George Eliot’s fiction synthesizes the intellectual currents of the nineteenth century. As a lifelong zealous reader and self-directed student, Eliot gained not only a rich background in literature and history, religion and philosophy, art, music, and languages (German, French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Latin), but throughout her life she kept up with the latest developments in the sciences, including the emerging social sciences of psychology and sociology. Her partner, George Henry Lewes, was also famous in his own right for his substantial writings on a wide variety of subjects, including literature, philosophy, biology, and psychology. Among the eminent names in their shared milieu were Herbert Spencer, the philosopher perhaps best remembered for his “Social Darwinism,” Alexander Bain, the British Associationist psychologist, and Charles Darwin, the naturalist whose theories Lewes studied closely and with whom he corresponded on occasion. Much of the literary criticism on George Eliot has illuminated the influences of such contemporaries on her art. Her fiction writing, however, is far more than a synthesis of the thinking of other intellectuals. Her approach to fiction and her insights were her own, and although she “epitomizes” her century, as Basil Willey expresses it (Century 260), her fiction was also unique in its time.

Literary criticism in the twentieth century initially established George Eliot’s position as a great writer by virtue of the “universality” and “profoundly moral character” of her themes, as Alan D. Perlis explains it (xv). Critics have long noted Eliot’s concern with the theme of growth in her central characters from egoism and/or self-delusion to self-knowledge and a capacity for empathy. Critics of the fifties and sixties, influenced by the New Critical emphasis on textual analysis, helped readers appreciate the formal qualities of Eliot’s art: the complex designs of her novels, the unifying imagery and symbolism, the rich sense of time
and place that her writing evokes, and the psychological insight that distinguishes her characterizations from the novelists that preceded her. In the seventies and eighties, an explosion of interest in Eliot is reflected in the quantity, excellence, and variety of the criticism, which has added deconstructionist, feminist, and psychoanalytic dimensions to readers' understanding of her work. In addition, as Perlis notes, criticism in those decades has demonstrated that "the social context of Eliot's work is so rich and complicated that historical, sociological, philosophical, and, perhaps most important, scientific events and discoveries, are intricately bound in the lives of Eliot's characters" (xiv). Despite the general acceptance of Eliot's position as one of the great English novelists, however, many critics have also seen flaws in her work which they often express in terms of her self-involvement with her idealized characters and/or the closely related problem of the forced endings of many of her novels. It was through my study of psychoanalysis, in conjunction with my work on George Eliot, that I began to see the connection between the artistic flaws in the novels and the author's personal conflicts.

I also began to see the connection between the author's personal conflicts and her denial of aggression in her idealized characters—a subject that has increasingly attracted the attention of critics. U. C. Knoepflmacher suggests in his bibliographic essay that the subject of aggression in Eliot's fiction is one "worth considering more fully" by "practitioners of the psychoanalytical approach" (Victorian 257). In recent years, literary critics such as Carol Christ, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, William Myers, and Dorothea Barrett have noted Eliot's apparent concern over the murderous potential of anger, a concern reflected, as Gilbert and Gubar observe, in her tendency to create idealized heroines who "repress anger" and "submit to renunciation" (490). My study, the first book-length psychoanalytic treatment of the subject of aggression in George Eliot's novels, thus constitutes an attempt to respond to the need articulated by Knoepflmacher and other modern critics.

During the course of my psychoanalytic study of George Eliot's fiction, I moved from my initial interest in the subject of narcissism, as reflected in my first published essay on Daniel Deronda (1987), to a more particular focus on aggression: the ways in which it is portrayed in the characters, the ways in which it is denied by the author, and the ways in which it affects the author's creative process. While I began by
applying the theories of two contemporary psychoanalysts, Otto F. Kernberg and Heinz Kohut, to my study of the novels, I discovered after the publication of my essays on *Adam Bede* (1989) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1990), that I needed to return to the writings of Sigmund Freud in my attempt to understand the character Silas Marner's obsessive-compulsive behavior and its relationship to rage. At the same time, I also read the works of contemporary psychologists—behaviorists, cognitive psychologists, and psycho-pharmacologists—who offer differing perspectives on the obsessive-compulsive disorder. It was this year-long attempt to understand obsessions and compulsions (at the same time as I was writing my essay on *Silas Marner*) that resulted in a breakthrough in my thinking about George Eliot, for in the process I had uncovered the connection between rage and loss, and formulated my thesis that George Eliot's fiction writing was her constructive response to unconscious mourning over the loss of her parents—a thesis that was bolstered by my study of Margaret S. Mahler's work on the process of separation-individuation, and John Bowlby's work on attachment, separation, and loss.

While I was writing the *Silas Marner* essay, I also began to perceive what turned out to be a pattern, reflected in the timing and content of the published writings, of Eliot's responses to the anniversaries of deaths in her family. My discovery of George H. Pollock's *The Mourning-Liberation Process*, which includes a review of the psychoanalytic literature on anniversary reactions, provided theoretical support for my observations. The anniversary reaction, as I. L. Mintz explains it, is a response to the unconscious sense of time. It is a "time-specific variant of the repetition-compulsion"—a psychological response "arising on an anniversary of a psychologically significant experience which the individual attempts to master through reliving rather than through remembering" (720). The anniversary reaction is characterized by some form of reenactment of events at a time when the mind associates present circumstances with one or more traumatic events of the past. Such reactions can occur at yearly, decade-long or other intervals, or at a particular time of day, month, or year; they can also occur in relation to the ages in a person's life (or in the life of a loved one) with which traumatic events are associated. Such reactions may also be a sign that the necessary process of mourning for a lost loved one is not yet complete. Pollock's assertion that the repeating patterns in an artist's creative work are
manifestations of the mourning process (1:127), taken together with the psychoanalytic literature on the variety of forms of anniversary reactions, supports my view of Eliot’s fiction writing as her constructive response to her sense of loss.

It will no doubt help my readers if I place my psychoanalytic sources in the context of the history of the psychoanalytic movement. Sigmund Freud’s daughter Anna (1895–1982), whose work is described in detail in Elizabeth Young-Bruehl’s biography, carried on and expanded the work of classical psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the resolution of the Oedipus complex in the treatment of adult neurosis, into her observations and treatment of young children who had been separated from their parents during World War II. Although she continued to focus her theoretical attention on the oedipal period (187), her insights into the needs of pre-oedipal children laid the groundwork for further research in early child development, including that of John Bowlby, who sees his own work as building on such early studies (1:24). In her Hampstead War Nursery in England, Anna Freud observed the importance for language development and toilet training of an ongoing emotional bond with a mother figure, and consequently decided to organize the children in small groups with a “mother” responsible for each one (Young-Bruehl 252). She had found that when children are separated from their mothers, developmental inhibitions set in and regressions occur, but that “once a stable relationship with a surrogate mother had been established by one of the women at the clinic, the superficial signs of symptomatology disappeared and ‘the children began to develop in leaps and bounds’” (Roazen 457). She also found that when the deprived and/or separated children are provided a substitute mother, good object relationships result, aggression becomes bound and its manifestations reduced to normal quantities (Young-Bruehl 322). Anna Freud’s insistence on working with children in the context of their families and her belief in helping the child by encouraging changes in maternal behavior amount to an acknowledgment of the importance of environmental factors in human development.

Although Melanie Klein, the British analyst (1881–1960), differed in many ways from Anna Freud in both the theory and technique of child analysis (Young-Bruehl 160–86), she shared with her rival the emphasis on the importance for development of the child’s interactions with the
mother. However, in contrast to Anna Freud, who emphasized the relationship between the child’s inner and outer worlds, Klein, drawing her inferences from her analytic work, focused on the internal world of the small child, which she saw, as Peter Gay expresses it, as “a mass of destructive and anxious fantasies” (468). Klein’s work marks the beginning of the development of object relations theory, an approach to psychoanalysis that focuses on the internalized objects, or images, that are created from the child’s introjection of parental figures. As defined by Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell in their review of the history of the concept in psychoanalytic theory, the term “object relations” refers to “individuals’ interactions with external and internal (real and imagined) other people, and to the relationship between their internal and external object worlds” (13–14).

Klein’s ideas are perhaps most clearly summarized by Hanna Segal, in a collection of lectures that comprise her Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein. Although most psychoanalysts now question much of Klein’s theory, many have also found that her notion of the “depressive position,” which she believed occurred during the second half of the first year of life, illuminates the difficulty of the young child’s acceptance of the fact that the mother is a person apart from itself. In Klein’s view, the beginning of the depressive position is marked by the recognition of the mother as a whole person (viii–ix). At that time, the infant experiences feelings of “mourning and pining for the good object felt as lost and destroyed, and guilt . . . which arises from the sense that he has lost the good object through his own destructiveness” (70). Klein believed that this experience of depression “mobilizes in the infant the wish to repair his destroyed object or objects” (72), and that “its working through is accompanied by a radical alteration in his view of reality . . . The infant becomes aware of himself and of his objects as separate from himself” (73). Klein’s theory thus establishes the connection between mourning and development—a connection currently under more thorough investigation by such contemporaries as the American psychiatrist George H. Pollock, who recently published his two-volume work on what he calls The Mourning-Liberation Process.

Unlike Anna Freud and Melanie Klein, who began their careers as teachers, Margaret S. Mahler (1897–1985) began hers as a pediatrician, although she knew from the outset that she also wanted to pursue her interest in psychoanalysis. Following her emigration from Vienna to the
United States (via London) in 1938, her professional interest gradually shifted from her research and therapeutic work in childhood psychosis to her research in what she called the "separation-individuation process" in normal children. As she expresses it in her Memoirs, "For me, the general problem of identity, and especially the way in which one arrives at a sense of self, has always been primary," because of her belief that "it is only out of such knowledge [of the processes of normal development] that we can formulate those strategies of primary prevention and early intervention that hold out the greatest hope for humankind" (136–37). As Paul Stepansky observes in his "Introduction" to her memoirs, Mahler is now "widely regarded as one of the outstanding students of early childhood development of our century" (xiii). Stepansky goes on to define the separation-individuation process as "the series of stages marking the infant’s gradual intrapsychic ‘separation’ from the mother and correlative understanding of himself as a distinct individual in a world composed of other equally distinct individuals—as an individual, that is, with a subjectively felt sense of identity" (xvii). Mahler explains in her best known work, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant, that whereas separation-individuation is an intrapsychic process, her research, which was based on observations of the behavior of mothers with their young children, was guided by the conviction that "this process could be inferred from behaviors that were indeed observable" (23).

Mahler emphasizes that she uses the term "separation" to refer to "the sense of being a separate individual, and not the fact of being physically separated [or emotionally isolated] from someone" (Birth 9). Yet much confusion has resulted from others' misunderstanding of her use of the word. To put it in terms of object relations theory, Mahler's "separation" refers to the essential (for the development of a sense of identity) human intrapsychic process of separation of self-image from parent images. To present human development in such terms is not to deny the need for human attachment throughout life—a need justifiably stressed by the "attachment theorists." On the contrary, Mahler herself stresses that separation-individuation is a precondition for what she calls "true object relationship" (6). The view that attachment theory and the theory of separation-individuation are antithetical, as articulated for example by Daniel Stern in The Interpersonal World of the Infant (240–42), is, I believe, based on a misunderstanding of Mahler’s intent. Indeed, what Mahler and the attachment theorists have in common is their understand-
ing of the young child’s development as necessarily occurring in relation to the people in his/her environment.

In contrast to Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, and Margaret S. Mahler, whose work was focused on child development, Otto F. Kernberg, an American professor of psychiatry and training analyst, bases his theoretical formulations on his extensive experience with severely disturbed adult patients. He is probably best known for his classic work, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism*, which, as he explains in his preface to the book, is the result of “thirteen years’ effort to develop a concept of [the psychopathology, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of borderline conditions] in the light of contemporary ego psychology and psychoanalytic object relations theory.” As Greenberg and Mitchell explain, Kernberg “derives most of his inferences from the transference reactions characteristically manifested [by such severely disturbed patients]” (328).

Like Mahler, Kernberg sees individual development as necessarily occurring in relation to others in the environment. Emphasizing the importance for the formation of identity of separating self and object images and “integrating libidinally determined and aggressively determined self- and object-images” in the early stages of life (162), Kernberg defines the self as “an intrapsychic structure consisting of multiple self representations and their related affect dispositions.” He explains that “the normal self is integrated, in that its component self representations are dynamically organized into a comprehensive whole.” This normal integrated self relates to “integrated object representations, that is, to object representations which have incorporated the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ primitive object representations into integrative images of others in depth” (315-16).

When early self and object configurations are not successfully differentiated and integrated, severe disturbances result and persist into adulthood. Kernberg believes that what he calls the “narcissistic personality,” for example, has a pathological self-structure, originating in the second half of the oral stage, in which “there is a fusion of ideal self, ideal object, and actual self images as a defense against an intolerable reality in the interpersonal realm”; at the same time, “unacceptable self images are repressed and projected onto external objects, which are devaluated” (231-32). The narcissistic personality’s inflated self-concept thus consists of a confusion and distortion of self and parent images. Kernberg is not
certain of the cause of this pathological fusion of early self and object images, although his clinical experience suggests that the background of his narcissistic patients often includes “chronically cold parent figures with covert but intense aggression,” with the result that these patients have sought refuge in their own physical attractiveness or special talents “against the basic feelings of being unloved and of being the objects of revengeful hatred.” Moreover, Kernberg believes that it is hard to tell to what extent the development of the “pathologically augmented development of oral aggression” in such patients “represents a constitutionally determined strong aggressive drive, a constitutionally determined lack of anxiety tolerance in regard to aggressive impulses, or severe frustration in [the] first years of life” (234–35). Thus he points to the aggressive drive that he believes is innate in the individual, at the same time that he stresses the child’s interaction with others in the environment. In his treatment of narcissistic personalities, who, he emphasizes, tend to project their aggression onto others, Kernberg attempts to get the patient to recognize the aggression that is actually coming from within.

Like Kernberg, Heinz Kohut (d. 1981) was widely regarded as a leading professor of psychiatry and training analyst. Also like Kernberg, Kohut became best known for his work on psychological problems that persist into adulthood when individuals have not completed the intrapsychic process of differentiating and integrating infantile self and object images. In contrast to Kernberg, however, Kohut includes in his definition of “narcissistic personality disorders,” as described in his first book, The Analysis of the Self, a broader range of personality and behavior problems. He sees such narcissistic disturbances in the context of what he calls “self-psychology,” the term he applies to his well-known and much-debated theoretical system. Although many writers see Kohut’s system as antithetical to the mainstream of psychoanalytic theory, Kohut himself asserts, even in his last theoretical work, How Does Analysis Cure? (1984), that although self-psychology is “still unassimilated by the majority of analysts, ... it is in the mainstream of the development of psychoanalytic thought” (95). Rather than a “deviation from traditional theory,” Kohut considers it “an expansion of analytic understanding” (208). In an earlier work, The Restoration of the Self (1977), Kohut explains his (now) widely misunderstood “principle of complementarity” (279): his notion of retaining the concepts of traditional psychoanalysis, while adding to them what he sees as a new
dimension of self-psychology. To cite an example: Kohut views the Oedipus complex in the context of the child's developing self-structure; he writes that "the presence of a firm self is a precondition for the experience of the Oedipus complex. Unless the child sees himself as a delimited, abiding, independent center of initiative, he is unable to experience the object-instinctual desires that lead to the conflicts and secondary adaptations of the oedipal period" (227). By adding the dimension of self-psychology to such classical concepts, Kohut hopes that therapists can "perceive configurations that would otherwise have escaped [their] notice" (Cure 84).

Kohut defines psychoanalytic cure in terms of structural completeness: that is, "when an energetic continuum in the center of the personality has been established and the unfolding of a productive life has thus become a realizable possibility" (Cure 7). Kohut explains in The Analysis of the Self that under optimal circumstances the young child experiences gradual disillusionment with his parent figures—a process that results in "gradual . . . internalization" or the gradual "acquisition of permanent psychological structures which continue, endopsychically, the functions which the idealized self-object had previously fulfilled." If a child suffers a traumatic loss or disappointment in the parent figure(s), however, "the child does not acquire the needed internal structure, his psyche remains fixated on an archaic self-object, and the personality will throughout life be dependent on certain objects in what seems to be an intense form of object hunger. The intensity of the search for and of the dependency on these objects is due to the fact that they are striven for as a substitute for the missing segments of the psychic structure" (45). Therapy involves a process of "transmuting internalization," achieved through a "narcissistic transference" with an empathic therapist who attempts to provide the supportive milieu that is necessary for the patient to rework the past and begin to grow again (Cure 4).

Perhaps Kohut's greatest difference from Kernberg is his belief that aggression is not a "manifestation of a primary drive that is gradually unveiled by the analytic process, but . . . a disintegration product which, while it is primitive, is not psychologically primal" (Restoration 114). He sees aggression in the transferences of his adult patients as reactions to empathic failures on the part of parent figures. He explains that through the therapeutic process, the patients can reconstruct and work through "the traumatic states of early life" that resulted from the "noxious child-
hood environment.” At the same time, through the process of transmuted internalization that occurs in therapy, the patient will attain new psychological structures, with the result that the propensity for rage will be reduced (261).

John Bowlby, the eminent English psychiatrist, researcher, and teacher in the field of personality development, is best known for his pioneering three-volume work on Attachment and Loss, a work which explores the child’s need for the ongoing, reliable presence of attachment figures. In his volume on Attachment, Bowlby explains his belief that it is instinctive (for survival) in children under age three to maintain proximity to the mother, or attachment figure (1:134). Moreover, observing that social interaction with the child is the most important factor in the formation of such necessary attachment, he asserts that the child’s need for the mother exists apart from the gratification of physiological needs (1:361ff). Following Sigmund Freud’s idea that childhood trauma causes disturbances in later life, Bowlby regards the young child’s separation from the mother as traumatic within the definition proposed by Freud (1:110, 11).

In his volume on Separation, Bowlby is careful to distinguish his own use of the term “separation,” as referring to a physical separation between child and parent, from Mahler’s use of it as “an intrapsychic process which results in ‘differentiation of the self from the symbiotic object’” (2:23). Thus, by implication, his work is not to be seen as contradictory to Mahler’s, but as concerning separate, although closely related and sometimes overlapping, issues. Bowlby does not concern himself with the child’s inner life, including early childhood fantasies of union with parent figures; he restricts himself to descriptions of the child’s behavior in relation to others in his environment. Throughout his writings, Bowlby explains in detail the ways in which he increasingly departs from the terminology of Freudian and object relations theory, as he extends his own use of terminology from the fields of ethology and cognitive psychology in his attempts to account for human attachment behavior.

Building on Freud’s insight that “missing someone who is loved and longed for is the key to an understanding of anxiety,” Bowlby stresses that it was not until late in his career that Freud accorded separation anxiety “the central place in what was to be his final theory of anxiety,” which was articulated in the 1926 work, Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety (2:27). The child’s reaction to separation, Bowlby observes, also
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includes anger. Like Kohut, Bowlby has moved away from the traditional psychoanalytic drive theory of aggression, as his observations have led him to see aggression as reactive, rather than primary. Placing his theory close to W. R. D. Fairbairn's frustration-aggression hypothesis, he then points to the paradox that "following experiences of repeated separation or threats of separation, it is common for a person to develop intensely anxious and possessive attachment behavior simultaneously with bitter anger directed against the attachment figure, and often to combine both with much anxious concern about the safety of that figure" (256).

In his volume on *Loss*, Bowlby describes the effects on children of the loss of parents to death. He concludes that "clinical experience and a reading of the evidence leaves little doubt . . . that much psychiatric illness [in adults] [including many cases of anxiety state, depressive illness, and hysteria] is an expression of pathological mourning" (3:23). Arguing that psychoanalysis generally has given scant weight to environmental factors in its assessment of such illnesses as depression, Bowlby believes that depressions in adults that have typically been characterized as endogenous, are (often delayed) reactions to loss (3:253). His account of studies of the consequences for adults of the loss of parents in childhood and adolescence lends support to my view that George Eliot, whose mother died at what I believe to be a critical time in her adolescence, suffered from unconscious mourning for most, if not all, of her life.

As I look back on my study of George Eliot, I am impressed by her remarkable capacity for growth. Each shift in her circumstances, no matter how painful, eventually resulted in a new level of accomplishment. Moreover, the pattern of ongoing intellectual, creative, and emotional growth that began early in Eliot's life continued throughout her fiction-writing career. I will argue that it was through her intellectually demanding work that she was initially able to defend herself against the inner rage that followed from her sense of loss, and through her fiction writing that she was ultimately able to achieve her sense of identity. To put it in Kohut's terms, her intellectual and creative work served to provide her with the necessary process of self-strengthening that would finally ease the depressive symptoms of her rage.

Born Mary Anne Evans into a conventional Warwickshire (Midlands) household in 1819, her first major early childhood loss, as I will argue in
my chapter on *Silas Marner*, seems to have been her sense of disconnection from her mother following the deaths of newborn twins when Mary Anne was a toddler; her mother, who suffered from ill health afterward, appears to have been virtually missing from Mary Anne's life after that time. The Evans household at Griff provided her with other attachments, however, and she became very close to her older brother Isaac, her chief playmate before their school days, and to her father, who apparently treated her as his favorite of the three children of his second wife. When Isaac was eight years old, he was sent to a boarding school near Coventry, at the same time that Mary Anne, age five, was sent with her older sister Chrissey to a boarding school three miles from home. The two girls came home only occasionally, on Saturdays and holidays. The young Mary Anne's reaction to the separation from loved ones at home is evident in the middle-aged Eliot's lingering memory, as John Cross, her husband during the last six months of her life, records, of "the difficulty of getting near enough the fire in winter, to become thoroughly warmed, owing to the circle of girls forming round too narrow a fireplace. This suffering from cold was the beginning of a low general state of health: also at this time she began to be subject to fears at night. . . . she told me that this liability to have 'all her soul become a quivering fear,' which remained with her afterwards, had been one of the supremely important influences dominating at times her future life" (8–9). Mary Anne's early childhood closeness to her brother was never restored. According to Eliot's biographer, Gordon Haight, Isaac, whom she now saw only on holidays, began to grow away from her, and Mary Anne turned to books for consolation (*Biography* 7). Thus began what I see as a lifelong pattern of response to loss.

In 1828, Mary Anne was sent to Mrs. Wallington's Boarding School in Nuneaton, where she studied English, drawing, French, and piano, and where she came under the influence of the principal governess, Maria Lewis, a devoted Church of England Evangelical who was to remain a close friend for many years, even after Mary Anne left the school. During her four years at Mrs. Wallington's, following Lewis's example, Mary Anne read repeatedly the whole King James version of the Bible, at the same time that she developed the habit of introspection. In Haight's view, these early practices contributed both to the later development of her "vigorous prose," and to her extraordinary capacity for psychological analysis (9). When she had mastered the offerings at Mrs.
Wallington's school, her parents were advised to send her to the Misses Franklins' school in Coventry, which she entered in 1832. There she studied English, French, history, arithmetic, drawing, and music. She seems to have excelled in every subject; she was remembered by a fellow student as "immeasurably superior" to the others (Laski 16-17). At the Franklins' school she also dropped her Midland dialect as she learned a more "cultivated" version of English pronunciation (Haight, Biography 11), and she was exposed to the writings of many English authors, including Shakespeare, Milton, Isaac Watts, Pope, Young, Cowper, Southey, Moore, and Byron. She also read historical novels by Bulwer Lytton, Scott (her lifelong favorite), and G. P. R. James, and wrote her own first piece of fiction, "Edward Neville," a romance that reflects the influence of her current reading; it begins "on a bright and sunny morning toward the end of the Autumn of the year 1650" when "a stranger mounted on a fine black horse descended the hill which leads into the small but picturesque town of Chepstow" (Haight, Biography 10-15; text 554-60). Mary Anne participated in the serious religious life of the school, where conversion was taught to be the beginning of the religious life. In Haight's view, her increasing interest in the "gloomy Calvinism" that had resulted in new practices of self-deny only served to increase the distance from her brother, who had "imbibed High Church views" at his own school (19).

Because of her mother's worsening health, the term ending Christmas 1835 was the last spent at the Franklins' school. Mrs. Evans died on February 3, 1836. According to Cross's account of Mary Anne's reaction, "the mother died, after a long and painful illness, in which she was nursed with great devotion by her daughters. . . . to a highly wrought, sensitive girl of sixteen, such a loss seems an unendurable calamity" (15). Ina Taylor's biography also stresses the severity of Mary Anne's reaction to her mother's death, which besides involving so much torture for her mother, had "symbolized [for herself] the end of childhood and the orderly world of school" (23). Haight suggests that her mother's illness and death were the source of a marked increase in Mary Anne's "religious zeal" (Biography 22). Certainly her life changed drastically and permanently. For a little over a year afterward, she and Chrissey kept house for their father, until Chrissey's marriage on May 30, 1837. On that day, Haight notes, Mary Ann, as bridesmaid, signed her name in the register for the first time without the final e (22). Cross writes of the
wedding day that “one of Mr. Isaac Evans's most vivid recollections is that on the day of the marriage, after the bride's departure, he and his younger sister had 'a good cry' together over the break up of the old home-life, which of course could never be the same with the mother and the elder sister wanting” (15).

From 1837 until her brother Isaac's marriage in 1841, Mary Ann took on the role of housekeeper at Griff. Besides her domestic responsibilities there, she also spent time in the community doing charitable works, such as “visiting the poor and organising clothing clubs.” “Over and above this,” as Cross reports, “she was always prosecuting an active intellectual life of her own” (17). Besides taking private lessons in German, French, Italian, Greek, and Latin, she continued her music lessons and pursued her own reading, especially in works related to theology. Except for one letter dated a few months before her mother's death, the surviving letters of this period, many of them written to her friend Maria Lewis, begin in May 1838. The language of the letters is stilted, at the same time the tone is ardent; they reflect Mary Ann's struggles to live up to the ideals of nineteenth-century evangelical Christianity, with its demands for daily Bible study, self-examination, and self-denial. One aspect of her strained religious practice is her dutiful attitude toward reading. Questioning the value of most fiction, she writes Lewis in a long letter on the subject, that “as to the discipline our minds receive from the perusal of fictions I can conceive none that is beneficial but may be attained by that of history” (Eliot, Letters 1:23). Her close involvement with her family is also reflected in her frequent expressions of interest in Chrissey's rapidly growing family, and in her anxiety over how her brother's impending marriage might affect her own position at Griff (1:50, 59). At this stage she had also begun to think of publishing her own writing. She spent six months beginning in 1839 working on a Chart of Ecclesiastical History before a similar work was published first by someone else. Her own first publication, a poem in the Christian Observer, appeared in January 1840. Cross observes of this period in her life that although Mary Ann was free to pursue her own interests, her life was “very monotonous, very difficult, very discouraging.” At the same time, he feels, she also experienced “the soothing, strengthening, sacred influences of the home life, the home loves, the home duties” (17). He concludes by remarking that “the very monotony of her life at Griff, and the narrow field it presented for observation of society, added immeasurably to the inten-
sity of a naturally keen mental vision, concentrating into a focus what might perhaps have become dissipated in more liberal surroundings” (18).

With Isaac’s marriage coming up, Mr. Evans solved the problem of his and Mary Ann’s living situation with the decision to move with Mary Ann to Foleshill, near Coventry, and leave the house at Griff to Isaac and his wife, who married on June 8, 1841. After only a short time in the larger community of Coventry, Mary Ann began to benefit from the fresh opportunities offered by her new surroundings. With more time for her own studies, she attended lectures on chemistry, continued her language lessons, and read more widely. She also met new people, including Charles and Cara Bray, who became lifelong friends. As Charles was notorious for his progressive views, Mary Ann’s friendship with him contributed to her growing sense of conflict with her family. The well-known “Holy War” with her father, beginning in January 1842 with her refusal to go to church, marks her open rejection of Christianity as she knew it—a shift in point of view which Haight believes would have happened with or without the influence of the Brays (Biography 39). Mr. Evans was so upset that he very nearly insisted that Mary Ann leave the household, and indeed, she did visit Isaac at Griff for a few weeks. With the help of other relatives, however, she and her father finally reached a compromise whereby “Mary Ann agreed to attend church with him as usual, and he tacitly conceded her the right to think what she liked during service” (Haight 44). The shift in her attitude is reflected in her letters. Her correspondence with Maria Lewis is replaced by letters to her new friends, and her style and tone seem more natural, as she emerges from the hold of evangelicalism on her mind (Letters 1:117 ff.). At this stage, she was also becoming known in the community for her intellectual capacities. By 1844 she had been invited to do a translation of Friedrich Strauss’s Das Leben Jesu, a fifteen-hundred page project which took her two years to complete. When the book, The Life of Jesus, was published in June 1846, she was not credited for the translation, and she was paid only twenty pounds for the work (Haight, Biography 53–59).

During the three years following, until her father’s death on May 31, 1849, Mary Ann’s time was increasingly taken up with his care, although at this stage she also began to publish reviews and essays in the Coventry Herald. Toward the end of her father’s life, she found solace in work on
a translation of Spinoza’s *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. She suffered a severe reaction to Mr. Evans’s death, which, besides leaving her without a parent, also left her without a home. After the funeral, she took a recuperative trip to the Continent. Upon her return to England, after a series of family visits, she made a decision to live temporarily with her friends the Brays. It was during her stay at their home that John Chapman, a publisher who knew of her as the translator of Strauss, offered her the opportunity to write the notice of Robert William Mackay’s *Progress of the Intellect for the Westminster Review*, a quarterly journal established in 1824, which had become, as Rosemary Ashton describes it, “the chief organ [in Britain] of political, philosophical, and religious radicalism” (*GHL* 29). When Mary Ann delivered the completed article to Chapman’s place of business and boardinghouse in London in November 1850, she also began a trial visit of two weeks, during which she made the decision to move to London to work for him, beginning in January 1851.

Mary Ann’s initial stay in London in early 1851 was marred by her much-discussed flirtation with Chapman, a notorious womanizer whose jealous wife and mistress teamed up to drive her out of the household by the end of March. Soon afterward, however, Chapman had the opportunity to purchase the *Westminster Review*, and although he was to be the nominal editor, he desperately needed Marian (as she had begun to spell her name in the spring of 1851) to do the work. She agreed to write the “Introductory Prospectus,” and eventually the two women in Chapman’s household agreed to her return to do editorial work there, beginning in September 1851. Despite the difficult personal adjustment to her new literary life in London, “The work she had been brought there to do was superbly done,” as Marghanita Laski expresses it in her biography (38). Although as her letters at the time reveal, her two years at the Chapman establishment were marked by ill health, depressions, and shifting loyalties to men, they are also distinguished by the quality of her editorial work, and by her “grasp of the needs and problems of the paper” (Laski 38). By all reports, however, she was paid little or nothing for the work, although she probably received free room and board (Laski 38–39; Haight, *Biography* 91).

During her years at the Chapmans’ household, Marian also formed her lifelong friendships with Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes.
The friendship with Lewes became a love affair, probably by the fall of 1853, when Marian moved into her own lodgings, although she continued to do editorial work for Chapman. She had also begun working on a translation of Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, a substantial work for which Chapman had agreed to pay her two shillings a page, or thirty pounds. When the book, *The Essence of Christianity*, was finally published in July 1854, as “Number VI of Chapman’s Quarterly Series,” the translator’s name, Marian Evans, appeared on the title page. That same month, she left England for a trip to the Continent with Lewes.

Marian’s decision to elope with Lewes, a married man, naturally created a scandal. Although Marian was not the cause of Lewes’s permanent estrangement and attempted divorce from his wife Agnes, such a liaison could not be condoned in Victorian England, and Marian was socially ostracized. It was not until late in her career that she finally experienced a degree of social acceptance. Lewes’s marriage had begun to deteriorate, as Marian’s friend Charles Bray explained it to a mutual friend, “when Mrs. Lewes after the birth of her 3rd child took one of those strong and unaccountable dislikes to her husband that sometimes does occur under similar circumstances amounting to monomania and [I have also heard] that Lewes was most sincerely attached to his wife and greatly distressed by it” (qtd. in Ashton, GHL 156). No doubt the couple’s belief in free love also contributed to the deterioration of the marriage. After bearing Lewes’s fourth son, Agnes had born his friend Thornton Hunt’s child and become pregnant with a second; at that point Lewes seems to have given up on his relationship with Agnes. Whatever the complex causes of the failed marriage, Lewes and Marian soon became “most sincerely attached” to each other. As they established on their trip to the Continent what became their lifelong pattern of helping each other with their work, they also found strength in each other’s company. They managed to support themselves on the income they received from their writing. At the time, Lewes was working on a biography of Goethe, along with some columns for the *Leader*. During the eight months in Germany, Marian wrote articles for the *Westminster Review* and the *Leader*, translated a German article on “The Romantic School of Music,” worked on her translation of Spinoza’s *Ethics*, translated passages of Goethe for Lewes’s biography, and when Lewes was
ill, wrote down articles that he dictated. She also read intensively, especially in German literature (Haight, Biography 173–74).

When they returned to England, Marian spent five weeks writing and reading alone in Dover while Lewes worked out the details of his permanent separation from Agnes. During that time Chapman invited her to take on the “Belles Lettres” section of the “Contemporary Literature” reviews in the Westminster Review. Haight records that during the seven quarters that she covered the section, “The ‘Belles Lettres’ . . . noticed 166 different books, and Marian doubtless looked at many more that were not worth mention.” As he observes, “The work gave her a close practical acquaintance with the literary market-place.” During this period she also wrote thirty-one articles for the Leader, one two-part article for Fraser’s, four articles for the Saturday Review, and five long articles commissioned by Chapman for the Westminster (186).

Lewes’s biography of Goethe, published in November 1855, received excellent reviews. Marian continued to write articles for the Westminster and the Leader, although her translation of Spinoza was her main task for the early months of 1856. She finished it in February, but it was never published; the manuscript remains at the Beinecke Library at Yale University (200). In May, Lewes’s interest in marine life took them to Ilfracombe, where he did research for his Sea-side Studies. During their stay there, Marian wrote what Haight calls “one of her finest articles for the Westminster,” “The Natural History of German Life” (201). From Ilfracombe they went on to Tenby for a five-week stay at the coast, again for Lewes’s zoological research. There Marian experienced a fresh sense of well-being. On July 20 she wrote in her journal, “I do not remember feeling so strong in mind and body as I feel at this moment” (qtd. in Haight, Biography 206). By September, she had begun to write fiction.

Eliot explains in her journal, in “How I Came to Write Fiction,” that September of 1856 had marked the beginning of a new era in her life (Letters 2:406). Her sense that the date marked the beginning of a new stage lends support to my view that the timing of her decision to write fiction, which occurred twenty years after her mother’s death in 1836, constituted a positive anniversary reaction that signified the beginning of her release from mourning. I also believe that the publication of her last novel, Daniel Deronda, twenty years later, in 1876, signified a (perhaps
partial) resolution of her sense of loss, as well as the fulfillment of her hard-won sense of identity as an artist. I will therefore argue in this book that Eliot’s fiction is an example of Pollock’s idea that an artist’s creative products may represent “aspects of the mourning process itself” (1:127). Eliot’s expressed sense of renewal in the summer of 1856 suggests that she began her fiction writing from a position of strength. Both her rich background of accomplishments and her stable relationship with Lewes had contributed to her readiness for new growth.

Eliot explains in her journal entry that although she had always had a “vague dream” of writing a novel, it was not until after her return from the Continent with Lewes that her “greater [than expected] success . . . in other kinds of writing” convinced them both that it would be worthwhile for her to try fiction. At Tenby, Lewes began to urge her to start immediately, but she deferred because of more pressing projects, until “one morning as I was lying in bed, thinking what should be the subject of my first story, my thoughts merged themselves into a dreamy doze, and I imagined myself writing a story of which the title was ‘The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton.’” Deciding to make her dream a reality, she came up with the plan to write “a series of stories containing sketches drawn from my own observations of the Clergy, and calling them ‘Scenes of Clerical Life’ opening with ‘Amos Barton.’” When “Amos Barton” was completed, Lewes helped her by proposing to John Blackwood, the publisher of his series of “Sea-Side Studies,” a series of “tales and sketches illustrative of the actual life of our country clergy about a quarter of a century ago; but solely in its human and not at all in its theological aspect; the object being to do what has never yet been done in our Literature, for we have had abundant religious stories polemical and doctrinal, but since the ‘Vicar’ and Miss Austen, no stories representing the clergy like any other class with the humours, sorrows, and troubles of other men” (2:269). Lewes did not, however, reveal the identity of the author.

Eliot’s first fictional characters were thus based on real-life figures from her childhood. The character Amos Barton was based on the Reverend John Gwyther, the curate who had officiated at Mrs. Evans’s funeral and Chrissey’s wedding (Haight, Biography 211). The title character in the second story, “Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story,” was drawn from memories of the Reverend Bernard Gilpin Ebdell, the vicar who had
christened Mary Anne; as Haight stresses, however, “the plot is entirely imaginary” (221). In the third and last of the stories, “Janet’s Repentance,” Mr. Tryan is an “idealized portrait of Mr. Jones, the Evangelical curate at Nuneaton” during Mary Anne’s schooldays at Mrs. Wallington’s (227). The fact that the characters were drawn from the author’s memories of real-life figures did not go unnoticed. In Warwickshire in particular, much curiosity was aroused as to the identity of the author, who had assumed the pen name of George Eliot. Most people thought the writer must be a clergyman; Charles Dickens was the only person to guess (from the domestic details) that the author was a woman (Laski 55). It was not until she had begun to write *Adam Bede* that Eliot revealed her identity to her editor, John Blackwood. After the novel’s publication, as Haight records, the truth of its authorship “was spreading generally in literary circles” (Biography 287). The attempts by an imposter, a clergyman named Joseph Liggins, to claim credit for George Eliot’s work contributed to her gradual (although reluctant) willingness to let her identity be known to the public, although more than anything else, it was the “extraordinary success of *Adam Bede*” that finally “lifted the veil of anonymity” (297).

Throughout the process of publishing *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), Blackwood responded favorably, although with honest criticism, to the manuscripts he received from the unknown author (Eliot, *Letters* 2:272, 275, 297). Judging from their correspondence, however, neither Eliot nor Lewes could accept the constructive criticism that might have helped the new fiction writer avoid mistakes later in her career (274, 299). Blackwood’s expressed “fear [in regard to “Gilfil”] that [Eliot] huddles up the conclusion of his stories too much” (323) was a criticism that turned out to be prophetic. Although his comment was noted by the author, she seemed not to understand how to work on the problem; she answered that “conclusions are the weak point of most authors, but some of the fault lies in the very nature of a conclusion, which is at best a negation” (324). Blackwood’s response to the first part of “Janet’s Repentance” also anticipates later comments about Eliot’s bleak presentation of provincial life. He wrote, “I should have liked a pleasanter picture. Surely the colors are rather harsh for a sketch of English County Town life only 25 years ago” (344). Arguing that the reality had already been softened enough, Eliot responded, “The real town was more vicious than my Milby; the real Dempster more disgusting than mine; the
real Janet alas! had a far sadder end than mine” (347). At this point, Lewes added (in a separate letter) his opinion that “I was in raptures with ‘Janet’s Repentance’ when Eliot first read it to me and declared it to be the finest thing he had written” (351). Blackwood responded, characteristically, with reassurance (352). Yet when he ventured still another criticism of a scene in “Janet’s Repentance,” Lewes, revealing what turned out to be a lifelong tendency to protect Eliot from criticism, finally wrote, “Entre nous let me hint that unless you have any serious objection to make to Eliot’s stories, don’t make any. He is so easily discouraged, so diffident of himself, that not being prompted by necessity to write, he will close the series in the belief that his writing is not relished.... Don’t allude to this hint of mine. He wouldn’t like my interfering” (363-64). Although the next letter from Blackwood expresses admiration for the ending of “Janet’s Repentance” (371), Eliot apparently still rankled from his earlier criticism. As she recorded in her journal, “I had meant to carry on the series beyond ‘Janet’s Repentance,’... but my annoyance at Blackwood’s want of sympathy in the first two parts of ‘Janet,’... determined me to close the series and republish them in two volumes” (410).

Despite their tentative beginnings, Eliot, Blackwood, and Lewes nonetheless developed a good working relationship over the years that followed. Blackwood was still Eliot’s editor, except for a short rift over the publication of Romola, when she wrote her last novel, Daniel Deronda.

George Eliot was paid generously for her fiction. After 1857, she and Lewes, who was also doing well with his publications, no longer had to worry about money, and Eliot was able to give up her article writing. Scenes of Clerical Life was well received in literary circles, and although there were only three reviews, they were encouraging (Laski 55). With the publication of Adam Bede, Eliot’s reputation was established. Her early fiction, which was drawn largely from a combination of various elements of memory and imagination, became less literally based on figures from the past after the Scenes as she began to make rapid progress in her artistic technique. Her early works were also rapidly composed. Scenes of Clerical Life was completed in only a little over a year, as was each of the long novels, Adam Bede and The Mill on the Floss. The short novel, Silas Marner, proved to be a transitional work, written as Eliot was beginning to move toward the writing of her more complex novels,
Romola, Felix Holt, Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda. All of these later novels involved more research and took longer to complete.

In the chapters to come, I have limited myself to a discussion of George Eliot’s seven novels. These are her major works, and as such, the primary focus of her attention during the twenty years of her creative life. Any attempt to include every work of fiction would result in too ponderous a book, and would not add substantially to my argument. Besides the three Scenes and the seven novels, Eliot also published two short stories: “The Lifted Veil,” in 1859, between the writing of Adam Bede and The Mill on the Floss, and “Brother Jacob,” written in 1860 after the publication of The Mill on the Floss and before the writing of Silas Marner. She also wrote The Spanish Gypsy, begun as a play in 1864 after the publication of Romola and completed as a poem in 1868, after the publication of Felix Holt. She wrote other works of poetry, including the “Brother and Sister Sonnets” in 1869 and “The Legend of Jubal” in 1870, before the writing of Middlemarch; a collection of her poetry was published later, in 1874. After her last novel Daniel Deronda, her only published work was a collection of essays, Impressions of Theophrastus Such, published in 1878.

I have continued my presentation of Eliot’s development by placing my analysis of each novel in the context of the ongoing events of her life; I have also described briefly in each case some of the details of her writing process. In this way, I hope to show how Eliot’s pattern of extraordinary intellectual, creative, and emotional growth continued throughout her fiction-writing career. I have also placed my discussions in the context of each novel’s critical reception, both in Eliot’s time and ours. My purpose in so doing is to convey something of the scope of each work of fiction, and the extent of the author’s success, at the same time that I demonstrate the way in which my psychoanalytic interpretations can help to answer some of the questions raised by critics; I also want to stress that criticisms of George Eliot’s work should be seen in the light of her overall achievement.

I must also add that Eliot’s artistic and personal development did not go smoothly, even once she started on the path of fiction writing. Instead of a smooth ascent, her creative path sometimes seems more like a labyrinth. To many modern critics, Romola and Felix Holt present serious problems; some even consider one or both to be failures. Yet after
attempting to work through the difficulties presented by those novels, Eliot was prepared to write her masterpiece, *Middlemarch*; and by the time she finished what some readers believe to be an even greater work, *Daniel Deronda*, she seems to have achieved, in addition to her eminent position as an English novelist, her own inner sense of completion.

I have tried to write this book in such a way that it will interest the general reader as much as the academic reader. Prior knowledge of George Eliot's novels, or of psychoanalytic theory, although helpful, is not necessary. For those who may be unfamiliar with the variety of academic styles of documentation, I want to explain that instead of using footnotes, I have incorporated all references to the list of "Works Cited" in the body of the text, in order to make it easier for readers to locate my sources. In short, I have tried to write the kind of book that I would like to read myself. I hope my readers will find it useful.