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GEORGE ELIOT, MARCEL PROUST AND THE LOGIC OF DESIRE¹

By Kenichi Kurata

The influence of George Eliot's fiction on Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* has often been discussed. For instance, L. A. Bisson drew attention in 1945 to 'the possibility, even the likelihood, of [...] [an] immediate and sympathetic suggestion' by Eliot, citing Proust's claim in 1910 that 'Il n'y a pas de littérature qui ait sur moi un pouvoir comparable à la littérature anglaise ... deux pages du *Moulin sur la Floss* me font pleurer.'² Bisson goes on to suggest that three specific passages in *The Mill on the Floss* have their counterparts in Proust's work, the most plausible of which is in the opening chapter where the narrator has a waking dream of his childhood which leads into the main story, and that is exactly what is made to happen at the beginning of *In Search of Lost Time*. The other two passages have to do with the importance of childhood memories for a person's existential integrity, which is of course of central importance in Proust's work.

Taking over this argument by Bisson, I aim to demonstrate that there is a further thematic continuity between the two writers. Where Bisson focuses on the aspect of time regained, I will instead focus on the aspect of time lost, which is most probably what made Proust weep. Proust's crucial reference to *The Mill on the Floss* in the letter Bisson partly cites in the previous quotation is as follows:

It is curious that in all the contrasted kinds of writing from George Eliot to Hardy, from Stevenson to Emerson, there is no literature which exerts on me a power comparable to that of English and American literature. Germany, Italy and quite often France leave me indifferent. But two pages of *Mill on the Floss* [*sic*] make me weep.³

While the passage as a whole states that he finds Anglo-American literature, in general, emotive, it gives *The Mill on the Floss* a highly privileged status by exclusively mentioning the book title. Proust later refers to it in a different letter as 'the book I have loved the most'.⁴ But what is most important here is that Proust explicitly states his particular response to the novel. He weeps. Neither the way the novel opens, nor its statements on the importance of childhood memories, would be in themselves enough to make one weep. This strongly suggests that it was the tragic strain in Eliot's novel, its depiction of squandered youthful lives that exerted its power on Proust and made him weep. I wish to demonstrate that this tragic strain, the representation of lives that are wasted in pursuit of futile desire, is his main inheritance from Eliot's fiction. Contrary to the contemporary vogue of reading Proust as a means of learning to be positive,⁵ in this paper I will dwell rather on how *In Search of Lost Time* tenaciously dwells on the negative by portraying life as a waste of time, and reconsider its ostensibly positive conclusion.

I have analysed elsewhere the logic in the tragic fates of Eliot's characters by referring to the theory of desire as elaborated by G. W. F. Hegel and Jacques Lacan, and demonstrated that from this perspective, *The Mill on the Floss* is important for its especially vivid description of desire for unfulfilled desire.⁶ After briefly summarizing this in the next section, I will go on to show how the same vicious circle of desire for unfulfilled desire is repeatedly described by the narrator of *In Search of Lost Time*, and that the essential parallel between the two writers lies in this shared consciousness of the tragedy of time wasted on the pursuit of unfulfilled desire. Finally, I will consider Proust's logic of time regained as a response to the problematics

of desire that was originally set out by Eliot.

The Vicious Circle of Desire⁷

Critics have long recognized the conflicting tendencies towards progress and conservatism in George Eliot. Having rejected faith in God in her 'Holy Wars' with her father, and having defied the sexual order of the day by becoming an independent writer and living with the already married George Henry Lewes, she wrote with particular emphasis on the religion of humanity and the value of personal sympathy – as if to compensate for her self-emancipation, according to Nietzsche's famous criticism of her.⁸

This equivocal gesture of conservatism in Eliot's biographical life is acted out in various patterns by the fictional characters she created. The tragic characters that she depicts with idiosyncratic vividness, it can be said, are grappling with the problem of their desire. As their desires are alternately pursued and suppressed, they are intensified to a disproportionate degree, leading to tragic consequences. These equivocations have to do with desire, not only because self-emancipation has to do with the free pursuit of personal desire, but also because equivocation is essential to the nature of desire itself. This equivocation can be best analysed by referring to the elaborations on the logic of desire by Jacques Lacan. The crucial argument is to be found in his discussion of Freud's specimen dream, which Lacan names 'the dream of the beautiful butcher's wife'.

A plump butcher's wife has a dream where she cannot give a supper-party because all she has is a small piece of smoked salmon, and the shops are all closed. Freud interprets this as a wish-fulfilment, notwithstanding its apparent frustration of a wish to give a supper-party, since her husband, who generally prefers plump women, recently showed interest in a slim lady friend who expressed her wish to become stouter, and insisted on being invited to a meal. Smoked salmon is a favourite of this friend. The butcher's wife is enabling herself not to feed her, otherwise she would become even more desirable in the eyes of her husband. But the butcher's wife relates a symptom which makes this explanation problematic:

She was very much in love with her husband now and teased him a lot. She had begged him, too, not to give her any caviare.

[Freud] asked her what that meant; and she explained that she had wished for a long time that she could have a caviare sandwich every morning but grudged the expense. Of course her husband would have let her have it at once if she had asked him. But, on the contrary, she had asked him not to give her any caviare, so that she could go on teasing him about it.⁹

While the slim lady's dissatisfaction would bring the butcher's wife's satisfaction, the problem nevertheless remains of explaining why the symptomatic creation of dissatisfaction for herself in her actual life is necessary. Freud admits that this is problematic, but wishing to sustain his theory of dreams as being essentially wish-fulfilment, escapes by saying that this is what hysterics do: it is called hysteric identification. She is identifying with her friend whom she has deprived of food in her dream.

Lacan takes this specimen dream and recognizes straightforwardly that what is at stake is a desire for unfulfilled desire: 'Desire Must Be Taken Literally', as the section in his 'Direction of the Treatment' that discusses the dream is titled.¹⁰ Where Freud placed the wish to deprive the friend of supper as central, Lacan places instead the butcher's wife's desire for unfulfilled desire as the pivotal point from which the dream emerges. Further, this derives from

her identification with her husband's desire. While he is generally fond of plump women, and should therefore be satisfied with his wife, he still praises her slim friend. This raises the question of what his desire really is. The butcher's wife's desire revolves around the desire of her husband that seems to have no fixed object of satisfaction, or is lacking in terms of satisfaction either way. This is what comes to be represented by the nonexistent portion of caviare.¹¹ The other who is lacking in satisfaction is none other than a desiring other. Beyond her identification with her friend, there lies the identification with her husband's enigmatic desire for something different.

But why should desire develop into desire for unfulfilled desire? The Lacanian answer to this would be that it is because desire seeks its own continuation, and comes to avoid satisfaction, since satisfaction is the death of desire. The two clinical categories of neurosis, hysteria and obsessive neurosis, are different ways of keeping desire alive: while obsessive neurosis desires objects that are structurally unattainable, hysteria works to keep a certain desire unsatisfied.¹² All of us are to some extent playing Achilles and the tortoise with satisfaction in our lives.

Desire, when it comes to be pursued for its own sake and is intensified, can become addictive and self-destructive, as is the case with anorexia, the logic of which can be seen in the desire for unfulfilled desire for caviare in the beautiful butcher's wife. Let us take a look at a more tangible example of such an addictive desire. Slavoj Žižek argues that the idiosyncratic feature of Coke (Coca-Cola) is that it does not provide any concrete satisfaction, such as quenching thirst or soothing the palate. Then why do we drink it?

The unexpected result of this feature is [...] [that] it is this very superfluous character that makes our thirst for Coke all the more insatiable : as Jacques-Alain Miller put it so succinctly, Coke has the paradoxical property that the more you drink the thirstier you get, the greater your need to drink more – with that strange, bitter-sweet taste, our thirst is never effectively quenched. [...] This process is brought to its conclusion in the case of caffeine-free diet Coke [...] [where] nutritional value is suspended and the caffeine, as the key ingredient of its taste, is also taken away – all that remains is a pure semblance, an artificial promise of a substance which never materialised. Is it not true that in this sense, in the case of caffeine-free diet Coke, we almost literally 'drink nothing in the guise of something'?

What we are implicitly referring to here is, of course, Nietzsche's classic opposition between 'wanting nothing' (in the sense of 'I don't want anything') and the nihilistic stance of actively wanting Nothingness itself; following Nietzsche's path, Lacan emphasized how in anorexia, the subject does not simply 'eat nothing' – rather, she or he actively wants to eat the Nothingness (the Void) that is itself the ultimate object-cause of desire [...]. So – along the same lines, in the case of caffeine-free diet Coke, we *drink the Nothingness itself*, the pure semblance of a property that is in effect merely an envelope of a void.¹³

This, I believe, effectively demonstrates the logic of addictive desire in general, be it either anorexia or cravings for Coke. In addictive desire, substantial satisfaction is posited and then subtracted or suspended so that one keeps on stuffing one's face with nothingness, or the lack of satisfaction, which one can incessantly and endlessly have.

Maggie in *The Mill on the Floss* is just such a figure of addictive desire for nothingness.

Her ultimate act of refusing Stephen after declaring her love for him, a truly Eliotesque gesture of equivocation regarding conventional values, can itself be seen as a self-destructive renunciation of desire that serves to intensify it. This act is depicted as having its roots in Maggie's adolescent asceticism in the path of Thomas à Kempis. My contention is that this asceticism, itself a version of active nihilism that is referred to in the above quotation from Žižek, can be figuratively understood as a kind of anorexia, when we see it as a response to her childhood episodes which are full of references to food.

Frustration of oral satisfaction is prominent right from the outset in the narrator's dream of Dorlcote Mill: 'That honest waggoner is thinking of his dinner, getting sadly dry in the oven at this late hour; but he will not touch it till he has fed his horses. [...] I should like well to hear them neigh over their hard-earned feed of corn, and see them, with their moist necks freed from the harness, dipping their eager nostrils into the muddy pond.' (p. 54)¹⁴ But we are not allowed to see their respective satisfactions, instead of which we are given the first sight of Maggie. This presentation of sustained hunger seems to foreshadow the drama of dissatisfaction that she is to enact in this novel.

Most of the important childhood anecdotes have to do with food. The rabbits Maggie lets die are probably regarded by Tom primarily as meat, for he intends to keep in his version of Noah's ark 'plenty to eat in it – rabbits and things' (104). His anger makes her decide to hide in the attic and 'starve herself' (p. 89) as if to identify with Tom's disappointed oral expectations, as well as mimicking his lost objects that were starved to death. Her strong demand for love is compared to the natural demand for food by the narrator: 'It is a wonderful subduer, this need of love, this hunger of the heart: as peremptory as that other hunger by which Nature forces us to submit to the yoke, and change the face of the world' (p. 91). Thus the reconciliation over the rabbits also has to be through food: sharing a cake (pp. 91-2). Her hair-cutting (pp. 119-126), too, can be read as self-inflicted fasting, as it entails a renunciation not only of her locks, but also of a good part of her dinner.

The sequence that ends up in her flight to the gypsies is also full of food references. The double-bind over the choice of jam puff pieces (pp. 98-100), which springs from the course of the conversation on Lucy's visit, already looks on to her later life in which she will be caught in the 'casuistry' of passion and duty (p. 627-8), that is, satisfaction and renunciation, acted out with Stephen. Tom's declaration that 'I wish Lucy was *my* sister' (p. 147) makes Maggie repeatedly destroy his objects of satisfaction. Apart from upsetting his card pagoda (p. 147), she drops and stamps on the small cake for which Tom seems very eager (pp. 153-4). She also spills Tom's cowslip wine in trying to make up with him (p. 155). Finally she sees that no object can be destroyed *in absentia* or *in effigie* in order to 'vex Tom' (p. 162), and pushes Lucy herself into the mud (p. 164). When she subsequently defects to the gypsies, the involuntary outburst, '*I want my tea so*' (p. 174), and finding their food inedible marks the point where she admits her defeat, after which she determinedly refuses to eat anything, and promises them to come back with 'some jam tarts and things' (p. 177).

Maggie's adolescent asceticism is her solution to the problematics of desire that she is grappling with in these childhood episodes. What she was acting out with Tom and oral satisfaction were already identifications with the desire of the other that she seeks to keep dissatisfied – now she herself is directly kept hungry for hunger's sake. On her reading of Thomas à Kempis, we are told that

for the first time she saw the possibility of shifting the position from which she looked at the gratification of her own desires [...] renunciation seemed to her the entrance into that satisfaction which she had so long been craving in vain. (p. 384)

Another formulation can be found in her confession to Philip, 'I was never satisfied with a little of anything. That is why it is better for me to do without earthly happiness altogether' (p. 428). These formulations remind us of Dr Johnson's remark on wine, that total abstinence is far easier than moderate consumption. This is the very dialectic of desire that makes the anorexic the ultimate overeater, because she is eating *nothing*, which can be eaten endlessly. If Maggie's adolescent asceticism can be described as a kind of anorexia, it can be said that it later develops into a kind of bulimia in her renunciation of Stephen, and becomes all the more self-destructive. Let us note in addition that the novel's emotional economy also seems to invite the reader to invest in Maggie, to desire her to become happy, and employ the same tactics of intensifying this desire through its repeated frustration: the unhappier she becomes, the more the reader desires to see her happy.

While it was once often argued that Maggie is driven by patriarchy to commit a 'long suicide',¹⁵ rather it is Maggie's intensified desire that breeds her asceticism and tragic renunciation, before which the Tulliver masculinity is powerless. Her desire acquires a momentum that is independent of the socio-ideological conditions that may be seen to have triggered it. Let us recall Tom's impotent outburst to her, 'I never feel certain about anything with *you*. At one time you take pleasure in a sort of perverse self-denial, and at another, you have not resolution to resist a thing that you know to be wrong' (p. 504). This touches directly on Maggie's equivocal strategy of intensifying desire by alternately positing and subtracting satisfaction. But Maggie cannot help it herself, no more than bulimics can of their addiction. This tragedy of self-destructive intensification of desire is central to *The Mill on the Floss*, and I believe this is what greatly influenced Proust, who eventually came to create his own narrative of intensified desire.

Life as a Waste of Time

Nothing is more limited than pleasure and vice. In that sense one may say truly, altering slightly the meaning of the phrase, that we revolve always in the same vicious circle. (VI, p. 169)¹⁶

While this narration refers to Charlus' homosexual activities, it can also be seen as self-referential, in the sense that the whole of *In Search of Lost Time* is a collection of vicious circles, whether in the direction of Swann's way or the Guermantes way, of the narrator's suspended desire. They are certainly extensive, but their nature is nevertheless 'limited': everything revolves 'always in the same vicious circle'.

The vicious circles derive, as was the case with Maggie, from the disproportionate appetite for life in the narrator that prevents him from being contented with moderate consumption. Walter Benjamin points out that Proust was obsessed with 'happiness':

Cocteau recognized what really should have been the major concern of all readers of Proust and yet has served no one as the pivotal point of his reflections or his affection. He recognized Proust's blind, senseless, frenzied quest for happiness. It shone from his eyes; they were not happy, but in them there lay fortune as it lies in gambling or in love.¹⁷

Proust is on a 'blind, senseless, frenzied quest for happiness': he has an intensified desire for happiness that does not make him happy at all. The addictive lure of gambling, too, can be seen as having the structure of intensified desire. The desire to win becomes heightened all the more by the losses, and this induces an addiction to the foretaste of fortune that is devoid of its substance, like the caffeine-free diet Coke.¹⁸

The story of 'Swann in Love', which foreshadows the narrator's tortured loves for Gilberte and Albertine, already presents the theme of desire for unfulfilled desire in a succinct way. Initially,

Swann did not make an effort to find attractive the women with whom he spent his time, but sought to spend his time with women whom he had already found attractive. And as often as not they were women whose beauty was of a distinctly vulgar type, for the physical qualities which he instinctively sought were the direct opposite of those he admired in the women painted or sculpted by his favourite masters. Depth of character, or a melancholy expression, would freeze his senses, which were, however, aroused at the sight of healthy, abundant, rosy flesh. (I, p. 230)

We can compare Swann's desire to that of the husband of the beautiful butcher's wife. What caused the chain of symptoms in the wife was the husband's desire for the slim lady friend, whereas he generally prefers plump women like his wife – 'the sight of healthy, abundant, rosy flesh'. Odette, with her 'melancholy expression' that 'would freeze his senses', and with 'the physical qualities [...] he admired in the women painted or sculpted by his favourite masters' – she is associated in his mind with Botticelli's Zipporah (I, p. 267) – lures Swann into the vicious circle of desire for unfulfilled desire.

[Odette] had struck Swann not, certainly, as being devoid of beauty, but as endowed with a kind of beauty which left him indifferent, which aroused in him no desire, which gave him, indeed, a sort of physical repulsion, as one of those women of whom all of us can cite examples, different for each of us, who are the converse of the type our senses demand. Her profile was too sharp, her skin too delicate, her cheek-bones were too prominent, her features too tightly drawn, to be attractive to him. (I, p. 234)

Though she initially 'aroused in him no desire', the very lack of immediate appeal triggers his desire, which is increasingly intensified through its frustration and jealousy: she becomes his version of the caffeine-free diet Coke. Swann later exclaims to himself, 'To think that I've wasted years of my life, that I've longed to die, that I've experienced my greatest love, for a woman who didn't appeal to me, who wasn't even my type!' (I, p. 460) But the point made by 'Swann in Love' is that the most intense desire is the desire for an object that does not appeal to one, or is not one's type, that is to say, an object that does not bring immediate satisfaction of the drives, but intensifies desire by its frustration. Swann is subtly ensnared into an addiction to the lack of satisfaction that Odette amply provides.

The narrator's unhappy loves for Gilberte and Albertine both act out the same structure of the vicious circle of desire. The narrator depicts in his relationship with Gilberte how 'Our desires cut across one another, and in this confused existence it is rare for happiness to coincide with the desire that clamoured for it' (II, p. 70). Desires clamour for happiness, or satisfaction, but they 'cut across one another', and for the narrator, the disappointments serve to fuel desire to the extent that they become part and parcel of desire:¹⁹

[...] there is in love a permanent strain of suffering which happiness neutralises, makes potential only, postpones, but which may at any moment become, what we wanted, excruciating. (II, p. 181)

Benjamin's comparison to gambling is indeed apt. The narrator is addicted to love in the same way that some are addicted to gambling, pursuing desire *qua* dissatisfaction, and in a way enjoying the excruciating suffering that accompanies it. Desire, a state of unhappiness or suffering, is for the narrator always greater than the temporary satisfactions that merely postpone or neutralize it.

Addiction to desire for unfulfilled desire is acted out on a fuller scale with the narrator's relationship with Albertine, compared to which his 'other loves [...] had been no more than slight and timid essays that were paving the way, appeals that were unconsciously clamouring, for this vaster love' (V, p. 285). The following on the seaside girls, from among whom Albertine emerges, is already premonitory of his addiction to her:

To strip our pleasures of imagination is to reduce them to their own dimensions, that is to say to nothing. Offered me by one of those procuresses whose good offices, as has been seen, I by no means always scorned, withdrawn from the element which gave them so many nuances, such impreciseness, these girls would have enchanted me less. We need imagination, awakened by the uncertainty of being unable to attain its object, to create a goal which hides the other goal from us, and by substituting for sensual pleasures the idea of penetrating another life, prevents us from recognizing that pleasure, from tasting its true savour, from restricting it to its own range. (II, pp. 434-5)

Here it is clearly stated that the certainty of satisfaction kills desire. The narrator, like Maggie, has an enormous appetite for life that is never satisfied with a little of anything, and develops a way to play Achilles and the tortoise with satisfaction. His imagination creates a 'goal' on a different level from that of immediate satisfaction, which enchants him by keeping him dissatisfied: it is the very 'idea of penetrating another life' that is to devastate him in his relationship with Albertine, where he is prevented from 'tasting the true savour' of satisfaction from doubt and jealousy.

The narrator's decision to live with Albertine is prompted by the possibility that there is an unknown side to her, that is, her homosexual activities, which leads to a further intensification of his desire through doubt and jealousy:

Each new doubt makes us feel that the limit has been reached, that we cannot cope with it; then we manage to find room for it all the same, and once it is introduced into the fabric of our lives it enters into competition there with so many longings to believe, so many reasons to forget, that we speedily become accustomed to it, and end by ceasing to pay attention to it. It lies there dormant like a half-healed pain, a mere threat of suffering which, the reverse side of desire, a feeling of the same order that has become, like it, the focus of our thoughts, irradiates them from infinite distances with wisps of sadness, as desire irradiates them with unidentifiable pleasures, wherever anything can be associated with the person we love. But the pain revives as soon as a new doubt enters our mind intact [...]. (V, 251)

It is this habit of suspense, of keeping doubt alive by denial, that makes him enjoy desire as dissatisfaction, or love as suffering. The satisfaction in keeping Albertine captive is haunted by the unknown side to her, her fugitive side, and this makes the satisfaction devoid of substance

and keeps his desire alive: 'one only loves that in which one pursues the inaccessible, one only loves what one does not possess, and very soon I began to realise once more that I did not possess Albertine' (V, p. 438).

Both Eliot and Proust depict with distinct vividness characters who almost deliberately destroy themselves in the pursuit of desire for desire's sake. Maggie continuously subtracts her objects of desire; Swann desires the very lack of immediate satisfaction; both he and the narrator desire the state of dissatisfaction that is jealousy. Despite the many contrasts between the two novelists, all of these derive from a disproportionate appetite for life, or excessively high ideals, which keeps them dissatisfied with immediate satisfactions and devastates them by their addictive desire for the ideal. It is above all in this central thematic continuity, in addition to the connections which Bisson identifies, that we should see Proust's inheritance from Eliot's fiction, especially *The Mill on the Floss*.

The Key to Literature

Before his conception of the work that was to become *In Search of Lost Time*, Proust compared himself to Casaubon with his unsuccessful plan of a *magnum opus*:

I have been working for a very long time on a long-distance work, but without achieving anything. There are moments when I wonder whether I do not resemble the husband of Dorothea Brook [*sic*] in *Middlemarch*, and whether I am not collecting ruins.²⁰

It is telling that Proust, who wept for Maggie, should identify himself with another figure of intensified desire in Eliot's fiction. As Ronald Hayman comments, in *Jean Santeuil* which he was working on at this point, 'Proust had been collecting fragments of his own life and packing them into a framework which was roughly that of a *Bildungsroman*, but wasn't strong enough to hold them together'.²¹ It was with *In Search of Lost Time* that he was to realize a master Key to hold the vast fragments of his life together.

With Proust's Key to literature, however, questions remain regarding its validity, as with Casaubon's Key to All Mythologies. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator professes that he has now learned to allow himself satisfaction through involuntary memory, for which intellect is but a hindrance: 'instinct dictates our duty and the intellect supplies us with pretexts for evading it' (VI, p. 233). Nevertheless, he deems it necessary to recreate this satisfaction through writing, which involves employing the intellect, in order to make it complete:

I now recaptured the living reality in a complete and involuntary recollection. This reality does not exist for us so long as it has not been re-created by our thought (otherwise men who have been engaged in a titanic struggle would all of them be great epic poets) [...]. (IV, p. 180)

Would the recursive ending not, then, constitute an infinite regression which amounts to another vicious circle? Involuntary memories and appreciations of art may revive the allure in the objects of desire, but pursuing them all over again through writing can only lead to the same process. The satisfaction the narrator encounters at the end of the novel seems to be lost again in order to be found in endless repetitions that are to be his never-ending work of literature.

The 'appetite for life' (VI, p. 223) that the narrator obtains as a result of experiencing '[fragments] of time in the pure state' (VI, p. 224) thus leads to another vicious circle, that of literature. The narrator accuses common art-lovers of a futile intensification of desire: 'since

they fail to assimilate what is truly nourishing in art, they need artistic pleasures all the time, they are victims of a morbid hunger which is never satisfied' (VI, p. 250). This indeed falls back on the narrator and all his narrations. The sheer length and complications of syntax, the prospect of never-ending composition,²² themselves fully attest to the morbid hunger for literary satisfaction that is never satisfied. Ultimately, the narrator is never allowed to know contentment in an identity with his own self. It is true that few are allowed to know contentment in this world, but the narrator of *In Search of Lost Time* seems to be deliberately setting himself against his own self, in a logically identical manner to the heroine of *The Mill on the Floss*.

Notes

An earlier version of this article, entitled 'Reading Proust with George Eliot', was published in *Bulletin*, Faculty of Music, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts & Music, No. 36 (2010).

- 2 L. A. Bisson, 'Proust, Bergson and George Eliot', *Modern Language Review*, 40 (1945), 108.
- 3 *Correspondance de Marcel Proust*, ed. Philip Kolb, vol. X (Paris: Plon, 1983), p. 55. The translation is from Ronald Hayman, *Proust* (London: Heinemann, 1990), p. 333.
- 4 *Correspondance de Marcel Proust*, ed. Philip Kolb, vol. XV (Paris: Plon, 1987), p. 169.
- 5 See the highly successful book by Alain de Botton, *How Proust can Change your Life* (London: Picador, 1998).
- 6 This is my PhD thesis entitled *Vicissitudes of Desire in George Eliot's Fiction* which was submitted to the University of Warwick in February 2010.
- 7 This section draws from chapters 1 and 3 of my PhD thesis. See also Kenichi Kurata, 'The Art of Hunger in *The Mill on the Floss*', *Reading*, 28 (2008), 30-6, which was the starting-point of this thesis.
- 8 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 45.
- 9 *The Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. IV (London: The Hogarth Press, 1958), p. 147.
- 10 See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), pp. 518-9.
- 11 See Collette Soler, 'Hysteria and Obsession', in *Reading Seminars I and II*, ed. by Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink and Maire Jaanus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. 259-10.
- 12 See Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), pp. 51-2.

- 13 Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 22-3.
- 14 Quotations from *The Mill on the Floss* are from George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. A. S. Byatt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).
- 15 See Elizabeth Ermarth, 'Maggie Tulliver's Long Suicide', *Studies in English Literature*, 14/4 (Autumn 1974), 587-601.
- 16 Quotations from *In Search of Lost Time* are from Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, 6 vols (London: Vintage, 1996) and are indicated by volume and page numbers.
- 17 Walter Benjamin, 'The Image of Proust' in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999), p. 199.
- 18 I have analysed how this logic of gambling addiction is at work in the figures of Godfrey in *Silas Marner*, Lydgate in *Middlemarch* and Gwendolen in *Daniel Deronda* in my PhD thesis.
- 19 This is none other than what Eliot repeatedly depicts in her early phase: it would suffice to recall the figure of Gilfil in *The Scenes of Clerical Life*, and that of Adam in *Adam Bede*. On this point, see Kenichi Kurata, 'Orphic Variations in Scenes of Clerical Life', *The George Eliot Review*, Special Issue (2009), 43-7.
- 20 Ed. Philip Kolb, *Correspondance de Marcel Proust: tome II* (Paris: Plon, 1976), p. 377. The translation is from Ronald Hayman, *Proust*, p. 138.
- 21 Ronald Hayman, *Proust*, p. 138.
- 22 'In long books of this kind there are parts which there has been time only to sketch, parts which, because of the very amplitude of the architect's plan, will no doubt never be completed. How many great cathedrals remain unfinished!' (VI, p. 431).