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Adam Bede and the Ideology of Marriage

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ヴィクトリア朝において public sphere と domestic sphere が明確に分裂する傾向があることに着目して、その傾向の中で George Eliot がいかに Dinah、Hetty、Adam、Seth を中心に結婚の ideology を形成していくか、ということを考察してみた。特に Dinah の spirituality (非肉体的性) と Methodism がいかに彼女と Adam との関係の中で、そして Dinah 自信がいかにヴィクトリア朝の結婚の ideology との絡み合いの中で女という役割を果たす存在として、domestic sphere の中に組み込まれていくか、という過程に注目してみた。

The division between the domestic sphere and the public sphere was one of the ramifications of the Industrial Revolution. Although the line separating the two was not so clear in the late eighteenth century (as evidenced by Adam Smith's conception of public and domestic spheres, according to which the latter comprehended market and productive activities as well as family life, while the former included only those which were controlled by the state),¹ a trend was discernible by the 1830s and '40s that the site of production was definitely shifting from the domestic to the public sphere. When production was removed from the home the discourse of domesticity developed an unmistakable association of women with the private, and men with the public. Spouses were ideologically pressured into disentangling themselves from the kind of work that was considered belonging to the sphere associated with the other sex. According to Davidoff and Hall, both women's participation in economic activities and men's involvement in familial matters were discouraged.² In this historical context, Eliot attempts to reformulate marriage so that it will be based on the equality between men and women while the institution of marriage still remains within the framework of the dominant ideology that is premised upon the existence of separate spheres.

Suzanne Graver argues that one of the motivating forces behind most of Victorian ideology arose from a sense of the loss of community. The transition from agrarian village life to industrial urban life entailed a shift in values from those oriented toward the community to those based on the individual.³ Because of the increasing visibility of the split, many writers looked back to the past with nostalgia, hoping that the recollection of the unsophisticated people with their spiritual unity would inspire the moderns to solve some of the problems they were facing. But these writers were inevitably overwhelmed by the discrepancy, and were ultimately unable to connect the two ages and make the knowledge of the past of much use to their contemporaries. Although Eliot held a similar view on the incompatibility of the past and the present, she relied on the transitional nature of the Victorian period to salvage the past in *Adam Bede*. The action of the novel takes place in 1799, i.e., in the middle of an era when the rural/community-based economy was yielding to the urban/mass productive economic system, but the rift represented by the use of this particular year is smoothed over through an operation that circumvents an unbridgeable hiatus. In fact, *Adam Bede* is a novel of mending a slippage and recuperating the past rather than one of relinquishing what has preceded the Industrial Revolution.

The effects the rising industrialism has on the rural world of *Adam Bede* are found throughout the novel. When Adam learns that his father has not finished a coffin as he had promised, he becomes angry, and threatens his mother that "I shall overrun these doings before long. I've stood enough of 'em."⁴ What Adam's remark implies is the fact that the city has been developing as an alternative site of living for skilled workers like Adam. Later, Adam tells Mr. Poyser, "Seth and me are sure to find work.... A man that's got our trade at his finger ends is at home everywhere" (508). However, the force to pull Adam to the urban center is countered by the communal bond that is created by the possibility of marriage. This marriage has to be the kind that is endued with the values identified with the communal life. A marriage between Hetty and Adam is not acceptable because it would destabilize the community. Lisbeth suggests that the union of Adam and Hetty would result in her displacement: "she'll be missis o'er me, an' I mun look on, belike, while she uses the blue-edged platters, an' breaks 'em, mayhap, though ther's ne'er been one broke sin' my old man an' me bought 'em at the fair twenty 'ear come next Whissuntide" (261). Hetty would likely cause disruption in the family continuity, as symbolized by the shattering of family dishes. Adam's marriage to Hetty suggests another possibility: "it would never do... for his mother to live in the same house with him when he married," though Adam admits, "[f]or himself, he would have liked that they should all live together till Seth was married" (255). In either case, the insertion of Hetty into the domestic circle necessitates the exclusion of Lisbeth from the family. The acceptable wife for Adam who will preserve the values adhered to by Lisbeth, is Dinah. While Hetty, Lisbeth thinks, will "ne'er knit the lads' stockins, nor foot them nayther," Dinah is sure "to take care on thee as thee gett'st a bit o' victual comfortable i' the morning" (543). The security Dinah promises, therefore, is equated with the ideology that opposes the force represented by Hetty, i.e., a force that tries to undermine the domestic values personified by Lisbeth.

Because of the expectations placed on her to become the perpetuator of the rural ideology, Dinah poses, paradoxically enough, a grave danger to the status quo when she introduces new elements that are heterogeneous to the rural world dominated by domestic values. One of the elements presents itself in the form of Dinah's economic independence. Since she has her own source of income, particularly that which derives from the operation of the mill, she is in a position to go beyond the constraints imposed by the rural ideology. When she is reprimanded for her restlessness, she rebuts the Poyser's argument by asserting the right to act on her free will, for she reasons that they have "no right t'interfere with her doing as she likes" (523). This independent spirit is exactly what Mr. Poyser discourages in Hetty. When Hetty requests for permission to seek employment as a lady's maid, Mr. Poyser answers, "Nay, nay... I'd like you to stay with us till you've got a good husband: you're my own niece, and I wouldn't have you go to service, though it was a gentleman's house, as long as I've got a home for you" (382). Security of the rural ideology depends to a great extent on the maintenance of the system that strictly regulates women's activities outside the domestic sphere. For that reason, Dinah's economic independence and the resultant mobility place her out of reach of the ideological control.

Another element that poses danger to the rural values is Dinah's Methodism. In a sense, the issue of Methodism arises in its opposition to ruralism. As the stranger on horseback points out, Methodism is associated with an urban phenomenon, and is opposed to the values upheld by farmers. Indeed, as Mrs. Poyser observes, Methodism could have a disastrous effect on rural life:

...if everybody tried to do without house and home, and with poor eating and drinking, and was allays talking as we must despise the things o' the world... I should like to know where the pick o' the stock, and the corn, and the best new milk cheeses 'ud have to go? everybody 'ud be wanting bread

made o' tail ends, and everybody 'ud be running after everybody else to preach to 'em, instead o' bringing up their families, and laying by against a bad harvest (122).

Methodism also contradicts the religious values thought absolute by the villagers like Mrs. Poyser. For example, Dinah needs only personal authority to preach God's words, for she speaks "directly from her own emotions, and under the inspiration of her own simple faith" (72). However, Mrs. Poyser equates her authority with selfishness, and, as she does not consider it actually sanctioned by God, she regards Dinah's authority as only derived from her "whim and 'contrairiness'" (538). The iconoclastic aspect of Methodism even threatens the sexual ideology that is paramount to preserve the genealogical lines of the village population. Dinah's association with Methodism, for example, compromises her womanhood. Even though she possesses "feminine delicacy of appearance," she is "as unconscious of her outward appearance as a little boy" (71). In other words, Methodism not only makes gender ambiguous but also potentially deprives woman (particularly Dinah) of her female body. While Hetty is described as an entity comprised of physical features such as eyes, cheeks, neck, hair and arms, Dinah is mostly referred to only by her clothes. In the process of minimizing her corporeality, Dinah gradually becomes identified with the spirituality that originates from her fervent belief in Methodism.

In *Adam Bede* all the factors that threaten the rural ideology have a similar feature in that each of them potentially allows Dinah the freedom to reject her biological role to propagate the next generation, as these factors somehow enable and justify her evasion of marriage. For example, because Dinah already possesses economic independence, she does not have to attach herself to a man for financial security; because she is herself authorized to speak the words of God, she does not require any authority figure; and because she is free from the complications of gender and body, she does not have to seek the other to satisfy her biological need. Therefore, Dinah can not only choose to marry a man but also not marry anyone at all. As if to foreground Dinah's independent status, Hetty sees her as "a little perching bird that could only flutter from bough to bough, to look at the swoop of the swallow or the mounting of the lark" (187). Since the survival of the family depends on the domestication of women like Dinah, the need to create a new ideology of marriage becomes a pressing issue.

As a cornerstone of the domestic sphere, the ideal marriage for Eliot involves two equal but complementary partners. The necessity for the complementarity of partners is easily detected when Lisbeth observes that Dinah could marry Seth, "[b]ut happen, thee 'dst like a husband better as isna just the cut o' thysen: th' runnin' brook isna athirst for th' rain" (538). As Lisbeth astutely concludes, despite Seth's status as a co-religionist, or rather because of his similarity to Dinah in religious orientation and temperament, affinity is not expected to develop between the two. Complementarity, however, does not become a condition to exclude equality between partners. Adam pledges to Dinah that in case they were to wed, they would "help one another in everything that is good. I'd never think of putting myself between you and God, an' saying you oughtn't to do this, and you oughtn't to do that" (552). Essentially, Adam rejects traditional men's role to play God, and instead allows Dinah the right to exercise her personal authority to speak for Him:

...you shall go where you like among the people, and teach 'em; for though I like church best, I don't put my soul above yours, as if my words was better for t' follow than your own conscience. And you can help the sick just as much, and you'll have more means o' making 'em a bit comfortable; and you'll be among all your own friends as love you, and can help 'em, and be a blessing to 'em, till their dying day. Surely, Dinah, you'd be as near to God as if you were living lonely and away from me (554).

Yet, the fact that Adam has to repeat his promise to respect her autonomy reveals the difficulty of maintaining a marriage founded on equality.

The difficulty of creating such a marriage emerges from the divergence of three views on the ideal marriage: the men's ideal, Mrs. Poyser's interpretation of the men's ideal, and the ideal that Adam and Dinah try to attain. As Hetty stands in front of her mirror, the narrator intervenes to comment how she will achieve what men consider a perfect wife:

How she will dote on her children! She is almost a child herself, and the little pink round things will hang about her like florets round the central flower; and the husband will look on, smiling benignly, able, whenever he chooses, to withdraw into the sanctuary of his wisdom, towards which his sweet wife will look reverently, and never lift the curtain. It is a marriage such as they made in the golden age, when the men were all wise and majestic, and the women all lovely and loving (198).

The sexual politics that lies behind men's desire to domesticate women and thus escape domestic responsibilities is exposed by Mrs. Poyser, as she remarks, "I know what the men like—a poor soft, as 'ud simper at 'em like the pictur o' the sun, whether they did right or wrong, an' say thank you for a kick, an' pretend she didna know which end she stood uppermost, till her husband told her. That's what a man wants in a wife mostly: he wants to make sure o' one fool as 'll tell him he's wise" (569). In contrast, the view of marriage exemplified by Dinah and Adam is based on interdependence between partners. When Dinah and Adam become engaged, the narrator speculates on the future relationship that will develop from their union:

What greater thing is there for two human souls, than to feel that they are joined for life—to strengthen each other in all labour, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting? (576)

This is the ideal marriage premised on equality. However, the coexistence of diverse views on marriage merely attests to the ideological obstacles that need to be overcome to establish the new ideology of marriage.

The Victorian period abounds with theorists who posit marriage as a necessary institution to make incomplete men and women complete. Auguste Comte, for example, writes that when two people marry, each becomes "necessary to the moral development of the other." Marriage is thus "the only association in which entire identity of interests is possible."⁵ In the same spirit, Ludwig Feuerbach observes that "man and woman are the complement of each other, and thus united they first present the species, the perfect man.... Man declares... the life which he has through love to be the truly human life, corresponding to the idea of man."⁶ *Adam Bede* continues this tradition, and reconfirms the complementary existence of each sex to the other. Eliot describes Adam and Dinah falling in love as "two little quivering rain-streams, before they mingle into one" (537). Through the sexual imagery Eliot merely stresses the natural affinity that exists between man and woman. While Adam thought he had disentangled himself from love, "the power of loving was all the while gaining new force within him; that the new sensibilities brought on by a deep experience were so many new fibres by which it was possible, nay, necessary to him, that his nature should intertwine with another" (532). The urge to find a suitable partner, then, becomes an ontogenetic, as well as phylogenetic, inevitability. However, there arises the question of why his marriage has to be implicated in the separation of spheres. To answer that is to delve into the question of complementary, or different, function of each sex that makes wholeness possible in marriage.

Lisbeth's argument for the union of Adam and Dinah is based on her conviction that Adam lacks

competence to look after domestic matters. Adam himself admits male incompetence, or at least insufficiency, when he tells Bartle Massey, “don’t be so hard on the creatures God has made to be companions for us. A working man ’ud be badly off without a wife to see to th’ house and the victual, and make things clean and comfortable” (285). However, Massey does not agree with either of them. In fact, he reiterates his strong belief in male sufficiency and autonomy in any field of human activity: “I tell you there isn’t a thing under the sun that needs to be done at all, but what a man can do better than a woman” (286). He even casts doubt on women’s ability to run a house, particularly because of their superstitious nature. If Massey is trusted, then what is the distinguishing feature that qualifies women as a necessary complement in marriage? Interestingly enough, Massey himself provides the answer to that question. Bigoted as he is, Massey cannot help but concede, though grudgingly, that the reproductive function is the exclusive prerogative of women: “unless it’s bearing children, and they do that in a poor make-shift way; it had better ha’ been left to the men” (286). This biological uniqueness becomes the ineluctable category that justifiably assigns the complementary role to women. In fact, Eliot grants maternity a special status by identifying it as “a distinctly feminine condition” that is linked to “the wondrous chemistry of the affectations and sentiments.”⁷ One of the ramifications of maternity is that women become associated not only with a procreative function but also with the moral and emotional influences they have on men. Considering Massey’s rational approach to domestic affairs, the emotional and moral role of women is thus doubly emphasized (although it may be in an indirect manner).

While in both *Adam Bede* and the larger Victorian society in general reason (associated with men) is prioritized over emotion (associated with women), the qualities identified as feminine are also considered indispensable for men and for society as a whole. In this light, Graver summarizes the common assumptions about women by Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill—authors who had an enormous influence on George Eliot:

The social organism depended on virtues traditionally designated ‘feminine’: sympathy, commitment to others, peacefulness, and the capacity to nurture. These altruistic graces were to counter the aggressive competition, rational calculation, and self-serving individualism of the marketplace.⁸

Because people’s, especially men’s, apprehension about the effects of the Industrial Revolution contributed to the positing of a separate sphere for women, women were eventually invested with, according to Linda Hunt, all the traits “which men...could not afford.”⁹ For example, the mayor of Birmingham, honoring women at Town Hall in 1839, intoned that woman “knows no hatred, nor will let us know any, if we but appeal to her. Let us, gentlemen, whenever we feel our hearts hardening towards each other...fly for counsel to those whose province and whose dearest task it is to soften, to bless, and to purify our imperfect nature.”¹⁰ The thrust of the mayor’s argument is clearly directed toward the creation of an ideology, according to which women’s superiority to men as an agency to oppose the aggressive and destructive force of the latter will be conveniently fabricated. This ideology is also intended to create a separate sphere for women that is both outside the political realm and a refuge for men, a place in which men can escape the nefarious influences of the public sphere and maintain their sanity. In other words, this ideology counters people’s sense of lost community (particularly pessimism associated with it) and changing values that accompanied the progress of the Industrial Revolution, and locates the site of a safe haven, free from the taint of commerce and politics, in women and the sphere associated with them. Appropriately, Comte, Spencer and Mill, according to Graver, all of them considered that “the safekeeping of a nonpublic sphere, whose center is the family, seemed essential to the preservation of society.”¹¹

Eliot too stresses women's role that is derived from the intrinsic maternal qualities women are supposed to be born with. In a letter sent to Emily Davies, Eliot writes, "We can no longer afford to part with that exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness and possible maternity suffusing a woman's being with affection, which makes what we mean by the female character."¹² In *Adam Bede*, Dinah is portrayed as the feeling, maternal counterpart to Adam's rational, practical personality, and in the process Adam's masculine attributes become devalorized. Concerning his overly harsh treatment of others, the narrator remarks:

Perhaps here lay the secret of the hardness he had accused himself of: he had too little fellow-feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences. Without this fellow-feeling, how are we to get enough patience and charity towards our stumbling, falling companions in the long and changeful journey (255).

While Adam lacks the empathy necessary to forgive and be patient with others, Dinah compensates for his deficiency by the feminine qualities, or "maternity," she is supposedly endowed with. As demonstrated by the otherwise strict Mrs. Poyser's lenient treatment of Totty when she spills starch, women naturally understand human imperfection.

Dinah's "maternity" and all the feminine traits associated with her, and their superiority to masculine qualities manifested through Adam, are particularly pronounced in *Adam Bede*. For example, an irritable child stops crying as soon as he hears Dinah's sermon, and "presently he run away from 's mother and went up to Dinah, and pulled at her, like a little dog, for her to take notice of him. So Dinah lifted him up and held th' lad on her lap, while she went on speaking; and he was as good as could be till he went t' sleep" (548). And when Hetty is in prison Dinah stays with her to offer spiritual consolation, while Adam remains home without knowing how to deal with the difficult situation. To Dinah's request to visit Hetty in prison, Adam responds, "I can't...I can't say good-by, while there's any hope. I'm listening, and listening—I can think o' nothing but that. It can't be as she'll die that shameful death—I can't bring my mind to it" (502). Adam is too paralyzed to act despite his rational temperament. In contrast, Dinah not only instinctively rushes to the prison to be with Hetty but also willingly accompanies her to the gallows.

Thus, Dinah indubitably establishes her complementary status. Adam admits, "I shall look t' her to help me to see things right. For she's better than I am" (574). As expected, some of the qualities personified by Dinah are also shared by other women. Lisbeth is one of them. Although Lisbeth is characterized by her irrationality, her understanding of human nature far transcends Adam's comprehension. While Adam deduces the affinity between Seth and Dinah from sensory information, for example, Lisbeth bases her judgment on extrasensory perception. When Adam suggests the compatibility between Dinah and Seth, and their possible marriage, Lisbeth retorts:

Where's th' use o' talkin a-that'n? She caresna for Seth. She's goin' away twenty mile aff. How's she to get a likin' for 'm, I'd like to know? No more nor the cake 'ull come wi'out th' leaven. Thy figurin' books might ha' tould thee better nor that, I should think, else thee mightst as well read the commin print, as Seth allays does (185).

Her intuition exceeds Adam's understanding, for the latter is only applicable to quantifiable objects. Revealing his awareness of the shortcomings of rational discourse, Adam admits that "the figures tell us a fine deal, and we couldn't go far without 'em, but they don't tell us about folks's feelings. It's a nicer job to calculate them" (185). At this point, his defect is conflated with his lack of compassion and sympathy for others, as Lisbeth observes, "thee 't never look at nothin', nor think o' nothin', but thy

figurin' an' thy work.... An' dost think thee canst go on so all thy life, as if thee wast a man cut out o' timber?" (543). What Adam cannot fathom is the depth of human nature, including his own. Lisbeth, on the other hand, can perceive Adam's fondness for Dinah, "as I know th' wind's comin' in at th' door" (539). As is evident when she remarks, "It's on'y the men as have to wait till folks say things afore they find 'em out" (539), Lisbeth clearly recognizes the intuitive ability as the prerogative of women, and with this utterance the character Lisbeth confirms the need for the complementary roles of men and women in marriage.

Dinah herself, excelling in intuitive knowledge, eventually realizes her complementary status, and becomes aware of the need for Adam in her life. But her realization occurs only after she has fallen in love, as she confesses, "My soul is so knit to yours that it is but a divided life I live without you. And this moment, now you are with me... I have a fulness of strength to bear and do our heavenly Father's will, that I had lost before" (576). Curiously enough, love entails a loss that is caused by the person who is the object of love. Thus, the need that has arisen in Dinah is the one generated and to be fulfilled by the same person. Hetty's experience also demonstrates the loss of autonomy and the need for the other who has brought about that loss in the first place. After her initial meetings with Arthur, "the anxieties and fears of a first passion... had given her for the first time that sense of helpless dependence on another's feeling which awakens the clinging deprecating womanhood even in the shallowest girl that can ever experience it" (267). Since Hetty was completely self-absorbed and independent before she met Arthur, it can be inferred that here again love functions as an agent to produce a need which is to be satisfied by the object of her love. Similarly, Dinah, who before love is awakened in her "is most of all discouraging to a lover" and "asks for no support" (76) on her walks, is now ready to take Adam's arm when he says "Take my arm, Dinah" (555). Thus, the need of each sex for each other is reiterated in the infinite complementary cycle of deficiency and fulfillment. Then, how is the marriage comprised of masculine and feminine principles to be implicated in the ideology of the domestic sphere?

Herbert Spencer wrote in *The Principles of Sociology* that "[i]f women comprehended all that is contained in the domestic sphere, they would ask no other."¹³ Stressing the superiority of the domestic sphere to the public sphere, Victorian ideology increasingly glamorized the familial space—the kind of space where women could rule with benign dispensation—as uncontaminated by the pernicious influences of the outside world. This ideology, partially adhered to by Eliot herself, was used "to revitalize woman's traditional role by infusing it with an exalted sense of purpose,"¹⁴ and to discourage women from aspiring to go beyond their proper realm. In the same vein, John J.S. Wharton observed in 1853 that the voting right would

deprive the fair sex of much, if not all, of that powerful and humanizing influence, which their purely social virtues now so justly command, and would very sensibly detract from that mild majesty of their private life.... This natural empire of woman, without which, indeed, our infancy would be without succour, our manhood without happiness, and our old age without consolation, would be lost, were she to quit the sacred retirement of her undisputed care and sympathy, and mix in the public arena of angry debate and heartless ambition; her powerful spell would be broken, her worth compromised, her respect decreased, and her unalloyed virtues—the consequences indeed of her domestic life—weakened and debased. Let not, then, her present glorious mission be taken away!¹⁵

Interestingly enough, Wharton transforms woman's influence within the domestic circle into something analogous to political power. Wharton's move to equate the two, however, successfully devalorizes woman's potential roles in the public sphere while it highlights the need and appropriateness for woman to

focus on her moral and civilizing mission in the domestic arena. As Davidoff remarks, "Home was business for women, haven for men,"¹⁶ and nothing else. The ideology of domesticity, therefore, effectively prevents the conflation of the domestic sphere with the public sphere.

Then, what constitutes the ideal marriage for Eliot? That question may be answered by comparing Seth to Adam, on the one hand, and Hetty to Dinah, on the other. In a way, it can be said that Seth's devalorized status arises from his effeminacy. During a discussion of marriage, Lisbeth complains to Seth that "[t]h' Methodies 'll niver make thee half the man thy brother is, for all they're a-makin' a preacher on thee" (89). Seth's emasculation is also linked to his lack of material productivity: "Thee wotna get double earnins o' this side Yule" (89). In fact, one way for Seth to bring about his marriage to Dinah is to assure her of his economic competence. As he proposes to her, he avows, "I'd make a shift, and fend indoor and out, to give you more liberty" (78). However, despite his avowal he cannot totally disentangle himself from the wrong values. Upon "Lisbeth's obstinate refusal to have any woman-helper in the house, he had learned to make himself... 'very handy in the housework" (534). Seth's domesticity/effeminacy is further corroborated by Lisbeth. When Seth and Adam were babies, Lisbeth tells the former, "thee 'dst allays lie still wi' thy eyes open, an' Adam ne'er 'ud lie still a minute when he wakened" (156). This time Seth's lack of masculinity is equated with his passivity. Then, it is no coincidence that Dinah's rejection of his offer of marriage gives rise to his meek resignation: "instead of bursting out into wild accusing apostrophes to God and destiny, he is resolving...to repress his sadness, to be less bent on having his own will, and to live more for others, as Dinah does" (82). In contrast, Dinah's resistance produces in Adam even firmer resolve to overcome the obstacles to his goal. When Adam thinks that "Dinah's old life would have too strong a grasp upon her for any new feeling to triumph," he even devises a stratagem to attain his objective. Appropriately enough, the quality that distinguishes Adam from Seth is Adam's virility. The scene in which Adam's "penetrating glance" awakens desire in Dinah makes this distinction clear: "there was something in the dark penetrating glance of this strong man so different from the mildness and timidity of his brother Seth" (162). While Seth's mildness is translated into a lack of virility and inability to arouse desire, Adam's strength is transformed into a sexual force. According to a Victorian belief, a woman's sexual desire lay "dormant, if not non-existent, till excited."¹⁷ Since desire or love is necessary to secure women's dependence and to bring out feminine traits, if Seth lacks his manhood to "excite" Dinah, then Dinah will never be induced to assume her feminine role in marriage.

The femininity that is conducive to marriage is more difficult to define than the analogous masculinity. In a comparison between Hetty and Dinah, Hetty is characterized by her self-absorption and immaturity, and as such by her dissociation from maternity. For example, she is indifferent to children to such a degree that children even sense it, as demonstrated by Totty's refusal to accept her (192). Hetty's indifference can be connected to her procreative deficiency, or rather more strictly to her inability to raise a child. (In this context, Norbelie argues that Hetty's baby is born prematurely.¹⁸ Although Norbelie's view may simply reflect the difficult condition Hetty is in, it does indicate her unsuitability to have children.) Her sterility, or her spiritual desiccation, is foregrounded when Hetty is implicated in the murder of her child. Her impulsive act totally contradicts Peter Gaskell's theory of natural maternal instinct:

A woman, if removed from all intercourse, all knowledge of her sex and its attributes, from the very hour of her birth, would, should she herself become a mother in the wilderness, lavish as much tenderness upon her babe, cherish it as fondly...sacrifice her personal comfort, with as much ardour,

as much devotedness, as the most refined, fastidious, and intellectual mother, placed in the very centre of civilized society.¹⁹

Hetty's lack of maternity also manifests itself in her obliviousness to the solicitude shown by Dinah. When Dinah visits Hetty in her bed chamber, the latter feels "no response within herself to Dinah's anxious affection" (205). Similarly, Mrs. Poyser notices Hetty's indifference to the familial circle: "I believe that gell, Molly...she'd care more about leaving us and the children, for all she's been here but a year come Michaelmas, nor Hetty would" (384).

In terms of her entanglement with Adam, Dinah emerges as Hetty's replacement. As Adam explains, "Dinah was so bound up with the sad memories of his first passion, that he was not forsaking them, but rather giving them a new sacredness by loving her" (546). Dinah also takes Hetty's place at the farm as she acquires such skills as butter-making and sewing. Dinah eventually succeeds Hetty as a daughter figure within the familial circle and assumes domestic duties that include lighting Mr. Poyser's pipe and caring for Totty (518). However, Dinah must undergo a fundamental transformation in order to satisfy the requirements of the ideology of marriage. Meanwhile, the process of replacement gradually develops into that of embodiment for Dinah. Initially, Dinah's physicality is minimized, and she is represented "like a beautiful corpse" (423). But when Mr. Poyser complains about Dinah's leaving, "it would have occurred to [Mr. Poyser] that there was certainly a change come over Dinah, for she never used to change colour; but, as it was, he...observed that her face was flushed at that moment. Mr. Poyser thought she looked the prettier for it" (522). In the end, her corporeality becomes indistinguishable from Hetty's, as Adam watches Dinah blush, "the slight flush in her cheeks...was heightened to a deep rose colour. She looked as if she were only sister to Dinah" (528). By the epilogue, her physical transformation is unmistakable, as her face is "a little fuller, to correspond to her more matronly figure" (581). At this point, maternity and corporeality are synthesized and Dinah is successfully inserted into the domestic sphere as an adequate reproductive agency that satisfies the ideology of marriage Eliot approved of.

Notes

- ¹ Catherine Hall, "Private Persons versus Public Someones: Class, Gender and Politics in England, 1780–1850," *Language, Gender and Childhood*, ed. Carolyn Steedman, Cathy Urwin, and Valerie Walkerdine (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 13.
- ² See Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 333.
- ³ Suzanne Graver, *George Eliot and Community: A Study in Social Theory and Fictional Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 1–2.
- ⁴ George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 85. Further references are parenthesized in the main text.
- ⁵ See Graver, 169.
- ⁶ See Neil Roberts, *George Eliot: Her Beliefs and Her Art* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), 33.
- ⁷ See Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 181–82.

⁸ Graver, 168.

⁹ See Linda C. Hunt, *A Woman's Portion: Ideology, Culture, and the British Female Novel Tradition* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), 4.

¹⁰ Hall, 25.

¹¹ See Graver, 174.

¹² As quoted in Pauline Nestor, *Female Friendships and Communities: Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 161–62.

¹³ As quoted in Graver, 171.

¹⁴ See Hunt, 5–6.

¹⁵ As quoted in Graver, 179.

¹⁶ See Davidoff, 178.

¹⁷ See Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 5.

¹⁸ Barbro A. Norbelie, "Oppressive Narrowness": *A Study of the Female Community in George Eliot's Early Writings* (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1992), 104–105.

¹⁹ As quoted in Poovey, 7.

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