth German Edition (by G.E.), London, 1846. p.40. (Hereafter this work is referred to as Life of Jesus).

[2] Life of Jesus p.35.

Bray wrote in his Autobiography that Marian Evans and he "agreed in opinion pretty well at that time, and I may claim to have laid down the base of that philosophy which she afterwards retained." [1]

The Philosophy of Necessity is broad in scope. Bray considers first the philosophical implications of determinism, and then applies his doctrine to various aspects of human experience. Much of the discussion is devoted to the reassessment in necessitarian terms of the principles of human morality, in particular the problem of punishment and its ethical significance. He considers also the question of the existence of God. The third part of the book, entitled Social Science, is a detailed examination of statistical evidence on such matters as population, distribution of wealth, free trade, the rights of women, and illustrates his contention that our attitude to social problems should be based on a close examination of the actual state of things.

The Philosophy of Necessity is firmly based in the rationalist tradition of late eighteenth century thought, and the main thesis of the book obviously derives from Bentham's Utilitarian ideas, and a Malthusian interest in economic factors and statistics of (for example) population growth rates.

Miss Evans does not indicate that she shewed any interest in the socio-economic or political aspect of Bray's thought; his crudely mechanistic system of ethics which rules out any form of altruism or unselfish

[1] Phases of Opinion and Experience during a Long Life Chapter VIII, p.73.

behaviour as a psychological impossibility, must have been anathema to her; yet in two respects Bray's influence on her thought seems to have been considerable. At least for a time she shared his belief in Phrenology, and his suprisingly subtle analysis of determinism seems to have left a permanent mark on her thought.

Bray applies the concept of determinism to the study of the human mind, and in postulating that in this sphere, as well as in every other, all events are rigorously caused, and that thorough research can reveal the necessary laws by which the mind operates, arrives at a starkly deterministic position.

> "There is," he writes "exactly the same connection between every action of the mind and its cause as between things external to the mind; and not the slightest change takes place in the mind, nor the most transient idea passes through it, but has its cause; which cause is always adequate in the same circumstances to produce the same effect; ...." [1]

This is precisely the supposition on which the twentieth century experimental psychologist goes to work, and had Bray's speculative zeal been matched by an equal enthusiasm for experimental work, the modern science might have been born half a century earlier. As it was, however, the pseudo-science of Phrenology was the object of his misguided enthusiasm. The Phrenologist's belief that a man's emotions and mental powers in general can be 'read' by the bumps on his head is of course universally discredited. Nevertheless, influenced by Bray, Miss

[1] The Philosophy of Necessity, Introduction, p.5.

Evans seems for a time to have dallied with Phrenology. Here are a few quotations from letters in which she uses Phrenological jargon:

> "Greg is a short man,with a hooked nose an imperfect enunciation from defective teeth, but his brain is large, the anterior lobe very fine and a moral region to correspond!"[1]
>
> "The professor has a hugh anterior lobe of his own"[2]

Miss Evans was on friendly terms with George Combe[3] the leading exponent of Phrenology in England (it was a book of his which had first inspired Bray with an interest for the subject[4]), and went to stay with him in October 1852. After her union with G.H.Lewes who had stated in his Biographical History of Philosophy that phrenologists presented "a rude sketch as a perfect science", any interest she may have had quickly faded.

Bray's belief in necessity or determinism does seem, on the other hand, to have become a permanent part of her thought, although her more profound and subtle approach was less easily satisfied with trite generalizations. In

[1] Letters, 11,p.21, G.E. to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 27 April 1852.

[2] Letters, 11,p.56, G.E. to Charles Bray, 18 Sept. 1852.

[3] George Combe (1788-1858) became an ardent believer in Phrenology after he had heard Spurzheim lecture in Edinburgh in 1815. Combe wrote many books on Phrenology, the best-known of which was his Essay on the Constitution of Man (published 1829).

[4] For a fuller account of Bray's startling 'conversion' to Phrenology-see Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson Marian Evans and George Eliot, (1952), p.44.

his autobiography Bray claims that

> "George Eliot always also held with me as a sequence to such doctrine of consequences that one of the greatest duties of life was unembittered resignation to the inevitable."[1]

Miss Evans' novels presuppose that character is moulded by circumstances, and shew that the consequences of a man's actions (especially of his evil actions) work themselves out with relentless logic. The question how far she believed that all human actions are determined is an important one, for a completely deterministic philosophy excludes good and evil, praise and blame; for if a man could not have acted otherwise in the circumstances, how can he be held morally responsible for his actions? This is a problem which Bray attempts to answer (he anticipated Bradley who advanced a similar argument in his Ethical Studies half a century later). After noticing that if actions could not have been otherwise in the circumstances, then merit and demerit are "merely names", he advances an ingenious idea.

> "Upon reflexion, however, it will be found to be just the reverse; for if there were no necessary connection between motives and actions, if a man might refuse or not to be guided by the former, then, indeed, all praise and blame would be useless; ...."[2]

In other words morality actually presupposes a degree of determinism and "true necessity is not opposed to that which is voluntary, but to that which is contingent."[3]

[1] Charles Bray Phases of Opinion and Experience during a Long Life, Chapter VIII, p.74.

[2] The Philosophy of Necessity, p.33

[3] The Philosophy of Necessity, p.21

George Eliot implies her acceptance of Bray's view in her novels. The 'inexorable law' which governs the lives and actions of the heroes and heroines of her novels is compatible with, and even essential to, morality, to praise and blame. Miss Evans' belief that the consequences of a morally bad action inevitably lead to the punishment (sooner or later, more or less directly) of the offender, is also to be found in Bray's work.

> "It is often thought that vice would be pleasant enough in this world if it were not for the penalties that attend it in another; but this is a great mistake, for every deviation from the moral laws is attended with suffering as certainly, although not so directly and immediately, as in the physical or organic laws, and a person guilty of an immorality will be as surely punished for it as if he were to put his hand into the fire."[1]

It is probable that it was the interest in determinism, fostered by Charles Bray, which gave Miss Evans the idea of translating two of Spinoza's works into English.[2] Miss Evans began a translation of Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus on March 4th 1849. The translation, which was never published, is now lost. Later, on her 'honeymoon' in Germany with G.H.Lewes, she began to translate Spinoza'a Ethics. The translation was completed in February 1856, but has never been published.

It is not easy to understand why she should have devoted herself to translating two notoriously difficult works. Though Spinoza's idea that everything is ruled by an absolute logical necessity doubtless interested her,

[1] The Philosophy of Necessity, p.103

[2] Bray quoted Spinoza in his Philosophy of Necessity and evidently admired his philosophy.

she could not have sympathised with Spinoza's essentially theist philosophy. It may be that Spinoza's complete rejection of free will, and consequent denial that evil is a reality, comforted her in the difficult moral crisis that confronted her when she had gone to live with Lewes as his wife. In her letters she is almost completely silent about Spinoza and his philosophy, nor do the articles and reviews she wrote give any indication that she was deeply influenced by his ideas. [1]

Agnosticism Accomplished; Marian Evans' Review of The Progress of the Intellect

It might be assumed that Miss Evans' close association with Charles Hennell and his work, and her own great labour - the translation of Strauss's Das Leben Jesu, is sufficiently clear evidence that she fully endorsed the theories of the Biblical Critics. Such a conclusion would be misleading. The letters that she wrote between 1843 and 1849 shew an immense appetite for new ideas, but little evidence that she was adopting ideas from the progressive books she was reading into her own thought.[2] Rather, she

[1] The most interesting discussion I have seen on Spinoza's influence on G.E. is in Chapter IV of P.Bourl'honne George Eliot: Essai de Biographie Intellectuelle et Morale 1819-1854 (Paris, 1933)

[2] P.Bourl'honne wrote (op.cit.part II Chapter I)
"....il n'y a pas ... de vie intellectuelle proprement dite chez Miss Evans de 1843 à 1849 si l'on entend par là, non la simple acquisition du savoir, ni même le goût des idées, mais l'effort de l'esprit pour ordonner le savoir enchaîner les idées et s'élever à l'unité, c'est à dire à l'intelligibilité."

was in the process of conversion. Her lack of sympathy with parts of Strauss's book, the tears and agony of mind it cost her to translate his cold dissection of the accounts of the crucifixion, contrast with the tears of joy and exalted sense of revelation with which another woman, Harriet Martineau, was to translate another of the great books of the time, Comte's Philosophie Positive, a few years later. The first clear and connected account of her own position as regards the great contemporary debates on moral and religious matters, is her review of a book by R.W.Mackay, The Progress of the Intellect as Exemplified in the Religious Development of the Greeks and Hebrews. The book was published by Chapman, and Miss Evans reviewed it at the request of author and publisher (see above) in the Westminster Review for January 1851. It is significant that the first confident and concerted account of Marian Evans' idealogical position is to be found in her first contribution to the Westminster Review, for it was during her association with the Review that her intellectual development reached maturity. The fact that the review was, according to custom, published anonymously, makes it quite safe to assume that the ideas Miss Evans stated were her own, and her praise unfeigned.

The review shews that Miss Evans was broadly in sympathy with the methods and the findings of the historical critics. But her acceptance was calm and judicious. Now there were no tears of distress (or of exaltation) but a sane and poised appraisal. The large amount of quotation in the review is evidence of Miss Evans' warm approval of the work.

The Progress of the Intellect was an important contribution to the contemporary debates about the nature

and significance of the religious experience from ancient times. "It is" Miss Evans wrote "perhaps the nearest approach in our language to a satisfactory natural history of religion." The central theme of the book is that divine revelation is progressive, and that no one age can claim to be in possession of the ultimate truth. All truths are relative to the state of development of the age and nation in question.

> "It is Mr Mackay's faith that divine revelation is not contained exclusively or pre-eminently in the facts and inspirations of any one age or nation, but is co-extensive with the history of human development, and is perpetually unfolding itself to our widened experience and investigation, ..." [1]

Mackay maintains that true religion implies a progressive search for truth, and that to hold any creed which claims to contain the whole truth is to admit defeat. "The true religious philosophy of an imperfect being is not a system of creed, but, as Socrates thought, an infinite search or approximation." [2] Nowadays the notions of progress, the change , evolution and development of human creeds and ideas are familiar to our social scientists, and have become an accepted part of our pattern of thought, but in 1850 these ideas were novel and startling to all but a small minority of advanced thinkers. Most people,among them the majority of orthodox theologians, still held the view that the revelation of the ideal creed had been the unique privilege of a chosen few of the early Christians for example. They saw 'progress' as a circular attempt

[1] Essays of George Eliot ed. Thomas Pinney (hereafter referred to as Essays), p.30

[2] Essays, p.44

to regain and recreate what they thought most valuable in the history of human experience. Mackay and his reviewer are emphatic that human development is more aptly conceived as a linear process than a cyclical one.

Mackay and Marian Evans believe that the present is determined by the past, which bequeaths to it a blend of redundant and outworn customs and beliefs, and a legacy of ideas and concepts which are destined to become the nucleus of the creed of the new age. Progress is held to consist in the gradual abandonment of redundant customs and the increasing adoption of valuable ideas:

> "Our civilization, and, yet more, our religion, are an anomalous blending of lifeless barbarisms, which have descended to us like so many petrifactions from distant ages, with living ideas,[1] the offspring of a true process of development."

The radical tone of the review becomes obvious when Miss Evans suggests that it is the 'dominant classes' who further their own interests by clinging to 'lifeless barbarisms' which are opposed to the line of true development. Progress implies hostility to hereditary privileges. It is important to notice that Miss Evans is in complete sympathy with the idea of progress - the fundamental idea of the new Westminster Review. She is insistant that true progress is organic not imposed:

> "...the process (of expelling error) will be very much quickened if the negative argument serve as its pioneer; if, by a survey of the past, it can be shewn how each age and each race has had a faith and a symbolism suited[2] to its need and its state of development,-"

[1] Essays, p.28
[2] Essays, p.29

The study of history is useful in that it can teach us the futility of trying to preserve the spirit of an age that is past. Each age must have a creed that answers to its own peculiar needs. True progress demands the abandonment of beliefs which have ceased to be relevant.

The concept of progress presupposes that the present is determined by the past as effect is determined by cause:

> "The master key (to understanding progressive divine revelation) is the recognition of the presence of undeviating law in the material and moral world - of that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still perversely ignored in our social organization, our ethics and our religion." [1]

The present is seen to be connected with the past by 'undeviating laws' which are as rigorously necessary as the laws of physical science. The physicist goes to work on the assumption that all events are caused, and that the same cause will invariably produce the same results. By collating the results of his observations he proceeds to generalise and to formulate a law which explains the phenomenon in question. Miss Evans is emphatic that it is only by the application of such scientific method to the history of human institutions that man can hope to progress, for only by observing and noting the true course of development can he learn to discern and discard the 'lifeless barbarisms'. The 'inexorable law of consequences' is not only capable of revealing to the researcher the laws of development, it can also teach him how the

[1] Essays, p.31

society in question ought to act. It is normative and educational.

> "It is this invariability of sequence which can alone give value to experience and render education in the true sense possible."....."human duty is comprised in the earnest study of this law and patient obedience to its teaching."[1]

Miss Evans' adoption of an uncompromisingly deterministic creed indicates the influence of Bray's necessitarianism on her thought. The passage from her review just quoted is in the spirit of Bray's philosophy. The following passage from his Philosophy of Necessity shews not only a congruity of ideas, but also a similarity of expression:

> "We have banished chance and supernatural agency from physics, but from ignorance of the laws of mind as being equally fixed with those of physics, we have retained them in this department to the great detriment of certain and scientific progress."[2]

It is Mackay's belief that religion and science are inseparable. He writes that "No object in nature, no subject of contemplation is destitute of a religious tendency and meaning."[3] Both attempt to answer the same question: that of the significance of man's life. Religion begins where science ends, for whereas science investigates the known and observable, religion carries speculation into the region of ideas which cannot be immediately known: "the known and the unknown are intimately connected and correlative." Faith, "the admission of certain inferences beyond knowledge" is the means by which man can transcend the boundaries of the known. Mackay is

[1] Essays, p.31
[2] The Philosophy of Necessity p.100
[3] Essays p.33

emphatic that true faith is not mere superstitious credulity. Faith, as he sees it, is a rational extension of our empirical knowledge: it is a

> "belief in things probable; it is the assigning to certain inferences a hypothetical objectivity, and upon the conscious acknowledgement of this hypothetical character alone depends its advantage over fanaticism; its moral virtue and dignity."[1]

Mackay asserts that valid religious belief must be in harmony with scientific knowledge; where faith and reason differ, reason has the last word. Although he admits the value of a reasoned religious faith he has no patience with what he calls "superficial religion". In superficial religion emotion preponderates and reason becomes "lanquid and incapable". True faith consists of a "belief in things probable". Only when a religion is reasonable can it contribute to progress. It is not enough that religion should be emotionally satisfying; the essential criterion is, "is it true?" Mackay's book urges that true religion can have nothing to fear from a spirit of free examination.

Miss Evans shews a particular interest in that part of Mackay's book which is concerned with biblical criticism, and her approach makes her own position clear. Mackay and his reviewer take the view that many parts of the Old Testament have a mythical character. As we have seen, the idea that the Old Testament can fruitfully be regarded in the same light as any other historical document had long been held by Hennell and the great German critics. But Miss Evans complains that it is "still

[1] Essays p.34

startling to the English theological mind." Her attack upon those who seek to explain away the dubious morality of the jealous cruel and avenging God of the Old Testament by the theory of accommodation, is direct and forceful. Believers in the theory of accommodation hold that:

> "...the puerile and unworthy religious conceptions invariably accompanying an absence of intellectual culture which in other nations are referred to the general principles of human development, are, in the case of the Hebrews, supposed to have been benevolent falsities on the part of the true God, whereby he allured a barbarous race to his recognition and worship."[1]

It is reasonable to assume that the Hebrews like many other primitive peoples passed through a 'mythical' phase characterised by crude moral views. Critical analysis of the books of the Pentateuch reveals that they are a compilation of district documents differing in date, spirit and purpose. The belief that the Old Testament is the inspired and infallible word of God is thus shewn to be quite untenable.

Miss Evans now embarks on a spirited attack on those theological teachers who obstinately persist in clinging to bigoted and erronious views:

> "Since these conclusions (i.e. of the biblical critics) are denied by no competent critic uncommitted to the maintenance of certain tenets, it would be wise in our theological teachers, instead of struggling to maintain a footing for themselves and their doctrine on the crumbling structure of dogmatic interpretation, to cherish those more liberal views of biblical criticism, which, admitting of a development of the Christian system corresponding to the wants and the culture of the age, would

[1] Essays p.40

> enable it to strike a firm root in man's moral nature, and to entwine itself with the growth of those new forms of social life to which we are tending."[1]

Miss Evans believes with Mackay that true religion can have nothing to fear from rational and scientific inquiry; ultimately the good and the true are one.

> "The spirit which doubts the ultimately beneficial tendency of inquiry, which thinks that morality and religion will not bear the broadest daylight our intellect can throw on them,..... is the worst form of atheism; while he who believes, whatever else he may deny, that the true and good are synonymous, bears in his soul the essential element of religion."[2]

Miss Evans' review of The Progress of the Intellect is notable for its plain speaking. It shews that she associated herself with the main tenets of the biblical critics and that her agnosticism was, at last, accomplished. The carefully considered verdict on Mackay (she is by no means blind to his faults), and the clear and unequivocal discernment with which she points to the excellences of his work, are evidence of a rapidly maturing personal judgement. In its constant preference for the truth, and its uninhibited expression, the review forms an appropriate prelude to Miss Evans' association with the Westminster Review.

[1] Essays p.42
[2] Essays p.42

CHAPTER 11

MARIAN EVANS AS EDITOR OF THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW

I

The Nature of Miss Evans' Editorial Duties

A few days after Miss Evans had finished the first draft of the Prospectus Chapman confirmed his offer of the editorship. His letter is lost, but in her reply she said that she was willing to undertake the 'nominal editorship' of the Review. In fact, whatever editorial duties fell to Miss Evans' lot, she was certainly not nominal editor of the Review. Indeed, it appears that there was a conspiracy of silence which effectively concealed the name and identity of Mr Chapman's versatile new assistant. This remained a close secret to all but those who were most intimately concerned. Carlyle wrote in a letter that Chapman had told him that he had "an able editor", adding in parenthesis "(name can't be given)!" [2] It seems to have been mutually agreed some months earlier that Miss Evans should be represented as a man. Chapman noted in his diary for 9th of February 1851: "Wrote to Mr Empson on behalf of Miss Evans of whom I spoke as a man." A few days later Miss Evans wrote approvingly to the Brays, "You will be pleased to see that Mr. C. spoke of me to Empson as a man." [1]

The exact nature of the duties of the new editor seem never to have been clearly defined. Chapman was evidently

[1] Letters 1, p.344, G.E. to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 28th January 1851.

2 Letters of Thomas Carlyle to Mill, Sterling & Browning ed. Alexander Carlyle [London 1923] pp 288-289

keen that Miss Evans should contribute to, as well as edit, the Review. In reply to a letter of Chapman's, now lost, she wrote: "If I did only one of the Summaries (i.e. of contemporary American, French, German or English Literature), I should certainly prefer that of the English Literature!"[1] But there was no need for a definite contract or agreement because of the close personal contact of the proprietor and his editor. A furtive and partially deleted entry in John Chapman's diary for 21st June alludes to a billet doux which Miss Evans had enclosed with a business letter: "Miss Evans' little note is inexpressibly charming, so quick, intelligent and overflowing with love and sweetness! I feel her to be the living torment of my soul." In such circumstances a formal contract would have been spuriously redundant. The closeness of their friendship, the fact that they would both be living and working in the same house, and that it was intended that Miss Evans should carry out her duties anonymously, meant that the agreement could be loose and informal.

There is no direct evidence that Miss Evans was paid. Hickson, the previous editor, had given his editorial services free and had contributed articles for nothing under J.S.Mill's management. It was a tradition that the Review should lose money (Thompson is said to have lost £1000 a year for the seven years of his proprietorship), and it was well-known that those who associated with it, did so for love and not for money. Conclusive evidence is lacking, but it would seem from various hints in her

[1] Letters, 1, p.356, G.E. to J.C. 1st August 1851.

letters that Miss Evans did not receive a regular salary. In July 1852 she wrote to Chapman, "When you can afford to pay an Editor, if that time will ever come, you must get one."[1] In November 1853 she wrote that Chapman was "so straightened for money and for assistance in the mechanical part of his business that he feels unable to afford an expense on the less tangible services which I render. . . . I shall find the question of supplies rather a difficult one this year . . ."[2]

Miss Evans could not have afforded to give her services completely gratis. The interest from the £2000 she had left in trust for her by her father would not have been sufficient to guarantee financial independence. The cost of lodging at 142, Strand, with Chapman would alone have been prohibitive for Chapman's charges for 'Board and Residence' were £2:10:0 for those occupying 'first class' bedrooms, £2:5:0 for those in 'second class' bedrooms.[3] It is probable that some loose arrangement was made whereby Marian Evans was given her board-and-lodging free, and a certain amount of spending money besides.

[1] Letters, 11, p.48, G.E. to J.C.
[2] Letters, 11, p.128, G.E. to Sara Hennell.
[3] For more detailed information about Chapman's prices for lodgers see Letters, 1, p.335 footnote.

II

Chapman's Advisor

Miss Evans lodged with the Chapmans from September 29th 1851 until October1853 - a period which almost coincided with the time of her editorship of the Westminster Review. The close day-to-day contact of Chapman and his editor made written correspondence unnecessary, and it is unfortunate that there is no record which would enable us to decide the exact extent of her editorial duties. But she was not always by his side, and the letters which temporary absence made necessary (Chapman's have been lost, but Miss Evans's replies are extant) make it easy to infer the extent to which Chapman relied on his editor for advice.

Before Miss Evans moved to the Strand to take up her duties, Chapman found it necessary to make three trips to Coventry to consult her about matters of policy, and frequently wrote to ask her advice. The purpose of the first visit was, as we have seen, to settle the Prospectus. Miss Evans wrote the greater part herself. Copies were sent to leading and influential men who were sympathetic towards the aims of the Review. Reactions were varied: Fronde (author of the controversial novel Nemesis of Faith) and Greg[1] wrote cordial and approving letters, but F.H.Newman sent 'a letter of objections' and J.Martineau wrote a 'half sneering cold letter'. J.S.Mill was not satisfied. Hickson was annoyed that Chapman had disseminated the Prospectus before the Review had changed hands.

[1]W.R.Greg,(1809-81), was a prolific contemporary writer on political and sociological subjects. His views were radical.

He did not want to be thought of as a "Setting Sun".

Chapman lost no time in writing to ask Miss Evans' advice. She replied

> "I am chiefly concerned that you should have appeared to overlook Hickson's interest, or have failed in etiquette towards him. If you had asked him for an introduction to J.S.Mill, it was clearly wrong to introduce yourself by letter."

She realized that they had acted too hastily:

> "I heartily wish the prospectus had been longer delayed and thought over before it was sent out to any of the dons . . . Everything has been too hurried."[1]

Three days later she wrote again tactfully telling him how to rewrite the letter answering J.S.Mill's "animadversions" on the Prospectus

> "If, as I suppose, you intend to rewrite the letter to Mill, would it not be better if the 1st paragraph read thus - "joint aims, so as best to further the main purpose of the future proprietor, which is, to make the Review the organ of the ablest and most liberal thinkers of the time. For "organ" in the 2nd paragraph read "medium". I wish, too, you would leave out the dashes, which weaken instead of strengthening the impression on the reader."

These letters, with their polite but firm insistence on personal tact and correct expression indicate the degree to which Miss Evans had already become Chapman's mentor.

Chapman, although full of ideas, seems not to have been able to trust himself to make any decision without consulting his editor.

On August 14th 1851 Chapman and Miss Evans decided that James Martineau had better write the article on 'Christian Ethics and Modern Civilization'. Chapman had

[1] Letters, 1, p.351, G.E. to J.C.

some difficulty in persuading him but he eventually agreed to do it and wrote to Chapman asking what mode of proceedure he ought to adopt. Chapman, evidently mistrusting his own ability to advise, made a second trip to Coventry to discuss the matter with Marian Evans. He recorded in his diary for August 21st 1851:

> "I went to Coventry on Saturday and fully discussed the subject with Miss Evans, after which I noted down the topics and mode of treatment to be adopted in the Article, which she embodied in a sketch for a letter with such modifications as she thought necessary, and from this material I shall write him our views on the subject, but I fear they will not be acceptable."

During this visit he and Miss Evans "spent much time" in determining the final form of the Prospectus (this draft was the one finally printed in the Westminster Review for January 1852), and in discussing the contents of the January number. That Miss Evans' advice should have extended as far as sketching out the letter which Chapman was to write to Martineau is significant, Chapman was a notoriously bad writer, and Miss Evans was not slow to realize the fact. On the 19th August, 1852, she wrote to Charles Bray:

> "The sentence you quote is a good specimen of Mr Chapman's skill in "the art of sinking", not in poetry, but in letter-writing. But it is nothing worse than bungling. He feels better than he writes,.."[1]

It was quite obvious that a man who was a bungler in his private correspondence would not enhance by his contributions the literary merits of an important Review such as the Westminster. Miss Evans, who always wrote clearly and correctly even in her letters, was fully alive to

[1] Letters, II, p.51

Chapman's shortcomings as a writer,[1] and lost no time in persuading him that it would not be right for him to contribute articles. She was determined that the asperities of style which had marred the early numbers of the Review should not be unnecessarily perpetuated. She put the matter to him tactfully on his third visit to Coventry on 21st September 1851. He recorded in his diary

> "Miss Evans thinks I should lose power and influence by becoming a writer in the Westminster Review, and could not then maintain that dignified relation with the various contributors which she thinks I may do otherwise."

Chapman sensibly took Miss Evans' advice, and contributed only one article in the year 1852-3.

Marian Evans and Herbert Spencer.

Marian Evans' work brought her into contact with many of the leading thinkers and writers of her day, but with none - except G.H.Lewes - did she form a more intimate friendship than with Herbert Spencer, who had not yet become famous. She made his acquaintance at Chapman's house in October 1851: "On Friday" she wrote to Charles Bray,

> "we had Foxton, Wilson and some other nice people among others a Mr Herbert Spencer who has just brought out a large work on Social Statics, which Lewes pronounces the best book he has seen on the subject."[2]

[1] But she emphatically denied that she dictated Chapman's letters. In a letter to Charles Bray written on 25th January 1853 she wrote: "You seem to be under the very great mistake of supposing that I dictate Mr C's letters. I have nothing to do with their composition, ..." (Letters, II, p.83)

[2] Letters, I, p.364

Marian Evans and Herbert Spencer had much in common. They were approximately the same age, and both came from a provincial midlands background. Both assisted with the editing of 'progressive' periodicals; Herbert Spencer was assistant editor of the Economist. They lived opposite each other in the Strand. Both were fond of music. Casual acquaintance seemed destined to ripen into warm friendship, and so it was. Before long they were spending much of their free time together. Herbert Spencer, as a journalist, had free admission to two theatres and the Royal Italian Opera. In the early months of 1852 Spencer 'nearly always' had the pleasure of Miss Evans' company at these performances. They used occasionally to make music together. Miss Evans was a good pianist, and they sang duets, Miss Evans in "a contralto of low pitch".

But close friendship does not seem to have passed to love. On April 27th 1852 Marian Evans wrote to the Brays:

> "We have agreed that we are not in love with each other, and that there is no reason why we should not have as much of each other's society as we like. He is a good, delightful creature and I always feel better for being with him."[1]

A few days earlier Spencer had written to his friend Lott:

> "Miss Evans who you have heard me mention as the translatress of Strauss is the most admirable woman, mentally, I ever met. We have been for some time past on very intimate terms. I am very frequently at Chapman's and the greatness of her intellect conjoined with her womanly qualities and manner generally combine to keep me by her side most of the evening."[2]

[1] Letters, II, p.50, G.E. to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 27th April 1852.

[2] Herbert Spencer, An Autobiography (1904), Volume I p.394 (the letter was written on 23rd April 1852).

This "deliciously calm new friendship"[1] with its "delightful camaraderie", was bound sooner or later, to cause gossip and rumour. In the 1850s it was not usual for a young lady to spend her time, unchaperoned in the company of an eligible bachelor unless she was engaged to be married to him. Before long Marian Evans wrote to the Brays: "all the world is setting us down as engaged." Of marriage there was however no question. Spencer had written the previous year"On the whole I am quite decided not to be a drudge; and as I see no possibility of being able to marry without being a drudge, I have pretty well given up the idea."[2] Marian Evans, for all her charm, lacked the physical beauty which Spencer considered the sine qua non. On the other hand, Spencer had not the captivating mixture of a sharp and salty wit with a mercurial brilliance and quickness of understanding which was so charming a part of his friend G.H.Lewes' personality.

Nevertheless the close personal friendship of the man who years later came to be considered in England the greatest philosopher of his day, with George Eliot, one of its greatest novelists, merits close attention. They had much in common. Both completely endorsed the fundamental presupposition of 'progressive' thought of their day, that events not only in the physical world, but also in the sphere of human activity, were governed by laws which can be revealed by intelligent investigation. Herbert Spencer, in his first major work, Social Statics, sees human affairs as "conforming everywhere and always to immutable law."[3]

[1] Letters, II, p.29, G.E. to Mrs Ch.Bray, 27th May 1852.
[2] Autobiography p.369 (a quotation from a letter dated 15th April 1851.)
[3] Autobiography Vol.I, p.360

Both were agnostics. Spencer confesses in his Autobiography that the theism of Social Statics is "nominal only"[1]. Both believed that human life must be interpreted in terms of human knowledge and experience, not treated as a preparation for a future state. Accordingly they looked for guidance not to the divine 'fiat' but to the scientific analysis of human behaviour, and saw in such analysis an approach which indicated the possibility of undreamed of progress and amelioration of the human lot.

This rational approach thrust to the fore the vexed question of the rights of women. Spencer devoted a whole chapter of Social Statics to the discussion of this problem. He points out that some women are undeniably cleverer than some men, and denies that there is any evidence that the feminine mind is generically inferior. There is, he admits, some reason for advocating an infinite gradation of rights according to intelligence and ability, but none for presuming that women are inferior to men. Accordingly he advocates full political rights for women.

The 'first principle' round which Social Statics - a book which expresses clearly Spencer's ideas at the time of his close friendship with Marian Evans - is built, is that "Every man has freedom to do that he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man."[2]

Spencer argues that any interference on the part of the state in the life of an individual is wrong unless circumstances make it strictly necessary.

[1] Vol.1, p.360
[2] Social Statics (1954 reprint, New York) Chapter Vl.

In his Autobiography he comments on the liberal tradition of the Westminster Review. The passage shews his own ideas about freedom and the individual, and deserves to be quoted in full:

> "In its early days, while directed by Mill and aided by Molesworth, the Westminster Review had been an organ of genuine Liberalism - the Liberalism which seeks to extend men's liberties; not the modern perversion of it which while giving them nominal liberties in the shape of votes..... is busily decreasing their liberties, both by the multiplication of restraints and commands, and by taking away larger parts of their incomes to be spent not as they individually like, but as public officials like. In persuance of genuine Liberalism the Westminster Review had reprobated the excesses of government meddling; and this traditional policy Chapman willingly continued."[1]

Although Miss Evans never pretended to be a political philosopher, the paradox of her 'conservative-reforming intellect' in which a belief in material and spiritual progress mingles oddly with a lingering tenderness for the past, may owe something to Spencer's ideal of Liberty. No thinker was ever more confident than he that mankind was steadily progressing towards social and political stability and equity, and yet, by regarding with suspicion any intrusion by the state on the life of the individual, he forbade the means by which such progress could most easily be attained. The same incongruity; that of believing in the principle of progress, but lacking faith in the means by which such progress can be implimented, was shared by Miss Evans. It is interesting that two of the leading 'radical' thinkers should have shared views so incompatible

[1] Autobiography, Vol.1, p.421.

with socialism.

Although Spencer and Miss Evans had much in common as thinkers, as scholars there was a wide gulf between them. Spencer wrote in his Autobiography that Marian Evans' "speculative faculty was analytic rather than synthetic;" an interesting comment not only on her approach, but on his own. Spencer was, above all, a builder of theories. He set out to be an original thinker, author of a new philosophical system. Miss Evans was at this stage, primarily a critic and a translator. Her effort was to understand where Spencer's was to innovate. It is symptomatic of the difference in their approaches to scholarship that Miss Evans, like Coleridge, was something of a 'library cormorant' who had read very widely, whereas Spencer seemed deliberately to avoid reading the works of other philosphers.

> "It is also true that though, so far as I can remember, I read no books on either philosophy or psychology, I had gathered in conversations or by references some conception of the general questions at issue."[1]

This is an extraordinary confession in a man who was shortly to write a Principles of Psychology. It is tempting to assume that Spencer was afraid that to read the books of other thinkers would be to spoil the originality of his own ideas. Ignorance was, however, a heavy price to pay for originality and it is ironical that a leading exponent of the empirical and experimental approach should have studiously isolated himself from the evidence of other men's researches. Spencer loved to fasten on an idea and

[1] Autobiography I. p.378

exalt it into a system. Miss Evans commented in a letter she wrote to Sara Hennell after she and Spencer had visited Kew: "if the flowers don't fit his theories, tant pis pour les fleurs."[1]

Spencer's article 'A Theory of Population' which appeared in the Westminster Review for April 1852 is a good example of his slick theorizing. He takes as his basic premise the fact that degrees of fertility in an organism are naturally determined, and postulates that the degree of fertility is inversely proportional to the grade of development. Therefore, in the case of man, who is the most highly developed species of life, a higher degree of evolution will be accompanied by a lower rate of multiplication. But since a highly developed species like man is better able to master his environment and live a long and healthy life, Spencer is able to conclude with specious ingenuity that there exists a tendency towards equilibrium, a balance between the high rate of reproduction but shorter life of the less highly developed, and the lower rate of reproduction and longer life of the more highly evolved. The logic of the article is impeccable. Since it is operating in vacuo, unencumbered by mere matters of fact and observation, this is not surprising.

Whatever its shortcomings, the very neatness and daring of Spencer's thought, in contrast to her own more tentative approach, must have been stimulating to Miss Evans. G.H.Lewes, looking back on his early friendship with Spencer attests that he was a most interesting

[1] Letters II, 39, 29 June 1852.

companion.

> "The stimulus of his intellect especially during our long walks, roused my energy once more and revived my dormant love of science. His intense theorising tendency was contageous, and it was only the stimulus of a theory which could have induced me to work."[1]

Spencer used to discuss his theories with Miss Evans. "I have known but few men with whom I could discuss a question in philosophy with more satisfaction," he records in his Autobiography.[2] It is unfortunate that there is no record of their conversations. Miss Evans realised that Spencer's cardinal weakness was his lack of knowledge of the works of other thinkers. She was particularly disturbed that he should have ignored the works of Auguste Comte, whose Philosophie Positive was the magnum opus of contemporary sociology and psychology - the very field of study in which he had attempted to make his first original contribution: Social Statics.

Spencer recorded that at the time when Social Statics was published, "I knew nothing more of Auguste Comte, than that he was a French Philosopher."[3] Miss Evans seems to have insisted that he should familiarise himself with the works of the French Philosopher. He wrote:

> "In the course of the spring the name of Comte came up in conversation. She had a copy of the Philosophie Positive and at her instigation I[4] read the introductory chapters, or 'Exposition'."

[1] G.H.Lewes, Journal, 28th January 1859.
[2] Autobiography, I, p.396.
[3] Autobiography, I, p.359.
[4] Autobiography, I, p.396.

Spencer, however, disagreed with Comte's classification of the sciences.

> "She was greatly suprised: having, as she said, supposed the classification to be perfect. She was little given to argument; and finding my attitude thus antagonistic, she forthwith dropped subject of Comte's philosophy, and I read no further."[1]

On January 20th 1854 Spencer recorded that he was "busy reading Comte" (Harriet Martineau's translation) largely, he says, to find out what Lewes and Miss Evans saw in him.

If Miss Evans helped Spencer to come to terms with his great failing - that of neglecting to read important books - he helped her to recognise the nature of her genius. He saw that she had many of the qualities necessary in a novelist "quick observation, great powers of analysis, unusual and rapid intuition into others' states of mind, wit and humour, and wide culture."[2] But Marian Evans, as yet, lacked self-confidence. "But she would not listen to my advice. She did not believe she had the required powers." Spencer's encouragement, although it provoked no immediate response, may not have passed unmarked.

After George Eliot's death Spencer wrote an interesting letter to an American friend in which he attempted to assess the nature and degree of his influence on the novelist.[3] He thought that "current statements" still represented his influence as "greater than it was". He admitted

> "It may be, and probably is, ... that she was considerably influenced all along by my books. In fact, accepting their general views as she did, it

[1] Autobiography, I, p.396
[2] Autobiography, I, p.396
[3] All quotations in this paragraph are from Autobiography, II, p.364. The letter was written in 1881.

could hardly be otherwise."

He thought that his Principles of Psychology might possibly have helped her in her delineation of character, but he admitted that "her achievements in the way of delineation of character are almost wholly due to spontaneous intuition."

There is no reason to doubt Spencer's own considered statement that his influence was small. But in one respect I think that his influence has been underestimated. Spencer was the only major 'progressive' thinker who did not hold the Utilitarian creed that an action is right when it tends to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In Social Statics he roundly rejects the Utilitarian doctrine of 'Expediency' on the grounds that it is vague, unscientific, and merely 'an enunciation of the problem to be solved.'[1] Following Shaftesbury and Hutcheson he maintains that we possess a 'moral sense'.

> "... there exists in us an impulse towards such (upright) conduct; or, in other words, ... we possess a "Moral Sense", the duty of which is to dictate rectitude in our transactions with each other, which receives gratification from honest and fair dealing, and which gives birth to the sentiment of justice."[2]

Spencer's 'moral sense' theory differed from Bray's narrowly inadequate Utilitarian account of morality by admitting the existence and reality of disinterested moral motives - of altruism and of duty -. It is unfortunate that Miss Evans whose novels and critical writings are so pre-eminently concerned with moral questions, left no

[1] Social Statics , p. 16
[2] Social Statics , p. 20

clear account of her philosophical position. She had little sympathy for Utilitarian ethics, and there is little in Spencer's theory which she could have disagreed with seriously (except perhaps for the intransigently slick evolutionary phrases by which he applies it). Many of the articles and reviews she wrote before she began fiction writing imply that she believed that we have a moral sense, and that we act rightly when we are acting from a 'moral impulse'. Although an intelligent consideration of the probable consequences of an act is necessary to right conduct, of itself it does not constitute a moral motive. It is an immediate impulse[1] of love or justice, pity or sympathy which gives an action moral worth.

[1] In Middlemarch Caleb Garth says "I've got a clear feeling inside me and that I shall follow."

IV

Marian Evans and Harriet Martineau

Harriet Martineau (1802-1876) was one of the more interesting figures with whom Miss Evans was brought into contact during her editorship of the Westminster Review. Harriet Martineau came from a provincial background with a strong Unitarian tradition; her brother James Martineau was one of the leading apologists of Unitarian thought. Like Marian Evans, Harriet Martineau had reacted against her early religious faith. By 1834 her Tales, didactic stories which contained a mixture of fiction and "raw masses of dismal science"[1] had made her one of the literary lions of her day. She was a determined opponent of slavery. The turning point of her life came in 1844 when she heard a lecture on mesmerism. She was soon converted to a belief in this strange 'science', which came to assume for her an almost cosmic importance. She regarded it as the key to the full understanding of the human mind (in this her enthusiasm was analogous to Bray's for phrenology), capable of providing not only a rational explanation of its working, but also a moral code that could regulate our conduct. Mesmerism for her assumed the importance of a new religion. H.G.Atkinson, whom she met in 1845 was the mentor and prophet chosen by the neophyte to enlighten her further. The climax of the 'mesmeritic' phase of Miss Martineau's thought came in 1851 when her long and earnest correspondence with Atkinson was published under the title Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development.[2]

[1] D.N.B.
[2] It was published, as one might expect, by John Chapman.

The book created a stir; her brother James Martineau wrote a scathing review in the Prospective Review (entitled "Mesmeric Atheism"), saying that the book shewed that his sister was the disciple of an avowed atheist. The criticism was not unjust, for Atkinson wrote

> "Philosophy finds no God in nature nor sees the want of any. ..... And what are all these creeds and conventialities but empty vanities - a false show - the swaddling clothes of children?"[1]

Christ's healing he attributed to "mesmeric processes" and he accepted Strauss's interpretation of the Bible as myth. The tone of the letters is however confident and optimistic, and the argument predominantly constructive. If the more blatant immoralities of the professed Christian are ruthlessly exposed, it is to make way for a saner and more logical approach.

> "How men can repeat the Lord's Prayer, and hang a man in the same breath, is astonishing and exhibits the utter depravity of a Christian Legislature."[2]

It is interesting that Miss Evans' first reaction to the book was to condemn it as "studiously offensive".[3] On 4th October 1851 she wrote to Charles Bray that she had been reading the book and remarked "Whatever else one may think of the book it is certainly the boldest I have seen in the English Language".[4] Bold the book certainly was, and Miss Martineau was so unhesitating in her

[1] Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development p.179
[2] Ibidem p.244
[3] Henry Crabb Robinson, Journal for 8th February 1851.
[4] Letters, I, p.364

adoption of 'mesmeric atheism' that her enthusiasm seemed delirious, and her faith in the new scheme credulous. It must have appeared so to Miss Evans. When Chapman wrote to ask Miss Evans to consider the relative merits of Harriet Martineau and W.M.W.Call as translators of Comte's Philosophie Positive, she replied:

> "It is true that Harriet Martineau's style is admirably adapted for the people, clear, spirited, idiomatic, but I should have less confidence in the equal fitness of her calibre of mind for rendering a trust worthy account of Comte's work."

Later in the same letter Miss Evans, after expressing doubts that Harriet Martineau's name "would be of much value now" on a title page, asked Chapman to behave with all delicacy towards her as she was "an admirable woman worth twenty of the people who are sniffing at her." [1]

But Harriet Martineau was not easily daunted. She had read notices by Lewes and Littré of Comte's work and was determined to translate it - or rather to translate and abridge it. She brought to this new task the ardent enthusiasm formerly shewn for mesmerism, translating it with tears falling into her lap. Marian Evans was wrong. The translation, published by Chapman in November 1853, was excellent. Comte himself was delighted and placed it, instead of his own, among the books to be read by his disciples.[2]

Miss Martineau was a fairly regular contributor to the Westminster Review during Miss Evans' editorship. In

[1] Letters, I, p.360-1, G.E. to J.C. 18th September 1851.

[2] In 1871 one of Comte's disciple, a M.Avezac-Lavigne began to translate Harriet Martineau's translation back into French.

October 1852 she wrote an article on Ireland, in 1853, one on England's foreign policy, and, in April 1854 an article on the census. Her article on Niebuhr[1] was admired by Marian Evans, who wrote, "After all she is a trump - the only English woman that possesses thoroughly the art of writing."[2]

It would have been strange if the woman translators of two of the most influential foreign works of the century, thrown together as they were by Westminster Review business, had not become acquainted. There is nothing in Miss Evans' correspondence, or in Harriet Martineau's Autobiography to suggest a warmly intimate friendship, but before long they were on "cordial terms". Marian Evans records in a letter to Mrs Bray:

> "Miss Martineau (Harriet) has written me a most cordial invitation to go and see her before July, but that is impossible. She has made me joint trustee with Mr Atkinson of the fund for the publication of Comte."[3]

Miss Evans did manage to visit her friend in October, and was warmly greeted,

> "She came behind me, put her hands round me and kissed me in the prettiest way this evening, telling me that she was so glad she had got me here."[4]

[1] In the Westminster Review for July 1852.

[2] Letters, II, p.32 G.E. to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray and Sara Hennell 2nd June 1852.

[3] Letters, II, p.17. 30th March 1852

[4] Letters, II, p.62. G.E. to Mr and Mrs Bray, 21st October 1852.

V

Marian Evans and Comte's Philosophie Positive

Miss Evans' insistence that Spencer should read the Philosophie Positive, and the fact that her friend Harriet Martineau translated the work so ably into English indicate that she was deeply concerned with his philosophy during her time as editor of the Westminster Review. It is not known when Marian Evans first read Comte's work. Certainly, she was well acquainted with the Philosophie Positive when she tried to discuss Comte's ideas with Spencer. It is probable that she had read the work before September 1851, for in a letter to Mary Sibree dated 28th August 1851 she wrote:

> "In the meantime there are but two words of very vital significance for you and me, and all mortals - Resignation and labour - ...."[1]

The words 'resignation and labour' are obviously a translation of Comte's phrase 'resignation et activité'.[2]

It would indeed be suprising if Miss Evans, with her voracious reading habits, had not read Comte before 1851. His Philosophie Positive which appeared from 1830 to 1842, created a stir among the advanced English thinkers of the time.

[1] Letters, I, p.359.

[2] Marian Evans quoted them again (this time in French), in a letter to Sara Hennell written on 25th November 1853.

J.S.Mill was quick to realize the importance of Comte's work.[1] G.H.Lewes in his Biographical History of Philosophy[2] greeted the Philosophie Positive with almost boundless enthusiasm:

> "A new era has dawned. For the first time in history an explanation of the World, Society and Man is presented which is thoroughly homogeious, and at the same time thoroughly in accordance with accurate knowledge."

The enthusiasm with which Comte's work was received by Harriet Martineau and George Lewes throws into relief Miss Evans' calm approach to his work. Many of the presuppositions of Comte's work were already thoroughly familiar to her; his belief in an objective and scientific approach to the question of the development of human societies and ideologies, his belief in progress and his acceptance of the methods and findings of the historical critics.

> "It is the exclusive property of the positive principle to recognise the fundamental law of continuous human development, representing the existing evolution as the necessary result of the gradual series of former transformations, by simply extending to the social phenomena the spirit which governs the treatment of all other natural phenomena."[3]

[1] When Comte was dismissed from the Polytechnique, J.S.Mill arranged for him to receive a regular subsidy to enable him to continue to devote his life to philosophy.

[2] Volume II, p.690 (5th edition, 1880). The work was first published in 1845-6.

[3] H.Martineau The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte (London 1853) Volume II p.43.

> "In all its applications the positive philosophy is directly progressive; its express office being to increase our knowledge,[1] and perfect the connection of its parts."

These quotations from Comte could equally well be taken from the works of J.S.Mill or Charles Bray. But from premises familiar to almost any advanced thinker of the mid-century, Comte goes on to a comprehensive system designed to embrace all aspects of human knowledge, intended to co-ordinate all the sciences into one grand scheme, give significance to the multifarious evidence of history, and provide man with a new science - sociology - by which he is to regulate his political and social life. Ultimately, Comte hopes that sociology will guide man towards a new positive religion.

His theory falls into two distinct but complementary parts, each of which is designed to prove the supremacy of the sociological interpretation of life. The most famous part is known as the '<u>Loi des Trois Etats</u>'. Comte postulates that human opinion and society necessarily evolve through three stages, the Theological, the Metaphysical,and, finally, the Positive. In the Theological stage natural phenomena are attributed to the intervention of supernatural beings, in the Metaphysical stage to abstract principles or forces, whilst in the Positive stage facts and events are explained scientifically by their relation to other facts and events. Sociology, the

[1] Ibid, Volume II p.46.

scientific study and regulation of society, is seen by Comte as the most important feature of the Positive stage, which is the most advanced of the three.

Secondly, Comte attempts a systematic classification of the sciences, which is intended to demonstrate that all the different branches of science are inter-related and mutually interdependent. His hypothesis is that the more particular and complex branches of science depend upon the more simple and general. The hierarchy begins with Mathematics (the most general) and ends, significantly, with Sociology. According to the 'Loi', Sociology, the most complex science, will be the last to reach the Positive stage.

Comte's theory, once so influential, has not stood the test of time. The 'Loi' lingers on only as an intellectual curiosity, and his classification of the sciences, inaccurate even at the time it was written, has long been superceeded by more modern and more scientific theories. Yet it was this aspect of Comte's work which claimed the attention of Miss Evans, who "supposed the classification to be perfect ...." [1] and who tried so hard to get Spencer to read it for himself. The silence of Miss Evans about the 'Loi' indicates that she was unwilling to identify herself with the intellectual arrogance of a theory which attempts to impose a strict order upon the multifarious evidence of history. The positivist leanings of her thought enabled her to approve

[1] Quoted above (Spencer, Autobiography Volume I, p.396.)

Comte's classification of the physical sciences, but her insight into the complexity of society forbad that she should believe in the 'Loi' with its oversimplifications and manifest inadequacy. Miss Evans, with her deep belief in the organic nature of social change, could not have sympathised with Comte's scheme for planned change.

She did share with Comte a belief in the importance of the emotions, which had been seriously underestimated by many of the Utilitarian thinkers of her day. And there must have been features of Comte's religion of humanity which interested her; but it is certain that Feuerbach's[1] ideas about the origin of the religious sentiments in human emotions weighed more heavily with her. Her later paradoxical position as a 'religious' agnostic is most easily explained by understanding the deeply reverent and pious cast of her mind, and the influence upon it of Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity.

[1]Marian Evans translated Ludwig Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity in 1854. The importance of the book to her own thought is considered below.

The Westminster Review under Marian Evans' Editorship.

During Miss Evans' Editorship, the Westminster Review was over three hundred pages in length, each number[1] containing an average of nine reviews. The cost was six shillings a number, and the circulation has been estimated at 4000.[2]

On Miss Evans devolved all the responsibility for the letter-press of the Review. Many writers, especially those of advanced opinions, were glad to find in the columns of the Westminster Review a means of publicising their own ideas, and were often glad to submit articles to it free of charge. But there were not enough contributions of this kind to fill the Review, and it was not Miss Evans' intention that poor articles should be accepted simply because they were offered for nothing.

It was therefore an important part of Miss Evans' task to find writers of distinction, and to persuade them to contribute. Often Miss Evans seems to have selected a suitable topic and then offered it to an able writer :

> "....I have been using my powers of eloquence and flattery this morning to make him (Mackay) begin an article on the Development of Protestantism. He says "Thank you" and asks me what books I recommend him to read!!"[3]

[1] The first number (January 1824) had 288 pages (excluding advertisements). The number for October 1851 (Hickson's last) had 270 (excluding advertisements). The number for January 1852 (Miss Evans' first) had 356 (excluding advertisements).

[2] By Alvar Ellegård, The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid- Victorian Britain. (Göteborg, 1957) p.27. He estimates the circulation of the Edinburgh Review at the time to have been about 7000.

[3] Letters, I, p.367 G.E. to Sara Hennell, 9th October 1851.

A few days later she wrote "We can get no-one to write on the Peerage."[1] She had offered the subject to Carlyle who declined being "dear for silence at present".[2] Miss Evans refused to take no for an answer, and wrote him "the most insinuating letter, offering him three glorious subjects".[3] Carlyle persisted in his refusal.

The task of selecting a subject and finding a writer who could do it justice occupied much of Miss Evans' time and energy.

As the aim of the periodical was, at least nominally, to review books, one of the editor's most important tasks was to read the most important works published, and to decide which were worthy to be reviewed - the cosmopolitan bias was a feature of the Westminster Review - Chapman and Miss Evans called[4] on William Jeffs, a bookseller whose premises were in Burlington Arcade, and who sold only French books. They arranged for him to lend them recently published books to review. Chapman himself published many of the works reviewed in the Westminster. Occasionally, however there was a dearth of important works, which caused Miss Evans anxiety. On July 25th, 1852 she wrote to Chapman, "The publishing world seems utterly stagnant - nothing coming out which would do as a peg for an article."[5]

[1] Letters I. p370, G.E. to Mr and Mrs Bray and Sara Hennell, 22nd October 1851.
[2] Letters of Thomas Carlyle to J.S.Mill, J.Sterling and R.Browning ed. A.Carlyle (London, 1923) pp.288-289.
[3] Letters I, p.376, G.E. to Sara Hennell, 24th November 1851.
[4] In October 1851.
[5] Letters, I, p.50.

Miss Evans' method for choosing a suitable title for an article seems frequently to have been to select an important book hot from the press, and to suggest to the prospective contributor other works on the same subject, usually published within the preceeding decade, which could be compared with the new work.[1] The task of reading and assessing the importance of recent publications occupied much of Miss Evans' time. Two months before the first (January 1852) number of the Westminster Review was due to be printed, Miss Evans wrote to Mrs Bray: "My table is covered with books - all to be digested by the editorial maw - I foresee terribly hard work for the next six weeks."[2]

The fact that Miss Evans, as Editor had selected a reviewer, and provided him with a subject, was no guarantee that the completed article would be accepted. Miss Evans seems never to have questioned her ex officio right to amend or cut the articles and reviews she received. On 2nd September 1852, for example, she recorded "there is a great, dreary article on the Colonies[3] by my side asking for reading and abridgement."[4]

[1] E.g. J.A.Froude's article on 'Mary Stuart' in the Westminster Review for January 1852, reviews the following books:
1) Histoire de Marie Stuart par M.Mignet (translated by Bentley 1851)
2) Letters of Mary Queen of Scotts Ed. Labanoff (translated by Bentley 1845)
3) Letters of Mary Queen of Scotts Ed. Strickland (translated by Bentley 1848)

[2] Letters, I, p.371

[3] 'Our Colonial Empire' appeared in the W.R. for October 1852.

[4] Letters, II, p.54. G.E. to Sara Hennell.

Occasionally she found it necessary to reject an article outright: "I find Foxton's article detestable, and quite enough to damn the Review. I think we shall be obliged to offend him by declining it."[1]

When the articles and reviews were collected Miss Evans sent them to the printer who returned a proof copy which it was the editor's task to read and correct. This involved a few days' very hard work. It is evident from a letter Miss Evans wrote to the Brays on the 23rd December 1851, that she expected to have to work on Christmas day in order to have the proofs of the January number read and corrected in time.

> "Alas, the work is so heavy just for the next three days - all the revises being yet to come in and the proof of my own article[2]- Mr Chapman is so overwhelmed with matters of detail that he has earnestly requested me to stay till Saturday."[3]

The Westminster Review for October 1852 was printed over-presipitately with several typographical errors. Marian Evans wrote to Sara Hennell

> "I know your hair will stand on end at the typographical errors ..... Don't impute them to my carelessness. The printers were so hurried the last day that no revise of Greg's article or of the last two sheets of the Review was seen. .... I have been stamping with rage - nay, swearing, this morning at the sight of these things and the misspelling on the title-page."[4]

[1] Letters, II, p.102. G.E. to Sara Hennell, 28th May 1853.
[2] Her review of Carlyle's 'Life of Sterling'.
[3] Letters, I, p.378.
[4] Letters, II, p.57 September 1852.

Her care and solicitude to build up and maintain the high standards of the Westminster Review, and the genuine indignation she felt when things did not go according to plan, form the central theme of Miss Evans' letters during the first year and a half of her editorship. During this time the conduct of the Review was her consuming interest. She eagerly awaited the finished articles. A few poor articles were enough to put her quite out of sorts.

> "I have been ready to tear my hair with disappointment about the next number of the W.R. ..... The English Contemporary Literature is worse than ever and the article on Ruth and Villette is unsatisfactory. Then one of the articles is half as long again as it ought to be. In short I am a miserable Editor."[1]

On the other hand she was delighted when a number turned out well: "I think the 3rd number of the W.R. will be capital - thoroughly readable and yet not frothy."[2]

Although she contributed short notices regularly to the 'Contemporary Literature of England' section of the Westminster Review , the only article of any length or importance she contributed during her time as editor was a review of the Thomas Carlyle's Life of Sterling.[3] The review, though anonymous, can confidently be ascribed to Marian Evans. In a letter she wrote to the Brays on 22nd October 1851 she mentioned "I have been reading

[1] Letters, II, p.93. G.E. to Charles Bray, 18 March 1853.

[2] Letters, II, p.36, G.E. to Mr and Mrs Bray and Sara Hennell 21st June, 1852.

[3] In the Westminster Review for January 1852 (Contemporary Literature of England' section, p.247)

Carlyle's Life of Sterling with great pleasure - not for its presentation of Sterling but of Carlyle. There are many bits of description in his best manner and exquisite touches of feeling."[1]

The prose style of the review is distinctly Miss Evans' and the manner in which the subject is approached: "In a book of such parentage we care less about the manner than the treatment..." is in the spirit of the comment she made in the letter to the Brays, quoted above.

Apart from this, and the occasional brief notice the 'Contemporary Literature of England'[2] section, the only writing of Miss Evans to appear in the Review at this time was editorial amendment. If, for example, there were two short reviews by different contributors, Miss Evans would adapt and combine them, adding, perhaps, a short connecting paragraph of her own. Such routine editorial amendment is almost impossible to identify, and is, in any case, of hardly any interest. Miss Evans' most significant contributions were made after she had relinquished the Editorship of the Review.

During her editorship, Miss Evans was primarily concerned with the literary side of the Review: "I must protest against being regarded as responsible for anything in the management of his (Chapman's) affairs beyond the mere letter-press of the Review - and even that is not always what I will."[3]

[1] Letters, I, p.370.

[2] It is exceedingly difficult to identify Miss Evans' work in this medley of short critical notices, the brevity of which, in any case, renders them of little interest.

[3] Letters, II, p.83, G.E. to Charles Bray, 25th January 1853.

Nevertheless her influence on editorial policy must not be underestimated. It did not end with the completion of the Prospectus. There were various features of the new Review that were to become controversial. First among these was the vexed question of the 'Independent Contribution' section. It was explained in the January 1852 number of the Review[1]

> "The object of the Editors, in introducing this new department is to facilitate the expression of opinion by men of high mental power and culture who differ widely from each other and from the editors."

The 'Independent' section was in reality a compromise, for whilst the Prospectus had stated that there would be a definite editorial policy, the new section implied that the Review would tolerate views which dissented from those which the Editors were pledged to support. In attempting to suit all tastes, it failed to please any and was strongly criticised both by those who, like J.Martineau, felt that the Westminster Review ought to have a definite editorial policy, and by those who, like Herbert Spencer, felt that a journal of progress should not pledge itself to any one creed.

The Economist for January 17th 1852[2] contains an interesting comparison of the Westminster Review for January 1852 and the Quarterly Review for December 1851, entitled 'The New and the Old'. There is warm praise for the new Westminster Review: "...we try it by a very high standard and pass on it a very high eulogium." But the

[1] p.277

[2] The Economist January 17th 1852 pp.70-71.

reviewer (probably Herbert Spencer) singles out the fixed formula of principles laid down in the Prospectus and implied by the presence of the 'Independent' section, for criticism.

> "We must add that we are rather suprised to find in the Westminster, which is emphatically an organ of progress, a fixed formula of principles - in fact a political creed - more suitable to stationary Oxford than a journal of progress." Such a journal "should have no such formula, but content itself with declaring a determination to follow truth wherever she may lead and whoever and whatever she may pass by."[1]

The Leader reviewer also gives the reborn Westminster Review warm praise, but comments adversely: "We miss the boldness such a Review ought to adopt. We miss the positive convictions of which it should be the organ."[2]

The 'Independent' section was not used any more after April 1852. It is not possible to say whether this was in response to criticism, or merely because no articles warranting such isolation were submitted. The latter course is the more likely because in a letter written as late as 24th and 25th July 1852 Miss Evans mentioned the 'Independent' section as a possibility for the more intransigent Unitarian contributions.[3] It is clear though that Miss Evans had come to realise that the "grand mistake" of the 'Independent' section was that it made "the Editors responsible for everything outside that railing - Ah me! how wise we all are après coup."

[1]The Economist January 17th 1852 pp.70-71.
[2]The Leader January 10th 1852.
[3]Letters, II, p.49.

The letter from which these quotations are taken was written by Miss Evans to Chapman from Broadstairs where she was spending her holiday in July 1852. It is of great importance, containing, as it does, a reasoned statement of her own ideas at the time, and giving a clear picture of the dilemma facing the proprietor and editor of the Westminster Review.

Miss Evans is urging Chapman to decide whether he wants the Review to become the preserve of Unitarian thinkers (like James Martineau), or of the progressive agnostic element which she favoured. She reminds him that the only alternative is to keep the Review as it is, an organ open to all creeds and shades of opinion.

The Unitarian element in the Westminster Review had always been strong. Bowring had been prominent in Unitarian circles, and had written hymns in his spare time. W.J.Fox,[1] an active contributor to the Westminster Review since 1824, had been Editor of the Unitarian Monthly Repository, and was a Unitarian minister. In the early days the fiery pioneering enthusiasm for social reform had united Bentham and Bowring, the atheist and the theist in a common cause. By 1852 the concern for radical reforms was no longer the focal point of the Review, and differences of opinion became more obvious. Recent developments, especially in the sphere of Biblical Criticism, had served to emphasize the question of religious belief. James

[1] W.J.Fox (1786-1864) preacher, politician and author, contributed to the first number of the Westminster Review, and to Marian Evans' first number in January 1852.

Martineau, Editor of Chapman's Prospective Review and one of the leading Unitarian thinkers in the country, had originally been sympathetic towards Utilitarianism, but had broken with it in 1834 and regarded empirical and necessitarian modes of thought with the disdain of one who was conscious of having forsaken a false creed. His own thought had become increasingly metaphysical. Strauss had impugned the external evidence in shewing that the Bible was not the infallible word of God, and Martineau sought the justification for his faith in the inner witness of the heart. Uncongenial as were Martineau's ideas to Marian Evans, Chapman was not in a position to refuse Martineau's admirably written articles, owing to the latter's position of Editor of the Prospective Review.

Moreover, Martineau was a minor creditor of Chapman's. Chapman's finances were at this time (as always) in a precarious state and he could ill afford to offend even a minor creditor.

James Martineau was growing impatient with Chapman.[1] Miss Evans saw that clear thought was needed about the future policy of the Westminster Review. The tone of the letter leaves no doubt where her own sympathies lay.

"I feel that I am a wretched helpmate to you, almost

[1]He complained in 1854 that J.C. was making the Westminster Review "the organ of his own egotism, and ever shifting thought, and not the expression of any body of competent and consistent opinion."
Drummond and Upton The Life and Letters of James Martineau Vol.I, p.264.

out of the world and incog. so far as I am in it. When you can afford to pay an Editor, if that time will ever come, you must get one. If you believe in Free Will, in the Theism that looks on manhood as a type of the godhead and on Jesus as the Ideal Man, get one belonging to the Martineau 'School of thought', and he will drill you a regiment of writers who will produce a Prospective on a larger scale, and so the Westminster may come[1] to have 'dignity' in the eyes of Liverpool.

"If not - if you believe, as I do, that the thought which is to mould the Future has for its root a belief in necessity, that a nobler presentation of humanity[2] has yet to be given in resignation to individual nothingness, than could ever be shown of a being who believes in the phantasmagoria of hope unsustained by reason - why then get a man of another calibre and let him write a fresh Prospectus, and if Liverpool theology and ethics are to be admitted, let them be put in the "dangerous ward", alias, the Independent Section.

"The only third course is the present one, that of Editorial compromise. Martineau writes much that we can agree with and admire. Newman ditto, J.S.Mill still more, Fronde a little less and so on. These men can write more openly in the Westminster than anywhere else. They are amongst the world's vanguard, though not all in the foremost line; it is good for the world, therefore, that they should have every facility for speaking out. Ergo, since each can't have a periodical to himself, it is good that there should be one which[3] is common to them - id est, the Westminster."

This letter contains the first hint of Miss Evans'

[1] James Martineau was connected with Paradise Street Chapel, Liverpool from 1832-1848. (See Life and Letters Vol.I, p. 69.)

[2] This phrase, and the tone of the whole paragraph have a Comtian ring to them.

[3] Letters, II, pp.47-49. G.E. to J.C. 24-25th July 1852.

dissatisfaction with the Westminster Review. The rift between the Unitarians and the progressive agnostics was becoming a serious matter, and one which she did not feel capable of dealing with.

Nevertheless there was much of which Miss Evans could feel justifiably proud. Under her Editorship the Review gained as high a reputation as it ever had. Articles and Reviews were of a very high standard, and there was a liveliness about the Review which was lacking in many of the great quarterlies of the day. Several articles of enduring importance were printed. John Oxenford's article 'Iconoclasm in German Philosophy'[1] was the foundation of Schopenhauer's fame in England. Herbert Spencer's article on the 'Universal Postulate' (which Marian Evans thought first rate) was the original sketch of his First Principles of Psychology.[2]

About all, the primary function of the Review, that of introducing the public to important new books, was looked to. The 'Contemporary Literature' section substituted for the "brief and incidental" literary notices that had appeared under Hickson's management, "a connected survey of the chief additions made to our literature during the preceeding quarter."[3] The foreign department of the Review was also improved. Instead of the miscellaneous and disconnected notices of foreign works which the Foreign Quarterly had bequeathed to the

[1] In the Westminster Review for April 1853

[2] The book was published in 1862 and the article was in the Westminster Review for October 1853.

[3] Westminster Review for January 1852.

Westminster Review, recent American, German and French works were treated in separate articles which, like the one on English Literature, were connected surveys.

The scheme to review modern foreign literature was an ambitious attempt to diminish the embarrassingly long time-lag that had intervened between the publication of such seminal works as Strauss's Das Leben Jesu and Comte's Philosophie Positive in the venacular, and their introduction to England. The scheme prospered, and from January 1854 onwards reviews of important foreign works found their way into the body of the Review. At this date the classification was changed, for they were now grouped according to subject rather than, as formerly, by their country of origin.

The success of the new Westminster Review can be judged from some of the reactions in the press. Here are some of the favourable press comments on the first number:

> "Contains some of the best and most interesting articles which have ever graced a Quarterly."
> (Weekly Despatch)
> "Distinquished by high literary ability, and a tone of fearless and truthful discussion which is full of promise for the future."[1]
> (Weekly News)

The Economist[2] comparing the Westminster with the Quarterly, says that the former "comes forth with new life," whereas the latter "continues in the old track."

[1] These press comments were reprinted on the back cover of the Westminster Review for April 1852.

[2] 17th January, 1852.

The reviews of the next number were even louder in their praise. That in the Daily News is typical.

> "We had occasion to speak of the promise of the Westminster under its new management, and the second number entirely confirms our favourable judgement. It would be difficult to find anywhere now-a-days, so much originality, ability, sincerity, in the same number of pages."[1]

George Combe congratulated Marian Evans.

> "I had a long call from George Combe yesterday. He says, he thinks the Westminster, under my management the most important means of enlightenment of a literary nature in existence - the Edinburgh, under Jeffery, nothing to it etc. etc.!!!"[2]

[1] This comment was reprinted on the back cover of the Westminster Review for July 1852.

[2] Letters, II, p.33. G.E. to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 5th June 1852.

Marian Evans' reasons for resigning from the Editorship of the Westminster Review.

The first hint of Marian Evans' dissatisfaction with the Editorship of the Westminster Review came in July 1852 when she wrote to Chapman "I feel that I am a wretched helpmate to you ...."[1] The rift between the theists (mostly Unitarians), and the free-thinking agnostic contributors was becoming progressively more serious. It presented a problem which she felt incapable of solving. Her advice to Chapman, that he should lose no time in getting an editor who would take a firmer line, was timely. Chapman ignored it. His perennially bad finances were to drive him in July 1854 to admit that he was insolvent. James Martineau withdrew his financial support, and it seemed that Chapman had no alternative but to sell the Westminster Review . A cheque from Harriet Martineau saved it at the last minute, and her brother was left grumbling about the "atheistic tendency and Refugee-politics of the Westminster."[2]

In February 1853 Miss Evans wrote to the Brays:

> "I am out of spirits about the W.R. The Editorship is not satisfactory and I should be glad to run away from it altogether. But one thing is clear - that the Review would be a great deal worse if I were not here."[3]

Miss Evans might have been dissatisfied about the

[1] The letter is quoted above.

[2] James Drummond Life and Letters of James Martineau, Vol.I, p.269.

[3] Letters, II, p.88.

Editorial compromise she was compelled to accept, about the unremunerative nature of the work, but in a letter written in February 1853 she hinted at a much stronger reason for her to give in her notice: "I am in for loads of work next quarter, but I shall not tell you what I am going to do."[1] Almost certainly, the mention of "loads of work" was a sign that she was beginning her translation of Feuerbach's Das Wesen des Christenthums. The labour of translation could have left little time for editorial business.

Although in the first place Miss Evans intended to resign in April 1853, she continued to edit the Review for another year - not leaving until April 1854. In November 1853 she wrote

> "I told Mr Chapman yesterday that I wished to give up any connection with the editorship of the Westminster. He wishes me to continue in the present state of things until April, ..."[2]

There is no definite record that Miss Evans did resign in April, but it is safe to assume that she did, for there are few references to Westminster Review business in the letters she wrote after that date. She was busily occupied with her translation from January until May 1854. In April she was helping G.H.Lewes with some work.[3] These activities must have engrossed her mind and left little time for Editorial duties.

[1] Letters, II, p.90, G.E. to Mr and Mrs Bray.
[2] Letters, II, p.127. G.E. to Sara Hennell.
[3] See Letters, II, p.150, footnote 6.

But Marian Evans had deeper and more personal reasons for freeing herself from the ties of Review business. In October 1853 she left her rooms in Chapman's house and took lodgings at 21 Cambridge Street, Hyde Park. Shortly afterwards her intimacy with G.H.Lewes begun, and the reason for the move is almost certainly to be found in her desire for independence and privacy which would make this possible.

George Henry Lewes was one of the most brilliant and fascinating men of his time. After a desultory education he became a clerk in a merchant's office. Then he appears to have studied medicine, but he soon determined on a career as an actor, and appeared on the stage several times between 1841 and 1850. But his main and enduring interest lay in the study of literature, science, and, above all, philosophy. He wrote two novels[1] in the years 1847 and 1848 which were not particularly successful. When Miss Evans met him in 1851 he was best known for his Biographical History of Philosophy (1845-6). This work was remarkable not only for its scholarship; unlike most philosophical works it was lucid and readable. Frederick Harrison describes the success of the book thus:

> "This astonishing work was designed to be popular, to be readable, to be intelligible. It was all of these in a singular degree. It did what hardly any previous book on philosophy ever did - it made philosophy readable, reasonable, lively, almost as exciting as a good novel."[2]

[1] Ranthorpe and Rose, Blanch and Violet.

[2] This passage is quoted by G.W.Cooke, George Eliot: a Critical Study of her Life, Writings and Philosophy (London, 1883) p.58. I have not been able to find the original passage.

Lewes knew French and German well. The cosmopolitan bias of his scholarship enabled him like S.T.Coleridge, to introduce the works of an important foreign scholar to English readers. What Coleridge had done for Kant, Lewes did for Comte. It was his enthusiastic and intelligent appreciation of the French thinker in his Biographical History .... that first attracted popular attention to Comte's works.

Lewes who was working as literary editor of the Leader[1] when Marian Evans first met him, had developed a genre of literary criticism which was enriched by his disciplined philosophical approach. His criticism at its best (often it was marred by chatty garrulity) can be compared in its firm rooting in a philosophical ideology with that of Coleridge, or of Matthew Arnold.

It is tempting to discuss Lewes as a restless dilettante, but fairer to count him as one of the last of the polymaths. His interests were very wide, but in every field of thought he touched, he seems to have contributed something important. Above all, his wide scholarship, his acquaintance with the disciplines of subjects so multifarious and diverse,[2] gave him a balance

[1] A progressive weekly periodical. Further information about the paper is given below, at the beginning of Chapter III.

[2] The titles of some of his works give an impression of the diversity of Lewes' interests:
The Spanish Drama (1846)
Life of Goethe (1855)
Seaside Studies (1858)
Physiology of Common Life (1859)
Aristotle, a Chapter from the History of Science (1864)

of outlook and a width of allusion which no specialist could match.

In 1840 Lewes married a daughter of Swynfen Stevens Jervis. The Leweses collaborated with Thornton Hunt[1] and his wife in an experiment in communal living. Thornton Hunt overstepped the mark and shared Lewes' wife, who bore him two children. Lewes, by not divorcing his wife after she had been unfaithful to him the first time, legally forfeited his right to divorce her at all. In any case the expense would have been prohibitive. Relations with his wife became seriously strained. They had never been happy together, and it was rumoured that Lewes had, in any case, only married for money. Miss Eliza Lynn,[2] who had been shocked by the Lewes-Hunt household, wrote:

> "George Lewes and Thornton Hunt were essentially free-thinkers - not only on theological questions, ... but on all moral and social matters whatsoever, ... Legal obligation was to them the remnant of a foregone barbarism, and enforced permanency was unholy tyranny."[3]

Miss Evans first met Lewes in October 1851 "I was introduced to Lewes the other day in Jeff's shop - a sort of miniature Mirabeau[4] in appearance."[5]

[1] Thornton Hunt (1810-1873) son of J.F.Leigh Hunt. He was a journalist, and helped Lewes to found the Leader in 1850.

[2] Later Mrs Linton (1822-1898), a novelist and miscellaneous writer.

[3] Eliza Lynn Linton My Literary Life (London 1899) pp.22-3.

[4] Mirabeau (1749-91) was noted for his repellent ugliness "His face was swollen and pitted with smallpox, his carriage ungainly and his manner gauche. But he had ... such charm that he could soon make people forget their first sentiments of repulsion." (The Oxford Companion to French Literature)

[5] Letters, I, p.367. G.E. to Charles Bray.

It is interesting that Miss Evans should first have been impressed by Lewes' ugliness, Miss Lynn describes him thus:

> "Lewes was a singularly plain man, deeply pitted with the small pox, with narrow jaws and somewhat drawn-in cheeks. He had bright vivacious and well-shaped eyes, a quantity of bright brown hair, and a flexible mouth of singular moistness."[1]

He had little social tact or polish:

> ".... He had neither shame nor reticence in his choice of subjects, but would discourse on the most delicate matters of physiology with no more perception that he was transgressing the bounds of propriety than if he had been a learned savage."[1]

Although Lewes' conversation shocked the sensibilities of the susceptible Eliza Lynn, Herbert Spencer, who met him in the spring of 1850, found him an amusing and delightful companion.

> "As a companion Lewes was extremely attractive. Interested in, and well informed upon a variety of subjects; full of various anecdote; and an admirable mimic; it was impossible to be dull in his company."[2]

It was inevitable that Miss Evans should have come into contact with the Literary Editor of the Leader, who was also one of the most outstanding journalists of his day. But it was some time before she began to show any personal interest. On June 9th 1852 she wrote that "Lewes has written us an agreeable article on Lady Novelists[3]."[4] She was not always complimentary: "Defective

[1] My Literary Life p.18

[2] Autobiography Vol.I, p.377

[3] This article is considered in more detail in Chapter III. below.

[4] Letters, II, p.34. G.E. to Sara Hennell.

"as his articles are, they are the best we can get of the kind."[1]

It was not until the end of 1852 that there is any evidence of developing friendship. In November Lewes called in and chatted to Marian Evans for a couple of hours - a trifling incident - but Miss Evans' letter[2] suggests that this was a not infrequent occurrence. On January 10th 1853 she hastened to defend "poor Lewes": "Pray do not lay the sins of the article on the Atomic Theory to poor Lewes's charge ".[3]

It was in 1853 that Miss Evans' acquaintance with Lewes ripened into affection. She wrote to Sara Hennell on 28th March:

> "We had a pleasant evening last Wednesday - Lewes, as always, genial and amusing.[4] He has quite won my liking, in spite of myself."

On April 16th she wrote of him as a man of "heart and conscience", and seemed to be overcoming her initial dislike of his ugliness and flippancy. ("he is much better than he seems").[5] Her letters from this date on abound in scraps of news about Lewes, yet, disappointingly, they give little insight into the feelings which led to her liason with him. Evidently Miss Evans felt that to

[1] Letters, II, p.49. G.E. to J.C. 24-5 July 1852.
[2] Letters, II, p.68. G.E. to the Brays, 22nd November 1852.
[3] Letters, II, p.80. G.E. to Sara Hennell. The article was in fact written by Dr Samuel Brown.
[4] Letters, II, p.94.
[5] Letters, II, P.98.

have confided her deepest fears and longings to the Brays would have been to honour a dependency she wished to break. Probably the only two people who she confided in were Chapman and Spencer.

The first two years of Miss Evans' editorship were busy and superficially happy. She was so absorbed with Review business that she had little time to think of herself. The letters she wrote are full of 'Editorial secrets', accounts of 'brilliant soirées', headaches, meetings, outings, racy little descriptions and comments.[1] Only once, in a letter to Mrs P.A.Taylor, did she hint at the underlying insecurity and loneliness of her life, the deep need for human sympathy and love which was the main motive which decided her to defy accepted standards of morality by uniting herself with a married man. She wrote:

> "For you must know that I am not a little desponding now and then, and think that old friends will die off, while I shall be left without the power to make new ones. You know how sad one feels when a great procession has swept by one, and the last notes of its music have died away, leaving one alone with the fields and sky. I feel so about life sometimes. It is a help to read such a life as Margaret Fuller's. How inexpressibly touching that passage from her journal - "I shall always reign through the intellect, but the life! the life! O my God! shall that never be sweet?" I am thankful, as if for myself, that it was sweet at last".[2]

The letters Marian Evans wrote to the Brays from November 1853 until her departure for Germany with Lewes

[1] e.g. "As for the Queen, she is deplorable - worse and worse the more one looks at her - ..." (Letters,II,p.28)

[2] Letters,II,p.15. 27th March 1852.

abound in dark hints and deep self-questionings, although Lewes is not mentioned as the cause. In response to a birthday greeting from Sara Hennell she wrote

> "I begin this year (her 35th) more happily than I have done most years of my life. "Notre vrai destiné," says Comte, "se compose de resignation et d'activité"- and I seem more disposed to both than I have ever been before. Let us hope that we shall both get stronger by the year's activity - calmer by its resignation. .... We may both find ourselves at the end of the year going faster towards the hell of conscious moral and intellectual weakness. Still there is a possibility[1]- even a probability - the other way."

At times she came near to utter despair:

> "..... for myself nothing seems desireable but to get out of this headachy world or rather to take my headachy body out of it[2] and make room for a more healthy existence."

Meanwhile she was warmly supporting Lewes. In a letter[3] to Chapman (marked PRIVATE) she objected to T.H.Huxley's 'Science' Section in the Westminster Review for January 1854, which devoted more than two pages to an attack on errors in Lewes' Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences. Miss Evans suggested that it would be wise to omit Huxley's review.

On 18th April she wrote that she was doing some work for Lewes.[4] His pseudonym 'Vivian' did not appear in the Leader until May 20th 1854, and it is probable that the

[1] Letters,II,p.127. G.E. to Sara Hennell, 25th November 1853.
[2] Letters,II,p.153. G.E. to Sara Hennell,26 the April 1854.
[3] Letters,II,p.133.
[4] Letters,II,p.150.

book reviews in the Leader during that month were written by Miss Evans.

On May 27th she wrote to the Brays that she had 'finally decided' not to live with the Chapmans.[1] A casual sounding hint, "it is quite possible that I may wish to go to the continent or twenty other things",[2] suggests that plans for her elopement with Lewes were already taking shape. The next personal reference in her now rare letters to the Brays was a brief 'good-bye' note.[3] On 20th July 1854 George Lewes and Marian Evans left London for Weimar.

Why Miss Evans decided to brave loss of friends and social ostracism by living with Lewes as his wife will never be fully understood. This irrevocable step was taken primarily in response to a deeply felt personal need. Bray who knew her well wrote in his autobiography,

> "She was of a most affectionate disposition, always requiring someone to lean upon, preferring what has hitherto been considered the stronger sex, to the other and more impressible.[4] She was not fitted to stand alone."

In Lewes she found a partner who was intellectually compatible; if it was her lot to 'reign through the intellect', Lewes was one of the few men of the time who could claim to be intellectually her equal. His ready wit and sympathetic understanding gave her tolerant

[1] Letters, II, p.158.
[2] Letters, II, p.158. 27th May 1854.
[3] Letters, II, p.166.
[4] Charles Bray's Autobiography, p.75.

guidance. He gave her confidence in her own abilities, and the advice and support which only a man of his perceptiveness and wide-ranging knowledge could give.

His quicksilver wit and lightening-quick understanding, and his light-hearted mimicry were an admirable foil to her slow and thorough working mind, and her seriousness. And it was in many respects apt that Lewes, with his unbuttoned disregard for the niceties of polite conversation should have found in Marian Evans his companion for life. For she too had little time for keeping up appearances, and her dress and manner were as provincial and outré as Lewes' conversation. Miss Lynn who met Miss Evans at Chapman's while she was editor of the Westminster Review described her thus:

> "She was essentially under-bred and provincial; ... . She held her hands and arms in kangaroo fashion; was badly dressed; and had an unwashed, unbrushed, unkept look altogether; ....."[1]

Lewes was to prove a loyal and devoted 'husband', and the generosity with which he, and after his death, George Eliot, continued to give financial support to his legal wife, leaves little room for reproach.

It appears that the personal influence George Lewes had on Marian Evans, was more important than the intellectual. There is abundant circumstantial evidence that it was his encouragement which inspired her to write as a critic and later as a novelist. But it is not possible to shew that any intellectual attitude or idea influenced her to begin creative writing. It is, however, not true

[1] My Literary Life, pp.94-5. Eliza Lynn disliked Marian Evans.

that their relationship excluded intellectual pleasures or the discussion of each other's work. On the contrary they lived in close intellectual companionship (it could hardly have been otherwise), reading books together in the evenings, and discussing her writings and his experiments. But the main bias of Marian Evans' thought was decided before she met Lewes, and was in any case largely consonant with his. Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity was the last work which had a major part in influencing Miss Evans' personal philosophy. If it be permissible to draw a distinction between her intellectual development, and her creative writing as a novelist, her association with Lewes (at least after 1857) marked the beginning of a decline in her own involvment in the intellectual disputes of her day. The intellectual progress reached its zenith during her spate of journalistic activity in the comparatively short time that intervened between her arrival in Germany, and the publication of Scenes of Clerical Life, her first fiction writing in 1857.

Marian Evans and Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity

It is strange that no record exists to tell us when Marian Evans first read Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity, a book which influenced her greatly . Since she did not allude to the work before she began the translation, it seems likely that she did not read it until late in 1852.

Feuerbach shares with Strauss, Mackay, Comte and most of the writers who influenced Miss Evans, a faith in the empirical approach and in objective facts. He accepts the findings of Strauss and his followers and approves of the

methods of the historical critics. But whereas Strauss is primarily an historian, Feuerbach is primarily a philosopher.

> "The Bible contradicts morality, contradicts reason, contradicts itself, innumerable times; and yet it is the word of God, eternal truth, and 'truth cannot contradict itself'."[1]

The book claims to be a historico-philosophical analysis concerned especially with the psychological significance of Christian rites and dogmas. The fundamental question asked by Strauss of the Bible is, "Is it true?" Feuerbach, taking for granted that much of the Bible is not historically accurate asks, "Is it significant?" Strauss is tentative, probing, analytic but fundamentally destructive, Feuerbach confident and broadly optimistic.

Feuerbach attempts to interpret all the religious sentiments in terms of human feelings. His fundamental premise is "The beginning, middle and end of religion is MAN."[2] The question "Does God exist?" becomes, in Feuerbach's book, meaningless and irrelevant. God at once exists and does not exist. He does not have an independent objective existence apart from the minds of His believers, but He does have a valid subjective existence, for He is "nothing else than an expression of the nature of feeling. God as a morally perfect being is nothing else than the realized idea, the fulfilled

[1] The Essence of Christianity (translated from the Second German Edition by MARIAN EVANS) by Ludwig Feuerbach (hereafter referred to as Essence of Chr.) p.210

[2] Essence of Chr. p.183.

law of morality, the moral nature of man posited as the absolute being."[1] In postulating a God, man has given objectivity to himself but has not recognised the object as his own nature.

Feuerbach's theory offers a convenient and convincing explanation of the vexed question of the progressive revelation of God. The conventional explanation of the orthodox theologian for the incongruities between the jealous angry God of the Old Testament, and the merciful forgiving God of the New, is the theory of Accommodation which states that God accommodated revelation of his nature to the degree of culture of his chosen people. Feuerbach's theory that "God is for man the common-place book where he registers his highest thoughts and feelings",[2] explains why God should have been conceived of differently by different peoples at different stages of cultural advance. Feuerbach's account is based on what is known to the modern psychologist as "projection",[3] the confusion of the psychological and subjective with the external.

The Essence of Christianity is divided into two parts. In the first, entitled 'The True or Antropological Essence of Religion', Feuerbach attempts to identify and reveal what is intrinsically valuable in the

[1] Essence of Chr.p.47.
[2] Essence of Chr.p.62.
[3] Feuerbach would not support Freud's hypothesis that there is a greater tendency for the projection of traits which the subject condemns in himself.

religious experience. The second part 'The False or Theological Essence of Religion' is a closely reasoned attack on the dangers of blind and illogical faith.

In Part I Feuerbach voices his approval of many aspects of religious belief. The freethinker, he says, is in danger of leading an "unregulated dissolute life."[1] Religion gives authority to man's moral sense by adding supernatural sanctions to moral law, and gives significance and meaning to man's existence.

> "Every man, therefore, must place before himself a God, i.e., an aim, a purpose. ..... He who has no aim, has no home, no sanctuary; aimlessness is the greatest unhappiness."[1]

Religion is a valuable treasure house of man's loftiest feelings:

> "..... feeling is the essential organ of religion, the nature of God is nothing else than the expression of the nature of feeling."[2]

For Feuerbach, one feeling, that of Love, is of supreme importance. Love unifies, reconciles differences, dissolves the selfish desires of the individual and opens the way for co-operation. Love is the loftiest and most moral of the feelings; God is love, or as Feuerbach would prefer it, Love is God.

> "Is not the love of God to Man - the basis and central point of religion - the love of man to himself made an object, contemplated as the highest objective truth, as the highest Being to man?"[3]

[1] Essence of Chr.p.63.
[2] Essence of Chr.p.8.
[3] Essence of Chr.p.57.

> "Love is the middle term, the substantial bond, the principle of reconciliation between the perfect and the imperfect, the sinless and the sinful being, the universal and the individual, the divine and the human. Love is God himself, and apart from it there is no God. Love makes man God, and God man ... And what wonders does not Love work in our social life! What faith, creed, opinion separates, Love unites."[1]

Love to Feuerbach means more than the 'charity' of the New Testament. His use of the word is akin to Freud's - it includes disinterested altruism, family feeling and sexual love. Feuerbach's interesting analysis of the psychological implications of certain Christian dogmas and stories anticipates the later theory of Freud by recognising the elements of human love inherent in the religious symbolism of the Church. Feuerbach takes as his premise, "Only he who has no earthly parents needs heavenly ones",[2] and argues that early Christians who lived a life of renunciation compensated for their lack of real family life by self-adoption into the holy family; Father, Son, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. He maintains that the Virgin Mary was not included in the Holy Trinity because this would have implied a sexual relation between Her and God, and the "sexual relation was regarded by the Christians as something unholy and sinful."[3] Jesus himself was "half a man, half a woman" because he had not masculine independence and was closely attached to his mother.

[1] Essence of Chr.p.47.
[2] Essence of Chr.p.72.
[3] Essence of Chr.p.69.

Feuerbach is fully aware of the intrinsically sexual nature of family affection, especially that of the infant son for its mother. He anticipates the psychological theory which was later to become known as the Oedipus Complex:

> "The love of the son to the mother is the first love of the masculine being for the feminine. The love of man to woman ..... receives its religious consacration in the love of the son to the mother; .."[1]

Feuerbach, realizing how large a part sex plays in our lives, pleads openly for the removal of unnecessary sexual restraints. He attempts to reconcile religious beliefs (which are really projected human emotions) with sex, the most powerful of man's instincts: "If God is not polluted by Nature neither is he polluted by being associated with the idea of sex."[2]

Sometimes Feuerbach goes almost so far as to equate God with the sexual distinction into male and female.

> "All the glory of Nature, all its power, all its wisdom and profundity, concentrates and individualizes itself in distinction of sex. Why dost then shrink from naming the nature of God by its true name?"[3]

The book is a palinode to the love of the sexes, which Feuerbach conceives as fulfillment of life.

> "Love especially works wonders, and the love of the sexes most of all. Man and woman are the complement of each other, and thus united the first present the species, the perfect man. Without

[1] Essence of Chr.p.70
[2] Essence of Chr.p.90
[3] Essence of Chr.p.91

> "species love is inconceivable. Love is nothing else than the self-consciousness of the species, as evolved within the difference of sex."[1]

He insists that marriage should be the"free bond of love"[2] - based not upon economic or social factors, but upon mutual love between the man and the woman.

> " .... a marriage which is not spontaneously concluded, spontaneously willed, self-sufficing, is not a true marriage, and therefore not a truly moral marriage."[3]

In the Appendix to his work he declares that the Roman Catholic'Church's condemnation of "carnal intercourse" as "the product of the devil",[4] is in itself immoral.

According to Feuerbach's theory, Marian Evans' liason with George Lewes which was "spontaneously concluded, spontaneously willed" was a legitimate and indeed moral marriage. It is tempting to assume that Miss Evans' decision to live with Lewes as his wife was largely due to the influence of Feuerbach's ideas. Although there is no record that this was the case, it is certainly true that he helped her, more perhaps than any other writer, towards reconciling religious emotions with intellectual agnosticism, and that the book left a strong and lasting impression on her mind. But against this must be weighed her habitual reticence where new ideas were concerned. It is probable that in the Essence of Christianity she

[1] Essence of Chr.pp.154-5.
[2] Essence of Chr.p.268.
[3] Essence of Chr.p.268
[4] Essence of Chr.p.309

found a concept of marriage which lent a theoretic justification to a step she was already contemplating from more personal motives.

The second part of the Essence of Christianity is a reasoned examination of the dangers of religious faith. It is here that the humanist presuppositions of Feuerbach's thought become obvious. He assumes that the good life is necessarily based upon reasonable moral principles. It is fundamental to his doctrine that human life must be valued in human terms, not in terms of obedience to supernatural sanctions. Feuerbach has unbounded faith in man's ability to regulate his own conduct by the use of reason. The logical processes by which man should regulate his conduct belong to the province of philosophy. Religion should be concerned solely with feelings. The dangers, excesses and immoralities of religious belief all spring from a misapprehension among believers about the true nature of religion. They mistake the subjective for the objective, feelings for moral laws, and regard their religious faith as a reliable source of moral principles governing their behaviour to their fellow men. Feuerbach contends that it was precisely this misapprehension of the rôle of religious belief which brought about the decline of the classical world. The classic spirit "limits itself by laws .... inherently true and valid ones."[1] With Christianity entered the principle of "unlimited, extravagant, fanatical, supernaturalistic subjectivity; a principle intrinsically opposed to that of science, of culture."[1]

[1] Essence of Chr. p.132.

Prayer, Feuerbach contends, is in reality an outlet for one's feelings, but when it becomes a substitute for, or a refuge from , action it becomes an evil:

> "The man who does not exclude from his mind the idea of the world, the idea that everything here must be sought immediately, that every effect has its natural cause, that a wish is only to be attained when it is made an end and the corresponding means are put into operation[1] - such a man does not pray: he only works; ...."

The same misapprehension applies to faith and belief in miracle. Feuerbach sees the two as inseparable. Faith, he writes, is "nothing else than confidence in the reality of the subjective in opposition to the limitations or laws of nature and reason."[2] Thus he is led to the humanist axiom - Wherever religion places itself in contradiction with reason, it places itself also in contradiction with the moral sense.[3] Feuerbach applies this axiom to various phases and manifestations of religious belief and points out the logical inconsistencies and contradictions involved. The nature of God is itself inconsistent. We believe that He is at once universal and personal. Our knowledge of science shews that unconditioned immaterial activity is an impossibility. By similar reasoning Feuerbach the contradictions involved in the doctrine of the Trinity and of the sacraments; most important of all, he shews the contradiction between faith and love. Faith, which Feuerbach takes to mean man's

[1] Essence of Chr. p.122
[2] Essence of Chr. p.125
[3] Essence of Chr. p.244. The italics are Feuerbach's.

exalting his own feelings and aspirations into a moral law, "deprives him of the freedom and ability to estimate duly what is different from himself."[1] Faith is narrow, arrogant and ~~narrowly~~ partisan. To Faith, thus understood, are traceable most of the iniquities of religious persecution, the church's dogmatic unreasonableness, its intolerance of other creeds, and of disbelievers, and its condemnation of sexual love. As such, faith is directly opposed to Love, and hence to morality. True moral worth consists in valuing and loving mankind for its own sake: "this is the law of the species and the law of intelligence!"[2]

Feuerbach's theory had a profound influence upon Marian Evans. Hitherto she had devoted her life to emancipating herself from the ties of her early upbringing. The struggle to justify her religious disbelief had culminated in the great translation of Strauss's Das Leben Jesu. On a more personal level, her decision to stay in France, and, later, to lodge in London, indicated a determination to escape from the narrowing influence of provincial life. Her acceptance of the editorship of the Westminster Review was her supreme gesture of commital to the radical cause. Her acquaintance with Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity marks the beginning of a more positive and contructive approach. It was this book which shewed her that it is possible to reconcile religious feelings with intellectual doubt, to recognise the power

[1] Essence of Chr. p.247.

[2] Essence of Chr. p.265.

and value of devotional sentiments whilst remaining unconvinced of the existence of God. In Feuerbach she found a humanist explanation of the function of 'divine' love, and as emphasis on the power of human love and sympathy which no other thinker whose works she had read, could offer.

It is a matter of dispute amongst critics of George Eliot's novels whether or not she is to be called a 'religious' novelist.[1] Feuerbach's theory underlies all her later thoughts on the subject, and to understand his position - that religion can have significance in terms of human emotion even though no God exists - is to understand hers. On 10th December 1874 George Eliot wrote to a friend:

> "My books have for their main bearing a conclusion ..... without which I could not have cared to write any representation of human life - namely that the fellowship between man and man which has been the principle of development, social and moral, is not dependent on conceptions of what is not man: and that the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the ideal of goodness entirely human (i.e.an exaltation of the human)."

In Feuerbach's theory the great religious debate of Marian Evan's life reached a conclusion, or rather a compromise. Ultimately the compromise - the acceptance of the value of religious feelings, and the denial that God exists as an objective entity - was not satisfactory. Honesty provokes the question, "Even if the sentiments

[1] There is an interesting discussion of this point in Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies, (Penguin Books edition, 1949,) p.248.

"aroused be worthy, is it right to allow oneself, or permit others to worship a God which one believes does not exist?" To this question neither Feuerbach nor Marian Evans could give a satisfactory answer.

If George Eliot never found true happiness, I believe that it was due to the ambivalence of her spiritual and personal life. She was at once religious and agnostic, at once a wife and a mistress. Whatever the long term effects, however, she was able to find a spiritual refuge in the ideas of Feuerbach, and a personal refuge in Lewes, and it was largely owing to this twofold influence that she was able to compose her mind to novel writing. The articles and reviews she wrote between her elopement with Lewes and the publication of Scenes of Clerical Life, shew a growing confidence in her own judgement, and cast light upon the metamorphosis of translatress into novelist. The overall impression of these critical writings is one of confidence and competence. Although several reviews contain the most violent diatribes to be found anywhere in her writing, the very roundness of her condemnation indicates clear values and a settled judgement.

I suggest that the poise and confidence of the reviews owes much to her close knowledge of Feuerbach who had helped her to resolve the great spiritual struggle of her life.[1]

[1]The use she makes of Feuerbach's doctrines in particular reviews is noticed below in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

ARTICLES AND REVIEWS WRITTEN BY MARIAN EVANS (FROM JULY 1854 UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1856).

I

Marian Evans as reviewer.

Marian Evans left England with George Lewes on July 20th 1854. She began Amos Barton on September 23rd 1856. Between these dates she wrote the majority of her articles and reviews. Full-length articles occupied most of her time, but the 'Belles Lettres' section of the Westminster (a literary mosaic of short reviews of recently published essays, translations and belles lettres) was regularly written by her from July 1855 until January 1857. Although her literary contributions to the Westminster are most important, it is necessary to consider her writings published in other periodicals in order to form a comprehensive picture of her scope as an essayist and reviewer. She contributed two notable articles[1] to Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country. Fraser's was a literary monthly founded in 1830, and had gained a reputation for the high standard of its criticism and other articles on literary subjects. Ruskin, Thackeray and Carlyle were contributors.

Miss Evans also contributed short articles to the first two numbers of the Saturday Review which was started in 1856. It was later to become one of the most important periodicals of the century. Miss Evans also frequently

[1] 'Three Months in Weimar' (June, 1855)
'Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar' (July,1855)

wrote for the Leader, which had been founded in 1850 by G.H.Lewes and Thornton Hunt. It was published each week and was conspicuous for its radical politics, and the energy and brilliance of its literary criticism, much of which was written by G.H.Lewes, the literary editor.

Miss Evans wrote the largest number of articles (thirty-two) for the Leader, fifteen for the Westminster,[1] four for the Saturday Review, and two for Fraser's. The Leader articles were often only three pages[2] in length, and seldon exceeded six pages. The Westminster articles were about ten times as long, numbering between thirty and fifty pages.[2]

One motive for the spate of literary activity which followed the completion of the Feuerbach translation was financial. Lewes was ill able to afford the expense of maintaining two women and a family of four children, or of the expedition to Germany.[3] The average income from his contributions to the Leader in the time between his liason with Miss Evans, and the publication of Scenes of Clerical Life was under £10 a month. It was not until the 30th October, 1855 when he published his Life of Goethe that he was removed from pressing financial need by a

[1] Including the 'Belles Lettres' sections.

[2] 1 page = 1 page in the 1963 reprint of Marian Evans' more important essays and reviews Essays of George Eliot Ed. Thomas Pinney, (Routledge and Kegan Paul). Hereafter the work will be referred to as Essays.

[3] The motive for this was partly to gain material for his biography of Goethe.

payment of £200. By her contributions to the Westminster alone, Miss Evans was able to earn enough to keep herself. She was paid £12..12..0 each number for writing the 'Belles Lettres' section, and about £20 for each full length review. In the eighteen months after her return from Germany her payments from the Westminster Review amounted to more than £200.

But even if there had been no financial need, the period would probably have been one of literary activity, though this might have taken a different form. The circumstances under which the Feuerbach translation was undertaken are illuminating, as they indicate that Miss Evans was concerned to honour her obligations to the public (Chapman had publicly advertised the translation before it was undertaken) even though she knew that her own financial gain from the publication would be negligible. The impulse to educate (in the broad sense) her readers, which she later professed to be the main purpose of her novels, was a strong motive for her contributing reviews at this time. Her naturally penetrating understanding, wide sympathies and close association in her editorial capacity with new ideas and recent publications, made her admirably fitted for the task of reviewing.

Her union with G.H.Lewes marked the beginning of her work as a creative writer. Although the creativity of a literary critic must naturally be distinguished from the creativity of the novelist, in Miss Evans' case the confidence and energy of the longer reviews anticipates the creative energy which inspired the novels. In both we feel the presence of a confident and wide-ranging

intellect writing easily. Exactly what urged her to write can never be fully known, but it is certain that it was Lewes who gave her confidence in her powers. She did wisely to adopt his christian name for her nom de plume; but for George Lewes there could have been no George Eliot.

Never in her life did Marian Evans express her mind more freely than in these reviews. In fleeing with Lewes she had broken many ties with her past life; she did not know whether she would ever see her closest friends again. In openly flouting a cherished convention she had risked social ostracism for the rest of her life. Their removal from the country underlined the complete break which George Lewes and Marian Evans were making with the society which had bred them. In such circumstances Miss Evans, protected from identification in any case by anonymity, was free to write exactly as she felt, and to attack whom and what she thought fit. It was a time of joy and anxiety, but joy predominated. Eliza Lynn visited George Lewes and Marian Evans at their lodging in St.John's Wood soon after their return from Germany and recorded her impression:

> "..... the aureole of their new love was around them. There was none of the pretence of a sanctioned union which came afterwards - none of that somewhat pretentious assumption of superior morality which was born of her success. She was frank, genial, natural, and brimful of happiness. .....Had she always remained on that level, she would have been the greatest woman of this or any other age."[1]

Something of the natural and uninhibited spontaneity of

[1] My Literary Life pp. 96-7.

her new life communicated itself to her articles and reviews.

If Miss Evans was free, to some extent, from social restraints, never did she forget her obligations to her readers. In her articles the implied relationship between writer and reader is that of confiding mentor to privileged pupil; rarely frivolous and never irresponsible. This attitude was encouraged by the prestige enjoyed by the Reviews amongst their readers. This was sometimes so great that J.H.Newman was provoked to complain in one of his sermons that people no longer bothered to apply their minds to the problems of life, but took their opinions ready-made from a Review.

> "'Private Judgement' commonly means passive impression. Most men in this country like opinions to be brought to them rather than to be at the pains to go out and seek for them. They must have persons to provide them with their ideas, ... Hence the extreme influence of periodical publications at this day .... these teach the multitude of men what to think and what to say."[1]

The great authority of the Westminster, and of the other Reviews, was partly due to the anonymity of the contributors. This was as true in the 1850s as it had been in 1824. Although some reviewers undoubtedly used their anonymity to voice opinions to which they would never have dared to put their names, in general the reviewer was fully aware of his influence, and of his obligation to be truthful and fair-minded. It was so with Miss Evans. She did not attempt to use her articles to justify her own matrimonial position. It would be

[1] J.H.Newman, Christ Upon the Waters (1850) 1898 ed.pp.148-9.

impossible to guess from the articles she wrote at this time any facts of her private life.. Only once did she succumb to the temptation to use the columns of the Westminster Review to vindicate a personal matter, and then it was a vindication of George Lewes, and not of herself.

In the 'Belles Lettres' section of the Westminster Review for July 1856 Miss Evans reviewed a volume of poems, Lonely Hours by Mrs C.G.Phillipson. She condemned the poems roundly as 'sentimental doggerel'. The review provoked a hysterically satirical pamphlet by Mrs. Phillipson, attacking G.H.Lewes whom she believed to have written the review. Miss Evans retaliated by reviewing Mrs Phillipson's pamphlet which she aptly termed a 'song in prose'.[1] Miss Evans' irony was nicely managed and she damaged her opponent by quoting extensively from the absurd pamphlet.[2] Sara Hennell must have written to complain that Miss Evans' review of the 'song in prose' was unworthy of the Westminster Review. Miss Evans replied:

> "I agree with you that Mrs Phillipson's pamphlet was beneath the dignity of the W.R. But I was annoyed at her attributing the criticism to Mr Lewes and wished to deny for the Westminster reading public in general that he has anything to do with Contemp. Lit."[3]

Miss Evans reviewed mostly literary works: novels,

[1] In the Westminster Review for January 1857 (Belles Lettres section).

[2] Miss Evans quotes the following passage: "And you- Westminster Reviewer! - bard! .... poetic Briaereus" ... whose ... "arms whirl for the astonishment and the alarm of the other Quixotes, young in arms or pens - we being doubtless one - , intent, Amazon-like, with thy long lance to pin, spindle-like, thy whirligig upon thy wooden forehead! ..."

volumes of poems. collections of letters, and, occasionally, translations of classical works into English. But she also wrote articles and reviews relating to music, history, social anthropology, travel and philosophy. She shewed an impressive and often extensive knowledge of every subject she touched. In fields where she lacked specialist knowledge, she was able to give the intelligent appreciation of a versatile amateur. What she says of O.F.Gruppe in the review entitled 'The Future of German Philosophy'[1] could well be applied to herself:

> "Those who decry versatility .... seem to forget the immense service rendered by the suggestiveness of versatile men, who come to a subject with fresh, unstrained minds."

If there was one sphere of literary activity in which the middle years of the nineteenth century were particularly rich, it was that of novel writing. The number of novels Miss Evans reviewed every quarter is evidence of the spate that issued from the press. There was, however, no Aristotle, Dryden or Coleridge to supply a critical doctrine for the novel as a literary genre. Novel criticism (and much poetry criticism too), was to remain amateurish by mid-twentieth century standards. The reason for this may lie in the bewildering heterogeneity of the novels published. But, more important, there was but little demand, even among the 'intellectual' readership of a famous quarterly such as the Westminster, for scholarly discussion of novels. People wanted to be told what novels they would be likely to enjoy; they were

[1] Leader 28th July 1855, reprinted in Essays p.149.

interested in critical theory only insofar as it helped them to sort the chaff from the bran. If a mid-Victorian father wanted to educate his family he would read them the Bible, or some other 'improving' book. Novels were read primarily to be enjoyed, discussed, wept over, but not assessed, categorised or criticised.

Miss Evans, especially when she was reviewing a novel, or a volume of poems, never forgot that her task was primarily to sift, and to guide her readers towards the sort of book they were likely to enjoy. If one examines the metaphors she used to commend a good book it becomes obvious that she often thought in terms of food or satisfied appetite. Of Browning's Men and Women she wrote: "this blending of opposite qualities gives his mind a rough piquancy that reminds one of a russet apple."[1] When reviewing Kingsley's Westward Ho! she spoke figuratively of his book as a 'genuine mushroom' amid a crowd of 'dubious fungi'. Often, too, she thought of an interesting or valuable book as a gem or an ingot of precious metal. The metaphors she used indicate that Miss Evans thought a good book should be enjoyed and valued as good food or jewels were enjoyed and valued but not strenuously analyzed.[2]

[1] Westminster Review for January 1856 (Belles Lettres).

[2] Similarly a writer's style is often described figuratively rather than analyzed critically. In her review of Carlyle's Life of Sterling (Westminster Review for January 1852) she describes his style thus: "The style of the work is rich; there are passages of deep pathos which come upon the reader like a strain of solemn music, ..." The musical simile was surely suggested by Orsino's speech at the beginning of Twelfth Night.

This is not to say that Miss Evans' recommendations were naïve value judgements. She had definite views on what constitutes a good novel, and the evolution of her critical standards and the development of her ideas about the broadly moral function of the novelist's art is one of the most interesting features of her reviews.

The awareness that novels and poems were very popular, and would in many cases be read out loud as entertainment for the family circle - young and old alike - laid the reviewer under an obligation to consider the moral tendencies of the work. Sexual morality has seldom been a matter for family discussion, and mid-Victorian middle-class families were notoriously sensitive about this matter. Miss Evans was aware of her obligation to consider the suitability of a novel for family reading, and took pains to point out any passages which could give offence. In reviewing a new translation[1] of the bawdy Heptameron by Margaret Queen of Navarre, she criticised the book for its coarseness, pointed out the folly of trying to teach chastity by unchastity, and insisted that the book should be kept out of reach of children. In her article 'German Wit: Heinrich Heine' she commented on the 'audacity of his occasional coarseness' and added "hence, before his volumes are put within the reach of immature minds there is need of a friendly penknife to exercise a strict censorship."[2]

However, Miss Evans' frank and fair discussion of

[1] Westminster Review, October 1855 ('Belles Lettres' section).
[2] Westminster Review, January 1856 ('Belles Lettres' section).

the morality of Goethe's novel Wilhelm Meister[1] (interesting she commented, "parents may let it lie on the dining room table without scruple, in the confidence that for youthful minds of the ordinary cast it will have no attractions".) immediately acquits her of the charge of prudery. Her article on Milton's Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce[2] was fair and not the least mealy mouthed. In her article on Lord Brougham[3] she criticised him for his lack of frankness about sexual matters.

Many, indeed most, of the books that Miss Evans reviewed have been long forgotten, and her reviews are now of merely historical interest. Great as were her powers of judgement, most twentieth-century readers would prefer to be guided in making their choice among the copious literary outpourings of the 1850s by a modern critic. It is for information about the reviewer, not the work reviewed, that Miss Evans' articles are read and studied today. Accordingly it will be my primary aim to trace in her reviews the development of her own ideas. It will often be necessary to extract a relevant passage from the review of which it forms a part, and artificially to isolate it from its context. In order to give an impression of the total effect of a full length review I shall begin with a brief account of the form and method usually adopted by Miss Evans in her articles and reviews.

[1] In the Leader, 21 July, 1855.

[2] In the Leader, 4 August, 1855. The article is entitled 'Life and opinions of Milton'.

[3] In the Leader, 7 July, 1855.

The 'review-like essay or the essay-like review'[1] was the main kind of expository prose in mid-Victorian England. A single review was often sufficiently long to fill a modern Penguin book. The longer and more scholarly reviews resembled and fulfilled the function of modern paperback books also in that they contained up-to-date information intended to educate intelligent readers about recent developments in the arts and sciences. The approach of the nineteenth-century reviewer was however diffusive and literary by modern standards. Reviews were embellished with literary allusions and, usually, an elaborate introduction.

Miss Evans' critical technique improved considerably in the two years she spent as a journalist. In her earlier reviews, such as that of Mackay's Progress of the Intellect, she concentrated closely on the work under review. In this review, for all her mastery of Mackay's argument and her awareness of its place in the context of contemporary ideas, she did not depart widely from the text. Much of the review was synopsis, and she quoted frequently and at length. 'Woman in France', published in October 1854 in the Westminster Review also contained much paraphrase, though less quotation.

If her earlier reviews are 'essay-like reviews' the later ones with their freer and more discursive treatment are more aptly described as 'review-like essays'. This freer and more literary approach is particularly evident

[1]The phrase is Bagehot's.

in the increasingly elaborate introductions. 'German Wit: Heinrich Heine'[1] begins with a delightfully clever and entertaining discussion of different kinds of humour and comedy. Miss Evans points out the wide difference which separates the highly complex pleasure derived from a'real witticism' from the 'object which shakes the diaphragm of a coal-heaver.' She then goes on to discuss schoolboy humour, and the grave seriousness of the ancient Hebrews. The second paragraph contains a brilliantly epigrammatic quasi-Baconian analysis of the difference between wit and humour: 'wit is sharp and sudden, and sharply defined as crystal'. In the third paragraph she considers the ancestry of wit and humour; in the fourth she contrasts French and German humour. Only in the fifth paragraph does she begin her consideration of Heine.

In her bitter attack on the eighteenth century poet Edward Young[2] whose reputation she is determined to demolish, she uses her introductory paragraph to reduce her prey to the level of a biological specimen:

> "Let us then, for a moment imagine ourselves, as students of this natural history 'dredging' the first half of the eighteenth century in search of specimens. About the year 1730, we have hauled up a remarkable individual of the species divine ..."

In her review 'Silly novels by Lady Novelists' Miss Evans employs a similar conceit by treating the 'silly novels' as phenomena of natural history. The review

[1] Westminster Review, January 1856.

[2] 'Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young'. Published in the Westminster Review for January 1857. (Essays pp.335-385.)

begins:

> "Silly novels by Lady Novelists are a genus with many species, determined by the peculiar quality of silliness that predominates in them - the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic."[1]

This development in the length and variety of the introductory paragraphs to the articles is indicative of a generally freer approach to the business of reviewing. In the later articles, the books under review are examined in a wide context. The criticism becomes keener, and the excellencies and faults of the work are acutely observed and exposed. Quotations are used less to give a sample of a writer's work, as in the early reviews, than to demonstrate the writer's attitude or an aspect of his literary style. Above all, Miss Evans, now fully confident in her own judgement, uses to the full her deep understanding and wide knowledge.

In her best reviews, (those for example, on Dr. Cumming and Young), beneath the occasionally facetious wit, behind the sometimes ponderously long sentences, there lies the thew and sinew of masterly logic which unfolds with fascinating inevitability, compelling assent at every turn. It is this deftly capable handling of material which makes Miss Evans' review of, for example, Dr Cumming's 'Evangelical Teaching'[2] endure as literature now that its subject is long forgotten.

Miss Evans' personal friends have left us the picture of a woman who, although a wise talker, was above

[1] Westminster Review, October 1856. (Essays pp.300-325).
[2] Westminster Review, October 1855.

all an attentive listener. We might have inferred as much from her reviews. Wherever possible she tries a writer by his (or her) own standards. Only when she has firmly demonstrated inadequacies and inconsistencies (if such there be), which the writer himself could not but admit to, does she add her own comment. She uses this technique with effect against Lord Brougham.[1] Brougham had criticised Gibbon, the famous historian, for using mixed metaphors, and Miss Evans is able to select some grotesque examples of this particular stylistic vice from Brougham's own writings. At the beginning of her review of Miss Jewsbury's novel Constance Herbert[2], Miss Evans writes:

> "We measure her work by her own standards and find it deficient, when if measured by the standard of ordinary feminine literature, it would perhaps seem excellent."

In her devastating review of Dr Cumming's sermons and books she makes her mode of proceedure quite clear.

> "We identify ourselves with no one of the bodies whom he regards it as his special mission to attack: ..... It is simply as spectators that we criticise Dr Cumming's mode of warfare, ..."[3]

In many of Miss Evans' reviews the note of sympathetic tolerance, of good-humoured irony, which is so fundamental an ingredient of her genius as a novelist is conspicuously lacking. The introduction to the review of Dr Cumming's works, with its disdainful attack on Evangelical preachers can hardly be reconciled with George Eliot's sympathetic

[1] In her review 'Lord Brougham's Literature', in the Leader, 7th July, 1855. (Essays pp.137-143).

[2] In the 'Belles Lettres' section of the Westminster Review for July 1855. (Essays, pp.123-136).

[3] Essays p.165.

and tolerant treatment of the Reverend Rufus Lyon in Adam Bede. Nevertheless, Miss Evans often attempts to find some aspect of the work under review or of its author to praise. After a cruelly logical exposition of Charles Kingsley's childishly oversimplified view of history in Westward Ho![1], she makes an attempt to conclude the review in a more grateful frame of mind:

> "..... after all, the last word we have to say of 'Westward Ho!' is to thank Mr Kingsley for the great and beautiful things we have found in it, as our dominant feeling towards his works in general is that of high admiration."[2]

Miss Evans' severely critical review of Tennyson's Maud begins with a long tribute to his greatness:

> "As long as the English Lanquage is spoken, the word-music of Tennyson must charm the ear; and when English has become a dead language, his wonderful concentration of thought into luminous speech .... will cause him to be read as we read Homer, Pindar, and Horace."[3]

She ends her sneering review of Lord Brougham's literature by "hoping that the next time we meet with any production of his we may be able to express admiration as strongly as we have just now expressed the reverse."

These usually brief consolatory messages sound almost ludicrously inadequate in the highly charged atmosphere of Miss Evans' most destructive reviews - to the victim they must have seemed the last twist of the knife - but

[1] In the 'Belles Lettres' section of the Westminster Review for July 1855. (Essays pp. 123-137).

[2] Essays, p.133.

[3] 'Belles Lettres' section of the Westminster Review for October 1855. (Essays pp.190-198).

they are reassuring reminders to us that the note of personal sympathy though frequently eclipsed, was never quite lost.

In her article on the wit of Heinrich Heine, Miss Evans wrote "It may be said that there is no really fine writing in which wit has not an implicit, if not an explicit action."[1] It is the wit and humour of her reviews which gives them life and charm. In her article just quoted her own wit is sometimes as incisive and epigrammatic as Oscar Wilde's (or as Heine's): "A German Comedy is like a German sentence: you see no reason in its structure why it should ever come to an end, and you accept the conclusion as an arrangement of providence."[2] She is also the mistress of the technique, which is the secret of Lytton Strachey's satire,[3] of rendering a person's ideas ludicrous by associating them with his physical characteristics. She describes the conventional heroine of a typically bad species of contemporary novel thus:

> "Her eyes and her wit are both dazzling; her nose and her morals are alike free from any tendency to irregularity; she has a superb contralto and a superb intellect; she is perfectly well-dressed and perfectly religious; she dances like a sylph,[4] and reads the Bible in the original tongues."

Sometimes Miss Evans' humour is donnish and heavy. The

[1] Essays, p.220.
[2] Essays, p.221.
[3] I have in mind particularly Strachey's satirical portrait of Thomas Arnold in Eminent Victorians.
[4] Essays, p.302.

encumberance of the plural 'we' conventionally used by the reviewer, and the latent authority it implied, did tend to encourage tedious sallies.

Although much of the humour is explicit, the wit which gives edge to the satirical reviews is implicit in the review as a whole, and is less easily sampled in short quotations. In the Article 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists'[1] in which Miss Evans exposes the more absurd types of fiction written by women novelists, the 'silly novels' are divided into four fictitious genres; the 'Mind-and-Millinery' species; the 'Oracular' species; the 'White Neckcloth' species, and the 'Modern-Antique' species. This facetious classification is the occasion of some splendidly amusing satire.

One of Miss Evans' finest satirical reviews is that on'Lord Brougham's Literature'. Two days after she had written it, Miss Evans wrote to the Brays that she had written a 'castigation' of Lord Brougham. The Brays seem to have taken it for 'mere word quibbling', and provoked the following justification from Miss Evans:

> "I consider it criminal in a man to prostitute Literature for the purposes of his own vanity and this is what Lord Brougham has done."[2]

The letter makes it clear that the review was written in indignation and genuine moral disapproval. The prefactory paragraph of the review contains a cleverly articulated attack upon members of the 'privileged classes' - an

[1] In the Westminster Review for October 1856.
[2] Letters II, p.210.

approach which would put the average reader of the radical Westminster Review on his guard. Miss Evans goes on to suggest that idle members of these classes, finding that time weighs heavily on their hands, try to relieve their ennuie by undertaking rather pitiable manual tasks: "kings and emperors have turned their hands to making locks and sealing-wax; ambassadresses have collected old stockings for the sake of darning them."[1] No harm comes until these 'voluntary artisans' come to set up shop. Then snobbish people set a fashion for their shoddy wares to the detriment of the genuine tradesman or specialist. When we learn in the second paragraph that Lord Brougham has been doing 'literary lock- and poker-making - by writing third-rate biographies in the style of a literary hack' his status as an aristocratic dabbler becomes clear, and our antipathy to this type of leisured dilettante is firmly established.

The occasion for this review of Lord Brougham's Lives of Men of Letters and Science (first published in 1845-6), was their republication in a cheaper form. This too is turned to good account by Miss Evans who, whilst objecting to the original édition de luxe ('gratuitous mediocrities in a pretentious garb'), hints that even greater dangers to the public mind may attend their wider distribution in a cheaper edition.

Throughout the review the reader is never allowed to forget Lord Brougham's status as an idle aristocrat:

> ".... his lordship, in the elegant ease of his library, with no call impending but that of the lunch or dinner-bell, might at least atone for the

[1] Essays, p.138.

> "lack of originality by finish - might, if he has no jewels to offer us, at least polish his pebbles."[1]

Satirical wit is also effectively employed in 'Evangelical Teaching: Dr.Cumming', and 'Worldliness and Other Worldliness'.[2]

These great satirical reviews are amongst the greatest and most memorable Marian Evans wrote; memorable because they are essays in a genre which finds little expression in her novels. They illustrate a side of her nature which is not often found in her letters or elsewhere, but which was at this time in her life an integral part of her thought and outlook.

But not all the reviews she wrote were satirical or witty. Topics such as 'The Future of German Philosophy',[3] were treated with appropriately learned thoroughness. Miss Evans wrote two articles based on her travels in Germany.[4] In 'Three Months in Weimar' the tone is calm, relaxed and descriptive. The article sets out to be nothing more than a personal impression, and the informal tone is indicated by the use of the first person singular. There are feeling descriptions of the countryside round Weimar:

> "To any one who loves Nature in her gentle aspects, who delights in the chequered shade on a summer

[1] Essays, p.139

[2] Westminster Review January 1857. (Essays, pp.335-386).

[3] Leader, 28th July 1855. (Essays pp.148-153).

[4] 'Three Months in Weimar' in Fraser's Magazine (June 1855) (Essays pp.82-96), and 'Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar' in Fraser's Magazine for July 1855, (Essays pp.96-123).

> morning, and in a walk on the corn-clad upland at sunset, within sight of a little town nestled among the trees below, I say - come to Weimar."[1]

She pauses to digress about German food and about German washing habits. The article makes pleasant enough reading and it is interesting as an account of Marian Evans' impressions of Weimar, but if its author were not known, it could cheerfully be consigned to oblivion.

'Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar' is another essay in the same genre - it is a sequel to 'Three Months in Weimar' - but it is more noteworthy for it contains one of the first friendly reviews of Wagner's music in the English press. Miss Evans supports the principle of musical innovation, praises the composer who writes his own libretto so competently, and applauds Wagner's attempt to fuse the dramatic, poetic and musical elements of opera into an organic whole. The review also contains an interesting description of the great Liszt whom Marian Evans and George Lewes met at this time. "I never saw features having at once so strong and clear an outline and so rich a gamut of expression; ...."[2] Articles of this kind are welcome reminders that Marian Evans was to find her true métier in creative fiction writing. The descriptions of people and places, though they cannot fairly be compared with the more extended descriptions in the novels, do at least shew that Miss Evans' talents were never all of the inkhorn variety.

[1] Essays p.84.
[2] Essays p.98.

II Marian Evans and the Feminist Movement.

It seems almost inevitable that such an outstanding woman as Marian Evans should have interested herself in the status of woman in society, and her rôle in the world of letters. Had she not lived to become a novelist, her translations and her position, unique for a woman, as editor of an important quarterly would have earned her a place among the great women of the century. Her union with George Lewes must have provoked a fundamental re-assessment of the questions and problems of marriage and divorce, for, as the letters she wrote from Germany indicate, it was a calm decision taken only after deep thought. Her interest in the social and political rights of women, however, dates from the years of her editorship, when G.H.Lewes was still only a 'miniature Mirabeau' to her.

It is probable that Marian Evans' interest in the political rights of women began with her acquaintance with Barbara Leigh Smith[1] in 1852. Miss Evans is said[2] to have been a frequent visitor at Miss Leigh Smith's progressive Portman Hill school situated near the Edgware Road. The two women certainly became very friendly. It was probably Barbara Leigh Smith who

[1] Barbara Leigh Smith (Later Madame Bodichon) was born in 1827. She was brought up in a permissive and progressive home, and founded the amazingly progressive Portman Hill School. Her life and work is well treated in Emily Davies and Girton College by Barbara Stephen (published 1927).

[2] Emily Davies and Girton College, p.37.

encouraged Marian Evans' interest in the position and rights of married women, for in 1856 she sent her a copy of a petition which proposed that a married woman should have a right to her own property equal to the husband's over his. Although there is no conclusive evidence, the tone of Miss Evans' letter to Sara Hennell written on 18th January 1856 suggests that the petition received her support. Years later, Miss Evans was strongly in favour of providing a university education for able women. She subscribed £50 to help to finance the foundation of Girton College, Cambridge. This seems to have been the extent of her practical contribution. The articles and reviews she wrote give an indication of her theoretical position.

In her reviews of Keightley's Life and Opinions of Milton,[1] she singles out for special attention Milton's Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce in which he pleads for 'conscionable and tender pity' for those who have 'unwarily ..... made themselves the bondmen of a luckless and helpless matrimony.' Milton, Miss Evans suggests, was pleading his own cause just as Mrs Norton[2] had recently done in her "Letter to the Queen" (1855) in which she had proposed an amendment of the existing divorce law. Miss Evans suggests that Milton's ideas might usefully reinforce what Mrs Norton had to say on this 'painful subject'.

[1] In the Leader for 4th August 1855 (Essays pp.154-157).
[2] Caroline Norton (1808-77) had a public quarrel with her estranged husband who refused to pay her an allowance.

In 'Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft', a review published in the Leader[1] Miss Evans compares Margaret Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1855) with Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). Miss Evans' tribute to the former book may be taken as describing also her own attitude to the subject:

> "There is no exaggeration of woman's moral excellence or intellectual capabilities; no injudicious insistence on her fitness for this or that function hitherto engrossed by men; but a calm plea for the removal of unjust laws and artificial restrictions, so that the possibilities of her nature may have full development, ..."[2]

The review is principally concerned with the anomaly that whereas men are apt to think intelligence and culture a fault in their wives, they are frequently the slaves of ignorant and feeble-minded women. Miss Evans declares herself firmly in favour of the culture and education of women.

> "For our own parts, we see no consistent or commodious medium between the old plan of corporal discipline and that thorough education of women which will make them rational beings in the highest sense of the word. Wherever weakness is not harshly controlled it must govern, ... "[3]

Miss Evans endorses what Margaret Fuller writes about the folly of trying to generalize about the characteristics of womenkind. She agrees that there are women

[1] 13th October 1855, (Essays, 199-206).
[2] Essays, p.200
[3] Essays, p.203

capable of undertaking any sort of work from carpentering to being a sea captain. Miss Evans points out that many a man of genius pays a heavy price for not encouraging his wife to share his inspirations and 'secret yearnings'.

> "The precious meridian years of many a man of genius have to be spent in the toil of routine, that an 'establishment' may be kept up for a woman who can understand none of his secret yearnings, who is fit for nothing but to sit in her drawing-room like a doll-Madonna in her shrine."[1]

The folly of the brilliant man who expects his wife to be a harmless ornament to his life was later to form the substance of the Rosamond/Lydgate story in Middlemarch.

In her article Woman in France: Madame de Sablé,[2] Miss Evans attempts to account for the prolific intellectual and literary life of cultured women in eighteenth-century France. One reason, she thinks, was 'the laxity of opinion and practice with regard to the marriage-tie.'[3] She continues:

> "..... it is undeniable, that unions formed in the maturity of thought and feeling, and grounded only on inherent fitness and mutual attraction, tended to bring women into more intelligent sympathy with men and to heighten and complicate their share in the political drama."[4]

The influence on Miss Evans of Feuerbach's doctrine that marriage should be a 'free bond' of love is evident in that review. But Miss Evans, mindful of her responsibilities to her readers, was careful not to advocate extra-

[1] Essays, pp. 204-5

[2] Westminster Review, October 1854. (Essays pp. 52-82).

[3] Essays, p. 56.

[4] Essays, p. 56.

marital relationships.

Two articles, Woman in France and Silly Novels by Lady Novelists were concerned with the contributions women writers have made, or are fitted to make, to literature. Miss Evans believed that women were capable of doing a wide range of tasks then generally considered the exclusive preserve of men. She advocated the extension to women of fuller cultural and intellectual education, but she never doubted that the feminine temperament was different from the masculine. These two articles were based on the clear understanding that a woman's literary talents lie in a different direction from those of a man:

> "Now, we think it is an immense mistake to maintain that there is no sex in literature. .... in art and literature, which imply the action of the whole being, in which every fibre of the nature is engaged, in which every peculiar modification of the individual makes itself felt, woman has something specific to contribute" ..... she "will necessarily have a class of sensations and emotions - the maternal ones - which must remain unknown to man; .."[1]

A woman's emotional response to life she believed to be governed also by other factors, such as her inferior physical strength.

The belief that sympathy and tenderness (both 'maternal' feelings) are particularly feminine attributes is seen throughout Miss Evans' reviews. In reviewing A Lost Love, a novel by Ashford Owen, she praises the authoress for "keeping to the delineation of what a woman's experience and observation bring within her special powers."[2]

[1] Essays, p.53.
[2] Westminster Review, January 1855 ('Belles Lettres' section).

In her review of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Aurora Leigh she writes that the work exhibits the peculiar powers of her sex by adding to 'masculine vigour' feminine subtlety of perception, quickness of sensibility, and perceptiveness.[1] In Women in France Miss Evans traces the excellence of the literature of the French Salons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries partly to the fact that they wrote as women 'without affecting manly views or suppressing womanly ones'.[2] The Salons were the most 'indisputable source of feminine culture; ...' and this was because they were open to both sexes who discussed together everything from philosophy to court scandal. The essentially feminine writings of the women of the French Salons combined womanly sentiment and perspicacity with a dread of ponderous intellectual argument. Their writings abounded in piquant wit and airy charm.

Madame de Sablé's own books and letters were elegant and charming, but her real talent lay in stimulating others to write: "She seconded a man's wit with understanding - one of the best offices which womanly intellect has rendered to the advancement of culture; .."[3] It was Madame de Sablé who inspired La Rochefauld's famous Maximes. The review ends with a dignified plea:

> "Let the whole field of reality be laid open to woman as well as to man, and then that which is peculiar in her mental modification, instead of being

[1] Westminster Review January 1857. ('Belles Lettres' section)
[2] Essays p.54.
[3] Essays p.74.

> "as it is now, a source of discord and repulsion between the sexes, will be found to be a necessary complement to the truth and beauty of life. Then we shall have that marriage of minds which alone can blend all the hues of thought and feeling into a lovely rainbow of promise for the harvest of human happiness."[1]

'Woman in France' attempts to shew the heights that feminine literature can achieve when given the right conditions. 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' is a merciless exposée of the sorts of debased fiction being written by women in England in the early 1850's. Miss Evans suggests that such stilted melodramatic and unrealistic writing can, perhaps, be pardoned in a woman who has to write to earn her bread. But most woman novelists appear neither underpaid nor over-taxed, but rich and leisured. These wealthy authoresses are treated with the same telling scorn as Lord Brougham, another aristocratic dabbler. Miss Evans sees a silly novel written by a woman as doubly pernicious. It offends against principles of good art, and it tends to confirm the popular prejudice against the better education of women.

> "'After all'," say the imaginary opponents of feminine culture in the review, "'when a woman gets some knowledge, see what use she makes of it! Her knowledge remains acquisition, instead of passing into culture; ...'"[2]

Miss Evans tries to correct the misconception:

> "A really cultured woman, like a really cultured man, is all the simpler and less obtrusive for her knowledge; it has made her see herself and her opinions

[1] Essays p.316.
[2] Essays p.316.

> "in something like just proportions. ... In conversation she is the least formidable of women, because she understands you, without wanting to make you aware that you can't understand her. She does not give you information, which is the raw material of culture, - she gives you sympathy, which is its subtlest essence."[1]

Miss Evans felt that much that was being written by women would have been better written by men. Her concern about the 'most rotten and trashy' kind of feminine literature was acute, for she saw that women were prejudicing their own cause. A truly worthy and representtative feminine literature depended firstly upon the recognition by women writers that they were women, with women's feelings and sympathies, and an honest admission that their literature should not be modelled on masculine literature. Secondly, it depended upon the termination of the common male prejudice against the educated woman, and an understanding that a clever woman would be able to benefit by being admitted to the fund of ideas then commonly supposed to be the preserve of the male.

It is interesting that the question of women's suffrage does not seem to have been considered by Miss Evans as a serious possibility. It is curious that Miss Evans was always at pains to imply that her reviews were written by a man. There are numerous small indications of this in the reviews, and she wrote to Charles Bray of Evangelical Teaching: Dr Cumming, that "The article appears to have produced a strong impression, and that impression would be a little counteracted if the author

[1] Essays p.317.

"were known to be a *woman*".[1] Although Miss Evans supported many aspects of the feminist movement in theory, she was shy of making the practical gesture of acknowledging her own writings to be the work of a woman.

[1] *Letters*, II, p.218.

Marian Evans' philosophical and religious position as revealed in her articles and reviews.

It is disappointing that Miss Evans wrote only one review of a specifically philosophical work during the period under consideration. The review was entitled 'The Future of German Philosophy',[1] and was primarily concerned with a work by a German philosopher, O.F.Gruppe (1804-1876) entitled Gegenwart und Zukunft der Philosophie in Deutschland. This interesting though brief review reveals that Miss Evans was thoroughly familiar with philosophical concepts and terminology. She shews a knowledge of J.S.Mill's famous A System of Logic (1843) and quotes Bacon who, by his rejection of the Principle of Authority and his appeal to experiment, had anticipated the attitude of Gruppe and of so many of the nineteenth-century philosophers.

> "It is, he (Herr Gruppe) says, simply to a reform in method that we owe all the splendid achievements of modern science, and it is only by the extension of that reform to every department of philosophical enquiry that here also any of what Bacon calls 'fruit' can be obtained."[2]

In the review the existence of *a priori* ideas is disputed. Universal terms are in fact empirical generalisations arrived at by inductive reasoning. Miss Evans dissociates herself from Kant who believed in the validity of synthetic *a priori* statements. For her, as for Gruppe, "every analytical judgement has previously been synthetic."

[1] The review was printed in the Leader for 28th July 1855. (Essays, pp. 148-153). Gruppe's work was published in that year.

[2] Essays, p.150.

Absract ideas are based, ultimately on 'a series of ascending generalizations'. The review ends with a richly characteristic metaphor:

> Gruppe "renounces the attempt to climb to heaven by the rainbow bridge of'the high priori road', and is content humbly to use his muscles in treading the uphill à posteriori path which will lead, not indeed to heaven, but to an eminence whence we amy see very bright and blessed things on earth."

The rejection of metaphysical speculation, the emphasis on knowledge derived empirically from experience, the choice of the 'uphill à posteriori path' characterised also Miss Evans' views on religion. In this sphere she adopted the approach categorised in her article 'Introduction to Genesis'[1] as extreme heterodoxy: which

> "holds no conviction that removes the Hebrew Scriptures from the common category of early national records, which are a combination of myth and legend, gradually clarifying at their later stage into genuine history."[2]

The preference for experiment rather than 'revealed truth', for natural explanation rather than supernatural, was closely aligned with her empirical philosophical position.

As was suggested above, Miss Evans' final solution to the vexed question of the relationship of the scriptural word to religious experience and morality lay beyond what would be admitted by one who was solely a historical critic. She found in Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity a means of reconciling religious feelings with a sceptical approach to the dogma of Christianity, and of re-interpreting the altruism, piety and reverence of Christian

[1] Leader 12th January 1856. (Essays, pp. 255-260).
[2] Essays p.257.

worship and including them in a humanist philosophy.

Nowhere is Miss Evans' debt to Feuerbach more obvious than in her biting review of Dr Cumming's sermons and books, 'Evangelical Teaching: Dr Cumming'. Her approach is interesting, for she concerns herself less with the falsehood of many of Dr Cumming's doctrines than the moral tendency of his writings: "we must be understood as altogether declining any doctrinal discussion."[1] The attack is directed against three 'striking characteristics' of Dr Cumming's writing. Firstly his 'unscrupulosity of statement', secondly his 'absence of genuine charity', thirdly his 'perverted moral judgement'. In the first section Miss Evans is chiefly concerned to point out the illogicalities and inconsistencies of Dr Cumming's writings. Her technique, here as elsewhere, is to display the 'argumentative white lies' by apt quotation, and to expose the latent contradictions. This is done with merciless logic:

> "One of two things, therefore: either, he uses language without the slightest appreciation of its real meaning; or, the assertions he makes on one page are directly contradicted by the arguments he urges on another."[2]

Dr Cumming's miss statements are, Miss Evans believes, a direct consequence of his dogmatic beliefs: "a result of the intellectual and moral distortion of view which is inevitably produced by assigning to dogmas ... the place and authority of first truths."[3] This criticism is based

[1] Essays p.165.
[2] Essays p.177.
[3] Essays p.166.

on the assumption made by Feuerbach that 'religion is the dream of the human mind', that what truth there is in religion lies in its exaltation and objectivisation of human feeling; that religious doctrines are the root of much that is pernicious and evil, for they are not objectively true, and therefore should never be made the basis of morality. Miss Evans points out that morality is dependent on the regulation of feeling by intellect. Amiable impulses do not lead to moral action unless they are endorsed by reason. This tallies closely with Feuerbach's statement that

> "Wherever religion places itself in contradiction with reason, it places itself also in contradiction with the moral sense."[1]

Miss Evans goes on to observe that morality is in general found in inverse proportion as religious sects exalt feeling above intellect. Direct inspiration often leads to immoral action (this recalls what Feuerbach wrote about the dangers of faith). Dr Cumming interprets the letter of religion, but ignores its essence,

> "He insists on good works as a sign of justifying faith, as labours to be achieved to the glory of God, but he rarely represents them as the spontaneous, necessary outflow of a soul filled with divine love."[2]

The whole review is a demonstration of Feuerbach's idea that:

> "Only by self-deception, only by the silliest subterfuges, only by the most miserable, transparent sophisms" does the believer in Revelation reconcile contradictions.[3]

[1] Essence of Chr. p.244.
[2] Essays, p.162.
[3] Essence of Chr. p.210.

Dr Cumming seems unaware that many 'eminently instructed and earnest men' regard the scriptures as 'a series of historical documents', and that many others 'find the dogmatic scheme built on the letter of the scriptures opposed to their profoundest moral convictions.'[1] He seems to proceed on the false syllogism:

> "Whatever tends to the glory of God is true; it is for the glory of God that infidels should be as bad as possible; therefore whatever tends to shew that infidels are as bad as possible is true."[2]

A second characteristic of Dr Cumming is his 'absence of genuine charity'. His mind is narrow and sectarian. Love to him, Miss Evans suggests, is a kind of theoretical charity towards Christians of his own persuasion, and enmity towards those who do not share his views: Roman Catholics, Puseyites, infidels:

> "Dr Cumming's religion may demand a tribute of love, but it gives a charter to hatred; it may enjoin charity, but it fosters all uncharitableness."[3]

In his sermons Dr Cumming tends to regard his fellow men as "agents of hell, as automata through whom Satan plays his game upon earth".[4] The morality he preaches:

> "... Is likely to nourish egoistic complacency and pretension, a hard and condemnatory spirit towards one's fellow-men, and a busy occupation with the minutiae of events, instead of a reverent contemplation of great facts and a wise application of great principles."[5]

[1] Essays, p.171.
[2] Essays, p.174.
[3] Essays, p.180.
[4] Essays, p.180.
[5] Essays, p.182.

To the follower of Feuerbach such a fiercely exclusive and unloving creed is the supreme danger of religious faith. The essence of Christianity is held to lie in its sanction of altruistic human love, and the picture of the spiritually arrogant and unloving believer haunts the pages of The Essence of Christianity:

> "The religious man ... is exposed to the danger of illiberality, of spiritual selfishness and greed. Therefore, to the religious man at least, the irreligious or un-religious man appears lawless,[1] arbitrary, haughty, frivolous; ....."

The third emphasized characteristic of Dr Cumming is his 'perverted moral judgement'. This Miss Evans points out, Dr Cumming shares with all who hold Evangelical views. In Dr Cumming's morality, genuinely altruistic behaviour can spring only from religious duty or the love of Christ. Hence, morally good behaviour is not possible in an unbeliever. The disinterested love of a man for his fellows or his family is a mere fiction. True virtue exists only in actions done to the glory of God or Christ. This alone, he believes, is a moral motive.

Such a creed cannot be satisfactory to a thinking believer, for the proposition "All good actions are motivated by the glory of God", besides being untrue to experience, quickly involves one in a circular argument. Feuerbach's position was almost diametrically opposed to Cumming's:

> "Benevolence and justice are strong only in proportion as they are directly and inevitably called into action[2] by their proper objects."

[1] Essence of Chr. p.63.
[2] Essence of Chr. p.187.

In the concluding paragraphs of the review, Miss Evans offers her own view of the connection between religion, reason and morality. There is nothing in her view which would be unfamiliar or uncongenial to Feuerbach, but the confidence with which she expresses herself reminds us that she had made Feuerbach's ideas her own. She argues that:

> "The idea of God is really moral in its influence - it really cherishes all that is best and loveliest in man - only when God is contemplated as sympathising with the pure elements of human feeling, as possessing infinitely all those attributes[1] which we recognize to be moral in humanity."

Although she fully realizes the importance of human feeling as a factor in moral conduct, Miss Evans insists that it should be guided and strengthened by reason for:

> " .... Right and reason are synonymous. The fundamental faith for man is faith in the result of a brave, honest, and steady use of all his faculties."[2]

The modern reader may well be alarmed at the imprecise way Miss Evans uses the words 'right' and 'reason', but at any rate, the humanist bias of her mind is firmly established.

[1] Essays, p.187
[2] Essays, p.189.

V

Marian Evans' Views on the Nature and Place Of Morality in Literature.

Since the time of Plato all who have attempted systematic literary criticism have debated whether literature should aim primarily to teach or to delight. Amongst those who have inclined to the latter view, was Henry James who in 1888 published a criticism of George Eliot's didactic purpose as a novelist. She had called Le Père Goriot 'a hateful book'. James wrote that this comment

> "illuminates the author's general attitude with regard to the novel, which, for her, was not primarily a picture of life, capable of deriving a high value from its form, but a moralised fable, the last word of a philosophy endeavouring to teach by example".[1]

Few critics today would accept James' criticism as fair. Miss Evans' reviews shew that the age-old debate about the function of art in general the place of didacticism in the novel in particular, were fully and deeply considered by her. Her aversion to novels which were only 'moralized fables', seeking to exemplify a certain pattern of virtuous behaviour was clearly established.

The question of the function of art belongs to the realm of aesthetics rather than ethics. Yet to Miss Evans who believed that art was the nearest thing to life, the aesthetic question 'Is this good as a novel?' tended to resolve itself into a moral question 'Suppose the characters and situations of the novel were living and real, could we then pronounce them to be in any sense moral?' Hence, in many reviews she began by considering aspects

[1]Henry James, Partial Portraits (London 1888), p.50.

of the novel, but ended up considering the nature of moral behaviour in real life.

In the earlier reviews Miss Evans was pre-occupied with the moral tendency of the literature - novel, play or volume of poetry - she was reviewing. She believed that literature should be broadly moral, but emphatically denied that it should be moralising. Her persistent aversion to overt didacticism in a novel is clearly seen in her review of Charles Kingsley's Westward Ho!:

> " ... the preacher overcomes the painter often, which, though creditable to the writer's earnestness and honesty, injures his work as a mere work of art."[1]

In a more lengthy review of Kingsley's novel for the Westminster Review Miss Evans considers Kingsley's faults and excellencies as a writer in more detail. She notices that he has a genius for evoking past scenes in an imaginative and picturesque way, but that he is inept at philosophising:

> "Poet and artist in a rare degree, his passionate impetuosity and theological prepossessions inexorably forbid that he should ever be a philosopher, he sees, feels, and paints vividly, but he theorizes illogically and moralises absurdly."[2]

His moralising tendency or 'parsonic habit' leads to a one-sided presentation of character, and a 'black and white' interpretation of history in which all characters are seen as either good or evil. Miss Evans finds this a childish oversimplification, and a serious misinter-

[1] Essays, p.123. Leader 19th May, 1855.
[2] Essays, p.126.

pretation of historical facts. Kingsley fails to shew that "human deeds are made up of the most subtly intermixed good and evil."[1] Miss Evans' two main objections to the book are, therefore, that it is didactic, and that, insofar as it fails to be faithful to historical facts or to the realities of human psychology, it is unrealistic.

After Westward Ho! in the 'Belles Lettres' section[2] Miss Evans reviews another novel, Constance Herbert by Geraldine Jewsbury. This book is avowedly didactic, and in criticising it in moral terms, Miss Evans claims to be trying it by its own standards. Miss Jewsbury claims in her Envoi to be 'articulating' the principle that "Nothing they (the characters of her book) renounce for sake of a higher principle will prove to have been worth the keeping."[3] The story is concerned with the renunciation of the heroine, Constance Herbert, of marriage, the sacrifice of inclination to duty, in order that she shall not run the risk of having children who will inherit the family trait of insanity. The man she loves turns out to have been "an egoistic shallow worldling",[4] so that duty is shewn to have recommended a course of action which time shews also to have been fortunate. The 'sacrifice' turns out to have been a lucky escape, not a hard renunciation. To Miss Evans, the moral, that self-interest and altruism are seen ultimately to recommend

[1] Essays, p.130
[2] of the Westminster Review for July 1855.
[3] Essays, p.134
[4] Essays, p.134

the same course of action is neither true to experience, nor valid as a moral principle. Miss Evans sees that the moral value of renunciation depends largely upon the fact that the renunciation made is a genuine sacrifice which is not alleviated or obviated by the passage of time:

> "And it is this very perception that the thing we renounce is precious, is something never to be compensated to us, which constitutes the beauty and heroism of renunciation."[1]

Hence Miss Evans unequivocally dissociates herself from the doctrine of psychological hedonism which postulates as a psychological fact that a man is capable of desiring only his own happiness, and that altruism is in reality only enlightened self-interest. She objects that Miss Jewsbury substitutes "something extrinsic as a motive to action, instead of the immediate impulse of love or justice, which alone makes an action truly moral."[2] Miss Evans sets aside all utilitarian considerations of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. She holds that an action derives moral worth not, as Bentham, J.S.Mill, and Bray believed, because it springs from a rational consideration of its probable consequences, and their probable influence on the well-being of all concerned, but because it is motivated by a moral sentiment arising in spontaneous response to the situation in the mind of the agent. The phrases Miss Evans uses; the

[1] Essays, pp.134-5.
[2] Essays, p.135.

'immediate impulse of love or justice', and the mention of 'the beauty and heroism of renunciation', remind us that Miss Evans never entirely outgrew the religious teaching of her early youth. She seems to have inherited from her religious upbringing a love of virtue and self-sacrifice grounded upon deep feelings of reverence for and sympathy with her fellow men. The following quotation from J.S.Mill's Utilitarianism makes clear the wide gulf which separates his attitude to renunciation from Miss Evans'.

> "All honour to those who can abnegate for themselves the personal enjoyment of life, when by such renunciation they contribute worthily to increase the amount of happiness in the world; but he who does it, or professes to do it, for any other purpose, is no more deserving of admiration than the ascetic mounted on his pillar. He may be an inspiriting proof of what men can do, but assuredly not an example of what they should"[1]

The theme of renunciation features largely in all George Eliot's novels.

The most full discussion of the place of morality in fiction occurs in an article, 'The Morality of Wilhelm Meister'.[2] Miss Evans confines herself to a single aspect of Goethe's book, the charge of immorality. Her style is terse, logical and methodical. The note of good humoured irony is absent, as are the digressions and illustrations with which she often embellishes her reviews. Miss Evans denies that the book is immoral. Although it appears so

[1] Utilitarianism (Everyman's Library Ed., 1962 reprint) p.15.
[2] Leader, 21st June 1855, (Essays, pp.143-147).

to some minds, "its morality has a grander orbit than any which can be measured by the calculations of the pulpit and of ordinary Literature." [1] Goethe shews no moral bias, "no hatred of bad actions, no warm sympathy with good ones," First, Miss Evans crushes the argument that lack of evident moral involvement in the novelist leads necessarily to his book's being an immoral one. Her answer is in the spirit of her criticism of Kingsley's Westward Ho!, but she takes it a stage further in this article. She argues that the novelist, when he becomes didactic and writes for or against his characters, gives an impression of 'contriving coldly' or talking artificially'. In other words he is teaching at the expense of his art. It is another case of the preacher overcoming the painter.

Secondly, Miss Evans considers the view that a book is immoral if the writer fails to contrive rewards for his good characters and befitting punishments for the villains. She points out that the emotion of satisfaction experienced by the reader when the villain receives condign punishment "is no more essentially moral than the satisfaction which used to be felt in whipping culprits at the cart tail." [2] Miss Evans thus rejects these two charges made against the morality of Wilhelm Meister.

Having cleared the ground, she proceeds to the heart of the matter:

> "It is said that some of the scenes and incidents are such as the refined moral taste of these days

[1] Essays, p.144.
[2] Essays, p.145.

> will not admit to be proper subjects for art, that to depict irregular relations in all the charms they really have for human nature, and to associate lovely qualities with vices which society makes a brand of outlawry, implies a toleration which is at once a sign and a source of perverted moral sentiment."[1]

The criticism concealed in the phrase 'refined moral taste of these days' immediately tells us that Miss Evans' sympathies do not lie with those whose moral fastidiousness cannot stomach sexual laxity in a novel. The question she now asks is whether Goethe has overstepped the limit, and attempted to represent characters and situations which lie outside the legitimate sphere of the novelist's art. If he has not overstepped the limit, she asks whether there is anything in his mode of treatment which makes the novel pernicious. Miss Evans believes that:

> "the sphere of art extends wherever there is beauty either in form, or thought, or feeling ..... The tragedian may take for his subject the most hideous passions if they serve as the background for some divine deed of tenderness or heroism, and so the novelist may place before us every aspect of human life where there is some trait of love, or endurance, or helplessness to call forth our best sympathies".[2]

Balzac, "perhaps the most wonderful writer of fiction the world has ever seen", has often overstepped the limit, but Goethe in his novel keeps within the legitimate sphere of art which Miss Evans has just defined. "Everywhere he brings us into the presence of living, generous humanity - mixed and erring ... but saved by noble impulse ... ."[3]

[1] Essays, p.145.
[2] Essays, p.146.
[3] Essays, p.146.

Goethe's mode of treatment, balanced, realistic, free from melodrama or exaggeration, seems to Miss Evans to be truly moral in its influence. In Goethe's 'large tolerance' lies his moral superiority. This leads Miss Evans to make the memorable statement that "the line between the virtuous and the vicious, so far from being a necessary safeguard to morality,is itself an immoral fiction."

The article is a model of cleverly articulated aesthetic theorizing, and it contains in summary all Miss Evans' leading ideas on the subject; her aversion to the manipulation of fictitious characters by their author for didactic ends, her belief that the sphere of art should, upon conditions, be co-extensive with real life, the high value she lays upon the awakening of human sympathy as a factor in the morality of fiction.

It is the lack of this last quality which leads Miss Evans to condemn Tennyson's narrative poem Maud. The poem seems to her to be written in a spirit of 'narrow scorn which piques itself on its scorn of narrowness, and a passion which clothes itself in exaggerated conceits.'[1] Hatred seems to be the keynote of the poem:

> "hatred of commerce and coal mines, hatred of young gentlemen with flourishing whiskers and padded coats, adoration of a clear-cut face, and faith in War as the unique social regenerator."[2]

In a short but important article 'The Antigone and its Moral',[3] Miss Evans illustrates and elaborates the

[1] Essays, p.192
[2] Essays, p.197
[3] Leader 29th March, 1856. (Essays, pp.261-265).

point she made in her article on 'The Morality of Wilhelm Meister' that 'the line between the virtuous and the vicious is .... an immoral fiction', In Sophocles' play, Antigone finds herself in an insoluble moral dilemma. The ties of religion and of kinship demand that she should bury her dead brother Polynices, but Creon, ruler of Thebes, has issued an edict forbidding her to do so. Here, "the impulse of sisterly piety which allies itself with reverence for the Gods, clashes with the duties of citizenship; two principles, both having their validity, are at war with each."[1] The moral dilemma confronting Antigone is genuine, and it is not possible to draw a neat line between Antigone and Creon, the unjustly persecuted heroine and the merciless tyrant, the virtuous and the vicious. Both are, in a sense, acting rightly, and both are conscious that "in following out one principle, they are laying themselves open to just blame for transgressing another, ..."[2]

Miss Evans sees the struggle of Antigone and Creon as fundamental to the human situation. It represents

> "that struggle between elemental tendencies and established laws by which the outer life of man is gradually and painfully being brought into harmony with his inward needs."[3]

Until this harmony is complete, "we shall never be able to attain a great right without also doing a wrong." Reformers and revolutionaries, martyrs and saints, who by

[1] Essays, p.263.
[2] Essays, p.264.
[3] Essays, p.264.

their oustanding qualities effect spiritual, moral or physical improvements" are never fighting against evil o only; they are also placing themselves in opposition to a good - to a valid principle which cannot be infringed without harm."

The awareness that nearly all activities are at once right and wrong is deeply embedded in Miss Evans' mind. It enlarges our understanding of her objection to Kingsley's oversimplified division of characters into the good and noble, and the evil and subversive in Westward Ho! It helps us to see more clearly why she objected to the 'narrow scorn' of Tennyson's Maud. On a more personal level it helps to shew why she later ceased to publish controversial articles and became such a cautious advocate of reform. The awareness that no protest is made, no injustice abolished, no reform effected, without a corresponding evil arising had been borne upon her by her own personal experiences. Her brave and resolute refusal in January 1842 to go to church had caused her father grave worry and concern, and her elopement with Lewes had caused pain and embarrassment to those who loved her most dearly.

The insoluble moral dilemma springing from the clash between a character's own moral conviction, and the conventions of the society in which he lives is a recurring feature of George Eliot's novels; one thinks of Felix Holt's dilemma, ought he to pursue his political career or to marry?, of the conflict in Dinah Morris' mind in Adam Bede about whether she should continue as an evangelical preacher, or marry Adam; Romola is perplexed

that 'law is sacred', but that 'rebellion may be sacred too'.

Such awareness of the moral ambiguity of actions frequently leads Miss Evans to an acceptance of the status quo, and an unwillingness to commit herself to the cause of reform. In the concluding paragraphs of her article 'The Antigone and Its Moral' is summed up all that is conservative in Miss Evans' paradoxically conservative-reforming outlook:

> "Wherever the strength of a man's intellect, or moral sense, or affection brings him into opposition with the rules which society has sanctioned, there is renewed the conflict between Antigone and Creon; such a man must not only dare to be right, he must also dare to be wrong - to shake faith, to wound friendship, perhaps, to hem in his own powers. Like Antigone, he may fall a victim to the struggle, and yet he can never earn the name of a blameless martyr any more than the society - the Creon he has defied,[1] can be branded as a hypocritical tyrant."

[1] Essays, p.265.

"Art is the nearest thing to Life": Marian Evans and the Concept of Realism

In her articles, Marian Evans frequently tries the work under review by the standards of realism. Whether she is reviewing a philosophical work, a novel or a volume of poems, she is concerned to assess the extent to which the work corresponds to the facts, to empirical evidence, or to the realities of life. In the earlier reviews she frequently concentrated, as has been seen, on the moral implications of the work in question. In the later reviews she shews a dominant interest in realism and its place in fiction. In the review of Westward Ho! she praises the genuine description of external nature flowing from 'spontaneous observation and enjoyment!'[1] She calls Ashford Owen's book A Lost Love 'a real picture of a woman's life'.[2] She condemns the scenes in Shirley Brooks's novel Aspen Court as 'vitiated by the constant presence of unreality.'

Even when she is reviewing a sociological work such as Riehl's, as she does in the article 'The Natural History of German Life',[3] she frequently digresses about the place of realism - the everyday life of ordinary people - in literature. This review shews, more clearly perhaps than

[1] Essays, p.124.

[2] She reviewed this in the Westminster Review for October 1855, ('Belles Lettres' section).

[3] Westminster Review, July 1856. The works reviewed are Die burgerliche Gesellschaft (published 1851) and Land und Leute (published 1853) both by Wilhelm Heinrich von Riehl.

any other, that Miss Evans was becoming seriously involved with the problem of fiction writing in general, and the realities of peasant and working-class life which were to feature so largely in Scenes of Clerical Life and so many of her later novels.

Miss Evans is always on the side of thorough and careful study which she believes to be a necessary preparation for a novel no less than for a scientific or philosophical work. But she realises that attention to detail cannot alone make a good book. A skilful writer will select his material carefully, and present it artistically. In her review of The Progress of the Intellect she praises the author for his scholarly qualities; a combination of minute and thorough erudition with a practical and progressive outlook, but she complains that he does not select his findings interestingly, but drags the reader through the laboratory of his thought:

> "... and so the scholar, who would produce a work of general utility, must not drag his readers through the whole region of his researches, but simply present them with an impressive coup d'oeil."[1]

In her review of Carlyle's biography of John Sterling[2] she digresses interestingly about the qualities of good biographical writing. Instead of the usual dreary compilations of letters and details, she calls for a

> "... real 'Life', setting forth briefly and vividly

[1] Essays, p.36.

[2] Westminster Review, January 1852, 'Contemporary Literature of England' section.

> "the man's inward and outward struggles, aims, and achievements, so as to make clear the meaning which his experience has for his fellows."[1]

This Carlyle has succeeded in writing. In his biography of John Sterling he excells in the artistic selection and presentation of material: "We are told neither too little nor too much."

Miss Evans' intolerance of pedantry is seen in her brief review of an edition of S.T.Coleridge's 'Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton'.[2] She comments that

> "Coleridge was not so great a man as every scrap of his must needs be interesting, ... and these scraps of lectures would scarcely gain admittance into any good periodical if they were offered as original articles."

Soon after it was published, Miss Evans reviewed Volume III of Ruskin's Modern Painters.[3] In her enthusiatic review of the work, Miss Evans concentrated her attention on Ruskin's emphasis on the representational function of art. It was her tribute to Ruskin that he brought various studies to bear on "one great purpose", that of shewing the place of realism in life and art:

> "The truth of infinite value that he teaches is realism - the doctrine that all truth and beauty are attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite substantial reality."

In much of Miss Evans' discussion in this review, her

[1] Essays, p.49.
[2] Westminster Review, January 1857 ('Belles Lettres' section).
[3] Westminster Review, April 1856 ('Belles Lettres' section). This review is not reprinted in Essays

enthusiasm is more evident than her exact meaning. She generalises overmuch and uses emotive phrases which do not convey any accurate meaning. Few critics today would be incautious enough to talk about 'the best and noblest in art', and to compare it with 'the best and noblest in morals', as she does in this review:

> "The fundamental principles of all just thought and beautiful action or creation are the same, and in making clear to ourselves what is best and noblest in art, we are making clear to ourselves what is best and noblest in morals; in learning how to estimate the artistic productions of a particular age according to the mental attitude and external life of that age, we are widening and deepening our basis of tolerance and charity."

Is it possible to construe a definite meaning for this loosely expressed statement?

At the heart of Miss Evans' thought there lies a characteristically English belief in the finality of fact. This doubtless derives ultimately from the practical common sense of Robert Evans, her father, and the pragmatical values of her Midland childhood environment. It was nourished by Bray's narrowly empirical philosophy, and extended by her acquaintance with German work historical criticism. But in essence it remained a simple and basic belief; a firmly rooted faith in the evidence of the senses, and an equally firmly rooted distrust of any other way of apprehending truth. This preference for the tangible, the definite, the demonstrable was a consistent substratum of Miss Evans' thought. The whole of her philosophy of life bears the stamp of her axiomatic belief in 'definite substantial reality'.

Yet it is clear that she over-worked the principle.

The criterion of realism can be validly applied to the study of history; historical realism consists of attempting to see events in the context of the contemporary social and political scene. Yet the principle of realism is less convincingly applied to the sphere of artistic theory.

Nevertheless Miss Evans' thought about the place of realistic representation in art is subtle in her review of Ruskin's work. Although Ruskin was mainly concerned with the visual arts, whereas Miss Evans' interests lay primarily in literature, the basic question of the extent to which art ought to be representational is fundamental to both.

Miss Evans' views can be most easily grasped if one imagines a continuum stretching between two hypothetical extremes. At one extreme stands purely realistic art (of which the handiest visual example is the photograph), in which all the artist's efforts are directed towards a factually correct representation of a scene. At the other extreme stands 'abstract' art in which the element of realistic representation is non-existent. In the former the element of subjective artifice is minimal; in the latter it is paramount. Miss Evans' artistic creed stands as near to the extreme of purely realistic art as is consistent with the admission of the subjective artifice of the creator. In her eyes a novel,for it is chiefly with the novel that she is concerned, ought to be as realistic as possible.

Miss Evans disapproves of the kind of literary unreality called by Ruskin in the work under review, the

'Pathetic Fallacy'. Writers who commit the fallacy represent inanimate nature as actively sympathising with and mirroring man's moods, especially his melancholy moods. The 'Pathetic Fallacy' is for Miss Evans, as for Ruskin, a falsification of real life, and an artist who commits it must be assigned to the 'second order'. Miss Evans notes with approval that Sir Walter Scott was not prone to this species of unrealism:

> ".... the bird, the brook, the flower and the cornfield, kept their gladsomeness for him, not withstanding his own melancholy."

In Miss Evans' summary of the main points of the third volume of Modern Painters can be traced her own ideas about the place of realism in art. Her enthusiasm for Ruskin's[1] work makes it certain that she endorsed his theory.

[1] It should be pointed out that Ruskin in his angry old age did not admire George Eliot's novels. In an article entitled 'Fiction - Fair and Foul' in The Nineteenth Century, (October 1881) he objected strongly to the vulgar realism of her novels. The article opens with a tirade against 'railway novels' in which:

> "interest is obtained with the vulgar reader for the vilest character, because the author describes carefully to his recognition the blotches, burrs and pimples in which the paltry nature resembles his own."

Ruskin writes that The Mill on the Floss is a good example of this genre. He goes on to observe that in

> "the English Cockney school which consummates itself in George Eliot, the personages are picked up from behind the counter and out of the gutter; and the landscape, by excursion train to Gravesend, with return tickets for the city road."

The 'Grand Style', she writes, depends upon the choice of noble subjects; love of beauty (as much beauty as is consistent with truth); sincerity (the largest quantity of truth with the most perfect harmony). In her consideration of the rôle of invention she comes to the heart of the matter; that of reconciling a faith in realism (a literal and objective recording of characters or scenes depicted or described) with imagination, the faculty by which the artist selects, arranges and imposes order upon the crude data of experience. She writes that a work of art

> "must not only present grounds for noble emotion, but must furnish these grounds by imaginative power, i.e., by an inventive combination of distinctly known objects. Thus imaginative art includes the historical faculties, which simply represent observed facts, but renders these faculties subservient to a poetic purpose."

What the 'poetic purpose' is, Miss Evans never clearly defined. There is nothing in this review, or any other, which attains to the comprehensiveness of S.T.Coleridge's masterly definition of the imagination.

If Miss Evans did not give a full and clear account of the place of imagination in creative artistic composition her review of Riehl's works in 'The Natural History of German Life' shews how concerned she was becoming with the more immediate question of portraying the everyday life of ordinary people in a novel. Riehl's works are concerned with the patterns of individual and collective thought and behaviour of the German peasant classes. Riehl sought to complete his information by spending years in close personal contact with the people he was

studying, and the result of this careful fieldwork is a series of works of outstanding thoroughness.

Miss Evans read and reviewed Riehl's books during the summer of 1856. She and Lewes were spending the summer at Ilfracombe where Lewes was completing the scientific researches for his Sea-Side Studies. Miss Evans kept a journal[1] during the summer, in which she wrote some minutely detailed descriptions of the countryside and local inhabitants she encountered near Ilfracombe. She recorded in the journal for 22nd July 1856:

> "I have never before longed so much to know the names of things as during this visit to Ilfracombe. The desire is part of a tendency that is now constantly growing in me to escape from all vagueness and inaccuracy into the daylight of distinct, vivid ideas!"[2]

Her own meticulously recorded observations were in the style of Riehl's more elaborate researches, and it is not a coincidence that it was during this summer that Miss Evans was planning her first novel.

Miss Evans' review of Riehl's books gives a clear indication of her almost obsessive interest in realistic representation at this crucial time. The lengthy six page introduction which prededes her account of his works is concerned with the treatment of the peasant classes in fiction. If she had reviewed Riehl's books two or three years earlier, her approach would almost certainly have

[1] The Journal is in Yale University Library. It has not been published in toto, though relevant passages are quoted in Letters.

[2] Letters, II, p.251.

been rigorously sociological. But in the summer of 1856 her approach is that of an emergent novelist, not a social critic.

Miss Evans points out at the beginning of the review that people are apt to theorize about 'the people' or 'the proletariat' with hardly any real knowledge:

> "How little the real characteristics of the working classes are known to those who are outside them, how little their natural history has been studied, is sufficiently disclosed by our Art as by our political and social theories."[1]

Most artists and novelists who attempt to portray peasant life shun realistic representation, and fall back on the stock notions that 'peasants are joyous, ... cottage matrons are usually buxom ... and ... village children necessarily rosy and merry.' Miss Evans offers a more realistic picture:

> "The slow gaze, in which no sense of beauty beams, no humour twinkles, - the slow utterance, and the heavy slouching walk, remind one rather of that melancholy animal the camel, ..."

'the coarse laugh' of the haymaker very often expresses 'the triumphant taunt'.

> "...The only realm of fancy and imagination for the English clown exists at the bottom of the third quart pot."[2]

Miss Evans criticises the unreality of contemporary social novels as 'a grave evil'. The highest function of the artist is, she believes, that of extending our

[1] Essays, p.268.
[2] Essays, p.269.

sympathies and this can only be done by giving realistic pictures of life:

> "The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment. ... Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow men beyond the bounds of our personal lot. All the more sacred is the task of the artist when he undertakes to paint the life of the people. Falsification here is far more pernicious than in the more artificial aspects of life."[1]

Ultimately, realistic representation is moral, not intrinsically, for it cannot tell us how we ought to act, but instrumentally for it provides the 'raw material of the moral sentiment', it encourages us to appreciate with ways of life which are alien to our experience, to sympathise with them, and hence to grow more tolerant towards them. Here again Miss Evans, whilst maintaining that art should be broadly moral in the influence, denies that it should be didactic.

The passage quoted above shews that Marian Evans is losing faith in 'generalizations and statistics' (this would be a typically Utilitarian approach to the cure of social evils), and is suggesting that the realistic portrayal of the miseries and hardships of working class life may be a more practical and efficatious means to their

[1] Essays, pp.270-271.

alleviation. In this article she reverses the bias of the Westminster Review in Bentham's day, when statistical approach to social problems was regarded as of paramount importance, whilst literature was suspected of being politically reactionary. Miss Evans insists that a realistic novel will stimulate not only a close knowledge of social conditions, but will provoke a sympathetic emotional response in the reader's mind which will encourage him to act on behalf of the oppressed.

'Sympathy' is a word used again and again by Miss Evans. She uses it in the strict etymological sense of 'suffering together with' someone. Granted that it is the novelist's main function to represent the ordinary every-day life of men and women in such a was as to encourage sympathy - the raw material of the moral sentiment - what course of action should the awakened moral sentiment recommend? What kinds of social reform will it tend to encourage? Miss Evans devotes several pages to a detailed account of Riehl's ideas about the direction social policy ought to take. Her deeply felt elaboration of his ideas leaves no doubt that in interpreting Riehl she is also speaking for herself.

Riehl sees European societies as 'incarnate history'.[1] A social group cannot be divorced from its history without losing vitality: "What has grown up historically can only die out historically by the gradual operation of necessary laws."[2] Changes imposed on a society which do

[1] Essays, p.289.
[2] Essays, p.287.

not take account of its history and tradition are only superficial in their effect. They cannot alter the deeply ingrained patterns of thought and behaviour of the individuals who compose the society. Such measures are as ineffective as "cutting off poppy heads in a cornfield."

Attempts to impose reforms on society have the same unfortunate effects as attempts to reform language whose growth is also naturally slow and organic. After repeated efforts the result is a 'patent de-odorized and non resonant language'[1], stripped of the richness of its time-honoured associations, - a characterless and lifeless phenomenon.

> "Language must be left to grow in precision, completeness, and unity, as minds grow in clearness, comprehensiveness and sympathy. There is an analogous relation between the moral tendencies of men and the social traditions they have inherited. The nature of European men has its roots intertwined with the past, and can only be developed by allowing those roots to remain undisturbed while the process of development is going on, until that perfect ripeness of the seed which carries with it a life independent of the root."[2]

The distrust of reform is not absolute, but Riehl insists that it should be informed by a "special study of the people as they are." The more deeply he has studied, the more convinced he has become that "universal social policy has no validity except on paper." It is impossible to generalize about the way in which human societies should be run. He who wishes to effect a genuine improvement should concern himself primarily with the history,

[1] Essays, p.288.
[2] Essays, p. 288.

institutions and pattern of culture of the particular class of the particular people he is investigating:

> " ... the most complete equipment of theory will not enable a statesman or a political and social reformer to adjust his measures wisely, in the absence of a special acquaintance with the section of society for which he legislates, with the peculiar characteristics of the nation, the province, the class whose well-being he has to consult."[1]

Riehl's books were exceptional for their day. His detailed studies of the German peasant classes based upon first-hand observation - 'field-work' as it is now called - with inferences carefully drawn from observed facts, anticipated by more than half a century the thorough social analyses of the great twentieth century social anthropologists, Malinowski and Rivers. The leading nineteenth-century sociologists and anthropologists, Comte, Tylor and Frazer, were theorists rather than investigators, who were content to rely to a large extent upon introspection for information about human nature. Marian Evans was exceedingly fortunate to come into contact with works as sound and as far ahead of their time as Riehl's. Her conservatism, and unwillingness to support changes imposed on a society or one class of a society, from outside, is similar to that of many modern social investigators who tell of the frequently catastrophic effects that have befallen many primitive societies as a result of the well-meaning but misguided interventions of missionaries and other 'improvers'.

The last of Marian Evans' reviews to appear in the Westminster Review was a lengthy study of the eighteenth

[1] Essays, p.290.

century poet Edward Young (1683-1765). It is the most complete critical estimate of a poet she ever wrote, and Lewes urged her to complete it,[1] saying that he thought it would be the best article she had written. The review was begun on 22nd April 1856, but not completed until after she had written The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton.

The review divides into two halves, each of approximately equal length. The first half is concerned with Young's life, the second with a critical estimate of his works. In the first half Miss Evans chooses salient points of the poet's life, quoting extensively from his own works and from the letters of those who knew him well, to shew the sycophantic nature of the man - his flattering odes to royalty, his willingness to abandon patrons who had ceased to be in a position to further his own ends. The scorn that Miss Evans so obviously felt for the man and her telling selection and interpretation of contemporary evidence makes her biographical sketch stimulating to read. But the real interest of the article lies in her critical assessment of his poetry.

The article is in many respects typical of the revolt of many Romantic and nineteenth-century critics against the 'artificialities' of eighteenth-century poetry. The terms of the review recall Matthew Arnold's famous saying:

> "The difference between genuine poetry and the poetry of Dryden, Pope, and all their school, is

[1] She interrupted the writing of it to write 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists'.

> "briefly thus: their poetry is conceived and composed in their wits, genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul."[1]

The main objections to Young's poetry are made (characteristically), on the grounds of lack of realism, false morality, and want of genuine emotion. He is unrealistic because his love of abstractions leads him to a telescopic view of human life. Miss Evans complains that "His muse never stood face to face with a genuine, living human being ... "[2] His inability to represent a 'real complex human being' meant that his scope as a satirist was severly limited - he could only write "cold and clever epigrams on personified vices and absurdities". His lack of knowledge of human nature involves him in the psychological error of his satires; that of presuming that all forms of folly can be traced to one passion, vanity or the love of fame. "The want of taking for a criterion the true qualities of the object described, or the emotion expressed"[3] is a characteristic of Young's 'radical insincerity as a poetic artist '. From his insincerity springs his artificial wit and his grandiloquence, his empty use of words like 'virtue', 'religion,' 'death', 'the good life', immortality', 'eternity', which are all airy abstractions unrelated to definite objects or specific emotions.

[1] Matthew Arnold, Essays in Criticism, Second Series, Thomas Gray.
[2] Essays, p.349.
[3] Essays, p.366.

Young's tendency to use unrealistic and meaningless abstractions is closely allied, Miss Evans believes, with the 'want of genuine emotion' in his works. He sees virtue and religions as exalted and remote from the lot of everyday human life. He overlooks the truth that virtue and religion really exist'in the emotions of a man dressed in an ordinary coat'.[1] Miss Evans believes that emotion can only be directed towards particular situations, and that abstract generalizations cannot arouse strong feeling. In most of Young's poetry there is "hardly a trace of human sympathy, of self-forgetfulness in the joy or sorrow of a fellow being."[2] This dissociation of religion and virtue from the situations of everyday life was a major heresy to Miss Evans, who, following Feuerbach, believed that they have no existence except within the spectrum of human emotions.

The negation of sympathy is consistent with Young's theory of ethics.

> "Virtue is a crime,
> A crime to reason, if it costs us pain
> Unpaid ....." [3]

Like Dr Cumming, Young believes that to deny religion and immortality is to resign oneself to a life of brutish selfishness. There is no middle path; either you believe in an after life and from fear of hell's torment and love of heaven lead a good life on earth, or else you deny the soul's immortality and abandon yourself to the 'natural

[1] Essays, p.371.
[2] Essays, pp. 371-372.
[3] Essays, p.372.

passions' of which self-love is the dominant one. Miss Evans' impassioned refutation of this view is put in the mouth of a disbeliever in immortality whose morality is nevertheless altruistic and unselfish:

> "I am just, not because I expect to live in another world, but because, having felt the pain of injustice and dishonesty towards myself, I have a fellow-feeling with other men, who would suffer the same pain if I were unjust or dishonest towards them... The fact is, I do not love myself alone, ..."[1]

This 'fellow-feeling' or sympathy is the essence of morality. The religious man who pursues a 'virtuous' course of action simply because he believes he will be rewarded in a future life is really acting from egoism which is not a moral motive. This Miss Evans believes to be true of Young himself:

> "The God of the 'Night Thoughts' is simply Young himself, 'writ large' - a didactic poet who lectures mankind in the antithetic hyperbole of mortal and immortal joys, earth and the stars, hell and heaven; and expects the tribute of inexhaustible 'applause'".[2]

His religion is simply egoism turned heavenwards.

Miss Evans' article ends with a brilliant comparison of Young's Night Thoughts, and Cowper's Task. Both poems are written in blank verse, both are intended to be didactic and both 'mingle much satire with their graver meditations'. In this comparison, Miss Evans shews a characteristically Wordsworthian view of the nature and function of poetry.

[1] Essays, p.373.
[2] Essays, p.378.

It is easy to forget that Miss Evans' reading was not confined to important scholarly works. But to neglect the broad if less spectacular stream of her reading of novels and poetry is to gather an incomplete picture of the development of her mind. Young, Cowper and Wordsworth are among the poets she had read with admiration and enjoyment in her younger days. On the 22nd November, 1839, Marian Evans had written to a friend:

> "I have been so self-indulgent as to possess myself of Wordsworth at full length, and I thoroughly like much of the contents of the first three volumes which I fancy are only the low vestibule to the three remaining ones. What I could wish to have added to many of my favourite morceaux is an indication of less satisfaction in terrene objects, a more frequent upturning of the soul's eye. I never before met with so many of my own feelings expressed just as I could like them."[1]

Her wish that Wordsworth should have shewn less satisfaction in worldly objects, and turned his eye heavenwards more often, is a startling reminder of the way in which Miss Evans' ideas changed after she wrote the letter. It also gives a clue about what she had found to admire in Young's poetry. It is interesting to know that she possessed a 'complete works' of Wordsworth. There is abundant though indirect evidence that she read his poetry with attention and enjoyment, for in the articles she wrote for the Westminster Review she quoted more frequently from his works than from those of any other writer.

[1] Letters, I, p.34.

Miss Evans shared with Wordsworth a dislike of the artificialities of 'poetic diction'. Young's 'radical insincerity ...' is partly due, she suggests, to his 'vicious imagery'. Her criticism is couched in terms which recall Wordsworth's objection to 'gaudiness and inane phraseology' in a poem. Miss Evans shews a characteristically nineteenth-century antipathy to the 'artificiality' of the rhymed couplet, and talks of the 'new freedom'[1] gained by the use of blank verse. She criticises Young because, after the first two or three Nights of Night Thoughts "he is rarely singing, rarely pouring forth any continuous melody inspired by the spontaneous flow of thought or feeling".[2] This recalls not only the meaning, but also the phraseology of Wordsworth's famous dictum that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."[3]

Miss Evans shews throughout the review a truly Wordsworthian belief that genuine poetry should find expression for feelings of love for the countryside:

> ".... we remember no mind in poetic literature that seems to have absorbed less of the beauty and healthy breath of the common landscape than Young's."

She says that his poetry is evidently the work of a town dweller; allusions that carry us "to the lanes, woods or fields"[4] are amazingly rare in 'Night Thoughts'.

[1] Essays, p.381.
[2] Essays, p.380.
[3] Preface to the Lyrical Ballads.
[4] Essays, p.370.

Young admires no natural object nearer than the moon:

> "Place him on a breezy common, where the furze is in its golden bloom, where children are playing, and horses are standing in the sunshine with fondling necks, and he would have nothing to say."[1]

Miss Evans contrasts Young's attitude with that of Cowper whose

> "exquisite mind falls with the mild warmth of morning sunlight on the commonest objects, at once disclosing every detail, and investing every detail with beauty."[2]

If Young neglects the beauties of landscape, he errs even more seriously in failing to represent men and women realistically in his poems. Miss Evans contrasts his deficient human sympathy with Cowper's 'large and tender heart' which embraces the most humble and ever-day forms of human life. Young, on the other hand is guilty of impiety towards the present and visible.

Marian Evans shares with Wordsworth a belief in the essential unity and homogeneity of human experience, what J.Jones in his study of Wordsworth's imagination[3] calls his monadism; a fundamental belief that the traditional 'religious' classification of experiences into heavenly and earthly, sacred and secular, spiritual and physical, is a false dichotomy. Marian Evans and Wordsworth[4] both believe that true heaven is to be found on earth, that a genuine spiritual experience grows from human love and friendship and the morally exhilarating presences of

[1] Essays, p.369.
[2] Essays, p.382
[3] The Egotistical Sublime.
[4] Throughout this discussion I am referring to the beliefs Wordsworth held in his younger and less orthodox days.

nature. Both in their works make frequent use of religious words (such as 'soul', 'piety', 'reverence') but they are related to experiences essentially human, not divine.

Hence Miss Evans chief objection to Young's 'other-worldliness' is in the tradition of Wordsworth's monadism

> " .... for in all things, now[1]
> I saw one life, ... "

Young's world-view has no such homogeneity.

[1]Wordsworth, The Prelude Book II, lines 409-410.

EPILOGUE

Critic into Novelist

The period of Miss Evans' association with the Westminster Review as editor, and later as reviewer, marks the climax of her career as an intellectual. The main bias of her thought - her agnosticism - was decided by the time she took up residence with John Chapman, but as yet she was uneasy in her disbelief. She could wield ideas readily and fluently, and her encyclopaedic reading had given her an astonishingly wide knowledge, but this knowledge had not yet been fully assimilated into her own thought. Herbert Spencer records in his Autobiography[1]:

> "She complained of being troubled by a double consciousness - a current of self-criticism being an habitual accompaniment of anything she was saying or doing; and this naturally tended towards self-depreciation and self-distrust."

She had discovered a new heaven and a new earth, but as yet she breathed the more settled atmosphere of her Midland childhood. The close intellectual and personal contact with many of the leading progressive thinkers which was brought by her editorship of the Westminster Review undoubtedly helped to give her the poise and assurance so obvious in her reviews. The best of the articles and reviews she wrote after she had relinquished the Editorship are remarkable in that they exhibit a balance of judgement and a sturdy sensibleness which was lacking in so many progressive works of the time. She

[1] Vol. I, p.395.

avoids alike the oversimplification of Bray's Necessitarianism which attempted to squeeze

> "....the universe into a ball
> To roll it towards some overwhelming question",[1]

the neat but facile theorizing of Herbert Spencer, the hysterical and uncritical enthusiasm of Harriet Martineau, the dogmatic wrongheadedness of George Combe. She was now moving confidently and easily amongst new ideas. Her interest in Comte's philosophy, and the enthusiasm with which she accepted Feuerbach's secular interpretation of religious experience indicate both her responsiveness and her developing critical sense.

In the best reviews, she expressed her mind more freely and more forcefully than she ever had before, or ever was to later when she had become a famous novelist. The scathing articles on Dr Cumming, Young and Lord Brougham are the most severe attacks she ever published. Never again did she denounce a person, even a fictitious character, as roundly as she denounced the victims of these articles. Soon after she began fiction writing she seems to have lost interest in destructive criticism. She wrote to Sara Hennell on 17th January 1858:

> "I have long ceased to feel any sympathy with mere antagonism and destruction, and all crudity of expression marks, I think, a deficiency in subtlety of thought as well as in breadth of moral and poetic feeling."[2]

This letter, with its disparaging tone and suggestion

[1] T.S.Eliot, The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock.
[2] Letters, II, p.421.

that destructive criticism is opposed to 'moral and poetic feeling', is an indication of the fundamental change of attitude which came upon Miss Evans when she became a novelist. Her reaction to Darwin's Origin of Species is even more illuminating. Having conceded that it was "a step towards brave clearness and honesty", she wrote:

> "The Development Theory, and all other explanations of processes by which things come to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery which underlies the processes".[1]

Admittedly, George Eliot had encountered many of the presuppositions of Darwin's work in books by Lyell and Chambers which had long been familiar to her; yet this cannot fully account for her lack of enthusiasm about and interest in this great work. In many respects her intellectual curiosity waned after she became a novelist. No book that she read after 1856 stimulated or interested her to anything like the extent that Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity had done, nor was any of her later criticism[2] as lively as her earlier writings for the Westminster Review.

The reasons for this decline in her interest in contemporary intellectual life are manifold. One reason for her loss of faith in destructive criticism was heralded in her review of Wilhelm Meister, in which she called the line between the virtuous and the vicious an 'immoral fiction'. Miss Evans was far too perceptive and

[1] G.E. to Madame Bodichon, 5th December, 1859.

[2] George Eliot contributed occasionally to various periodicals for the rest of her life.

intelligent to identify herself with any 'black and white' view of right and wrong. She had come to appreciate that almost every human action and ideal was in some way good, in some way evil. The awareness that there were two sides to every issue ultimately made her uneasy about writing reviews which were predominantly critical and destructive. Could it be that there was another side to the question which she had failed to see? An entry in J.S.Mill's diary for 13th January 1854 has relevance to Miss Evans' case:

> "Scarcely any one, in the more educated classes, seems to have any opinions, or to place any real faith in those which he professes to have ... it requires in these times much more intellect to marshal so much greater a stock of ideas and observations. This has not yet been done, or has been done only by a very few: and hence the multitude of thoughts only breeds increase of uncertainty. Those who should be the guides to the rest, see too many sides to every question, or find that so much can be said, about everything, that they feel no assurance about the truth of anything."

In particular, in any age when morality was popularly supposed to be an impossibility without Christianity, there was an understandable reticence about promulgating an agnostic point of view.

Secondly,Miss Evans' early novels were nearly all based upon scenes and incidents recalled from her childhood experiences of rural life in the Midlands. The imaginative evocation of the country life she had known in her youth necessitated a degree of withdrawal from the doubts and disputes which had occupied her in her Westminster Review days, an almost conscious isolation of

her mind from the distracting influences of contemporary debate. The degree to which she desired isolation from the opinions of the Review can be judged by the well-known fact that Lewes allowed her to see no adverse criticism of her own works. It was not only for scenes and characters that Miss Evans let her mind feed upon her early experiences. She seems to have recaptured also some features of her early evangelical upbringing which had been in partial abeyance during the Westminster Review period; the ideals of duty, piety and reverence.

Thirdly, there can be no doubt that the metamorphosis of Marian Evans into George Eliot involved, personally, a loss of spontaneity and ready charm. Eliza Lynn described the ageing George Eliot thus:

> "Not a line of spontaneity was left in her; not an impulse beyond the reach of self-conscious philosophy; not an unguarded tract of mental or moral territory where a little untrained folly might luxuriate."[1]

Oscar Browning, who claimed to have known George Eliot for fifteen years, (they first met in 1865) and who was a reverend disciple of hers wrote:

> "The tenderness and delicacy of her nature would have forbidden her to write a word which could have weakened the faith of a single believing soul. I once heard George Lewes urging her to declare herself, to take a side in religious thought, to bear a part in the conflict against current belief, for which so many were enduring unpopularity and ostracism. .... (She answered) Why should she hurt the numbers who loved and trusted her through her writings? Why, if she deeply sympathised with their faith, even if she had ceased to hold it, should she carry the weapons

[1] My Literary Life, p.98.

> "of scorn and refutation against the host of ideas which were bred of purity and virtue? The first thing to teach, she had written to me, is reverence, reverence for the hard-worn beliefs of many struggling ages."[1]

The lively and human character of the editor of the Westminster Review seems later to have become overlaid with a solemn awareness of her moral responsibility. Her youthful resolve to follow truth wherever it might lead has given way to a refusal to expose false belief when this will destroy cherished associations. How different is the impression given by Eliza Linton and Oscar Browning of George Eliot's character and outlook from Hale White's ('Mark Rutherford's') description of Marian Evans when she lodged in the Strand with John Chapman:

> "She was really one of the most sceptical, unusual creatures I ever knew, and it was this side of her character which to me was the most attractive .... I can see her now with her hair over her shoulders, the easy chair half sideways to the fire, her feet over the arms, and a proof in her hands in that dark room at the back of No.142."[2]

The first quality necessary in a literary critic is the ability to notice excellencies and faults, in other words to assess, whereas to Miss Evans, the primary function of a novelist was to observe and sympathetically to record aspects of real life. It is this difference in the method of the critic and novelist which helps to explain the re-orientation of Miss Evans' mind after she had started to write fiction. There is too the fact,

[1] The Life and Writings of George Eliot by Oscar Browning, pp.152-3.

[2] Article in the Athenaeum for 8th December 1894.

particularly relevant in Miss Evans' case, that novel writing has to take account of the indefinable element of inspiration. There is ample evidence to suggest that George Eliot's novels owed their genesis to that 'dark instinctive birth'. The title of her first story The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton came to her after her thoughts had "merged themselves into a dreary doze."[1] Cross records her own account of the inspirational force which guided her pen in her finest writing:

> "She told me that, in all that she considered her best writing, there was a 'not herself' which took possession of her, and that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which this spirit, as it were, was acting."[2]

It is a measure of the independence of George Eliot's genius that the first three stories she wrote should all have been concerned with the clergy, a class of men which is treated with uniform dislike and disparagement in the letters and reviews of the previous few years. It would be a task for a second Livingstone Lowes to attempt to trace in detail the highly complex relationship of Marian Evans' conscious philosophy expressed so lucidly, if fragmentarily, in her letters and articles, and the themes of her novels. I have not attempted to do more than to indicate, in passing, some of the more salient aspects of this difficult problem. The 'not-herself' is a disconcerting presence not easily explained.

[1] J.W.Cross, George Eliot's life as related in her Letters and Journals (1884) 'How I came to write fiction'.
[2] Ibidem, Chapter XlX.

It is a more fruitful task to attempt to assess the importance of her critical writings and to see them in the context of contemporary ideas. No full-length studies of George Eliot have been able to afford to ignore her early work as a journalist. Verdicts range between Jacob's brusque dismissal:[1]

> "These articles are essentially unfinished studies and give no foreshadowing of the finished product",

and the guarded praise given by Thomas Pinney in the introduction to his excellent modern edition of Miss Evans' more important articles:

> "George Eliot's powers as an essayist and a reviewer can add nothing to her reputation, but her articles display, in lesser measure, the same intelligence and breadth of view that we have learned to appreciate in her novels. This is praise enough."

I have attempted to see the essays and reviews as the climax of an intellectual argosy dating from her early youth, not as an exercise preparatory to or comparable with, her later career as a novelist. Some of the longer articles would have survived - even if research had failed to reveal them as Marian Evans' work - as outstanding examples of mid-nineteenth century criticism. Many of her shorter notices would have been consigned to oblivion had their authorship not been revealed. But the enduring interest of the essays does not lie primarily in their being the interesting juvenilia of a great novelist, nor even in their literary merit, but in the unique insight they give into the culmination of one of the most interesting spiritual and intellectual biographies of the nineteenth, or of any, century.

[1] Joseph Jacobs 'George Eliot' in the Athenæum for 23rd February 1884.

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N.B This list is not an exhaustive catalogue of all the books consulted. My debt to other works is acknowledged in footnotes.