

of young woman who attended classes at Cambridge and who was parodied by a number of novelists including Grant Allen in *The Woman Who Did*, whereas Mina simply wishes to take advantage of modern inventions to be able to assist Jonathan in his work. Nevertheless, when Mina begins to use her uncanny ability to remember railway timetables and other skills to pursue the Count, Van Helsing tells her that she has a ‘man’s brain’ (234). The fact that the vampire is drawn to her suggests that she has overstepped the boundaries of propriety, however, and as Sally Ledger commented, Stoker ‘wanted to terminate the career of the sexualized New Woman and to reinstate in her place a modernized version of the “angel in the house”’ (Ledger, 1997: 106). In Stoker’s world the education of women was a pragmatic step, rather than a progressive one, and it would take many more years before society could accept the education of women as a basic right.

Darwin

The Mill on the Floss

As I discussed in Part One, the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 created shockwaves throughout the Victorian intelligentsia as they tried to reconcile Darwin’s explanation of evolution with religious teachings. George Eliot, as an atheist, did not face these challenges and was fascinated by the imaginative possibilities that Darwin’s theory presented, although as Angelique Richardson notes, the novel *The Mill on the Floss* is a more general reflection on the nineteenth-century interest in heredity (2003: 85). Published a year after Darwin’s controversial book (although she had already written volume one before *The Origin* appeared), Eliot’s novel is brimming with references to what was later termed ‘natural selection’ and contains a number of fascinating references to breeding and hybridity.

When Maggie is first introduced to us, the narrator tells us that she is a ‘small mistake of nature’ (61), suggesting that she is some type of anomaly. While most of the characters are unsophisticated, they nevertheless discuss breeding and behavioural characteristics, attempting to understand why Maggie is both intelligent but unable

to conform, while her brother Tom is given to action, rather than thought. Maggie's father knows that his daughter is like him and blames his wife for his son's weakness of intellect. He reflects:

It seems a bit of a pity, though . . . as the lad should take after the mother's side instead o' the little wench. That's the worst on't wi' the crossing o' breeds: you can never justly calkilate what'll come on't. (59)

This discussion of breeding and fitness pervades the novel and the narrator extends the metaphor to consider both the natural and the economic worlds. While Maggie's cleverness marks her out as a forerunner of the New Woman, who emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, her context means that she cannot be neatly assimilated into her parochial, closed-minded society. Eliot's novel reflects the period of her own childhood when a lively, impulsive young woman like Maggie (or Eliot) would have presented a challenge to her parents and to the world around her.

Maggie is one of a sequence of Eliot's heroines who possess remarkable potential, but who are thwarted by social pressures. Although she is fiercely clever, she is also curiously naïve about the world, believing that when she runs away to join the gypsies she will immediately become their queen and failing to think through the consequences of her intrigue with Stephen Guest. In this respect, she fails to adapt to the changing world around her and seems unable to pick up a number of basic social rules, demonstrating that she is unable to modify herself according to her environment. She is, perhaps, like Arthur Henry Hallam in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, a 'herald of a higher race' (118.14), born before society can accommodate her and her difference.

The novel contains a number of proleptic moments (i.e. moments in which events prefigure the conclusion) and several of these draw implicit comparisons between Tom and Maggie and hybrid creatures of the natural world. When Maggie discovers that she has killed Tom's lop-eared rabbits through neglect, Luke consoles her by pointing to their lack of vigour and observing, 'Things out o' nature niver thrive. God A'mighty doesn't like 'em. He made the rabbits' ears to lie back, an it's nothing but contrariness to make 'em hing down like a mastiff dog's' (82). A similar critique follows

a few pages later when Tom Tulliver's dog, Yap is shown to be a spoiled companion animal who is inadequate when measured against the working dogs admired by Bob Jakin. When Yap tries to bite Bob, he is simply flung into the river, where his soaking anticipates Tom and Maggie's final immersion in the Floss. Bob, on the other hand, later compares himself to his own dog, Mumps, who is a mongrel and who is therefore more robust and less highly strung, emphasizing that Bob is well adapted for the world he inhabits. Mary Jean Corbett takes this argument a step forward, suggesting that the mongrel was for Eliot and her contemporaries, 'a figure for the English themselves as a people of hybrid stock' (Corbett, 2007: 132) and this reading sits neatly alongside arguments that suggest that the English middle classes were drawn to the theory of evolution because it validated their own rise to economic dominance.

If there is any character in Eliot's world who is able to adapt and survive, then it is Bob. When he is first introduced to us, he is presented as a slightly wild, uncouth character who frightens Maggie, but who, significantly, knows all about the natural world where class and birth are meaningless. Feeling a misplaced confidence in his place in the social hierarchy, Tom patronizes Bob as 'an inferior who could always be treated with authority in spite of his superior knowingness' (101). Bob rejects Tom's assertion of mastery over him, understanding that birthright is no longer a guarantee of one's place within the social hierarchy and that with hard work social mobility is possible. Unlike Tom, Bob is entrepreneurial and becomes a type of small-scale capitalist or speculator, combining his business acumen with compassion when he invites Tom to lay out some money in order to gain interest. Although Tom makes money, it is not because of his abilities, but because of Bob's willingness to assist him and because of his natural skill as a salesman.

In economic terms Maggie's father is also unable to adapt to changes in the wider world. Mr Tulliver's business is conducted somewhat haphazardly, and although he wants his son to advance in life, he goes about it in the wrong way, attempting to turn Tom into something he is not, while neglecting Maggie's greater abilities. Eliot uses the language of miscegenation to consider Mr Tulliver's unfortunate match with his wife. Tulliver himself registers his culpability when he explains that he chose his wife 'cause she was a bit weak, like' (68) and because he did not wish to