Fathers in a Dynamic Age
Efforts of Provider in Early Novels of George Eliot

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Abstract

The studies of fatherhood historically, sociologically, and in literary discourses, received growing attention at the end of the twentieth century. The fathers of nineteenth century Britain attracted scholars in particular as the role of fatherhood then changed dramatically due to the Industrial Revolution. Fathers as providers for the family had to cope with the changing economic and social phenomenon of the time. The change brought by the industrial Revolution and the anxieties generated by this change, were depicted in memoirs and memories, fiction and other writings. This study aims to explore the depiction of anxieties, struggles and effort of fathers in the novels by George Eliot. The study focuses on the presentation of the father's role in Eliot's novels across the time and space, with the help of comprehensive and interdisciplinary supporting literary, social, and historical resources from the Victorian age. Furthermore, by showing the damage done by the Industrial Revolution in undermining the role of fatherhood, it intends to shed light on how Victorians yearned for the ideal father.

Keywords: Fathers, Nineteenth Century, George Eliot

1. Introduction

The representation of fatherhood in nineteenth century fiction provides fascinating material about the historical, social, and cultural changes brought by the Industrial revolution and offers a point of focus in the quest to understand the father's shifting role during this time. The nineteenth century was also peculiar because of the emergence of female writers. It brought forth a diverse style of writing and perspectives in the literary sphere. The female writers gained an equal footing to male writers and

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started to participate in discussions of social and cultural issues instead of pursuing a narrow range of domestic issues only. George Eliot is one of those writers who wrote about the social, cultural, and historical issues of her time. Most of her writings are about the middle class in a patriarchal society where fathers played an essential role in the development of their children in the male-dominated society of the Victorian age. Her works reveal and record the uncertainties about the place for the father in a culture that developed and underwent radical changes during the Industrial Revolution, the results of which are still present in society today.

John Tosh describes fathers in the nineteenth century having duties, "to establish a home, to protect it, to provide for it, to control it, and to train its young aspirants to manhood, have usually been essential to a man's good standing with his peers." (Tosh, 1999, p.4) The article intends to unfold the duties and activities of fathers in the public sphere, as depicted in the novels of George Eliot, where they struggle to carry out their role as provider assigned by the society of nineteenth century Britain. To study the efforts of fathers, this article seeks answer to the question; how important was it to understand the changing economic trends of the dynamic time to cope with the social and economic phenomenon.

2. Literature Review

Sociological and literary studies of the nineteenth century have explored the dual roles of father as provider and authoritative figure in the home. The changing practices of fatherhood were captured in memoirs, fictions, and other writings, which have been analyzed by sociologists and historians as case studies. The following will explore some of these analyses.

Family Fortunes by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall (2002) recounts the shaping of middle-class culture in the dynamic period of the nineteenth century. Davidoff and Hall show that the modern family structure acquired its distinctive form due to changes in the economic and political situation. The father "exemplified external authority" the one who usually controlled economic resources and economic failure by the father was often seen as a "personal failure entailing a loss of respect and thus manhood in the man's own eyes as well as in the eyes of children." By holding the central place in the family, the father was decisive and his failure, should he fail, was seen as "poisoning the family relationships." (p.233-4) Hence, the father struggled to maintain the family; they were all dependent on his success.

Davidoff and Hall (2002) also show that many late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fathers were more emotionally involved with their children, and most of the fathers took their responsibilities seriously, doing the best for their families.

There have been extended investigations about fatherhood and one of them is done by Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers (2013) in *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century*. Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers provide an essential overview of changing ideologies and practices of fatherhood as the family acquired its distinctively modern form. The analyses in the book of the stereotypical image of fatherhood in the paterfamilias uncovers, in a convincing way, intimate and involved fathers, as well as authoritarian and austere fathers.

Prof. John Tosh's (1999) *A Man's Place* is another case study. It suggests that domesticity was central to Victorian culture of masculinity. "Masculinity, after all," the author writes, "was essentially about being master of one's own house…indeed rule as 'father' embodied the primary meaning of term 'patriarchy'." (p.8)

The Tregi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood by Valerie Sanders (2009), based on the personal experiences of fourteen "high-achieving Victorian men," is also a remarkable study of the Victorian fathers. She discusses a "wide range of fathering styles," analyzing unpublished journals and letters, diaries, autobiographies, and more. She also uses examples from fiction and periodicals written by those fathers whom she studies, i.e. Dickens, Darwin and Carlyle. By looking into their private lives and writings, Sanders manages to capture concise experiences of fatherhood. Mapping their historical background, she asserts that "because of his public profile . . . each father had the opportunity to clarify or develop the conditions in which fathering was performed." All the fathers included in her study are actively engaged with their families, and they fail nevertheless because "fatherhood had failure built into its very purpose and fabric." (193-6)

While all of these writers have documented the changing perspectives of fatherhood in the nineteenth century Britain by analyzing a vast array of records, this social phenomenon was observed in other writings of the time. In *All the Years Round*, a weekly journal conducted by Charles Dickens, it is written that "the old patriarchal father," who was "a sort of

Jove to his children," has begun to disappear (Anon, 186A). In the *Quarterly Review*, Henry Sumner noted that the "practical domestic authority of an English Father in his own household was once vastly greater than it is now. The ceremonious form with which he was addressed by his children and even by his wife has disappeared." (Henry, 1886, p.186)

The evolution or change of fatherhood is seen in novels written after the Industrial Revolution. For instance, Margaret Markwick (2007) tries to analyse Anthony Trollope, saying:

"Trollope's novels advance a consistent theme of masculinity; within which men achieve their true potential by embracing their feminine side . . . They openly acknowledge the pleasure and satisfaction of close involvement in the nurturing of babies and children." (p.4A)

Elizabeth Bridgham (2011) also makes investigation about fathers presented by Trollope and Gaskell. According to Bridgham, both novelists, express anxieties about the conflicting concepts and practices of fatherhood, rejecting "the traditional notion of Victorian patriarchal authority that placed fathers dictatorially at the head of all their families' decisions." Both novelists "present fatherhood as a negotiated relationship between authority and affection, private conscience and public responsibilities." (p.67)

Fathers in Victorian Fiction by Natalie McKnight (2011), on the other hand, shows how changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution manifested themselves in a remarkable shift in the home and in the role of the father in the household. Writers of the time who reflected this shift in their writings received more attention. McKnight makes the critical point that:

"Efforts to maintain the power of the father actually eroded it. Ironically the stern Victorian father stereotype—which is such a powerful presence in fiction, memoirs, and memories—emerges due to the weakening of the role of father. The figure dominates because of its distance, and the sternness results from the severing of what had been more intimate connections between fathers and children." (p.11)

Caroline Gonda (1996) echoes McKnight and claims that "many novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by radicals and conservatives alike, present paternal authority as in a state of collapse, fathers as no longer willing or able to exercise their protective powers." (p.13) Thus, the nineteenth century, as the golden age of the novel for Britain, saw fiction writers of this time deeply involved with the shift in the father's role. The anxieties of those writers consequently resulted in their writings which mirror the society of the time and era and create a world where characters yearn for the return of the model father. Critics so far, as we have discussed above, have already done much in order to understand why and how regarding fatherhood with the novelists both as a group and as an individual.

There are some studies which include George Eliot's fiction as a case study of changing role of fathers during the nineteenth century. Jenkin Shields's (2007) dissertation is one of these remarkable studies of fatherhood. She argues that nineteenth century realistic writers like Elizabeth Gaskell, George Meredith, William Makepeace Thackeray and George Eliot invented new strategies for representing fatherhood, and their analysis of father in fiction "correlate with growing uncertainties about the place for the father in culture." (p.11) Shields argues that the authors break down patriarchal monuments by breaking apart their own texts and her study focuses on thematic difficulties and structural innovation in order to explain the connection between form and function.

A more recent study is Natalia Cole's (2011) "Masculinity and Fatherhood in George Eliot's Fiction". Cole points out that Eliot brings out the contradictions that complicate the roles and rights of fathers in the changing religious and historical background of her stories. Cole asserts that there are an overwhelming number of failed fathers in Eliot's works and there are also memorable examples of benevolent fathers. This study agrees with Cole and argues that Eliot's presentation of different patterns of fatherhood reflects the existing phenomenon of her time. Moreover, this study argues that by highlighting these negative behaviours in fathering, she urges for the responsible and benevolent father.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a sociological and historical approach to the issue of fatherhood in Eliot's novels. The work is done on the basis of close reading and assuming fatherhood to be a social construct, to investigate

how George Eliot dramatizes the role and place of nineteenth century British fathers in her novels. It analyzes Eliot's assessment of fathers within a historical context by considering the nineteenth century cultural understanding of fathers and uncovering how men grow into and sustain their roles in society. Although George Eliot has been regarded as a historical source of her time in terms of her realistic novels, how the historical events brought about change in the patriarchal structure of the family is largely ignored. Accordingly, the study focuses on the presentation of the father's role in Eliot's novels across the time and space of the period, with the help of comprehensive and interdisciplinary supporting literary, social, and historical resources from the Victorian age. The selection of novels is based on the contextual chronology from 1800 to the 1860s. As the title shows, the study will be about "fathers" and "age". The nineteenth century was a very dynamic time in Western history in many respects, including domestic life and other social phenomenon.

This study is not an attempt to prove that the novels of Eliot represent factual evidence about the place and role of fathers; rather, it is to explore the writer's attitude and opinion towards the nineteenth century idea of fatherhood (as presented in historical and social texts) helping to illuminate Eliot's own representation of what ideal fatherhood means.

4. Discussions

4.1 The Historical Changes and the Efforts of the Provider

George Eliot's early novels mostly represent country life far-off from the upheavals of city life; however, Eliot saw country life as equally subject to change as city life. *The Mill on the Floss* recounts rapid social, economic, and political change in Britain from around the 1820s, although it was published in 1860. The novel is set in the midlands and there are towns and landholdings like St. Ogg's, Basset, Garum Firs, and Dorlcote Mill. The novel tracks the growth of society, where business, industry, and legal procedures are growing. In chapter three of the novel, the changing time of St. Ogg's is described in full detail to show how economic and social life of the dwellers changed after the Napoleonic wars. War or the rumours of wars have vanished away from the minds of the people of St. Ogg's. (*MF* p-116-117) Now it is the time for trade and investment. In the middle class families, materialism grows and becomes a source for the judging and valuing of things. "The Catholics, bad harvests, and the mysterious fluctuations of trade were the three evils mankind had to fear."

(*MF* p-118) In this situation, a professional insight was required to judge the consequences of the steps to be taken for the future planning and building of businesses.

The Mill on the Floss is all about the middle class of the nineteenth century, and the Tulliver family is at the bottom of this hierarchy. Mr. Tulliver cannot gain professional objectivity and abandon his rash passions for business and legal relations. The other middle class members in the novel are lawyer John Wakem, against whom Mr. Tulliver loses the lawsuit and the husbands of the Dodson sisters, Mr. Deane, a junior partner in the firm Guest & Co., Mr. Pullet, a gentleman farmer, and Mr. Glegg, a wholesale merchant. Mr. Tulliver, the miller, is the only person whose financial and economic condition is worse than others, and his wife, Bessy Tulliver, complains about her suffering in the Tulliver's home.

Mr. Tulliver's strong belief in traditions and his stubborn standings on outdated methods bring him to ruin. "It is suggested that for the Tullivers, innovation constitutes tradition, although of course this does not square with Mr. Tulliver's stubborn conservatism, his refusal to comply with new technologies that threaten his mill." (Mcdonagh, 2001, p.73)

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the new business practices, the use of new marketing techniques, and new machinery, were introduced. According to Catherine Hall and Leonore Davidoff (1987), the growing commitment to new commercial forms among the middle class created fears and anxieties. (p.20) Mr. Tulliver could not face the modernization of the agricultural industry. He could not understand and imagine what action to take within the juxtaposition between local interests and the interests of financial capital. About this transitional age, Margaret (1993) observes:

"*The Mill on the Floss* is set in a time of transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy. The decline of Mr. Tulliver's Dorlcote Mill, with its picturesque buildings, its long history of operation by one family, its close ties to agriculture, and its small, quasi-familial work force, and the complementary rise of the trading concern, Guest and Co., with its bustling scenes of wharf side business and its vast distance between rich employer and depersonalized employees, mark the passing of an apparently timeless, pre-industrial social formation, a distant precursor of

the Victorian middle class, and its replacement by a newer middle class that would have been more recognizable to Eliot's contemporaries." (p.196)

Thus, this transitional period required insight into the relevant matters at hand in order to understand and pursue new goals. In *The Mill on the Floss* where a father like Mr. Tulliver is too unrealistic and short-sighted to judge the coming circumstances in order to take measured action accordingly, his demise is inevitable. His bankruptcy leaves its effects on his dependents and the psychological impact on himself.1 His social position is rooted in his ownership of the mill. Bankruptcy diminishes him: "I'm nought but a bankrupt—it's no use standing up for anything now." (MF p-3A0) For his wife and her sisters, Mr. Tulliver's actions undermine their family honour and reputation because they "deplore the affront to their bourgeois virtues—thrift, prudence, temperance." (Coleman, 2014, p.39)

In contrast, there is another father, Mr. Wakem, Philip Wakem's father, who becomes an increasingly wealthy member of the town of St. Ogg's, and makes better estimations of the changes in society, wining all in life that the former loses. At the same time, Lucy Deane's father, Mr Deane, comes up as a capitalist as he focuses on profit making from the same local and rural social network.

Mr. Deane is a successful father in terms of providing, protecting, and guiding his daughter. Mr. Deane, unlike Mr. Tulliver, understands and follows the changes in economic developments and takes appropriate action in response. He is a junior partner at Guest & Co. and focuses on business and money making. His expertise in business trends is shown in his lecture to Tom, where he says, "ours is a fine business—a splendid concern, sir—and there is no reason why it shouldn't go on growing; there is a growing capital, and growing outlets for it." (MF p-397) His understanding of business trends, and his confidence in his effort, makes him a prosperous man of the time. From the time he starts business, he always knows that growth is very rapid at the time, and he is always able

[1]In her personal life, George Eliot observed those who touched by bankruptcy. She records the bankruptcy of Arthur Helps, one of her acquaintance, saying, "In the panic last year all turned out badly for him and he has had to part everything --even his library." Weiss, Barbara: *The Hell Of The English: Bankruptcy And The Victorian Novel*. Cranbury,N.J.:Bucknell University Press,1986. p-29.

to keep pace with new developments. "The world goes on a smarter pace now than it did when I was a young fellow," (MF p-395) Mr. Deane explains.

The Tulliver family owns Dorlcote mill, but because Mr. Tulliver follows outdated financial methods, other family businesses gain upon them. Kathleen Blake comments about Mr. Tulliver's confusions about his money matters: "Mr. Tulliver doesn't keep his accounts very well, for in some sense he doesn't know how much capital he has at his disposal, how much is saved compared to owe." So he suffers "from misrecognition, from category confusion, in money matters." (Blake, 200A, p.222)

The town of St. Ogg's represents the rise of capitalism and commerce, while Dorlcote mill represents the traditional agricultural economy. The contrast between the traditional agricultural economy and the growing economy of trade is shown by the approaches of different characters. These characters are the providers for their dependents. Mr. Deane and Mr. Tulliver hold the responsibility of providing for their families, yet they are quite opposite in their approaches towards the new economic environment. Mr. Deane embodies the rising middle class of the time, while Mr. Tulliver is orthodox and is unwilling to share his water right because he views it as his birth right. Even after his bankruptcy, he is reluctant to leave the mill. He is lost in his obsession for the mill and tries to keep it after losing the lawsuit, later making efforts to regain it. To Mrs. Glegg, Mr. Tulliver chooses a dying way of life, and in the eyes of other St. Ogg's citizens, he is simply "incompetent". (*MF* p-68) He is unable to adapt the commodity exchange trend that Mr. Deane describes:

"Somebody has said it's a fine thing to make two ears of corn grow where only one grew before; but, sir it's a fine thing, too, to further the exchange of commodities, and bring the grains of corn to the mouths that are hungry. And that's our line of business; and I consider it as honourable a position as a man can hold, to be connected with it." (MF p-329)

Mr. Deane is an agent of change in *The Mill on the Floss,* and he knows that the age of farming is being succeeded by the age of trade. Mr. Deane is "a large but alert-looking man, with a type of physique to be seen in all ranks of English society." (MF p-58) He is sincere and practical and helps Tom to rise economically and be able to pay his father's debts. He

lectures Tom about his code of duty and knows that Tom is ignorant of the "practical subject".

The changing economic and business patterns of the time bring for the father and provider like Mr. Tulliver, a challenge that requires taking appropriate steps, and while Mr. Deane and Mr. Wakem take those steps and become successful, Mr. Tulliver becomes puzzled and bankrupt. Mr. Deane epitomizes the new ways of St. Ogg's. Unlike Mr. Tulliver, who is too impulsive and sentimental to deal with his business crises, Mr. Deane exerts himself by "taking snuff vigorously, as he always did when wishing to maintain a neutral position" and does not "carry on business on sentimental grounds" (*MF* p-105, 383). He remains ambiguous and noncommittal, considers Mr. Wakem as a powerful business rival and waits patiently "before he got the whip in his hand" (*MF* p-200), while Mr. Tulliver remains inadequate not to allow "anybody get hold of his whip-hand" (MF p-53). Mr. Deane represents the modern capitalist business of the time and believes in profit making instead of family claims like Tulliver's. He raises himself from a junior partner of Guest & Co. to a "great mill-owning, ship-owning business."

Mr. Stelling, Tom's tutor, is also outdated in his teaching. He has no formal training and he teaches what he himself was taught, with Latin and Euclid. He aims to earn money by boarding and teaching a few boys at his vicarage. As a clergy man, he is also a symbolic father of the community who is supposed to be a guide to the people. Being unaware of how to educate young fellows and by continuing his old fashioned method of teaching, he fails to give Tom fruitful knowledge and insight. Thus, Eliot, by showing the failures of the outdated methods in different fields, speaks for change in this dynamic age. The fathers, as providers especially, are shown struggling and trying to keep their pace with the time. Being unable to notice the demands of the contemporary trends, fathers faced with financial crises bring difficulties not only for themselves but also for their dependents.

4.2 The Economic Burden Distances the Father: The Situation in the Clergy

This section focuses on another changing phenomenon occurring at the same time, one that took place in the church and brought new challenges for priests, parishes, and other clergymen.

Eliot was well aware of the intellectual trends in the history, philosophy, and science of her time. Though she did not agree with contemporary religious evangelical ideas, she expressed her views about them in her writings. In her review of Dr. Cumming's "Evangelical Teachings" in the *Westminster Review* (1855), she expressed her objections. (Eliot, 1855) In her novels she produced some characters with the strengths and weaknesses of the Evangelical tradition. As David Hempton (2013) explains in his book *Evangelical Disenchantment*:

"There is also no one who so deeply appreciated the strengths and weaknesses of the evangelical temperament as Eliot, or who was able to invent fictional characters who so compellingly represented those strengths and weaknesses, sometimes in the same personality. Her rejection of evangelicalism was partly an intellectual transaction, partly a protest against evangelical morality, and partly an expression of her position as an unmarried woman flouting the marital conventions of Victorian England." (p.60)

She shows how the new developments in the church brought new ways of thinking for priests and parishes. *The Sad Fortunes of Amos Barton* is one of three stories from Scenes of Clerical life, Eliot's first fictional work published in 1857, in which she wrote about her recollections of a time "five and twenty" years ago, citing a period during the 1830s. "I recall with a fond sadness Shepperton Church as it was in old days." This story revolves around Rev. Amos Barton, a clerical man of Shepperton, who lives in a village near Milby, and who is a new priest in the parish church. He is the father of six children for whom a better living is possible if only he could obtain a stable, secure job. Barton comes to the village when "Evangelicalism and the Catholic Questions had begun to agitate the rustic minds with controversial debates." (SCL p-6) Barton's hardships as a clergyman centre around the church and the changing practices of the clergy.

The character of Amos Barton is taken from the author's memories of Warwickshire, and is a portrait of John Gowyther, the curate of the Evans' home parish of Chilvers Coton in the 1830s. The Church of England, also called the Anglican Church, was founded in the late sixteenth century by Henry VIII. In the late eighteen and nineteenth centuries, the Church of England underwent rapid and revolutionary changes. It had to widen its doctrine because many upper class Anglicans were tired of disputes of

different doctrines. The church was divided into three sections: High Church, which was inclined to keep the church closer to its Catholic roots, Low Church, which completely separated the church from its Catholic roots, and Broad Church, which was between the High and Low Churches. They wanted a rational and practical religion that was empty of disputes and that led the church to accept the Evangelical movement which brought Methodism and processed the reforms within the church. They believed that individuals should follow scripture and that the only religious authority for Christianity was the Bible. (Pinion, 1983, p.55-58)

At that time, the head of the state was also the head of the Church of England; however, the wealthy establishment, whose payments in the form of endowments of "livings" helped the clergy to obtain property and income, also controlled the church. This aristocratic and gentry domination neglected some parishes, which led to them being run by poor curates like Amos Barton. "A troublesome district for a clergyman," Eliot writes, "at least to one who, like Amos Barton, understood the 'cure of souls' in something more than an official sense; for over and above the rustic stupidity furnished by the farm-labourers, the miners brought obstreperous animalism, and the weavers an acrid Radicalism and Dissent." (SCL p-23) Thus the negligence of aristocracy and gentry resulted in trouble for the curates who could not keep hold of their congregations.

This story is mainly about Barton's professional and theological efforts as a newcomer in the village of Shepperton, with his financial, social, and personal difficulties being highlighted. Amos Barton, as a clergyman, is "neither extraordinarily silly, nor extraordinarily wicked, nor extraordinarily wise." (SCL p-81) When he appears in the story for the first time, after having dinner with the squire's family, he walks home in the frigid air without a coat—his financial condition does not allow him to afford such a luxury. As a clergyman, he receives eighty pounds as an annual stipend to support his wife and six children. His financial condition is truly depicted in the narrator's words:

"By what process of division can the sum of eighty pounds per annum be made to yield a quotient which will cover that man's weekly expenses? This was the problem presented by the position of the Rev. Amos Barton, as curate of Shepperton." (SCL p-7)

To meet the expenditures of the home, he relies on the mending work of his wife. Still, he has to pay a debt of twenty pounds to the butcher, and sometimes he is unable to provide for the basic necessities of his children. At one point, his wife tells him their son's toes are peeping because he has no shoes to wear. Barton remains under constant pressure to provide for his family. Sometimes he is very cold towards his children. Natalie B. Cole (2011) justifies his behaviour, explaining that "economic pressure may contribute to a father's distance from his children, as the underpaid curate father struggles to support his family and maintain his class status." (p. 67)

His incompetence is shown in the narrator's comments: "Alas! A natural incapacity for teaching, finished by keeping 'terms' at Cambridge, where there are able mathematicians, and butter is sold by the yard, is not apparently the medium through which Christian doctrine will distil as welcome dew on withered souls." (SCL p-2) Henry Nancy (2008) comments on these remarks by the narrator:

" …no elevated thinker himself and not well-prepared by his education at Cambridge, Amos is incapable of relating to the poor souls he hopes to reach, and so is perpetually ineffectual and—to the extent that he recognizes his failure—doomed to professional frustration that can make him irritable with his family and hence even more difficult for readers to like." (p.47)

He tries to keep his congregation within the care of the Church of England, but because of his own shortcomings he relies on ideas that are unpopular among other people. Thus his professional career remains threatened in part because of the deficiencies in his character and in part because of the concurrent corruption in the church:

"He preached Low-Church doctrine as evangelical as anything to be heard in the independent Chapel; and he made a High-Church assertion of ecclesiastical powers and functions. Clearly, the Dissenters would feel that 'the parson' was too many for them. Nothing like a man, who combines shrewdness with energy. The wisdom of the serpent, Mr. Barton considered, was one of his strong points." (SCL p-12).

When he falls into a devastating crisis because of the death of his wife, he receives a notice from the Vicar to leave the church within six months.

The vicar throws him off because he gives the work to his brother-in-law in the parish of Shepperton. Elizabeth Bridgham (2011) quotes from Melnyk in her "Victorian Fatherhood and Clerical Conscience": "The majority of Victorian clergy spent their whole career serving their first parish as incumbent. There was no career ladder, no means of promotion by merit, though merit in a well-placed parish might catch the eye of the bishop and lead to a better position." (p. 6A) But the parish of Shepperton is neither a well-placed parish nor does Mr. Barton have the merit required for the job. As provider, he makes his dependents suffer, especially his wife who tries to lessen his burden by knitting. Jedrzejewski (2007) comments on his incapability and miseries of his wife in these words:

"A well-meaning but ultimately rather insensitive and egocentric man, lacking in intellectual sophistication as well as emotional intelligence, he does not appreciate the pressures, social, economic and personal, under which he puts his loving, resourceful but physically fragile wife Milly." (p.33)

George Eliot made attacks on Rev. John Cumming, who was the popular and influential minister of the National Scottish Church in Covent Garden. She criticized him because of his "intellectual dishonesty, anti-Catholic bigotry". (Ellison, 2003, p. 380)

Given a man with moderate intellect, a moral standard not higher than the average, some rhetorical affluence and great glibness of speech, what is the career in which, without the aid of birth or money, he may most easily attain power and reputation in English Society? Where is that Goshen of mediocrity in which a smattering of science and learning will pass for profound instruction, where platitudes will be accepted as wisdom, bigoted narrowness as holy zeal, unctuous egoism as God-given piety? Let such a man become an evangelical preacher; he will then find it possible to reconcile small ability with great ambition, superficial knowledge with the prestige of erudition, a middling morale with a high reputation for sanctity. (Eliot, 1855)

Thus she emphasized the human frailties of clergymen and the influence they might have on members of a community. In this sense, the competence and ambition of the men who found careers in the national institution of the church were more important to Eliot's recreation of English society than the content of their beliefs. (Henry, 2008, p.18)

So, by showing Mr. Barton as a failure at his professional front because of his shortcomings, the author actually advocates for reformation in the church. Mr. Barton has to leave the church because he is not able to fulfil his duty as the provider of six children. His efficiency brings troubles for his dependents. After twenty years, when he returns, his children have bright futures, which would not be achievable if he had continued his job at the parish of Shepperton. The next section will elaborates on the most intimate father in Eliot's novels.

4.3 Caleb Garth: The Most Intimate Father

This section examines the most intimate father in Eliot's novels, Caleb Garth in *Middlemarch.* The previous sections of this article deal with fathers who try to fulfil their roles according the Victorian ideal of fathering, but couldn't pace with the changing historical time. Caleb Garth is shown to be exemplary father who not only proves himself a successful father as a guide and protector of his children but also grasps the economic trends as a provider of the family.

Although a minor character in *Middlemarch*, Caleb Garth is recognized as the most admirable father in Eliot's works. Many critics identify him as the fictional model of Eliot's own father. Jenkins (2014) describes him as "the most heroic of Eliot's biological fathers" based on her own father. (p.112) Jan (2007) proposes that Mr. Garth, as "the novel's most consistent source of moral authority and generosity of spirit, is a thinly disguised portrait of the writer's own father, Robert Evans," and that "his—and George Eliot's—attitude to life, [is] best characterised as progressive conservative." (p.3)

Caleb Garth substantiates the most perfect fathering by having all of those virtues that other fictional fathers in Eliot's stories lack. His character is a foil not only to those in *Middlemarch* but also to the characters of fathers in earlier novels by Eliot, like Mr. Tulliver, Amos Barton, Mr. Waken, and Squire Cass. Unlike Mr. Tulliver, who obstinately sticks with tradition, Caleb Garth is not only ready to welcome and accept the changes of the age, but also perceives ways to cope with the new trends and challenges of modernity.

Middlemarch presents a society where there is a clash between modern social reformers and conservatives. The reformers include Dorothea

Brooke, Lydgate, and Will Ladislaw. Dorothea Brooke wishes to pursue charity work, Lydgate brings medical reform and Will Ladislaw advocates for political reform. These reformers encounter "hampering threadlike pressure of small social conditions, and their frustrating complexity," (M p.210) which is projected by the intellectual aridity of Casaubon, the political awkwardness of Mr. Brook, the incompetency of Mr. Wrench in medicines, and the fraudulence of Blustrode. At the same time, Caleb Garth is shown as the ideal response to modernity.

Caleb Garth is an independent state agent who is honest in his work and endeavours to bring improvements to large estates, like the Brooke and Chettam estates, and repairs to tenant farms. He is a man "ready to accept any number of systems, like any number of firmaments, if they did not obviously interfere with the best land-drainage, solid building, correct measuring, and judicious boring (for coal)." (M p.284)

Caleb Garth believes his own devotion to work without comparing himself to others. The narrator regards his efforts as a religion because his "virtual divinities were good practical schemes, accurate work, and the faithful completion of undertakings." And "it must be remembered that by 'business' Caleb never meant money transactions, but the skilful application of labour." (M p.383)

Mr. Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* becomes bewildered by legal and business affairs; Mr. Garth differs in that he can only comprehend the intrinsic "value" of things related to work rather than the monetary value that it represents. "He could not manage finance: he knew values well, but he had no keenness of imagination for monetary results in the shape of profit and loss...He gave himself up entirely to the many kinds of work which he could do without handling capital." (M p.18A) His devotion to work makes him a reliable person to the owners of the large estates, and Mr. Brooke and Sir James Chettam hire him to manage their properties. His dedication to work benefits the owners of the estates he manages, and also the tenants. His children celebrate Mr. Garth's success at reinstatement as Brooke's agent, and they compare their father to Cincinnatus[1], the Roman king, captain and farmer. "He was a wise man,

[1]"Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519–430 BC) was a Roman aristocrat and statesman whose service as consul in 460 BC and dictator in 458 BC and 439 BC made him a model

like my father, that made the people want his advice. And he was a brave man, and could fight. And so my father," his son, Ben, explains about the personality of Cincinnatus to his sister. (M p-374-5) This comparison to Cincinnatus also shows the paternal authority in the home. Sadoff (1982) in her *Monsters of Affection* comments on this comparison and regards Mr. Garth as the "fictionalized presentation" of Eliot's own father, explaining that "Eliot's sentimental fictionalizing of her father appears undercut not only by her equivocal comparison of him with equally—if not more—equivocal father-king-farmer but also by narrative context and structure."(p.118) Like Cincinnatus, he is called forth in a situation of crises to handle the big estates, which he manages splendidly. The essence of his philosophy of work is summarised in his speech:

"You must be sure of two things: you must love your work, and not be always looking over the edge of it, wanting your play to begin. And the other is, you must not be ashamed of your work, and think it would be more honourable to you to be doing something else. You must have a pride in your own work and in learning to do it well, and not be always saying, There's this and there's that—if I had this or that to do, I might make something of it. No matter what a man is—I wouldn't give two pence for him"—here Caleb's mouth looked bitter, and he snapped his fingers—"whether he was the prime minister or the rick-thatcher, if he didn't do well what he undertook to do." (M p.3A8).

For Mr. Garth, a man's work ethics actually define his character, as the Victorian ideal for manhood is the ability to provide for the family. His philosophy of work is also tied to the social and familial standings of the man.

Caleb Garth is also an ideal surrogate father who helps Fred Vincy by signing a note for a loan. He also sacrifices the money that he has saved for his own son's training. Later, Fred is able to find employment and pay the money back to him, but Garth proves himself to be a benevolent father to Fred in the first place. He sees a potential in Fred, and doesn't hesitate to invest money for Fred's education to pursue a better future. Garth judges Fred, as "the lad is of age and must get his bread. He has sense enough and quickness enough; he likes being on the land, and it's my

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of civic virtue." *N.S. Gill. "Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus". About.com. Retrieved June 14, 2018.*

belief that he could learn business well if he gave his mind to it." (M. p.341) In this way, Garth is contrasted with Mr. Tulliver, who also wants his son to be able to provide for himself and his future family, but instead invests his money in a useless education for Tom. In the case of Fred, his father wants him to be a cleric in which Fred is not interested. Garth helps him to reach his goals.

Thus, when Fred Vincy's biological father fails to guide him for his future, Mr. Garth becomes a surrogate father for him. Fred is sent to college by his father to become a clergyman. But like Mr. Tulliver, Fred's father also couldn't judge his son's interests and thus wastes his money and expresses his disappointment, saying, "I wash my hands of you. I only hope, when you have a son of your own he will make a better return for the pains you spend on him." (M p.289) Caleb Garth provides an alternate paternal authority by giving Fred a direction and purpose in life and becomes his provider, guide and protector by loaning him money to train for his career. Fred accepts Mr. Garth's doctrine of work and becomes able to pay off his loans. It is due to the alternate father in Caleb Garth that Fred Vincy is able to get what Tom in The Mill on Floss desires but is unable to achieve.

The Garths live in a standard Victorian home, where the mother provides the warmth. Mrs. Garth is also an idealised domestic woman and mother in Eliot's novels, who makes the home heaven for her husband and children. Mintz (1978) explains the division of work between father and mother of the nineteenth century in Garth's home in these words:

"In his pursuit of business, Caleb wants direct contact with the material world and resents the complicating insidiousness of money. He would prefer to work only for the pleasure of work, and his wife Susan, herself a paragon of domestic economy, has to remind him that work is connected to livelihood." (p.138)

The Garth family appears to be an intersection of traditional and modern values and they successfully keep both values for the betterment. When the modern forces bring trouble to the other members of Middlemarch community, "with no coherent social faith and order" (M p.178), Mr. Garth is able to provide the religion of humanity. "The Garth family is to be considered, in its collective attitude to love, money, and work, very much in terms of an exemplary contrast with other inhabitants of the Middlemarch world." (Anothony, 197A, p.42)

In *Middlemarch*, the theme of marriage is a significant subject, and it involves Dorothea Brook's marriage to Casaubon and Rosamond's marriage to Lydgate, differentiating the family of Garth from the other members of the community. Mr. Garth and Mrs. Garth not only offer an exemplary model to their children but they also teach the ethics of marriage to their daughter, Mary. Harvey (1962) describes the Garths as the best marriage in Middlemarch: "the Garths are the one solidly happy family in the book and as such provide a standard whereby the failings of the other marriages can be measured." (p.146-7) Mary Garth insists that Fred must find a worthy profession before she will accept his proposal for marriage, saying, "my father says an idle man ought not to exist, much less be married." (M p-289)

Thus Mr. Garth also proves himself a guide to his own children and teaches them his determined approach to work and duty towards family. As an intimate father, he is able to train his children to gain success in their lives. While the eldest daughter Mary Garth becomes a teacher, Christy prepares for university and Alfred trains to be an engineer. In teaching his children to have serious and whole-hearted commitment to work, Mr. Garth defines his legacy.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Eliot's novels show how nineteenth century fathers embodied the duty of deciding, guiding, and providing for their dependents while struggling to earn a living within a changing business and economic situation. In her fictional world, Mr. Tulliver, Mr. Wakem, Mr. Deane, and Amos Barton are benevolent fathers who make utmost efforts to fulfil their fatherly responsibilities. Cole (2011) thinks that fathers like Mr. Tulliver, as represented by Eliot, are "unable to fulfil the father's 'principal function' of breadwinner" and "loses the status as a father, husband and man." (p.167) But I should say that these fathers, in a sense, cannot be fully regarded as failed fathers. These fathers suffer through changing social, economic, and business trends to achieve a place for themselves within society. Eliot emphasizes that these fathers are actually aware of their responsibilities even if they are not always able to carry them out completely. In middle class families, the failure or success of the father as head of the family has a deep impact on the other members of the home. By bringing up the problems of patriarchy and authority, and showing the weaknesses of fathers, Eliot actually yearns for the perfect father.

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