

# Silas Marner the Influence of "Pure, Natural Human Relationships"

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**Abstract**— Silas Marner, the linen weaver of Raveloe, lives in a village on the brink of industrialization. Once he was a respected member of a narrow congregation, but the events that took place during one of his cataleptic foits led to the loss of everything that he valued. Now he lives a withdrawn half – life and is an object of suspicion to his new neighbors; he exists only for his work and his golden guineas. But when his precious money is stolen and, shortly after, seemingly and mysteriously replaced by the child Eppie, Silas is awakened to life by the redemptive power of love...

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A novel is a long narrative, normally in prose, which describes fictional characters and events, usually in the form of a sequential story. The genre has also been described as possessing "a continuous and comprehensive history of about two thousand years". This view sees the novel's origins in Classical Greece and Rome, medieval, early modern romance, and the tradition of the novella. The latter, an Italian word used to describe short stories, supplied the present generic English term in the 18th century. Ian Watt, however, in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) suggests that the novel first came into being in the early 18th century,

The romance is a closely related long prose narrative. Walter Scott defined it as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents", whereas in the novel "the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events and the modern state of society". However, many romances, including the historical romances of Scott, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, are also frequently called novels, and Scott describes romance as a "kindred term". Romance, as defined here, should not be confused with the genre fiction love romance or romance novel. Other European languages do not distinguish between romance and novel: "a novel is le roman, der Roman, il romanzo."

## II. CHAPTER-II

Mary Ann Evans (22 November 1819 – 22 December 1880; alternatively "Mary Anne" or "Marian"), known by her pen name George Eliot, was an English novelist, poet, journalist, translator and one of the leading writers of the Victorian era. She is the author of seven novels, including *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871–72), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876), most of them set in provincial England and known for their realism and psychological insight.

She used a male pen name, she said, to ensure her works would be taken seriously. Female authors were published under their own names during Eliot's life, but she wanted to escape the stereotype of women only writing lighthearted romances. She also wished to have her fiction judged

separately from her already extensive and widely known work as an editor and critic. An additional factor in her use of a pen name may have been a desire to shield her private life from public scrutiny and to prevent scandals attending her relationship with the married George Henry Lewes, with whom she lived for over 20 years.<sup>[1]</sup>

Her 1872 work *Middlemarch* has been described by Martin Amis<sup>[2]</sup> and Julian Barnes<sup>[3]</sup> as the greatest novel in the English language.

## III. CHAPTER-III

The Style Of This Novel Before taking to fiction-writing . George Eliot underwent a long apprenticeship in the art of letters. Her first literary attempt was translation from Strauss's German book 'Leben Jesu' (Life of Jesus). Later on her career of journalism helped her to form a terse pure and forceful style she acquired definite characteristics which are briefly noted below:-

**Pure Duction:** he wrote pure English. The student of 'Silas Marner' will note that there is not a single foreign phrase or idioms in the novel. Her words are forceful and pregnant; the most scholarly woman writer which England has produced and so her language sometimes become a little stiff and difficult. But it is never pedantic. She has a great power of describing and subtle human emotions. With one stroke of the pen she presents a complete and accurate picture, i.e. George Eliot's description of Silas Marner's discovery of his loss.

**Humour:** George Eliot is noted for her quaint humour. Indeed, according to Charles Reade she ranks as a humorist only next to Shakespeare. In *Silas Marner* there is a delightful undercurrent of humour. It is noticeable in the villagers and Silas Marner's funny attempts to keep Eppie under discipline. The scene at the Rainbow, when Silas Marner reaches there and as a ghost, is one of the most humorous scenes in the story. This humorous scenes of the story in poetry but later on changed her mind, as poetry was not a good medium for expressing the humour of rustic life.

**Pathos:** George Eliot was gifted with a keen insight and a no less keen sympathy with sufferings. She therefore could describe the pathetic side of human life very beautifully and forcefully. But true pathos does not consist in drawing tears. It is true pathos. It should be restrained. And George Eliot's pathos is always restrained. The student should note how cleverly she uses the incident of the broken pitcher to lay bare the agonies of unsatisfied love and crushed heart. The description of Silas Marner's grief at the loss of his guineas is another illustration. Other instances are Silas Marner's sleeplessness on the new year's eve in the hope that his gold would come back; the death of Molly Farren; Godfrey's remarks about his childlessness.

**Characterisation;** George Eliot possessed a keen perception of human nature. Her characters are thus always life-like and real. She was little of dialogue but analysis and describing to bring out the characters to her men and women. She is singularly and

powerful in describing the conflict of emotions the quaint mixture of motives underlying human actions; the hypocrisy of the lower nature; and convenient morality of persons. For illustration we might refer to the state of Godfrey mind when Silas Marner appears at the at red house with Eppie in his arms; Dunstan's offer to sell wildfire and his theft Marner's Godfrey's reason keeping his first marriage secret from Nancy.

There Is Some Moral of This Novel A novel in which the moral is too apparent, or in which too much light is thrown on the moral side of the story is not considered artistic generally by the critics. If there is a moral, it should be hidden under the artistic side if the picture. The novelist should keep into consideration the art of the story first.

Same is the case in 'Silas Marner'. There is hardly a moral in the novel; and if there is, it is not too much emphasized. On the one hand, we feel that justice is done to the wrong-doer; while, on the other, the wrong-doer lives a happy life.

George Eliot herself designed the novel, as she says, to illustrate "the remedial influence of pure natural human relations." The wounded heart of Silas Marner is shown to be ultimately healed by his pure affection for Eppie. At one time George Eliot was inclined to write the story in poetry. She was afraid that the supposed event of the tale the moral recovery of a nature reduced by injustice and isolation to the borders of insanity, though pretty, they will not be regarded as probable by the readers; but in a poem, they will be less disposed to insist upon prosaic probabilities. This fear, however, that readers might forget its charms in a consciousness of its improbability happily proved groundless. The story never loses its charms; indeed, the reader is so absorbed by the charming tenderness of the tale that he loses all thoughts about its probability or improbability.

The novelist is little inclined to play the art of providence to the characters. Silas Marner is first embittered by the casting of lots, loses faith in god and man; but later on providence makes it up by given him the charming Eppie. Dolly Winthrop sees a difficulty about it, by saying that "Kem above ha a great deal tender heart than what I have" and so the right thing to do is to "trusted". When, after the entrance of Eppie and instance of dolly, Silas Marner regains his faith in god and man he lives a happy life. George Eliot herself at one time had lost faith in god, and had become a religious sceptic. She looked with contempt upon the ritual ceremonies of the church. The reiteration of her faith is a matter of the heart and has nothing to do with philosophical learning. Elemental righteousness is grander than elaborate ritualism or a thorough scripture-reading.

But it would be wrong to suppose that there is a fixed moral underlying the story and that this moral is "Trust in Providence". For, on the one hand, the story seems to suggest that compensation for injustice may be expected in this life. Dunstan Cass is treated by the providence as he must have been treated. He falls into the stone-pit. Yet, on the other, the story also reveals how Godfrey Cass, who told lies to hide his disgrace and forsook his first wife out of mean moral cowardice, led a tolerantly successful life. But it is true if all the great authors. Poetic justice is not done to all in this world. The moral is not much emphasized.

#### IV. CHAPTER-IV

The major theme of Silas Marner is of course the influence of "pure, natural human relationships," but there are several others. Some of these are never the subject of a direct

statement, but constant repetition brings them to the reader's attention, and the novel draws some sort of conclusion about them. One of these themes is the function of religion in society. Another is the use of custom and tradition. There is a more direct consideration, focused on Nancy, of the extent to which "principle" should predominate over sympathy in human relationships. This is closely connected to the question of indulgence versus discipline in human life, as exemplified by the home life of Godfrey and of Nancy. A theme may be mentioned only indirectly and yet be quite explicit in its meaning. One such in Silas Marner is the effect of industrialisation on English society in the nineteenth century. Lantern Yard after the factory has been built is a grimy, dark place full of unhealthy people. There is a sharp contrast between the grim unfriendliness of Lantern Yard and the community spirit of Raveloe, between Silas' life (likened to that of a spinning insect) and the fresh air of the open fields.

In Silas Marner, Eliot combines symbolism with a historically precise setting to create a tale of love and hope. On one level, the book has a strong moral tract: the bad character, Dunstan Cass, gets his just deserts, while the pitiable character, Silas Marner, is ultimately richly rewarded, and his miserliness corrected. The novel explores the issues of redemptive love, the notion of community, the role of religion, the status of the gentry and family, and impacts of industrialisation. While religion and religious devotion play a strong part in this text, Eliot concerns herself with matters of ethics and interdependence of faith and community.

The summary of this novel is set in the early years of the 19th century. Silas Marner, a weaver, is a member of a small Calvinist congregation in Lantern Yard, a slum street in an unnamed city in Northern England. He is falsely accused of stealing the congregation's funds while watching over the very ill deacon. Two clues are given against Silas: a pocket knife, and the discovery in his own house of the bag formerly containing the money. There is the strong suggestion that Silas' best friend, William Dane, has framed him, since Silas had lent his pocket knife to William shortly before the crime was committed. Silas is proclaimed guilty. The woman Silas was to marry breaks their engagement and later marries William. With his life shattered and his heart broken, Silas leaves Lantern Yard and the city.

Marner travels south to the Midlands and settles near the rural village of Raveloe, where he lives alone, choosing to have only minimal contact with the residents. He comes to adore the gold he earns and hoards from his weaving.

The gold is stolen by Dunstan ("Dunsey") Cass, a dissolute younger son of Squire Cass, the town's leading landowner. Silas sinks into a deep gloom, despite the villagers' attempts to aid him. Dunsey disappears, but little is made of this not unusual behaviour, and no association is made between him and the theft.

Godfrey Cass, Dunsey's elder brother, also harbours a secret. He is married to, but estranged from, Molly Farren, an opium-addicted woman of low birth living in another town. This secret prevents Godfrey from marrying Nancy Lammeter, a young woman of high social and moral standing. On a winter's night, Molly tries to make her way to Squire Cass's New Year's Eve party with her two-year-old girl to announce that she is Godfrey's wife and ruin him. On the way, she takes opium and lies down in the snow. The child wanders away and into Silas' house. Silas follows her tracks in the snow and discovers the woman dead. When he goes to the party for help, Godfrey heads to the scene, but resolves to tell no one that Molly was

his wife. Molly's death conveniently puts an end to the marriage.

Silas keeps the child and names her Eppie, after his deceased mother and sister, both named Hephzibah. Eppie changes Silas' life completely. Silas has been robbed of his material gold, but has it returned to him symbolically in the form of the golden-haired child. Godfrey Cass is now free to marry Nancy, but continues to conceal the fact of his previous marriage—and child—from her. However, he aids Marner in caring for Eppie with occasional financial gifts. More practical help and support in bringing up the child is provided by Dolly Winthrop, a kindly neighbour of Marner's. Dolly's help and advice assist Marner not only in bringing up Eppie, but also in integrating her into village society.

Sixteen years pass, and Eppie grows up to be the pride of the village. She has a strong bond with Silas, who through her has found a place in the rural society and a purpose in life. Meanwhile, Godfrey and Nancy mourn their own childless state. Eventually, the skeleton of Dunstan Cass—still clutching Silas' gold—is found at the bottom of the stone quarry near Silas' home, and the money is duly returned to Silas. Shocked by this revelation, and coming to the realisation of his own conscience, Godfrey confesses to Nancy that Molly was his first wife and that Eppie is his child. They offer to raise her as a gentleman's daughter, but this would mean Eppie would have to forsake Silas. Eppie politely refuses, saying, "I can't think o' no happiness without him."

Silas revisits Lantern Yard, but his old neighbourhood has been "swept away" and replaced by a large factory. No one seems to know what happened to Lantern Yard's inhabitants. However, Silas contentedly resigns himself to the fact that he now leads a happier existence among his family and friends. In the end, Eppie marries a local boy, Dolly's son Aaron. Aaron and Eppie move into Silas' new house, courtesy of Godfrey. Silas' actions through the years in caring for Eppie have provided joy for everyone, and the extended family celebrates its happiness.

### CONCLUSION

In Greek mythology it was believed that virtue always triumphed in the end and that evil was always punished or revenged. The Greeks believed that there was a special goddess whose business was to avenge wrongs. This goddess was called Nemesis.

The conception of Nemesis has been almost universally followed by writers of all countries. Evil may flourish in the actual world; in books it never prosper and escapes

punishment. George Eliot follows the universal rule; but her method of treatment reveals at once her common-sense and her excellence as an artist.

"Mr. Macey's looking for a word from us," said Dolly; "he'll be hurt if we pass him and say nothing—and him so racked with rheumatiz." P.148

Godfrey wronged Molly Farren. After having married her, it was unjust for him to deprive her of the status in life to which her marriage entitled her. It was still more unjust to leave Eppie at the mercy of strangers. Godfrey committed these wrongs for selfish ends. He wanted to win the hand of Nancy. He deserved punishment and he gets it. We can almost hear him groaning under his anguish when he exclaims, "I wanted pass for a childless person once, Nancy- shall pass for childless man now against my wish". God gave him a craving for his childless man now against my wish". God gave him a craving for his daughter when the daughter was beyond his reach. Again Dunstan Cass was a wrong doer. He wronged his elder brother and stole away the weaver's two guinea bags. The providence did him justice by letting him fall in the stone-pit. But knowing this world. George Eliot realized that evil is not always punished in this world. Sometimes the worst men prosper. She therefore makes a compromise. Godfrey is punished but not as adequately as he deserved. Theoretically Godfrey should not have got Nancy because he committed all his wrongs for her sake. His punishment would have been complete if he were deprived of the one person for whose sake he sinned. A lesser artist than George Eliot would have been tempted to inflict this punishment upon him. Not so George Eliot. She knew that the world is not governed by ethical theories of right and wrong. Her treatment of Godfrey gives a touch of reality to the story. Outwardly he flourishes. He has wealth, name and a good wife, like many others of his stamp. But inwardly his heart is filled with black despair. And his outward prosperity probably intensifies the inward drama of his feelings.

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