

On the Awakening of Maggie's Self-Consciousness from the Perspective of Psychoanalytic Feminism

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Abstract—This thesis delves into George Eliot's "The Mill on the Floss", focusing on Maggie Tulliver's journey towards self-consciousness against the backdrop of Victorian gender norms. It leverages Psychoanalytic Feminism and Freud's theories to argue that the novel's ending, particularly Maggie's death, aligns with Eliot's intentions and reflects deeper meanings. Divided into four main parts, the thesis first examines Maggie's personal development and internal influences shaping her self-awareness. The second part discusses the emergence of Maggie's self-consciousness, highlighting her conflicting personality traits within a patriarchal society and her mixed feelings towards male dominance. The third part focuses on Maggie's awakening, manifested in her rebellious actions, thirst for knowledge, and conflict with her brother, Tom. The fourth part explores the culmination of Maggie's journey, where emotional suppression leads her to mature insights into her desires and moral choices, culminating in her reconciliation with Tom and ultimate self-sacrifice. The thesis argues that Eliot portrays human beings as inherently driven to pursue self-consciousness. Maggie's life-long struggle for self-awareness and her final decision to sacrifice herself underscore a pursuit of harmony with the external world, suggesting that such self-realization and ascension might only be achievable through sacrifice. This exploration sheds light on Eliot's views on the complex interplay between individual aspirations and societal constraints.

Keywords—George Eliot, literature, literature interpretation theory, psychoanalytic feminism patriarchy self-consciousness, *The Mill on the Floss*, women studies

I. INTRODUCTION

George Eliot (1819–1880) is considered one of the most outstanding novelists in Britain during the Victorian age. F. R. Leavis regarded her as one of the most important novelists who have formed and shaped the tradition of English novels, ranking her among eminent writers such as Jane Austen, Ms. Gaskell, Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray. In her lifetime, she has written a large number of novels that deeply reflect the human spirit world and paved the way for the development of modern psychological novels. Her first novel is *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), then followed by three masterpieces: *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), and *Silas Marner* (1861). Besides, George Eliot also produced other works: *Romola* (1863), *Felix Holt the Radical* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1892), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

The novel *The Mill on the Floss*, talked about in this thesis, is regarded as her autobiography. Elaine Showalter, a famous contemporary feminist critic in America, thought the novel described the Victorian British women's growing experience completely; she even considered her the forerunner of female literature. Alison Booth (1992:32) praised its wonderful continuity of dramatic color. Woolf also drew high praise for

the novel, and she said that the novel was very graceful, its vision was vast, and its glory was energetic. However, because of her female identity, she was ignored by most Chinese scholars who gave their attention to foreign literature. Thus, the research about George Eliot and her works in China didn't truly start until 30 years later [1].

Eliot's novels are original and beautiful; the majority of her novels deal realistically with the English provincial life, which is filled with wisdom and unique insights toward some problems such as life, society, nature, history, religion, and philosophy. Although their identity as female novelists brought her universal odium at that time, by the 20th century, critics in foreign literature thought highly of her literary position and contribution. For example, Marian Williams called her "Female Shakespeare". As an outstanding female novelist in the Victorian age, George Eliot is known for her extraordinary ability to think philosophically and for her strong moral awareness. Her concern demonstrated the greatness of Eliot for mankind. "Art is something that is close to life", she once said, "and its terminal goal is to reestablish man's consciousness, which is used to construct a new social structure". As a matter of fact, the studies on Eliot came into being when she was still alive. For a hundred years, research in foreign countries was fruitful. Writers and critics mainly study the moral consciousness and moral emotion in Eliot's works. In China, due to the serious, deep, and theoretical characters of her works, which are not appropriate for Chinese people who emphasize practical things, the number of scholars who study her works remains very few.

As a female writer, both her female identity as a writer and her private life brings a lot of argument. Even some people believe that "Eliot was both a saboteur of and a collaborator with patriarchy: without sabotage, she could not have become a writing woman, without collaboration, she could not have achieved professional success in a masculine world" [2]. The novel to be discussed in the thesis is universally acknowledged as Eliot's autobiographical novel, which is called *The Mill on the Floss*.

The Mill on the Floss is a story of destructive family relations, and this highly autobiographical fiction describes the life of a provincial girl called Maggie Tulliver. Maggie lives in the Victorian age when women's position is inferior to men and it's a male dominated society. As a matter of fact, Maggie is a girl who is totally different from other women in that time. Women in this novel are all submissive and think themselves subordinate to men except Maggie. She has a personality of both submissive and rebellious. She is eager to be loved by others, especially Tom, her beloved brother.

However, Tom is a typical figure who represents the patriarchal society. Maggie is different for the first time she comes out in the novel. She liked reading and wanted to be educated, but women were not allowed to get too much knowledge at that time. It is not good for women who are too clever and diligent because they will be thought to bring disaster. This novel mainly depicts the relationship between Maggie and three men (Tom, Philip, and Stephen), through which Eliot expresses Maggie's self-salvation in each period. Because of Maggie's rebellious spirit, she tries to seek salvation in her whole life, during which we can also know some of the life experiences of George Eliot herself. Finally, Maggie finds her own way of salvation through the "opportune" flood, which drowns herself and Tom together in the denouement.

Because of the great influence of this novel, and with the development of the feminist movement, lots of people began to pay more attention to the feminist ideas in Eliot's works. Some scholars say that Eliot had an extraordinary intellect and took a significant position in English literature. Some others think that the feminist critics in the 20th century agree with Eliot and discuss the deep influence that her works have had on contemporary feminism. In China, people began to study Eliot in the 1980s, and they still focus on Eliot's Feminism.

According to various studies on George Eliot and *The Mill on the Floss*, different scholars have different interpretations. Since this thesis is composed of a psychoanalytic feminist viewpoint, the critical review would probably emphasize the essays and monographs on *The Mill on the Floss* and by George Eliot that were published roughly after the 1970s, when feminism was accepted as a serious literary critical approach.

James [3], in her George Eliot, asserts that it was not until Gilbert and Gubar's feminist masterpiece *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* [4] that people began to see beyond the conservative facades with which George Eliot's works have been written and began to uncover the tensions underlying this seemingly complacent arrangement. In concurrence with this observation, Susan Fraiman's formative survey of the up-to-then feminist criticism of *The Mill on the Floss* has further ascertained this critical change. According to her, the early feminist critics mainly focused on the protest of female victimization.

George Eliot has an ambiguous attitude towards feminists. Although Eliot calls for women's right to receive higher education, she never gives a clear idea to support the feminist movement. She even shows compromise to the patriarchal society by describing the protagonist Maggie in *The Mill on the Floss*. Some feminists think that George Eliot should arrange Maggie's life just like hers, acquiring abundant knowledge and being brave enough to seek her happiness without caring about others' opinions, since the heroine showed her yearning for knowledge when she was a little girl and daring to live illegally and to seek her love and happiness. Helene Deutch once described her, "from the psychology perspective, Eliot does not have a mother, and she was born from her father's head just like Athena". Levis [5] also pointed out that the novel's ending is quite impractical, and the death of Maggie caused by the sudden flood is illogical

and just out of everyone's expectation. Different kinds of interpretations are made about Maggie's tragic ending.

Judith Mitchell has pointed out, "She (Maggie) is a figure in Eliot's works; she dares to be suspected and is brave enough to challenge patriarchal values, her showing up makes its author worried and anxious". Some people think that the ending of the novel caters to reality. They also insist that the author has presented an accurate and transparent worldview determined by her realistic idea. As a realist novelist, George Eliot writes to "give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind" [6]. In *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot portrays Maggie as an image who is a victim of the patriarchal society that manipulates everything at that time. At the same time, in real life, George Eliot is a female who dares to do the things she wants. Her achieving occupational success and eloping with Lewes are all the bold behaviors at that time. However, few females can do like George Eliot. Her example was just an exception.

Some critics argue that Maggie's death adds to the fullness of the tragedy. Eliot had stated her view on tragedy in *The Mill on the Floss*:

The pride and obstinacy of millers and other insignificant people, whom you pass unnoticed on the road every day, have their tragedy too, but it is of that unwept, hidden sort that goes on from generation to generation and leaves no record of such tragedy, perhaps, as lies in the conflicts of young souls, hungry for joy, or such tragedy as lies in the slow or sudden death that follows on a bruised passion, though it may be a death that finds only a parish funeral [7].

Some others attribute the tragic ending to the heroine's personality from a psychological perspective by using Freud's theory: the conflict between the id, Ego, and Superego. Maggie has faced a lot of choices all her life, but because of self-effacement and self-abnegation, she finally goes to dualism.

Moreover, others interpret the sister's rescue of her brother using "memory". They emphasize more on the effect of Wordsworth on George Eliot. Wordsworth says in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, "We can achieve spiritual health only by keeping the sweet memories in our childhood and recalling the past, which is a good medicine for purifying one's soul" [8]. Maggie misses her past life and yearns for her happy childhood with her brother. She tells Philip in the Red Deep, "The first thing I ever remember in my life is standing with Tom by the side of Floss while he held my hand--everything before that is dark to me" [9]. Therefore, even though Dr. Kenn urges her to leave for a new place and start her new life, she prefers to stay in St. Ogg, letting the scandals and rumors devour her. "If the past does not bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment" [10]. Because it is impossible for her to extricate herself from these memories, Maggie has no other choice but death, which is the best ending for her.

Since 2000 in China, critics have provided us with plentiful research achievements. There are 92 articles based on the study of *The Mill on the Floss*, including 1 Dr. thesis, 21 Master thesis, and more than 70 periodicals. Moreover, the perspectives vary from moral themes, feminist viewpoints, religion, and neo-historical views to psychological, eco-feminist, Bildungsroman, and Marxism. This dissertation attempts to probe into the changes and development of

Maggie's female consciousness and her continuing maturity to reveal the battle between the backward traditional patriarchal ideology and more progressive feminists. With the death of Maggie and her brother, George Eliot also suggests that the battle between women and the patriarchal society will undoubtedly bring about the ruin of both. Also, Maggie's death brings her a different way of self-salvation, as in death, she returns to the source of life. In this novel, George Eliot acknowledges the powerful patriarchal society and points out the potential strength of feminism as well.

In order to make a better analysis of Maggie's development of her female self-consciousness, this thesis tries to use psychoanalytical feminism theory. Actually, a lot of scholars have already done much research from the perspective of feminism or psychoanalysis, but few of them combine the two theories to interpret this novel. In fact, George Eliot is famous for her profound philosophical thoughts and vivid descriptions of the psychology of her characters. As a female writer, there's no doubt that her novels embrace lots of feminist elements; at the same time, she is good at the combination of speculative philosophy and the rich creation of literary work. That is why this thesis tries to interpret this novel from this perspective.

The word "Feminism" first originated at the end of the 19th century in France, and later, it prevailed in British, The US, and even the whole world. Ch. Fourier, a French socialist, once used it to express a new idea about women's emancipation. As a matter of fact, feminism refers to a faith or a movement that fought for women's rights, or it can be called a suggestion for a social revolution that aimed to close female suppression.

With the promotion of the Feminist Movement, Feminists use different study methods to illustrate the root of gender inequality and come up with the political view that is to achieve women's emancipation and equality of men and women. The major genres of feminism are Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Marxist and Social Feminism, Postmodern Feminism, Psychoanalytic Feminism, Existentialist Feminism, and Eco-feminism. Among all these genres, Liberal Feminism, Marxist and Social Feminism, and Radical Feminism are called the three main genres of Traditional Feminism.

The psychoanalytic feminism theory that this thesis adopts is a social movement based on the work of Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theories. Psychoanalytic feminists just wonder how a woman becomes a woman. They hold that gender is not biologically formed; instead, it is based on the psycho-sexual development of the individual. They also maintain it is early childhood experience that leads to gender inequality, which leads men to believe themselves to be masculine and women to believe themselves feminine. It is further believed that gender determines the social system dominated by men, which in turn affects the individual psycho-sexual development. gender-specific structurization of society can be avoided only through the common development of males and females.

As a matter of fact, psychoanalytic feminism comes into being on the basis of inheriting and developing Freud's theory. Jane Gallop, a very famous feminist at that time, points out that when the second wave of the feminist movement became prosperous in the 1960s, feminists and Freud each went their

own way. Nevertheless, from the beginning of the 20th century to the middle of the '70s, feminists from different genres agreed to make Freud the target of criticism. They disagreed with Freud's assessment, and there were debates concerning women's sexuality and the roles of castration and penis envy, notable among Karl Abraham, Ernest Jones, Helene Deutsch, and Karen Horney. Horney, in particular, argued for an inherent feminine disposition that is not merely a secondary formation premised on castration. Besides, Simone de Beauvoir later addressed the discourse of psychoanalysis in *The Second Sex*, displaying her distrust of "The Psychoanalytic Point of View" [11]. She denounces Freud's idea that there is but one masculine libido and no feminine libido with "its own original nature".

Arguments among feminists become especially fierce over the question of whether there is such a thing as 'femaleness', what that 'gender essence' might be, and where it might come from. The radical rejection of 'femaleness' and the associations with the bodily determination of sexuality that it carries has been severely criticized by cultural feminists who see the category of 'woman' as fundamental to the common recognition of shared oppression among all women. For psychoanalytic feminists, 'femaleness' is viewed as an oppressive concept that denies the plural nature of all human consciousness by forcing individuals into single identities. Psychoanalytic feminism concentrates on female consciousness, and the root of oppression is the symbol of patriarchy, which regards women as an object of exchange, of definition, originating in childhood. There are three prominent psychoanalytic feminist thinkers: Carol Gilligan, Jane Flax, and Jane Gallop.

Gilligan traces to Freud and his theory of the Oedipus complex, according to which female pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother is seen as the cause of women's development failure. Jane Flax points out that the distinction between male and female and the subordination of the feminine, necessary to patriarchy, is perpetuated through the Oedipal crisis. According to Flax, the child is originally feminine, in psychic terms, and must actively become masculine. Under patriarchy, Flax notes, "Becoming aware of gender means recognizing that men and women are not valued equally; in fact, men are socially more esteemed than women". Jane Gallop sets out to expose the extent to which feminist psychoanalytic thinking is enmeshed in a patriarchal language or system of representation. When the girls go through the Oedipal crisis, their desire for their father, her expression of allegiance to the father rather than the mother, is the desire for personal value, which can be derived only from the Father in a phallographic culture. The daughter has to submit to the phallographic law of the Father. Through the operation of patriarchal law, the daughter is given an identity, as Gallop notes, "It is not her own, even if it blots out her feminine specificity" [12]. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie's relationship with her father can be well explained to this point.

There's still another theory used in this thesis that is Freud's Personality Structure Theory: Id, Ego, and Superego. This is the most important part of his psychoanalysis. This theory is used to explain the inner causes that shape and influence Maggie's female consciousness.

This thesis specifically intends to analyze the development of Maggie's female consciousness and the process of her

continuing maturity by combining the theories of psychoanalysis and feminism to explore the roots of Maggie's self-consciousness and the influence that patriarchal society has on the shape of her self-consciousness. Besides, this thesis also points out that Maggie gains a rebirth through her death, and she gets her salvation in a special way. This thesis is made up of five parts:

The introduction briefly introduces George Eliot's status and the novel *The Mill on the Floss*. In addition, it concludes the theory of psychoanalytic feminism and the research and achievements that have been made in this novel.

Chapter One first analyzes the inner causes of Maggie's self-consciousness formation through the discussion of her personality as a female in the Victorian age. This part mainly uses Freud's psychological analysis theory, explaining the Electra complex in Maggie's deep heart and the conflicts between her personality.

Chapter two expatiates the contradiction of her self-consciousness. Because of her rebellion against and worship of the patriarchal society, she becomes neither an angel nor a monster, neither of which is the image given to women in the Victorian age. Due to this kind of contradiction, Maggie has to face a lot of difficult choices in her lifetime. All of these hard decisions she has to make demonstrate her contradictory self-consciousness.

Chapter three discusses the awakening of Maggie's self-consciousness. Since Maggie makes every effort to pursue her real self, she suffers a lot in the male-dominated society. Luckily, she gradually becomes mature, and she learns to relieve herself by trying to do what she wants. She dares to rebel against Tom, to whom she always shows respect. In this period, Maggie's female consciousness seems to give off.

Chapter four further shows Maggie's self-consciousness through her death, which is not only the reconciliation between her brother and herself but also kind of symbolizes the harmonious state between man and woman. What's more, Maggie's death also gives her rebirth and salvation.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Chapter One: The Inner Causes for Maggie's Self-Consciousness

1) The Electra complex

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir famously commented, "*One is not born a woman; one becomes one*"; Psychoanalytic feminists ask how this process of 'becoming' actually occurs. In this view, a woman is born like a man; it is because of the patriarchal society that makes them to be a woman. In Sigmund Freud's theory of the Oedipal stage of psychosexual development, the Oedipus Complex begins in the pre-Oedipal stage when the child experiences no distinction between himself and the world and is, therefore, pure ego. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie is a typical character who is dominated by the Id. From a Freudian viewpoint, the Id is the primitive instinct of people, which is mainly reflected in a person's sexuality. In an infant, the id can be shown in two aspects: the Oedipus complex and the Electra complex. The Oedipus complex means that when the boy finds that he is different from his mother (he has a penis) but he is the same as his father. During this phallic stage of development, every boy conceives the desire to kill his father

and become the sexual partner of his mother. From another perspective, the Oedipal stage is more complicated for girls who do not perceive any difference between themselves and their mothers. When the girl thinks that she has been castrated with the sigh of her mother's lack of a penis, she will shift her love from mother to father and develop a gender identity in response to the demands of the father's culture.

In the novel, Maggie is a girl who is eager for love. When she grows up, she will gradually have a mind for all the beautiful things in the world, such as books, music, and her quest for understanding, love, and respect from others. All these emotions are the instinctive nature of her inner world. When she was a little girl, she showed an intense attachment to her father. This can be proved when Maggie runs away from her family and leaves for Gypsies. On her way to the Gypsies, she keeps thinking of her father. She is afraid that her father will be upset because of her disappearance. In terms of Freudian theory, what Maggie really cares about is whether her abnormal behavior will make her father angry and whether he will never love her like before. In general situations, when the kids are in sorrow, they are more likely to turn to their mother for comfort instead of their father. On the contrary, what Maggie thinks of and cares about the moment she needs help is only her father.

So, Maggie decides to return home. When she finally meets her father on the way home, she bursts into tears with joy. As the narrator describes, "The sudden joy was almost painful, and before her father reached her, she was sobbing" [7]. In fact, Maggie's reaction when meeting her father looks as if a girl meets her lover to whom she wants to pour out all her sorrows and from whom she wants to get comfort and sympathy. In this sense, the relationship between Maggie and her father has exceeded the normal relationship between father and daughter, which proves that Maggie is a girl who possesses a strong Electra complex.

Besides, when Mr. Tulliver loses the lawsuit and both Tom and Mrs. Tulliver complain that it is Mr. Tulliver's reckless deeds that bring about the bankruptcy of the family. On hearing her brother and her mother's complaints, she burst out and hit back angrily, "Mother, how can you talk so? As if you cared only for things with your name to care about anything but dear father himself! When he is lying there, he may never speak to us again. Tom, you ought to say too – you ought not to let anyone find fault with my father" [13]. Here, we must know all of Maggie's abnormal behaviors are due to her abnormal love for her father. In her deep mind, her father only belongs to herself, and she hopes she can get all her father's love. She doesn't want to share it with anyone, even her mother and her brother. All her unexpected responses are due to her Electra complex.

Apart from her abnormal love for her father, another notable thing to show Maggie's Electra plot is her hostile attitude toward her mother. She never does things according to her mother's will because she thinks that her mother only loves her brother, Tom, and seldom cares for her. It is true that Mrs. Tulliver does not like Maggie. She always feels sad and ashamed about Maggie's strange appearance, rash behavior, and uncanny intelligence. She even wishes that she weren't her daughter.

Therefore, it is inevitable that there are often clashes between them. In Chapter Four of Book One, Mrs. Tulliver

does not allow Maggie to wear her best bonnet to go outside because of the bad weather. However, Maggie does not want to follow her mother's words and reacts intensively. When her mother is brushing her hair, she abruptly sleeps away under her arms and buries her head into the basin of water nearby. The terrible relationship between Maggie and her mother is not only because of the criticism Mrs. Tulliver gives to Maggie but also because of Maggie's resentment toward her mother. Maggie's feelings toward her father cause her jealousy and hatred toward her mother. In her unconscious, Maggie takes her mother as a rival who robs her love of her father. This is why Maggie always goes against her mother's will and does things to make her mother heartbroken.

2) *The conflict between id and superego*

According to the pleasure principle, the id is one's instinctive feelings, asking for prompt gratification of its desire. It is the basis of personality and the energy source of the whole system; besides, it is also the foundation from which the ego and superego further develop. The superego, however, is similar to conscience: The judge of right and wrong, of good and evil, is in accord with the internalized standards of society. The superego demands us to repress our pleasure-seeking and forbids us to have those concerned with sex and offense. The superego is always socially oriented and rational. It is pushing for ethical perfection, while the id pushes for pleasure. Their different pursuits determine there are conflicts between the two.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, our protagonist, Maggie, has a passionate longing for love and respect. Unfortunately, she lives in a Victorian society where women's desire is rigidly restrained by severe morality. The viewpoint of women in the Victorian age is that women are inferior creatures; women should be obedient and stupid; women should be apathetic about sex and other desires, etc. Just as Freud says, "The superego comprises the norms, values, and ideals that upbringing and education have instilled in us" [14]. Therefore, Maggie's superego is formed in that rigid patriarchal social circumstance.

As a matter of fact, Maggie's female self-consciousness has always been repressed by her superego in many aspects throughout her short life. When she was a little girl, she was regarded as a monster because of her unusual appearance. Although she has a desire for knowledge, she is deprived of receiving an education. She was treated unfairly by her parents. What's more, she was often threatening to withdraw love from her beloved brother if she did something against Tom's will. In the face of love, she should have led a happy life with her lover, either Philip or Stephen. However, she gives up Philip for the benefit of her family and refuses Stephen because she is afraid of hurting Lucy and Philip's tender heart. She puts everybody's feelings before hers and abandons her own happiness as a result of the strong power of her superego.

In its quest for moral perfection, the superego, as the arbiter of morality, is dauntless, even cruel. According to Freud, the superego is autocratic; it cannot be violated, although being small, with no errors, however accidental, but there is no exception, although it is temporary but never compromised. If we do something evil, the superego will come to punish us by letting us feel bad, guilty, weak, and insufficient. However,

nobody is perfect, and no one can always do things in accord with the saints; even if we try to do everything according to our superego, we must still feel unhappy and stifled. Because there's no way for us to express our inner true feelings. People are required to do much more by the superego, sometimes even beyond their capability. Thus, it is easy to produce a sense of guilt if a man can't meet the demands of the superego. As a result, this sort of person will emerge with the feeling that they are too inferior, so they start to be disgusted with themselves. Maggie is just the same kind. She possesses the personality of both self-denial and self-efface. As Freud puts it: "All who wish to be more noble-minded than their constitution allows fall victims to neurosis" [5].

B. Chapter Two: The Contradiction of Maggie's Self-Consciousness

Women in the Victorian age were by no means thought to be subordinate to men. They couldn't express their own opinions, not to mention to seek for their self-consciousness. Maggie is different from other Victorian women who have blond hair and yellow eyes. Instead, she has black hair and dark brown eyes. As a matter of fact, she is different by judging from her appearance, which also determines her different personality. When she was a little girl, she was thought to be different from other people around. Her mother worried about her a lot. In spite of the strong desire to be loved she is yearning for, only her father defends her and always stands on her side.

As a different girl, Maggie was born to have her own desires and pursuits. She is eager to be loved and longs for friendship and soul communication. Therefore, at the beginning, she will be driven by instinct to be self-indulgent and seek her own ideal or even do something that is contrary to the traditional canon. In the novel, Maggie appears in front of the readers with the image of wildness just like an intractable tomboy. She was overindulged by her father, and under the protection of her father, she did everything arbitrarily. She never listens to her mother and is unwilling to let her mother help her to make her hair well. When someone makes her angry, she would hide herself in the attic and pull nails into the doll. All these behaviors just show Maggie doesn't want to be the same as others who just do as the adults say. Actually, on the one hand, Maggie is rebellious deep in her heart; on the other hand, she is also submissive to her father and brother, especially to her brother, who just represents the patriarchal society and the old backward thoughts. She almost totally depended on Tom when she was young; she wanted Tom to pay more attention to her. Despite the great sorrow brought to her by Tom, she tries every method to attract his attention and make him happy, which undoubtedly shows her subordinate personality. From this, we can see Maggie has a very ambiguous identity.

1) Maggie's rebellion against and worship of the patriarchy

In Maggie's time, society was dominated by men, and England faced conflicts between tradition and modernity. With the development of industrialization, although to some degree, the victory of democratization, ration, and science increased the modernization of old England, women initially realized equality with men in law, but they still needed to bear a lot. Women are still subordinate to men in such areas as

economy, occupation, marriage, and education. And this state can never be changed. It is just the complicated society that perplexes Maggie. As a matter of fact, on the one hand, in Maggie's deep heart, she doesn't want to obey what others say and behave herself according to the standard set for women at that time. On the other hand, she was in bondage and troubled by patriarchy. Because she completely depended on her father and brother when she was a little girl. She was in a state of rebellion and submissive to the patriarchy.

a) Maggie's rebellion against the patriarchy

In the Victorian age, under the control of male supremacy, the male parents always looked at women from the perspective of themselves. Women are assumed to have weaker ego boundaries and to be more vulnerable to psychosis. They are thought to be self-doubtful and uncertain. When men have realized their ambition in the booming industry, women have to confine themselves to a small circle of family. Even though women later had the opportunity to enter society to seek positions, the jobs were nothing more than tutor, factory or farm worker, and other low-paid jobs. Because of the great disparity in economic status, women have to depend on men. This kind of subordination just helps intensify the strength of billows and waves on man's chauvinism and further consolidates the hegemony of males in the family.

First of all, a man's standard for choosing a wife shows this hegemony. Take Mr. Tulliver as an example; and he admitted that the reason why he chooses Mrs. Tulliver as his wife among her sisters is that he thinks Mrs. Tulliver seems a little feeble and weak, from which we can make a conclusion that the criterion of a good wife in Victorian age should be good looking with less diligent. A woman who is very clever and has lots of wisdom is considered to bring disaster to the family. Helene E. Roberts asserts: "It was the sweet, passive, obedient wife, busy within her domestic setting, showing her concern and appreciation for her masculine protector apprehensive for his comfort and safety, ever watchful of his reputation, that brought a throb of emotion to the manly breast" [15].

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie couldn't involve herself in society, even in her own family. She is always laughed at because of her appearance and queer behavior. In order to seek her own true identity, she escapes to Gypsies, where she thinks she truly belongs. And this is the first time she revolts against her family and the patriarchal system. Maggie's love affair is repressed and interfered with by patriarchal discourse, too. Her love for Philip and Stephen cannot be accepted by her brother or the whole society. When Tom finds that she meets Philip secretly, he is very indignant, so he forces Maggie to swear on the Bible and say she will never meet Philip again. Although Maggie has to do what Tom requires, this time, she has her own thoughts. When Tom insults Philip with bitter sarcasm, her long-gathered irritation bursts into utterance.

She neither thinks Tom is right nor will she bow to his will. She feels ashamed of what Tom says to Philip and the way he speaks to him. She also detests his insulting, unmanly allusions to Philip's deformity. She despises Tom for he has been reproaching other people all his life, and he doesn't have a mind enough to those who are better than him.

Maggie now submits to what she acknowledges and feels to be right. She is no longer the little girl focusing all her feelings on Tom. Maggie's rebellious spirit completely gives off. In addition, Maggie's elopement with Stephen also shows her revolt consciousness, even if it's just a mistake, but actually, she wants to conform to her deep mind. She is always eager to get rid of the bond of the patriarchal system, and this time, she really breaks the traditional value of a woman in the Victorian age. In fact, Maggie's life is a typical circle of rebel-compress-rebel. Maggie objects to people's preconceptions, but her rebellious spirit is suppressed. When she hit back again, she was condemned by society once again. George Eliot speaks out her anger at patriarchal society by describing her heroine, Maggie. We can see how female feeling and passion is repressed by authority. While the background of the novel is in a peaceful English countryside in the 19th century without bloody war and cruel exploitation, the "honest and upright" man like Tom and his father turn a deaf ear to emotion and let compassion, tolerance, and love give way to that set of stiff male value systems.

b) Maggie's worship of the patriarchy

In the novel, Maggie also depends on her father very much and Mr. Tulliver's fondness and tolerance to her encourage Maggie to take the role of a martyr. Maggie's waywardness was accepted by her father. When other people are against Maggie, he is always on her side. When Maggie's aunts show their resentment of Maggie's appearance and criticize her hair, Mr. Tulliver often argues in favor of Maggie. "No, no, the child is healthy enough--there's nothing ails her. There's red wheat as well as white, for that matter, and some like the dark grain best" [16]. After Maggie bobbed her hair, people began to blame and ridicule her; Mr. Tulliver hugged his daughter with his arms and said with a comforting tone, "Come, come, my wench, never mind. You were in the right to cut it off if it plagued you. Give over crying: Father I'll take your part" [17].

Maggie was afraid of the threat of withdrawing love from her. In her childhood, Maggie's smiles and her tears have a close relationship with her brother Tom. She cares very much for Tom and his thoughts. Tom's attitude and reaction to her will affect her emotions and passion. She is largely dependent on him despite he often blames her and is not able to satisfy her longing for his love. Tom is a typical representative of the patriarchal society. He is selfish and thinks that he is much more clever than his little sister. He gets the opportunity to feel superior to Maggie, who cares a lot for Tom's love and approval. The narrator says in the novel: "Tom, indeed, was of the opinion that Maggie was a silly little thing; all girls were silly" [10]. Tom's attitude toward Maggie shows the general concept that men hold for women in a male-dominated society. He feels the flattery of her emotional dependence on him, and he gives his affection mainly as a reward for submission. If Maggie does something wrong, he will threaten to stop loving her. Actually, Tom's love for his sister is purely conditional, and he just wants to satisfy his own controlling desire. When Tom is sent to school by his father, Maggie expects his return every day; she even goes to see him. When she didn't look after Tom's rabbit and the rabbits died at last, Tom was very angry with her, scolding and threatening her by saying: "I'm sorry I brought you the fish-line. I don't love you". Maggie begs: "O, please forgive

me, Tom; my heart will break” [17]. She felt very sad and hid herself alone in the attic, resisting the temptation of the delicious afternoon fragrant tea and waiting silently for Tom to comfort her. Maggie’s need for love overthrows her pride so completely that it also overthrows her integrity.

Tom always feels embarrassed and annoyed when Maggie shows her radiate feelings to him. Thus, Maggie can’t really get true love from Tom and is always in despair. Even so, Maggie fancies that she and Tom can live a very happy life together. In Maggie’s memory, she and Tom have experienced some happy moments when they go fishing in the pond; Maggie hopes “that the small fish would come to her hook and the large ones to Tom’s” [18]. Also, even though longing for food is a part of children’s nature, when Tom asks Maggie to choose the unevenly divided puff, Maggie doesn’t care whether the puff she gets is the big half or the small half, but after Maggie swallows the last morsel, Tom still blames her: “O, you greedy thing!” [19].

Maggie loves her brother Tom deeply, and she wishes to get his love eagerly. And this kind of feeling has accompanied her all her short life. Even the name “Tom” can serve as well as the shrillest whistle: “In an instant, she was on the watch, with gleaming eyes, like a Skye terrier suspecting mischief, or at all events determined to fly at anyone who treated it towards Tom” [20], and she falls into a desperate position when he is angry with her and draws love from her. In the puff plot, despite being miserable and giving herself up to the keen sense of unmerited reproach. Even if she is blamed and ignored by her brother, she would still rather give up eating all her puff; instead, she chooses to save some of it for Tom. She does everything for her brother’s sake without considering her feelings.

We can see from here that it is Maggie who puts herself in a humble and inferior position, for she completely obeys Tom. The relationship between her and her brother becomes the source of her sorrow and joy. When they visit the Pullets with Lucy, Tom takes Lucy to play without bringing Maggie; Maggie is so angry that she pulls Lucy into the mud to take revenge on them. She was jealous of Lucy’s love for her brother while she couldn’t. She is naive to think that Tom and Lucy make her unhappy; they must suffer, too. The narrator says she always feels regretful after her rash deed. However, she thinks that as Tom and Lucy make her so miserable, their happiness must be spoiled.

To some extent, the love and responsibility she feels for Tom become her law, her morality, and the spiritual meaning of her life. Her need for love is actually a morbid dependency, which Tom uses to master her and forces her to be entirely submissive to him. Therefore, Maggie’s feeling for Tom is deeply rooted in her childhood, which becomes an inseparable part of her submissive character, and of course, it is the basement of her future tragedy. Just as Harvy says: “The inequalities in the patriarchal division of power show up nowhere so clearly as in Maggie’s relationship with Tom, which in many ways is the key relationship in the novel” [20].

As a matter of fact, Maggie cannot get true love from her brother because “Tom is the representative of patriarchal society, representing the law of fathers in a particularly harsh and rigorous manner” [21], and he is also “the principal representative of the society that acts with such an oppressively negative force” [21] on Maggie. Even though

Tom tells Maggie that he will take care of her, the condition is that Maggie must obey him. After Mr. Tulliver dies, Tom, the only male in the family, becomes the lord. He is the symbol of maleness in a patriarchal society. He can’t love Maggie the way she loves him; his love is conditional.

2) *Both angel and monster*

In the process of a thousand-year civilization, the erosion of male discourse makes women continue to be materialized and alienated. Most feminists think that the male-centered culture order has deprived the rights of women, and in the conservative Victorian age, women have no chance to say “no”. Women’s images are molded as “angels” who are very beautiful and pure, introverted, obedient, and selfless. However, these kinds of women just betray themselves, betray their true inner feelings or their desires. As a result, their sacrifice of their own desire will undoubtedly lead them to death. Selfless means not only noble but also death. Actually, these women just have bodies but no spirit. They are just objects that are beautiful but without living. They are just those being imagined and created people who are kept silent in life. This behavior can be seen as a suppression and deprivation of females, which male-dominated discourse gives. It is a hegemonic discourse behavior.

Based on Maggie’s ambiguous attitude toward the patriarchal society and her contradictory psyche, here we have to think about one question: whether Maggie is an angel or not. It is no wonder that Maggie is not qualified to be an angel in this novel. When she was a little girl, she did nothing good to please others. She was born with a rebellious spirit. She has an incongruous personality, which annoys everyone around her, including her beloved families and relatives.

As we read through the novel, we can easily find that the author spends a large part of the novel describing Maggie’s childhood because it is an essential and indispensable part of Maggie’s short life. The novel is “the epic of a woman’s soul, traced through childhood, development and temptation” [6]. At the beginning, Maggie first appears in the novel at the age of nine. She once lived in a place where everybody called her a wild thing, and even the narrator says that she is a poor creature of nature. Maggie’s rash behavior seriously disobeys the standard set for women at that age. She has dark, wild eyes, uncanny intelligence, unnaturally dark skin, and unruly hair, which annoys everyone around her. Her aunts dislike her and always make fun of her because of her appearance; even her mother often says that she doesn’t like her at all and wishes that she were not her child. In the book, Mrs. Tulliver complains about Maggie: “She’s too big a gell, gone nine, and tall of her age to have her hair cut short. I think Lucy is more like me than Maggie does. Maggie suffers great prejudice from people around, and it is this prejudice and repression that helps her rebel against the rigid code of a good woman. As is shown in chapter four of book one, when her mother is ready to brush out her hair, she abruptly sleeps away under her hands and buries her hair into the basin of water nearby. Finally, she cuts her hair by taking revenge on those who often make discussions and teasing remarks about her hair. As a matter of fact, in the history of Christianity, hair is considered the main symbol of female obedience to male authority. Through the cutting of her hair, it seems to Maggie that she has victory over her mother and aunts. After she cuts

her hair, she feels relaxed and free, as if she had come to the great plains just from the jungle. This sense of refreshing demonstrates the liberation of women from a world dominated by male culture. Maggie's cutting of her hair can also show the germination of her self-consciousness.

Maggie is deprived of happiness all over her life due to her special personality, or, we can say, because of her difference from others. She just has a brief life; however, during such circumstances, she lives the hardest and most fatal life that could distort her temperament. Perhaps there are still many other women who want to seek equal rights as Maggie. But most of them quell their rebellious spirit as they grow older. They learn to adjust themselves to the male-dominated society and then readily accept the fact that they are born to be inferior beings. Unlike them, although Maggie tries to commit to being "good" recurrently in order to get others' approval, she cannot be successful because she just cannot adjust herself to the outside world.

3) Maggie's dilemma

During Maggie's short life, she always faced difficult decisions that changed her into a mature and considerate adult. When she was a little girl, she was self-centered and never thought about others' feelings except Tom. She did things as she liked, cutting her hair, which made her mother very angry. At that time, there was no doubt that Maggie was a wretch to make so many hard choices; it was just those dilemmas that made her a blessed and wayward girl. Everyone thinks that she is not suited to the standards that a woman should have had in the Victorian age. She is just a wild little thing in others' eyes. However, when she gradually grows up, she becomes mature. Her superego forces her to give up her id. Although she doesn't feel happy at all, she has to learn to take others into consideration when she does something. She would like to succumb to Tom and vow to him never to see Philip in order not to make her father angry. She refuses Stephen's love because she feels guilty. What's more, she sacrifices her life in order to save her dear brother. These three things illustrate that Maggie has changed from egoism to altruism, which lays a foundation for the development of her self-consciousness.

a) Family or Philip: Repressing her love

Philip is the son of Wakem, the lawyer who causes Mr. Tulliver's loss of his mill. When Philip was first introduced to Tom by Mr. Stelling, Tom would have disliked having a deformed boy for his companion, even if Philip had not been the son of a bad man. Facing Tom's indifferent attitude, Philip feels both proud and timid. Philip's deformity makes him a lonely boy with few friends. Actually, Philip is the male in the Victorian period who represents some new and advanced ideas, while Tom represents the old tradition in a male-dominated society. The two make a very obvious contrast.

The first time Maggie saw Philip, she was absorbed by his great talent. Maggie loves reading, and she is longing for knowledge, and Philip can satisfy her desire. In Maggie's second Visit to the Stellings, she could not restrain herself from her growing interest in Tom's new classmates. Maggie admires Philip's knowledge; she shows her good feelings to him even though he is the son whose father makes their family bankrupt. She believes that Philip must be so brilliant that he must admire her wisdom, too. Despite Philip's

deformed body, Maggie feels more sympathy for him. As is said in Chapter 5, Maggie has unique sympathy for all deformed things; she would rather show her love to a wry-necked lamb than a quite healthy and strong one, which she thinks is not necessary to be petted. Also, Philip still has some good feelings for Maggie; he thinks that she is a nice little thing, and he wonders why Maggie has such special dark eyes, which reminds him of the stories about princesses being turned into animals! In addition, Phillip still believes that her eyes are filled with wisdom and affection. From the first moment they meet each other, there is a special affection produced between them. However, they don't know it is just the beginning of their tragic love.

Maggie's father and brother think it is Philip's father (Mr. Wakem) who makes their family bankrupt [22]. And Mr. Tulliver feels ashamed that Mr. Wakem lets him continue to manage the Mill which belongs to him. He swears to take revenge on him and asks Tom to take it back. Mr. Tulliver hates Mr. Wakem, and so does Tom. He even vents on Philip, Mr. Wakem's son. However, Maggie feels it's unfair to Philip. She admires Philip's talent for knowledge and is attracted by his gift even if he is deformed. As we said before, Maggie has a nature of yearning for love, but she always can't get true love from people around. Even her beloved brother Tom can't give her the love she wants. But Philip appreciates her; he encourages her to learn and read, sharing his knowledge with her, which makes Maggie feel happy and satisfied. However, when Tom finds that she falls in love with Philip, he warns her not to see him anymore or he will tell her father. Maggie finds it difficult to make a decision. On the one hand, she doesn't want to make her father angry because her father was ill at that time; on the other hand, she doesn't want to cut the relationship with Philip because to her mind, Philip is just like one soul mate to whom she can talk everything and they have common interest. There's no one, but Philip who can give her the love that she has been eager to get for such a long time.

A few years have passed, and when Maggie meets Philip again, she feels both agitated and glad. Because she thinks the meeting with Philip would be robbed of all pleasure in the presence of two fathers. But it was not at all agitating for Maggie to see Philip again. The narrator says that Maggie kept her childish gratitude and compassion toward him, remembered his cleverness, and in the few weeks of her loneliness, she kept recalling his goodness, often expecting him to be his brother or teacher. She thinks that Philip has changed because of his life abroad and he will never care about her concerns. She feels very happy to see Philip and has an opportunity to speak to him. She never forgets how well Philip had once treated her and how much help she once got from him. But she is not sure that Philip still remembers all these things. As a matter of fact, after going through the bankruptcy of her family and her father's sad feelings, Maggie seems to grow up suddenly; she lives an ascetic life and begins to be in denial. She believes it is her own self-indulgent behavior to pursue happiness and freedom that brings about all the misfortune. She now can think for her family, taking her father's concern into consideration. No matter how much she wants to keep in touch with Philip, she has to force herself to give up. She abandoned those things that she used to love. She said that the old books are gone, Tom has changed, and her father feels no attachment to life.

She is firmly to part with all the things she once cared for; she must part with Philip, too. She thinks that they cannot meet each other anymore despite Philip persuading her that it is not right to sacrifice everything for other people's unreasonable feelings. He thinks that as long as they are alive, they should not give up the pursuit and faith to seek for everything good in the world. They must be brave enough to pursue happiness. Without them, how can they feel satisfied? Their feelings will cease to exist. It seems to Maggie that she could think away her duty, and she is quite sure that whatever she does, she would rather suffer everything herself than do something to make her father sad and disappointed. From this, we can figure out that Maggie's struggle is in her inner mind. In fact, Maggie doesn't want to refuse Philip, and it would be very hard to say "good-bye" to the two people. Philip knows that Maggie has to make a very hard decision because of the enmity between the two fathers. He said to Maggie that if there was mutual hostility between the people whom they loved, they should try to heal it with their friendship instead of deepening it by cutting the relationship with each other. He means that by using their influence on both sides, they can remove the wounds that have been made in the past. Here, Maggie is having conflicting thoughts; now, she thinks more of her family instead of herself; she wonders if it would make his life harder if they were to see each other sometimes. Her deep mind is intertwined with two kinds of voices: It seems to her inclination to see Philip now and then and keep up the bond of friendship with him was something not only innocent but good; perhaps she might really help him to find contentment as she had found it and that there was such a thing as futile sacrifice for one to the injury of another [14]. Facing Philip's request, Maggie finds it difficult to say yes or no; she thinks that she has to wait, she is afraid of making the wrong decisions, and she says she must seek guidance.

But when Tom finds that her sister has a secret meeting with Philip in the Red Deep, he is very angry, and he warns Maggie by asking her to vow solemnly to him with her hand on their father's Bible that she will never see or speak in private with Philip Wakem if she refuses to do so, he will tell everything to his father. And if Mr. Tulliver knows that his beloved daughter is having some love affair with his enemy's son, he must feel very disappointed. He must regard Maggie as a disobedient, deceitful daughter who doesn't care about his respectability.

At last, in order not to make her father angry and sad, Maggie has compromised with Tom. If we look deeply, we can find that Maggie has actually shown her self-consciousness. She has her own thoughts, even though she succumbed to Tom from the surface, she doesn't truly succumb to the patriarchal society. She makes this hard choice for her family and for her own self-consciousness. She comes to know her own responsibility, which fully illustrates the germination of Maggie's great female power and her development of feminist awareness.

b) Morality or Stephen: Giving up her love

The relationship between Maggie and Stephen is controversial. As we know, in *The Mill on the Floss*, the protagonist has two surprising actions. The first one is her escape to Gypsies, and the other is her elopement with her cousin's betrothed husband. The escape theme in this novel is obvious.

Stephen is the fiance of Maggie's cousin, Lucy. However, as the narrator says, "his diamond ring, attar of roses, and air of nonchalant leisure are the graceful and odoriferous result of the largest oil mill and the most extensive wharf in St. Ogg's" [23]. In fact, the economic elements in this novel established Stephen's charm and elegant personality. Even though he is not as knowledgeable as Philip, in the novel, he is molded as an outstanding singer, well-brought-up, and polite. He is strong, handsome, and decisive, which makes a clear contrast with Philip, who is deformed and weak. Maggie is obsessed with Stephen's strength and charm. Stephen is attracted to Maggie because of his physical appearance, which can bring a new element of sexual attraction, whereas Philip can satisfy her spiritual desire. Stephen embodies the physical attraction of a woman. The first time they met each other, Maggie blushed, and it was the first time she was respected and bowed to by a person in front of whom she felt timid and shy. This kind of feeling makes her feel comfortable and happy, so happy that she almost forgets the emotion she feels for Philip. The same is true to Stephen. He is unable to restrain himself from the amazing when he sees this tall, dark-eyed, and special girl. He believes there are so many mysterious things about her that he can't help but keep exploring more. At that moment, Stephen clearly knows his love for this extraordinary girl, but he has no courage to tell her. When they are dancing together, Stephen grips Maggie's hand and wants to kiss her, and this behavior just announces that he loves her. Maggie glares at him as if she were a wounded war goddess, with her eyes full of anger and humiliation of trembling, like any offended girl. But in her inner world, she feels a little happy because she loves him too. Stephen's love is quite different from that of Philips. In Maggie's eyes, she admitted her love for Philip as the love between friends, while her love for Stephen is the love truly between lovers. Both Philip's and Stephen's love brings Maggie happiness as well as great suffering. She constantly struggles in her deep mind. Despite her desperate need to be loved, which she can get from Philip and Stephen, she has to refuse both of them. Maggie is now a girl not only living for herself. She refuses Philip for the sake of her family, while she cannot love Stephen for not hurting Philip and Lucy. She understands that she cannot pursue what she wants by sacrificing others' happiness. Maggie's feelings are always divided. When she turns down Stephen Guest's request, the narrator says, "she almost desired to endure the severity of Tom's reproof, to submit in patient silence to that harsh disapproving judgment against which she had so often rebelled" [11].

Actually, the relationship between Maggie and Stephen can be called a war; their relationship is of conquest and subjugation. From their first meeting to Stephen kissing Maggie's arm in the garden and then to their discussion about "love" at Maggie's aunt's home and to their last quarrel when she elopes with Stephen by boating, Stephen always stands in a higher position and thinks that Maggie should obey what he said and accept his love. Obviously, here we can see that Stephen is another representative of a patriarchal society. Maggie's falling in love with him brings her submission, humiliation, and betrayal and also lets her embark on a journey of no return. Under these circumstances, Stephen suggests not caring about others and running away by

throwing away all the responsibilities. Nevertheless, Maggie now makes up her mind to go against Stephen's will and decides to go back to St. Ogg to be confronted with people's abuse and misunderstanding. When Stephen requires Maggie to go with him and never go home again, Maggie is determined to say what they are doing is wrong. She knows that if she agrees to Stephen and flees away with him, they are just breaking the most sacred ties that can never be formed on earth. She can't throw away all her duties just for the sake of instinctive happiness for the moment.

From Maggie's words, we could find she was no longer the little girl who did everything as she liked without considering others' feelings. At this time, Maggie's id is completely defeated by her superego. After her elopement with Stephen Guest out of her pure craving, her superego makes her feel guilty and depressed. In order to let herself feel relaxed, she has to end the relationship with Stephen, even though she is unwilling to do so, which caters to her superego. His id isn't able to strive for satisfaction in its own pleasure-oriented way but only in the sacrifice-oriented way of the superego, which is a psychologically dangerous situation and produces genuine suffering and internal tension. In the end, she chooses to obey her superego, but she still can't get the forgiveness of others, even her own family. She is still regarded by the world's wives as a plague for her seemingly unconventional behavior. Thus, her failure to live up to the increasing demands of her superego produces an even stronger sense of guilt and self-hatred.

C. Chapter Three: Awakening of Maggie's Self-Consciousness

If we say that Maggie never takes others for granted and always follows her bent and behaves like a troubled teenager who rebels against the whole world when she was in her childhood, during which time she doesn't think more for others and doesn't have a very clear self-awareness. Her blind dependence on her brother also shows her immature and unclear self-awareness. On the one hand, she is wayward, just like a martial artist; on the other hand, she expresses herself to be very submissive to Tom. However, in this chapter, Maggie gradually reveals her female consciousness and her female thoughts.

1) Her escape to Gypsies

Maggie always does things to annoy the people around her, her mother worries her a lot, and her aunts often mock her because of her queer appearance. So, in Maggie's childhood, she couldn't get true love from others; she often fancies going to the Gypsies, whom she thought were the outsiders of society. She thinks that she can get love and be respected as a queen by the Gypsies. By pushing Lucy into the mud for revenge for being overlooked by Tom, she thinks that she is extremely miserable, so she has no other choice but to flee away to the gypsydom for refuge.

Therefore, Maggie has a new idea that she will run away to the Gypsies, and Tom should be anxious about not finding her. As Maggie was often told that she was like a gypsy and 'half-wild', it seems to her the only way of escaping the embarrassment and humiliation is to join the gypsy people, among whom she would warmly welcome and be paid more appreciation due to her superior knowledge.

Maggie, who has a rebellious spirit, lives in the Victorian

age dominated by males, so she has to choose "escape" to fight against the control and oppression of patriarchy in order to pursue spiritual freedom. This is an active, defiant gesture.

"Escape" is an important theme in feminist literature. During Maggie's short life, she makes two "escapes". One is her escape to Gypsies and the other is her escape with Stephen along the river later in her life. Maggie's escape to the Gypsies is just the first awakening of her self-consciousness. According to Horney's female psychology (Karen Danielsen Horney 1885–1952, a psychoanalytic Feminist of German-born American psychologist) [24], the escape is an inevitable result of her personality development, and it is a manifestation of rebelling against patriarchal society to pursue her self existence significance. In *Our Inner Conflicts*, Horney put forward that in order to overcome the sense of insecurity caused by anxiety, not being loved and not being taken seriously, people may cater to others by yielding to others and escaping from themselves. They would like to leave for another place and stand aloof from the world to obtain spiritual independence and freedom.

As Maggie is generally not appreciated and asserted by people around, she feels like an exile in society. Her aunts often say that she is just like a gypsy because of her dark skin, so she goes to find where she belongs [25]. This is the first time that Maggie has started to think about her own identity and wants to seek her own place, from which we can see the changing of her own self-awareness. In this novel, Gypsies seem to symbolize the group who live in a world isolated from society, and they are the extreme examples that break away from social connection. In the beginning, Maggie goes to the Gypsies to find her spiritual home, but when Maggie finds that life with the Gypsies is far away from what she had thought before, she wants to return to the world to which she does not belong. In fact, during the time when Maggie tries to find her own identification, we may figure out that she seems to rebel against the patriarchal society and begins to struggle for a better and fairer way of existence in society. In order to seek spiritual freedom, Maggie has no other choice but to run away, which can show her a completely clean break from the people around her. Maggie stands for the new feminists who germinate the rebellious consciousness. However, they don't possess enough courage and belief to fight to the finish. So, in a male-dominated society, a woman like Maggie has to choose this way to escape too.

2) Her eager to get knowledge

In Maggie's thoughts and the depth of her soul, there have always been active rebellious cells, which can also be demonstrated by her longing for knowledge. She is full of eager, passionate longings for all that is beautiful and pleasant, being insatiable for knowledge. Maggie often thinks it is very stupid to do traditional darning things, so she is unwilling to do it. When Maggie was a little girl, she showed her special intelligence and was always devouring books that she could get her hands on, including the novels written by Daniel Defoe [24], John Bunyan, and Aesop's Fables. When she goes to see Tom at Mr. Stelling's, she takes an interest in learning Latin and Euclid and gradually makes sense of them on her own; finally, she would like to go to school with Mr. Stelling. Contrary to Maggie, Tom hates studying, and he is not as wise as his sister. But it is just because he is the son of

Tulliver's family, Mr. Tulliver puts all hope on him and spares no money to give Tom a good education and launches him into a business, though Mr. Tulliver understands that his daughter is superior in intelligence to his son, Maggie is still unable to have the same opportunity as Tom to receive the education in Math or Latin. Mr. Tulliver couldn't help speaking highly of his little daughter. He thinks that she has an extraordinary learning ability. However, on the other hand, he thinks that women should learn too much knowledge, lest it will bring disaster to the family.

Gillian Beer says, "The desire for knowledge, for 'more instruments playing together', had traditionally been registered as the man's story" [25]. Deborah Mac Fratz also maintains, "Maggie's intellect is the most apparent symptom of her flawed femininity". For Lynn Franken, she sees "her combined femininity and intelligence" as "a kind of mutation" [26]. Actually, man is entitled to language and intelligence (which is manifested in the wielding of language), while woman is inept while facing it. Therefore, when Maggie displays her desire to learn and teach, she challenges this misconception and acts as a disruption of the enclosed, stable Symbolic, and this is where the woman's voice comes in.

Maggie's awakening of feminism awareness not only shows in her yearning for knowledge but also in her desire to teach. For example, when she escapes to Gypsies, she tries to elaborate on the meaning of the pictures in *History of the Devil* for Mr. Riley [26]; she enlightens Luke on the life of Dutchmen in *Pug's Tour of Europe* [27]; she tells the Gypsies about the story of Columbus [28]. What's more, she wants to tell Tom "Everything he doesn't know" [29]. There are several times when Maggie expresses her wish to be Tom's teacher. All these facts are not only Maggie's attempts to show her refusal to believe that woman is removed from language but also an expression of the awakening of her self-consciousness.

Maggie's quest for knowledge is a kind of potential rebellious force, which is used to resist the blockade and imprisonment against women's desire for knowledge. Unlike other common women, Maggie's unconscious appetite for knowledge is as powerful as the forces within a living plant seed. Her strong zeal for books and music makes her feel the existence of life. She has subconsciously known that education is an activity that can inspire people. In her childhood, every time she saw those books on the shelves in the study, she could not resist exclaiming how she wished to have as many books as that. Nevertheless, her enthusiasm toward learning has suffered a blow from people around and her intelligence is regarded as a defect for a woman in the Victorian time when stupidity is one important characteristic of the angelic woman, as is seen from the beginning of the book: "An over- 'cutworm ant's no better nor a long-tailed sheep-she'll fetch none the bigger price for that" [30].

3) Her rebellion to Tom

Love is the essential element in the relationship between Tom and Maggie. "Eliot regards the capacity to love as a fundamental virtue, which is in many ways especially feminine" [31]. This virtue weakens women particularly, "We women are always in danger of living too exclusively in the affections" [32]. As for Maggie, the want of being loved, rooted in her nature, stands out in comparison with her other

need: "She was as dependent on kind or cold words as a daisy on the sunshine or the cloud" [13]. Throughout her childhood, she makes every effort to win Tom's love and does many things to attract his attention. She never says no to Tom and is completely subordinate to him. Tom's focus on rationality is a pragmatist, whereas Maggie, valuing passion, is an idealist. Tom is obviously empowered more than Maggie, both physically and psychologically; as Dorothea Barrett says, "Tom has all the power in the relationship between them because he loves less" (Barrett).

In spite of being smarter than her brother and treasured as an apple of her father's eye, she can't get an equal chance to study. Tom knows that Maggie never learns Euclid, but he always makes use of her weaknesses to laugh at her. As for Tom, he needs to show his male authority in his sister's embarrassing situation; Maggie's gaffe is just an opportunity for him to raise his confidence. We can find in *The Mill on the Floss* that what occupies Tom's heart is a kind of stubborn ego-centrism; he always looks down upon her sister and shows his aggressiveness toward her. He constrains Maggie with the identity of parental masculine. He decides all things without any room for discussion, and what he asks his sister is absolute obedience.

When Tom and Maggie experience the bankruptcy of their family, both of them change a lot. Maggie is not allowed to have a relationship with Philip, who is Wakem's son. Because it is Wakem who lets Mr. Tulliver lose his Mill, both Mr. Tulliver and Tom hate Wakem and want to take revenge on him.

When Tom goes to meet Philip with Maggie and says some bad words to insult Philip [33], Maggie rebuts her for the first time to her brother. She neither thinks he is right nor she will bow to his will. She feels ashamed of what Tom says to Philip. She also detests his insulting, unmanly allusions to Philip's deformity. She despises Tom, for he has been reproaching other people all his life, and he does not have a mind enough for those who are better than him.

From Maggie's response to Tom, we can figure out that though Maggie is like a withering flower that is desperately thirsting for the dew of love and this fire of love is not easy to quench because it is rooted deeply in Maggie's mind, when her inner values are challenged, she will absolutely abandon the love she is always longing for and insist those values she thinks upright and justice. Up to now, Maggie is no longer the little girl who always obeys her beloved brother and submits to whatever he says. This is the first time that Maggie has rebelled against Tom and dares to argue with him: "I don't want to defend myself", "I know I've been wrong, often, continually. You have no pity; you have no sense of your own imperfection and your own sins. It is a sin to be hard; it is not fitting for a mortal, for a Christian. You thank God for nothing but your own virtues; you think they are great enough to win you everything else [34]".

Maggie says she will succumb to what she thinks to be right. Even though She will give way to unreasonable things from her father, she will never submit to Tom, who always believes he has the right to be cruel to others.

What Maggie says to Tom is the best illustration of how women dared to challenge men's authority in the Victorian age [30]. As we all know, the equal rights between men and women at that time is by no means a great fantasy. Maggie's

words show her tremendous courage and determined mind. Maggie begins to insist on her own idea and stick to what she thinks is right, which suggests Maggie's maturity in her self-awareness. It is also the best demonstration of her awakening of self-consciousness.

D. Chapter Four: Sublimation of Maggie's Self-Consciousness

Maggie's personality has gradually changed with her development, and her thoughts have become gradually mature. She has changed from a little girl who does things only for her own concern and always being self-centered to a young adult who can consider others' feelings when she makes some choices. George Eliot described the process of Maggie's maturity and the development of her self-consciousness in order to show us that a male-mastered society exerts a terrible influence on women's development and they suffer a lot from the suppression of personality, during the process of their suffering, they try their best to struggle for themselves with the patriarchal society. Even though, Maggie has once fought for her own right and wants to pursue her own love and happiness, in the end, this exceptional--intelligent, sensitive, and impetuous girl born in this icy society suffers even more than other common ladylike women in her psychological world. In her short life, she has faced too many choices and dilemmas through which we can see her stronger self-awareness.

1) Maggie's self-dependence

The elopement with Stephen brings Maggie great suffering, not only from her own family and other people in town but also the suffering from her own mind. She chooses to come back and face everything but the cruel reality is beyond her imagination. Even though she is afraid to meet Tom's severe reproach, she still thinks that she shouldn't avoid it anymore. She decided to bear the consequence of being driven away by Tom and shoulder the duties that belonged to her. Here the image of Maggie becomes grand [21]. At this time, Maggie's female consciousness has fully burst out, she has her own opinions and judgments to choose the right way to redeem herself. She is a woman who dares to take responsibility for what she has done wrong, which cannot be found in any other Victorian woman. Even if Maggie doesn't get salvation through her bravery, it can be called an amazing courage and move at that time.

When Maggie met Tom and intended to explain everything to him, Tom said with tremulous rage, "You will find no home with me". Maggie is thought to bring shames to her family, and she is regarded as a curse to her best friend. Tom makes a clean break with her by driving her away from home. Tom's words are so severe that Maggie can feel Tom's loath and hatred toward her. Maggie feels so hurt by what Tom said; she understands that Tom will never forgive her because of her shameful running away with Stephen. She knows that she cannot stay with Tom anymore, therefore she chooses to leave. But she has no place to go. This is a great agonizing anxiety and suffering for a female; in her deep mind, there are several feelings mingled together with each other, including anxiety about Stephen, Lucy, and Philip and her love, remorse, and pity toward them. She suffers unprecedented pain; even if Maggie is in such desperate circumstances, she still never gives up. All she craved, as she dwelt on her future

lot, was something to guarantee her from more falling. She must be brave. She does have practical intentions; the love of independence was too strong an inheritance and a habit for her not to remember that she must get her bread. After being driven away from Tom, she went to Bob's and was received by Bob. In order not to cause so much trouble to Bob, she returns to her plain sewing and so gets enough to pay for her lodging at Bob's. She tried her best to maintain herself at St. Ogg's. However, things are not always going smoothly. "The ladies of St. Ogg's were not beguiled by any wide speculative conceptions; but they had their favorite abstraction, called Society, which served to make their consciences perfectly easy in doing what satisfied their own egoism, --thinking and speaking the worst of Maggie Tulliver, and turning their backs upon her" [17]. When Dr. Kenn tries to help Maggie find some employment, it turns out to be a disappointment to him. Maggie is refused everywhere; nobody wants to take her as a nursery governess, even temporarily, because they are afraid that she should carry her dangerous tendencies into strange families unknown at St. Ogg's. She is called the woman who did this sort of thing and was called the woman who was playing with the gentleman. Perhaps Maggie has to go to another place where nobody knows her. As the narrator says: "She must be very bold and hardened to wish to stay in a parish where she was so much stared at and whispered about" [35].

Maggie wants to live independently; this kind of quality just shows the advancing idea of that time. Women want to have equal rights with men. Even in such a hard and desperate environment, Maggie never thinks of giving up herself, instead, she lives depending on herself, and she is not defeated by other people's piquancy in evil speaking. A girl who once depended on her brother a lot has become an independent and brave female, which suggests her great progress in self-awareness.

2) The supreme moment of reconciliation

In Maggie's short life, she has to face several tough choices. She also tries her best to extricate herself and makes self-salvation. Among all the salvation, only the last one from the real sense saves her own. To begin with, Maggie understands the meaning of death when she faces the surging waters, which could devour her life easily. She doesn't hesitate for a second, and she resolutely rows a small boat rocking to a frog in the storm, risking her life to rescue her brother. Here, Maggie herself, the "small boat", and the "flood", blend into a picture of nature. As a matter of fact, as a female, Maggie cannot be separated from nature; her rescue of Tom just symbolizes the rescue that nature gives mankind.

Before going to save Tom, Maggie rebuffs Stephen's love again, even if it is too difficult for her to make such a choice. At the same time, she considers leaving her hometown to live her new life in other places. But the sudden flood broke all her plans. Knowing that her brother and relatives are in danger, she has no time to think but follows her own mind to row a boat to save her beloved brother without knowing that it is a chance to rebuild the relationship with Tom. At the crucial moment of life and death, Tom forgives his little sister and they hug closely with each other. This is the moment when Maggie feels released and at ease, which makes her fearless. George Eliot isn't mentioned in the novel, but perhaps we can imagine that Maggie isn't afraid of death

because she is accompanied by her beloved brother, and she gets forgiveness from her brother. At that moment, Maggie is happy and pleased. When the brother and sister are both devoured by the flood, all the understandings between them are dissipated. As is said in Chapter 5, Part 7 [1], "The boat reappeared, but brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted; living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love and roamed the daisies fields together" [22]. In the death of Maggie and Tom, they were not divided. It is the flood which signifies nature that makes the reconciliation and coexistence of men and women.

3) *Maggie's self-salvation*

At the novel's end, George Eliot arranges a flood that is out of everyone's expectations. Many scholars think it abrupt, some hold that it is unnecessary for Maggie to die in the flood. Many readers cannot understand where George Eliot's intentions are. As a matter of fact, the flood is not a sudden one. If we read the story carefully, we could find that the author has implicated Maggie's death from the beginning. Maggie often went to play by the river; in Chapter 10, Mrs. Tulliver says: "They're such children for the water, mine are" and "They'll be brought in dead and drowned someday. I wish that river was far enough" [18]. Besides, we must remember her childhood comments on the picture of the witch being drowned: If she's drowned and killed, you know, she is innocent, and not a witch, but only a poor silly old woman. But what good would it do her then, you know, when she was drowned? Only I suppose, she'd go to heaven, and God would make it up for her [3].

The image of flood in this novel is similar to that in the Bible, in which Noah drives the ark over the flood and at one time it was out of his control. But luckily, Noah and the Ark are threatening but not dangerous. While Maggie is not as lucky as Noah, she can undoubtedly avoid death if she chooses to stay with Bob instead of drifting to save her brother and mother. In spite of the danger, she risks her life to save Tom, which is Maggie's own choice. She drowned with Tom in the flood. At that moment, Maggie makes herself equal to Tom who is the symbol of male supremacy. Her suffering in death makes her like Christ, the martyr. Here, Maggie prays, "I have received the Cross, I have received it from thy hand; I will bear it, and bear it till death, as thou hast laid it upon me".

In Mythological Archetypal Criticism, "flood" is the symbol of death and rebirth, and it stands for baptism. So is the truth in the Bible. The flood also washed out humans' sins. At the same time, it destroyed mankind. It can be regarded as a complete baptism of human beings and thus gives mankind new life. On the contrary, the flood in *The Mill on the Floss* is so big that Maggie's rebellious force seems to be very small in front of this tremendous flood, and she is eventually swallowed by the flood. To some degree, we can say that the flood in this novel symbolizes the suppression that was given by males in the Victorian age. George Eliot uses Maggie's death to show the complete break between a female and a male-dominated society. Maggie's death embodies the failure of the female against the male. But what cannot be ignored is that the flood also symbolizes rebirth; though Maggie died in the water, she got the forgiveness of Tom, and the brother and sister hugged each other forever. The final death makes her

soul clean and her spirit sublimated. From this level, it can be said as a success that females fight for equal rights with males.

The author has her deep meaning by arranging death as Maggie's final ending. Indeed, Maggie has to die, but death means neither bemusement nor frustration, it also doesn't bring about fear and unease. Maggie's death by drowning represents a return to the feminine, to the pre-natal condition. The river is just the symbol of femininity, as Elaine Showalter observes: "As the female body is prone to wetness, blood, milk, tears, and amniotic fluid, so in drowning, the woman is immersed in the feminine, organic element. Drowning thus becomes the traditionally feminine literary death" [10]. In practice, Maggie's death has two significances: on the one hand, death reflects religious viewpoints that only when the body separates from the soul can the soul get salvation. On the other hand, death highlights Eliot's pessimistic view of religion, obtaining eternal life through death; as is said above, the courageous soul is immortal.

On the contrary, if Maggie is alive, she may not acquire Tom's forgiveness forever because of Tom's stubborn and traditional personality. If she continues to stay in her hometown after rejecting Stephen's love, she must live under others' condemnation. Her time doesn't allow people to be forgiven after doing something that offended public decency. Even if she moves to other cities, she cannot make her heart peaceful. Eliot establishes a great woman's image, Maggie, in the process of pursuing her own happiness. She values the duty that everyone should commit to. Facing the conflict between duty and rights, self-sacrifice is her first choice. The society brands her to discard the classics and rebel against orthodoxy. The longer she lives, the more pain she will feel. So, yielding to the pressure of time, the author arranges Maggie's death. Death is her best choice, and death is her last salvation. Because people are always tolerant of the dead, they only miss their good rather than dwell on their past.

Water, as well as the river, symbolizes Maggie's development from initial fear to later soul redemption. By the time she refuses the patriarchal gender identity endowed with her by the male-dominated society, it signifies the world in which Maggie has to live is crippled and incomplete. She wants to come back to the pre-Oedipus phase to achieve her female identity, but such a change can be realized only through death. She attempts to find an alternative in the feminine world. Therefore, the beginning of her awakening of feminine self-consciousness is also the end of her life. She returns to the source of life through death.

III. CONCLUSION

As a Victorian intellectual woman, Maggie hankers for a happy life and passionate love. However, she suffers from a large amount of unfair treatment both in her childhood and youth. She absolutely doesn't conform to all the requirements that should be possessed by women at that age. Maggie was born with a rebellious spirit; when she grew up, she showed a great interest in learning knowledge, and all her characteristics were incongruous with the standards at that time. Therefore, she cannot be accepted by others. In contrast, Maggie's cousin Lucy is regarded as a real lady. As Stephen says, "A man likes his wife to be accomplished, gentle, affectionate, and not stupid, and Lucy had all these qualifications". Lucy's image can meet the demands of that

society, and she is adored by everyone. The comparison between Maggie and Lucy just highlights the contradictions of social pressure and the confusion that Maggie faces in her inner mind. This comparison also shows the two different social values coexisting together in the Victorian age. Unlike other people in this novel, Maggie has a noble ideal that is repelled by society, while Tom, Stephen, and the Dodons all ignore others' or even their kin's sufferings for the benefit of their own. What's more, they even sacrifice others in order to chase their personal happiness. Under this cruel social background, Eliot arranges Maggie's death in order to help her realize her self-salvation.

According to Nietzsche's death of God, Foucault suggests, as well as all the accompanying destructiveness of the modern era; the apocalypse seems likely to lead to the end of the human species, "erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea". Once there's no value in existence, the human species is, in effect, dead. Constant traumatic blows from the destruction of the outside world will induce the individual's strong desire to return to the inorganic state, which just shows the idea of Freud's death instinct.

As a giant novelist, George Eliot systematically expresses her feministic and psychological thoughts in this novel. Psychoanalysis is not only a theory of personality but also an important practice of literary criticism. By combining the theories of psychoanalysis and feminism, we can obtain a clear insight into the mental state of the main characters in the novel. We can also look through the development and changes in Maggie's self-consciousness as well as her inner conflicts.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot describes Maggie as both a victim and a martyr. Maggie's short life is full of contradictions, from which we realize that a life of feminine submission is a life of silence and motionlessness, while a life of female rebellion, of "significant action", is a life of sound and sensation, a life that has an extraordinary story. In this novel, *The Mill*, where Maggie lives her whole life, is regarded as the male sphere of honor and work. The flood, which is the symbol of purifying and sanctifying, will finally take it away. This is the symbol of the final disappearance of the patriarchal society where men and women will finally achieve equality. Here we dare to guess the intention of George Eliot to write this novel is to manifest the great power of female consciousness. But Maggie's drowning in the catastrophe of flood with Tom demonstrates Eliot's other idea: the author herself still feels repressed in a patriarchal society; however, in real life, she doesn't choose the way to die. Instead, she expresses her unsolvable conflicts in her heroine, Maggie, from whose death she reveals her strong revolt against the patriarchal society. George Eliot survives and initiates a new life with the death of Maggie. The author is eager to realize the harmonious relationship between men and women.

If Maggie lives nowadays, her breezy, outgoing, and curious personality will no doubt enable her to be a successful emerging woman. And a woman like her is bound to be loved by quite a few men. Even if she does something wrong, for example, she elopes with her cousin's fiancee; through her effort to make up for it, she can get forgiveness from others. However, it is a pity that she lived in the Victorian age when people could only think of women as either angels or evil. If

one dares to express her inner eagerness or to show her quest for knowledge, she must be treated as people, not of the same clan. Therefore, when Maggie appears in front of people at this period, her image of either angel or evil cannot be accepted as the heroine by other people. But as a representative of the new emerging and germinating female thoughts, Maggie coexists with her advantages as well as disadvantages, which demonstrates the integrity of a female image. Her self-unity has important significance in the history of literature.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is not any conflict of interest in the research paper, all authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Yushuo Bao finished the paper scheduling and modified the research reference; Yuqiao Liu did all the others from abreast to the conclusion part; both authors had approved the final version.

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