"A Barrier of Dreams" or "The Possibility of Choice":

Imagining Alternatives to the Marriage Plot in Victorian Novels

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Introduction: "Something to do"

In Margaret Oliphant's *The Rector*, there is a metafictional aside in which the narrator addresses the reader, remarking "have not women been incomprehensible since ever there was in this world a pen with sufficient command of words to call them so? And is it not certain that, whether it may be to their advantage or disadvantage, every soul of them is plotting to marry somebody?" (*The Rector*, 22). This ironic moment not only challenges who holds the "pen with sufficient command of words," but also at once reaffirms and undermines the socio-political system of Victorian womanhood and domestic marriage.[1] It does so by calling into question the "advantage[s] or disadvantage[s]" of such "plot[s]" while simultaneously reminding the reader of their generic predictability within the Victorian marriage novel. The historical and narrative "incomprehensib[ility]" of women is also thrown into confusion by the rise of female writers through the nineteenth-century. Novelists like Margaret Oliphant and George Eliot strive to complicate this "incomprehensib[ility]" by writing heroines who rebel and submit in equal measure to Victorian social and narrative conventions and expectations. In Oliphant's *Hester*, the heroine expresses a "want" for "something to do," and this "want" of vocation or occupation beyond the boundaries of marriage is articulated throughout Oliphant's novel and others written by female authors as an expression of their own discontent and restlessness with the socially and politically stipulated lot of the Victorian woman. Such a "want" or lack is expressed consistently by heroines throughout Victorian novels written by women, and it frequently clashes against societal expectations of marriage and domestic confinement prescribed for middle and upper-class Victorian women. Dorothea Brooke in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* voices similar concerns while she is "oppressed by the indefiniteness which hung in her mind, like a think summer haze, over all her desire to make her life greatly effective." She asks herself, "what could she do, what ought she to do? – she, hardly more than a budding woman, but yet with an active conscience and a great mental need, not to be satisfied by a girlish instruction

comparable to the nibblings and judgments of a discursive mouse." [2] The heroines I will focus on in Oliphant's *Hester* and Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and *Adam Bede* convey similar dissatisfactions with "girlish instruction," questioning the idea of what constitutes 'respectable' work for women whilst delaying marriage and attempting to write their own futures and possibilities in a unique avowal of female agency and rebellion. As such, these female narratives of dissatisfaction stand as a threat to the Victorian social and political framework. Though these female characters are frequently tamed into a marriage plot, their vocational and creative energies still exist in the story-world and historical consciousness. The sometimes-conventional endings in matrimony within these marriage plot novels do not eradicate the subversion that exists between the covers of the book and beneath the surface. Such expressions can also be seen as a metafictional shorthand for the struggles of the female author in Victorian England. In this thesis, I intend to explore both the possibilities and lack thereof that women envision for themselves within these novels, and how they see themselves and their futures as both historically and socially rooted but also rife with nonconformist possibilities. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1848), as a possibly metafictional entry point into Brontë's own struggles as an author, Jane expresses such dissatisfaction by remarking defensively,

> Who blames me? Many, no doubt; and I shall be called discontented. I could not help it: the restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes…It is vain to say human beings out to be satisfied with tranquility; they must have action and they will make it if they cannot find it. Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (*Jane Eyre*, 93) [3]

Jane's (and Brontë's) "natural" "restlessness" challenges the naturalness of the Victorian marriage plot novel and Victorian social consciousness, as does the "discontented" woman's dissatisfaction "with tranquility."

The Seamstress by Charles Baugniet, 1858

Portrait of a Young Woman by Alfred Stevens mid-19th cent.

The "Possibility of Choice": Vocation and Oliphant's *Hester*

In Margaret Oliphant's *Hester* (1883) before the titular heroine is introduced and her vocational aspirations are explored, the novel is foregrounded with Catherine Vernon's banking experience.[4] Throughout the novel, both the narrator and Catherine herself downplay her involvement in the family business, which would have been considered highly inappropriate for a woman. However, these modulations stand contradictory to the pull of the narrative itself in which both Catherine and Hester are transgressors who disregard gender roles and the pretense of separate spheres, venturing into the male realm of the business world, foregoing marriage.[5] An early example of this is available through our introduction to Catherine. We are told that "though she was as deeply interested in" business and banking as her male family members, she "took no responsibility whatever—how should she, a girl who knew as much about money as her pony did?" (*Hester*, 8). This is as narratively tongue-in-cheek as the next instance, in which Catherine is approached about the subject of banking, and her lawyer interposes, "What should she think? What should she know? Of course she leaves all that to me…How can a girl

understand banking business?" (*Hester*, 8). This is the question the narrative seeks to answer: *how* a girl can understand banking business, and by extension how can a woman capably perform the activities associated with a distinctly male vocation? Would a woman eschew marriage— "the object of a woman's life"— in order to do so? Could a woman flourish in such a position and make the business profitable? And finally, could she make a significant contribution of her own? [6]

In answer to some of these questions, Catherine Vernon single-handedly saves the bank and thereby the Vernon family, rising to her place as queen over the small town. The narrator tells us that "the bank ever after remained in the hands of Miss Vernon, who, it turned out, had more than her grandfather's steady power of holding on, and was, indeed, the heir of her great-grandfather's genius for business" (*Hester*, 22). While women could under certain circumstances inherit some property and wealth, as the intellectual "heir" of a man's "genius," Catherine trespasses both physically and mentally upon the male territory. She offers a jarring contrast to female characters like Mrs. John who, "would have considered it a slight to the delicacy of her mind to have been supposed to know anything about the bank" (*Hester*, 10). Catherine's "genius for business" would be considered an unnatural type of inheritance for a woman, but she nonetheless reigns as the "most important person in Redborough" while the "bank throve in her hands…and everything it touched prospered" (*Hester*, 22). The narrator goes on to tell us that "Miss Vernon's was a reign of great benevolence, of great liberality, but of great firmness too…The people spoke of her, as they sometimes do of a very popular man, by her Christian name" (*Hester*, 22-23). The comparisons to male authority are fairly direct here; as far as the narrative and the other characters are concerned, Catherine is not ruling like a woman (like Queen Victoria, for instance). Just like "her name was put to everything" in the town, "Catherine Street, Catherine Square," and so on, her name and her actions permeate the narrative, perhaps only eclipsed by the titular heroine, "Hester," who represents a female intellectual heir to Catherine Vernon herself as the legacy Catherine

represents and establishes is matrilineal (*Hester*, 23). Catherine is a "saint," but one "more easily within reach, and more certain to lend a favorable ear" (*Hester*, 23).

It is key for the narrative that Catherine neither marries nor has children, and her ability to create an intellectual and matrilineal business legacy outside of the patriarchal political economy is incredible in that respect. The narrator describes her as "Queen Elizabeth…a dry tree—while other women had sons and daughters" (*Hester*, 24). However, rather than being posited as a tragic (and threatening) lack, the narrative translates this deficiency into a strength, for "when the hearts of mothers were torn with anxiety, she went free" (*Hester*, 24). This is an interesting characterization which suggests the benefits of women remaining single and childless; a clear departure from the Victorian social and political climate and popular understandings of women. Indeed, this pairs with a later comment made by Captain Morgan to Hester when he tells her "Once a mother, always a mother, Hester. You women are sadly fettered—you can't shake it off" (*Hester*, 150). Catherine is without "fetters" in the traditional sense of Victorian domestic trappings. [7] Since my thesis seeks to answer the question of what women *can* and *do* envision for themselves, in terms of vocation and their place in the world, Catherine Vernon is an interesting figure in her ability to forge her own path in a life "full of exertion and occupation" within "a world of her being in movement" (*Hester*, 24). [8] Oliphant's work suggests new possibilities for female vocation and future. The narrator informs us that "she was an old maid, to be sure, but an old maid who never was alone…A woman with plenty of money, with a handsome, cheerful house, and a happy disposition, she had—at least since her youth was over—never had occasion to remember the want of those absorbing affections which bind a married woman within her own circle" (*Hester*, 24). This is reminiscent of the wry opening of Jane Austen's *Emma* ("Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence…"). However, it is remarkable that by the time this is expressed, Catherine Vernon is long

past the "comforts" and "blessings" of marriage, which is what "existence" usually consists of for middle and upper-class women. Catherine stakes out new territory for women's "existence" outside of the male purview; or rather, still within it, but on her own and without a husband. Catherine is already a very different kind of heroine than even Austen's Emma was, revolutionary as Emma is in her assertions that she need not marry. Later on, Catherine agrees with Mrs. John that marriage is "what every girl expects to do," without revealing her own past and present "expect[ations]" (*Hester*, 253). How women like Catherine define their future possibilities and vocations is illuminating of the larger societal restraints upon Victorian women.

Catherine is paired with the titular heroine Hester, even if she does her best to distinguish herself from the younger girl who is nonetheless very similar to herself. We are told that Hester is "a very young girl…apparently of the old stock, with a head for business, and a decision of character quite unusual in a child," or rather, "quite unusual" in a girl (*Hester*, 29). However, when Catherine meets Hester, she downplays this female exceptionalism, telling her "Your grandfather was only the second son, and you are only a girl—if you had been a boy it might have been different…" (*Hester*, 37). Despite the realism of this statement, it contrasts with Catherine's own incredible life experience in which she has consistently defied the restrictions placed on her by both her class and her gender. This statement also pairs with Catherine's own descriptions of herself as "only a woman" (*Hester*, 80). Catherine will go on to call Hester a "little firebrand" whose defiance represents "opposition, firm, healthy, instinctive opposition, without any cause for it" the "sort of thing which it refreshes one to see…It must have been born in her…the little wild cat!" (*Hester*, 40-41). Though she expresses admiration for Hester's "instinctive" and natural "opposition," Catherine and the surrounding society maintain their opposition against Hester's rebellious ambition. A male relative tells Hester that "Ladies in this country have nothing to do with business—by the way, I am forgetting Aunt Catherine" (*Hester*, 47). Catherine is

represented much in the way that Queen Victoria was around the same time; as an exception to the rules and confines of the patriarchy, but by no means a proto-feminist exception. Similarly, the naturalness of Catherine's business acumen and Hester's opposition conflict with the popular social expectations of what was "natural" and good for women. The same male relative qualifies his views by saying that "I have the greatest respect for the ladies—where would we be without them? "Oh, woman, in our hours of ease," etc. –you know: But I think that mixed up with business they are entirely out of their place. It changes the natural relations—it creates a false position…" (*Hester*, 53) How both Catherine and Hester contest the "false[ness]" of the position they hold and what socially constitutes "natural relations" is worth examining for its subversive and even revolutionary commentaries on society.

The narrative sets itself up against Catherine's realistic pessimism regarding Hester's prospects:

> Hester was a great deal too young for a heroine, but as it chances there could not be a better portrait of her than that of Lamb's "sprightly neighbour." She went out with that springing motion, stepping on air, with the pride of life and youth and conscious energy in every vein. A certain youthful contempt for the inferior beings who lay stupid behind those closed shutters, losing all this bloom and glory, was in her heart. She was very black in the midst of the bright landscape in her mourning frock, with a white kerchief tied round her throat like a French girl, but her curly locks shining like everything else in the sun. She did not mind the sun. She had not yet learned that she had a complexion to care for; besides, the sun could do nothing to the creamy-white of her tint. Perhaps she was not very sensitive, not thin-skinned at all, either in body or soul. (*Hester*, 45)

Here it is hard to say whether Hester is being specifically gendered male, or rather just a different type of female—one who disregards social conventions and is described as active, healthy, robust and in continual movement—attributes that hang awkwardly upon a Victorian girl. Catherine is descriptively approached in a similar manner by surrounding characters: she is called "so good, but under such a brusque exterior" (*Hester*, 56). The "brusque exterior" encasing her "good[ness]" represent two conflicting modes through which we can appreciate Catherine's dual male and female-gendered qualities. Hester herself marks these encircling feelings of contempt towards Catherine: "Sometimes she would be drawn into the talk of the women who misrepresented their dear Catherine all day long… sometimes she would join involuntarily in the worse malignity of the man to whom Catherine Vernon

gave everything that was good in his life, and who attributed every bad motive to her" (*Hester*, 71). The narrator goes on to describe Hester's conflicting feelings towards Catherine, saying "And as if that was not enough, Hester sinned with Catherine too, and saw the ridicule and the meanness of these miserable pensioners with a touch of the same cynicism which was the elder woman's great defect, but was unpardonable in the younger, to whom there should as yet have been no loss of the ideal" (*Hester*, 71). I would like to examine what Hester means by "the ideal" and how she views herself (and Catherine Vernon) in possible opposition and conflict to this ideal, or in observance thereof. These two characters are more alike than different, even if they remain antagonistic and opposed to each other for the majority of the novel.

Early on, Hester describes a vaguely unfeminine desire to work; she tells her mother "I don't want to learn…I want to teach…I want to open a *cours*; don't you think I might open a *cours*? I know that I could teach, for I am so fond of it, and I want something to do" (*Hester*, 65). Hester's "want" – both her desire for and current lack— of occupation or vocation is indicative of a larger social problem of female discontent and restlessness. However, once Hester voices this discontent we are told that "having got all this out like a sudden shot from a gun Hester stopped short, got behind her mother, and was heard no more" (*Hester*, 65). Certainly in many narratives, articulations of female discontent or rebellion are resolved through the silencing of the discontented woman (Gaskell's *Ruth*, Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, among others). [9] However, for Hester and for George Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda*, the woman is allowed to live on whilst pursuing "something to do" outside of the traditional female pathways of marriage and family. Commenting upon this desire for vocation later—and somewhat downplaying its serious consequences to the separate spheres— Ellen says to Mrs. John, "

> 'Don't you know it is the fashion now for girls to do something? Oh, but it is though! The best girls do it; they paint, and they do needlework, and they sing, and they write little books, and everybody is proud to be able to earn money. It is only when they are clever that they can teach; and then they are so proud! …It will be quite aristocratic to have a Vernon teaching. I shall take lessons myself.' (*Hester*, 66)

One can imagine Margaret Oliphant having a little joke with her audience at the suggestion of girls "writ[ing] little books" since "everyone is proud to be able to earn money" (*Hester*, 66). Proud as she might have been of her own novelistic endeavors, this middle-class pride in "earn[ing] money" is certainly a shift towards the end of the nineteenth-century where we find ourselves in *Hester*. Ellen's remark that it would be "aristocratic" to do so is an ironic turn-around which cannot be entirely taken at face value. Furthermore, all of the occupations which Ellen describes are no different than the ladylike accomplishments pursued by gentle and elite society throughout the entirety of the nineteenth-century, except in their connotations of economic marketability (rather than matrimonial marketability). It appears as though Ellen is hinting at girls "do[ing] something" in order to make themselves marketable, but not necessarily for marriage, but this subtextual interpretation is veiled by an ironic commentary upon female accomplishments.

Regarding Hester's vocational and educational aspirations, the narrator remarks upon her discontent:

> Sometimes the young creature would raise her head dismayed from one of the books in which life is so different from what she found it, and ask herself whether books were all lies, or whether there was not to be found somewhere an existence which was true? Sometimes she would stop short in the midst of the Church services, or when she said her prayers, to demand whether it was all false, and these things invented only to make life bearable? Was it worth living? she would ask sometimes, with more reason than the essayists. (*Hester*, 72)

A "true" "existence" as Hester sees it is one of occupation and meaning produced by work and production; in her current existence "she could do nothing she wanted" (*Hester*, 72). It is difficult to tell whether Hester feels particularly called to teaching, or if she just desires a vocation of any kind and that is one of the few options open to her. However, Mrs. John "obstinate in nothing else, had been obstinate in this, that her poor husband's daughter should not dishonor his name (alack the day!) by becoming a teacher—a teacher! like the poor governesses for whom he had felt so much contempt" (*Hester*, 72). If Hester expected Catherine to be on her side, she is sorely disappointed when "Catherine Vernon, the last

auxiliary whom Mrs. John expected, had supported her with a decision which put all struggles out of the question. Catherine indeed had explained herself on the occasion with a force which had almost brought her within the range of Hester's sympathies, notwithstanding that the decision was against herself" (*Hester*, 72). Is it Oliphant's narrator or Catherine Vernon herself who recognizes this hypocrisy? Catherine tells Mrs. John "Women have never worked for their living in our family, and, so far as I can help it, they never shall," to which Hester points out, "You did yourself, Cousin Catherine" (*Hester*, 72). The narrator tells us that Hester "stood forth to learn her fate," which is notably in the hands of two women. Catherine objects to Hester's characterization of her work, claiming "That was different. I did not stoop down to paltry work…I was wanted to save the family, and thank Heaven I could do it. For that, if you were up to it, and occasion required, you should have my permission to do anything. Keep the books, or sweep the floors, what would it matter!" (*Hester*, 72). A quick glance at Margaret Oliphant's biography and her own comments about her writing profession suggest that this was how she viewed her work, at least during part of her writing career: profitable and necessary for survival. [10] "Keep[ing] the books, or sweep[ing] the floors" is as Catherine Vernon describes it here, something any woman must be willing to do to step into a role in order to save their family. However, Hester has a different view on women's work: she sees it as a vocational pleasure and reflection of ambition beyond working to survive, but rather for one's own personal gratification and meaning. [11] Oliphant also wrote that she felt she could have been as serious and accomplished a writer as George Eliot had she not had to earn a living by her pen, since she would have then had time to develop her gifts and achieve a much higher place in the literary estimation. In other words, it would have been her pleasure to do her work as a vocation instead of as a necessary career. With this in mind, Oliphant blends her realism and idealism in the two characters. [12] Later the narrator tells us that "It was not a little money that Hester wanted, but work of which something good might come" (*Hester*, 73-74). These two alternating views of women's

work are contrasted throughout the novel: "it was that for a moment these two, the old woman and the young woman, made of the same metal, with the same defects and virtues, looked each other in the eyes, and almost understood each other" (*Hester*, 72). The "almost" suggests this difference that I point out, which is both generational and personal. Hester uneasily resigns herself to domesticity. We are told "she had to yield, as most women have to do. She had to consent to be bound by other people's rules, and to put her hand to nothing that was unbecoming…She yielded altogether" but "proudly" and though "the arrangement of the little household, the needlework, and the housekeeping, were nothing to her young capabilities…she desisted from the attempt to make something better of herself, with an indignant yet sorrowful pride" (*Hester*, 73-74). My thesis will continue to explore how and why women who find themselves discontented within the marriage plot novel and their confining patriarchal society at large must "yield" at last, while seeds of subversion and disquiet remain, sometimes barely perceptible. [13] Oliphant's implication in this passage is that Hester herself must agree to "yield" and give her "consent to be bound by other people's rules." I should like to explore the nature of this yielding and consent as well as the moments when both are not observed by female characters.

Hester begins to interiorize and enact this exterior submission and "yield[ing]" in a conversation with Captain Morgan. He calls her "a daring, masterful spirit" of a "girl "to which Hester responds "I am not daring or masterful…I that can do nothing, that am only like a straw tossing on the water, carried the way I would not. If I were masterful, I would go away from here. I would do something for myself" (*Hester*, 86). One can see these realistic self-deprecations as an internalization of Catherine Vernon's own frequent downplaying of her own power and acumen. However, Hester does not cease pondering "the object" of women's "ambition," making a study of the girls around her and also of "heroines in novels" (*Hester*, 89). She takes a commonsensical and even business-like approach to her study, noting that "it is a pity, for the sake of young readers, that all the girls in novels, with so very rare exceptions—

and Jane Eyre, if not pretty, probably was less plain than she thought…—should be beautiful and should have so much admiration and conquest. The girls who read are apt to wonder how it is that they have not the same fortune" (*Hester*, 90). This hints at a very real social and political issue in the mid-nineteenth-century, which was the overabundance of women and lack of men within the marriage market. This created an even greater sense of competition particularly among women, as well as the need for some women to explore other options out of necessity and survival. [14] We are further informed that "Hester, for her part, had a fine scorn of feminine victories in this sort; they had never come within the possibilities of her lot. She never went to balls, nor met in society gangs of suitors contending for her smile; she did not believe in such things…" (*Hester*, 90). Hester's resistance and refusal to play the courtship game contributes to what would have been considered her unfeminine, subversive and rebellious qualities. Though we are later told that "novels were all Hester's experience," it is clear that many of the lessons she learns from books are more cautionary in nature (*Hester*, 224).

As an obstacle to this last conversation about her lack of suitors and her general marriageability, Hester receives a marriage proposal from Harry which functions plot-wise as an opportunity to shine an interesting light on Hester's views of marriage and her prospects and other alternatives. Her mother prepares her for the upcoming proposal beforehand, telling her "Think, my darling, what it would be—not only to be rich, but to be independent—to have your own house, all your own, and no charity—to have as much money as you want, to be able to help the poor, and do everything you wish, and to make me happy, so happy, to the end of my days!" (*Hester*, 105). This is a common nineteenth-century impression of marriage: an economic transaction, designed to preserve a family legacy and provide domestic comfort to all parties involved. Looking at marriage—or domestic confinement— as an "independen[ce]" is common rhetoric at this socio-historical moment; Gwendolen in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* will express a similar outlook. However, Hester's response to this is that "people consider a

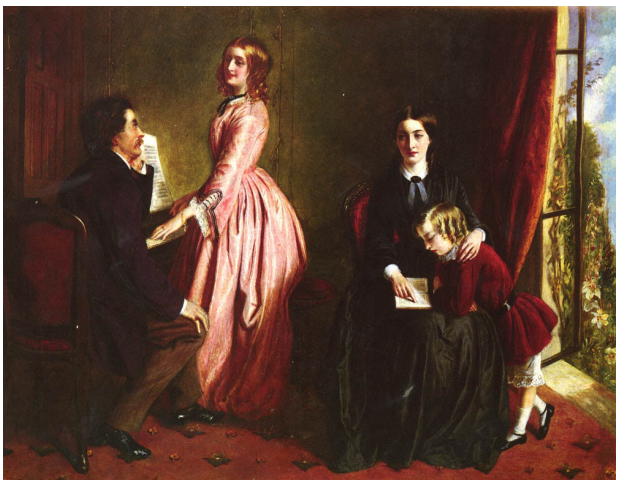
girl a piece of goods to be sold and disposed of" and she even tells her mother that "if I could marry the house, and let you have it, I would do so in a moment" (*Hester*, 106, 134). Within the marriage market, the eligible woman or man is frequently collapsed into the economic and property assets they bring to the table. Harry is rhetorically and materially aligned with his house, where Mrs. John used to reside, and Hester would have also been considered in terms of the dowry or other economic advantages she presents. Though Hester's remark comes off as vulgar, it shows her acute understanding of the place of the marriageable woman within the matrimonial transaction. Mrs. Morgan reminds Hester that "Success in marriage means almost everything," after which the narrator informs us that "there was a pause" (*Hester*, 120). I read the "pause" as indicative of the type of subversive, even feminist double-text and "anxiety of authorship" that Gilbert and Gubar point to in nineteenth-century novels written by women. [15] This is all the more likely since the "pause" comes after Mrs. Morgan's likely true comment that for women, "success in marriage" determines their fate. The "pause" which follows undermines this statement, calling the entire patriarchal apparatus behind it into question and suggesting if not alternate possibilities for women, at least the slight evocation of discontent or injustice not yet fully articulable.

Hester reinforces this by telling her mother that not only does she refuse Harry, but the institution of marriage as a whole, saying "I would rather not marry—any one. I don't see the need for it. We are very well as we are, but we don't know what a new state of things might do for us… I don't want to have—any one" (*Hester*, 139-140). This pairs with Hester's recurrent outbursts after being told she ought not walk alone—representative of the perceived threats posed by and to a single woman: "I have to be my own body-guard, it is true…but why should I want one at all? It is folly to suppose a girl requires protection wherever she goes. Protection!" (*Hester*, 144). She further states "I want no one. I am quite able to take care of myself" (*Hester*, 155). However, if she is not to marry— insisting on 'walking alone' in both metaphorical and literal senses of the phrase—then she must do something else,

but what? Edward points this out, telling Hester "When I say that Harry is the man, I do not suppose either that he is worthy of you, or that you think so; but you are a girl, what can you do? They would not let you work, and if you could work, nothing but daily bread would come of it" (*Hester*, 145). He goes on to say that "Hester, you want a great deal more than daily bread. You want triumph, power; you want to be as you are by nature, somebody." This is a remarkable statement to vocalize through a male character, though its significance is somewhat deflated by what follows: "how can you do this, save by marrying? It does not make anything worse to recognize its real character. You must do this by marrying" (*Hester*, 145). Edward immediately converts this into a discussion about money, recognizing if not directly, at least mentally, that marriage and money are inextricably tied for both male and female parties. Both Edward and Roland are concerned about Hester being "stranded in that old house as if it had been a desolate island," for "she could not be content to vegetate there for ever, a girl of her spirit" (*Hester*, 369). However, despite recognizing her "spirit" and independence, the male solutions to her wants for freedom and occupation merely convert this independence to a dependence. Roland presents a similar perception of Hester's predicament to Edward's, but with vastly different resulting answers. He tells Edward, "that poor child wants air, if you please. She is as full of spirit and life as any one I ever saw. She would like to do something…she wants work" to which Edward reveals that "She will soon have it in her power to change all that. Don't you know she is going to marry Harry Vernon, an excellent match for her—money and little brains—whereas she has much brains and little money, the very thing in marriage…" (*Hester*, 183). Hester's desires for "power," to "do something" and to be "somebody" on her own terms, not by virtue of a husband, are indicative of greater signs of female discontent and restlessness which marriage and domestic ideals cannot completely alleviate.

Emma also points to commonly shared struggles experienced by women at this time. She frequently speaks of a woman's "chance," both in marriage and society, saying "People always exert

themselves to get invitations for girls. It is like helping young men on in business. We cannot go and make acquaintances for ourselves as young men go and set up offices, but we must have our chance, you know…it is for everybody's advantage that we should have our chance as well as the men" (*Hester*, 230). As Mrs. Cadwaller states in *Middlemarch*, concerning Dorothea's need to find a second husband, and requiring possible suitors around in order to do so, "How can she choose if she has no variety to choose from?" (Book VI, Chapter 54). [16] Presumably, by "everybody's advantage," Emma is referring to the success of domestic comfort and the triumph of separate spheres between men and women within a marriage partnership in Victorian society. [17] Hester and Emma discuss two options available to educated middle-class women of their status: marriage and governessing. While Hester remarks that being a governess would be better, "to be independent," Emma counters that "to have a paid salary would be very nice—but it hurts a girl's chance," gesturing to the impossible and conflicting standards women are held to when they must both work and marry to survive, but cannot do one without damaging their chances of the other (*Hester*, 237). Hester argues with Emma's choice to go live dependent upon her brother rather than taking a governess's position, saying "I would much rather be a governess" with what the narrator describes as "a glow of indignant pride" at the "matter-of-fact description of the state of dependence…with the composure of an individual fully capable of holding her own" choosing to be dependent instead (*Hester*, 238-239). Though Hester "shrank from the revelation as if it had been something terrible" the narrator reminds us that "it was not terrible at all, but the most calm historic account of a state of affairs which seemed perfectly natural to every one concerned" (*Hester*, 239). Hester's ability to rise against what "seem[s]" "natural" is part of her subversiveness, as is her unwillingness to settle or accept her situation as it is.



The Governess by Rebecca Solomon, 1854

The Governess by Richard Redgrave, 1844

In conversation with Roland at the ball, Hester shuns the conventions of polite society, remarking that "what I want is not dancing" and Roland reinforces that "It is work, according to the fashion of young ladies. You don't know when you are well off. You have always wanted work…You want to go and teach wretched little children, and earn a little miserable money. You to be wasted on that! Ah! you have something a great deal better to do" (*Hester*, 306). Roland's presumption that he knows Hester's vocational aspirations and purpose better than she does herself grates against the reader's sensibilities, and Hester crisply replies, "I should like, not that, but to do as Catherine Vernon did…I should like to step in when ruin was coming and prop it up on my shoulders as she did, and meet the danger, and overcome it——" and "I should like to do what she did. Something of one's own free will—something that no one can tell you or require you to do—which is not even your duty bound down upon you. Something voluntary, even dangerous——" (*Hester*, 306-307). The narrator tells us that "she paused again, with a smile and a blush at her own vehemence, and shook her head," saying "That is exactly what I shall never have it in my power to do" (*Hester*, 307). Roland makes the separate spheres argument, telling Hester "don't you think that is far less than what you have in your power? You can make others do: you can inspire (isn't that what Lord Lytton says?) and reward…there is nothing a man

might not do, with you to encourage him. You make me wish to be a hero" (*Hester*, 307). Hester "did not laugh" but rather looked at Roland with "a touch of disdain," and asks profoundly,

> 'Do you really think…that the charm of inspiring, as you call it, is what any reasonable creature would prefer to doing? To make somebody else a hero rather than be a hero yourself? Women would need to be disinterested indeed if they like that best. I don't see it. Besides, we are not in the days of chivalry. What could you be inspired to do—make better bargains on your Stock Exchange? and reward—— Oh, that is not the way it is looked at nowadays. You think it is you who——.' Here Hester paused, with a rising color, 'I will not say what I was going to say,' she said. (*Hester*, 306-307)

Though she manages to rein herself in after another significant pause, this is a remarkable passage; Hester identifies the very problem with the separate spheres argument which is also a narrative one. Men get to be heroes; women are heroines, but only insofar as they support someone else's story where the story is one of ambition, vocation and a purposeful work. Hester is not content with merely "inspir[ing]" action for someone else; she wants a part of the action herself—to be a hero herself rather than merely a supporting heroine. [18]

Edward and Hester later engage in a similar argument in which Edward rejects Hester's form of "inspiration" or romantic support. When she hears of Edward's difficulties, she wishes not to be left "outside" his problems—as a mere comforter— but rather to understand them entirely in order to rationally find a solution. However, Edward tells her

> 'You would not understand…I don't wish you to understand…that is not what a man wants in a woman; not to go and explain it all to her with pen and ink, and tables and figures, to make her understand as he would have to do with a man. What he wants, dear, is very different—just to lean upon you—to know that you sympathize, and think of me, and feel for me, and believe in me, and that you will share whatever comes.' (*Hester*, 370-371)

Hester objects after another pregnant "pause," enquiring, "Don't you think that a woman could do all that—and yet that it would be easier for her if she understood what it was, and why it was?" (*Hester*, 370-371). She tells him "I am a woman, but I am not a fool. I can understand most things…I will set my mind to it…Sympathy that is ignorant cannot be so good as sympathy that knows" (*Hester*, 371). Her desire to "know" and "understand" by bridging a gap between the Victorian male and female spheres of

influence and activity is a threat to the careful balance of those realms. Edward clearly sees it as such, pointing out that "another fellow, any man, a clerk in the office, would understand. I want your sympathy. I want—you" (*Hester*, 371). The principle behind this attitude largely consists of the idea that women ought to be what they *feel*, while men are what they *do*. Hester's mother also admonishes her for attempting to help, saying "you are the strangest girl I ever knew. Do you think a man *ever* talks to women about these things? Oh, perhaps to a woman like Catherine that is the same as a man. But to anybody he cares for—never, oh, never, dear!" (*Hester*, 374). Mrs. John draws a distinction between romantic and business relationships; one is female and the other is male, and the boundaries can only be crossed when a woman is "the same as a man" like Catherine and without any domestic attachment. Mrs. John also delineates the physical embodiment of the separate spheres: "think of any man venturing to bring business into my drawing-room...that could never—never be! In all my life I never descended so low as that…" (*Hester*, 374). Hester's mother is equating a woman attempting to understand "masculine" issues of business and banking to sinking below her position and degrading herself somehow. Indeed, "sympathy" is a feminine quality, while "understanding" is male. This is all the more fascinating when one considers the Victorian social problem and Condition of England novel earlier in the century, in which authors (usually female) were asking their (gendered female) readers for sympathy regarding the plight of the fallen woman and the working class. Oliphant's work would have us believe that this sympathy that is asked for on the part of readers is one that does not truly understand the actual problem, which in most cases could only be true if women were politically and structurally *forbidden* from understanding.

Mere "sympathy" is not enough for Hester, and we see this all the more clearly through a long passage in which the narrator focalizes the narrative through Hester's thoughts, invoking the plight of the Victorian middle-class woman:

> Hester kept gazing through that wintry blackness, with eyes still wide open, and her clear brows puckered with wonder and alarm. Was it natural, then, a thing she could accept as just, that it was enough for her to sympathize, to share the consequences, to stand by the chief actor whatever happened, but never to share in the initiative or have any moral concern in the motive or the means of what was done? A sense of helplessness began to take the place of indignation in her mind. Was that what they called the natural lot of women? to suffer, perhaps to share the blame, but have no share in the plan, to sympathize, but not to know; to move on blindly according to some rule of loyalty and obedience, which to any other creature in the world would be folly and guilt? But her mother knew nothing of such hard words. To her this was not only the right state of affairs, but to suggest any better rule was to fail in respect to the lady whose right it was to be left ignorant. Hester tried to smile when she recalled this, but could not, her heart being too sore, her whole being shaken. He thought so too perhaps, everybody thought so, and she alone, an involuntary rebel, would be compelled to accept the yoke which, to other women, was a simple matter, and their natural law. Why, then, was she made unlike others, or why was it so? (*Hester*, 375)

Through focalizing Hester's thoughts in this climactic moment, Oliphant returns us to what is "natural" again within the male-female binary and relationship transaction. By asking what is natural and true, Hester seeks to challenge the very interpretations of nature and her current reality. She challenges the idea of the man as the "chief actor," and demands her own equal, but not separate role. Her "sense of helplessness" is an institutional one, and the "some rule of loyalty and obedience" operates at the level of cultural, political and legal oppression. All of this leads to Hester's final question: "Why, then, was she made unlike others, or why was it so?" (*Hester*, 375). The question is left unanswered, but the very fact that it is asked is revolutionary. Hester will go on to confront Edward regarding her misgivings about his perception of their mutual roles. The narrator tells us that she was "not touched by" Edward's "reference to her little heart, which was not a little heart, but a great one, bounding wildly in her breast with perplexity and pain, as well as love, but ready for any heroic effort" (*Hester*, 377). For Hester, "heroic effort" at this moment comes in the way of rejecting Edward as a suitor, even though originally, he had been more disposed to satisfy her as a love match than other suitors who proposed more of a marriage of convenience. She finally tells him "It makes me happy that you should want me, and lean on me, and give me your burden to bear; but I want so much more. Perhaps I am not so gentle as women ought to be. My mother would be content, but I am not. I want to know everything, to help you to think, to understand it all" (*Hester*, 377-378). This is a powerful moment as a direct articulation of female

discontent; Hester's desires for "so much more" are left undefined in order to compass all the mass of possibilities open to her within her understanding of her destiny, choices, and alternatives to traditional marriage and domesticity. As I will explore further, George Eliot's earlier heroines in *Adam Bede* and *Daniel Deronda* express similar sentiments. In *Middlemarch* as well, Dorothea Brooke remarks impatiently, "the mind has other wants" than the conventional lives of women could gratify. [19]

This brings us to the end of Oliphant's novel, where we finally observe Catherine Vernon and Hester recognizing each other for what they are and joining proto-feminist forces. Catherine tells Hester that "It is a great pity…a girl like you, that instead of teaching or doing needlework, you should not go to Vernon's, as you have a right to do, and work there…they tell me you wanted to do something like what I had done" to which Hester replies, "I wish I could…" (*Hester*, 454). Despite her successes within the male realm of business, Catherine has a generationally narrower (and perhaps more realistic) view of women's vocational possibilities. However, the end of the narrative catapults Catherine back into the forefront, charged with saving the business again with Hester's help after Edward has jeopardized everything. Catherine dies shortly afterward, and the narrator tells us,

> There was, then, no need that Catherine Vernon should ever live in cramped rooms, in another house from that in which she had been born. When they carried her out from it a week after, the whole population came out to meet the procession, and followed her weeping, lining the path, filling the streets. Her misfortunes, and the noble courage with which she had stood up against them at the end, brought back all the fulness of the love and honour with which she had been regarded when she first became supreme in the place, and all bounty flowed from her…The doctors were not clear as to how she died…it was her heart somehow, with or without a medical reason for it, that had failed her. The last touch, those who loved her thought, had been too much. Derision such as she had delighted in in other circumstances, had overtaken the last tragic occurrence of her life. Catherine had not been able to bear the grim mockery, the light of a farce upon that tragedy of her own. (*Hester*, 456)

Catherine remains an indomitable and powerful presence haunting *Hester* despite her best efforts to undermine her own power and subversiveness. Though she personally does not appear to envision much for herself and her future, her actions speak otherwise in terms of suggested alternatives to marriage and thereby alternatives to the marriage plot through her intellectual heiress in Hester. The two are paired on

the last page of the novel, where instead of a comic conclusion through matrimony for Hester we get a suggestion of the continuation of her story outside of popular and generic convention. The narrator tells us:

> And as for Hester, all that can be said for her is that there are two men whom she may choose between, and marry either if she pleases—good men both, who will never wring her heart. Old Mrs. Morgan desires one match, Mrs. John another. What can a young woman desire more than to have such a possibility of choice? (*Hester*, 456)

Certainly this is hardly "all that can be said for" Hester; the narrative hints at the possibility of the "so much more" that Hester desired throughout. Oliphant does not marry her off immediately, but instead gives her the "possibility of choice" in two different suitors to a fictional continuation of her story. As unusual an ending as this is for a Victorian marriage plot novel, I would like to suggest that included within the "possibility of choice" which Hester is rewarded is also the possibility that she will not marry at all, but will instead pursue a vocation and seek to please herself rather than society and the confines of narrative and traditional womanhood. Her "something to do" might be making the choice between these two men, but also between other unwritten alternatives. Indeed, "what can a young woman desire more than to have such a possibility of choice?" both within and without the story-world?

The Fair Toxophilites by William Powell Frith, 1872

The "Gentlewoman's Oppressive Liberty": Victorian Womanhood and *Daniel Deronda*

What George Eliot refers to as the "gentlewoman's oppressive liberty" in *Middlemarch* becomes Gwendolen Harleth's condition in *Daniel Deronda* (1876). [20] She is introduced at the gambling table in Leubronn through the eyes of Daniel Deronda as a disturbing disruption of convention:

> Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents? She who raised these questions in Daniel Deronda's mind was occupied in gambling…" (*Daniel Deronda*, 3)

Daniel Deronda attempts to judge Gwendolen's character and possible status as a literary heroine based on her appearance. Answering the question "was she beautiful or not beautiful?" goes a long way towards understanding her place in the story and models our own recommended reading approach to Gwendolen. We are meant to ask ourselves what kind of heroine she is and how she fits into our preconceived notions of womanhood and a heroine's place in a story. Though the novel is called *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen's narrative— "the English story"— dominates half the tale, and many critics consider hers to be the better half. Daniel's gaze on Gwendolen is contrasted with her own interpretation

of his glance as she defiantly refuses to "avert" her eyes. The narrator marks her "darting sense that he was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, that he was of different quality from the human dross around her, that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict" (*Daniel Deronda*, 6). The narrator tells us that she "controlled herself by the help of an inward defiance" as she continues to gamble, for "why should not a woman have a like supremacy?" (*Daniel Deronda*, 6). Her desire for "like supremacy" with men and subsequent "defiance" of Deronda and anyone else who disapproves of her is called an "enraged resistance." Gwendolen's narrative is one which enacts this "resistance" to convention and both gender and generic expectations throughout the novel (*Daniel Deronda*, 6-7). [21]

One of the expectations attached to Gwendolen— by both characters in the novel and by the narrative itself— is that she is "a girl likely to make a brilliant marriage" (*Daniel Deronda*, 30). However, in terms of Gwendolen's own views about her socially and narratively inevitable prospects, we are told "let no one suppose that she also contemplated a brilliant marriage as the direct end of her witching the world with her grace on horseback, or with any other accomplishment. That she was to be married some time or other she would have felt obliged to admit" but "her marriage would not be of a middling kind, such as most girls were contended with" (*Daniel Deronda*, 30). [22] The narrator goes on to say that despite this, "her thoughts never dwelt on marriage as the fulfilment of her ambition; the dramas in which she imagined herself a heroine were not wrought up to that close" (*Daniel Deronda*, 30-31). This is a direct allusion to how Gwendolen imagines her own life as a story in which she stars as a heroine. However, the story she imagines for herself does not necessarily match up with that of her surrounding society. Appreciating how Gwendolen understands herself and her place within her own

storyworld goes a long way towards seeing how she does or does not fit into conventional Victorian expectations for women, both within narrative and reality.

The narrator continues by focalizing through Gwendolen:

> To be very much sued or hopelessly sighed for as a bride was indeed an indispensable and agreeable guarantee of womanly power; but to become a wife and wear all the domestic fetters of that condition, was on the whole a vexatious necessity. Her observation of matrimony had inclined her to think it rather a dreary state in which a woman could not do what she liked, had more children than were desirable, was consequently dull, and became irrevocably immersed in humdrum. Of course marriage was social promotion; she could not look forward to a single life; but promotions have sometimes to be taken with bitter herbs—a peerage will not quite do instead of leadership to the man who meant to lead; and this delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead. For such passions dwell in feminine breasts also. (*Daniel Deronda*, 31)

Gwendolen's perception of her "womanly power" as either a wife or otherwise illuminates the gendered roles and social options available to her, limited as they are. Eliot hints that among the "passions" which "dwell in feminine breasts also" are both ambition and vocation, as well as "social promotion." Gwendolen wishes to possibly combine all of these within marriage. She chiefly desires action and activity; not to be "immersed in humdrum" or a "dreary state" is her main goal. [23] She recognizes that marriage might bring freedom and power, but even so she cherishes her present singleness as she seeks out alternatives to marriage (and as Eliot seeks to possibly provide her with alternatives to the marriage plot). Regarding her marriageability, we are told that "About her French and music, the two justifying accomplishments of a young lady, she felt no ground for uneasiness; and when to all these qualifications, negative and positive, we add the spontaneous sense of capability some happy persons are born with, so that any subject they turn their attention to impresses them with their own power of forming a correct judgment on it, who can wonder if Gwendolen felt ready to manage her own destiny?" (*Daniel Deronda*, 31-32). Regarding this reference to a young woman's social and matrimonial prospects, I am sure there is more to Gwendolen's purported narrative and social "destiny" at this moment than just her future marriage; she appears to feel the same, hence her resistance. Gwendolen's "destiny" at this moment—and her management thereof— can take many forms; it has infinite

possibilities. And the implication that she can possess any sort of authority over her destiny is suggestive of a greater degree of "womanly power" than marriage could typically afford a woman in Gwendolen's situation.

A conversation between Gwendolen and Mrs. Arrowpoint at a party results in a fascinating metafictional moment regarding women's vocation. Mrs. Arrowpoint remarks to Gwendolen that "young ladies are so advanced now. I suppose you have read everything," to which Gwendolen facetiously and sardonically answers, "I wish I could write books to amuse myself, as you can! How delightful it must be to write books after one's own taste instead of reading other people's! Home-made books must be so nice," and she later continues, "I would give anything to write a book!" (*Daniel Deronda*, 36). Not quite picking up on Gwendolen's satirical tone, Mrs. Arrowpoint replies "why should you not? …Pen, ink, and paper are at everybody's command" (*Daniel Deronda*, 36). Gwendolen goes on to say "I shall be so glad to read your writings. Being acquainted with authors must give a peculiar understanding of their books: one would be able to tell then which parts were funny and which serious. I am sure I often laugh in the wrong place…But I always want to know more than there is in the books" (*Daniel Deronda*, 37). In spite of this sardonic discussion of female writers, one of the real reasons why Gwendolen cannot adopt a serious vocation is because she "want[s] to know more than there is in the books," and she desires a kind of power beyond authorship of fictional stories, but rather an individual authorship over her own story and destiny. [24] The narrator spends a great deal of time in the beginning of the novel analyzing Gwendolen and deciding what kind of heroine she is and what her aims and objectives are. We are told that "it would have been rash to say then that she was at all exceptional inwardly, or that the unusual in her was more than her rare grace of movement and bearing, and a certain daring which gave piquancy to a very common egotistic ambition…the set of the head does not really determine the hunger of the inner self for supremacy: it only makes a difference sometimes as to the way

in which the supremacy is held attainable…" (*Daniel Deronda*, 42). Gwendolen's "ambition" and desires for "supremacy" are conflicted throughout the novel as Gwendolen struggles to understand herself and her desires; the degree to which either of these are "attainable" is also frequently contested. The narrator informs us that "Gwendolen was…inwardly rebellious against the restraints of family conditions, and…ready to look through obligations into her own fundamental want of feeling for them" (*Daniel Deronda*, 42-43). Though "she rejoiced to feel herself exceptional," the narrator admits that "her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion…" (*Daniel Deronda*, 43). [25] This is a good way to characterize Gwendolen's restlessness and female discontent: "vague power, originality, and general rebellion." For as Eliot's narrator tells us, "Here is a restraint which nature and society have provided on the pursuit of striking adventure; so that a soul burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and ready to take all existence as fuel, is nevertheless held captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms and does nothing particular" (*Daniel Deronda*, 43-44). This is why Gwendolen is unable to act or to articulate her discontent; because she is still "held captive" by societal expectations and pressures on women as her desires to meet those conflict with her general distaste for convention and the ways in which it paralyzes her.

Indeed, the only thing that Gwendolen is certain of at this point in the novel is that she does not "wish to lead the same sort of life as ordinary young ladies did; but what she was not clear upon was, how she should set about leading any other, and what were the particular acts which she would assert her freedom by doing" (*Daniel Deronda*, 44). When an educated middle-class woman like Gwendolen is not given options beyond marriage, creating new alternatives is the only way to avoid "lead[ing] the same sort of life as ordinary young ladies did." How should she "assert her freedom" when there is no existing dialectic through which she can do so? She must fabricate a new dialectic. Gwendolen

constantly strives against the grain by attempting to reach beyond the constraints of her life to a new mode of existence for women. However, these subversive moments are contrasted with those in which Gwendolen is paralyzed by fear or "fits of timidity" brought on by her inability to fit into a role she is assigned; both the social roles of her daily life, and also more theatrical positions. The most notable instance of this comes through the tableau vivant scene in which Gwendolen is play-acting as the statue from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and is suddenly struck with "a change of expression that was terrifying in its terror…like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered" (*Daniel Deronda*, 50). This is explained by a "sensitiveness" or "excitability of her nature," but the narrator tells us that "these explanatory phrases required conciliation with much that seemed to be blank indifference or rare self-mastery" (*Daniel Deronda*, 52). Gwendolen repeatedly obstructs her quest for "self-mastery" by succumbing to "black indifference," dread, or the drift into trust in a fantasy of ease.

A scene in which Gwendolen's sense of her own agency and freedom is exercised comes during the foxhunt. It is fascinating that Eliot uses this scene in which Gwendolen is exhibiting herself and her power—riding about the country with the men following the hunt—as the setting wherein she receives her first marriage proposal. [26] While Gwendolen admits that she is unsure whether or not she will "follow the hounds" on her ride with Rex, she says "I can't tell what I shall do till I get there. Clairvoyants are often wrong: they foresee what is likely. I am not fond of what is likely: it is always dull. I do what is unlikely" (*Daniel Deronda*, 56). Doing what is "unlikely" takes many forms for Gwendolen, but essentially it means that she does not want her present and future actions dictated to her by society. For her, this goes along with avoiding marriage and other obligations assigned to the Victorian woman. Rex joins in Gwendolen's lightness, telling her "When once I knew what people in general would be likely to do, I should know you would do the opposite. So you would have come round to a likelihood of your own sort" to which Gwendolen responds that then "I should turn round and do what was likely for

people in general…my plan is to do what pleases me." Rex calls this "contradictoriness" a "sort of likelihood," which is perhaps where we leave Gwendolen later in the novel following her marriage (*Daniel Deronda*, 56-57). Gwendolen tells Rex that "Girls' lives are so stupid: they never do what they like…I never saw a married woman who had her own way" and says "flightily" that she should like to "go to the North Pole, or ride steeple-chases, or go to be a queen in the East like Lady Hester Stanhope" (*Daniel Deronda*, 57). All of these possible— if not probable— alternatives for Gwendolen suggest a unique command of power. In answer to Rex's question about if she will ever marry, she says "when I get married, I should not do as other women do" and deferring Rex's further insinuations, she joins the hunt upon hearing the call of the hounds. The pairing of such a defiant statement with a rebellious action is typical for Gwendolen. The narrator tells us that though she "was perfectly aware that her cousin was in love with her…she objected, with a sort of physical repulsion, to being directly made love to. With all her imaginative delight in being adored, there was a certain fierceness of maidenhood in her" (*Daniel Deronda*, 57). Part of this resistance to sexual and matrimonial overtures comes from "maiden[ly]" shyness, as the narrator suggests, but her reluctance lies in her general distaste for marriage and her desire to "do" something with herself and her life, without knowing particularly what.

Illustration in *Horsemanship for Women* by Theodore Hoe Mead, 1887

The conversation tip-toeing around marriage is immediately converted into the "excitement of the scene at Three Barns" along the hunt. The narrator describes how "the color, the stir of the field had taken possession of Gwendolen with a strength" coming from the "prohibition" of "violent exercise" deemed "unseemly in a woman" since "no lady of good position followed the Wessex hunt: no one but Mrs. Gadsby, the yeomanry captain's wife, who had been a kitchenmaid and still spoke like one" (*Daniel Deronda*, 58). The threat of being compared to Mrs. Gadsby "had some effect on Gwendolen" keeping her "halting between her desire to assert her freedom and her horror of being classed" with such a woman (*Daniel Deronda*, 58). However, as Mrs. Gadsby is absent from the event and Gwendolen the only woman present, the narrator informs us,

> Gwendolen felt no check on the animal stimulus that came from the stir and tongue of the hounds, the pawing of the horses, the varying voices of men, the movement hither and thither of vivid color on the background of green and gray stillness: —that utmost excitement of the coming chase which consists in feeling something like a combination of dog and horse, with the superadded thrill of social vanities and consciousness of centaur-power which belongs to humankind. (*Daniel Deronda*, 58)

Rather than masculinizing Gwendolen as part of the "animal stimulus" of the hunt, Eliot renders the exhilaration of the sport open to all "humankind." Gender reappears in another guise however; Gwendolen's expertise sharply contrasts with Rex's failure, and her vitality clashes with his weak and wan figure once he falls from the horse. The conversation around marriage returns when Gwendolen comes home to Mr. Gascoigne and Mrs. Davilow's censure regarding her marriage prospects, and the effect of her "adventures" upon this future. Mr. Gascoigne warns her that "to be spoken of as 'the young lady who hunts' by way of exception, would give a tone to the language about…When you are married, it will be different: you may do whatever your husbands sanctions. But if you intend to hunt, you must marry a man who can keep horses" (*Daniel Deronda*, 64). Gwendolen retorts saucily, "I don't know why I should do anything so horrible as to marry without *that* prospect, at least." Mrs. Davilow attempts to recompense for Gwendolen's rudeness, saying "She always speaks in that way about marriage…it will be different when she has seen the right person…It was only last night she said to me, 'Mamma, I

wonder how girls manage to fall in love. It is easy to make them do it in books. But men are too ridiculous" (*Daniel Deronda*, 65). Like Hester in Oliphant's novel, Gwendolen has a hard time imagining marriage beyond the domestic fiction she has read. To her, marriage is the stuff of narrative but not necessarily the narrative she wishes inscribed for herself. Mr. Gascoigne remarks that "there is no harm in the girl. It is only that she has a high spirit, and it will not do to hold the reins too tight. The point is to get her well married. She has a little too much fire in her…It is natural and right that she should be married soon—not to a poor man, but one who can give her a fitting position" (*Daniel Deronda*, 65). Once again, the word "natural" is used in relation to the institution of marriage in order to demonize Gwendolen's unnatural preferences. Her family reads her resistance as though she is a young filly that requires breaking in, but they little suspect that Gwendolen wants to ride and control the horse herself rather than be one. Gwendolen realizes she must either invent a new marriage plot, or through sleight of hand, master the old. When Rex proposes to her, she tells him "Pray don't make love to me! I hate it!" and the narrator tells us that "the life of passion had begun negatively in her. She felt passionately averse to this volunteered love" (*Daniel Deronda*, 68). Gwendolen later tells her mother, "I shall never love anybody. I can't love people. I hate them" (*Daniel Deronda*, 68). Immature as such a response might seem— certainly from Mrs. Davilow's perspective— Gwendolen is articulating her aversion to social schemes which necessitate her matrimonial pairing. This is an inescapably subversive response which destabilizes both the separate spheres between the genders as well as political society as a whole.

After Rex's failed proposal, a new chapter in Gwendolen's future opens with an epigraph regarding contemporary Victorian views of women and their roles in society.

> *1st Gent*. What woman should be? Sir, consult the taste
> Of marriageable men. This planet's store…
> Is wrought in shapes responsive to demand;
> The market's pulse makes index high or low,
> By rule sublime. Our daughters must be wives,

> And to the wives must be what men will choose;
> Men's taste is woman's test… (*Daniel Deronda*, 82)

This foreshadows the following scenes with Gwendolen and Mr. Grandcourt. The "pulse" of the marriage market in which "our daughters must be wives, / And to the wives must be what men will choose" is something to which Gwendolen finds herself ultimately unable to submit. She rejects the "marriageable" male notions of "what woman should be" and though she does marry eventually, her marriage only strengthens her opposition to the ideology of separate spheres. Given what follows, this epigraph reads somewhat satirically. As the rest of the narrative unfolds, the main question becomes will she or won't she marry? And further, what will finally get her to the altar? (These are also key questions which I will further explore in Eliot's *Adam Bede*) Gwendolen desperately tries to avoid, or at least defer marriage for as long as possible. How long and in what manner will Gwendolen resist and seek to challenge conventional society; and how much of her game is just that, a game? Even when she agrees to marry, she hopes to resist conventional marriage trappings. If she cannot break the tradition she can try to change it from within.

The archery contest pairs with the opening scene in Leubronn as well as the foxhunting scene because it sets Gwendolen once again within the male purview and subject to "the taste of marriageable men." Once again we observe Gwendolen exhibiting herself before a male audience in a traditionally masculine activity where she is both judged and admired according to the ways in which she dualistically reaffirms and challenges traditional femininity and ideas of womanhood. The narrator opens with, "Who can deny that bows and arrows are among the prettiest weapons in the world for feminine forms to play with? They prompt attitudes full of grace and power, where that fine concentration of energy seen in all marksmanship, is freed from associations of bloodshed…" (*Daniel Deronda*, 83). Though feminized, the contest is still primarily male. However, this oxymoronic discussion of "the prettiest weapons" results in not so much a masculinization of Gwendolen as a

feminization of a male sport (as with the foxhunting scene). The narrator goes on to say that "The time-honored British resource of 'killing something' is no longer carried on with bow and quiver" since archery "breaks nobody's shins, breeds no athletic monsters; its only danger is that of failing, which for generous blood is enough to mold skillful action" (*Daniel Deronda*, 83). While Gwendolen is inserted into this male arena—as with gambling and foxhunting—she is not masculinized but rather provides a subversively feminized alternative to the patriarchal playing ground.

When Gwendolen shoots successfully and quickly outstrips her male competitors, she remarks, "with pretty archness," that "It is not my fault…If I am to aim, I can't help hitting" (*Daniel Deronda*, 87). Her refusal to restrain her athleticism and vivacious spirit while exhibiting herself competitively is a marker of her unconventionality. Later in conversation with Grandcourt, this unconventionality and refusal to submit comes off as flirtatious and coquettish, but narratively it can be seen as a feminized mask covering her rebellion and resistance. She identifies the mark, but misses the man: Grandcourt is not "a man of extremely calm, cold manners" who "might be less disagreeable as a husband than other men, and not likely to interfere with his wife's preferences" and Gwendolen's critical miscalculation leads to her acceptance of his proposal (*Daniel Deronda*, 91). She tells Grandcourt, "I never like my life so well as when I am on horseback, having a great gallop. I think of nothing. I only feel myself strong and happy…When I am on horseback I never think of danger. It seems to me that if I broke my bones I should not feel it. I should go at anything that came in my way" (*Daniel Deronda*, 91). Gwendolen's enjoyment of riding comes primarily from the sense of freedom and power it gives her. However, freely admitting to relishing and desiring the sensation of feeling "strong" makes her quite unusual for a Victorian woman, and honestly confiding that masculine taste to a potential suitor is even more strange under the circumstances. [27] Their conversation is bracketed half a dozen times with "pause[s]" in which the narrator gives us Gwendolen's feelings about what sort of man Grandcourt must be based on what he

says. In this way, the pauses of *Daniel Deronda* differ from those I referenced in *Hester*. Gwendolen's interpretations of Grandcourt's character vacillate back and forth, but mostly relate to how she perceives he would satisfy her as a marriage partner. We see Gwendolen's mental calculations as she attempts to gauge what their relationship would be and how she could possibly benefit from it. She cannot decide if his "cold" manners indicate his indifference or the reverse; she ultimately concludes that "she had not observed husbands to be companions" and "after all she was not going to accept Grandcourt" (*Daniel Deronda*, 91-92).

The intermittent courtship increases Gwendolen's unrest. When discussing Miss Arrowpoint with her mother, Gwendolen remarks, "I wish I were like her," to which Mrs. Davilow asks, "Why? Are you getting discontented with yourself, Gwen?" Gwendolen responds, "No; but I am discontented with things. She seems contented" (*Daniel Deronda*, 95). Whatever form Miss Arrowpoint's "content" takes, it is vastly different from Gwendolen's sense of "discontent" with her situation and the world around her. Once the shooting is done and the archery contest won, Gwendolen despairs that it "is over now, and I don't know what will come next" (*Daniel Deronda*, 95). She is also dissatisfied with the lack of control she has over "what will come next." The narrator reflects on Gwendolen's woeful lack of power and how it affects her, asking,

> Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant? —in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigor making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely… What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions? (*Daniel Deronda*, 102)

While this puts Gwendolen's relative unhappiness and struggles into perspective, it also more clearly delineates a sliver of her small sense of herself and her place in the world. She continues to act in an unconventional manner, refusing to please others and working only to please herself. The narrator tells us that "if she chose to take this husband, she would have him know that she was not going to renounce her freedom, or according to her favorite formula, 'not going to do as other women did' " (*Daniel*

Deronda, 108). Gwendolen's sense of what "other women d[o]" reflects her interpretation of the rules of conventional society and the separate spheres, and she is determined to renounce these. Even if she eventually succumbs to marriage, she plans to enter into it on a vastly different footing than required by tradition. But what is this "freedom" Gwendolen holds so dear; is it a freedom from or a license to? We get many passages connected with horseback riding and other masculine activities (gambling, archery, etc.), so those are certainly the arenas in which she feels free and powerful. This is addressed again in conversation with Grandcourt, where she tells him,

> 'We women can't go in search of adventures—to find out the North-West Passage or the source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like the flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about the plants; they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous.' (*Daniel Deronda*, 111)

This is scathing social commentary, though the comparison of women to flowers is not a new one during this time; garden imagery pervades Victorian novels. As Gwendolen points out, women were to be grown and cultivated, handled delicately and cherished; but they were also supposed to be content with such treatment, and be "dull" and "pretty." Gwendolen recognizes her lack of power through this metaphor comparing women to flowers, and her conclusion reflects a life of inaction, restricted action, and inevitably resulting boredom and "poison." Grandcourt's solution is to be expected under the circumstances: "But a woman can be married" (*Daniel Deronda*, 111). Gwendolen answers that "some women can," and goes on to say, "I am not sure that I am not both cruel and obstinate" in the face of such an alternative (*Daniel Deronda*, 111).

Once Grandcourt's matrimonial intentions are clarified, Gwendolen has time to reflect on the "two likelihoods" which "presented themselves alternately, one of two decisions toward which she was being precipitated, as if they were two sides of a boundary-line and she did not know on which she should fall" (*Daniel Deronda*, 112). The narrator goes on to tell us that "this subjection to a possible self," or Mr. Grandcourt, "a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and

terror; her favorite key of life—doing as she liked—seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do" (*Daniel Deronda*, 112). Gwendolen begins to see the wide gap between the two, the movement from egotism ("doing as she liked") to action ("what…she might like to do"). For Eliot, this is the turn towards morality and the possibility of establishing an authentic identity. Gwendolen juggles between struggling with putting herself in Grandcourt's power through marriage, but also with the possibility that marriage will open up for her new "dignities…luxuries" and most importantly, "the power of doing a great deal of what she liked to do" (*Daniel Deronda*, 112). Regarding "Grandcourt himself," Gwendolen thinks that "he seemed as little of a flaw in his fortunes as a lover and husband could possibly be," however, "Gwendolen wished to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself, with a spouse by her side who would fold his arms and give her his countenance without looking ridiculous" (*Daniel Deronda*, 112). Her desire to "drive the plunging horses herself" reflects her strong need for independence, which is unlikely to be met through marriage to one such as Grandcourt, even if at this point she believes that "after marriage she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly" (*Daniel Deronda*, 112). However, even within this decision in which she appears to have complete power of choice, Gwendolen slowly begins to recognize the lack of choices which present themselves to her. [28] The narrator says of this that "she began to be afraid of herself, and to find out a certain difficulty in doing as she liked. Already her assertion of independence in evading his advances had been carried farther than was necessary, and she was thinking with some anxiety what she might do on the next occasion" (*Daniel Deronda*, 112). Her family's precarious financial and social position makes her 'possibility of choice' even harder as she seeks to find some way to preserve her mother and her sisters while still asserting her independence and gratifying her own views of her future happiness. At this point, it is difficult for Gwendolen to imagine many alternatives for herself and her future.

Regarding this choice or lack thereof, Gwendolen's uncle tells her "you hold your fortune in your own hands—a fortune such as rarely happens to a girl in your circumstances—a fortune in fact which almost takes the question out of the range of mere personal feeling, and makes your acceptance of it a duty" (*Daniel Deronda*, 117). He phrases it almost vocationally to Gwendolen, saying "If Providence offers you power and position…your course is one of responsibility, into which caprice must not enter…" (*Daniel Deronda*, 117). Gwendolen answers that "I am not foolish. I know that I must be married some time—before it is too late" (*Daniel Deronda*, 118). Her uncle goes on to tell her:

> 'I trust that you will find in marriage a new fountain of duty and affection. Marriage is the only true and satisfactory sphere of a woman, and if your marriage with Mr. Grandcourt should be happily decided upon, you will have, probably, an increasing power, both of rank and wealth, which may be used for the benefit of others. These considerations are something higher than romance! You are fitted by natural gifts for a position which, considering your birth and early prospects, could hardly be looked forward to as in the ordinary course of things; and I trust that you will grace it, not only by those personal gifts, but by a good and consistent life.' (*Daniel Deronda*, 118)

This passage is a fascinating one for my purposes in this thesis; it collapses a woman's duty and purpose in life into the sole role of wife and mother, forbidding any sort of creative or vocational impulse—anything beyond traditional domesticity and confinement within the separate spheres. [29] This passage is also a good example of common contemporary Victorian views towards marriage; and something which the nineteenth-century marriage plot novel is in conflict with through its emphasis on notions of romantic love. There is no room for Gwendolen to have any personal aspirations within this framework, or even any conception of a romantic narrative plot trajectory for herself. What options does a character like Gwendolen have, given this view of a woman's role and purpose? The reader can be proud of Gwendolen's response to this; she says only, "I hope mamma will be the happier" for "she wanted to waive those higher considerations" (*Daniel Deronda*, 118). Within her choice to eventually marry, she seeks a middle ground between the martyred, hopeless "duty" of her uncle's characterization of a woman's marriage on one hand and her own sense of what is right for her family on the other. She runs away from the decision-making process to Leubronn, putting off her final decision to marry Grandcourt,

but is soon forced to return when her family suffers economic ruin. At this point on her return home, she faces the "dreary prospect" of the matrimonial decision awaiting her (*Daniel Deronda*, 190). The narrator notes Gwendolen's profound "discontent" ringing its "sad changes during her slow drive" home, marking that these "disagreeables…told heavily on poor Gwendolen, and helped to quell her resistant spirit" for "what was the good of living in the midst of hardships, ugliness, and humiliation? This was the beginning of being at home again, and it was a sample of what she had to expect" (*Daniel Deronda*, 190). How we chart Gwendolen's fluctuating and sinking expectations goes a long way towards understanding her decisions in the novel, pressed out of hardship and difficult circumstances. These dismal expectations result more in a portrait of the single Victorian woman's prospects in this time than an individual study of a complex character. Or in other words, Gwendolen's characterization and the analysis of her "discontent[ed]" resistance is one of an age and a gender rather than an individual.

At this moment in the narrative as the story veers back and forth between Daniel Deronda's quest to find and understand himself paired with Gwendolen Harleth's own journey of self-discovery, Gwendolen has not yet completely given up. The narrator tells us that "she did not mean to submit, and let misfortune do what it would with her…weariness and disgust with this wretched arrival had begun to affect her like an uncomfortable waking, worse than the uneasy dreams which had gone before" (*Daniel Deronda*, 191). But, comforting her mother, she resolves not yet on marriage as the solution to her present difficulties as "suddenly she seemed to perceive how she could be 'something" (*Daniel Deronda*, 192). This is a climactic moment in the novel—"she was at a higher crisis of her woman's fate than in her last experience with Grandcourt"—in which Gwendolen begins to no longer question "whether she should take a particular man as a husband," but rather "whether she need take a husband at all—whether she could not achieve substantially for herself and know gratified ambition without

bondage" (*Daniel Deronda*, 211). This seems like George Eliot's true views of marriage and the woman's right to choose, contrasted heavily with the earlier statement by Gwendolen's uncle regarding woman's true and rightful purpose in marriage. [30] Eliot seeks a more comprehensive definition of what it means to be a woman at this historical moment in which the political climate has largely ruled against such a possibility. Though her conversation with Klesmer does not really go to plan, and his pessimistic realism sends Gwendolen reeling back into her conventional position, the fact that she has an ambitious vocational plan here, a suggestion through which she can "get [her] own bread and…provide for [her] mamma, so as to save her from any hardship" is fairly incredible (*Daniel Deronda*, 212). She tells Klesmer her plan: "The only way I can think of—and I should like it better than anything—is to be an actress—to go on the stage…to study singing also…to sing and act too…Naturally, I should wish to take as high rank as I can" (*Daniel Deronda*, 212). Klesmer shoots down this suggestion almost immediately, telling her "you have not been called upon to be anything but a charming young lady…with that preparation, you wish to try the life of an artist; you wish to try a life of arduous, unceasing work…Your praise would have to be earned, like your bread; and both would come slowly, scantily…they may hardly come at all" (*Daniel Deronda*, 214). Perhaps we can observe George Eliot injecting her views on the life of a female artist here as a professional author. [31] Klesmer goes on to say,

> 'No, my dear Miss Harleth, you could do nothing better—neither man nor woman could do anything better—if you could do what was best or good of its kind. I am not decrying the life of the true artist. I am exalting it…But the honor comes from the inward vocation and the hard-won achievement: there is no honor in donning the life as a livery.' (*Daniel Deronda*, 214)

Klesmer's main objection is this idea of "inward vocation," which he forbids Gwendolen with her gender and her class background from possessing even in theory. He also shuns the notion of work for the sake of itself without some sort of creative aspirational calling, which is a rather elitist approach to take. It is also one which fails to acknowledge the real financial and social danger in which Gwendolen finds herself unless she *does* something or marries. Although Klesmer's standards exceed Gwendolen's

capacities, Eliot does want us to understand that Gwendolen hopes for an easy achievement; she is not willing to risk failure, even after working hard for success. He assumes, of course, that the right and only pathway for a girl raised like Gwendolen is marriage. But Gwendolen desires more; she tells him "I think I could soon learn to do tolerably well all those little things you have mentioned. I am not so very stupid…I suppose I have no particular talent, but I *must* think it is an advantage even on the stage, to be a lady and not a perfect fright" (*Daniel Deronda*, 218). By this, she means that her upbringing as a lady has prepared her to play the part of a lady on the stage to better advantage than the typical working-class actress. This is a realist approach to work which perhaps does not fit in well with either Gwendolen's gender expectations or class. Klesmer goes on to discuss the idea of "higher vocation in which you would strive after excellence," and it is clear that he perceives this as being out of Gwendolen's reach. He stresses the hardships that would come along with such a pursuit, which, though justified by "the dignity of a high purpose" will be unlikely to actually result in the freedom Gwendolen is seeking to achieve or maintain. More likely, he claims she "will hardly achieve more than mediocrity" (*Daniel Deronda*, 218). They seem to be coming from fundamentally different understandings of work, vocation, and the purpose of both: Gwendolen stresses her "desire to be independent," which is the main thing, whereas Klesmer interprets her wish to be an actress as an artistic pursuit of glory and fame. From what she says, Gwendolen likely has something more realistic in mind. She admits, "Of course I cannot know how things go on about theatres. But I thought that I could have made myself independent. I have no money, and I will not accept help from any one" (*Daniel Deronda*, 219). The main reason Gwendolen's suggestion is so shocking to Klesmer is because she is presenting the notion of a young, middle-class woman moving out of the domestic and into the public sphere. For the same reasons Mary Poovey calls upon to suggest that governesses were considered threats to both the gender and class status quo of Victorian England and the notion of separate spheres between men and women,

Gwendolen's suggestion that she exhibit herself publically and performatively for money is a departure from everything that is expected of the Victorian middle-class woman. [32] It is even worse than becoming a governess, because at least governesses worked within someone else's domestic sphere, if not their own. Gwendolen posits a revolutionary move into the public sphere, and Klesmer is right in his intimation that both she and society are ill-equipped and unprepared for such a venture. [33]

The disappointment which follows on the heels of this interview is unlike any we see Gwendolen experiencing throughout *Daniel Deronda*. The narrator remarks upon this, noting,

> She had been used to have her conscious superiority admitted…she had moved in a society where everything, from low arithmetic to high art, is of the amateur kind, politely supposed to fall short of perfection only because gentlemen and ladies are not obliged to do more…otherwise they would probably give forth abler writings, and show themselves more commanding artists than any the world is at present obliged to put up with it. (*Daniel Deronda*, 220-221)

The disappointment of such "self-confident" and "beguil[ing]" "visions" is severe, mostly because until this point Gwendolen had a more optimistic and perhaps less realistic view of her choices and possibilities in life, as she was "lately used to the social successes of a handsome girl…" (*Daniel Deronda*, 228). Although she briefly pursues the notion of becoming a governess, this work does not appeal to her, perhaps because she does not see it as including a creative vocational impulse like singing or acting. She dabbles with the "lure of freedom" in the idea of still "running away to be an actress," but cannot see a practical way to do so without any patronage or assistance (*Daniel Deronda*, 228). The result of these disappointed hopes is the depressed state which leads to her acceptance of Grandcourt as a husband, from which she struggles to remove herself throughout the rest of the novel.

She feels herself infected by a "world-nausea," brought on by "romances where even plain governesses are centres of attraction and are sought in marriage," and this heavily influences her subsequent choices. Here we see that *Jane Eyre* is a novel which other subsequent realist works are in dialogue with (*Hester* and *Daniel Deronda*, at least) through its depiction of both an educated, working women and a Gothic romance. The narrator's description of the "supreme worth of the teacher's

vocation" and the "sweetness of labor and fulfilled claims; the interest of inward and outward activity; the impersonal delights of a life as a perpetual discovery" are not convincing enough to Gwendolen following her disappointment (*Daniel Deronda*, 230). Eliot's narrator suggests teaching as an alternate vocational path with "the dues of courage, fortitude, industry" which Gwendolen could have pursued, perhaps even happily, in another life (*Daniel Deronda*, 230). The tragedy of her story is that there are some other slight alternatives for her in life, but she cannot see them for what they are. Part of the blame for this comes from her upbringing: "poor Gwendolen had never dissociated happiness from personal pre-eminence and *éclat*." This feels like a male-gendered view of ambition and a woman's place in the world. She desires to achieve much, and because of her gender and class, the only way that can be properly done is through marriage, which is clearly not going to be enough for Gwendolen. The narrator explains that "the fact which wrought upon her was her invariable observation that for a lady to become a governess—to 'take a situation'—was to descend in life and to be treated at best with a compassionate patronage," and within such a "situation," "she should take life to be hardly worth the having" (*Daniel Deronda*, 230). Eliot's narrator asks us to view her sympathetically, saying "Surely a young creature is pitiable who has the labyrinth of life before her and no clue—to whom distrust in herself and her good fortune has come as a sudden shock, like a rent across the path that she was treading carelessly" (*Daniel Deronda*, 230). In *Daniel Deronda,* we see how the many twists and turns within this "labyrinth of life" are perhaps more entrapping to women than freeing.

Within the chapter entitled "Maidens Choosing," we are implicitly called upon to ask what choice a "maiden" like Gwendolen has. From reading novels written by Victorian women about Victorian women, I am inclined to believe that the "spirit of general disappointment" which possesses her is one of an age for similarly situated women at this historical and social moment. [34] We are told that "her grievances did not seem to her smaller than some of her male contemporaries held theirs to be when

they felt a profession too narrow for their powers… Her griefs were feminine; but to her as a woman they were not the less hard to bear…" (*Daniel Deronda*, 232-233). George Eliot asks for an equal pairing of Gwendolen with "male contemporaries," an equal consideration of her "feminine griefs" with male ones, and she wants readers to consider her situation sympathetically with a view towards attempting to understand the nuances of her "general disenchantment with the world…with herself" since "it appeared that she was not made for easy pre-eminence" as a woman (*Daniel Deronda*, 242).

The passages before Gwendolen accepts Grandcourt are infused with a similar atmosphere of despair and "helplessness." As she waits for him to come and propose, she looks "along an inescapable path of repulsive monotony, with hopeless inward rebellion against the imperious lot which left her no choice" but "now, a moment of choice was come" (*Daniel Deronda*, 245). However, "where was the good of choice coming again? What did she wish? Anything different? No! And yet in the dark seed-growths of consciousness a new wish was forming itself—'I wish I had never known it!' Something, anything she wished for that would have saved her from the dread to let Grandcourt come" (*Daniel Deronda*, 245). Here, as readers, we desperately hope for another choice to introduce itself and prevent what appears to be the inevitable fact of Gwendolen's marriage to Grandcourt. Her "hopeless inward rebellion" takes no other form than that which dallies with Grandcourt's affections and intentions. She tells her mother that "I wish to have the pleasure of refusing him," and then says, "let us walk in the avenue. I am stifled" (*Daniel Deronda*, 247). She is "stifled," not just physically from being kept indoors waiting on a man who can move about the world freely to come and offer her a position in life, but also psychologically because of her conviction that she has no choice.

When Grandcourt does at last come to propose, Gwendolen attempts to use what remaining power she has to test him. He asks her if there is "any man who stands between us," and inwardly she thinks, "No; but there is a woman," and "What then? I may not be ready to take *you*" (*Daniel Deronda*,

252). The woman she speaks of is Mrs. Glasher, but I think it can also be Gwendolen herself and her resolve to not do as other women do. The intimation that just because she has no other suitor she must be naturally inclined to accept Grandcourt supports this notion. However, she eventually accedes to his proposal, more out of a belated sense of duty and desire to save her family from social and financial ruin than any other inclination. At this moment, we see the fatal miscalculation of Gwendolen's expectations to master her husband. The narrator informs us of Grandcourt's "strongest wish" "to be completely master of this creature," and Gwendolen is objectified in his eyes as a "piquant combination of maidenliness and mischief" (*Daniel Deronda*, 253). The narrator goes on to bemoan the "piteous equality in the need to dominate!" as Gwendolen "was overcome like the thirsty one who is drawn toward the seeming water in the desert, overcome by the suffused sense that here in this man's homage to her lay the rescue from helpless subjection to an oppressive lot" (*Daniel Deronda*, 253). Gwendolen's desperation misleads her and she succumbs to Grandcourt as the only way to avoid "subjection" to the "oppressive lot" of the unmarried woman. The "something like new consciousness" which is "awaked" in her after becoming engaged and guaranteed a position in life is contrasted with her old ideas of marriage, or the "brilliant position she had longed for, the imagined freedom she would create for herself in marriage, the deliverance from the dull insignificance of her girlhood" (*Daniel Deronda*, 258-259). At this moment, "her more resistant self could not act against the first onslaught of dread after her irrevocable decision" and we get the sense that after a long accumulation of narrative tension, she has crossed the point of no return (*Daniel Deronda*, 259).

Though she has undergone a profound emotional and mental change subject to her affianced position, Gwendolen maintains a level of her resistance, telling Grandcourt, "I will not be told that I am what women always are" (*Daniel Deronda*, 263). We see her continuing to exhibit this "hopeless inward rebellion," both mentally and verbally. After her marriage she thinks that "it was as if she had consented

to mount a chariot where another held the reins…All she had to do now was to adjust herself, so that the spikes of that unwilling penance which conscience imposed should not gall her. With a sort of mental shiver, she resolutely changed her mental attitude" (*Daniel Deronda*, 273). She realizes early on in her marriage that she has far less control than she originally anticipated. In this "chariot," Grandcourt clearly holds "the reins." On their journey home, the narrator asks,

> Was it at the novelty simply, or the almost incredible fulfilment about to be given to her girlish dreams of being "somebody"—walking through her own furlong of corridor and under her own ceilings of an out-of-sight loftiness, where her own painted Spring was shedding painted flowers, and her own fore-shortened Zephyrs were blowing their trumpets over her; while her own servants, lackeys in clothing but men in bulk and shape, were as nought in her presence, and revered the propriety of her insolence to them:—being in short the heroine of an admired play without the pains of art? Was it alone the closeness of this fulfilment which made her heart flutter? or was it some dim forecast, the insistent penetration of suppressed experience, mixing the expectation of a triumph with the dread of a crisis? Hers was one of the natures in which exultation inevitably carries an infusion of dread ready to curdle and declare itself. (*Daniel Deronda*, 298)

Has Gwendolen indeed become "somebody" through her marriage? This is certainly what society would say, but she will hardly find herself the "heroine of an admired play" of her own choosing. In other words, the "fulfilment" she seeks is not one which marriage can satisfy, despite all she has been taught growing up. Going a little further, the "fulfilment" Gwendolen is after is one which her society is not prepared to provide for a middle-class educated woman at this time.

In terms of the narrative structure, George Eliot does not abandon Gwendolen following her marriage, especially since the other half of the novel is focused on the titular hero. On the contrary, Eliot's narrator spends a great deal of narrative space focalizing through and further characterizing Gwendolen, adding more introspective layers to her following the transition of marriage. The narrator remarks that within Gwendolen "there was a combination of proud reserve with rashness, of perilously poised terror with defiance, which might alternately flatter and disappoint control" (*Daniel Deronda*, 348). More than that, the narrator wards off a unilateral characterization of Gwendolen, saying, "few words could less represent her than 'coquette.' She had a native love of homage, and belief in her own

power; but no cold artifice for the sake of enslaving" (*Daniel Deronda*, 348). Explaining this further and demarcating the tragic flaw in Gwendolen's personality which partially results in her failed marriage, "the poor thing's belief in her power, with her other dreams before marriage, had often to be thrust aside now like the toys of a sick child, which it looks at with dull eyes, and has no heart to play with, however it may try" (*Daniel Deronda*, 348). Though we see her resistance gradually fading, Gwendolen still "often pursued the comparison between what might have been, if she had not married Grandcourt, and what actually was, trying to persuade herself that life generally was barren of satisfaction, and that if she had chosen differently she might now have been looking back with a regret as bitter as the feeling she was trying to argue away" (*Daniel Deronda*, 362). This "bitter[ness]" becomes matter-of-fact to Gwendolen as she thinks that "her mother's dullness, which used to irritate her, she was at present inclined to explain as the ordinary result of woman's experience. True, she still saw that she would 'manage differently from mamma;' but her management now only meant that she would carry her troubles with spirit, and let none suspect them" (*Daniel Deronda*, 362). Though she expects to find an outlet for her creative and vocational energies through this domestic "management," she is disappointed to find it not enough. [35] She thinks ironically about her old ideas regarding "the wife's great influence!" for "Gwendolen herself had once believed in her future influence as an omnipotence in managing—she did not know exactly what" (*Daniel Deronda*, 464). Seeking "excitements that would carry her through life, as a hard gallop carried her through some of the morning hours," she toys with various ideas, including "gambling," for "she had heard stories at Leubronn of fashionable women who gambled in all sorts of ways…perhaps if she began to gamble again, the passion might awake" (*Daniel Deronda*, 362-363). By offering us a portrait of both a dissatisfied girl before marriage, but also an equally discontented married woman, George Eliot transforms the marriage plot as she analyzes and questions

the efficacy of the literary representation of "happily ever after." [36] At this stage in the evolution of the Victorian realist novel, Eliot pursues a more realistic realism. [37]

Gwendolen's mind rarely ceases juggling different alternatives; she perpetually seeks new options for herself even after marriage has mostly consigned her to tedium and stagnation. After contemplating gambling as one way to regain "passion," she reflects on "the pleasure of producing an effect by her appearance in society." She thinks, "what did celebrated beauties do in town when their husbands could afford display? All men were fascinated by them: they had a perfect equipage and toilet, walked into public places…perhaps they bought china, and practiced accomplishments" (*Daniel Deronda*, 363). Gwendolen desires to "display" herself and "the pleasure of producing an effect" is both a creative and a vocational energy which she cannot entirely satisfy as a wife. She bemoans the fact that pursuing female "accomplishments" has never held much interest and "pleasure" for her:

> Accomplishments had ceased to have the exciting quality of promising any pre-eminence to her; and as for fascinated gentlemen—adorers who might hover round her with languishment, and diversify married life with the romantic stir of mystery, passion, and danger, which her French reading had given her some girlish notion of—they presented themselves to her imagination with the fatal circumstance that, instead of fascinating her in return, they were clad in her own weariness and disgust. The admiring male, rashly adjusting the expression of his features and the turn of his conversation to her supposed tastes, had always been an absurd object to her, and at present seemed rather detestable. (*Daniel Deronda*, 363)

This is not much different than her feelings before marriage; she consistently exhibits a discernible aversion to "the taste of marriageable men" referenced earlier. The narrator goes on to remark upon her "hidden helplessness," saying, "Let her wander over the possibilities of her life as she would, an uncertain shadow dogged her. Her confidence in herself and her destiny had turned into remorse and dread; she trusted neither herself nor her future" (*Daniel Deronda*, 363). I would like to suggest that the "uncertain shadow" hanging over Gwendolen is that of Victorian political society and the trappings of narrative realism which restrict women's pursuits and even the idea that women should have pursuits beyond domestic activities.

During this period due to "the sense of inferiority…forced upon her," Gwendolen grows closer to Daniel Deronda, confiding her feelings of discontent and trusting his advice about what she should do to escape the monotony she feels (*Daniel Deronda*, 461). Noticing this, Grandcourt tells her that "I don't care two straws about Deronda…He is not going to take my place. You are my wife. And you will either fill your place properly—to the world and to me—or you will go to the devil," to which Gwendolen responds "with bitterest mortification in her soul" that "I never intended anything but to fill my place properly" (*Daniel Deronda*, 378). What is her "place" and how can she "fill" it "properly" in the eyes of both "the world" and her husband? Through her resistance in continually seeking other alternatives, Gwendolen complicates this idea of the "woman's place" and the "wife's place." She maintains her "suppressed struggle of desperate rebellion," despite (or perhaps due to) Grandcourt's tyrannical rule over her, and the "shadowy powers" which "govern Gwendolen" are "nonexistent" to him. Indeed, the narrator tells us that "he magnified her inward resistance, but that did not lessen his satisfaction in the mastery of it" (*Daniel Deronda*, 468). It is possible that in novels like *Daniel Deronda*, male characters "magnify" the "inward resistance" of female characters far more frequently than we see so explicitly described here. Gwendolen still pushes against the boundaries, even seeking to exhibit herself creatively within the domestic confines. She tells Grandcourt, "I think of making myself accomplished while we are in town, and having singing lessons" (*Daniel Deronda*, 495). When he challenges this, she responds by contrasting her position with his. She wants lessons "because I can't eat *pâté de foie gras* to make me sleepy, and I can't smoke, and I can't go to the club to make me like to come away again—I want a variety of *ennui*" (*Daniel Deronda*, 495). Though he allows her this comment, he also remarks, "I don't see why a lady should sing. Amateurs make fools of themselves. A lady can't risk herself in that way in company" and "one doesn't want to hear squalling in private" (*Daniel Deronda*, 495). In this manner Grandcourt dismisses the legitimacy of Gwendolen's desire for "a variety of ennui" and denies her even

the illusion of domestic independence. The topic resumes when Grandcourt tells her that "As my wife, you must take my word about what is proper for you. When you undertook to be Mrs. Grandcourt, you undertook not to make a fool of yourself. You have been making a fool of yourself this morning…you might soon get yourself talked of at the clubs in a way you would not like. What do *you* know about the world? You have married *me*, and must be guided by my opinion" (*Daniel Deronda*, 500). By "making a fool of herself," he is referring to Gwendolen's desire to exhibit herself publically while stepping into a male realm. Gwendolen recognizes the truth of his power over her in this scene: the narrator tells us that "every slow sentence of that speech had a terrific mastery in it for Gwendolen's nature. If the low tones had come from a physician telling her that her symptoms were those of a fatal disease…she could not have been more helpless against the argument that lay in it" (*Daniel Deronda*, 500). Continuing with the medicinal metaphor, the domestic confinement within their marriage which Grandcourt prescribes is equally "fatal" to Gwendolen in the way that it stifles and oppresses her. The narrator compares Grandcourt's domestic tyranny and subjugation of a helpless power to that of imperial control, and Gwendolen's gradual realization of this is where the narrative conflict unfolds and develops during the rest of the novel.

I would like to transition briefly away from Gwendolen to Daniel Deronda's mother, who also exemplifies the Victorian woman's discontent and oppression. She represents another female alternative, but one which is maligned in society because of her decision to send her son away as she pursued a performing career. When Daniel finally meets her in Italy and questions her motives, she responds defensively with,

> 'When you are as old as I am, it will not seem so simple a question— 'Why did you do this.' People talk of their motives in a cut and dried way. Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel—or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others.' (*Daniel Deronda*, 529)

She points out the great divide between how women are interpreted at this cultural moment. Women, particularly as wives and mothers, could either be angels or demons, mothers or monsters, with very little gray area in between. She is right to suggest that women like her would all be expected to be the same, and make the same choices. The resistance she exhibits in defying this notion of a woman's place within domestic confines is the same type of energy that Gwendolen attempts to articulate throughout the rest of the novel. Daniel's mother goes on to say,

> 'When you reproach me in your heart for sending you away from me, you mean that I ought to say I felt about you as other women say they feel about their children. I did *not* feel that. I was glad to be freed from you. But I did well for you, and I gave you your father's fortune. Do I seem now to be revoking everything?—Well, there are reasons. I feel many things that I cannot understand. A fatal illness has been growing in me for a year. I shall very likely not live another year. I will not deny anything I have done. I will not pretend to love where I have no love. But shadows are rising round me. Sickness makes them. If I have wronged the dead—I have but little time to do what I left undone.' (*Daniel Deronda*, 529)

The "shadows" she speaks of here are perhaps the same which surround Gwendolen; those of patriarchal confines and smothering expectations for Victorian women, mothers and wives. Referring to her own artistic and vocational impulses and desires, the Princess Halm Eberstein rejects Daniel's attempts to understand her decisions, telling him

> 'You are not a woman. You may try—but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out—'this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt.' (*Daniel Deronda*, 531)

The "man's force of genius" within her is her ambition and professional aspirations as a singer and actress, attributes which are incongruous within a female body; they cannot coexist with domestic expectations for a woman. The Princess says "That was what my father wanted. He wished I had been a son…He hated that Jewish women should be thought of by the Christian world as a sort of ware to make public singers and actresses of. As if we were not the more enviable for that! That is a chance of escaping from bondage" (*Daniel Deronda*, 531). She then asks Daniel, "Had I not a rightful claim to be something more than a mere daughter and mother? The voice and the genius matched the face.

Whatever else was wrong, acknowledge that I had a right to be an artist, though my father's will was against it. My nature gave me a charter" (*Daniel Deronda*, 560). The sentiments the Princess expresses here are more clearly articulated than Gwendolen's own views about herself and what she wants in life, but they arise from the same impulses, impulses which can be found through many discontent female characters in novels written by Victorian female authors like Margaret Oliphant, George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë. [38] The "right" she expresses is not one which society grants her, but rather one which she has granted herself, from her "nature." This clashes with what Victorian society has stipulated as the proper feminine "nature."

However, despite her defensiveness we see some indications that the Princess is not satisfied with the decisions she has made; or at least she wishes that she could have satisfied both vocational aspirations as well as domestic cares for her son. She speaks of a rupture and fragmentation between these two halves within herself. Particularly in the moments when she feels this guilt, she says "my whole self comes quite back; but I know it will sink away again, and the other will come—the poor, solitary, forsaken remains of self, that can resist nothing" (*Daniel Deronda*, 535). She outlines that "it was my nature to resist, and say, 'I have a right to resist.' Well, I say so still when I have any strength in me." (*Daniel Deronda*, 535). Her proclaimed right to "resist" and be more than "mere daughter and mother" is not one which society has granted her; it must come from somewhere within herself. Eliot's ability to represent and articulate the nature and character of this resistance is revolutionary because it suggests new pathways for womanhood, including both work and vocation and also domestic traditions.[39]

After Grandcourt's death and as the Gwendolen plot becomes more subsumed into the other storylines in the novel, including Daniel Deronda's own romantic narrative conclusion, Gwendolen does not disappear. Rather her personal story converges with the plight of Victorian women of a similar position and situation. Her future is left narratively undecided, much in the same manner of Hester

Vernon in Oliphant's novel. [40] Earlier during the high point of Gwendolen's misery, the narrator asks, "Can we wonder at the practical submission which hid her constructive rebellion? The combination is common enough…" and certainly for the Victorian woman in many of these novels written by women, "practical submission" masking or even constituting a "constructive rebellion" within a marriage is as commonplace as the marriage plot itself (*Daniel Deronda*, 510). Daniel Deronda's marriage with Mirah Lapidoth is not the final nail hammered into Gwendolen's coffin, but rather it marks a new future with new opportunities for her as a widow outside of a conventional second marriage. Much as readers might desire a romantic resolution joining Daniel and Gwendolen, it is clearly not within the best interests of Gwendolen as a woman and an individual within a narrative that is seeking to mark new pathways for women who resist. Desolate though the ending may seem for Gwendolen, she uses the news of Deronda's marriage to mark a turning point in her life, writing "I shall live." Implicit within this simple statement are some of the many alternatives which lay open to her, even if they are not clearly delineated by Eliot's narrator. I find that endless possibilities exist within what is *not* articulated as a future path for Gwendolen, as we saw with Hester in the last chapter of her story. Indeed, contrary to the shrinking of her world after her marriage with Grandcourt, this time the narrator tells us that "the world seemed to be getting larger round poor Gwendolen, and she more solitary and helpless in the midst…" (*Daniel Deronda*, 677). The narrator marks the "slow urgency" of Gwendolen's trajectory within "the larger destinies of mankind" (*Daniel Deronda*, 677). Striking out a hopeful tone for Gwendolen even within her dismal despondency, the narrator marks this stage in her life as test of "the submission of [her] soul to the Highest" as "even in the eyes of frivolity life looks out from the scene of human struggle with the awful face of duty, and a religion shows itself which is something else than a private consolation" (*Daniel Deronda*, 677). It is unclear where Gwendolen will go, or what she will do; if she

will "submit" to a higher creator as she did once for a husband, or if she will resist. The fact that the narrative leaves it open uncovers new possibilities for women within the marriage plot novel.

"The highest vocation of the novelist": Women's Work and Alternatives to Marriage in George Eliot's *Adam Bede*

> If I held it the highest vocation of the novelist to represent things as they never have been and never will be…I might refashion life and character entirely after my own liking…but it happens, on the contrary, that my strongest effort is to avoid any such arbitrary picture, and to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective, the outlines will sometimes be disturbed, the reflection faint or confused; but I feel as much bound to tell you as precisely as I can what that reflection is, as if I were in the witness-box, narrating my experience on oath. (*Adam Bede*, 151)

In George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), in the chapter entitled "In Which the Story Pauses a Little," George Eliot the author steps into the narrative in order to explain her understanding of the components and the value of realist depiction within the "simple story" which she claims is not "trying to make things seem better than they were," but rather to portray events and people faithfully (*Adam Bede*, 152). [41] This is reminiscent of Hester's question of "whether there was not to be found somewhere an existence which was true?" in "the books in which life is so different from what she found it" (*Hester*, 72). By observing the "vocation of the novelist" as an entry-point into the discussion of female vocation throughout *Adam Bede*, one notices how the narrative trajectories, plot destinies, and alternatives to marriage of both Dinah Morris and Hetty Sorrel are contrasted throughout the novel for different narrative effects. [42] Frequently, this contrast depends upon how their own individual understanding of themselves as working women, their place in the world, and their future possibilities grates against those dictated to them by mid-nineteenth-century societal conventions. Eliot's narrator interposes her own self-consciously metafictional comments upon the realist conventions which make up narrative, both mocking them whilst relying on their familiar appeal for Victorian readers. How Eliot interprets the

"vocation" of the realist "novelist," –and her own attempt to hold up a "mirror" to society, as if "in the witness-box, narrating [her] experience on oath"—illuminates the constraints upon women, both women writers like Eliot, preachers and mill workers like Dinah, and coquettes and fallen women like Hetty. Observing how Eliot navigates the differences between these types of Victorian women gives us new paradigms through which to interpret Victorian culture and society and the woman's place within it. This chapter of my thesis explores what Eliot terms the "barrier of dreams" restraining ambitious women like Hetty and Dinah within this discussion of female vocation and ambition, and all the social elements restricting and prohibiting such aspirations. [43]

The Life & Age of Woman—Stages of Woman's Life from the Cradle to the Grave, 1849

The above Victorian print is an artistic representation of some of the available conventional narratives of a middle-class woman; George Eliot's *Adam Bede* is one of many literary renderings challenging such impulses. Within the first couple pages of the novel, *Adam Bede* quickly translates a

portrait of the working class and the Bede family into a discussion about Dinah Morris, a working woman. The epigraph opening the first chapter directs, "*Awake, my soul, and with the sun/ Thy daily stage of duty run;/ Shake off dull sloth*" (*Adam Bede*, 3). Given the conversation between working men which follows, discussing Dinah and her work, I would like to argue that this epigraph is directed at women's work as well as men's. In this novel, the "soul" that is called upon to be awakened can also be interpreted as a woman's soul. Perhaps because the vocation she pursues is spiritual in nature, Dinah Morris is able to follow this call to work and service to a greater extent than many other female characters of a similar class and educational background in other Victorian novels. We are given to understand a great deal about Dinah before she appears on the scene; Seth Bede tells Ben that, "she's neither for you nor for me to win, I doubt. Only you come and hear her, and you won't speak lightly on her again" (*Adam Bede*, 5). In other words, Dinah Morris is *not* on the marriage market; she has a career instead. Dinah's status is fascinating from the perspective of the nineteenth-century marriage plot novel; how can this be a marriage plot novel in the true generic sense if the key heroine is unmarriageable? Clearly the goal of the narrative is going to be to move her to marriageability, and likely with the titular hero, Adam. However, the journey we undergo as readers and characters to get to that point is a turbulent one, especially since there is the very real possibility that Dinah will never marry or abandon her career for the sake of marriage. By understanding how nineteenth-century novels operate, we know that the work of the narrative will be to move her to a marriageable state, likely forsaking the career in favor of this rightful place for a woman. However, Dinah's reluctance to get to that place is indicative of her unusual and uncertain status as a Victorian heroine with a vocational calling.

Dinah's character is foregrounded as the "preacher woman" several chapters before she is introduced to the reader. This unites her work with her gender in a manner that would seem antithetical to contemporary Victorian audiences. The village's response to her can be equated with how readers at

the time might have seen her: she is gawked at and scoffed at, but mostly she evinces a strong "curiosity," particularly on the part of the village women, who are "drawn…quite to the edge of the Green, where they could examine more closely the Quakerlike costume and odd deportment of the female Methodists" (*Adam Bede*, 16). We go on to learn that Dinah is doubly employed; the suggestion is first made that her "kin wouldn't like her to demean herself to a common carpenter" like Seth Bede, but Ben says that "Dinah Morris…as poor as iver she was—works at a mill, an's much ado to keep hersen. A strappin' young carpenter as is a ready-made Methody, like Seth, wouldna be a bad match for her" (*Adam Bede*, 17). Of course, as in *Daniel Deronda*, the real question which will later be answered is whether or not Dinah will marry at all, and what she will achieve—or lose—when she does.

Dinah is introduced in the next chapter, but only from afar; she does not speak until she begins preaching. Her physical description is delivered through the point of view a stranger who approaches the village whilst traveling. The narrative is focalized through this stranger as he

> was struck with surprise as he saw her approach and mount the cart—surprise, not so much at the feminine delicacy of her appearance, as at the total absence of self-consciousness in her demeanor…he had felt sure that her face would be mantled with the smile of conscious saintship, or else charged with denunciatory bitterness. He knew but two types of Methodist—the ecstatic and the bilious. (*Adam Bede*, 18)

Her "absence of self-consciousness" is backed up by the fact that she "seemed as unconscious of her outward appearance as a little boy: there was no blush, no tremulousness, which said, "I know you think me a pretty woman, too young to preach"; no casting up or down of the eyelids, no compression of the lips, no attitude of the arms that said, "But you must think of me as a saint" (*Adam Bede*, 18). This is our first real glimpse at Dinah's complicated inner life; her interiority, spirituality, and intellect are the most significant aspects of her characterization, and though we are given details of her appearance, they fall secondary to these other qualities. The stranger quickly renders his opinion, calling her "A sweet woman…but surely nature never meant her for a preacher" (*Adam Bede*, 18). This is the first iteration of a common utterance regarding Dinah and her work; bringing the intentions of "nature" into the question

of female vocation and power positions Dinah as an unnatural being, particularly through her desire to stay single.

Dinah Morris preaching on the common by Edward Henry Corbould, 1861

Immediately after this, Dinah begins to preach and her rhetorical and oratorical powers are put on display. Despite her status as a marginalized woman, Dinah Morris has a voice throughout this narrative. Through her ability to preach and to speak publically, she is empowered in a way that feels unprecedented at this historical and political moment. The first Biblical story she speaks of is that of the Samaritan woman at the well; an interesting choice since that tale is frequently drawn on as an example of Christ's views on women, particularly sexually fallen women. Dinah chooses the example of a straying woman as a way to relate to this village audience, and to urge them to "preach the Gospel to the poor" and invite "the Spirit of the Lord" upon them (*Adam Bede*, 19). The emphasis upon evangelism is one of the key differences between the dissenting Methodists and the majority of those who follow the Church of England; this evangelical thrust is significant for my purposes because it stresses the importance of reaching out to the poor, the working classes, the common men and women. Dinah cautiously includes an emphasis on women and their inclusion in this representation of Christian faith as well. At this time the Methodist faith allows some women to preach and be more active in the church

than they would be able to in Anglicanism. She stresses sharing this gospel with everyone, men and women, rich and poor, asking, "Can God take much notice of us poor people? …Jesus spent his time almost all in doing good to poor people; he preached out of doors to them, and he made friends of poor workmen, and taught them and took pains with them" (*Adam Bede*, 20). Dinah's stimulating revivalist sermon is fundamentally about equality in terms of class as well as gender.

Dinah has the unique power of commanding the attention of an audience through her rousing sermon, much in the way that an aspiring male politician like Will Ladislaw in Eliot's *Middlemarch* does. Eliot's narrator gives us much of the text of her actual sermon, but she also includes the perceptions and reactions of some of her listeners. The stranger, for instance, feels himself "chained to the spot against his will by the charm of Dinah's mellow treble tones, which had a variety of modulations like that of a fine instrument touched with the unconscious skill of musical instinct" as "the quiet depth of conviction with which she spoke seemed in itself an evidence for the truth of her message" (*Adam Bede*, 22). Further, we are informed that "she had thoroughly arrested her hearers. The villagers had pressed nearer to her, and there was no longer anything but grave attention on all faces…" (*Adam Bede*, 22). The effect Dinah has over her audience is palpable and the power she has to "fix the attention of her rougher hearers" while still wielding the "power of rousing their more violent emotions," is the "necessary seal of her vocation as a Methodist preacher" (*Adam Bede*, 22). This is the first instance of the word "vocation" in *Adam Bede*, and it is applied towards a woman's work. This elevates it from just that—work—to a higher, more professional and transcendent calling. We are also given to understand the creative and even artistic aspects of Dinah's oratory. The narrator notes that "she was not preaching as she heard others preach, but speaking directly from her own emotions and under the inspiration of her own simple faith" (*Adam Bede*, 22). Is this similar to Gwendolen's refusal to "do as other women do?" Dinah's sermons are "simple," but nevertheless something entirely her own;

though she herself does not emphasize her power as an individual, many such claims as these testify to that. The "inward drama of the speaker's emotions" is something which the reader can follow throughout the course of the novel in relation to Dinah's vocational calling and oratorical power.

Juxtaposing this important display of Dinah's preaching work is a marriage proposal from Seth Bede. It is significant for the narrative that these two events occur back-to-back, because through it we see the options available to Dinah. Unlike Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda*, or even Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*, Dinah Morris has several distinct alternatives for existence and subsistence available to her at this point in the novel. Both a respectable marriage to a good man, and a vocation from which she derives both pleasure and purpose are open to her, so the choices she makes at this point are crucial to the structure not only of this narrative but also other Victorian marriage plot novels. Another way of thinking about her choice is to contrast the gendered spheres she inhabits. She has a foray into the public arena through her public speaking, which is radical for a woman at this time, but she also has the more domestic alternatives of marriage and a home offered to her as well. Once again, her choice between these two alternatives, and two separate, gendered spheres of existence— and the possibility that she will eventually unite them— is significant not only for *Adam Bede* but also for the nineteenth-century realist novel as a whole.

There is a quiet independence about Dinah which refuses to submit to the rules of conventional society, despite an outward submissiveness. The narrator notes in the proposal scene that her expression was one of "unconscious placid gravity—of absorption in thoughts that had no connection with the present moment or with her own personality…an expression that is most of all discouraging to a lover" (*Adam Bede*, 27). Dinah moves in a different sphere, one which is described as strongly interior and spiritual. Her primary dwelling-place within her own interiority contrasts with the material world in which she works. Seth recognizes this, thinking that "she's too good and holy for any man," but decides

that "There's no man could love her better and leave her freer to follow the Lord's work" (*Adam Bede*, 27). Perhaps surprisingly so, Seth has no desire to quench Dinah's ambitions; he even supports these aims and admits that they make her better than himself. Seth opens his discussion of marriage with an analogy to work, saying "It's a deep mystery—the way the heart of man turns to one woman out of all the rest…and makes it easier for him to work seven year for her, like Jacob did for Rachel" (*Adam Bede*, 28). Both Seth and Dinah feel this powerful call to service; for them this call is equal between the sexes and largely disregards gender roles in favor of more important priorities like ministry and humanitarian relief. However, Seth wishes to labor *for* Dinah while she wants to focus her work not around a husband, home and family, but around the church and its people. Seth's argument for marriage is one which is particularly compelling for someone like Dinah through his avowal that their partnership could enable a joint service and could even enable Dinah to serve more effectively without having to split her time between preaching and factory work as she currently does in order to support herself and not be dependent on anyone.

However, despite his valuable arguments—which have much merit in both the Victorian and Methodist worldview of service, marriage and domesticity—Dinah is not satisfied. Rather, she has another satisfaction which she holds dearer, finding that the two possibilities are not meant to coexist for her. She perhaps also recognizes the sacrifices that would have to be made on either side in order to facilitate a merger between domestic tranquility and valuable vocational service. She tells him,

> 'I thank you for your love towards me, and if I could think of any man as more than a Christian brother, I think it would be you. But my heart is not free to marry. That is good for other women, and it is a great and blessed thing to be a wife and mother; but 'as God has distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every man, so let him walk.' (*Adam Bede*, 29)

It is fascinating from a religious, political and social standpoint, that Dinah has applied this particular verse to women as well as men, arguing for her own valuable place in both society and spirituality. It is also worth noting that Dinah does see the value in marriage, both culturally and spiritually, but

nonetheless exempts herself from it. The argument, "that is good for other women" but not for her—is one which places the power and strength of the individual at the forefront, stressing her own subjectivity as that which determines the course of her life. Dinah's position is a threatening one, even if it is masked by a spiritual and moral high-ground; by desiring to not marry—even for religious reasons which contradict the "texts" Seth reference which encourage marriage—Dinah is subverting the traditional order of things and placing her own will over that of society, religion, and even narrative.

Further scenes in the novel work to explore Dinah's unique subjectivity and stance on marriage and her vocation; she views her calling as specifically pulling her from marriage and into a different mode of existence which largely rejects the type of Victorian domesticity which imprisons and confines women. She claims that "we can all be servants of God wherever our lot is cast, but He gives us different sorts of work, according as He fits us for it and calls us to it" (*Adam Bede*, 67). Perhaps this is where Dinah Morris is the most subversive of Eliot's heroines; she is advocating a world in which individual choice concerning one's destiny is also extended to women, and where marriage and motherhood is one of many different alternatives for women dependent on their character, strengths and weaknesses. The "barrier of dreams" which comes in a later scene regarding the restrictions upon Hetty Sorrel also has its effect upon Dinah Morris as the rest of the novel seeks to shape and develop Adam Bede in preparation for his eventual union with Dinah. Unlike many marriage plot novels in which it is the heroine who is molded and framed for the hero, Dinah bookends the narrative, absent during Adam's narrative progression and swooping back in at the last moment as his reward for goodness and constancy. Much as we are inclined to trust Adam with the care of Dinah, her final conversion into marriage has an unsatisfactory ring for the reader which runs contrary to the dual sense of romantic fulfillment and consummation which marriage plot novels train in us. The "vocation of the novelist" at

this stage in the development of the nineteenth-century novel might be one which values realist depiction at the expense of women.

A reader might struggle to find Dinah a particularly threatening or revolutionary type of character. Like Jane Eyre, she is small with a timid personality. [44] In the next chapter, Mr. Irwine expresses surprise at what he has heard of Dinah, saying "What, that pale pretty young woman I've seen at Poyser's? I saw she was a Methodist, or Quaker, or something of that sort…but I didn't know she was a preacher" (*Adam Bede*, 48). Captain Donnithorne will later also affirm that "she looks as quiet as a mouse" even if there is "something rather striking about her…like St. Catherine in a Quaker Dress" (*Adam Bede*, 54). This is largely consistent with the reception history of Dinah. Many critics have not always found her subversive, particularly in comparison with a coquettish rule-breaker like Gwendolen Harleth. These outward attributes of quietness and mildness contrast greatly with what we know of her strong character, which is largely defiant to cultural norms. Through her actions and reasoning, we can read Dinah's motives and ambitions as both subversive and unconventional. She tells Seth, "God has called me to minister to others, not to have any joys or sorrows of my own…He has called me to speak his word, and he has greatly owned my work…God's work is too great for me to think of making a home for myself in this world" (*Adam Bede*, 29). It is not just Seth's feeling that their marriage is the Lord's will which is enough to persuade Dinah; she insists on consulting her own feelings and ideas. She recognizes the power and truth of Seth's argument that they could be "fellow-helpers." However, she admits that "whenever I tried to fix my mind on marriage…other thoughts always came in…the happy hours I've had preaching…when I've opened the Bible for direction, I've always lighted on some clear word to tell me where my work lay…I see that our marriage is not God's will—He draws my heart another way" (*Adam Bede*, 29). Normally within contemporary religious settings, the man's assurance of

God's will would be the deciding factor; however here it is a more equal, individualized experience across the genders and even the classes.

Dinah goes on to say, "I desire to live and die without husband or children. I seem to have no room in my soul for wants and fears of my own, it has pleased God to fill my heart so full with the wants and sufferings of his poor people" (*Adam Bede*, 29). Not only does this reaffirm Dinah's sense of her vocation and calling, and how that calling has specifically pulled her from marriage and into a different mode of domestic existence, but it also sets apart the particulars of her Methodist faith versus that of many characters within the novel and likely much of Eliot's implied Anglican audience. This type of vocational certainty and decision of character is something which we see a heroine like Gwendolen Harleth longing for. Dinah defines her vocation through her individual ability to give herself away to others in love. Considering how strongly she feels about the relationship between her essential self, her worth and her work, it is interesting that she does marry at last. Does she reconcile these realms through marriage, or forfeit the delicate balance between the three? At this point, the suggestion of marriage entails a large sacrifice on her part. Since this is a marriage plot novel, narratively we can assume she *will* marry at long last like Gwendolen in Eliot's other novel, despite (or perhaps because of) the resistance which she enacts constantly throughout the novel. In this way *Adam Bede* is similar to *Daniel Deronda* in its study of how a reluctant heroine is conveyed or socially persuaded to the altar, and what circumstances bring her there.

Despite her refusal of his proposals, Dinah's influence over Seth is not inconsequential. The narrator moves into the more immediate active voice to assure us that "instead of bursting out wild accusing apostrophes to God and destiny, he is resolving, as he now walks homewards under the solemn starlight, to repress his sadness, to be less bent on having his own will, and to live more for others, as Dinah does" (*Adam Bede*, 32). This is an ironic moment of tonal shift from the narrator, who self-

consciously undermines romantic narrative expectations: "Considering these things, we can hardly think Dinah and Seth beneath our sympathy, accustomed as we may be to weep over the loftier sorrows of heroines in satin boots and crinoline, and of heroes riding fiery horses, themselves ridden by still more fiery passions. Poor Seth! He was never on horseback in his life…" (*Adam Bede*, 32). [45] Arising out of this I would like to further observe throughout the novel how Eliot simultaneously fulfills and undermines narrative expectations in her turn, particularly regarding the prospects of female characters like Dinah Morris and Hetty Sorrel.

We later discover how some of Dinah's friends view her work; her aunt, Mrs. Poyser is particularly vocal, though many of her objections arise from her desire to see Dinah settled and happily within a domestic setting. She tells Dinah,

> 'You're like the birds o' th' air, and live nobody knows how. I'd ha' been glad to behave to you like a mother's sister, if you'd come and live i' this country where there's some shelter and victual for man and beast…then you might get married to some decent man, and there'd be plenty ready to have you, if you'd only leave off that preaching.' (*Adam Bede*, 66)

Evidently for Aunt Poyser—like most of her Victorian contemporaries—there is a clearly demarcated boundary line between a woman's marriage on one hand and work on the other: the latter should be foregone if possible in favor of the comforts, ease, and protection of the former. Her main objection to Dinah's work arises from her removal from the domestic realm and refusal to become a homemaker. She tells her niece, "if everybody was to do like you, the world must come to a standstill… if everybody tried to do without house and home" (*Adam Bede*, 66-67). Of course, were Dinah to marry within her class she would hardly live a life of idleness. Rather she would work on the farm as Mrs. Poyser does, raising children whilst managing a household. Once again, Dinah emphasizes that she does not think *all* women should make the same choices as hers. She reminds her aunt, "you have never heard me say that all people are called to forsake their work and their families. It's quite right the land should be

ploughed…and the things of this life cared for" (*Adam Bede*, 67). She recognizes a distinct calling to a vocation which is specific to the individual rather than an overarching rule. [46]

Mrs. Poyser is probably Dinah's kindest critic; among the others among the community of Hayslope she receives much harsher censure challenging her decisions. [47] We learn through her conversation with Mr. Irwine that Dinah is an orphan, raised by relatives. She began working at the age of twenty-five, making her a much older heroine than traditionally seen in Victorian marriage plot novels like this one. She also has two occupations: not only does she preach—for which she is not paid—but she works in the mill at Snowfield. In response to Mr. Irwine's question about "women's preaching," Dinah answers that in Methodism women are not forbidden from preaching "when they've a clear call to the work, and when their ministry is owned by the conversion of sinners and the strengthening of God's people" (*Adam Bede*, 75). Dinah views her work as solicited from a higher power for a communal good, intrinsically tied to humanitarian relief and philanthropic efforts. Regarding objections raised against female Methodist preachers, Dinah says that "it isn't for men to make channels for God's Spirit, as they make channels for the watercourses, and say, 'Flow here, but flow not there' " (*Adam Bede*, 75). Concerning the grand history of patriarchal and imperial control lying in the background of a novel like this, Dinah rejects the mindsets motivating this type of male control and its inevitable power and influence over her. The decisions regarding what and where vocational and creative impulses can "flow" is one which Dinah leaves up to her own judgment through her reliance on God.

The line of work Dinah pursues is not just service within the church community but also public speaking through preaching. As a young, handsome, and unmarried woman, standing before large audiences of both men and women, Dinah gives sermons in the same types of circumstances that Gwendolen Harleth suggests publically performing on the stage in *Daniel Deronda*. Mr. Irwine inquires

about this important aspect of Dinah's vocation, and she responds that "I'd been used from the time I was sixteen to talk to the little children, and teach them, and sometimes I had had my heart enlarged to speak in class" (*Adam Bede*, 76). She goes on to communicate the divine inspiration which called her to preach: "sometimes it seemed as if speech came to me without any will of my own, and words were given to me that came out as the tears come… I was called to preach quite suddenly, and since then I have never been left in doubt about the work that was laid upon me" (*Adam Bede*, 76-77). She then describes her first experience teaching in the poor mining village of Hetton-Deeps, expressing a "great movement" within her soul, which is one of the markers of the rich subjectivity of her inner life. She is a character who dwells mostly within her interiority, rising out of it occasionally to preach publically and privately as an exterior articulation of this interiority. She also voices this rich subjectivity to Mr. Irwine, commenting, "thoughts are so great—aren't they…? They seem to lie upon us like a deep flood; and it's my besetment to forget where I am and everything about me, and lose myself in thoughts that I could give no account of, for I could neither make a beginning nor ending of them in words" (*Adam Bede*, 77). Mr. Irwine goes on to question her about any "embarrassment" or sense of impropriety she must feel from the fact that she is "a lovely young woman on whom men's eyes are fixed" when she preaches (*Adam Bede*, 78). However, she discounts this by saying "I've no room for such feelings." Once again, she relies upon her sense of safety within the freeing confines of the spiritual realm, despite the fact that these freedoms and protections call her to assert her interpretation of God's word and plan within the public realm, hardly thought proper for a woman at this time.

It is helpful to compare the narrative trajectory and plot destiny of Dinah with her foil, Hetty Sorrel as Eliot frequently juxtaposes the two for narrative effect. In the chapter on "The Dairy" we get our first introduction to Hetty as a "distractingly pretty girl of seventeen…rounding her dimpled arm to lift a pound of butter out of the scale" (*Adam Bede*, 70). She is deliberately cast into the character mold

of the beautiful coquette of a romance, but a specifically working-class version. [48] It is important to note that when Hetty first emerges and appears devastatingly attractive to Captain Donnithorne, she is laboring physically. We are told that "Hetty tossed and patted her pound of butter with quite a self-possessed, coquettish air, slyly conscious that no turn of her head was lost" (*Adam Bede*, 70). The narrator inserts herself and her distinctive voice more clearly within the chapters dealing with Hetty in order to mock the generic conventions which produce the fallen woman:

> There are various orders of beauty, causing men to make fools of themselves in various styles, from the desperate to the sheepish; but there is one order of beauty which seems made to turn the heads not only of men, but of all intelligent mammals, even of women. It is a beauty like that of kittens…a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you. Hetty Sorrel's was that sort of beauty… It is of little use for me to tell you that Hetty's cheek was like a rose-petal…it is of little use for me to say how lovely was the contour of her pink-and-white neckerchief…or how the linen butter-making apron, with its bib, seemed a thing to be imitated in silk by duchesses, since it fell in such charming lines…of little use, unless you have seen a woman who affected you as Hetty affected her beholders… (*Adam Bede*, 71-72)

This is a self-conscious and metafictional comment upon the realist conventions which make up narrative. Eliot's narrator admits that her description would matter little unless you yourself had experience to relate to, suggesting one method through which to interpret the realist novel and what it offers nineteenth-century readers. The narrator remarks that "Hetty was particularly clever at making up the butter; it was the one performance of hers" which "she handled…with all the grace that belongs to mastery" (*Adam Bede*, 70-72). Hetty's "master[ful]" "performance" is one that puts both her gender and her class on display to the best advantage of both. [49] Since she is "quite used to the thought that people liked to look at her," Hetty performs her femininity and domesticity to male viewers and the reading audience in a way that suggests her marketable marriageability (*Adam Bede*, 82). Hetty's is a far different type of performance which serves a different purpose than Dinah's on the common, but narratively and socially, the two are frequently viewed in the same light.

Unlike Dinah Morris, Hetty Sorrel is well within the confines of the marriage market and she is quite happy to play the courtship game. While the narrator's voice is used frequently to gently mock

Hetty, there is a lot of narrative space spent discussing Hetty's "inward life" as well as Dinah's in order to compare and contrast the two. Despite her early courtship with Adam Bede, the narrator marks "a new influence" which comes over Hetty, "vague, atmospheric, shaping itself into no self-confessed hopes or prospects, but producing a pleasant narcotic effect, making her tread the ground and go about her work in a sort of dream, unconscious of weight or effort…" (*Adam Bede*, 86). Through this "inward life," Hetty rises to a plane of semi-spiritual existence, but one drastically different from Dinah's; "showing her all things through a soft, liquid veil, as if she were living not in this solid world of brick and stone, but a beautified world, such as the sun lights up for us in the waters" (*Adam Bede*, 86). Hetty's imaginary world is a romantic one in which she dreams of marrying Arthur Donnithorne and moving from Hall Farm to the Donnithorne wealthy estate. Such a vast social transition and ascension is certainly the stuff of novels, but not a realist novel like *Adam Bede*. Treading the line between conventionality and the status quo versus radical calls for change, Hetty's seduction and abandonment is far more realistic insofar as the realist novel is concerned than her potential elevation to the rank of a Squire's wife. The narrator calls Hetty's romantic aspirations "foolish," but reminds us that "all this happened, you must remember, nearly sixty years ago, and Hetty was quite uneducated—a simple farmer's girl, to whom a gentleman with a white hand was dazzling as an Olympian god" (*Adam Bede*, 86). We soon discover that "until to-day, she had never looked farther into the future than to the next time Captain Donnithorne would come to the Farm" but now "perhaps he would try to meet her when she went to the Chase tomorrow…that had never happened yet" (*Adam Bede*, 86). Hetty begins to imagine a future for herself, one which is just as outside the bounds of reality and conventional society as the futures Hester Vernon, Gwendolen Harleth and Dinah Morris dream up for themselves. How women like Hetty Sorrel envision their future destinies (or are prohibited from doing so) illuminates Victorian constraints surrounding women. We discover that Hetty's "imagination, instead of retracing

the past, was busy fashioning what would happen tomorrow …what he would say to her to make her return his glance—a glance which she would be living through in her memory, over and over again, all the rest of the day" (*Adam Bede*, 86). Eliot's narrator terms this imaginative narrative-making a "pleasant delirium" but a "barrier of dreams" (*Adam Bede*, 86). The novel observes Dinah and Hetty's differing methods of challenging and overcoming this "barrier of dreams," deciding to what extent it will rule over their lives. It is worth noting that this "barrier of dreams" has its male counterpart in the "web of possibilities" which Adam dreams of when he imagines his future. Though he is thinking particularly of his future alliance with Hetty, this "web of possibilities" is one that is largely accessible and unrestricted for Adam; as a man, his "web of possibilities" has far fewer limits on its horizon than either Hetty's or Dinah's "barrier of dreams" (*Adam Bede*, 248).

The contrast between Hetty and Dinah is drawn more clearly when we see them placed alongside one another in the narrative, "in rooms adjoining each other" (*Adam Bede*, 127). Hetty studies herself in "a queer old looking-glass" in an interesting moment of introspective contemplation. Though Hetty's gaze remains fixed only on the physical, her exterior is an entry-point into interiority. Especially since much of her sense of her own value as a commodity within the marriage market comes from her own and others' perception of her looks, Hetty is a "devout" celebrant of this "peculiar form of worship" (*Adam Bede*, 127). Her observance of the "religious rite" of studying herself in the mirror is juxtaposed for ironic intent against Dinah's more serious Biblical study. However, since Dinah derives her value from her spirituality, and Hetty from her physical beauty, these two forms of worship are comparable in their purpose and worth for each individual. Thinking of her future inevitable marriage, the narrator notes, "Ah, what a prize the man gets who wins a sweet bride like Hetty!" and "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" (*Adam Bede*, 130). In other words, during a time in which women were merely decorative and

had no options outside of the home; no purpose except for marriage and childbirth. The narrator also makes reference to "Nature," who "has written out his bride's character for him in those exquisite lines of cheek and lip and chin…" (*Adam Bede*, 130). Ostensibly more "natural," Hetty is possibly still living within this reality, like many of her Victorian female contemporaries, but Dinah exists narratively to suggest an alternative as she seeks out her own possibilities. The narrator draws the direct contrast between the two in the passage quoted below:

> What a strange contrast the two figures made, visible enough in that mingled twilight and moonlight! Hetty, her cheeks flushed and her eyes glistening from her imaginary drama, her beautiful neck and arms bare, her hair hanging in a curly tangle down her back, and the baubles in her ears. Dinah, covered with her long white dress, her pale face full of subdued emotion, almost like a lovely corpse into which the soul has returned charged with sublimer secrets and a sublimer love. They were nearly of the same height; Dinah evidently a little the taller as she put her arm round Hetty's waist and kissed her forehead. (*Adam Bede*, 136)

Though Hetty's "imaginary drama" is called out here, Dinah's "subdued emotion" and "sublime love" are equally important in distinguishing her; they are both laboring under "a barrier of dreams" equally improbable for Victorian female heroines. While characters like Hetty and Arthur are frequently seen contemplating their reflections in mirrors, Dinah and Adam are usually looking out windows. One's reflection is visible in a window, but so is the rest of the world that one is gazing out upon. As a woman, looking out is especially poignant for Dinah; it indicates the ways in which she seeks to look both into as well as beyond herself and at what lies beyond the borders of domesticity.

Though the narrator gently mocks Hetty for her vanities, she also suggests that we question our own foibles and shortcomings before we judge Hetty too harshly. Whilst describing Hetty's daily religious regimen of studying herself in the "old speckled glass," the narrator tells us, "do not reason about it, my philosophical reader…you will never understand women's natures if you are so excessively rational. Try rather to divest yourself of all your rational prejudices, as much as if you were studying the psychology of a canary bird…" (*Adam Bede*, 214). She asks us to "only watch the movements of this pretty round creature as she turns her head on one side with an unconscious smile at the ear-rings"

(*Adam Bede*, 214). Understanding and sympathizing with Hetty will come from interpreting her as a different type of heroine from Dinah; distinguishing them in our minds, as the narrator suggests, helps us to understand them differently and better as a result. [50]

Returning to an earlier comparison, there is a connection between the depictions of working-class men like Adam and the differing characterizations of working women like Dinah and Hetty. This also extends to the discussion of faith and Methodism in the book, and the Methodist evangelical advocation of equality and spiritual representation. Mr. Poyser disdainfully draws this comparison, saying "I'm no opinion o' the Methodists. It's on'y tradesfolks as turn Methodists…There's maybe a workman now an' then, as isn't overclever at's work, takes to preachin' an' that, like Seth Bede" (*Adam Bede*, 164). He hardly recognizes the value of this connection; certainly it is no coincidence that Methodism would appeal to working men and women since it is a sect of Christianity which at this time placed equal or even more value on working class people and what they contribute to their society and the kingdom of God. Eliot represents it as a faith which not only suggests new paradigms for gender relations, but which also has interesting implications for the enfranchisement of the working classes (the Reform Bills followed shortly on the heels of novels like Eliot's). Mr. Poyser notes that Adam, "has got one o' the best head-pieces hereabout" and knows better when it comes to religion, for "he's a good Churchman" (*Adam Bede*, 164). Adam adopts simplicity as an approach to his spirituality and its relation to his work. The nobility of his character is illuminated by the course of his thoughts and actions as the Hetty plot evolves. He has his own "calculations and contrivances" regarding his future marriage, which turn into romantic "dreams and hopes" in the same manner of the women in this novel, but with far fewer "barrier[s]" and much more "possibilities" (*Adam Bede*, 181-182). Adam is deceived in Hetty Sorrel's character, overwhelmed as he is by his own romantic projections. Despite their eventual union, Adam and Dinah are only together a handful of times until their final courtship at the end; far more

narrative space is spent upon his love and courtship of Hetty. However, it is interesting to watch him draw the comparison between the two women. When discussing "flowers or feathers or gold things" used as decoration in women's hair, he tells Hetty "If a woman's young and pretty, I think you can see her good looks all the better for her being plain dressed. Why, Dinah Morris looks very nice, for all she wears such a plain cap and gown. It seems to me as a woman's face doesna want flowers; it's almost like a flower itself. I'm sure yours is" (*Adam Bede*, 192). Adam is speaking sincerely—if patronizingly—even from his slight understanding of female dress, but Hetty translates his sincerity into flirtatious banter along the lines of her coquetry with Arthur Donnithorne. She tells him, "Oh, very well…I'll put one o' Dinah's caps on when we go in, and you'll see if I look better in it" (*Adam Bede*, 192). Though he clearly had some notion of combining the two women and their individual appearances and behaviors in his mind, Adam backtracks, clarifying, "Nay, nay, I don't want you to wear a Methodist cap like Dinah's. I daresay it's a very ugly cap, and I used to think when I saw her here as it was nonsense for her to dress different t' other people" (*Adam Bede*, 192). Dinah's "Methodist cap" distinguishes her among other women as a preacher and female laborer, and this is likely what makes Adam uncomfortable. He goes on to tell Hetty, "you've got another sort o' face; I'd have you just as you are now, without anything t' interfere with your own looks." Or in other words, he would have Hetty without embellishments or the distinctions or rank and gender which he sees other women using to perform their worth and their marriageability (*Adam Bede*, 192).

After she spends some time comforting Adam's mother following his father's death, Dinah leaves Hayslope for Snowfield and disappears from the narrative for several-hundred pages, existing only in spectral and spiritual form in the minds of the other characters until her return after Hetty's ordeal. The novel is bookended with the two proposals Dinah receives from the Bede brothers; two different options for her outside of her largely off-stage preaching and mill work which takes up the

central portion of the novel. With Dinah gone, the majority of the narrative surrounds Hetty and her own struggle between two men who offer her vastly different things. This middle portion of the novel also gives us an opportunity to observe Adam's views on marriage and women. Though he appears to admit an equality between men and women, he clearly understands a separation between their spheres of work and influence which is consistent with his social and historical contexts. He tells his friend Mr. Massey that "a working-man 'ud be badly off without a wife to see to th' house and the victual, and make things clean and comfortable" (*Adam Bede*, 206). He does not view this domesticity as a limitation on women's freedom and choices, but it is an essential component of a successful marriage to him. Bartle Massey objects to this characterization of a woman's role, arguing,

> 'It's the silliest lie a sensible man like you ever believed, to say a woman makes a house comfortable. It's a story got up because women are there and something must be found for 'em to do. 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, unless it's bearing children, and they do that in a poor make-shift way; it had better ha' been left to the men—it had better ha' been left to the men.' (*Adam Bede*, 207)

There is much than can be said about this speech; it advocates an obliteration of separate spheres, but by way confiscating the woman's sphere and delegating that to the men as well. What good are women for, one has to ask, in Bartle's estimation? The narrator notes that his female dog, Vixen, "felt it incumbent on her to jump out of the hamper and bark vaguely" in objection to this misogynistic speech, to which he responds, "Quiet, Vixen! …You're like the rest o' the women—always putting in your word before you know why" (*Adam Bede*, 208). Vixen is the voice of female rebellion, "bark[ing] vaguely" but resonantly, in objection to her master's misogyny. [51] Similarly, towards the end of the novel Vixen makes her second appearance in the prison after Adam has just been contemplating his own suffering and sadness surrounding Hetty. Vixen approaches, and "whimpers," perhaps as a reminder of the suffering of women which goes largely unremarked upon in comparison with male suffering (*Adam Bede*, 367).

We are meant to see Adam as a different type of hero, but an equally noble one despite his working-class status. At first glance, he bears some comparison with the heroes of earlier industrial

novels like Elizabeth Gaskell's; John Barton of *Mary Barton* (1848) and Nicholas Higgins of *North and South* (1855) come to mind. [52] However, Adam Bede is not a revolutionary but a farm laborer; he works as a stand-in for an older sort of chivalry and gentility. Eliot's narrator tells us exactly how we ought to feel for Adam as she uses the narrative to prove his worth. Describing the villagers' feelings of "value and respect for Adam Bede," Mr. Irwine claims that "people in a high station are of course more thought of and talked about and have their virtues more praised, than those whose lives are passed in humble everyday work; but every sensible man knows how necessary that humble everyday work is, and how important it is to us that it should be done well" (*Adam Bede*, 230). Dinah and her own vocation loom in the background of this discussion of "humble everyday work." Adam is not only a good man, but a good worker; the two are possibly inextricable in Eliot's idea of working-class male virtue. Mr. Irwine remarks that "when a man whose duty lies in that sort of work shows a character which would make him an example in any station, his merit should be acknowledged. He is one of those to whom honor is due…I know Adam Bede well—I know what he is as a workman…I respect him as much as I respect any man living" (*Adam Bede*, 230). It is key for Eliot's purposes that Adam is respected and honored by both the high and low within Hayslope's society. All of this is intended to narratively prepare Adam for his union with Dinah. A great deal of narrative effort is extended towards making Adam worthy of her as no other man can be. This is a reversal within the marriage plot conventions, since traditionally it is the heroine who must be schooled and taught by the hero or other characters to be worthy of the man. Though both Adam and Dinah come mutually fairly well developed and ready to be together, some of Adam's core principles and not a few of Dinah's as well must be shaken before they can marry.

There are interesting instances in these novels written by women in which the working women become writers themselves. Particularly since Dinah's creative and rhetorical power in oratory is revealed so early on, one has reason to believe that she also likely excels as a written author, and that

having her write would be an interesting metafictional experiment for George Eliot as a woman writer herself. [53] Seth prepares Adam and the reader for her writing style, saying "it's quite easy t'read—she writes wonderful for a woman" (*Adam Bede*, 281). Though to be expected for the time, the qualification still grates. Nevertheless, Dinah immediately rids her layered readers of any doubt of her inscribed rhetorical prowess through the text of her letter itself, which is given in its entirety to both Adam and us. The fact that Dinah and Seth exchange such long written letters suggests an intimacy, if not with him then with the Bede family as a whole. She writes to them, "my heart is knit to your aged mother since it was granted me to be near her in the day of trouble" (*Adam Bede*, 282). She talks about the dusky "blessed" time of day in which "the outward light is fading, and the body is a little wearied with its work and its labor" when "the inward light shines the brighter, and we have a deeper sense of resting on the Divine strength" (*Adam Bede*, 282). She presumably intends to communicate her own bodily toils and tolls here, as a worker herself, and recognize an honesty in the kind of daily work which wears on the body and soul in a fulfilling manner.

Further abstracting herself, she writes, "I sit on my chair in the dark room and close my eyes, and it is as if I was out of the body and could feel no want for evermore…the very hardship, and the sorrow, and the blindness, and the sin I have beheld and been ready to weep over…I can bear with a willing pain, as if I was sharing the Redeemer's cross" (*Adam Bede*, 283). She tells Seth, "I feel it, I feel it—infinite love is suffering too…I see it in the whole work and word of the Gospel" (*Adam Bede*, 283). The use of the word "work" here registers the direct connection between how Dinah sees her work and its importance to society and posterity; it also makes an evaluation of the "Gospel" as something active rather than passive in Dinah's estimation. She continues upon this vocational note, describing her own current "constant work in the mill," explaining, "my body is greatly strengthened" by the work as it is balanced with preaching (*Adam Bede*, 284). I have said that Dinah appears only at the start and finish of

the novel. This crucial moment occurs mid-way through, where Eliot revives her voice—the most compelling aspect of Dinah's character—in order to remind characters (and readers) of the vital connection between work and spirit that is, or should be, our highest ideal. However, there is more to Dinah than this; she is always described as a character whose goodness overrides her other characteristics. Certainly, she is good and wishes to do good. Nevertheless, there remains a great deal of the subversive within her. She finishes her letter to Seth Bede by praising his own sense of home and community among his people, and, comparing it with hers she states, "my work and my joy are here among the hills, and I sometimes think I cling too much to my life among the people here, and should be rebellious if I was called away" (*Adam Bede*, 284). [54] By admitting to this potentially fomenting rebellion, Dinah Morris articulates her sense of the entrapment of women that pervades her society, and suggests means through which she can rise above it. At face value the means she picks through which to do so seem conventional, but there is an underlying restlessness and subversion behind this religiosity which is anything but conventional. [55]

Returning to Adam and Hetty, the narrator gives us her opinions on Adam's fallibility, which exists only insofar as he is mistakenly in love with Hetty. However, she uses this very weakness to defend him, saying,

> Possibly you think that Adam was not at all sagacious in his interpretations, and that it was altogether extremely unbecoming in a sensible man to behave as he did—falling in love with a girl who really had nothing more than her beauty to recommend her, attributing imaginary values to her, and even condescending to cleave to her after she had fallen in love with another man…But in so complex a thing as human nature, we must consider, it is hard to find rules without exceptions…For my own part, however, I respect him none the less—nay, I think the deep love he had for that sweet, rounded, blossom-like, dark-eyed Hetty, of whose inward self he was really very ignorant, came out of the very strength of his nature and not out of any inconsistent weakness… (*Adam Bede*, 304-305)

Eliot's narrator asks how a sympathetic approach to Adam's imprudence just as she does Hetty's. This occurs after Hetty has been seduced and jilted by Arthur Donnithorne and Adam has proposed and been accepted by Hetty. While recognizing some of Hetty's indiscretions in the matter, Adam

overwhelmingly blames Arthur for her ruin and takes the responsibility upon himself because he did not put a halt to the intimacy earlier. In so doing, he seeks to redeem Hetty's reputation by taking her as a wife. His impulses are gentlemanly and chivalrous, arising out of his love for Hetty, but they mostly neglect her own feelings and understanding of her situation. This is not to say that Hetty is forced into an engagement with Adam; she certainly enters it freely, but not without a sense of obligation, gratitude and both societal and virtuous necessity impressed on her by Victorian morality.

Hetty's inner life is kept much obscured from Adam but not from us as readers of her and her emotions. Following Arthur's abandonment, the narrator describes "the shattering of all her little dream-world which returns us to the "barrier of dreams" that earlier characterized the romantic lens through which Hetty typically distorted the world and the relations she forged within it. Going on, the narrator notes "the crushing blow on her new-born passion" which "afflicted her pleasure-craving nature with an overpowering pain that annihilated all impulse to resistance, and suspended her anger" as "she sat sobbing till the candle went out, and then, wearied, aching, stupefied with crying, threw herself on the bed without undressing and went to sleep" (*Adam Bede*, 287). Though certainly on a larger-scale, this can be compared to Gwendolen's lessening "impulse to resistance" after her marriage. Although even the astute reader is perhaps not yet entirely aware of the degree to which Hetty is ruined, it hardly matters in terms of how society would have perceived her. Seduced, pregnant, and abandoned or romantically and sexually trifled with on a smaller scale, it would matter little in terms of what would be considered to be her ruin. Regardless, she would be considered a fallen woman in the eyes of society and the man who voluntarily takes her on. The folk ballad dating back to the seventeenth century England, "The Sprig of Thyme" or "Let No Man Steal Your Thyme" references this idea:

> *Come all you fair and tender girls*
> *That flourish in your prime*
> *Beware, beware, keep your garden fair*
> *Let no man steal your thyme*
> *Let no man steal your thyme*

For when your time it has passed and gone
He'll care no more for you
And every place where your time was waste
Will all spread o'er with rue
Will all spread o'er with rue. [56]

That being said, despite the degree to which she is actually fallen, George Eliot foregrounds an atmosphere of sympathy for the fallen woman in this novel. Like in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*, or even in Thomas Hardy's later *Tess of D'Urbervilles*, we are given the entire history of the fallen woman's narrative trajectory from virtue to ruin and are called upon as sympathetic readers to interpret for ourselves how she has been preyed upon, manipulated, and maneuvered by the strict confinement of women in Victorian society into this position. By understanding all the circumstances, including those wherein the fallen heroine herself trespassed or erred, we are granted a more relatable impression of the sexually straying female in these literary works. We also come to understand why Hetty's "resistance" is "annihilated" at this point, and she almost gives up. Her "resistance" to the values imposed upon her has perhaps led her into the state in which she now finds herself. Indeed, the "candle" which goes out is a representation of this "resistance" as it fades away, bit by bit.

The Outcast by Richard Redgrave, 1851

The above oil painting by Richard Redgrave, entitled "The Outcast," artistically represents a patriarch's reaction to a daughter's illegitimate child. Hetty is spared familial ostracization only because

her pregnancy goes undetected and she falls under the protection of Adam Bede before her family knows the full extent of her immorality. But it is another Victorian representation of the fallen woman which seeks to cultivate a sense of sympathy around her. When Hetty Sorrel runs away from home, seeking out Arthur Donnithorne, her deep desperation and despondency invites pity. The narrator switches into the present tense in order to extend this sense of immediate consequence, foreshadowing the gravity of the decisions that Hetty will make and their future impact on her life. The narrator describes "Hetty, in her red cloak and warm bonnet…hardly knows that the sun is shining; and for weeks, now, when she has hoped at all, it has been for something at which she herself trembles and shudders" (*Adam Bede*, 313). She also desires to be out of the way, "out of the high-road, that she may walk slowly and not care how her face looks, as she dwells on wretched thoughts…Her great dark eyes wander blankly over the fields like the eyes of one who is desolate, homeless, unloved, not the promised bride of a brave tender man" (*Adam Bede*, 313). We intimately follow Hetty's line of thought for the first time since observing her itemization of her own physical attributes at the mirror. As her thought process and decisions quickly unfold, we realize the gravity of her situation through the "on-coming of her great dread" as "all the force of her nature" is "concentrated on the one effort of concealment" (*Adam Bede*, 313). The narrator tells us, "No, she has not courage to jump into that cold watery bed, and if she had, they might find her—they might find out why she had drowned herself. There is but one thing left to her: she must go away, go where they can't find her" (*Adam Bede*, 314). Her "irresistible dread" is that of the "discovery" of her illegitimate pregnancy; the narrator marks that "something must happen—to set her free from this dread" and still within Hetty's "young, childish, ignorant soul" is this "blind trust in some unshapen chance" (*Adam Bede*, 314). Her wavering, but still existent hope is contrasted with the "necessity" "pressing hard upon her" as she continues along the road (*Adam Bede*,

315). The narrator ends this chapter on a climactic, metafictional note, addressing the reader and Hetty directly, uniting us narratively:

> She must wander on and on, and wait for a lower depth of despair to give her courage. Perhaps death would come to her, for she was getting less and less able to bear the day's weariness. And yet—such is the strange action of our souls, drawing us by a lurking desire towards the very ends we dread—Hetty, when she set out again from Norton, asked the straightest road northwards towards Stonyshire, and kept it all that day.
>
> Poor wandering Hetty, with the rounded childish face and the hard, unloving, despairing soul looking out of it—with the narrow heart and narrow thoughts, no room in them for any sorrows but her own, and tasting that sorrow with the more intense bitterness! My heart bleeds for her as I see her toiling along on her weary feet, or seated in a cart, with her eyes fixed vacantly on the road before her, never thinking or caring whither it tends, till hunger comes and makes her desire that a village may be near.
>
> What will be the end, the end of her objectless wandering, apart from all love, caring for human beings only through her pride, clinging to life only as the hunted wounded brute clings to it?
>
> God preserve you and me from being the beginners of such misery!" (*Adam Bede*, 335)

Not only does this passage preserve the atmosphere of sympathy surrounding the fallen woman—"poor wandering Hetty"—particularly as her situation becomes increasingly dire, but it also creates a space for readers to move one step closer towards identifying and empathizing with Hetty, just short of becoming her. Her "objectless wandering" clashes against the purposeful and determined strides of other female characters like Dinah Morris. The narrator's plea, "God preserve you and me from being the beginners of such misery!" suggests that this "objectless wandering" is the real enemy to be avoided within a society that confines and oppresses half the population. [57]

Hetty Sorrel by Jean Collier, 1904

The notion of Christian suffering as regenerative does not apply to Hetty as it does to Adam. I intend to argue that for Eliot's narrator, where Hetty really goes wrong is her failure of moral responsibility in leaving Adam and seeking out Arthur. My interpretation suggests that instead of being satisfied with her 'salvation' through marriage to Adam and the protection he provides her and her baby, Hetty vainly and selfishly leaves in search of another alternative and this is where she truly "falls." In other words, for Eliot's narrator, perhaps Hetty's moral failing lies *not* in her original sexual fall and seduction by Arthur, but rather her later response to it (*Adam Bede*, 367). It is worth pondering whether it is more generous or damning that Eliot writes Hetty to her grave later rather than sooner after her fall and the murder of her child. If we are to see Hetty as one fallen woman taking her place within a narrative successive history of fallen women, Eliot's narrator gives us one way to handle her; whether it is better or worse, it is one interpretation.

Moving past the morning of Hetty's sentencing and execution following the desperate murder of her child and her subsequent arrest and imprisonment, I would like to transition into the final stage of the novel after Hetty has been sufficiently, but not yet mortally punished and observe Dinah's return to Hayslope and the final narrative resolution through her marriage to Adam Bede. In doing so, I would like to observe the possibly problematic and controversial nature of this marriage considering Dinah's vocation and views on marriage. From the beginning of the novel, we have observed time and time again Dinah's opinion that while marriage is good for some, it is not the right position for her. Even after a proposal from Seth which sought to ensure the fulfillment of her desire to work following her marriage, she resisted. How then does Dinah Morris get to the altar, and how does the narrative work to place her there? Tangentially, how satisfactory is this final union, and what other questions does it raise regarding the place of Victorian women in society? [58] It is difficult to answer some of these questions clearly since Dinah is absent from several hundred pages within the middle of the narrative; however,

Hetty's substitution might provide answers. Hetty is another straying female, like Dinah, but her "wandering" is sexually charged. While Hetty must be mortified and punished for her seduction—even if we are intended to sympathetically challenge the conventions which require this mortification—Dinah is a martyr in a different style. Positioning these two trespassing females side by side does not only juxtapose them against each other, but also compares their situations and ultimate fates.

Conclusion: "Led towards another Path"

In concluding my thesis, I would like to close with Adam Bede and Dinah Morris' whiplash courtship, proposal, and marriage, all of which occurs within the span of forty pages at the end of Eliot's novel. While it may come as a surprise to the reader of *Adam Bede*, for readers of Victorian novels it is the kind of conventional union one narratively expects. In my reading, there are very few distinct signs throughout the course of the narrative that Dinah has been romantically pining for Adam, and far more indications (not least of which are her frequent, determined avowals) that Dinah does not feel called to marriage, at present or in the future. How then do we reconcile the ending, other than by saying that it is the correct way to conclude the marriage plot narrative within an established, conservative genre? Certainly, Dinah's sentiments are radical and unorthodox throughout the novel until the last moment when she gives in, and this unconventionality throughout should not be overlooked for the sake of a traditional conclusion. Or in other words, I would like to give Dinah more dignity than suggesting she is a traitor to her gender and work; her decision is a great deal more complicated than that.

As Adam is inquiring whether she will remain at Hall Farm or not, she admits that they "are in no present need" of her since their "sorrows are healed" and "I feel that I am called back to my old

work, in which I found a blessing that I have missed of late in the midst of too abundant worldly good" (*Adam Bede*, 415). She goes on to say,

> 'I know it is a vain thought to flee from the work that God appoints us, for the sake of finding a greater blessing to our own souls, as if we could choose for ourselves where we shall find the fulness of the Divine Presence, instead of seeking it where alone it is to be found, in loving obedience. But now, I believe, I have a clear showing that my work lies elsewhere—at least for a time.' (*Adam Bede*, 415)

Adam responds to this by saying "You know best, Dinah," speaking to her "own conscience" wherein he claims that he has "no right to say anything." However, it is clear from what follows that she *could not possibly* know best from his point of view, since he is planning to delineate a future for her that is antithetical to what she has previously imagined for herself. Instead of focalizing through Dinah, the narrator articulates Adam's thoughts, shifting to an inner discussion of "*his* work" and "*his* religion," rather than Dinah's. As he reflects on his love for Dinah, he asks himself, "Could anything be more natural?" Though justified by the marriage plot narrative in which he finds himself, this also suggests that it is Dinah's hopes and wishes which are *unnatural* (*Adam Bede*, 420). He goes on to mark that "in the darkest moments of memory the thought of her always came as the first ray of returning comfort" (*Adam Bede*, 420). Certainly, we have seen Dinah wishing to provide "comfort" for God's creatures, but on a larger scale than simply for one husband. This is similar to Hester's discussion with Edward in which he sees her as his comforter, rather than someone who can understand and provide practical support; shaking off her desires to be a "hero" within her own story. Is this all Dinah will be granted with the end of the novel, when we have continually seen her striving for so much more?

Adam knows that Dinah is "not for marrying" because "she's fixed herself on a different sort o' life," as he tells his mother (*Adam Bede*, 431). [59] Despite this, he still insists on overlooking this, convinced that the "great love" he and Dinah share is stronger than her will and her calling. He asks her, "how can there be anything contrary to what's right in our belonging to one another and spending our lives together?" (*Adam Bede*, 436). Dinah answers this indirectly, repeating what she told Seth Bede in

his proposal at the beginning of the novel: "I know marriage is a holy state for those who are truly called to it, and have no other drawing; but from my childhood upwards I have been led towards another path; all my peace and my joy have come from having no life of my own, no wants, no wishes for myself…We could not bless each other, Adam, if there were doubts in my soul…" (*Adam Bede*, 436-437). I would like to place special emphasis on her qualifier, "but," because this is one of Dinah's last-ditch efforts to reassert the force of her will and her individualism against a society which mandates conformity and the taming of women by marriage and domesticity. Dinah admits that she loves Adam but questions whether this is enough to make her give up her firm calling. Adam becomes more forceful, telling her, "But now, dear, dear Dinah, now you know I love you better than you love me...it's all different now. You won't think o' going. You'll stay, and be my dear wife, and I shall thank God for giving me my life as I never thanked him before" (*Adam Bede*, 437). His grammatical switch from a request to a directive— "you will," and "you will be"—effects a commanding tone, even masked by his strong love for Dinah. Here, he is trying to define her, to change her role and calling in life from that of preacher, worker, laborer, to "wife." Dinah resists this, even if she admits that she feels pulled towards him as much as she does towards Christ, dichotomizing them in her mind (*Adam Bede*, 437). Adam again stresses "I'll never be the man t' urge you against your conscience" but immediately invalidates this by saying, "I can't give up the hope that you may come to see different" (*Adam Bede*, 437-438). However, "Dinah was silent; her eyes were fixed in contemplation of something visible only to herself" as "Adam went on presently with his pleading," telling Dinah, "And you can do almost as much as you do now…" (*Adam Bede*, 438). "Almost" is yet another qualifier; even before he has received the affirmative answer he longs for, Adam is already attempting to alter who Dinah is. Despite her love for him, this saddens Dinah; the narrator tells us that "she turned her grave loving eyes on his and said, in rather a sad voice,

> 'Adam there is truth in what you say, and there's many of the brethren and sisters who have greater strength than I have, and find their hearts enlarged by the cares of husband and kindred. But I have not faith that it would be so with me, for since my affections have been set above measure on you, I have had less peace and joy in God. I have felt as it were a division in my heart…That life I have led is like a land I have trodden in blessedness since my childhood; and if I long for a moment to follow the voice which calls me to another land that I know not, I cannot but fear that my soul might hereafter yearn for that early blessedness which I had forsaken; and where doubt enters there is not perfect love. I must wait for clearer guidance. I must go from you, and we must submit ourselves entirely to the Divine Will.' (*Adam Bede,* 436-438)

However, as we shall find out shortly, it is Dinah who will be forced to compromise and "submit" for the conservation of the marriage plot and narrative resolution which the genre mandates.

As perhaps we cynically expected she might, Dinah relents. She tells Adam that "it is the Divine Will. My soul is so knit to yours that it is but a divided life I live without you…I have a fulness of strength to bear and do our heavenly Father's Will that I had lost before," and Adam responds "Then we'll never part any more, Dinah, till death parts us" (*Adam Bede*, 458). Commenting perhaps ironically on this, the narrator states, "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?" (*Adam Bede*, 458). This is posed as a question that is left unanswered; perhaps the silent fulfillment of this question lies in the rest of Dinah's narrative. "What greater thing…?" indeed. In the epilogue, eight years later, the last sentence of the novel is uttered by Dinah. She says, "Come in, Adam, and rest; it has been a hard day for thee." In the end, Adam is told to rest from his work, but Dinah is not; perhaps there is still hope that she can pursue her work, not stopping to rest as Adam finally does.

As I have underlined throughout this thesis, the problem that heroines like Hester Vernon, Gwendolen Harleth, Dinah Morris—and female novelists like Margaret Oliphant and George Eliot—face in these novels is greater than women seeking or having a vocation or occupation as a replacement for marriage; it is the very fact that these women feel that they *need* an alternative, and that they *need*

their own female bildungsroman or novel of development. [60] Charlotte Brontë addresses this concern in an 1848 letter in relation to the authorship of *Jane Eyre*, in which she states:

> I often wish to say something about the 'condition of women' question…It is true enough that the present market for female labor is quite over-stocked, but where or how could another be opened? Many say that the professions now filled only by men should be open to women also; but are not their present occupations and candidates more than enough to answer every demand? ...When a woman has a little family to rear and a household to conduct, her hands are full, her vocation is evident; when her destiny isolates her, I suppose she must do what she can, live as she can, complain as little, bear as much, work as well as possible. This is not high theory, but I believe it is sound practice, good to put into execution while philosophers and legislators ponder over the better ordering of the social system. At the same time, I conceive that when patience has done its utmost and industry its best, whether in the case of women or operatives, and when both are baffled, and pain and want triumph, the sufferer is free, is entitled, at last to send up to Heaven any piercing cry for relief, if by that cry he can hope to obtain succor. [61]

Charlotte Brontë is just one of many Victorian female novelists exploring the "isolat[ion]" of a woman's "destiny," in which middle and upper-class women must decide where to invest their energies and interests—in work or in marriage and domestic comfort—and frequently sacrifice one for the sake of the other. This is the dilemma that Dinah faces, and I would like to see her eventual decision to marry and forego preaching not as a test which she fails, but rather as an articulation of a nearly impossible choice particularly at this historical and political moment. As we find out through the Princess in *Daniel Deronda*, her bifurcated sense of the "rightful claim" to artistry and "to be something more than a mere daughter and mother" cannot be united at the present socio-political moment. Within Eliot's earlier novel, Adam is tested time and time again and proved to be a stable character, existing within a stable society far removed from Eliot's Victorian reality. Running parallel to this exterior stability is the instability which Dinah provides the narrative as her female bildungsroman becomes one in which she defies convention. And to return to the cover of the novel at the very end, why is Adam Bede awarded the title of Eliot's novel? Not only does it follow a nineteenth-century pattern which Eliot partook of (*Adam Bede*, *Daniel Deronda*, *Silas Marner*, *Felix Holt*), but I would argue that Adam gets the title because Adam gets what he wants. As do Daniel Deronda and Hester Vernon; while Dinah Morris and Gwendolen Harleth both lose their maiden names—arguably along with an essential part of

themselves— and must still seek how to reconcile what freedoms or choices are open and desirable to them with their respective societies. We are not to forget about Dinah and Gwendolen because Adam and Daniel are elevated the titles of their respective works, but rather to be reminded; their names haunt in the foreground and background of the novels as ghostly, subversive subtexts. Hester, on the other hand, is not confined in marriage by the end of her narrative, but rather is confronted with a realm of possibilities, instead of a "barrier of dreams."

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Notes

[1] Gilbert, Sandra M., Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed. Yale University Press, 1979.
[2] Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. 1872. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2009.
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[4] Oliphant, Margaret. *Hester*. 1883. Ed. Phillip Davis and Brian Nellist. Oxford World's Classics, 2003.
[5] Poovey, Mary. "The Anathematized Race: The Governess and *Jane Eyre*," *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, 1988.
[6] Calder, Jenni. *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.
Chapter 1: "The Only Solution" -historical, political and literal history of Victorian marriage
Women's education in the 18th and 19th centuries is about both preparing them for marriage with men as well as keeping them on their guard in order to protect them from men…who must in turn become their protectors. Looks at the "vulnerability of women" and marriage as a form of protection…given as the only solution* "the grim workings of marriage capitalism" (Calder 26)
[7] Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
"From the beginning, domestic fiction actively sought to disentangle the language of sexual relations from the language of politics and, in so doing, to introduce a new form of political power. This power emerged with the rise of the domestic woman and established its hold over British culture through her dominance over all those objects and practices we associate with private life." (Armstrong, 3)
[8] All bolded text is my own emphasis
[9] Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Ruth*. 1853. Ed. Angus Easson. London: Penguin Group, 1997.
[10] Smith, Julianne. "Private Practice: Thomas De Quincey, Margaret Oliphant, and the Construction of Women's Rhetoric in the Victorian Periodical Press." *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2004. 40-56.
wherein their own lives shape their own art." (Smith, 41)
"cultural debates raged around such issues as whether women were capable of "genius," as successful literary men were often denominated…The Victorian woman writer at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who was often unwilling to sign

her name to publications or assumed a male pseudonym (à la Charlotte Brontë 'Currer Bell' or Mary Ann Evans/'George Eliot'), gradually abandoned this disguise over the succeeding decades and began to make a name for herself and establish an authorial identity that did not disguise gender. To achieve this shift, however, women writers often had to suffer the indignities and insults of all kinds—ranging from the notion that writing was a process that "unsexed" women to the tautological denigration of women's writing itself as "effeminate" (the surest way to insult any work of art or writing in the Victorian period was to apply this adjective). Nonetheless, Victorian women continued writing and began achieving public success in such numbers as not only to alarm male professionals but also to appropriate the identities of entire literary genres; the novel, for example, with its outsider literary status early in the nineteenth century, is frequently maligned as a feminine form." (Smith, 43)

Oliphant stated: "Writing is a congenial choice because it provides an anonymous way to breach the public/private divide; it may be done in the home with minimal to no financial investment, and by and large the business of authorship may be conducted through the mail." (Smith, 49)

"Margaret Oliphant and other women writers, however, were able (at least some of the time) to conceive of themselves as accomplished professional writers, if not rhetoricians. Victorian publishing afforded the opportunity to disguise gender. Because writing is not oratory, Victorian women writers could subvert and appropriate rhetoric and ethos by submitting their work anonymously or using a male pseudonym. Oliphant, however, did not write under an assumed name, although her writings were sometimes not signed or only identified with her initials following Victorian publishing practices. Part of her professionalism, as any biographical note will report, is evidenced by the variety and breadth of her output. She produced nearly three hundred articles for the periodical press, almost a hundred novels, and a similar number of nonfiction books (Batchelor). However, her place in the Victorian canon is, as Heller notes, "indeterminate" ("No Longer" 96)—the same evaluation De Quincey receives though perhaps for

Virginia Woolf- "Oliphant's professional writings are a degrading example of women's intellectual slavery" (Smith, 53)

[11] D'Albertis, Deirdre. "The Domestic Drone: Margaret Oliphant and a Political History of the Novel." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1997. 805-829.

"Demands for entry into the workplace, along with legal and educational reforms, it is commonly supposed, signaled the advent of modern-day feminism in mid-Victorian Britain. Not all middle-class women who worked to support themselves endorsed the notion of collective action, however, or even collective interest in the realm of employment. Margaret Oliphant, reviewing the memoirs of Anna Jameson and Fanny Kemble, turned an 1879 Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine article into a manifesto for independent women who eschewed political feminism, declaring with palpable exasperation: "whenever it has been necessary, women have toiled, have earned money, have got their living and livings of those dependent upon them, in total indifference to all theory."' Like Oliphant herself, they might be left a "'widow woman' with her 'sma' family'-and there is scarcely any one who is not acquainted with two or three specimens of this class." A middle-class woman who works, Oliphant suggests, need not be a feminist or attend to theories of women's employment; indeed, she "has not waited for any popular impulse, poor soul, to put her shoulder to the wheel, nor has stopped to consider whether the work she could get to do was feminine, so long as she could get it, and could get paid for it, and get bread for her children...Women's work, in h advance, no cause for political debate, but rather, to quote Oliphant's contemporary Charlotte Bronte, "something unromantic as Monday morning, when all who have work wake with the consciousness that they must rise and betake themselves thereto."" (D'Albertis, 805-806)

"her claim as an impoverished widow to work only for survival is compromised by chronology. Oliphant's first novel was published in 1849, she married in 1852, her first child was born in 1853, and her husband died in 1859, meaning that the novelist was writing for profit a good ten years before she was left alone to fend for her family. Equally perplexing is the way in which Oliphant's upending of certain convenient binarisms- public/private, domestic/economic, mass fiction/literary art- complicates our understanding of Victorian culture and the place she was able to obtain for herself within that culture as a woman of letters. We might be inclined to dismiss Oliphant as anomalous, or better still, incorporate her as a negative example of the rule of gender difference that organized her society. Yet her market-driven domestic writing, I would contend, represents an exception that should spur us to reconsider a rule that has prevented us for some time from really reading "Mrs. Oliphant."" (D'Albertis, 806)

"As a woman who wrote domestic fiction, Oliphant resembled neither the subject of representation commonly found in this literature nor the type of writer who is most often credited with crafting the individualistic ethos promoted by the novels of Bronte, for instance. Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot, two writers who have basically formed the parameters of feminist inquiry into nineteenth-century women's literary culture, have less in common with Oliphant, in this regard, than they do with each other. Oliphant critically assessed Bronte's fame as founded on "passionate narratives of a woman's mind and heart. . . reflections of an individual being, extremely vivid and forcible, but in no way ... to be compared with the far stronger, higher, and broader work" of George Eliot.18 Eliot's fiction represents not the passionate narrative of a single "woman's mind and heart," but rather a humanistic narrative aligned with domestic moral authority extending to encompass all of society. Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot, unlike Oliphant, both shared an aesthetic based on introspective subjectivity, an art

grounded in formal "reflections of an individual being" utterly divorced from and superior to writing for money. What is at stake in tracing Oliphant's opposition to these writers is a significantly different conception of the self, as well as a different relation to literary representations of that self." (D'Albertis, 808)
"Work, for this writer, existed in a pragmatic, contingent realm, "in total indifference to all theory" about the proper role of women as homemakers or laborers. Oliphant's economistic bent, her way of conceptualizing literary labor, throws into sharp relief a real conflict between "theoretical" feminism and her own, often unrecognized, brand of "practical feminism." The principle of economy she embodied in her career-not stopping "to consider whether the work she could get to do was feminine, so long as she could get it, and could get paid for it"-is very different from the managerial function we discuss today in theorizing specifically the development of Victorian feminism and, more generally, the situation of middle-class women within nineteenth-century domestic ideology. Taken seriously, Oliphant's writings on the business of literature provide a useful vantage point from which to assess our theories of the domestic, complicating and, in the process, enriching our understanding of women's work and the work of cultural production in the last century." (D'Albertis, 809)
[12] Casey, Ellen Miller. "Edging Women out?: Reviews of Women Novelists in the "Athenaeum." 1860-1900." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2996. 151-171.
[13] Miller, Nancy K. "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction." *PMLA*, vol. 96, no. 1, 1981. 36-48.
[14] Poovey, Mary. "The Anathematized Race: The Governess and *Jane Eyre*," *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, 1988.
"Because the governess was like the middle-class mother in the work she performed, but like both a working-class woman and man in the wages she received, the very figure who theoretically should have defended the naturalness of separate spheres threatened to collapse the difference between them."
"That representations of the governess in the brought to her contemporaries' minds not just the middle-class ideal she was meant to reproduce, but the sexualised and often working-class women against whom she was expected to defend, reveals the mid-Victorian fear that the governess could not protect middle-class values because she could not be trusted to regulate her own sexuality."
[15] Gilbert, Sandra M., Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed. Yale University Press, 1979.
"Is a pen a metaphorical penis? …Male sexuality, in other words, is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet's pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis." (Gilbert and Gubar, 3-4)
Chapter 2- "Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship"
"What does it mean to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are…both overtly and covertly patriarchal?" (Gilbert and Gubar, 45-46).
[16] Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. 1872. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2009.
Smith, David L. "Middlemarch": Eliot's Tender Subversion." *George Eliot—George Henry Lewes Studies*, no. 40/41, 2001. 34-46.
[17] Newton, Judith Lowder. *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981.
Introduction: Power and the Ideology of 'Woman's Sphere'
" '…women, in their position in life, must be content to be interior to men; but as their inferiority consists chiefly in their want of power, this deficiency is abundantly made up to them by their capability of exercising influence.' " –Sarah Ellis, *The Daughters of England*, 1845
An "ideological crisis, a crisis of confidence over the status, the proper work, and the power of middle-class women. This crisis of confidence, which emerged in the 1830s and 1840s in Great Britain, took the form of a prolonged debate over the 'woman question'…" (Newton, 1-2)
"The debate over the 'woman question,' in addition to its mass production of theories about women's 'mission,' 'kingdom,' or 'sphere,' gave an emphasis to the subject of women's power, and in particularly to their influence, which was historically unprecedented." (Newton, 2)
"…by 1831…power and influence are frequent subjects of concern, and references to both are accompanied by a sharpening distinction between what is appropriate to women and what to men. Most authors—and it is worth nothing that much of this literature was written by men—reject the notion that women have power, but they acknowledge and give value to the fact that women possess 'enormous,' 'immense,' or 'vast' 'influence.'…always reassuringly unobstrusive, 'secret,' 'unobserved,' an 'undercurrent below the surface.' " (Newton, 4)
[18] Newton, Judith Lowder. *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981.
"This valorization of women's influence…was aimed at devaluing actions and capacities which we can only call other forms of power, and, in this way, the peddling of women's influence, in a sort of ideological marketplace, functioned to sustain

unequal power relations between middle-class women and middle-class men. Having influence, in fact, having the ability to persuade others to do or to be something that was in *their* own interest, was made contingent upon the renunciation of such self-advancing forms of power as control or self-definition. To have influence, for example, the middle-class woman was urged to relinquish self-definition; she was urged to become identified by her services to others, in particular to men." (Newton, 4)
"Having influence also required women to lay aside any desire for the power to achieve, especially outside the domestic sphere, for 'it is from an ambitious desire to extend the limits of this sphere, that many have brought trouble upon themselves." (Newton, 5)
Female authors choosing to focus on "female ability" as "these writers themselves exercised a form of agency, or resistance to dominant values." (Newton, 6)
"Although each of these novels [*Evelina, Pride and Prejudice, Villette, Mill on the Floss*]…is the story of quest, the story of entry into the world, of education, and of growth, including growth in power, the heroine's power is sometimes renounced and often diminished at the end of the novel, so that it seems that the work has had nothing to do with power at all. For no matter how much force the heroine is granted at the beginning of her story, ideology, as it governed life and as it governed literary form, required that she should marry, and marriage meant relinquishment of power as surely as it meant the purchase of wedding clothes." (Newton, 8)
"To write subversively is more than a means of exercising influence. It is a form of struggle—and a form of power." (Newton, 22)
[19] Williams, Merryn. *Women in the English Novel, 1800-1900*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.
[20] Eliot, George. *Daniel Deronda*. 1876. Ed. Graham Handley, Intro. K.M. Newton. Oxford University Press, 2009.
[21] Barrett, Dorothea. *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines*. London: Routledge, 1989.
Chapter 8- "The Open-Endedness of *Daniel Deronda*"
"Social barriers are not the only ones transgressed in this novel. The characterization of Gwendolen is a breakthrough in George Eliot's treatment of women, and a breakthrough in George Eliot's treatment of women, and breakthrough in the treatment of women in fiction…in the characterization of Gwendolen there is a suggestion that any woman of personal power is bound to be bad; the conflict between her potential and the paucity of opportunity will inevitably result in evil." (Barrett, 155)
"In Gwendolen, George Eliot creates a figure whose motives are clearly and consciously self-seeking, but unlike her predecessors Hetty and Rosamond, Gwendolen is the indubitable heroine of the novel, and her vanity and selfishness are treated with a narratorial gentleness quite at variance with the apparent narratorial aversion to Hetty and Rosamond." (Barrett, 159)
"The open-endedness of Gwendolen's story, set beside the expatriation of most of the repositories of spiritual values in the novel, Daniel, Mirah, and Mordecai, constituted a challenge to George Eliot's contemporaries, and remains a challenge to us today, since the problems it poses have yet to be solved." (Barrett, 174)
[22] Calder, Jenni. *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.
Chapter 4: "The Perils of Independence"
"The mainstream of fiction in the 1840s and '50s stuck close to an uncritical presentation of the Amelia type in heroines, and a corresponding interpretation of marriage. There were some remarkable exceptions—the Brontës and Mrs. Gaskell in particular—but generally the fiction of the period contains not only a stereotype of femininity and marriage, but a stereotype that is intrinsically less interesting than, for instance, the Fanny Burney heroine hedged by dangers….Fanny Burney's heroines needed protection, but they moved freely and widely. As the Victorian age took shape necessities became conventions, and as the walls closed in on the Victorian heroine and the Victorian marriage, two features grew into dominance: stasis and boredom." (Calder, 56)
Anonymous author- "Dependence is in itself an easy and pleasant thing: dependence upon one we love is perhaps the sweetest thing in the world. To resign oneself totally and contentedly into the hand of another; to have no longer any need of asserting one's rights or one's personality, knowing that both are as precious to that other as they were to ourselves; to cease taking thought about oneself at all, and rest safe, at ease, assured that in great things and small we shall be guided and cherished, guarded and helped—in fact thoroughly 'taken care of' –how delicious is all this. So delicious, that it seems granted to very few of us, and to fewer still as a permanent condition of being. (*Chamber's journal*, May 16, 1857)
^ "This is a wholly explicit and idealized characterization of marriage as the total subordination of wife to husband…throughout the nineteenth century there were many more women than men, so it was not possible to count on marriage as the solution to the problem of superabundant females, and a realistic attitude to the necessity of self-dependence did not need to have anything to do with feminism. It is worth remembering, in connection with the advances in female education in the century, that the more enlightened view of the education of women often had nothing to do with a belief in women's rights. The general consensus, in fiction as well as in journalism, was that marriage was the core of social life and

social aspiration, and that the onus was on the wife to make marriage a success. Wives had a duty to love their husbands, except in extraordinary circumstances, in which they had a duty to make the best of things." (Calder, 59)

[23] Mews, Hazel. *Frail Vessels: Woman's Role in Woman's Novels from Fanny Burney to George Eliot*. University of London, The Athlone Press, 1969.

[24] Marcus, Sharon. "The Profession of the Author: Abstraction, Advertising, and Jane Eyre." *PMLA*, vol. 110, no. 2, 1995. 206-219.

"Since its publication in 1847, *Jane Eyre* has been read by its detractors and admirers as the portrayal of a willful female subject who claims her own identity. Readers have failed to note, however, that the most basic and encompassing maker of that identity, her name, tends to emerge when her will is most in abeyance. A key instance of Jane's involuntary self-promotion occurs toward the end of the novel, during her stay with the Rivers family, when St. John Rivers identifies Jane as the relative for whom "advertisements have been put in all the papers" (406) St. John recognizes her as the rightful heir of a fortune before Jane herself does. His proof of her identity consists of a signature in "the ravished margin of [a] portrait-cover," which Jane con- fronts as if it belonged to another: "He got up, held it close to my eyes: and I read, traced in Indian ink, in my own handwriting, the words 'JANE EYRE"' (407). Jane has failed to answer the advertisements of others, but her unwitting self-advertisement has found its ideal reader.

Jane construes her signature as "the work doubtless of some moment of abstraction" (407) and thus disowns it as the product of her own volition, even as it fulfills the conditions of her uncle's will and her own de- sires to be financially independent and to belong to a family. Although Jane has consistently refused to speak her personal story to St. John Rivers or his sisters, her unintentional signature publicizes it for her. Through the use of typographical conventions for designating titles-capitalization and quotation marks-the words "JANE EYRE" also emblematize the text itself, suggesting that Jane Eyre the novel, as well as Jane Eyre the character, is the "work... of some moment of abstraction."

In this essay, I analyze abstraction through close readings of scenes of speech, writing, and advertising in Jane Eyre and through a consideration of Charlotte Bronte's dealings in the Victorian literary market. The concept of abstraction is crucial to understanding the relation of writing to female subjectivity in *Jane Eyre* and in Brontë's literary career because it mediates between apparently contradictory categories: embodiment and invisibility, self-effacement and self-advertisement, femininity and professional identity, fragmentation and wholeness, and profit and loss." (Marcus, 206-207)

[25] Sutphin, Christine. "Feminine Passivity and Rebellion in Four Novels by George Eliot." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1987. 342-363.

[26] Bossche, Chris R. Vanden. "What Did "Jane Eyre" Do? Ideology, Agency, Class and the Novel." *Narrative*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2005. 46-66.

"its heroine rebels against social exclusion yet ultimately does not seek to overturn the existing social order; her narrative begins with her rebellion against the Reeds, who seek to "exclude" her "from privileges intended only for contented, happy, little children," and ends with her social inclusion as a cousin of the Rivers siblings and wife of Edward Rochester." (Bossche, 46-47)

"Jane Eyre repeatedly shifts positions within class discourse, not in order to move towards a final class identity but in response to economic dependence, social exclusion, personal isolation, and other circumstances. It is not that she abandons the one achievement—the economic autonomy of the school teacher—in order to obtain the other—the social relationship of marriage—but rather that she shifts to one or another position depending on the needs of the particular social situation…The fact that Jane Eyre is as much concerned with social inclusion as with economic autonomy accords with this Chartist belief that the working poor could not achieve economic reform unless they first obtained political agency through representation in parliament." (Bossche, 47-48)

"The now familiar argument that literary texts such as Jane Eyre both support and subvert ideology follows from a conception of ideology as a self-contained, synchronic discursive field that exists outside of, and prior to, particular speech acts or written texts." (Bossche, 48)

"Jane Eyre appears to be a bildungsroman cast in the form of the narrative of the rise of a middle class that displaces an outmoded aristocracy. Its heroine begins as an orphan whose father leaves her neither name nor fortune and rises to become the wife of a gentleman whose status makes him eligible to marry the daughter of a peer. From this perspective, Jane Eyre can be regarded as a self-made woman who shapes her destiny through individual industry, a rise that is set against the backdrop of genteel families whose fortunes are in decline." (Bossche, 56)

Female bildungsroman as a new/different category

[27] In *Middlemarch,* Dorothea Brooks enjoys horseback riding so much—she is "bewitching" to men on horseback—that she gives it up, and Rosamond has a miscarriage due to her reckless decision to ride after Lydgate has told her to refrain.

[28] Demaria, Joanne Long. "The Wondrous Marriages of "Daniel Deronda:" Gender, Work and Love." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1990. 403- 417.

"And what I will suggest is that through the marital metaphors of the Deronda plot Eliot "answers" the questions raised by the experiences of her female characters using a language of gender differentiation as it was commonly used in her time, even by feminist reformers. What is uncommon about Eliot's use of this language is that she elevates the "masculine" search for vocation by conflating it with a "feminine" instinct for love through the "marriage" of two male characters." (Demaria, 403)
"But I do wish to recapture momentarily the degree to which Gwendolen is culpable, according to Victorian debates about women's work and marriage, of making a mercenary marriage. Eliza Lynn Linton describes the "Girl of the Period" as "one of the modern phases of womanhood—hard, unloving, mercenary, ambitious, without domestic faculty and devoid of healthy natural instincts,"6 and her idea of marriage as "the legal barter of herself for so much money." (Demaria, 404)
"while Gwendolen does not move into the position of women who shift back and forth between low-paying work and prostitution, Eliot emphasizes the paucity of women's possibilities in narrowing all of Gwendolen's to a choice between becoming a governess and selling herself to Grandcourt. But Eliot does not blame Gwendolen ' s problems on an "imperfect social state" which denies women significant work, as she had Dorothea Brooke's. Eliot shows Gwendolen to be the victim of the forces which drive her into marriage unwillingly, but she also draws Gwendolen as someone who wants to operate, powerfully, within the world of fashion in which marriage was a woman's channel for social advancement. In a dense pattern of themes and images which link marital prostitution to power, inheritance, and murder, Eliot insists on both the personal and the social destructiveness of the mercenary marriage." (Demaria, 404-405)
"Nineteenth-century gender definitions gave "love" to women and "power" to men.12 Gwendolen is frank in her desire not for love but for power, for doing "what she likes." Although she is aware of the limitations imposed on her mother by marriage, she thinks of it as "the gate into a larger freedom" (p. 131) and she sees a husband as "a man over whom she was going to have indefinite power" (p. 288). Eliot places Gwendolen's notions about the freedom and power she expects in marriage against the submission she fears in the vocational courses she explores: of a career as an actress, Klesmer tells her, "'you must subdue your mind and body to unbroken discipline'" (p. 237); she knows that as a governess she would be "under the necessity of showing herself entirely submissive" (p. 269)…Eliot limits Gwendolen by showing her as both incapable of the discipline which might lead to satisfying work and unwilling to accept dutiful submission to ordinary work. It is just such submission to the conditions of her life that Deronda later admonishes her to seek. Because Gwendolen defines freedom and power as social and sexual pre-eminence in which there is no necessity for submission to duty, work is not a path to independence; as for so many of her contemporaries, for Eliot work and duty were overlapping categories. With her "need to dominate," Gwendolen sees in Grandcourt's proposal "the rescue from helpless subjection to an oppressive lot" (p. 279) and having accepted him, looking out the window at his horses, she feels "a thrill of exultation" at the "symbols of command and luxury" (p. 281). Marriage for Gwendolen is, specifically, an escape in which power is free of work and duty." (Demaria, 405)
"By having Gwendolen form a mercenary marriage in which she expects to wield power, Eliot denies her the sort of women's work in marriage that she settled so uneasily on other female characters, notably Dorothea Brooke." (Demaria, 405)
"By making a mercenary, illegitimate marriage in order to remain in the fashionable world, Gwendolen is deprived of the satisfactions of both work and marriage, and the result is her personal devastation." (Demaria, 406)
[29] Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. Chapter 2- "The Rise of the Domestic Woman" –Gwendolen
"it was the new domestic woman rather than her counterpart, the new economic man, who first encroached upon aristocratic culture and seized authority from it." (Armstrong, 59)
[30] Boone, Joseph Allen. *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
Claims that in Daniel Deronda we see George Eliot's strongest movement away from the closure of the typical marriage plot
[31] Barrett, Dorothea. *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines*. London: Routledge, 1989.
Hughes, Kathryn. *George Eliot: The Last Victorian*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999.
See both of the above for biographical information on George Eliot
"What is most striking about George Eliot is her inclusiveness: she is both passionate and prudish, radical and conservative, capable of an almost superhuman extension of sympathies and of the most corrosive disdain. All these conflicting elements struggle together in her fiction, and the result is not a series of elaborate moral fables but rather a protean vision of the dialectical engagement of human realities and possibilities." (Barrett, 13)
[32] Poovey, Mary. "The Anathematized Race: The Governess and *Jane Eyre*," *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, 1988.
[33] Rosenman, Ellen B. "Women's Speech and the Roles of the Sexes in Daniel Deronda." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1989. 237-256.
[34] Wilson, Cheryl A. "Placing the Margins: Literary Reviews, Pedagogical Practices, and the Canon of Victorian Women's Writing." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2009. 57-74.

"the canonization of certain works is an act of institutionalized appreciation that creates a self-perpetuating set of hierarchies" (Wilson, 57)
"reading public expanded and diversified with the explosion of print culture in the 19th century. Men and women of all classes enjoyed increased literacy and access to books as a result of widespread education as well as cheaper and more efficient means of producing texts. With this change came anxieties about reading…" (Wilson, 58-59)
"consider the role of gender in the Victorian literary marketplace by looking specifically at criticism of Victorian women by Victorian women with particular attention to both the cultural and pedagogical implications of such writings." (Wilson, 60)
"Victorian women writers' critiques of women's writing, like other liter- ary critiques and reviews from the period, reflect a need to categorize and evaluate texts. Within specific discussions of women's texts, however, these critiques also reveal much about the cultural implications of Victorian women's writing. They reveal fears of a loss of femininity and subsequent compromising of the domestic sphere, a sense of threat to male writers, and attempts to create space to articulate changing ideas of what it means to be a woman. Women critics "are often harsher on women novelists who deviate from gender stereotypes than are many of the male reviewers" (Thompson, p. 1 1) . The dynamic created here concerns the place of women's work within a larger institutional structure - in this case the literary marketplace - a dynamic that also has relevance for the role of Victorian women writers and scholarship on those writers in the contemporary academy." (Wilson, 69)
"In beginning to answer the questions of why and how we teach nineteenth-century women writers, it is important to include not only contemporary theoretical and critical perspectives but to historicize the question as well. In turning to the works of the women writers themselves I found that they shared a critical perspective with contemporary theorists in their attention to gender constructions, value judgments, and inherent contradictions. These writers can provide a starting point for a self-conscious and self-reflexive pedagogy that is both historically grounded and critically sound." (Wilson, 71-72)
[35] Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. Epilogue- "The ideal of domesticity has grown only more powerful as it has become less a matter of fact and more a matter of fiction, for the fiction of domesticity exists as a fact in its own right. It begins to exert power over our lives the moment we begin to learn what normal behavior is supposed to be. Whether or not we accept it as truth, this fiction alone enables very different individuals to sit down to dinner in entirely unfamiliar places without finding them particularly strange, to shuffle into classrooms with people they have never met and with whom they may have little else in common, and to enjoy melodramas and sitcoms produced in regions or even countries other than theirs. In this respect, the most powerful household is the one we carry around in our heads…the notion of the household [is] a specifically feminine space [which] established the preconditions for a modern institutional culture." (Armstrong, 251)
"The novel, together with all manner of printed material, helped to redefine what men were supposed to desire in women and what women, in turn, were supposed to desire to be." (Armstrong, 251)
[36] Keen, Suzanne. *Victorian renovations of the novel: narrative annexes and boundaries of representation*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
[37] Courtemanche, Eleanor. "Naked Truth is the Best Eloquence": Martineau, Dickens, and the Moral Science of Realism." *ELH*, vol. 73, no. 2. John Hopkins University Press, 2006, 383-407.
[38] Demaria, Joanne Long. "The Wondrous Marriages of "Daniel Deronda:" Gender, Work and Love." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1990. 403- 417.
"I will take up later the issue of Deronda's response to the Princess, but for the moment I want to concentrate on just what it is in the behavior of Gwendolen and the Princess that Eliot presents as criminal. First it is useful to see the familial and vocational parallels Eliot draws between these characters, parallels made more visible by Eliot's placement of the climax of Gwendolen's story in the book in which the Princess reveals herself: neither character wanted children; each thought she had, as the Princess describes it, a '"rightful claim to be something more than a mere daughter and mother,'" that her '"nature gave [her] a charter'" (p. 619); each married as "'the best way of getting some freedom'" (p. 584); the Princess had the talent and drive to make a success of the career Gwendolen did not attempt because of her fear of failure, yet because of her own fear of failure the Princess made the same sort of (second) marriage Gwendolen did, to a rich aristocrat she did not love, a marriage she came to "regret." Eliot, then, gives us two characters who try to manipulate the marriage plot in order to achieve some thing other than "real marriage." (Demaria, 407)
"In Gwendolen's story we see the effect on a woman of expectations about the wife's behavior within marriage. In the Princess's story the emphasis is on the woman's role more generally, but with particular emphasis on the maternal role…" (Demaria, 408)
"The implications for women of the distinction between bonds and bondage are, in many respects, side-stepped in Deronda's acceptance of his Jewish heritage." (Demaria, 409)
"It was one of the aims of the women's work movement in the nineteenth century to present women's entry into the public sphere as less a loss of feminine virtues than a gain to the public sphere of those virtues: women would not be masculinized, but rather the world of work made more gentle." (Demaria, 410-411)

[39] Calder, Jenni. *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.
Chapter 9: "Women of the Period"
"By 1859, when George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and George Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* were published, there had been two significant pieces of legislation that had had some effect on Victorian marriage. The first was the Infants' Custody Act of 1839, which gave the Court of Chancery power to allow mothers custody of their children under the age of sever in cases of separation. The second was the Matrimonial Causes Act of 157, which extended the possibilities of divorce…Such legislation was symptomatic, if not radical. Women were more aware of the anomalies of their position, even if they still accepted them. This can be detected in the mainstream of fiction: so much of it, especially novels written by women, consciously sets out to illustrate the value of the woman's role, although usually emphasizing that the traditional role is the only satisfactory one." (Calder, 120)
"George Eliot…wrote about marriage in a context of work, a closely identified way of life, community, and the emotional and practical needs of ordinary humanity." (Calder, 122)
"George Eliot was interested in the way that society, and specific communities, threw up potential heroes and heroines, and the way in which these people interacted with the communities that tested them. An explanation of her popularity as a novelist may lie in the fact that she went so far beyond and beneath the artificial structure of society that dominated most fiction. She allows her characters no easy successes. Her heroes and heroines are almost all potential rather than fulfilled." (Calder, 127)
Chapter 11: "The Common Yearning of Womanhood"
"George Eliot uses the word 'passion' frequently in her novels, and in her vocabulary it has not the expected flavor of disapproval…She uses it of women who feel deeply and cannot find the right outlet for those feelings, and she uses it with the full awareness of the predicament of such women. Passion in women baffled Victorian society. It suggested at best irregularity and nonconformity, at worst, sin. Yet passion in women like Maggie and Dorothea, that could possibly be channeled into selfless achievement, society could not afford to ignore. Their creator suggests that women have a great deal to offer, seeing their freedom of action as dangerous and offensive, but the women themselves don't really know what their potential is, and cannot, or will not, find the commitment and understanding that they need." (Calder, 144)
"Sadly, and it is a radical criticism of George Eliot, she does not commit herself fully to the energies and aspirations she lets loose in these women. Does she not cheat them, and cheat us, ultimately, in allowing them so little? Does she not excite our interest through the breadth and the challenge of the implications of her fiction, and then deftly dam up and fence round the momentum she has so powerfully created? She diagnoses so brilliantly 'the common yearning of womanhood,' and then cures it, sometimes drastically, as if it were indeed a disease." (Calder, 158)
[40] Barrett, Dorothea. *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines*. London: Routledge, 1989.
Chapter 8- "The Open-Endedness of *Daniel Deronda*"
"The open-endedness of Gwendolen's story, set beside the expatriation of most of the repositories of spiritual values in the novel, Daniel, Mirah, and Mordecai, constituted a challenge to George Eliot's contemporaries, and remains a challenge to us today, since the problems it poses have yet to be solved." (Barrett, 174)
[41] Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. 1859. Intro. Doreen Roberts. Wordsworth Classics, 1997.
[42] Barrett, Dorothea. *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines*. London: Routledge, 1989.
Chapter 3- "Hetty and Dinah: The Battle for Predominance in *Adam Bede*"
"*Adam Bede* is of particular critical interest in that its unresolved structural and aesthetic problems allow the critic a rare glimpse of the armatures beneath George Eliot's creative process. The reason for these problems in the novel seem to lie in George Eliot's own unresolved and highly problematic relation to the dichotomy [between Dinah and Hetty] as manifested in her own life and personality. Marian Lewes was both the female preacher and the fallen woman, both the soulful intellectual who pursued a vocation as moral leader and the woman with sexual needs who received the disapprobation of her community for gratifying them…In her own life, the emergence of her vocation coincided with the beginning of her long love affair with George Henry Lewes." (Barrett, 35)
"…in the cases of both Dinah and Dorothea, marriage supplants vocation, or the desire for vocation, without becoming a vocation in itself." (Barrett, 36)
"Dinah's story, then, ends on an unresolved and unsatisfying note. The only heroine in any of the George Eliot novels who has a definite vocation chooses a marriage which is bound to conflict with her work, relinquishes her work without apparent pain, and subsides into the role of helpmate and mother." (Barrett, 42)
"uneasy coexistence of oppositions" in the novel (Barrett, 47)
[43] Stopla, Jennifer M. "Dinah and the Debate over Vocation in "Adam Bede." *George Eliot— George Henry Lewes Studies*, no. 42/43, 2002. 30-49.
[44] Dutta, Sangeeta. "Charlotte Brontë and the Woman Question." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 26, no. 40, 1991. 2311-2313.

"A new dialectical vision is expressed in her novels—on one hand resistance of predominating ideology and personal feeling of powerlessness, and on the other, wish fulfilment of power and control in her fictional characters." (Dutta, 2311)
"Mid-19th century saw the emergence of a female literary community coincide with the social phenomenon of an excess of female population, which stimulated widespread reassessment of women's role and relationship. Women's work had meant work for others, women were defined as wholly passive, projected as selfless. Work for self-development was in direct conflict with the subordination and repression inherent in the feminine ideal. In a famous letter to Charlotte, Robert Southey expressed the notion: "Literature is not the business of a woman's life and it cannot be." (Dutta, 2311)
"In the works of Bronte, Gaskell, Eliot, we find not merely an exposition of woman victim but exploration of women as agents of change and their persisting power. In women's fiction, we can trace an emergent rebellious structure of feelings about inequities of power between men and women and economic inequities as well. Women were excluded from independent evolution, and confined to the domestic sphere. An ideological emphasis existed on women's spiritual control over the home and society. The conflict between individual development and marriage and reproduction became acute for women who thought that their own self-development was important. In literature, power and influence became central concerns and the woman writer revised patriarch plots and genres to emphasise the identity of the female protagonist." (Dutta, 2312)

[45] Sopher, R.E. "Gender and Sympathy in "Adam Bede": The Case of Seth Bede." *George Eliot—George Henry Lewes Studies,* no. 62/63, 2012. 1-15.
"For the Victorians, the relationship between gender and spirituality or religion was in flux, largely because both gender and religion themselves were coming under pressure and themselves in flux. New developments in religion - in the form of both the pressures from scientific discoveries and, more pertinently to Adam Bede, the increasing presence and power of dissenting sects and evangelicalism - meant that religion was becoming both a site that could accommodate multiple expressions of gender and, consequently, one in which gender became a constant source of anxiety. The frequently demoralizing quality of work under capitalism meant that religion was increasingly domesticated, and, therefore, increasingly associated with women and the private sphere." (Sopher, 11)
"Sympathy, for George Eliot, is an ethical process that requires not only gentleness, but, also, a thoughtful way of relating to others. It must be a matter of choice to be truly ethical, rather than a reflexive way of relating to the world. For it is Adam, not Seth, who carries away the rewards - Dinah, professional success, children - that are denied Seth. Seth's characterization and fate thus suggest George Eliot's ambivalence about sympathy - or, at least, sympathy that manifests itself in primarily passive ways - as a sufficient basis for ethical life. Because this ambivalence is less pronounced in the later novels, Adam Bede can be seen as a tentative exploration of what it would mean for sympathy to constitute a significant part of both living ethically and of crafting the realist novel. It also seems that, if one compares Seth Bede with the title character of Daniel Deronda, that George Eliot has as yet to see sympathy as compatible with masculinity, or to see traditional masculine virtues of hardness and emotional restraint as necessary ingredients in the characterization of masculinity." (Sopher, 13)

[46] Stopla, Jennifer M. "Dinah and the Debate over Vocation in "Adam Bede." *George Eliot— George Henry Lewes Studies*, no. 42/43, 2002. 30-49.

[47] Williams, Raymond. "Knowable Communities," in *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, 165-181.

[48] Lefkovitz, Lori. "Delicate Beauty Goes out: "Adam Bede's" Transgressive Heroines." *The Kenyon Review,* New Series, vol. 9, no. 3, 1987. 84-96.
"The language in which George Eliot describes her heroines' beauty in Adam Bede records a transition in nineteenth-century values. Here, Eliot's physical descriptions facilitate the delicate heroine's going out in two senses of the phrase: going safely out into the market place and going out of fashion. Through her descriptions, Eliot not only frees the delicate heroine to go out without subjecting her to risks that the delicate heroine typically faces, risks of rape or death, but Eliot also attempts to reconcile competing and mutually exclusive styles of beauty by creating healthy delicacy, a beauty that is both spiritual and sexual. She does so by appealing to and under- mining literature's codes of delicacy." (Lefkovitz, 84)
"Apparently in evidence in Adam Bede is the positive value of delicate health: Dinah is as morally strong as she is physically frail, Hetty as weak willed as she is robust. Illness seems to be redemptive: the guilty lovers, Hetty and Arthur, are each recovered in the eyes of the reader as they grow morally stronger in illness… Eliot will, however, exchange these religious values for naturalistic ones by challenging the time-honored dichotomies between sexuality and spirituality, health and delicacy." (Lefkovitz, 84-85)
"While Dinah Morris's friends have full confidence in her virtue, it is not surprising that they fear for her reputation. Working against a literary tradition in which delicate heroines come to evil, Eliot takes special pains to demonstrate that her Dinah invites no sexual harassment. The forbearance of a Reverend in a competing church is a strong indication to the reader that accusations of indelicacy are inappropriate. Though Eliot allows her model of frail beauty to take uncharacteristic liberties, Dinah's friends wish her to stay comfortably at home." (Lefkovitz, 87-88)

[49] Chishty-Mujahid, Nadya. "Scarred and Healed Identities: Fallenness, Morality, and the Issue of Personal Autonomy in Adam Bede and Ruth." *Victorian Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2004, 58–80.
[50] Lefkovitz, Lori. "Delicate Beauty Goes out: "Adam Bede's" Transgressive Heroines." *The Kenyon Review,* New Series, vol. 9, no. 3, 1987. 84-96.
"By this point in the novel, Dinah and Hetty are both fully described: both women are distractingly pretty, but Dinah distracts attention from the body and Hetty distracts attention from the soul. Dinah elevates; Hetty debases. As frail preacher and rosy farm girl, Dinah and Hetty are exaggerated antithetical types. Dinah may go out among rough men without incurring any disapproval from the narrator, and Hetty cannot go out even among the most refined gentry. It is only after Eliot fixes in our minds the virtue of the one and the wickedness of the other that she will temper her own commentary on each and humanize them both." (Lefkovitz, 88)
"Hetty and Dinah are the two faces of the nineteenth century's Janus- faced woman, until Eliot produces beauty out of the synthesis of the healthy (but fatal, murderous) Medusa and the virtuous (but sickly, vulnerable) angel. Adam Bede, who loves first one woman and then the other, stands in for the reader…Dinah is Eliot's response to the Victorian angel. Like Hawthorne, Eliot persuades us that a healthy heroine can be more virtuous than a frail one because she has a body strong enough for purposeful labor (an ideology for the middle class). Dinah is no angel because she works; Hetty's flawed character is expressed by fantasies of idleness when her strength is needed on the farm. Her end is fitting: Hetty cannot stand on her own feet. Even as the fashions and ideals of the Victorian Age promoted feminine frailty, even as debility was a sign of beauty, absence of spirit or bloom was unlovely. Women were caught in the ambivalence contained in the idealized images of femininity, such as the images of the caged pet and the flower: beauty had to be fragile as the flower even as it required the bloom of health." (Lefkovitz, 93)
[51] Sutphin, Christine. "Feminine Passivity and Rebellion in Four Novels by George Eliot." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1987. 342-363.
[52] Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life*. 1848. Ed. Jennifer Foster. Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 1969.
Gaskell, Elizabeth. *North and South*. 1855. Ed. Patricia Ingram. London: Penguin Group, 1995.
[53] Marcus, Sharon. "The Profession of the Author: Abstraction, Advertising, and Jane Eyre." *PMLA*, vol. 110, no. 2, 1995. 206-219.
[54] Williams, Raymond. "Knowable Communities," in *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973, 165-181.
[55] Newton, Judith Lowder. *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1981.
[56] Gregory, E. David. *The Late Victorian Folksong Revival: The Persistence of English Melody, 1878-1903*. Scarecrow Press, 2010
Gregory, E. David. *Victorian Songhunters: The Recovery and Editing of English Vernacular Ballads and Folk Lyrics, 1820-1883*. Scarecrow Press, 2006
[57] Lefkovitz, Lori. "Delicate Beauty Goes out: "Adam Bede's" Transgressive Heroines." *The Kenyon Review,* New Series, vol. 9, no. 3, 1987. 84-96.
"Because Dinah becomes what Hetty had been, a sexual woman, Eliot is forced to impose a conventional morality on her. Having come to possess the health and comfort embodied in her fuller figure, Dinah is prevented from going out to the market as she used to. Mrs. Poyser is thus proven right on another score when Eliot puts a stop to Dinah's objectionable preaching. It is significant that the novel closes with a discussion of women preaching… Eliot had been deliberate in her effort to lead the reader to believe that Dinah should be free to preach. By novel's end, Adam and Dinah agree that women should attend to matters of the spirit indoors. While Eliot tried to create a delicate woman who could both go out and not die to prove her virtue, she ends by concluding that some unspecified harm does indeed come of a woman's going out to preach."
"In *Adam Bede* Eliot succeeds in transposing the value of delicate health and that of healthy delicacy, but in doing so she must bring in the heroine who went out." (Lefkovitz, 96)
[58] Wilson, Cheryl A. "Placing the Margins: Literary Reviews, Pedagogical Practices, and the Canon of Victorian Women's Writing." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2009. 57-74.
"Although varied in nature and content, critical reviews of nineteenth- century women's writing do share some commonalities, including an articulation of "ideal" women's writing, comparisons to male writers, and attention to subject matter and the condition of women. Ideas of what women's writing should be are often expressed through a criticism of what it should not be…In her infamous declaration that the author of Jane Eyre could not possibly be a woman - a claim most scholars love to hate - Eastlake maintains that women's writing should be appropriately "feminine" in its knowledge of its own sphere." (Wilson, 62)

"At the same time, according to Eliot, women writers must take care not to fall into the trap of being too "feminine" by writing "silly" fashionable novels and tales of high life that lack substance or morality. This tendency, Eliot notes, can be attributed to women's lack of education: "For it must be plain to every one who looks impartially and extensively into feminine literature, that its greatest deficiencies are due hardly more to the want of intellectual power than to the want of those moral qualities that contribute to literary excellence - patient diligence, a sense of the responsibility involved in publication, and an appreciation of the sacredness of the writer's art."" (Wilson, 62)

[59] Martin, Bruce K. "Rescue and Marriage in Adam Bede." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* vol. 12, no. 4, 1972. 745-763.

"Critics dissatisfied with Adam Bede have singled out the rescue of Hetty Sorrel by Arthur Donnithorne and Adam's marriage to Dinah Morris as especially glaring imperfections…Because Adam Bede concerns principally its title-character's acquisition of sympathy, the story of Arthur serves as a subplot, to induce behavior in Adam indicative of his moral state, and to create, through the crisis involving Hetty, an inescapable condition of suffering, from which his reversal of character can arise. His marriage to Dinah near the end of the novel represents not only a reward for his reform, but the culmination of his growing attraction to the quality of sympathy which Dinah epitomizes." (Martin, 775)

"As noted earlier, the marriage between Adam and Dinah has been strongly criticized… Looking at the Adam-Dinah marriage in terms of the total form of the novel, one must regard Dinah as a just and desirable reward for Adam once he has acquired the sympathy demanded of him." (Martin, 750-751)

"To fully understand the position of Dinah Morris in the novel, one must consider, too, the relationship between her religiosity and the ethic of sympathy." (Martin, 754)

"An examination of rescue and marriage in Adam Bede thus reveals George Eliot's craftsmanship, however imperfect. Both events result from an at least unconscious awareness by the author of the central obstacles to realizing the novel's form as she envisioned it. Alternatives suggested by critics of the rescue and marriage-such as ending the novel with Hetty's execution or leaving Adam without a wife-imply a certain blindness to what George Eliot hoped to accomplish, for they would surely contribute to a breakdown of that form. The novel, with its admitted imperfections, displays not so much the surprising naïveté or misguidance of a major author as an impressive degree of complexity and tightness for a first novel. Admirers of George Eliot need not apologize for Adam Bede, for it is a distinguished and necessary forerunner to her later triumphs." (Martin, 763)

[60] Fraiman, Susan. *Unbecoming Women: British women writers and the novel of development*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

[61] Taylor, Helen. "Class and Gender in Charlotte Brontë's "Shirley." *Feminist Review*, no. 1, 1979. 83-93.