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Motifs of Revulsion in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and Induction of Moral Conflicts

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This paper selects revulsion and its networking emotion: resentment and disgust as a generic form of novel studies and the subject of moral investigation. Motifs of revulsion create complex bedding texture of the plot, which introduces personality and inner visions of characters in the novel. It unifies the binding power of narrative history and informs readers various aspects of morality in the Victorian era, in addition, to present a lyrical tone of social ethics. The following analysis takes Eliot's *Middlemarch* as the base text. I shall explain the lexical meaning and textual discussion of revulsion, resentment and disgust spirally within its context, then illustrate with paranthetical examples and different idioms. Later arguments turn to what Eliot defines as faction of human duty in life, which is the nuanced requirement of a subject stands against himself or herself through the disposition of conscience as verdict. This disposition provides unlimited parallels for instinctive presence of internal feelings and thresholds that are constantly affecting moral understandings.

Keywords: motifs, revulsión, *Middlemarch*, moral conflicts, texts and emotions

Introduction

Motifs are recurring structures that weave and inform the major themes of a novel, these structures help to tie discrete stories together and ring the bells of readers in hindsight. A sensible discovery of motifs helps to expose the fundamentals of a novel and mysterious mixture of human essences. Fredric Jameson recently said if the generic sub-structure of a novel disappears at any moment, there is nothing that can guide a novel.[1]

To begin with, I would like to draw the attention of the readers about the solitude of self-revulsion. Subsequently, there is a type of relational revulsion (resentment) which requires a person to see the other with an eye filled with hatred, and results in antithetical reactions. This resentment becomes collective in shape, engenders public opinions for the organic society, thus creates different strata of moral conflicts and misjudgment. Several questions arise: what are the typical motifs of revulsion, resentment and disgust in *Middlemarch*? How raw is such emotion asserting oneself and another? What are the examples of moral consequences related to the immense dominance of revulsion to the middle-class provincial (small) town which is in keen pursuit of its own reform ideals? Relevant background information is provided below.

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[1] Most of Fredric Jameson's opinion concerning the persistence of narrative in terms of method of interpretation is delivered in his lecture for the conference *Forms of Fiction—the Novel in English*, organized by Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin, on November 7-9 2013 at David Logan Center for the Arts, University of Chicago.

Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life is a long novel written by George Eliot, whose real name is Mary Anne Evans or Marian Evans, born in Warwickshire, November 22, 1819. *Middlemarch* is her late novel which projects phenomenological and ethical trajectories. Early productions are translation of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, *Scenes of Clerical life*, and *Adam Bede*. The writing of *Middlemarch* began in 1869 and was then put aside. It was fused together later on with different stories of primary and secondary characters into a coherent whole, and finally appeared in 1874 as the one-volume novel. The novel is set in the fictitious Midlands region of Middlemarch in 1830, it contains multiple intertwining plots with many characters and their energetic aspirations for life. This novel is committed to realist principles, entanglement of quotidian affairs, human vices and virtues, and frequent overwrought emotions different characters felt. The cultural context was taken from a time when people were obsessed with personal stress, incipient modernity, and diplomatic crisis such as parliamentary representation of the Great Reform Bill in 1832, nascent beginnings of surgical procedures and hospital establishment, and mid-course ascetic inquiry of Methodism. The novel starts with a short prelude putting forth the idea of the latter-day St. Theresa, foreshadowing the female character Dorothea; it finishes up in a session of "finale" after the eighth book, which gives the post-novel conclusion of the main characters. Between the front and the end, somewhere beyond book six, a great portion of dialogical words and maxims recorded is devoted to the motifs of revulsion, resentment and disgust, which satirically work against any idealistic outlook of life. Eliot aimed to present a real life filled with episodes of revulsion, hatred, and flight. Characters are surrounded by the looming consequences of thoughtless actions, with their life journeys intercepted by intermittent moral lucks and contingent order.

Motifs of Revulsion

Revulsion means to "pluck or pull away." Its etymology comes from *re*, again, back, and *vellere*, to pull, denoting the act of holding or drawing back. It marks repugnance and hostility, for example, "a sudden and violent revulsion of feeling both in the parliament and the country followed." [2] In medical terms it means "the act of turning or diverting any disease from one part of the body to another, or a counter-irritation used to reduce inflammation or increase the blood supply to an affected area." [3] The revulsion of self appears twice in *Middlemarch*, both instances mention the situation when feeling of revulsion was too strong in Dorothea. The first painful revulsion came because Sir James Chattam was in love with Dorothea, as sister Celia observed:

> The *revulsion* was so strong and painful in Dorothea's mind that the tears welled up and flowed abundantly. All her dear plans were embittered, and she thought with disgust of Sir Jame's conceiving that she recognized him as her lover. There was vexation too on account of Celia.[4] (Eliot, 2008, p. 33)

Internal swells and release of painful emotion go against the rational decision of Dorothea, she aimed at pulling away from Sir James for Casaubon.[5] The hostility of her inward emotion diverted her from what she had originally planned. Soon, the second revulsion came when Rosamond confessed to Dorothea that her desire for

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[2] Goodrich Chaucey and Noah Webster, *Webster's complete dictionary of the English language-1758-1843* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1886), 1134.
[3] Ibid., also take reference from *The American Heritage® Medical Dictionary* Copyright © 2007, 2004 by Houghton Mifflin Company.
[4] The *Middlemarch* version used here is the Oxford edition.
[5] *Middlemarch*. Oxford World's Classics (Paperback), p. 33.

Will Ladislaw was never comparable than Dorothea existence for him.

> *The revulsion of feeling* in Dorothea was too strong to be called joy. It was a tumult in which the terrible strain of the night and morning made a resistant pain—she could only perceive that this would be joy when she had recovered her power of feeling it. Her immediate consciousness was one of immense sympathy without check. (Eliot, 2008, p. 750)

After listening to the confession from Rosamond, Dorothea felt the agitation of her mind, and that feeling runs on a diurnal and nocturnal mill. In "Sunset and Sunrise," book eight of the novel, every novel character undergoes tumult of moral configuration—a reordering of his or her own self in relation to the world due to the uncontrollable shift of circumstances, the self-to-be undergoes constant changes accordingly. The addition of minute actions of revulsion makes the totality of a moral life. The flickering minutely *self* is represented by the narrative mode of consciousness, as the scratches of reality on the wall reflecting the image of illumination of a candle, the arcs of circle mark different strata of reasoning, with its central image exemplified by the character who feels real.[6] George Eliot means to evoke the emotions inside a person and projects corresponding feeling of "reality," that is, to provide a view of what it is to be "being inside one's world," and the opposite perception this state necessitates (Star, 2013, p. 868). The "full pulsed" Dorothea observed in the later part of the novel marks the potency of her own responsive being, which exposes the inner vision and energy of selfhood. This kind of revulsion locates the immediate consciousness of the moral agent and his or her incapacity, farther conception of any idealism is heavily resisted by this disposition of revulsion. Hence, we are no more different than animals and we are subject to the curse of the serpent. Accordingly, what is the relationship between the motif of revulsion and the curse? When Henry James Sr. thought about Swedenborgian and the endless "strife of tongue" in England in his book *Society—The Redeemed Form of Man*, he once put the curse on selfhood this way: "the curse of mankind, that keeps our manhood so little and so depraved, is its sense of selfhood, and the absurd abominable opinionativeness it engenders" (James, 1879, p. 47). The situation is dismal and drone, especially to the one who holds high moral value similar to Dorothea.

Motif of Resentment

To depart from revulsion of self, we reach motifs of resentment marked by other characters. Resentment (French: *ressentiment*) means:

> The act of resenting, the state of resentful, or inclined to think over, as a state of consciousness; conviction; feeling; impression. It is also satisfaction, complacency and gratitude in the good sense, displeasure and anger in a bad sense. Its synonyms are rage and fury. Resentment is anger excited by a sense of personal injury. It is etymologically the reaction of the mind which we instinctively feel when we think ourselves wronged.[7]

This definition takes at least two people to ferment resentment, this is a relational type of revulsion that puts oneself against the other. In *Middlemarch*, there are fourteen instances of resentment, most of them mark

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[6] *Middlemarch*, 248. "Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! The scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection." Many critics focus on explaining the notion of scratches, circles, the arrangement of the illusion, the absence and presence of self, and so forth.

[7] *Webster*'s complete dictionary, 1124.

the hostility between a man and a woman, and excerpts of strongest sense are identified. In chapter seventy-six, Tertius Lydgate went through all the turmoil, one of which is household furniture sales because of huge debt accrued. He was already placed under suspicious eyes of the public for assisting Mr. Bulstrode to kill Raffles, as a result he received thousand pounds from Bulstrode, thereby executed an obscure use of "bribes" to resolve the debt problem. He was at the same time unwelcomed and professionally challenged by other medical staff members. He went home to see his wife Rosamond, at that stage an enmity of his, and the text says,

> When Lydgate came in, she was almost shocked at the change in his face, which was strikingly perceptible to her who had not seen him for two months. It was not the change of emaciation, but that effect which even young faces will very soon show from the persistent presence of *resentment* and despondency. (Eliot, 2008, p. 716)

This prolonged ageing effect (gauntness) on the face of Lydgate sustains without much mitigation of mercy from Rosamond. Lydgate is the one who had his opportunity lost in this chapter possibly due to Middletown's resistance to change. Any man with a well-crafted future plan undergirded by good sense of egotism is ready to brace the high risk of brutal failure. To Lydgate, simple application of his clear understanding of microscopic scientific research to his own circumstances of subject-object delineation may not help much in terms of gaining some tractions and self-control for his life. The *ressentiment* of Lydgate came from wrong choices he made in his late twenties, followed by marital dissatisfaction, career incapability, and corky conservatism of the Middletown itself.

However, the main cause of persistent presence of resentment in Lydgate is this: his radical fallenness from being a hero of science to a person of sheer compromise as William Deresiewicz observed generically.[8] Tertius Lydgate exercised his will to power frequently but did not encounter moral luck in the troubling world, and became more and more despair deep within. In the finale of this novel, Lydgate resented his nominal wife so much that he called Rosamond as his basil plant, "which had flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains."[9] This basil plant is an element of the poem *Isabella; or The Pot of Basil* by Keats, which realistically depicts basil growth on a dead man's brain. Besides anticipating on a good marriage suddenly went wrong, Lydgate aspired to become the one "hero of science" among the many and enjoyed morbid disengagement—an exclusive scientific life.[10] The narrator, Eliot, unequivocally states the obstacles and complexities of everyday life are something that superhumans have to always deal with:

> Each of those Shining Ones had to walk on the earth among neighbors who perhaps thought much more of his gait and his garments than of anything which was to give him a title to everlasting fame: each of them had his little local personal history sprinkled with small temptations and sordid cares, which made the retarding friction of his course toward final companionship with the immortals. Lydgate was not blind to the dangers of such friction, but he had plenty of confidence in his resolution to avoid it as far as possible: being seven-and-twenty, he felt himself experienced. (Eliot, 2008, p. 137)

The shining ones are the shining moral agents, each get rubbed and robbed by others and lose momentum of life, Lydgate is the unfortunate exemplar. The retarding friction refers to anyone who has a less clean moral

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[8] William Deresiewicz mentions the heroism that Lydgate desires so passionately "assumes a form associated with a pair of figures whose influence on George Eliot has remained." In "Heroism and Organicism in the Case of Lydgate: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900." *Nineteenth Century* 38, no. 4 (Autumn, 1998), 723-740.
[9] *Middlemarch*, 782.
[10] *Middlemarch*, 155.

record and experience subsequent despise from others due to his poor outlook—"gait and garments"—all gets dirtier and soiled by numerous transgressions. Other commentators see the failure of Tertius Lydgate in terms of disoriented search for the "common basis of life" by carefully examining the core human materiality—as a scientist, a keen observer of the object—what was the primitive tissue?11 Lydgate imagined himself as a free agent, he thought about his life carefully and walked intuitively (he had a romantic crush with the married lady in France). He felt that he is in control of his destiny, both public and private. Rapidly he discovered how fatality of life and unexpected slavery rupture. An early forecast of his fate occurs when the narrator describes Lydgate was bound by the calling of his profession. Soon after, the soul of Lydgate was not his own, not because of work, but after he became engaged to the woman to whom he had made himself bound. The motif of resentment simply brushes on the will of Lydgate, he was enslaved by his animal self and dragged to unexpected life event.

Before citing another example of Lydgate, I would like to review Nietzsche and Jamison on *ressentiment*. What is the object of our will to power? Is it merely an elevation of status to mitigate between the resentment of a subject to an object? To defeat those who bully unjustly as a form of class struggle and resentment expression? Or, to achieve self-realization—one desires to find moral groundings and materiality for an evaporative life in the ecosystem of euro-humanity? The narratives of George Eliot are very often multifarious interweavings of various transcending histories of primary and secondary characters, as if they are divinely narrated by the sagehood of the author. While Lydgate had difficulty finding the materiality of human life on his own, Eliot comes down from a higher view of life and his omniscience judges over all. He selects the prominent psychological features operative upon important characters who remain unaware of their emotions (Rosenheim Jr., 2000, p. 71). The narrator has a "divine" model of how each single human tells his and her own story, and interacts with all the other stories that other male and female characters are constructing for themselves, this is implicitly understood in the novel, and the resulting patchwork of stories composes "a dense world of materiality" (Reed, 1989, p. 326).[12]

For Nietzsche, the seeing and knowing of life is perspectival in nature (Nietzsche, 2003, p. 12). It is very similar to what Eliot attempts to complete, he advises other philosophers to observe that unique materiality from as many angles as possible. He presupposes the object under microscopic examination remains unchanged, its nature can be practically pieced together by the synopsis of multiple perspectives, and motif of resentment is one of the many investigations one can assume. The understanding of our will to power is an authentication of the weak, the weak invents his or her morality to subdue the strong; it adopts Aristotle politics and expands it. The argument of Nietzsche is supported by some historical examples. However, as we cite the singularity of Lydgate, problem exists. The empowerment of the will is assassinated by the cruel materiality of life and the absence of moral luck. It is assumed that slavish man and his quiet way of thinking would soon attain surmount power propelled by poisonous resentment, unstable circumstances and injustices on earth. The angry subject desires to punish and surpass those with authority, as the latter are usually considered as better or more powerful. Resentment usually arises when incongruence ascends between the longing of a subject and the

[11] *Middlemarch*, 139, 255. Also see Kenneth Womack and William Baker, Companion to the Victorian Novel (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002), 302.

[12] There is an interesting chapter "Moral pattern and unpatterned circumstantiality" by John Robert Reed, which talks about interactions between different characters and the chemistry in between.

outcome of his striving. It is undeniable that all characters in *Middlemarch* were seeking the uninhibited manifestation of their desires in actions—such free will nonetheless implies the *non sequitur* of Nietzche.[13]

In *Middlemarch*, after all the misfortunes downpoured on him, Lydgate began to lash out his anger on Rosamond, Bulstrode, Sir James. Ironically, he hoped for a little dignity preserved by receiving unbiased sympathy from "mentor" Dorothea. On the contrary, the whole town and the hospital authority were waiting to impose judgment on him because he received dirty money from Bulstrode. Genealogists associated the origins of the pursuit of justice to the punishment of criminals. Those who disobey the law deserve punishment because they were once free to obey. Nietzsche proposed that conventional morality imposes punishments on those who break human promises and condone injustices, consequential paybacks usually had their origins in the cruelty of the audiences. There is a cruel pleasure derived from pain infliction, it is a public enjoyment of watching other people suffer and casting debased opinions of mistrust.[14]

> This silence of hers (Rosamond) brought a new rush of gall to that bitter mood in which Lydgate had been saying to himself that nobody believed in him—even Farebrother had not come forward. He had begun to question her with the intent that their conversation should disperse the chill fog which had gathered between them, but he felt his resolution checked by *despairing resentment*. (Eliot, 2008, p. 713)

> The truth is, Ladislaw, I (Lydgate) am an unlucky devil. We have gone through several rounds of purgatory since you left, and I have lately got on to a worse ledge of it than ever. I suppose you are only just come down—you look rather battered—you have not been long enough in the town to hear anything? (Eliot, 2008, p. 735)

Lydgate, surrounded by the dense chill fog, was subtly judged by others. The fountain of gall seems to be divinely appointed and induces purgatorial torments. *Ressentiment* flourishes among people who feel wounded and hate by what they thought to be the source of their pain. Is Dr. Tertius Lydgate the prime murderer? He gave his medical advice and told Mr. Bulstrode not to give liquors of any sort to Raffles (patient) but Bulstrode did so secretly, which hastened the death of his enemy Raffles. However, Lydgate offhandedly mentioned the publication of American physician Dr. Ware's abundant medical experience about alcoholic poisoning on *delirium tremens* in 1831. In this case, was the human accident a medical error? The doctor did not expect the ill will of a patient's friend or rival. Does resentment foil social justice? Who contributes to the onset of resentment? Town residents? Family of Raffles? Bulstode? Lydgate? Nietzsche cautioned readers against the idea of equating revenge to resentment in terms of using pain as a form of compensation for injury.[15]

To set pause on this logic, an alternative solution is given. As an admiral of thoughts and forms, Fredrick Jameson sees resentment as "life affirming" in terms of deciding the outcome of a novel, at the same time, he also finds the theory of *ressentiment* striking because it is auto-referential, "an expression of annoyance at seemingly gratuitous lower-class agitation, at the apparently quite unnecessary rocking of the social boat"[16] (Jameson, 1981, p. 203). The annoyance level of Lydgate escalated in raw manner that a

[13] GM, I, 10, 11, 16. Also see Peter Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: the Ethics of an Immoralist* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), 77.
[14] GM, III, 4. *Ethics of an Immoralist*, 86.
[15] GM, II, 6.
[16] Jameson applies his hermeneutics to nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts, emphases on Balzac, Gissing, and Conrad. Other approaches such as Lacanian psychoanalysis, semiotics, dialectical analysis, and allegorical readings are under examination. There are keen observations on dialectics and structuralism, ideas of ressentiment and other aesthetic traditions. The key idea remains drilling the method and the practice of Marxist criticism.

purgatory of unhappy consciousness resided in him, while he continued to rewrite his own historical and social reality powerlessly. Lydgate became so fatigue because of the authentic resentment, and he worried about his class position and situation—"worse ledge of it (purgatory) than ever."

Echoing the "unlucky devil" Lydgate referred himself to, this text marked his frustration:

> Nevertheless, though reason *strangled the desire* to gamble, there remained the feeling that, with an assurance of luck to the needful amount, he would have liked to gamble, rather than take the alternative which was beginning to urge itself as inevitable. (Eliot, 2008, p. 637)

On the other hand, Richard Freadman explains the meaning of moral luck in his edited volume of *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy and Theory*, it "contests the Kantian claim that dutiful rational moral agents and their intentions are not subject to the vicissitudes of external contingency" (Freadman, 1998, pp. 134-160).[17] He also suggests three forms of luck—the cosmic kind beyond everything; the circumstantial-cultural kind; and constitutive luck related to human needs and appetite (Freadman, 1998, p. 149). Did Lydgate try his best as a medical practitioner? Probably yes. But he mismanaged his finances due to low salary received and a forthcoming large mortgage payment. His boiling resentment made him crave for gambling out of circumstances and a need to reconfigure (by himself!) the presence of contingency. This type of appetite for a false happiness easily overcomes any sense of rational duty.

Motif of Disgust

Beyond motif of resentment I explore the motif of disgust. Its noun form implies:

> Repugnance to what is offensive; aversion to that which is presented to the taste; displeasure produced by something loathesome; distaste, dislike, said primarily of the sickening opposition felt for anything which offends the physical organs of taste, also of the analogous repugnance excited by anything extremely unpleasant to the higher sensibility of the soul.[18]

In *Middlemarch*, there are thirty-four instances of disgust, some of the more remarkable phrases include "concentrated disgust" (Eliot, 2008, p. 53), "cosmic disgust" (p. 192), "revival of his disgust" (p. 268), "fox-hunter's disgust" (p. 307), "the rising disgust and indignation" (p. 315), "outburst of professional disgust" (p. 425), "a look of disgust on her pretty face" (p. 429), "intense disgust" (p. 454), "unmixed disgust" (p. 637), "outleap of jealous indignation and disgust" (p. 740). Two short texts are chosen from this record of whole town of disgust, the first one is an old chum of Mr. Bulstrode who may uncover his not-so-glorious past by gaining acquaintance from a leak source, it says:

> He can tap Bulstrode to any amount, knows all his secrets. However, he blabbed to me at Bilkley: he takes a stiff glass. Damme if I think he meant to turn king's evidence; but he's that sort of bragging fellow, the bragging runs over hedge and ditch with him, till he'd brag of a spavin as if it "ud fetch money. A man should know when to pull up." Mr. Bambridge made this remark with *an air of disgust*, satisfied that his own bragging showed a fine sense of the marketable. (Eliot, 2008, p. 674)

The "air of disgust", other than carries satirical tone, calmly induces repulsion. There is a desire of Bambridge for social distance and avoidance of anyone who may actually know or at least brag about what they

[17] Page 136 gives more detailed distinctions. There was an interesting encounter of moral luck in Paris.
[18] *Webster*'s complete dictionary, 386.

know about the bad deeds of Bulstrode. This kind of moral disgust goes hand in hand with pungent personal opinions and asserts a certain unformed type of judgment. George Eliot did mention a rather "realist" belief on moral judgment in her work *Mill on the Floss*, it is a perpetual reference to special circumstances that mark individual lot and the deep seated habit of directing fellow feeling with individual fellow men.[19] The textbook definition of moral judgments usually advocates impartiality and reciprocated respect for the well-being and goodness of mankind. However, the driving potency of sensability, in this case, the emotion of disgust, acts as new energy for rudimentary affective processes. This energy becomes the frequent guide of morality, something hidden in the bullet-speed discourse of Mr. Bambridge. To look at someone suspiciously, to whom may have full-blown breaking news probably tapped by paying extra amount of money to the source, what is the moral value of Bambridge and the invisible "reporter"? Jonathan Haidt called this kind of "commentary" moral intuition—it acts upon any prompt individual judgment. This "flash of intuition" usually advances operation of any well-substantiated moral reasoning. This lightning flashes rapidly outside of human consciousness and imposes mental conditionability (David, 2011, pp. 1142-1146). This flash can be seen as hypo-mentalized and dehumanizing in nature once it induces raw emotion of disgust (Sherman, 2011, pp. 245-251).

Martha Nussbaum identifies disgust as an indicator that majoritarian discourse employs to certain locations. This indicator makes the discourse as highly valuable in return. By exercising diminishment on associated personality and emitting scorn, a despised minority is thus created. It ultimately affects the establishment of social laws. She sees Lord Devlin's arguments that the disgust of despised minority, or run-of-the-mill member of the society, "gives us a strong reason to make an act illegal, even if it causes no harm to others" (Nussbaum, 2004, p. 4). The redemptive value of disgust is seen from the righteous eyes who usually value progressivism rather than convenient escapism for its legal convenience. Why are people in Middlemarch so meddlesome and inquisitive about other people's business? I am eager to use an idea from Sissela Bok, that secret probing can bring a good purpose if immense pain and shame and disgust can be brought into the life of the open, afterwards a certain extent of healing and health can take place. It is the implicit and explicit promise of secrecy (Bok, 1989, pp. 129-130). For the temporal concern of this novel, I have to lay aside this claim of controversial hope and retreat to moral weakness and animal likeness (or the opposite: fantasies of purity and omnipotence), which are in plain sense the signatures of disgust. Expressions are formulated through the use of concentrated raw language, unmixed invectives, unparalleled comical discourse, and so forth. Mr. Bambridge simply demonstrated similar language usage:

> In her first *outleap of jealous indignation and disgust*, when quitting the hateful room, she had flung away all the mercy with which she had undertaken that visit. She had enveloped both Will and Rosamond in her burning scorn, and it seemed to her as if Rosamond were burned out of her sight forever. But that base prompting which makes a woman more cruel to a rival than to a faithless lover, could have no strength of recurrence in Dorothea when the dominant spirit of justice within her had once overcome the tumult and had once shown her the truer measure of things. (Eliot, 2008, p. 741)

The text shows a genuine display of disgust proper from St. Theresa (Dorothea), she witnessed her utopian "reformed" lover who aspired a career of British metropolitan politics through ardently associating with a

[19] MF 7:2:498; M:61:610.

married woman, whose husband is the unlucky devil Lydgate. Her emotion of disgust entails a viscerally powerful reaction. This observation is supported with relevant scientific data. Paul Rozin, a clinical researcher, has demonstrated that moral subject is unwilling to touch the sterile objects like sweater, silverware and so on, if the objects belong to someone with a moral transgression. Dorothea quitted the hateful room, expelled all her mercy and enveloped two human objects of disgust and hatred in her burning scorn. The fierce actions of burning, distancing, measuring and judging driven by personal energy and ardency link her physical aversion and intense moral revulsion together—the raw disgust rushed from the physical *self* because of the presence of absolutely irresponsible others. This kind of moral judgment Dorothea projected is both explicit and implicit: Her physical response to the unexpected behavior of other organic personhood can be extended to the fear of contamination of her individual selfhood through disgusting such objects (Jones, 2011, p. 158). Is Dorothea herself immaculate overall? Her purity was already defiled by her own frustrations of marriage with deceased Casaubon and the constant feeling of uselessness. This was her external conflict: her acceptance of ethical limit was directly relational to her acceptance of the limit of others as well. The plot of George Eliot relied on tensions between selflessness and egoism, where Dorothea had already begun to emerge from some kind of moral stupidity, "taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves." This moral stupidity is amplified by the thick particularity of each situation (Levine, 2001, 81). If we let this motif of disgust stand against Eliot's depiction of jewelry, it will be interesting to see the contrast. Some critics see a sharing of emotion between Dorothea and her creator Eliot, as Eliot's (Evan) fundamental psychological motivation was her quest for love and approval (Yu & Ziolkowski, 2006, p. 79).[20] Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* uses Gwen to expand such quest, the turquoise necklace of Gwendolen presents itself as the gem of grace, which gives meaning to the protective and sympathetic nature of a woman, for Gwendolen "it was lost once but then found" (Eliot, 2009, p. 264). To Dorothea, the tortoise-shell lozenge-box was the gift of Ladislaw to someone else, but once she saw it, "she felt the color mounting to her cheeks."[21] Lozenge is a diamond-shaped figure with sharp upper and lower angles slightly borne upon an escutcheon used by a woman. The color of the foreign love affected the consciousness of Dorothea, and it was where her emotion started to bloom. Romance and sentiment was not replicated by the marital reality of Dorothea, and the burning scorn remedied her lack of fulfillment in life. Her physical and spiritual isolation from deceased Mr. Casaubon and the rest of the world was already awaken by her rush of disgust, which brought her true personhood back to the world. The snowballing effect of assault on Dorothea's ideals disgusted her. The disenchantment resulted was not guided by Providence in this novel, and Dorothea had to rely upon her own resources to make sense of the sharply changing circumstantiality (Schweiker, et al., 2010, pp. 367-400).[22] This free demand for Providence is acutely different from the actions of Lydgate, who put his faith in the hands of chance.

From Motifs of Revulsion, Resentment and Disgust to the Sense of Duty

As we swiftly proceed from diverse views on motifs to the discourse of duty, the following observations shape the course of obligation *Middlemarch* described. In general, duty means:

[20] The sharing of emotion between the character and the writer is the observation of Ruby Redinger.
[21] *Middlemarch*, p. 757.
[22] Richard Rosengarten commented on the session of Middlemarch in the article and relates to the providential aspect of the novel.

> Which is due from one person to another; that which is owing; especially, that which a person is bound, by any natural, moral, or legal obligation, to do, or to refrain from doing; the relation of obliging force of that which is morally right. It signals service rendered, and demand respectful obedience. It also means respect, reverence, regard, "my duty to you"[23].

The main function of narrative is to tell how residents should cooperate with each other, at the same time, to induce moral conflicts within a community, and witness how people defect from the social norm. Those who love *Middlemarch* are essentially fascinated by the implicit and explicit moral conflicts of the plots, where the guilty are unveiled, predators flushed out, risk-takers made to face the consequences of their actions. We are interested in reading novels because of our emotional recognition of their numerous hidden motifs and attempts of desert and escape from high mores most characters shared, while some of them would assume a certain extent of ethical responsibility as the novel concludes itself. Nevertheless, to read the surface definition of duty, there are seventy (!) occurrence of the word "duty" in *Middlemarch*, range of meanings extends from domestic duty, marital duty, duties of clergy and chaplain, medical duty, to "other people's duty," which illustrate typical Victorian social attitude. The summary is presented below:

> After all, self-culture was the principal point; while in politics he (Will Ladislaw) would have been sympathizing warmly with liberty and progress in general. *Our sense of duty must often wait for some work which shall take the place of dilettantism and make us feel that the quality of our action is not a matter of indifference.* (Eliot, 2008, p. 433)

Negative emotions exemplified by revulsion, resentment and disgust always have a diligent frontal force on their own, which provides a source of negative motivation for different moral outcomes. We have to admit that without ascribed psychological motivation, any subsequent moral actions would deem to be groundless—as a dilettante experimenting art jam on a blank canvas. The creative adventure of a dabbler on the field is not sufficiently weighty for conflict resolution. Harold bloom once said George Eliot is a philosophical novelist who writes for things that are phenomenological as well as experiential, he has strong moral bearings on duty and character, with the life of each character grounded in consciousness.[24] It is certain that character is not a clean cut in marble, as Rev. Farebrother expressed in the novel, character is the core of human conduct. To Dorothea, a grand life is a life she envisions to have extraordinary means to do good, rather than money hoarding and castle dwelling in Middlemarch. "What do we live for? If it is not to make life less difficult to each other?"[25]

Mr. Farebrother once said he did not "translate my own convenience into other people's duties. I am opposed to Bulstrode in many ways. I don't like the set he belongs to: they are a narrow ignorant set."[26] After the death of Raffles, a meeting was held in the Town Hall on the occurrence of a cholera case in the provincial town. The Act of Parliament called for sanitary measures, and the board for the superintendence in charge of this summoned all the medical men, chairman, and board member Bulstrode for a grand meeting. In the middle of the meeting, someone insisted that Mr. Bulstrode needs to deny and confute publicly the many scandalous

[23] Webster's complete dictionary, 421.
[24] For details read Gregory Tague, *Character and consciousness: George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence—phenomenological, ecological, and ethical readings* (Bethesda, Md.: Academica Press, 2005), 28, 34. In *Middlemarch*, motifs of marble is associated with Dorothea's stillness, museum statue, table and plaything in different books, some on pages 177, 181, 271.
[25] *Middlemarch*, 691.
[26] *Middlemarch*, 165.

statements made against him, such as suspicious death of Raffles in his house, and dishonest business procedures he conducted years ago. Then and there, Bulstrode experienced a crisis of feeling "almost too violent for his delicate frame to support."[27] One can imagine this mutual share of violent emotion between Bulstrode and others far surpasses a moderate sense of disgust. This hostility came from Bulstrode and perhaps eight other board members. Bulstrode remarked,

> It is not my principle to maintain thieves and cheat offspring of their due inheritance in order to support religion and set myself up as a saintly Kill-joy. I affect no niceness of conscience—I have not found any nice standards necessary yet to measure your actions by, sir. (Eliot, 2008, p. 685)

A few minutes after his public testimony, Bulstrode was summoned to quit the room, and avoid further attendance to any townhall meetings in the future. Lydgate walked with him out of the boardroom; this walk marked the gentle duty and pure compassion from Lydgate, to whom Bulstrode had given thousand pounds. However, Lydgate's dutiful act was "unspeakably bitter to him." Bulstrode experienced raw emotion from a sheer mistrust he received from the public, most of them believed that he lied upon his conscience, and demonstrated contempt for his own version of Christianity in the business and medical arena. Though morality in *Middlemarch* is not a critique of any systems or nice standards, its boundary is marked by both astute individual and community, it is their earnest quest for a possible reform of something.[28] To apply current standards, any life outcome can be collections of mere coincidences as the subject anticipants and encounters, there are many uncertainties on the road, and a nice mirror of conscience thus realizes narrative potentials. Creation of emotive motifs within narratives enriches materiality of vices and virtues. Reaching a good life is often a fight or flight process where each character has to work through his or her honest feelings.

Conclusion

This article explores the lexical meanings and narrative examples of revulsion, resentment and disgust, the spiral theme dominates later part of the novel and reveals moral lessons mechanically. The rough estimation on how Eliot defines as faction of human duty in life is an attempt of transferral, where verdicts of others and readings of self elucidate social mores in reformed aspects. Besides, emotion evoked potentials of novels may serve as particular research direction.

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[27] *Middlemarch*, 683.

[28] Schweiker explained "secularism (thus) contributes a crucial condition of the achievement of one of Reform's goals, namely, that one's Christianity be one's own." I think the reflected solitude of reform spirit each character experienced in *Middlemarch* introduces nascent advantage of post-Victorian secular progress, when medicine, Anglicanism, town planning, parliamentary policies and so forth progressed in both gentrified and ambitious fashion.

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