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GEORGE ELIOT'S "BROTHER JACOB":  
AN EXPERIMENTAL STORY FOR THE WRITING  
OF THE NOVEL

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## PART I

Soon after coming back from Italy, George Eliot wrote a short story in August 1860, which was first called "Mr. David Faux, a Confectioner," then later "The Idiot Brother," and finally published anonymously in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1864 as "Brother Jacob." This "second and final short story" (Redinger, 433) has received little attention so far, as has been the case with the other of George Eliot's short stories, "The Lifted Veil," written in 1859. Both are nearly forgotten works of George Eliot, and as for "Brother Jacob," the treatise that first treated and analyzed it fully was Peter Allan Dale's "George Eliot's 'Brother Jacob': Fables and the Physiology of Common Life" published in *Philosophical Quarterly*, LXIV, 1985. In the same year, James Diedrick also made it the subject of his thesis: "George Eliot's Experiments in Fiction: 'Brother Jacob' and the German Novelle" published in *Studies in Short Fiction*, XXII. Until then, Brother Jacob had been either ignored or dismissed in a sentence or two. The most typical example is Jerome Thale's following comment on "Brother Jacob": "For obvious reasons I have confined myself to the novels of George Eliot.... The first ["Brother Jacob"], an awkward attempt at farce, shows how wise George Eliot was in keeping to serious fiction" (13). George Eliot herself rarely mentions either of the two short stories and few references made by her to "Brother Jacob" are found in the voluminous *George Eliot's Letters* edited by Gordon S. Haight. The first time its name appears in *Letters*, it is not in one of her

letters or in her journals but in one of the journals of George Henry Lewes. The journal is dated February 27, 1862, two years after "Brother Jacob" was written. In it, Lewes refers only to the proposal made to him by William Smith, who was later to publish *Romola*, to "split it up into three numbers, and thus tide over the three months; and then to commence in August or September with the new work [*Romola*]" (*Letters*, Vol. IV, 18). According to Lewes's journal, the reason for this proposal by Smith was that "[the *Cornhill Magazine* would] stand in need of some reinforcement as Thackeray's story [*The Adventures of Philip*] [was] quite insufficient to keep up the sale." In short, Smith's intention was to use "Brother Jacob" as "a filler" (Redinger, 446). But, after all, Lewes and Smith decided that the story would not do even as that.

"Brother Jacob" is mentioned again in a George Eliot's letter to Sara Sophia Hennell dated March 1, 1862. In it, she calls "Brother Jacob" "only a *trifle* which [she] wrote 3 or 4 years ago, and [has] just given to Mr. Smith because he wanted something for his forthcoming number of the *Cornhill*" (*Letters*, Vol. IV, 157; My Emphasis). In other words, George Eliot made the story a present to Smith. She gave it to him as a gift because he had lost on *Romola*, and it was "a token compensation" (Redinger, 446) for the loss that she had caused Smith to suffer by publishing *Romola*.<sup>1</sup> A reference to "Brother Jacob" is made again in a letter which George Eliot sent to Mrs. William Smith on March 1, 1873. In it, she expresses her wish to use her two short stories simply to "fatten the volume containing 'Silas Marner'" (*Letters*, Vol. VI, 336) so that it would become about 100 pages thicker.

There are a few more references to "Brother Jacob" in *George*

*Eliot's Letters*, but most are made only as to the terms and forms of its publication — there are none of the author's own estimates or opinions of the story in them. It was only John Blackwood, who published most of her works, that offered an opinion, though quite brief, concerning the story itself. When George Eliot wrote to Blackwood and told him that she and Lewes wanted to publish both "The Lifted Veil" and "Brother Jacob" together with *Silas Marner* in the proposed new edition of her novels, Blackwood strongly advised against including either story, telling Lewes in a letter that he had "a scruple in compiling them with Silas" because they were "so desperately painful" (*Letters*, Vol. VI, 349). But, after all, their preference prevailed; the stories were published in the Cabinet edition together with *Silas Marner*. From a small number of these references to "Brother Jacob," we can never be certain of the author's own evaluation of her story. But we tend to suspect from the reading of them that George Eliot herself does not rate them highly, that she regards them as only fit as "a filler" or merely sufficient as the works "to fatten the volume containing 'Silas Marner.'"

But the fact that she wanted to publish the two short stories with *Silas Marner*, though she herself says about them in a letter she sent to John Blackwood in July 1877 that they "may have been forgotten" (*Letters*, Vol. VI, 397), shows that she did not regard either of them really as "a trifle." To my reading, "Brother Jacob" is a study or an experiment aimed at practicing writing a fable and treating egoism in the novel. In this thesis, I aim to analyze "Brother Jacob" and to argue, first, that the author is trying her hand in it at writing a fable. George Eliot quotes the last sentence of "The

Fox and the Stork” by La Fontaine in the original on the front piece:

“Trompeurs, c’est pous vous que j’écris,  
Attendez vous á la pareille.”  
 (“Deceivers, I write for you,  
Pay attention to the parallel.”)

It is quite obvious simply from this that this story is a fable, which is “[a] variety of didactic structure the eighteenth century knew as ‘apologue,’ fictions whose highly stylized elements of character and action are rigidly subordinated to ideological propositions, as they are in *Rasselas*, and *Candide*” (Boardman, 114). “Brother Jacob” as a fable naturally contains didacticism, and in this story, George Eliot’s didactic intent is transparent, though she employs an excessively ironic tone. Throughout the story, the presence of the author is clearly perceived and the story itself often reads like “preaching,” despite her careful watch against anything that could be called that.

Secondly, I want to argue that George Eliot is making an experiment in the analysis of an egoistic character who thinks only of his/her own interest and has no fellow feeling or sympathy for others. Finally ——— and this is my chief concern here ——— I plan to show the similarities between David Faux and Tito Melema in *Romola* and to illustrate that David Faux is a crude or coarse version of Tito Melema; or, in other words, that Faux is a prototype of Tito Melema, who is a much refined David Faux and endowed with far more attractive outward appearance. I mean by “refined” that the psychological analysis of Tito Melema is done far more minutely

and with much greater depth than that of David Faux. In fact, Judith Wilt thinks quite highly of George Eliot's description of, and her inner analysis of, Tito Melema, saying that Tito's point of view is "rendered brilliantly all along by Eliot" (194) and that "Eliot beautifully dramatizes" (195) Tito Melema. His egoism is treated with a great deal of subtlety compared with that of David Faux, the exposure of whose egoism is simply bold, obvious and straightforward. The result is that George Eliot has made David Faux a caricature of Tito Melema. David Faux is the first of George Eliot's conventional egoists and, as it were, a forerunner of Tito Melema. I believe that the image, or the idea, of Tito Melema was taking a clearer shape in George Eliot's mind while she was writing "Brother Jacob."

Henry James is one of those who appreciate George Eliot's outstanding ability as a writer of short stories. Regretting their scarcity, he says that she "will probably always remain the greatest novelist who has written fewest short stories" (Haight ed., *A Centenary of George Eliot Criticism*, 130). He assumes that those who pay attention to her short stories "will doubtless wonder why the author has not oftener attempted to express herself within the limits of that form of fiction which the French call the *nouvelle*." As Henry James points out, George Eliot "[had] departed more and more from the 'short story' as she devoted herself to writing" what he calls "if not absolutely the longest-winded ... [but] the most spacious" novels.

As mentioned above, George Eliot has written only two short stories, and they have one thing in common: their unity of effect. But they are completely different in the other respects: "The Lifted

Veil" is written from a depressingly pessimistic viewpoint of human nature, with Gothic elements, while irony dominates the latter. Henry James is of the opinion that "Brother Jacob" is far better than "The Lifted Veil" for the reason that the former is "wholly of a humorous cast" (131). He further points out that "it may be credited with something of a philosophic import."

"Brother Jacob" has certainly "a philosophic import," but it is questionable whether it is "wholly of a humorous cast" as Henry James says. Rosemarie Bodenheimer, like James, rates "Brother Jacob" much higher than "The Lifted Veil," but for a completely different reason:

As in the earlier story ["The Lifted Veil"], neither the hero nor his antagonists have any claim to sympathy or virtue. But "Brother Jacob" is to my ears a far better piece of writing. Its concrete, socially detailed narration is writing characteristic of George Eliot, though it speaks in a satirical voice she rarely unleashed without its careful hedge of sympathy and moral appeal. (149)

Bodenheimer gives a more convincing reason for her evaluation than Henry James; there are certainly humorous elements in "Brother Jacob," but the irony is overwhelmingly strong so that the humor is hardly perceptible. Haight says in his *Biography* that "Brother Jacob" is "unique among George Eliot's works in its complete lack of sympathy for any of the characters, even the idiot [the hero's idiot brother Jacob]" (340). George Eliot sees almost every character in the story with a completely detached, sardonic eye. It is only the parents of David Faux, the hero, who escape the author's



irony. The story is told "in a bantering, cynical style" (Haight, *Biography*, 340) from beginning to end. Employing this "bantering, cynical style," George Eliot tells us the fate of "David Faux, a Confectioner" with a didactic intent. The "philosophic import" which Henry James credits this story with, is the law of cause and effect, or the inescapability from retribution: the author makes the fate of David Faux "an admirable instance of the unexpected forms in which the great Nemesis hides herself."<sup>2</sup> This closing phrase corresponds to the opening paragraph also in its didactic tone. The story begins with a lengthy paragraph in which George Eliot warns the reader of the danger of "blindly taking to the confectionery line" in a "bantering" tone:

Among the many fatalities attending the bloom of young desire, that of blindly taking to the confectionery line has not, perhaps, been sufficiently considered. How is the son of a British yeoman, who has been fed principally on salt pork and yeast dumplings, to know that there is satiety for the human stomach even in a paradise of glass jars full of sugared almonds and pink lozenges, and that the tedium of life can reach a pitch where plum-buns at discretion cease to offer the slightest enticement? (267)

The author goes on to ask in the form of a rhetorical question how "the son of a British yeoman" can "foresee the day of sad wisdom" when he will realize that being a confectioner allows no social influence and that it is quite unlikely to satisfy "a soaring ambition" (267). Then, George Eliot appears before the readers and speaks directly to them, citing an actual example of "many fatalities attending the bloom of young desire" : a man who happens to have

“a metaphysical genius” made a mistake in the choice of his occupation “in the period of youthful bouyancy,” and became a dancing-master, and thus, “could not give up his dancing-lessons, because he made his bread by them, and metaphysics would not have found him in so much as salt to his bread.” (267-8). The readers are piqued by this strange, unique opening passage, and wonder why, of all the trades, the author has chosen a confectioner to tell us that “there is satiety” for human desire, or why she has chosen “the confectioner’s calling” as a trade that carries no social influence or has no possibility to satisfy “a soaring ambition.”

Redinger maintains that George Eliot wrote “Brother Jacob” to criticize the publishers and reviewers who encouraged the writing and reading of “saccharine literature which catered only to the taste of the public” (435). She implies that George Eliot compares “a glass jar full of sugared almonds” to “saccharine literature,” and that she warns that the public will soon be satiated with it and will cease to enjoy it. Redinger further suggests that Blackwood’s negative reaction to anything she wrote “that swerved from the popular conception of happiness and society’s favorable image of itself as the protector of civilization” (435) gave her a great concern. After reading “The Lifted Veil,” Blackwood wrote to her that he wished it had had a happier theme, though admitting that “others are not so fond of *sweets* as [he is] and no judge can read the Lifted Veil without deep admiration and the feeling that it is the work of a great writer” ( *Letters*, Vol. III, 67; My Emphasis). He could not perceive the difference between the two stories; he treated them merely as being essentially the same in having “a painful want of light.” Blackwood certainly missed the real meaning of “Brother Jacob.”

Redinger's argument is very convincing, because, at the end of the story, David Faux, who is a confectioner and "caters to the taste" of the people in Grimworth, is punished by Nemesis disguised in the form of his idiot brother Jacob. On the other hand, Bodenheimer detects the purport of the story in George Eliot's biographical elements:

The simplest plot summary [of "Brother Jacob"] suggests that this much-neglected story is George Eliot's satirical coming-to-terms with the extended crisis of pseudonymity she had suffered in the previous year. (148)

Therefore, she regards "the humor and metaphorical playfulness" of "Brother Jacob" as characterizing a story that

considers the accusation that George Eliot had stolen other people's stories and transcribed them as fiction, by inventing a character whose attempts to turn stolen guineas into yellow candy lozenges backfire with a vengeance. (149)

Each of the arguments carries conviction in its own way, but the meaning of the story should be considered in relation to the other works of George Eliot. To understand it requires a close analysis of "Brother Jacob" and a consideration of its place among her other works, notably *Silas Marner* and *Romola*.

Immediately after citing the example of the man with a metaphysical genius having commenced his career as a dancing-master "in the period of youthful bouyancy," George Eliot introduces David Faux the protagonist, and goes on to tell us his

fate in an extremely ironical tone; the irony directed to the hero is so bitter and conspicuous throughout the story that the readers tend to think that the author is scornful of him rather than she treats him with scientific objectivity. First, she tells us why he chooses the confectionery business. The reason is absurdly simple: in his boyhood, David visited his uncle, the butler at a great house near Brigford, and at the sight of the confectioners' shops in the town, he had the illusion that "a confectioner must be at once the happiest and the foremost of men, since the things he made were not only the most beautiful to behold, but the very best thing, and such as the Lord Mayor must always order largely for his private recreation" (268). His sweet tooth is at once wedded to this illusion, and when he reaches the age to be put to a trade, he decides to become a confectioner "without a moment's hesitation." But, as the author warned about the danger of "blindly taking to the confectionary line," he becomes satiated with "a paradise of glass jars full of sugared almond and pink lozenges" even before his apprenticeship is over.

George Eliot endows David Faux with excellent skill as a confectioner, but gives him no other merits. She denies him an attractive personal appearance: he is "a young gentleman of *pasty* visage, lipless mouth, and stumpy hair" (270; My Emphasis). Neither is he given inner qualities that make up for the lack of personal beauty. He is always the main target of irony, and when she tells us about him, it is always in "a bantering, cynical tone" which forbids the readers to feel sympathy for him. On the contrary, it only serves to make us feel antipathy or repugnance toward him. George Eliot describes him in such a way that the more we know him, the more we feel

emotionally alienated from him. He is described as a young man dissatisfied with “a narrow lot” (269) because of “a soaring ambition,” which shows his lack of self-knowledge.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie Tulliver is also dissatisfied with her narrow lot, but her dissatisfaction comes from her noble nature, while this egoistic, contemptible protagonist is dissatisfied with his lot because of “a soaring ambition.” This ambition comes from his absurd, groundless vanity in believing that “there [is] nothing average about him,” that “he ought to become something very remarkable” (269). There is something seriously wrong with his mentality, which the author exposes in a casual manner: on reading *Inkle and Yarico*, David Faux feels “very sorry for poor Mr. Inkle” (269), a contemptible protagonist who thinks only of himself and his profit, and is quite unworthy of our sympathy. The fact that David feels sorry for this “poor Mr. Inkle” proves that they have the same anomaly of character; this sympathy is also significant because he is to meet the same fate that Inkle does at the conclusion of *Inkle and Yarico*. The conspicuous difference between these two protagonists is that Inkle is reformed to true Christian charity at the end, while it can be inferred that David Faux will not be reformed, will never learn anything from the lesson given by Nemesis, and will always remain as he is.

Peter Allan Dale argues that it is likely that “the Inkle and Yarico story provided George Eliot with the inspiration” (249) for the plot of “Brother Jacob.” He detects some similarities between these two stories, and says that “it probably suggested a theme as well.” The themes are certainly similar; both in “Brother Jacob” and *Inkle and Yarico*, the protagonists are punished by Nemesis. The two

works are also similar in the social criticism. In Chapter II of "Brother Jacob," George Eliot describes the process of the corruption of Grimworth that is caused by purchasing pastry at the shop which David Faux opens in the market-place at Grimworth under the pseudonym of Edward Freely and thus ceasing to make it at home. In this description, the author's criticism of division of labor brought about by Industrial Revolution is clearly perceived. In *Inkle and Yarico*, "the inhumanity of imperialist exploitation of non-European races" is illustrated, and it "epitomizes a struggle between the ethic of capitalistic self-assertion and traditional Christian charity" (Dale, 249). But the similarity between these two works stops there. As to the protagonists, David Faux and Thomas Inkle, it is only egoism that they have in common. They are essentially different characters, moved by different motives. David Faux is driven by vanity and ambition, while Inkle's thought and action are entirely based on calculation. Nevertheless, as Dale supposes, it is highly probable that George Eliot got the inspiration for "Brother Jacob" from *Inkle and Yarico*, because David Faux is strongly influenced by it, especially by black Yarico<sup>3</sup> being immediately attracted by Inkle's fair skin; on reading the work, he gets the illusion that some rich black woman will be attracted by him simply because of his fair skin and decides to go to the West Indies, following the example of Inkle.

But, before continuing further with the analysis of "Brother Jacob," it would be appropriate for me to digress here for a while to treat *Inkle and Yarico*, because few readers will be familiar with it and the knowledge of what the story is like is indispensable in comparing "Brother Jacob" with it. I plan to discuss it much more in

detail than some critics have done so far. What they have usually done is to summarize its plot so briefly as to be baffling to those who are unfamiliar with it.

*Inkle and Yarico*, "virtually a folktale" (Dale, 248) made into an opera by George Colman the Younger, was first performed on August 11th, 1787. The story is taken from Ligon's "History of Barbadoes." It appears in Addison's *The Spectator* (No. 11), in which Arietta treats Inkle's behavior as an example of male inconstancy. When "I" pay a visit to Arietta, she has another visitor, "a common-place talker" (49) who is talking to her about "the old topic of constancy in love." He is quoting "out of plays and songs, which allude to the perjuries of the Fair, and the general levity of women." Arietta, who "[seems] to regard this piece of raillery as an outrage done to her sex" (50), retorts, telling him that she was "the other day amusing [herself] with *Ligon's account of Barbadoes*" (The Author's Emphases), adding that "in answer to [his] well-wrought tale, [she] will give [him] ... the history of *Inkle and Yarico*" (50-1). Then Arietta goes on to summarize the story<sup>4</sup>, telling him about the ingratitude and unfaithfulness of Inkle toward Yarico, always employing the same ironical tone that George Eliot uses in "Brother Jacob" whenever she refers to the character and behavior of Inkle.

It is natural that Inkle should be mentioned with irony by Arietta: for example, she refers to him as "the prudent and frugal young man" (53). Like David Faux, he is not at all worth the audience's sympathy. From the very beginning, his calculation, or "arithmetic," is emphasized. Even when he is lost in "an American Forest"<sup>5</sup> together with Trudge, who is a factotum employed by Inkle, and Medium, who is Inkle's uncle, he is thinking of "advancing his

interest" (7). They are in the wilds of America now because their merchant ship, *the Achilles*, was shipwrecked. The ship was bound for Barbadoes, one of the English settlements in the West Indies. The three embarked on it chiefly to "carry home the daughter of the governor, Sir Christopher Curry, who has till now been under [Inkle's] father's care in Threadneedle-street for polite English education" (11) and it is "a fix't thing" that Inkle is to marry the daughter of the governor, named Narcissa, as soon as they get there.

Medium is now angry at their having been separated from the foraging party and puts the blame for it on Inkle. He says to Trudge that Inkle is "a schemer," "a fellow who risques his life for a chance of advancing his interest" (8), adding as follows:

*Med.* ... —Always advantage in view! Trying here to make discoveries that may promote his profit in England. Another Botany Bay scheme, mayhap. Nothing else could induce him to quit our foraging party from the ship.... (8)

When Medium refers in an ironical tone to his father as a happy trader for having such a "prudent" (9) son for a parter, he adds, "Why, your are the carefulest Co. in the whole city; never losing sight of the main chance, and that's the reason perhaps you lost sight of us here on the main of America." Inkle agrees with him self-complacently, quite impervious to the irony:

*Inkle.* Right, Mr. Medium. Arithmetic I own has been the means of our parting at present. (9)

Inkle further says, using queer syllogism, that only the pursuit of profit has motivated him to travel:



*Inkle*. Travelling, Uncle, was always intended for improvement, and improvement is an advantage; and advantage is profit, and profit is gain. Which in the travelling translation of a trader, means that you shou'd gain every advantage of improving your profit.  
(10)

In fact, *Inkle* is thinking that, if "so many natives cou'd be caught, how much they might fetch at the West India markets." When *Medium* reminds him of the main purpose of the voyage to Barbadoes, hinting that he "ought to be ogling a fine girl in the ship" (11) instead of thinking of gaining profit by "hunting old hairy negroes," he answers that the marriage is "a table of interest from beginning to end," thus indicating the real motive of his desire to marry *Narcissa*, and this motive in turn indicates his absence of romantic passion for her.

The three are chased by "a fleet of black devils" (14). They run away, but only *Medium* successfully reaches the ship, which at once sets sail, leaving *Inkle* and *Trudge* on the shore. Even when he finds himself forsaken by them, he only says that his property is being carried off, exclaiming, "Traacherous Villains! My whole effects lost" (16). *Trudge* is astonished at his response, and says that "any body but you wou'd only think of effecting his safety in such a situation." Despite *Trudge's* comment, *Inkle* deplores that they may report him dead and dispose of his property, adding that he would soon marry *Narcissa* at Barbadoes and "much advance [his] interests" (16) if he were on the ship that is under sail for Barbadoes. Thus, his excessive love of profit is repeatedly emphasized in the dialogues of *Medium*, *Trudge* and *Inkle* himself. *Trudge* belongs to the lower

classes, but he has common sense superior to that of his master. His sense of values is much more sound than Inkle's, who is the third son of a rich merchant and had love of gain carefully instilled into his mind at an early age by his father. As the story unfolds, it becomes clearer that Trudge is in reality the mouthpiece of the author: Trudge's words and behavior, and above all, his faithfulness to Wowski, based on a great sense of gratitude, is obvious criticism directed toward Inkle.

But it takes time for Inkle's despicable egoism to rise to the surface, and Yarico is the involuntary means of revealing it. Soon after Inkle and Trudge find themselves left alone in the wilds of America, they run away from "the Blacks" (14) and find shelter by chance in a cavern. On entering it, they find the cavern beautifully decorated with skins of beasts and feathers of fowls. It is the dwelling of Yarico, the heroine, who is the daughter of the dead chief of her tribe. Wowski, a kind of chambermaid to her, lives with her in the cave. Yarico immediately falls in love with Inkle on seeing his handsome features and hearing his voice; above all, she is powerfully attracted by his fair skin; she exclaims, "What harmony in his voice! What a shape! How fair his skin too!" (20). She at once resolves to conceal him from her countrymen. Trudge and Wowski likewise fall in love with each other at once. That Yarico and Wowski should be able to speak English, though broken, seems implausible, but Colman informs us that Yarico and Wowski learned English from "an old shipwreck'd sailor" (22). Inkle and Trudge live in the cavern with Yarico and Wowski for several months. Yarico devotes herself to protecting Inkle from her countrymen. In return for her love and kind protection, Inkle

avows that "whilst [his life] lasts, nothing shall part [them]" (21), and promises that "when an opportunity offers to return to [his] country, [she] shall be [his] Companion."

Act II opens with the dialogues of four planters at the quay in Barbadoes. They are talking about the arrival of *the Achilles*, and are disappointed that it has brought only Narcissa and "a parcel of lazy, idle, white folks" (26), but no slaves. They talk of "a terrible dearth of 'em in Barbadoes lately." While they are talking, a cry is heard announcing the arrival of another merchant ship, which has carried Inkle, Trudge, Yarico and Wowski to Barbadoes. The planters hurry to the ship to see if slaves are on it. In this way, the author shows the audience that the slave trading is flourishing in English colonies. This is a herald of the author's criticism of slavery.

On the other hand, the audience knows that Narcissa and the captain of *the Achilles*, Captain Campley, love each other. He declares his love to her, emphasizing his genuine love and Inkle's being mercenary: "... your intended spouse is all for money. I am all for love. He is a rich rogue. I am rather a poor honest fellow. He would pocket your fortune; I will take you without a fortune in your pocket" (30). She urges the captain to see her father to obtain his permission for their marriage, and when he learns that Inkle is now in Barbadoes, he decides to do as Narcissa has suggested. He tells himself: "... cock my hat; make my bow, and try to reason the Governor into compliance. Faint heart never won a fair Lady" (33). He sees Sir Christopher Curry, and a comic scene ensues: Sir Christopher Curry has not seen Inkle since the latter was a small boy, so he takes Campley for Inkle and immediately gives assent to Campley marrying his daughter.

As for Inkle, once he gets to Barbadoes, he forgets that he owes his life to Yarico's love and assistance. While talking with a planter, he decides to get rid of Yarico by selling her into slavery. He does have compunction about it, to be sure. He feels sorry for Yarico, but, after all, his inner struggle is not strong enough to make him change his mind. The idea of the marriage to Narcissa, or rather, of her fortune, easily outweighs his pity for Yarico. In his mind, he only seeks for excuses for the justification of his decision, while remembering his "father's precepts" (40). His cruel ingratitude and lack of humane feeling are in conspicuous contrast to Trudge's sincerity and faithfulness to Wowski. When Trudge knows Inkle's decision, he says to himself in an aside, criticizing him as cruel and unfeeling:

*Trudge.* [*Going out*] Ah! you may as well put your hand to your head; and a bad head it may be, to forget that Madam Yarico prevented her countrymen from peeling off the upper part of it. (*Aside*) [*Exit.* (59)

Now Inkle thinks only of the thirty thousand pounds that Narcissa will bring to him when they marry. He even blames himself for having been vacillating between a life with Yarico and marriage to Narcissa. He goes to the quay and meets a man who he takes for a planter, and asks him to buy a young black woman as a slave. But, the man is not a planter but Sir Christopher Curry, who has come to the quay, being unable to wait for "Inkle." Neither of them can recognize each other by sight. Sir Christopher Curry proves to be strongly against slavery, and becomes disgusted with Inkle while he is talking about selling a slave. Then, Yarico appears at the quay

as she is told to by Inkle in a letter delivered by Trudge. She is informed of her prospective fate by the letter. Now she begs Inkle to let her stay by him, reminding him of what she had done for him in the American forest. While hearing Yarico's pathetic story, Sir Christopher becomes infuriated with Inkle and tells him who he really is. Inkle realizes that he is "lost and undone" (69). Inkle is punished for his ingratitude by Nemesis in the form of Sir Christopher Curry. But this is a comedy and the author has prepared a happy ending. Inkle repents and promises to marry Yarico in the presence of Sir Christopher Curry, Trudge, and Wowski.

As is stated above, *Inkle and Yarico* has a very simple plot. It seems natural that it enjoyed great popularity. The despicable protagonist, who is called "Young Multiplication" and "young Rule of Three" (69) even by his cowardly uncle, is punished for his selfish calculation, is reformed, and promises to marry the innocent, pathetic heroine at the conclusion; thus justice is done at the end. Mistaken identity serves to increase the fun of the opera. There is humor, wit, and pathos; notably, Trudge's wit, which is manifested in his playing with words and jokes, plays an important part in making this opera enjoyable. In addition, there is an exotic atmosphere, which must have appealed to the contemporary audience. In short, it is skillfully composed to entertain the audience.

But, taken as a literary work, its defects are obvious. It lacks depth. The development of the plot is predictable. It is a kind of conventional moral play that illustrates poetic justice. The characterization is too simple: almost all the characters are given only single features and have no subtlety. Inkle is merely a calculating figure imprisoned in egoism; he is essentially too shallow to experience

excruciating compunction, so that his mental struggle is artificial. His final awakening to Christian charity happens suddenly without any preceding inner process, so that it carries no conviction at all. His abrupt decision to marry Yarico strikes us as not only unnatural but sentimental. It also gives us the impression that Colman has brought the work to a hasty conclusion. Yarico presents merely a pathetic figure; she has only a loving, docile nature, so that she does not seem a living human being. When she learns that Inkle intends to sell her into slavery, she only feels sad and there is no other feeling in her. Narcissa is characterless, or elusive; her sole function is to love Captain Campley though she is to marry Inkle. There is no inward struggle that we think she may naturally feel in her dilemma. The author's treatment of her is so perfunctory that, in spite of her name, which reminds us of narcissism, we find nothing narcissistic about her. We simply infer from her name that she must be a narcissist. Sir Christopher Curry has more definite personality. He is cheerful, impetuous and passionate; he also proves to be a man of integrity. He hates negative qualities in man such as dishonesty, insincerity, cruelty, or ingratitude. He is an attractive figure and contributes to making this opera delightful by taking Captain Campley for Inkle. He plays another important role in criticizing slavery, which I will refer to again later. But his main function is to punish Inkle and when he has performed it, there is nothing left for the the author but to bring the work to an end. Colman fails to make the most of this character. As for the minor characters, they are all conventional and have no distinctive features.

But there is one exceptional character: Trudge, a factotum. He is undeniably the most impressive figure in this work, and *Inkle and*

*Yarico* is heavily dependent on him. But for him, it would not have been successful. He comes out far more alive than any other character. We may go so far as to say that he is the virtual hero. In fact, he remains on the stage longer than Inkle. His impressiveness comes partly from his unique, captivating personality and partly from the fact that he is entrusted with various tasks. The most important one is to present a remarkable contrast to Inkle by remaining faithful to Wowski and continuing to love her to the end. He is critical of his master for his egoistic preference for Narcissa's fortune over his obligation to *Yarico*, who protected him from the danger to his life and keeps loving him. Trudge is scandalized at Inkle and resolves to leave him when he knows for certain that his resolution to sell *Yarico* to a planter is firm. He is convinced that Inkle is incorrigible and says as follows:

*Trudge.* I'm sorry for it, Sir; I've lived with you a long while; I've half a year's wages too due the 25th *ulto.* due for dressing your hair, and scribbling your parchments; but take my scribbling; take my frizzing; take my wages; and I and Wows will take ourselves off together —she sav'd my life, and rot me, Sir, if any thing but death shall part us. (65)

Trudge's despair at Inkle's cruel ingratitude and his subsequent resolution to part with his master makes Inkle's baseness all the more conspicuous.

His role is not confined merely to the thematic circle. He is entrusted with the task of manifesting the author's criticism of the contemporary society. Colman's *Inkle and Yarico* has little literary

worth, but his social criticism in it is worth our attention. It is true that a comic tone runs through the work, but the author's serious concerns about the social problems are found in various places. They come out sometimes in irony, and sometimes directly. The theme of the work — the punishment inflicted on Inkle for his greed for material affluence — shows his criticism leveled at those who have forgotten Christian charity and pursue only their own profit at the sacrifice of everything else. At the same time, Colman indirectly criticizes those rich merchants, represented by Inkle's father, who implanted into their children the notion that only material profit was important. Remembering his father's "precepts," Inkle justifies his resolution to sell Yarico as follows:

*Inkle.* Let me reflect a little.... My interest, honour, engagements to Narcissa, all demand it [parting with Yariko]. My father's precepts, too; I can remember when I was a boy what pains he took to mould me! — School'd me from morn to night — and still the burthen of his song was — Prudence! Prudence, Thomas, and you'll rise. — Early he taught me numbers; which he said — and he said rightly, — wou'd give me a quick view of loss and profit, and banish from my mind those idle impulses of passion, which mark young thoughtless spendthrifts; his maxims footed in my heart, and as I grew — *they* grew; till I was reckon'd, among our friends, a steady, sober, solid, good young man; and all the neighbours call'd me *the prudent Mr. Thomas*. And shall I now at once kick down the character, which I have rais'd so warily? .... (40-1; Colman's Emphases)



“Prudence” is, of course, a fine virtue, but in this context, the word is used as a euphemism for the egoistic pursuit of profit. Inkle’s inner defects were partly produced by the education which his father gave him in his childhood.

Colman criticizes some other aspects of the society. He does so mainly through Trudge, employing irony. For instance, the following words which Trudge utters on knowing Wowski’s ignorance of the meaning of the word “steal” are a bitter criticism directed at “a Christian country”:

*Trudge.* .... Somebody might steal ’em [Wowski’s furs and feathers], perhaps.

*Wows.* Steal ! — What that?

*Trudge.* Oh, Lord! see what one loses by not being born in a Christian country. (34)

Colman is critical of everything that goes against true Christian spirit. He criticizes the education that has made Christians lose “the practice of gratitude”; when Trudge finds that Wowski is ignorant of what the word “gratitude” means, he exclaims:

*Trudge.* Ha! this it is now to live without education; the poor dull devils of her country are all in the practice of gratitude without finding out what it means; while we can tell the meaning of it, with little or no practice at all. — Lord, Lord, what a fine advantage Christian learning is! .... (35)

Trudge instructs Wowski that she must behave differently toward the rich and the poor; he tells her that his countrymen will “look

blind — not see him” (35) when they “meet an old shabby friend in misfortune, that [they] don’t wish to be seen to speak to.”

Colman is also strongly opposed to slavery and racial discrimination, and it is Trudge and Sir Christopher Curry that represent the author’s opposition to them. It comes out in the dialogue between Trudge and a planter who proposes to buy Wowski; when the planter knows that “[the] booby’s in love with her” (37), he says to Trudge that he “wou’d not live here with a Black.” Trudge retorts: “I’ll tell you what, Mr. Fair Trader: If your head and heart were to change places, I’ve a notion you’d be as black in the face as an ink-bottle” (37-8). Colman’s criticism of slavery is expressed in the dialogue between Inkle and Sir Christopher Curry; taking the latter for a planter who is looking for a slave, Inkle offers to sell “a female, whom [he wishes] to part with” (62). Sir Christopher’s sense of justice is aroused at once: his response is filled with rage against slavery.

*Sir Chr.* Look-ye, young man, I love to be plain; I shall treat her a good deal better than you wou’d, I fancy; for though I witness this custom every day, I can’t help thinking the only excuse for buying our fellow creatures, is to rescue them from the hands of those who are unfeeling enough to bring ’em to market.... Let Englishmen blush at such practices. Men who so fully feel the blessings of liberty, are doubly cruel in depriving the helpless of their freedom. (63)

So much for discussing *Inkle and Yarico*. As I mentioned before, George Eliot was probably provided with the inspiration for “Brother Jacob” by it: reading it is the sole motive for David Faux’s decision

to go to the West Indies. But George Eliot does not mention at all how he fares there. Chapter I ends with his departure for the West Indies where he firmly believes "a gullible princess [awaits] him" (285). Six years have already passed since his departure for the West Indies when Chapter II opens, and he appears in a country town in England called Grimworth under the pseudonym of Edward Freely. From the fact that he appears alone in the town and that he is still a confectioner, we know that his ambition was not fulfilled, i.e., that he could not find a Yarico as he had expected. This means that George Eliot is not fond of "sweets" and that she writes far more realistically than George Colman the Younger. She does not believe at all that there is a Yarico in the West Indies who falls in love with a man simply because he is fair-skinned. Moreover, he is not attractive at all either inwardly or outwardly; he is the most unattractive character that George Eliot has ever produced. His name itself sounds unattractive; it clearly shows his moral defects. "Faux" means "deceitful" in French; it reminds us of "a fox" in English. In *Inkle and Yarico*, most of the characters are given symbolic names. The protagonist is given an appropriate name; "inkling" means "a slight understanding." "Trudge" means "to walk wearily" and is a fit name for a factotum. As the name "Medium" suggests, Inkle's uncle has no distinctive quality except cowardice. Narcissa is, of course, suggestive of "a narcissist." In the same way, George Eliot has given most of the characters in "Brother Jacob" the names that symbolize their characteristics, as is always the case with a fable. In fact, George Eliot seems to be experimenting with the writing of a fable in "Brother Jacob." It is significant that *Silas Marner* was written immediately after this story and *Romola* was

written after *Silas Marner*. I plan to make further analysis of "Brother Jacob" in Part II and refer to this point again. I also intend to examine closely the similarities between David Faux and Tito Melema; George Eliot is also experimenting with the treatment of an egoistic figure in this short story.

## NOTES

- 1 Quoting this generous act of George Eliot, Gordon S. Haight argues as follows in his *George Eliot: A Biography*, defending her from the charge of "being a mercenary author": "While she could not afford to take less than the best price for her writings, she never compromised artistic integrity for the sake of money. None of her works can be described as a pot-boiler. Because she believed that *Romola* would be better understood in longer installments, she took £7,000 instead of £10,000 for it. What other novelist ever made such a sacrifice? She can hardly be blamed because *Romola* did not bolster the circulation of the *Cornhill* as much as Smith had hoped, or that, when it was issued in three volumes in July 1863, the sale was not large. Sir Sidney Lee's authorized 'Memoir of George Smith', saying plainly that 'The whole transaction was not to Smith's pecuniary advantage', almost implies that it was somehow George Eliot's fault rather than being due to Smith's lapse of judgement. She sent him as a gift the story 'Brother Jacob', for which he had once offered her £250, and it appeared in the *Cornhill* in July 1864. This is not the gesture of a mercenary author" (370).
- 2 George Eliot, *The Writings of George Eliot*, Vol. VII: *Silas Marner / Brother Jacob* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), p. 327. All further references to "Brother Jacob" are to this edition.

3 The name Yarico appears again in George Eliot's last novel. It appears in the first sentence of Chapter XXVII of *Daniel Deronda*: "When Grandcourt on his *beautiful black Yarico*, the gloom behind him on Criterion, was taking the pleasant ride from Diplow to Offendene, Gwendolen was seated before the mirror while her mother gathered up the lengthy mass of light-brown hair which she had been carefully brushing" (My Emphases). Grandcourt rides to Offendene to propose to Gwendolen. Of course, the name of his horse comes from *Inkle and Yarico*. Susan Meyer, mentioning the name in her *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction*, gives an extremely brief summary of the story: "The name of his [Grandcourt's] horse comes from the tale of Inkle and Yarico, narrated by Steele in the *Spectator* in 1711 and often retold and then made into a popular musical comedy by George Colman. It recounts the exploits of Inkle, an Englishman saved from cannibals in Barbadoes by the beautiful native woman Yarico, whom he subsequently abandons and attempts to sell into slavery" (163-4). In this summary, Meyer has made two errors: first, Inkle does nothing in the story that is worthy of being called "exploits"; secondly, Inkle is not saved from "cannibals in Barbadoes," but from Yarico's countrymen, i.e., native Americans; nor is she a native of Barbadoes.

4 Arietta's summary of the story is slightly different from Colman's *Inkle and Yarico*. Arietta says: "In this manner, did the lovers pass away their time, till they had learned a language of their own, in which the voyager [Inkle] communicated to his mistress, how happy he would be to have her in his own country ..." (52). In Colman's *Inkle and Yarico*, Trudge speaks to Patty, Narcissa's chambermaid, as follows: "Master [Inkle], to be sure, while we were in the forest, taught Yarico to read with his pencil and pocket-book ..." (56); Trudge means that Yarico and Wowski could neither read nor write English. But, when Inkle and Trudge meet Yarico and Wowski for the first time in their

cavern, Yarico and Wowski speak English so well that Inkle and Trudge have no difficulty communicating with them in English.

- 5 George Colman the Younger, *Inkle and Yarico: an Opera* in Peter A. Tasch ed., *The Plays of GEORGE COLMAN THE YOUNGER* (New York & London: Garland and Publishing, Inc., 1981), p. 7. All further references to *Inkle and Yarico* are to this edition.

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