

Imperial Shadow in George Eliot's Work:
Shifting from Her Scepticism towards the British Empire to Cultural Hybridity

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Abstract

When the work of George Eliot is listed, based on the time setting, it can be noticed that about a half of it is set in rural England during the 1820s and 1830s. While George Eliot described nostalgic daily lives or the political disturbance caused by the Great Reform Bill, she never forgot to allude the shadow of the British colonies, or other regions equivalent to them. This dissertation aims to demonstrate that George Eliot was sceptical towards the British Empire, and she focused on effects of cultural hybridity throughout her later work. In this present study, I have chosen six of her works as core texts: *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), "Brother Jacob" (1864), *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866), *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), *Middlemarch* (1871-72), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876), and I track the gradual changes in George Eliot's sense of the outside world.

The first chapter aims to set up a new aspect of *The Mill on the Floss* and to show how Tom and Maggie Tulliver came to share childish colonialism through reading books. Although *The Mill on the Floss* has been regarded as George Eliot's autobiographical novel, the books that Tom and Maggie read were filled with imperial consciousness, which filled their unconscious minds. I analyse the sibling's imperialistic behaviours, with the episodes of Maggie's escape to Gypsy commons and Tom's hero worship, and then I mention their different colonial discourse: Tom came to have financial contact with a linen trade colony, while Maggie kept away from colonial books with racial prejudice.

The second chapter focuses on George Eliot's novell "Brother Jacob", in which David Faux, having the strong desire to further advance in English society, found it difficult to be fulfilled and decided to leave for Jamaica, the West Indies. When viewed in light of the recent post-colonial studies, his decision to stay in Jamaica with sugar plantations connotes to an owner-and-slave relationship. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the imperialist consciousness was created and shared among the characters: how David beguiled country people who had a lack of knowledge about him and life in the colony: and how their colonial illusion was overturned.

In the third chapter of this dissertation, I argue an imperialist consciousness that Harold

Transome and his surroundings shared. George Eliot described Harold as an immoralist by making him return to England with his son who was born to his female slave, and she also used his lack of local experience as a barrier when he returned to English society. George Eliot never hesitated to show these two aspects, which were prone to be associated with some returnees. George Eliot's resistance toward the imperialist consciousness can be found in a different episode: the marriage of Felix Holt and Esther Lyon. Felix had an ambition to educate the working class people, and he asked Esther, of French origin, to change towards an English life by helping his project: however, she countered by saying that she would improve his French accent. I conclude that Anglicisation or cultural hegemony is not achieved in this novel.

In the fourth chapter, I analyse how George Eliot changed her description of the British Empire and colonies in *Daniel Deronda*, mainly through Gwendolen's plot. Unlike "Brother Jacob" and *Felix Holt, the Radical*, the British colonies are no longer economically promised lands. In fact, Gwendolen's grandfather was a plantation owner in Barbados, but this place did not function as one of the British capital sources. Besides, Gwendolen's mother used up all the savings for buying stock for the mines, and Gwendolen's "get-rich-scheme" through gambling failed. In order to cover the financial loss, Gwendolen decided to marry Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt, an heir to the magnificent Diplo Hall. Her marriage life was not a happy one, but I point out that Gwendolen's decision can be read as a proof of George Eliot's value of shifting from colonial property to the domestic grand house.

The fifth chapter focuses on some cosmopolitans in *Middlemarch*, and their introverted attitudes are also analysed. The setting of *Middlemarch* is between "Brother Jacob" and *Felix Holt, the Radical*, so it might be reasonable to infer that the descriptions of the British colonies are included, but nobody moved to and from the British colonies. Instead, some of the characters came into Middlemarch town from places such as France, Italy, Switzerland, or regions near the Mediterranean Sea. They were described as "cosmopolitan", and they were destined to stay in England after returning from the outside world. It could appear that their arrival in England was similar to the colonial invasion; however, George Eliot meticulously made differences in the conception of "fortune", meaning "money" in "Brother Jacob" and *Felix Holt, the Radical*, and "not income" or "intelligence" in *Middlemarch*. George Eliot prioritized the reconstruction of the English rural town, rather than imperial or colonial activities, by gaining sophisticated intelligence through broad cultural

intercourse. I conclude, for George Eliot, the person who had a broad point of view and who could contribute to national reformation were real cosmopolitans.

In the sixth chapter, I argue how George Eliot described the relationship between people in an English community and the Jews, mainly through the Jewish plot in *Daniel Deronda*. *Daniel Deronda* ends at the point that the newly married Jewish couple, Daniel and Mirah, hinted to depart for the East, while in *The Spanish Gypsy*, the gypsy queen Fedalma left her Spanish fiancé for founding Gypsy Kingdom in Africa. These endings have aroused negative comments among some literary critics, such as that George Eliot wished to remove them from European society or that she wanted to preserve a pure European society. Yet, George Eliot knew that different races definitely would have difficulty in coexisting in one place, particularly in a place where social or racial power relationship was constructed. She mentioned her apprehension of fusion sometimes causing the extinction of a minor ethnic group. I demonstrate her unique idea of the organism, in which different ethnicities mutually survived through separate existence, which George Eliot learned from George Henry Lewes' study of organic unity as a cultural 'fusion of races'.

In the Introduction of *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said deplors as follows: "Most professional humanist as a result, are unable to make the connection between the prolonged and sordid cruelty of practices such as slavery, colonialist and racial oppression, and imperial subjection on the one hand, and the poetry, fiction, and philosophy of the society that engages in these practices. One of the difficult truths I discovered in working on this book is how very few of the British or French artists whom I admire took issue with the notion of "subject" or "inferior" races" (xiii-xiv). Likewise, in *Postcolonialism* (2005), Motohashi evokes readers to realize that there are some versions of the year of 1492, and it is time to read about the event in a different perspective. In terms of George Eliot's writings, she incorporated three versions of 1492: Columbus' discovery of the new world; the Reconquista, a Christian colonialization of Spain; and expelling all Jews from Spain. George Eliot always tried to write about socially or racially minor people with great care and understanding, showing her resistance to the British hegemony of the nineteenth century.