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Proust and Eliot: An Intertextual Reading

Abstract

Defining intertextuality as “the reader’s perception of relationships between one work and others, which either preceded or followed it” (Riffaterre), this essay sets out to highlight compelling similarities between Proust’s novel, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, and the fictional works of George Eliot. The emphasis is on affective memory (involuntary memory and emotional templates), ethical considerations (empathy and compassion), and the kind of self-reflexive reading both writers encourage through a complicit narration that implicates the reader. They show readers how emotional memory constitutes the essence of their personal history, thus anticipating modern research in psychology and the neurosciences. In doing so, they make us aware that there are no insurmountable barriers between fictional worlds and ours. In conclusion, this intertextual reading of two novelists from different centuries and cultures has confirmed that these insights are still valid today.

Keywords

intertextuality, Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, George Eliot, affective memory, memory, ethics, fiction, fictional worlds, reality

Proust and Eliot: An Intertextual Reading

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That novels, though fiction, can touch our lives and give us the kind of insight that everyday life rarely affords us is undeniable. This holds true for novels from different ages and cultures, as George Eliot and Marcel Proust well knew. This realization is also central to my discussion of the intertextual relationship that I gradually discovered while reexamining their works.

It all began when I was reminded of Proust's admiration for Eliot while going through a new edition devoted to his correspondence. One of the most striking passages I came across is in a letter Proust wrote to Robert de Billy in March of 1910:

C'est curieux que dans tous les genres les plus différents, de George Eliot à Hardy, de Stevenson à Emerson, il n'y a pas de littérature qui ait sur moi un pouvoir comparable à la littérature anglaise et américaine. L'Allemagne, l'Italie, bien souvent la France me laissent indifférent. Mais deux pages du *Moulin sur la Floss* me font pleurer. (*Lettres* 505-06)

It is curious that in all the different genres from George Eliot to Hardy, from Stevenson to Emerson, there is nothing that affects me as much as English and American literature. Germany, Italy, quite often France leave me indifferent. But two pages of the *Mill on the Floss* make me cry. (my trans.)¹

From another letter, as early as March 1897—some ten years before laying the groundwork for *A la recherche du temps perdu*, *In Search of Lost Time*—Proust revealed his admiration for *Middlemarch* to Édouard Rod: “Dans un roman comme *Middlemarch* c'est

cette peinture panoramique non seulement des lieux mais des événements que j'avais tant aimée" (155) 'In a novel like Middlemarch it is this panoramic description not only of place but of events that I had liked so much.' Even more telling is a letter written on February 18, 1920 to Jacques Rivière where Proust openly admits that Eliot had been "the cult of his adolescence" (955).²

There is further evidence of Proust's intense involvement with Eliot in his early writings, yet it is puzzling that no such testimony can be found in the three thousand pages of his major work, *A la recherche du temps perdu*.³ Twice her name is merely mentioned in passing (1: 546; 3: 629). A third time, Andrée, one of the novel's characters, is said to be translating a novel by Eliot, and in doing so, to have the best time of her life: "ses meilleures heures étaient celles où elle traduisait un roman de George Eliot" (2: 295) 'her happiest hours were those she spent translating a novel by George Eliot'—a revealing comment, since the novel's hero-narrator admits that he shares her intellectual interests and has a similar artistic sensibility.

There is no denying that my curiosity was piqued by Proust's early enthusiasm for Eliot and the absence of any such remarks in *A la recherche du temps perdu*. When rereading Eliot's novels, I discovered some compelling similarities to Proust's work. In this intertextual reading *à rebours*, I was especially drawn to affect and ethics, and certain aspects of style with a Proustian resonance. While I discuss these findings, I am not hunting for influences, which would be hard to prove, but rather, for a kind of double reading based on my own perception and reaction, a reading at once textual and memorial.⁴

Rereading Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, my attention was drawn at once to certain aspects of the opening chapter.⁵ The narrator suddenly intrudes at the end of the first paragraph and becomes part of the scene, as things are described as felt and seen from within. It is a scene of remembrance with a Proustian twist, as is even more obvious when we reach the last paragraph:

It is time too for me to leave off resting my arms on the cold stone of this bridge....

Ah, my arms are really benumbed. I have been pressing my elbows on the arms of my chair and dreaming that I was standing on the bridge in front of Dorlcote Mill as it looked one February

afternoon many years ago. (11)

This is nothing less than a striking parallel to the Proustian hero's experience of involuntary memory as described at the very end of the opening section of "Combray"—the kind of memory triggered by a sensory impression.⁶ Though Eliot speaks of dreaming, it is more like a reminiscing daydream as past impressions come to the fore. The three periods, at the end of the first sentence quoted above, mark the sliding into another state of awareness; yet there is no further explanation, in Eliot's text, as the narrative of the past now takes over to evoke the events of childhood.

The emphasis is quite different in Proust's seminal passage on involuntary memory with its step by step analysis of the phenomenon as it unfolds and the interjection of dramatic questions that command the reader's attention. We witness how a certain sensory impression in the present is able to establish contact with an analogous one previously experienced. In "Combray," it is a cup of tea with a madeleine that unlocks the gates of the past. Once contact has been made, other sensory impressions experienced at the same time, as well as thoughts, preoccupations, emotions, and moods emerge as if they were all intricately connected.

Thus in the beginning of both *A la recherche* and *The Mill on the Floss*, the protagonists' childhood is evoked through an initial experience of involuntary memory. Yet only in Proust's text is the exceptional nature of this experience highlighted through a detailed analysis and explanatory comments. Though Eliot merely mentions sliding into another state of awareness, Proust, as an early reader of her novel, took note and made an elliptical entry into his 1908 notebook, where he recorded important reminders: "1re page du Moulin sur la Floss" '1st page of *The Mill on the Floss*.'⁷ What exactly he meant and intended is not clear, but it confirms that he paid close attention to Eliot's novel.

There is no doubt that the additional insight into the workings of memory that I gleaned from Proust were brought to my present reading of Eliot. Yet this intertextual exchange works also the other way around. For instance, there are two passages, further on in *The Mill on the Floss*, that not only seem unmistakably Proustian to me, but that also enhance my understanding of the persistence of early childhood impressions. In both instances, Eliot's narrator interrupts

the narrative—the description of the scene at hand—to introduce a general reflection on the special importance of childhood surroundings and their concurrent sensory impact. In the first, taking up most of a page, memory is mentioned twice as the operative factor (“the deep immovable roots in memory”; “an early memory”). My attention was drawn at once to the part of the passage focused on an elderberry bush:

One’s delight in an elderberry bush overhanging the confused leafage of a hedgerow bank as a more gladdening sight than the finest cistus or fuchsia spreading itself on the softest undulating turf, is an entirely unjustifiable preference to a landscape-gardener.... And there is no better reason for preferring this elderberry bush than that it stirs an early memory—that it is no novelty in my life speaking to me merely through my present sensibilities to form and colour, but the long companion of my existence that wove itself into my joys when joys were vivid. (160)

The emphasis on the elderberry bush brings to mind the Proustian hero’s beloved hawthorns whose white and pink blooms enchant him each spring, a spell the narrator captures through complex metaphorical descriptions alluding to feminine charm, gustatory delights, and religious associations—all linked in his awareness through simultaneous impressions and preoccupations (1: 110-12 and 136-38 in the French text; 1: 155-58 and 193-97 in the English edition respectively). Eliot’s web metaphor, at the end of the passage, says as much and strikes another Proustian note, evoking the image *réseau* ‘network’ or ‘web’ that Proust repeatedly uses to describe such associations.

The significant role that memory plays in our lives and the interconnectedness of simultaneous impressions is also the focus of the other Eliot passage that came to my attention. Once again, it is in the last paragraph of a chapter that the narrator introduces the truth discovered. This time, however, the message is made more conspicuous from the start, when the authorial voice opens the paragraph by speaking in the first person, drawing attention to her present self while leaving her characters, Tom and Maggie, in the background:

The wood I walk in on this mild May day, with the young yellow-

brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white star-flowers and the blue-eyed speedwell and the ground ivy at my feet—what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid broad-petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home-scene? (45)

Yet, there is an additional message in what follows; not only simultaneous but also the same or similar impressions experienced over the course of a lifetime are intricately linked and form nothing less than what might be thought of as an affective palimpsest or template—something I first became aware of while examining analogous passages in Proust:

These familiar flowers, these well-remembered bird-notes, this sky with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields, each with a sort of personality given to it by the capricious hedge-rows—such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the deep bladed grass today, might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off years, which still live in us and transform our perception into love. (45-46)

Far more than a poetic ode to childhood, Eliot's passage gives us insight into how impressions constitute an important aspect of who we are and how we respond to the world around us; they are at the root of our innermost sensibility and determine the very shape of our personal history.⁸ The same discovery is set in relief more than once by Proust's narrator, who integrates such experiences into a philosophy of the self that gradually evolves as the real is redefined in terms of the personal.

The most telling passage in Proust, which closely corresponds to Eliot's, comes towards the end of "Combray," as the narrator takes stock of his childhood experience:

Soit que la foi qui crée soit tarie en moi, soit que la réalité ne se forme que dans la mémoire, les fleurs qu'on me montre aujourd'hui pour la première fois ne me semblent pas de vraies

fleurs. Le côté de Méséglise avec ses lilas, ses aubépines, ses bluets, ses coquelicots, ses pommiers, le côté de Guermites avec sa rivière à têtards, ses nymphéas et ses boutons d'or, ont constitué à tout jamais pour moi la figure des pays où j'aimerais vivre.... (1: 182)

Whether it is because the faith which creates has ceased to exist in me, or because reality takes shape in the memory alone, the flowers that people show me nowadays for the first time never seem to me to be true flowers. The Méséglise way with its lilacs, its hawthorns, its cornflowers, its poppies, its apple-trees, the Guermites way with its river full of tadpoles, its waterlilies and its buttercups, constituted for me for all time the image of the landscape in which I should like to live.... (1: 260)

A few lines later, he comes back to this observation to explain the psychological significance of this discovery, an explanation closely attuned to the one given by the narrator of *The Mill on the Floss*: “en restant présents en celles de mes impressions d'aujourd'hui auxquelles ils peuvent se relier, ils leur donnent des assises, de la profondeur, une dimension de plus qu'aux autres. Ils leur ajoutent aussi un charme, une signification qui n'est que pour moi” (1: 183) ‘by their persistence in those of my present-day impressions to which they can still be linked, they give those impressions a foundation, a depth, a dimension lacking from the rest. They invest them too with a charm, a significance which is for me alone’ (1: 262). Whereas Eliot speaks of the “subtle inextricable associations” between simultaneous impressions and characterizes them as “the mother tongue of our imagination,” Proust introduces a spatial metaphor to stress the joint, reinforcing impact of present and past impressions (“des assises, de la profondeur, une dimension de plus” ‘a foundation, a depth, a dimension lacking from the rest’). It is noteworthy that both authors conclude by highlighting the positive impact of such unique experiences: in the first passage, perception is transformed into love; in the second, charm and significance heighten the experience.

It is in such deep-seated impressions that both Eliot and Proust locate the true self. This is even more apparent when such impres-

sions are linked to a certain state or mood in a particular setting and constitute what Proust calls *un cadre d'existence* 'a state of being.' When a present scene evokes a similar past experience, it has an emotional impact. In the following example from *A la recherche*, a carriage ride through the woods, at first not associated with any emotion, becomes fully charged once it is recalled:

Cette route était pareille à bien d'autres de ce genre qu'on rencontre en France, montant en pente assez raide, puis redescendant sur une grande longueur. Au moment même, je ne lui trouvais pas un grand charme, j'étais seulement content de rentrer. Mais elle devint pour moi dans la suite une cause de joies en restant dans ma mémoire comme une amorce où toutes les routes semblables sur lesquelles je passerais plus tard au cours d'une promenade ou d'un voyage s'embrancheraient aussitôt sans solution de continuité et pourraient, grâce à elle, communiquer immédiatement avec mon coeur. (2: 80)

This road was like many others of the same kind which are to be found in France, climbing on a fairly steep gradient and then gradually descending over a long stretch. At that particular moment, I found no great attraction in it; I was only glad to be going home. But it became for me later on a frequent source of joy by remaining in my memory as a lure to which all the similar roads that I was to take, on walks or drives or journeys, would at once attach themselves without breach of continuity and would be able, thanks to it, to communicate immediately with my heart. (2: 408-09)

The narrator stresses first the future importance of this otherwise ordinary experience by highlighting the implied recurrence of a similar event through the web metaphor (*amorce* 'lure'; *s'embrancheraient* 'attach themselves'), thus making more tangible the workings of memory. After pointing out, in what follows, that the interim years are abolished in such reminiscences, he carefully enumerates all concurrent sensory impressions that make up the special atmosphere of this experience and describes the frame of mind associated with it. In doing so, he speaks of a certain type of pleasure, almost *un cadre d'existence* that invades him with an

almost palpable consistency, thus constituting nothing less than a palimpsest memory on which the hand of experience has inscribed both past and present—experiences that connect and build up to a state of exultation:

Raccordées à celles que j'éprouvais maintenant dans un autre pays, sur une route semblable ... ces impressions se renforceraient, prendraient la consistance d'un type particulier de plaisir, et presque d'un cadre d'existence que j'avais d'ailleurs rarement l'occasion de retrouver, mais dans lequel le réveil des souvenirs mettait au milieu de la réalité matériellement perçue une part assez grande de réalité évoquée, songée, insaisissable, pour me donner, au milieu de ces régions où je passais, plus qu'un sentiment esthétique, un désir fugitif mais exalté, d'y vivre désormais pour toujours. (2: 80)

Linked up with those I was experiencing now in another place, on a similar road ... these impressions would be reinforced, would take on the consistency of a particular type of pleasure, and almost of a framework of existence which, as it happened, I rarely had the luck to come across, but in which these awakened memories introduced, amid the reality that my senses could perceive, a large enough element of evoked, dreamed, unseizable reality to give me, among these regions through which I was passing, more than an aesthetic feeling, a fleeting but exalted ambition to stay and live there forever. (2: 409-10)

Proust, at the end of this long passage, makes a distinction between two kinds of reality: the material present and the evoked reality of the past, both of which, in his view, constitute the real of the actual moment, the resurgent past modifying the present by transforming current sensory impressions into desire and exultation.

Eliot's narrator draws our attention to a similar template in memory by showing how a predominant mood associated with a certain scene can be recaptured through an emotional grafting onto later events. The following passage from *Middlemarch* is focused on Dorothea's point of view as she watches a funeral procession:

But for her visitors Dorothea too might have been shut up in the

library, and would not have witnessed this scene of old Featherstone's funeral, which, aloof as it seemed to be from the tenor of her life, always afterwards came back to her at the touch of certain sensitive points in memory, just as the vision of St Peter's at Rome was inwoven with moods of despondency. Scenes which make vital changes in our neighbour's lot are but the background of our own, yet, like a particular aspect of the fields and trees, they become associated for us with the epochs of our own history, and make a part of that unity which lies in the selection of our keenest consciousness. (238)

As in the previous quotation from Proust, Eliot's narrator points to the future significance this scene will acquire through later, personal associations—associations selected by Dorothea's "keenest consciousness" and as such constituting part of her own history. In this case, it is a mood that prevails, a mood whose powerful feelings have left their imprint; interwoven with sensory impressions, such moods are a potent catalyst for linking the present to the past.

By recalling, in the above passage, a similar mood of despondency that once before overcame Dorothea while on her honeymoon—a mood previously described as a feeling of desolation as "she was beholding Rome, the city of visible history, where the past of a whole hemisphere seems moving in funeral procession with strange ancestral images and trophies gathered from afar" (143)—the narrator engages in a kind of analogical narration that allows the reader to witness how personal associations shape a life's history.⁹ Clearly, the earlier passage anticipates the later one, as the narrator thus weaves a complex web in which we are implicated as we make our way through the novel.

In this intertextual reading of Proust and Eliot, there is another compelling dimension of their work that revealed their kindred spirits: a compassion for suffering and an unwavering rejection of indifference. Proust paid attention to this ethical dimension in his reading of Eliot's novels, as is evident from the notes he took:¹⁰

Sentiment de l'utilité de la souffrance, du progrès moral, des équivalences morales à travers l'échelle humaine.... (657)

A feeling of the usefulness of suffering, of moral progress, moral equivalences throughout the human realm....

Vif sentiment du développement des inclinations sympathiques entre les hommes. Dinah, Silas Marner et ses voisins... (657)

Strong feeling of the development of sympathetic inclinations among human beings. Dinah, Silas Marner and his neighbors...

Sentiment de la souffrance plus grande dans êtres sans vie spirituelle, sans solidarité morale avec les autres. (657)

Feeling of suffering greater in those without a spiritual life, without moral solidarity with others.

Moral preoccupations in Eliot's novels thus certainly caught Proust's attention. There is further evidence of this in the footnotes to his translation of John Ruskin's *The Bible of Amiens*. In one of these notes, he speaks of the historical and sociological aptitude of some writers in discovering a different moral intention in actions that otherwise seem identical, and in pointing out the similarities in the various forms that the same morality or immorality may take over time. He then concludes as follows: "Ce don existe à un très haut degré chez des écrivains comme Ruskin et plus encore chez George Eliot" (Proust *La Bible* 183) 'This gift is found to a high degree in writers like Ruskin and even more so in George Eliot.'

Most striking, among these notes, is one that extends over two pages and includes long excerpts from two of Eliot's novels, with the focus, in each, on the simple humanity, good character, and pleasant company of a clergyman. Neither is given to religious fervor, as is evident in the following description, quoted by Proust, of Mr. Irwine in *Adam Bede*: "He really had no very lofty aims, no theological enthusiasm ... and would have thought it a mere loss of time to talk in a doctrinal and awakening manner to old 'Feyther Taft,' or even Chad Cranage the blacksmith" (69-70).¹¹ In what follows, Proust skips a few lines to the point where Irwine's Christian charity and ready understanding for the weaknesses of others is the focus:

“he had that charity which has sometimes been lacking to the very illustrious virtue—he was tender to other men’s failings, and unwilling to impute evil” (70).

From Proust’s comments on Eliot we gain insight into his pre-occupations and beliefs. The need for human understanding and kindness is a recurring theme that makes its way into *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Right at the outset, towards the end of “Combray,” we are confronted with the narrator’s condemnation of indifference to suffering: “Cette indifférence aux souffrances qu’on cause et qui, quelques autres noms qu’on lui donne, est la forme terrible et permanente de la cruauté” (1: 163) ‘that indifference to the sufferings one causes which, whatever other names one gives it, is the most terrible and lasting form of cruelty’ (1: 232-33).

Even earlier, a few pages into the novel, we witness a tender scene of empathy and compassion that affords us insight into the hero-narrator’s moral fiber. It is evident that he cannot bear to have pain inflicted on his beloved grandmother and reacts vehemently when his great-aunt encourages his grandfather to have a glass of liquor, something that for health reasons he should definitely avoid:

Ce supplice que lui infligeait ma grand-tante, le spectacle des vaines prières de ma grand-mère et de sa faiblesse, vaincue d’avance, essayant inutilement d’ôter à mon grand-père le verre à liqueur, c’était de ces choses à la vue desquelles on s’habitue plus tard jusqu’à les considérer en riant et à prendre le parti du persécuteur assez résolument et gaiement pour se persuader à soi-même qu’il ne s’agit pas de persécution; elles me causaient alors une telle horreur, que j’aurais aimé battre ma grand-tante. Mais dès que j’entendais: “Bathilde, viens donc empêcher ton mari de boire du cognac!” déjà homme par la lâcheté, je faisais ce que nous faisons tous, une fois que nous sommes grands, quand il y a devant nous des souffrances et des injustices: je ne voulais pas les voir; je montais sangloter tout en haut de la maison.... (1: 12)

This torture inflicted on her by my great-aunt, the sight of my grandmother’s vain entreaties, of her feeble attempts, doomed in advance, to remove the liqueur-glass from my grandfather’s hands—all these were things of the sort to which, in later years,

one can grow so accustomed as to smile at them and to take the persecutor's side resolutely and cheerfully enough to persuade oneself that it is not really persecution; but in those days they filled me with such horror that I longed to strike my great-aunt. And yet, as soon as I heard her "Bathilde! Come in and stop your husband drinking brandy," in my cowardice I became at once a man, and did what all we grown men do when face to face with suffering and injustice: I preferred not to see them; I ran up to the top of the house to cry by myself.... (1: 13-14)

The implied evaluation at the end of this passage is that unjust suffering should be confronted and not simply dismissed. The young boy sheds tears not only because he empathizes with his grandmother, but also because he feels guilty for not helping her. He would have found a ready soul mate in *Middlemarch*, where Dorothea makes this poignant remark: "Trouble is so hard to bear, is it not?—How can we live and think that any one has trouble—piercing trouble—and we could help them, and never try?" (582).

Having paid attention to scenes of empathy and cherishing in *La recherche du temps perdu*, I found similar situations of loving care at the heart of Eliot's novels. What could be more striking than the mutual affection between Silas Marner and Eppie, the motherless child he rescues and then adopts; or Adam Bede's steadfast love for Hetty, even after she has forsaken him for another? Mr. Gilfil, another rejected suitor, nonetheless rescues his beloved Caterina and nurtures her back to health.¹² In telling this tender story, the narrator intrudes with a memorable comment: "In the love of a brave and faithful man there is always a strain of maternal tenderness; he gives out again those beams of protecting fondness which were shed on him as he lay on his mother's knee" (*Scenes* 180).¹³ This insight could be applied to more than one of Eliot's characters, and to the Proustian hero-narrator as well.

Emotional memory is the driving force behind sympathy and compassion in Proust's and Eliot's fictional world. The narrator of *Middlemarch* explains why this is so in a revealing observation: "pain must enter into its glorified life of memory before it can turn into compassion" (571).¹⁴ How suffering leads to sympathy and pity is central to the story of "Janet's Repentance." Janet's soul mate and salvation turns out to be Edgar Tryan, the Methodist minister

whose own past suffering makes him a compassionate and effective listener: “he saw that the first thing Janet needed was to be assured of sympathy. She must be made to feel that her anguish was not strange to him; that he entered into the only half-expressed secrets of her spiritual weakness, before any other message of consolation could find its way to her heart ... and it is because sympathy is but a living again through our own past in a new form, that confession often prompts a response of confession” (300).

This intertextual reading of Proust and Eliot is a motivated reading, one centered on the affective and moral dimensions of their works. It is also a self-reflexive reading. Both novelists encourage such a reading through complicit narration—inclusive pronouns and general reflections that implicate the reader. Paul Ricoeur accounts for such interactive readings by introducing the concept of “narrative identity” in describing the discoveries readers make by identifying with fictional characters.¹⁵ Moreover, as he so aptly put it, “we do not cease to re-interpret the narrative identity that constitutes us in the light of stories handed down to us by our culture” (“Life” 131). By engaging in an intertextual reading spanning two centuries and involving writers from different cultures, I found compelling points of contact through a kind of “elective affinity” centered on affect. Roland Barthes, in his last rereading of Proust, made a similar discovery, which he calls “the moment of truth”: “Moment de vérité: ce qui, dans une lecture, m’arrive à moi, sujet au premier degré” (*Préparation* 156) ‘Moment of truth: that which, in a reading, happens to me, subject in the first instance.’¹⁶ He leaves no doubt that the truth in question is emotional: “Seulement, avec Proust, il ne s’agit pas ... de la quiddité des choses, mais de la vérité de l’affect” (155) ‘Only, with Proust, it is not a matter ... of the quiddity of things but of the truth of affect.’

Such hermeneutic insights are still valid today in helping us account for the actions and reactions of fictional characters and our response to them. Proust and Eliot understood that there are no insurmountable barriers between fictional worlds and ours. In Eliot’s words, “Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot” (*Natural* 53).¹⁷ Through their writ-

ings, these novelists have made us more keenly aware of the intricate associations of affective memory and the complex workings of empathy that mold and structure our lives. In doing so, they encourage us, through response-inviting features in the text, to be open to new ways of being.

Notes

1 All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

2 According to the editor, Proust read *Middlemarch* while at Fontainebleau, in the fall of 1896. For other references to Eliot's work in this collection, see pages 198, 501, and 775.

3 I will be referring to and quoting from the four volume Pléiade edition of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. Jean-Yves Tadié. The English translation used in this essay is the 1993 edition of *In Search of Lost Time*, edited and revised by D.J. Enright.

4 I am citing here Michael Riffaterre's discussion of intertextuality. I share his view that "intertextuality is the reader's perception of relationships between one work and others, which either preceded or followed it. These other works constitute the intertext of the first" (4). However, while he primarily focuses on "obligatory intertextuality" (5)—a kind of reading where a lexical, syntactic or semantic incompatibility within the text constitutes the revealing trace that points to an existing intertext for its resolution—I shall be engaged in an aleatory intertextual reading based on some noteworthy correspondences I discovered between *A la recherche*, which has been the focus of my work for over thirty years, and Eliot's novels, which I have begun to explore with a detective's interest for clues. I am aware, of course, that others, for different reasons and from various perspectives, have studied the connection between Proust and Eliot. See, for example, Mein (121-42), and Fraser (87-113).

5 I shall be referring to the Penguin Classics edition of *The Mill on the Floss*. All subsequent quotations will be from this edition.

6 See *A la recherche du temps perdu*, 1: 44-47; *In Search of Lost Time*, 1: 60-64.

7 See *Carnets*, ed. Florence Callu & Antoine Compagnon, Carnet 1: 91.

8 Cf. Eliot's *Adam Bede* for a similar observation: "The secret of our emotions never lies in the bare object but in its subtle relations to our own past" (199-200).

9 Note how the earlier passage describing Dorothea's mood is followed, a few lines later, by the narrator's general explanation of the impact of such recurring states, thus foreshadowing future emotional templates: "Our moods are

apt to bring with them images which succeed each other like the magic-lantern pictures of a doze; and in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St Peter's, the huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the attitude and garments of the prophets and evangelists on the mosaics above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina" (144).

10 Only four pages of Proust's reading notes devoted to Eliot have been found, most of which are fragments (see the manuscript, BN 45, folios 101-04). They have been transcribed and are printed in the 1971 edition of *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (656-57). I am quoting from this edition.

11 I am substituting here the English original text of Eliot's novel for the French translation from which Proust is quoting. The ellipsis indicates the portion of the text that Proust left out without indicating that he did so. The quoted passage appears in Footnote 2 on page 133 of *La Bible d'Amiens*. Previously, in this note, Proust refers to two other clergymen: Mr. Farebrother from *Middlemarch* is merely mentioned (132) before the first long quotation centered on Mr. Gilfil from *Scenes of Clerical Lives* (131-32).

12 See *Scenes of Clerical Life*: "Mr Gilfil's Love-Story," 177-94. Note also that in *Daniel Deronda*, the protagonist turns out to be the saviour of several of the novel's characters: Gwendolen, Mirah, and Mordecai.

13 Compare the following observation from "Janet's Repentance," in the same edition of *Scenes of Clerical Life*: "In the man whose childhood has known cares there is always a fibre of memory that can be touched to gentle issues" (241).

14 Note how a similar observation is woven into the narrative fabric of *Adam Bede*: "Let us rather be thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form, as forces do, and passing from pain into sympathy—the one poor word which includes all our best insight and our best love" (488).

15 See Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*, chapters 5 and 6, where he discusses various kinds of narrative identity.

16 It is noteworthy that Barthes derived a new approach to literary texts, one based on pathos, from these moments of truth. He describes this approach in "Longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure," *Essais critiques IV: le bruissement de la langue* (313-25).

17 Cf. Proust's similar view as expressed in *A la recherche du temps perdu*: "Par l'art seulement nous pouvons sortir de nous, savoir ce que voit un autre de cet univers qui n'est pas le même que le nôtre et dont les paysages nous seraient restés aussi inconnus que ceux qu'il peut y avoir dans la lune. Grâce à l'art, au

lieu de voir un seul monde, le nôtre, nous le voyons se multiplier, et autant qu'il y a d'artistes originaux, autant nous avons des mondes à notre disposition..." (4: 474) "Through art alone we are able to emerge from ourselves, to know what another person sees of a universe which is not the same as our own and of which, without art, the landscapes would remain as unknown to us as those that may exist on the moon. Thanks to art, instead of seeing one world only, our own, we see that world multiply itself and we have at our disposal as many worlds as there are original artists..." (6: 299). The same view still holds today, though the terms may have changed in our contemporary critical parlance. Gabriele Schwab, for instance, speaks of "imaginary ethnographies" and gives the following explanation: "In addition to offering direct figuration of otherness and cultural contact, literary texts actually deploy complex discursive strategies and aesthetic devices in order to mediate these fictional cultural encounters for their readers" (39).

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