

THE MILL ON

THE FLOSS

BY

GEORGE ELIOT

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INTRODUCTION

The Mill on the Floss, published in 1860, marks the end of what could be called the first stage of George Eliot's work as an artist. It was an attempt at a realistic history of unfashionable families. This book was set in a past, not very remote, and covered by the memories of the author herself, or of her family. It drew on people and places from Warwickshire although *The Mill on the Floss* is set in Lincolnshire, where she had traveled to find suitable rivers for her catastrophic flood, Dorlcote Mill closely resembles Arbury Mill, where Mary Ann Evans played as a child, and the attic where Maggie Tulliver bangs her fetish's head on the beams is the attic of Griff House, where she spent her first twenty-two years.

By 1859, when she began *The Mill on the Floss*, she had already had some worrying repercussions from people who thought they recognized themselves, in the works of the anonymous George Eliot.

The Mill on the Floss does contain material from her remote past, but it is, as that in the earlier books was not *personal* material. The relationship between Tom and Maggie Tulliver as children resembles very closely that between Mary Ann and her brother Isaac; like Tom, Isaac judged his sister's passionate aberrations from conventional behaviour harshly.

There are good historical and intellectual reason why George Eliot should, as it were, have used her own people and past as typical examples of the pieties, culture and development of rural English society. But the peculiarly tense and gloomy character of parts of *The Mill on the Floss* must derive from the paradoxical fact that she was using an artistic re-creation of her own life partly to teach that strong and deep roots make good men, that morality is derived from the development of particular family and local affections into abstract conceptions of duty and piety, whilst her own search for happiness in love and a wider intellectual world had effectively severed her from her roots.

BIOGRAPHY. GEORGE ELIOT

MARY ANN (MARIAN) EVANS was born in Warwickshire. She attended schools in Nuneaton and Coventry, coming under the influence of evangelical teachers and clergymen. In 1836 her mother died and Marian became her father's housekeeper, educating herself in her spare time. In 1841 she moved to Coventry, and met Charles and Caroline Bray, local progressive intellectuals. Through them she was commissioned to translate Strauss' *Life of Jesus* and met the radical publisher John Chapman, who, when he purchased the

Westminster Review in 1851, made her his managing editor. Having lost her Christina faith and thereby alienated her family, she moved to London where she met Herbert Spencer and the versatile man-of-letters George Henry Lewes. Lewes was separated from his wife, but with no possibility of divorce. In 1854 he and Marian decide to live together, and did so until Lewes' death in 1878. It was he who encouraged her to turn from philosophy and journalism to fiction and she subsequently wrote, under the name of George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical life*(1858), *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola*, *Felix Holt* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871–72) and *Daniel Derona* (1876), as well as numerous essays, articles and reviews.

George Eliot died in 1880, only a few months after marrying J.W. Cross, an old friend and admirer, who became her first biographer. She was buried beside Lewes at Highgate.

PLOT

It is a vivid portrayal of childhood and adolescence in rural England.

Tom and Maggie Tulliver constitute the center of *The Mill on the Floss* and their difficult relationship is the base of the novel; their lives are totally united to the antique and solid society that they are in. That society is represented in a magisterial form by The Dodson family, heir and guardian of many old rural values, one of them is a tremendous feeling of solidarity , which make that they can around their family in case of any exterior threat. These families have little curiosity about whatever happens out of his region, and, in the own words of the author *They live in an epoch were the ignorance results more comfortable than in our days.*

Around The Tulliver and The Dodson there are a series of characters well observed and well positioned in the role of each one inside of that antique and carefully structured society:

The Guest and The Deanne, sailors and merchants, prosperous beneficiaries of the river; The lawyer Waken and Doctor Kenn; The preacher Stealling, form well family and few economic ways, that is obligated to educate the local burgess' children; the lively Bob Jakin, expert in the manage of rats and ferrets and in unsociable woman too.

These people come to complete the background of this big rural picture.

This the reality where Maggie Tulliver lives, she is the central figure (near her brother) of the story. Her life pass in front of our eyes, we can see her happiness, sadness, troubles step by step we go inside her world, she is capable of holding our attention and we cannot stopping read.

CHARACTERS

TOM TULLIVER

He is one of the main characters; he is a blond hair boy, with pale grey eyes. He looks like his mother's family. He has noble nature and a great sense of honour; he never goes back about a decision.

His father's illness make him mature faster but this has contributed to the formation of his character, while he grows his principles make stronger and complex although he has the debility of judge the people lightly.

MAGGIE TULLIVER

She is the main character; She looks like her father's family, she has a dark hair, impossible to curl, and black eyes. As the same as her brother she has noble nature but a little bit more contradictory, she will always want make the contrary of what she does.

Her great imagination is a quality that many times helps her to go out of a difficult situation. She wants to be independent and this will cause her, in the future, some troubles. In the other hand, her great love to her brother is one of her bigger conflicts.

Mr. TULLIVER

He is a rude man with strong principles and big bitterness. He is the father of Tom and Maggie (who is his preferred), and he is good with his family. He tries to help his sister in all the ways he can. He is a little unjust with his preliminary judgments but is firm in his decisions.

Mrs. TULLIVER

She is member of The Dodson family. She is the mother of Tom and Maggie, is nice, very agreeable with her husband but a little bit strict with her children, above all with Maggie.

She feels predilection for her sisters and has tendency to fail in a difficult situation.

Mr. And Mrs. PULLET

Mrs. Pullet is Mrs. Tulliver's sister. They are nice person and constitute an influence over Mrs. Tulliver.

Mr. And Mrs. GLEGG

Mrs. Glegg is Mrs. Tulliver's sister and is the greatest influence over her. She is a strong woman with strong moral values and a few strict. She can be a little bit disgusting but is a good help when is needed. Mr. Glegg supports Tom in his incursion inside business.

Mr. And Mrs. DEANE

Mrs. Deane is Mrs. Tulliver's sister and died young. Mr. Deane is who more support Tom in every moment. He looked for Tom's first job and is like a protector.

They daughter LUCY DEANE is a great friend of Maggie. More lately, when they are adolescents they have some problems because Maggie doesn't want cause any pain to Lucy because of her relationship with Stephen.

FELIPE WAKEM

He is lawyer Waken's son. He was the partner of Tom in Mr. Stealing classes. He is a shy boy because is discriminated because of his deformity, which combats with painting and drawing. He is love with Maggie from the first time he saw here and makes all possible to make her happy.

STEPHEN GUEST

He is Lucy's engaged but he falls in love with Maggie and takes her to a situation of public humiliation.

BOB JAKIN

He is Tom's friend from their childhood; he would help Tom every time he need. He will be the precursor and partner of Tom in their business, and will give refuge to Maggie in one of hr worse moments.

PERSONAL OPINION

I like this story, in general, and I think that several things that happens there are familiar to me, like the wrangle with one of my brothers. The brothers of the novel, although they loved each other, had different conception of duty and it caused quarrels between them.

To start, and to my understanding, I think that the plot is very interesting, and it is very well treated, the language is clear and simple. The employ of the water as a symbolic element is constant among the novel. The author had in her mind a fluvial story ended in a great flood and since the first page the reader finds many indicators of this end.

I think that the character of Maggie Tulliver is very well created. Her personality is strong and more her character, although she was predestined to died young. In the third chapter we discover Maggie reading *The history of the Devil* by Daniel Defoe and she explains one of the illustration of the book, it is a woman threw to the water by his accusers; the scene is a clear anticipation of the fate of Maggie, accused by her town and died in her innocence.

I find, to my way, that the first chapters are better than the last; meanwhile Maggie is a child, her character is satisfactory but when she is adult her behaviuor is disconcerting, I don's understand because she makes coward to the exigencies of her brother, for example, in her date with Felipe Wakem in the Red Deeps, I don't known because Maggie permits her brother insult in that way Felipe. But the most surprising is that she falls in love with Stephen Guest, I think that it is because Maggie doesn't known more men because that guy is so false.

About the character of Tom Tulliver, I think is less sensitive than her sister; although he demonstrate that he wanted look after his family working after their father's death, I haven't like that Maggie have to die for his brother.

To summarize, I like very much this story although it has a sad end.

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