



Original Research

Silas' Four Seasons: George Eliot's *Weaver of Raveloe*

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Received: 11/23/2024; **Accepted:** 01/28/2025; **Published:** 04/14/2025

Abstract: George Eliot's *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe* uses the seasons, geography, space, and time to chart the protagonist's inner growth and life journey. It contrasts two distinct locations that represent different stages of Silas' self-awareness and personal development: Lantern Yard, the urban setting, represents Silas' early life of rigid religious beliefs, a sense of community, but also betrayal and false accusation, and industrial progress and change; Raveloe, the rural setting, symbolizes Silas' isolation and later redemption, a slower pace of life rooted in nature and tradition, and opportunity for personal growth and healing. The inner landscape evolves in tandem with his physical surroundings, since the initial closed-off existence in Raveloe reflects his emotional state. As he opens to the community, his world expands, and Eppie's arrival transforms both Silas and his home environment. Silas' cottage and all the interiors represent refuge and protection, whereas exteriors signify potential threats but also connection to nature. Crossing thresholds between these spaces marks important transitions in Silas' life. Eliot interweaves the passage of time with changes in the landscape; seasons mirror Silas' emotional states and life stages, and time layers the landscape, revealing secrets and altering structures. The rhythms of nature parallel Silas' personal evolution, while growth is possible, the past cannot be undone. Through this intricate mapping of inner and outer landscapes, Eliot creates a rich tapestry that reflects the complexities of human growth and the profound impact of place and time on personal development.

Keywords: Space, Time, Landscape, Seasons, Self-Awareness, Identity

Introduction

Le paysage apparaît ainsi comme une manifestation exemplaire de la multidimensionalité des phénomènes humains et sociaux, de l'interdépendance du temps et de l'espace, et de l'interaction de la nature et de la culture, de l'économique et du symbolique, de l'individu et de la société [The landscape appeared thus as an exemplary manifestation of the multidimensionality of human and social phenomena, of the interdependence of time and space, and of the interaction of nature and culture, of the economic and the symbolic, of the individual and society]. (Collot 2011, 11)

The geographic landscapes in *Silas Marner* are as rich and dynamic as Silas' own life, marked by change and a certain rhythmic continuity. George Eliot masterfully captures the

transformative effects of time on the external environments where the narrative unfolds, mirroring the simultaneous transformations within Silas and his life trajectory.

This article examines the interplay between the external and internal settings of the novel, focusing on the evolving landscapes of Raveloe and Lantern Yard, alongside the metaphorical “life map” of Silas. Where each setting represents a phase in his emotional and spiritual development, marking his move from isolation to connection, and from despair to hope. At the beginning, Raveloe is the rustic, pastoral village, which represents simplicity and confinement; as the story progresses, it transforms, mirroring Silas’ own growth and reintegration into society. Lantern Yard is the counterpart—a grim, industrial setting, symbolizing the character’s past betrayal and loss of faith. Silas’ dramatic change from here to Raveloe highlights his journey from darkness to light. It is important to note that Silas’ development is intricately linked to other characters—Eppie, Godfrey, Nancy, and Dunstan—who play significant roles as both catalysts for his transformation and products of change by their interactions with him. Eppie symbolizes new beginnings and unconditional love; her presence transforms Silas, turning him into a more sociable Self, more open and loving. Godfrey, on his turn, represents guilt and moral ambiguity, struggling with responsibility and truth in all his interactions with Silas, as well as with Nancy, who embodies steadfastness and societal norms, as well as duty and morality. Dunstan is indeed a catalyst for change through his deceit and downfall, to the extent that his actions indirectly reveal truths and reshape relationships. Silas’ development is hence not only influenced by his environment but also by the relationships with these characters, in a dynamic reciprocation that enriches the narrative and allows us to better understand the growth, redemption, and power of human connection. As Collot (2011) propounds, landscape embodies the multidimensionality of human and social phenomena, and *Silas Marner* reveals this interaction by demonstrating how the novel’s characters collectively influence and shape Silas’ experiences and transformation. In Tallys’ words:

On one hand, consistent with my view of literary cartography as a fundamental aspect of storytelling, I mean to indicate that narratives are in some ways devices or methods used to map the real-and-imagined spaces of human experience. Narratives are, in a sense, mapping machines. On the other hand, narratives—like maps, for that matter—never come before us in some pristine, original form. They are always and already formed by their interpretations or by the interpretative frameworks in which we, as readers, situate them. Further, as readers, we cannot help but fit narratives or spatial representations into some sort of spatiotemporal context in which they make sense to us, thereby also becoming more or less useful to us, in our own attempts to give meaningful shape to the world in which we live. That is, these narratives, which are also maps, must be understood as themselves objects to be mapped. (2014, 3)

Eliot's novel demonstrates the intricate relationship between the settings and the personal development of the characters. The shifting landscapes of Raveloe and Lantern Yard, along with the progression of time, serve as metaphors for the internal journeys of the characters, especially Silas Marner. They serve not only as backdrops but as active participants in the narrative. The stark contrast between the industrial Lantern Yard and the pastoral Raveloe highlights Silas' passage from a place of betrayal and isolation to one of community and belonging. It shapes the character's experiences and reflects his internal states. This concept is aligned with the idea that geographical and spatial contexts significantly outline a character's evolution over time. Eliot's novel exemplifies the complex relationship between geography, space, and time in shaping a character's journey and interior evolution, following "the trajectories of the subject and of the object" (Tally Jr. 2014, 3), indicating how both the external environments and the internal emotional landscapes of the characters evolve in tandem. Eliot's meticulous description of settings not only provides a background for the story but also mirrors the transformations occurring within the characters. The physical spaces inhabited by the characters—Silas' cottage, the village, the church—are deeply intertwined with social hierarchies and relationships. These spaces influence how characters interact and perceive one another. Silas' transformation from a reclusive weaver to a beloved father figure is mirrored in the changing physical space of his home, which becomes warmer and more inviting with Eppie's presence.

The narrative is set in two contrasting locations, symbolizing distinct phases of self-awareness, personal growth, and fulfillment. These settings juxtapose rural and urban life, nature and human nature, reflecting the protagonist's emotional states and existential struggles. In *Silas Marner*, the depiction of landscapes—whether indoor or outdoor—serves a dual symbolic purpose. Outdoor spaces evoke aggression, fear, and unease, emotions that are particularly evident in scenes involving the dark, foreboding forests and the treacherous landscapes that the characters traverse. For example, the robbery of Silas' gold occurs in the gloomy, oppressive outdoors, symbolizing the threats and uncertainties that lie beyond the safety of his home. While indoor settings represent sanctuary, protection, and the ultimate achievement of peace, signified by the crossing of thresholds both literal and figurative. The interiors of homes and communal spaces provide a refuge from the harshness of the outside world. Silas' cottage, once a place of solitude and sorrow, becomes a sanctuary of love and warmth with Eppie's presence. This transformation signifies Silas' journey toward emotional and spiritual peace. Indeed, as Smith et al. claim, "emotions also have a culture, history, seasonality, psychology, biology, economy, and so on" (2009, 1). This assertion underscores the complexity of emotions and their deep connections to various aspects of human experience. In *Silas Marner*, the combination between emotions and settings reflects this complexity, adding layers to the characters' development and the narrative structure. The cultural and historical context of Raveloe and Lantern Yard shapes the characters' emotions

and actions. The traditional, tight-knit community of Raveloe contrasts with the more rigid, judgmental environment of Lantern Yard, influencing Silas' emotional progress.

The changing seasons in the novel, also help to mirror the characters' emotional states. Winter often symbolizes despair and stagnation, while Spring represents renewal and hope. Moreover, the psychological and biological aspects of emotions are evident in Silas' transformation. His initial isolation and physical decline give way to emotional rejuvenation and physical vitality as he reconnects with the community and forms a bond with Eppie.

This article offers a perspective on *Silas Marner*, intertwining temporal and spatial dimensions to underscore the dynamic and layered narrative George Eliot constructs. By drawing parallels between the physical landscape and the human experience, the study illuminates how time, through its cyclical rhythms and inevitable progression, shapes not only the terrain but also the lives of its inhabitants. This approach reveals secrets embedded in the layers of time, aligning Silas Marner's life stages with the natural rhythms of the seasons. Eliot uses temporal shifts to emphasize the passage of time and its impact on characters' lives. The narrative spans several years, allowing readers to witness the long-term effects of events and decisions. The novel explores how past experiences shape the present. Silas' memories of Lantern Yard continue to haunt him until he finds redemption and closure in Raveloe. Time's steady march brings changes and revelations, uncovering secrets embedded in the layers of the past. This inevitable progression of time shapes the character's development and interactions with the world around him. The narrative employs the cyclical patterns of the seasons to reflect Silas Marner's emotional and spiritual journey. The progression from the bleakness of Winter to the renewal of Spring mirrors Silas' transformation from isolation to community.

The methodological integration of cultural and literary studies, enhanced by the application of a lexicometric tool, adds rigor and depth to this analysis, gaining from "cross-fertilization" (Ryan et al. 2016, 3). Through this digital lens, the article evaluates patterns, frequencies, and the thematic weight of specific terms, providing visual evidence through graphs to substantiate its claims. This quantitative approach complements the qualitative insights, enriching the interpretation of Eliot's text. Framed by literary geography (Tally Jr. 2021), the exploration of these quantitative aspects of the text delves into the interplay between characters and their psychological states, as well as their emotions (Conroy 2021). Mapping fictional settings, as Conroy (2021) notes, necessitates assumptions about the relationship between language and place. This endeavor, described by Piatti and Hurni as a true "interdisciplinary challenge" (2011, 218), aims to elucidate the ambiguities and uncertainties inherent in this field. This analysis enhances our understanding of how literary landscapes shape and reflect the inner lives of characters, contributing significantly to the study of literary geography and the broader field of literary studies. Through this interdisciplinary approach, scholars can better understand the complex connections between narrative spaces, character development, and thematic depth.

The focus on *change*—as both a natural rhythm and a thematic cornerstone—emphasizes the novel's portrayal of transformation and renewal, often tied to nature's cycles and the urban environment's fluidity. The article underscores the tension between permanence and transience: the irrevocability of the past, the transformative potential of the present, and the anticipation of the future. This conceptual framework resonates with Eliot's nuanced exploration of human experience, where change is inevitable, secrets are unveiled, and life evolves within an interconnected web of time and space.

Silas' Four Seasons

Time and the Seasons

The return to Lantern Yard, over three decades after Silas Marner's settlement in Raveloe, serves as a poignant testament to the permanence of change and the irrevocability of the past. This theme is mirrored in Godfrey's situation; his choice to conceal Eppie's true parentage upon her arrival at Silas' cottage is a decision without reprieve, cementing his exclusion from a paternal bond with her. Redemption, within this context, is possible but hinges on personal growth and evolution rather than the possibility of altering past actions. Furthermore, the landscape in *Silas Marner* symbolizes the changes wrought by time.

In the days when the spinning-wheels hummed busily in the farmhouses—and even great ladies, clothed in silk and thread-lace, had their toy spinning-wheels of polished oak—there might be seen in districts far away among the lanes, or deep in the bosom of the hills, certain pallid undersized men, who by the side of the brawny country-folk looked like the remnants of a disinherited race. (Eliot 2017, 51)

This passage of time and its impacts are mirrored in Silas' internal landscape, which is delineated into distinct temporal layers: the initial twenty-five years, representing a period of withdrawal and alienation, following his betrayal and exile from Lantern Yard, then the subsequent fifteen years, after Eppie's arrival which symbolize the beginning of renewal, love, and social reintegration, and another sixteen years that mark the culmination of his growth, where Silas embraces a fuller sense of belonging and identity; each phase shapes the rhythm of his personal development, the human capacity to evolve and adapt, suggesting that while past experiences leave indelible marks, they are not definitive of one's ultimate identity. These temporal strata construct Silas' identity, illustrating how time continuously molds and reshapes both the external environment and his inner self.

It was fifteen years since Silas Marner had first come to Raveloe; he was then simply a pallid young man, with prominent, short-sighted brown eyes, whose appearance would have had nothing strange for people of average culture and

experience, but for the villagers near whom he had come to settle it had mysterious peculiarities which corresponded with the exceptional nature of his occupation, and his advent from an unknown region called 'North'ard. (Eliot 2017, 54)

Adding to this complex framework is the role of weather and the seasons, which further influences and shapes the landscape. The succession and variation of these conditions contribute additional layers to the landscape, mirroring the stages in Silas' life. Each season represents different phases and emotions experienced by the characters, with weather acting as a fuel for change. For instance, the harshness of Winter symbolizes the bleak periods of Silas' life, while the rejuvenation of Spring can reflect renewal and hope.

Weather conditions also interact with the physical environment, modifying the landscape and creating new challenges or opportunities. The challenges of losing his gold and the arrival of Eppie represent distinct stages in Silas' journey. While the loss of gold emphasizes his vulnerability and triggers a crisis of despair, the arrival of Eppie introduces a positive and transformative challenge that brings hope and renewal. Together, these challenges illustrate the resilience of the human spirit and the potential for growth and redemption through adversity and love. The seasonal changes like Winter as a time of stagnation and coldness in contrast to Spring, serve to reflect and amplify the emotional states and journeys of the characters. By incorporating weather conditions—snow, cold, mud, and rain—as dynamic elements in the story, Eliot adds depth and realism to the narrative, enhancing the reader's understanding of the characters' struggles and transformations. These changes in the external world parallel Silas' internal journey, illustrating how external forces and inner experiences are intertwined. Storms or harsh weather signify moments of conflict or turmoil in Silas' life. Gentle, calm weather reflects periods of peace or contentment, showing harmony between Silas and his environment. The cyclical nature of seasons emphasizes the ongoing evolution and resilience of the characters, reinforcing the themes of growth, redemption, and the passage of time. Indeed, the physical hardships of cold Winters or the blessings of fertile Springtime directly influence choices and development.

By examining how the seasons interact with space, place, and time, we gain a deeper understanding of how these elements collectively shape the narrative and the characters' development in *Silas Marner*. The novel's elaborate depiction of the natural world serves as a powerful metaphor for the complexities of human life and transformation, and highlights the narrative's grounding in a vivid, almost living environment where the earlier-mentioned elements coalesce to drive the story forward. The depiction of Silas Marner's brownish figure in a wintry late afternoon landscape serves as a poignant reflection of the narrative tone surrounding its central character. Immersed in the inter mist enveloping the community of Raveloe, Silas' presence is emblematic of isolation and bleakness. When the narrator shifts focus to Godfrey Cass and the Red House, the narrative situates us in the

month of November, where the dim natural light and the warmth of the fireplace contribute to an atmosphere of intimacy, secrecy, and foreboding. This setting mirrors Godfrey's concealed life and his clandestine marriage to Molly.

The pervasive rainy weather, referenced by Godfrey as his brother Dunstan prepares to sell his horse, becomes a harbinger of events that will ripple through the lives of the horse, Dunstan, Godfrey, and Silas alike. Eliot's description captures the somber tone: "The spot looked very dreary at this season, with the moist trodden clay about it, and the red, muddy water high up in the deserted quarry...for mist is no screen when people get close to each other...for the mist was passing to rain" (Eliot 2017, 32–33). This intensification of the wintry weather becomes a driving force in the narrative, precipitating a chain of events with profound consequences for Silas. The rain and poor visibility delay Silas' return home, providing the opportunity for the theft of his gold. This act coincides with Dunstan's death and disappearance. Later that evening, the worsening weather—marked by heavy snowfall—culminates in Molly's tragic death, an event that irrevocably alters the trajectory of Silas' life.

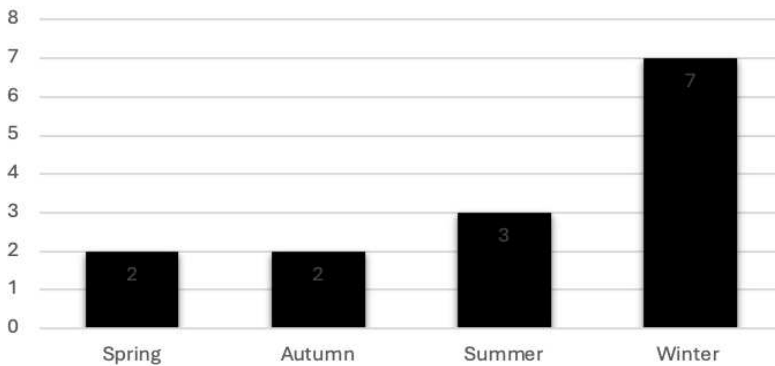


Figure 1: Seasons

Winter emerges as the season with the most profound symbolic and narrative impact in the novel (freq. 7), shaping both the depiction of misfortunes and the quotidian details, such as the logistical arrangements for the journey to the Red House New Year's Eve party. This is vividly illustrated in the description of Miss Nancy Lammeter's journey:

Some women, I grant, would not appear to advantage seated on a pillion, and attired in a drab joseph and a drab beaver-bonnet, with a crown resembling a small stewpan;...It was all the greater triumph to Miss Nancy Lammeter's beauty that she looked thoroughly bewitching in that costume, as, seated on the pillion behind her tall, erect father, she held one arm round him, and looked down, with open-eyed anxiety, at the treacherous snow-covered pools and puddles, which sent up formidable splashings of mud under the stamp of Dobbin's foot. (Eliot 2017, 79)

As illustrated in Figure 1, Winter is unequivocally the season that establishes the novel’s overarching tone. Furthermore, it is closely associated with themes of dark/darkness (freq. 48), black/blackness (freq. 21), cf. Figure 2, all of which evoke despair, unhappiness, and sadness. This imagery is reinforced by the repeated use of the adjective *cold*, (freq. 18) and of the noun *night* (freq. 45), throughout the novel.

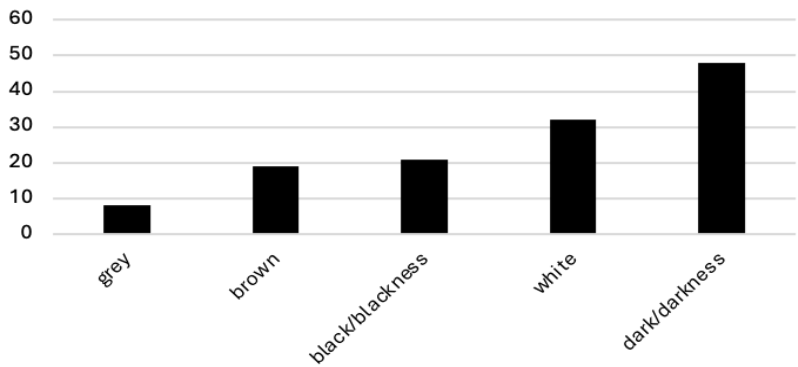


Figure 2: Colors

Winter, often associated with significant religious festivities, highlights the unconditional contrast between community life and Silas Marner’s isolation. While the villagers of Raveloe come together to celebrate Christmas and New Year with joy and shared traditions— “in Raveloe village the bells rang merrily, and the church was fuller than all through the rest of the year, with red faces” (Eliot 2017, 77)—Silas remains distant and indifferent to these expressions of communal warmth. This contrast emphasizes Silas’ profound alienation, both physical and emotional, from the society around him. The vivid imagery of the church filled with “red faces” conveys the vitality and togetherness of the community, which stands in sharp relief to Silas’ solitude. His disconnection from these celebrations reflects his broader estrangement from human connection, underscoring key themes of isolation, belonging, and the human need for community.

And so, notwithstanding the honest persuasions of Mr. Macey and Dolly Winthrop, Silas spent his Christmas-day in loneliness, eating his meat in sadness of heart, though the meat had come to him as a neighbourly present. ...but towards evening snow began to fall, and curtained from him even that dreary outlook, shutting him close up his narrow grief. And he sat in his robbed home through the livelong evening, not caring to close his shutters or lock his door, pressing his head between his hands and moaning, till the cold grasped him and told him that his fire was grey. (Eliot 2017, 77)

Silas' frigid and gray-colored Christmas serves as an absolute contrast to the joy symbolized by the ringing bells and the rosy faces filling the church. As previously noted, this season holds particular significance within the novel, as it marks the pivotal moment initiating the inner transformation of the characters.

Autumn, in turn, becomes the narrative focal point sixteen years later, underscoring the relentless passage of time: "It was a bright Autumn Sunday, sixteen years after...in spite of Time, who has laid his hand on them all" (Eliot 2017, 121). This season, emblematic of change, reflects a shift not only in the physical landscape but also in the characters' lives. The drying of the water in the pit, attributed to intensive harvesting, serves as a metaphor for deeper transformations to come. These shifts are subtly foreshadowed through the dialogue, as Eppie observes, "How odd it'll seem to have the old pit dried up!" (Eliot 2017, 131).

The progression of the seasons symbolizes shifts in the natural world, a theme mirrored in the transformative moments within *Silas Marner*. Eppie embodies this change when she expresses her desire for a garden filled with flowers, representing her aspiration to alter the landscape surrounding the cottage. This desire for transformation extends further as she contemplates marriage to Aaron, despite her professed aversion to change. Silas, however, articulates a deeper reflection on the inevitability of transformation, stating: "But there's this to be thought on, Eppie: things will change, whether we like it or not; things won't go on for a long while just as they are and no difference" (Eliot 2017, 133). Ultimately, the narrative achieves closure as Silas reconciles with his memories and past experiences: "and as, with reawakening sensibilities, memory also reawakened, he had begun to ponder over the elements of his old faith, and blend them with his new impressions, till he recovered a consciousness of unity between his past and present" (Eliot 2017, 126). Through these reflections, the text explores themes of personal growth, acceptance, and the cyclical nature of life. "As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory: as her life unfolded, his soul long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness" (Eliot 2017, 114).

As counterpart to Autumn and Winter, Spring emerges as the season most evocative of joy and happiness. This association is reflected in the full blossoming of nature, the renewal of animal life, and the expression of human emotions. Appropriately, it is during this season that Eppie chooses to marry Aaron, underscoring the thematic alignment between the season's vitality and the personal happiness of the characters: "It was when the great lilacs and laburnums in the old-fashioned gardens showed their golden and purple wealth above the lichen-tinted walls, and when there were calves still young enough to want bucketfulls of fragrant milk" (Eliot 2017, 159). This seasonal imagery reinforces the sense of renewal and harmony central to the narrative.

Another significant characteristic associated with nature in *Silas Marner* is its role as a reflection of the characters' internal landscapes, particularly through the themes of fertility and barrenness. Raveloe is portrayed as a prosperous and fertile region, where even the

incompetence of its landowners does not diminish its abundance. The narrator ironically observes, “but there were several chiefs in Raveloe who could farm badly quite at their ease, drawing enough money from their bad farming” (Eliot 2017, 5). This depiction contrasts with the barren, oppressive environment of Lantern Yard, described through Eppie’s reaction: “‘O father, I’m like as if I was stifled,’ said Eppie. ‘I couldn’t ha’ thought as any folks lived I’ this way, so close together. How pretty the Stone-pits ‘ull look when we get back!’” (Eliot 2017, 158). These contrasting settings underscore the broader symbolic interplay between nature and the psychological states of the characters. Lantern Yard is a hostile and unnatural environment, devoid of comfort and warmth, particularly from Eppie’s perspective. This setting is similarly perceived by the reader, who associates it with the life of young Silas, the protagonist. His existence is characterized by darkness, isolation, and a lack of meaningful experiences, despite being considered by his fellowmen “a young man of exemplary life and an ardent faith” (Eliot 2017, 56). This barrenness defines Silas’ life until the transformative arrival of Eppie. Silas resides in a desolate quarry, surrounded by unyielding rocks and sparse vegetation—a reflection of his inner emptiness. The interior landscape of Silas’ emotions begins to flourish first, gradually enriched by Eppie’s presence. Eventually, she extends this newfound vitality to the external environment, emerging as the pivotal agent of change.

“I wish *we* had a little garden, father, with double daisies in, like Mrs Winthrop’s,” said Eppie, when they were out in the lane; “only they say it ‘ud take a deal of digging and bringing fresh soil—and you couldn’t do that, could you, father?” (Eliot 2017, 122)

“It’ll be a deal livelier at the Stone-pits when we’ve got some flowers, for I always think the flowers can see us and know what we are talking about...There’s no reason why you shouldn’t have some,” said Aaron, “for I can bring you slips of anything; I am forced to cut no end of ‘em when I’m gardening, and throw ‘em away mostly.” (Eliot 2017, 123)

This interpretation highlights a symbolic connection between the external environment and the internal lives of the characters, suggesting that the desolate landscape mirrors the emptiness of Nancy and Godfrey’s marriage. The question of whether this is mere coincidence, or a form of divine punishment directed at Godfrey adds depth to the narrative, emphasizing moral and spiritual undertones. Godfrey’s concealment of his marriage to Molly and the existence of their child reveals his moral failings. “And Nancy’s deepest wounds came from the perception that the absence of children from their earth was dwelt on in her husband’s mind as a privation to which he could not reconcile himself” (Eliot 2017, 138).

By prioritizing his reputation and comfort over responsibility, he creates a chain of consequences that ultimately impacts Nancy. Her infertility is portrayed as a shared

punishment, underscoring how Godfrey's actions entangle those around him in his moral failings. Eliot's description of Nancy's pain—deepened by her awareness of Godfrey's unspoken longing for children—emphasizes her emotional suffering and the fractures in their relationship. This layered narrative serves as a critique of personal irresponsibility and the broader social consequences of individual moral choices.

Space and Place

The dichotomy of inner and outer landscapes plays a role in the novel's structure and character development. The narrative contrasts two distinct geographical settings: the industrial town of Lantern Yard and the rural village of Raveloe. Lantern Yard, marked by its industrial and religiously fanatic community, is juxtaposed with the idyllic and isolated Raveloe, situated in a fertile agricultural area surrounded by mountains. These contrasting locations encapsulate the two major stages of Silas Marner's personal growth.

Both Lantern Yard and Raveloe are characterized by their remoteness. Lantern Yard's community, with its fervent religious zeal, is cut off from the broader urban environment, while Raveloe's geographical seclusion is emphasized by its hilly surroundings, making it difficult to access. Silas' cottage on the village's outskirts further underscores his isolation, reinforcing his detachment from the community. The novel explores the impact of these environments on Silas' character. The physical and social seclusion he experiences parallels his inner immobility, exemplified by his cataleptic state. This condition reflects the stagnation of his life in Lantern Yard and the subsequent transformation he undergoes in Raveloe. The external landscapes are thus inseparably linked to Silas' internal journey, shaping and reflecting his evolution throughout the story.

Exterior spaces can transform into internalized spaces, especially when they are characterized by barriers that set apart, restrict interaction, and inhibit communication. Notably, the narrator's first reference to time and space occurs within a wintry rural landscape: "the shepherd's dog barked fiercely when one of these alien-looking men appeared on the upland, dark against the early winter sunset" (Eliot 2017, 3). This description conveys an inhospitable atmosphere marked by discomfort and mistrust. Further emphasizing Silas' isolation within the community, the narrator notes his lack of social ties: "he invited no comer to step across his door-sill, and he never strolled into the village to drink a pint at the Rainbow" (Eliot 2017, 5). At the novel's outset, the village is portrayed as a secluded and insular space—a prosperous but inaccessible area with limited communication with the outside world—where Silas had lived in self-imposed isolation for the past fifteen years, making no effort to form connections with the community.

In this context, Raveloe functions more as a "space" for Silas rather than a "place." Space is often viewed as a more abstract, neutral, and undifferentiated expanse, referring to the physical dimensions and the arrangement of objects within an area, without any

meaning or attachment. Place, on the other hand, is more than just a physical location; it is imbued with meaning, significance, and personal or communal attachment. Place is created through human experiences, memories, and emotions. It is often defined by the experiences, emotions, and social interactions that occur within it. It is relational and subjective, shaped by human perception and attachment. Unlike space, place provides a sense of belonging and identity. It is where people form relationships, create memories, and establish routines. At the beginning, Raveloe is but a space where “his life narrowing and hardening itself more and more into a mere pulsation of desire and satisfaction that had no relation to any other being” (Eliot 2017, 68). However, as the narrative progresses, Raveloe evolves into a place of significance for him, aligning with Tuan’s conceptualization: “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (Tuan 2018, 6). While space provides the physical dimensions, place is where the qualitative, emotional, and relational aspects of human experience come to life. The transformation from space to place is fundamental to the creation of meaning, identity, and community. This dynamic interplay shapes not only physical surroundings but also social and emotional landscapes.

The initial characterization of Silas Marner portrays him as a man deeply marked by past suffering, particularly tied to his experiences in Lantern Yard. These two key geographic locations—Lantern Yard and Raveloe—serve as symbolic anchors, with the passage of time and the changing seasons reflecting Silas’ psychological and emotional journey throughout the novel. Silas’ departure from Lantern Yard occurs under circumstances of forced exile, ironically due to an accusation of robbery, leading him to seek solitude in Raveloe, a village different from his previous environment. He takes up residence in a stone cottage situated amidst “nutty hedgerows near the village of Raveloe, and not far from the edge of a deserted stone-pit” (Eliot 2017, 4). The contrast between these two worlds is emphasized: “And what could be more unlike that Lantern Yard world than the world in Raveloe?” (Eliot 2017, 13). Alienated from his origins and set within an unfamiliar and remote landscape, Silas retreats into isolation, both physically and emotionally. His life becomes mechanized and centered around his weaving, which evolves into a compulsive pursuit, culminating in an obsession with accumulating wealth: “How the love of accumulating money grows an absorbing passion in men whose imaginations, even in the very beginning of their hoard, showed them no purpose beyond it” (Eliot 2017, 17). Silas’ obsession dissipates after he is robbed, and it is soon replaced by Eppie, who becomes his sole reason for living. She serves as both a replacement and a source of sublimation: he “had found his new treasure on the earth” (Eliot 2017, 121). Eppie thus becomes Silas’ new and cherished treasure.

The weaver’s relationships with the surrounding community are revealed through his points of permeability with the social environment. Silas’ life in Lantern Yard, constrained by religious fanaticism, unfolds in an automatic manner, governed by rules that he neither

questions nor seeks to understand; it unfolds “in an emotionally mediated process of nostalgic reflection as part of an attempt to cope with on-going changes to a landscape important to their sense of individual and collective identities” (Bennett 2009, 189).

This setting can be considered the first boundary—a space designed to exclude the unknown and the fear it may provoke. The second boundary is delineated by the topography of Raveloe, while the innermost boundary is represented by the stone cottage that Silas inhabits. These concentric boundaries serve to protect Silas, with the cottage, arguably the most significant boundary, possessing a distinctive feature: a door, an aperture to the external world. As Tuan observes, “The house is bounded space, but it has openings that must be protected” (2013, 206). The door functions both as a protective barrier and a point of vulnerability. Its efficacy relies on vigilant guarding; if left open, it ceases to shield and instead facilitates intrusion. Symbolically, the different moments when the door of Silas' cottage is opened carry profound significance. While the door protects Silas from the cold and the encroachments of others, its openness permits external elements to penetrate his life—whether it be Dunstan, who enters to steal, or Eppie, who finds warmth and transforms Silas' existence through her presence.

There is a clear connection between Silas and the surrounding landscape, a realm he has avoided for years, seeking refuge from interaction. Silas' home was “guarded against a whole range of unwanted potential intrusions” (Massey 2005, 179). This landscape—or rather, a sequence of landscapes—consists of various physical barriers. While not insurmountable, as the narrative later reveals, these barriers are initially discouraging, symbolizing the different stages of personal and emotional challenges Silas must confront throughout his life. We cannot forget that Silas' betrayal and subsequent expulsion from Lantern Yard symbolizes the first significant impediment in his life. This event isolates him both physically and emotionally, leading to his relocation to Raveloe, which presents another set of challenges for Silas. The rural village is vastly different from his previous home, creating an obstacle, unfamiliarity and mistrust and reinforcing solitude, but also setting the stage for his eventual transformation. A transformation that happens with Eppie, leading Silas to rediscover love, trust, and a sense of community. This challenge also represents the hindrance of adjusting to a new role as a father figure, learning also to trust and embrace the community, ultimately finding a sense of belonging and peace.

We have already identified key elements shaping this landscape—such as time and the seasons—but we must also consider the terrain itself, which profoundly influences the external setting. This terrain, with its distinct features, plays a crucial role in the contrast Silas draws between Lantern Yard and Raveloe. He observes: “Nothing could be more unlike his native town, set within sight of the widespread hillsides, than this low, wooded region, where he felt hidden even from the heavens by the screening trees and hedgerows” (Eliot 2017, 13). The landscape embodies both a literal and metaphorical sense of concealment, reflecting Silas' state of isolation and disconnection.

Silas' return to Lantern Yard, a journey back to his past, is portrayed as a labyrinthine walk-through narrow alleys and streets, where only glimpses of the sky are visible. A new building now stands where a chapel, once central to his life, used to be, erasing all traces of its existence:

"Here it is," he said, in a tone of satisfaction, as they came to a narrow alley. "And then we must go to the left again, and then straight for'ard for a bit, up Shoe Lane; and then we shall be at the entry next to the o'erhanging window, where there's the nick in the road for the water to run. Eh, I can see it all." (Eliot 2017, 158)

In contrast, Raveloe is depicted with deliberate geographic detail, such as Silas' stone cottage: "Stone cottage, not far from the edge of a deserted stone-pit" (Eliot 2017, 4), or the village of Raveloe itself.

(Raveloe) it lay in the rich central plain of what we are pleased to call Merry England, and held farms which, speaking from a spiritual point of view, paid highly-desirable tithes. But it was nestled in a snug well-wooded hollow, quite an hour's journey on horseback from any turnpike, where it was never reached by the vibrations of the coach-horn, or of public opinion. (Eliot 2017, 5)

The coordinates of the stone cottage, its proximity to the pit, and its position relative to Raveloe's access paths are essential to the unfolding of key events in *Silas Marner*. These spatial relationships not only frame the physical setting but also underscore the thematic interplay of chance, isolation, and moral consequence in George Eliot's narrative. For Dunstan Cass, the cottage's location and its connection to the treacherous paths surrounding the stone-pits create the conditions for his collapse. The passage illustrates his struggle with the obscuring mist and evening darkness, emphasizing the danger posed by the landscape. The description of Dunstan dragging his whip along the hedgerow for guidance reflects both his overconfidence and his gradual loss of control as he nears the fatal opening at the pits:

But now the mist, helped by the evening darkness, was more of a screen than he desired, for it hid the ruts into which his feet were liable to slip—hid everything, so that he had to guide his steps by dragging his whip along the low bushes in advance of the hedgerow. He must soon, he thought, be getting near the opening at the Stone-pits. (Eliot 2017, 32–33)

Similarly, the position of the weaver's cottage plays a critical role in the fate of Molly and her daughter, Eppie. Molly's downfall, driven by her intention to reveal her marriage to Godfrey Cass, occurs on her journey to Raveloe. Her death near the cottage leaves Eppie abandoned in

proximity to Silas Marner, altering the course of his life. The positioning here is not merely coincidental but underscores Eliot's use of space to weave together individual lives through proximity and circumstance. Together, these coordinates serve as more than geographical markers; they become narrative tools that reflect the interconnectedness of human lives and the inevitability of moral reckonings within the fabric of Eliot's realist universe.

She had arrived at a spot where her footsteps were no longer checked by a hedgerow...She sank down against a straggling furze bush...and the little one, rising on its legs, toddled through the snow, the old grimy shawl in which it was wrapped trailing behind it, and the queer little bonnet dangling at its back—toddled on to the open door of Silas Marner's Cottage, and right up to the warm hearth. (Eliot 2017, 98)

This passage uses the landscape to reflect and enhance the emotional states of the characters. The coaction between the harsh outdoor elements and the welcoming indoor space underscores the themes of struggle, hope, and renewal. By transitioning from the cold, unforgiving outdoors to the warm, protective indoors, Eliot not only captures the characters' emotional quests but also highlights the transformative power of place and time in shaping human experiences, showing how temporal strata and spatial dimensions construct Silas' identity, continually molding and reshaping both his external environment and inner self. This moment is vital in the narrative, highlighting the impact of time, space, and human experience in shaping identity and emotional progress. In *Silas Marner*, the interconnectedness between space and time has already been established as crucial to understanding the narrative's progression. Paths, stones, and pits symbolize the external landscape's impact on the story, while the passage of time, with its layers of experiences, highlights the internal transformations of the characters.

Conclusion

In *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe*, the landscape is in constant transformation, paralleling the personal metamorphosis of Silas himself. The progression of the weaver's journey can be aligned with the cycles of the seasons, creating a rhythm that resonates with Mels' assertion: "Whether or not we recognize the rhythmicity of the world, and whatever theoretical conclusions we draw from its complexity, human beings have always been rhythm makers as much as place-makers" (2016, 3). This alignment of Silas' internal evolution with the seasonal changes imbues the narrative with a cyclical, almost ritualistic, quality.

The association of the seasons with the landscape of Raveloe is rendered explicit through Eliot's deliberate structuring of the narrative, which uses them as a metaphorical framework. Similarly, Silas' internal journey unfolds within a temporal pattern that mirrors their rhythm. However, this pattern subverts the conventional sequence—Spring, Summer, Autumn, and

Winter. Instead, Silas' life cycle begins in Autumn, marked by his constrained existence in Lantern Yard. This season, symbolic of decline and transition, culminates in his exile and sets the stage for the difficulties and profound isolation that dominate the next fifteen years of his life. Autumn thus contains the seeds of the hardships to come, reflecting the narrative's deeper exploration of change, resilience, and renewal. The narrative arc of *Silas Marner* can be understood through the metaphor of the seasons, illustrating Silas' emotional and social transformation. The fifteen years of isolation and labor, marked by Dunstan's theft of Silas' gold during Christmas and culminating in the snowstorm, Molly's death, and Eppie's arrival, symbolize a prolonged "Winter" in Silas' life. During this period, Silas turns away from community and exists in a state of emotional stagnation and alienation. The turning point occurs with Eppie's entrance into his life, signaling a transition to a "Spring" characterized by renewal, discovery, and growth. Over sixteen years of this metaphorical Spring, Silas gradually reconnects with his past, overcomes his fears and suspicions, and dismantles the barriers that had separated him from others. This process reaches its emotional climax when Eppie acknowledges Silas as her true father, solidifying their bond and epitomizing the novel's themes of redemption and the transformative power of human connection.

The seasonal framework underscores George Eliot's broader exploration of human resilience, the importance of community, and the potential for renewal through love and trust. The novel closes with the marriage of Eppie and Aaron, symbolizing the culmination of Silas Marner's journey and the fulfillment of his transformation. This represents what can be described as Silas' "Summer"—a period of life marked by contentment and completion. By this point, Silas has achieved a profound turning point, having not only recovered his lost gold but also gained acceptance and recognition within the community. Furthermore, through Aaron, he secures a stable and promising future for Eppie, thus bringing his plot structure to a resolution and achieving personal closure.

In conclusion, George Eliot weaves Silas Marner's inner transformation with the evolving landscapes of Lantern Yard and Raveloe, portraying a natural and inevitable progression. This integration of change is encapsulated in Godfrey's reflection: "there's debts we can't pay like money debts, by paying extra for the years that have slipped by. While I've been putting off, the trees have been growing—" (Eliot 2017, 154). This observation underscores the inexorable relationship between time and space, wherein the passage of time persists regardless of human hesitation or procrastination. The inability to alter past events emphasizes the necessity of embracing and integrating change. *Silas Marner* emerges as a narrative of transformation, highlighting the human capacity for growth and the enduring hope for redemption. "'It's gone, child,' he said, at last, in strong agitation—'Lantern Yard's gone. It must ha'been here, because here's the house with the o'erhanging window—I know that—it's just the same; but they've made this new opening; and see that big factory! It's all gone—chapel and all'" (Eliot 2017, 158). Silas is unable to alter his past or redeem his reputation, as the past itself no longer exists; the elements that once defined it—

most notably the chapel, the focal point of his world and its associated hardships—have vanished. This reality, however, serves merely as a recognition of what was, bearing little relevance to the future where Silas' happiness lies in wait.

George Eliot reflects deeply on themes such as labor, wealth, deception, justice, moral principles, community, family, and even addiction. These reflections are seamlessly interwoven into the natural rhythms of life—like rain, snow, and sunlight—mirroring the cyclical processes inherent to the landscapes she evokes. George Eliot's *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe* reveals the dimensions of humanity through the novel's imaginary settings and the spatial structure of the narrative (Collot 2014). The text employs the contrasting environments of Lantern Yard and Raveloe to reflect the protagonist's internal transformation and the broader human experience. Through this, Eliot explores how time, geography, and spatial contexts influence and mirror the characters' psychological and emotional journeys, highlighting the profound connection between place and human development.

AI Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the use of Copilot to improve the clarity of the language and readability of the article. The prompts used include asking for grammar corrections, synonyms, and rephrasing. The output from these prompts was used to bring more cohesion and clarity to the text. While the authors acknowledge the usage of AI, the authors maintain that they, Ana Clara Birrento and Maria Da Conceição Ribeiro, are the sole authors of this article and take full responsibility for the content therein, as outlined in COPE recommendations.

Informed Consent

The authors declare that informed consent was not required as there were no human participants involved.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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