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THE SUBVERSION OF THE DOMESTIC UTOPIAN VISION AND GENDERED PLOTS IN DICKENS AND ELIOT

presented by

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Ph.D degree in English

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THE SUBVERSION OF THE DOMESTIC UTOPIAN VISION AND GENDERED PLOTS IN DICKENS AND ELIOT

By

Soonhee Lim

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1995

ABSTRACT

THE SUBVERSION OF THE DOMESTIC UTOPIAN VISION AND GENDERED PLOTS IN DICKENS AND ELIOT

By

Soonhee Lim

This dissertation addresses two related issues. First, it discusses the problems of Victorian domestic utopias represented in Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Using the dialectic concept of ideology and utopia brought forth by Ernst Bloch, Karl Mannheim and Paul Ricoeur, I attempt to demonstrate how the Victorian idealization of the home as an emblem of order and harmony is coopted as a dogmatic form of domestic ideology in the age of rapid social reformulation. The Victorian ideal of home based on the ideology of separate spheres and women's 'natural' domesticity contributes to the maintenance of middle-class cultural hegemony and unequal sexual order. Nevertheless, this dissertation demonstrates that, despite their internalization of their culture's certain paradigms, Dickens and Eliot subvert Victorian domestic utopian vision and reveal its ideological contradictions in their texts. Taking examples of Bleak House. Great Expectations, The Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch, I focus my analysis on the lapses, contradictions, and conflicts in

their portrayals of Victorian home utopias.

Second, this dissertation investigates how the subversion of the domestic utopian vision affects the plots of the female Bildungsromane in Dickens and Eliot. Even when they adopt the traditional female Bildungsroman plots which end in marriage--Bleak House and Middlemarch--, Dickens and Eliot seriously disturb the ideality of marriage and the home as the final goal of Victorian women's development. In the plots which end in female characters' death--Great Expectations and The Mill on the Floss--, Dickens and Eliot further intensify their critiques of Victorian dictates of female destiny which cannot produce alternative life-plots for aspiring women, but eliminate them.

Despite the limits of their conservative liberal-humanist politics, Dickens and Eliot's 'negative hermeneutic' of their culture and society dismantles the logic of Victorian ideological formation, registering their deep sense of society's injustice for women. In doing so, Dickens and Eliot's texts evince alternative utopian hope against existing sexual inequality towards a more perfect social state, and the possibility that the 'heroine's text' will eventually be able to reach beyond the limits of Victorian domesticity.

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For my Mother, Kyung-yeom Lee and in Loving Memory of my Father, Haang-kyu Lim

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I first came to America to do doctoral studies, I expected the difficulties of language and finance. But the unexpected one was my back disk problem which troubled my life for five years. Now that all things have worked for good, I hope that my grueling academic marathon at Michigan State University has paralleled the discipline of my character in a positive way. Looking back upon those years, I have to acknowledge that my achievement is not mine only. From the bottom of my heart, I know that without the tremendous support from professors, friends and family, the completion of my dissertation would have been impossible.

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. James Hill, who, as my dissertation director, helped me academically and emotionally throughout my doctoral program. I cannot thank him enough for his patience and unfailing support for me. I sincerely thank Dr. Roger Meiners who not only gave me insightful guidance into literary criticism, but also his warm-hearted sympathy and encouragement. I deeply thank Dr. Victor Paananen for his academic guidance and encouragement. Although he was very busy as chairperson, he was always friendly, open-minded, and accessible. I also extend my deep thanks to Dr. Judith Stoddart, who, despite her extremely tight schedule, read my manuscripts closely and gave

me invaluable expert assistance. I also want to thank Dr. Clint Goodson, Dr. Bill Johnsen, Dr. James McClintock, Dr. Philip McGuire, Dr. Ellen Pollack, and Dr. Donald Rosenberg, for providing me with unforgettable intellectual stimulation. I express my appreciation to Ms. Lorraine Hart who, as graduate secretary, always offered me her unselfish, practical aid. I am indebted as well to the professors of the English Department at Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea, who first encouraged me to become a literary critic.

I am very grateful to my friends, especially Laurie Anderson and Neerja Chaturvedi for their proofreading and friendship, Virginia Firnberg for teaching me yoga with poetic sensibility, and Anastasia Wilch and my friends at Lansing Korean Methodist Church for moral support and fun. My special thanks are also offered to Hyoyung Ahn, Hyekyung Chung, Miran Huh, Shamus Mok, Paster Hyonam Hwang, my aunt and cousins in Virginia, and my maternal cousins Hye-ok Lee and Jimin Cho, who were with me both in good times and in bad times. Chung, my roommate of four years, deserves a special acknowledgement: our friendship will always be cherished. Lastly, I owe my deepest gratitude to my mother and my three brothers who suffered and rejoiced with me through every step of the lengthy process, even though we were separated across the Pacific. I thank God who has been behind my wonderful life in East Lansing, Michigan. East Lansing, I'll miss you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTR	ODUCTION	
	Notes	
PART	_ ,	TTICAL HORIZON AND THE LIMIT OF THE MIDDLE-MESTIC UTOPIAN VISION
	CHAPTER 1.	THE DISCOMFORT OF THE HOME IN DICKENS' BLEAK HOUSE AND GREAT EXPECTATIONS 51
		Notes 107
	CHAPTER 2.	THE HOME EPIC AND THE LOT OF THE DOMESTIC WOMAN IN ELIOT'S THE MILL ON THE FLOSS AND MIDDLEMARCH
		Notes 176
PART		ED PLOTS AND THE PROBLEMATICS OF FEMALE
	CHAPTER 3.	THE FORM OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND ITS PRICE: BLEAK HOUSE AND MIDDLEMARCH 194
		Notes
	CHAPTER 4.	THE FORM OF ALIENATION AND THE INVERSION OF VICTORIAN WOMANHOOD: GREAT EXPECTATIONS AND THE MILL ON THE FLOSS 259
		Notes 306
CONCI	Lusion	
202100		
WORKS	S CITED	327

INTRODUCTION

1. IN SEARCH OF AN IDEAL HOME: UTOPIA VERSUS IDEOLOGY

A predominant feature of Victorian culture was the disintegration of an old social order resulting in conflicts between classes and between genders. The realist novelists of the Victorian period were intensely aware of this social fragmentation and their writings registered the rapid transition of the old society into a new one. When Georgy Lukacs argues, in The Theory of the Novel, that the novel form 'like no other. is an expression of transcendental homelessness' (41), he inadvertently recapitulates a major problematic of mid-nineteenth-century novelists such as Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Lukacs sees the novel emerging out of the epic as the form of loss and dissolution of the harmony and 'totality' that supposedly defined Greek For Lukacs, modern narrative is an attempt to society. reconstitute the 'totality' of man and the world contained in the old epic. The harmonious totality signified by Greece serves as the utopian end towards which the novel strives, but which it can never reach under the capitalist order. the aspiration for 'totality' becomes a longing for utopia 1 in modern narrative.²

By the same token, when Victorian novelists documented the dehumanizing and fragmented reality of their society, they carried their sense of loss of an utopian origin to the age of rapid social change. Accordingly, an important part of their literary project was the restoration of an utopian center of order and harmony. In A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature, Leo Bersani calls such a narrative move a 'redemptive pattern' which provides society with a reassuring myth about itself. According to him, nineteenth-century realist novelists made a poignant effort to provide their society with some image of a 'viable and morally decent order,' although their works also confessed a certain degree of 'failure to find such an order' (Bersani 61).

However, if Victorian narrative represented an utopian longing for 'totality,' it also represented 'ideology.' In their attempt to patch up divisions and heal disruptions in society, Victorian novelists presumed a consensus about an ordered universe. As Elizabeth Ermarth observes in Realism and Consensus, the realist novel may demonstrate the 'power of consensus,' but the act of consensus is not an affirmation of a fact but an 'heroic act of faith' (257). She further notes, 'a stable invariant world is there...because everybody agrees that it [should be] so' (77). Clearly, consensus of realism creates what Raymond Williams calls the 'knowable world' (English Novel 13-14, 66-67). Nevertheless, the knowable world which consensus creates is an image of order, not the

reality of order.3

In this sense. Victorian narrative can be seen as what Fredric Jameson calls a 'socially symbolic act,' which aims at a resolution of social conflicts and contradictions in an aesthetic form. This process is broadly defined as ideology.4 Jameson arques in The Political Unconscious: 'the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal "solutions" to unresolvable social contradictions' (79). He goes on to argue that narrative employs 'strategies of containment' which allow society to provide an explanation of itself which suppresses the underlying contradictions of history. In the same vein, Terry Eagleton also argues that texts process 'ideological conflict under the form of resolving specifically aesthetic problems....It is, rather, a matter of the "ideological" presenting itself in the form of the "aesthetic" and vice-versa--of an "aesthetic" solution to the ideological conflict producing in its turn an aesthetic problem which demands ideological resolution, and so on' (Criticism and Ideology 88).

Here, the conception of narrative as an utopian act is paradoxically synthesized with a conception of narrative as ideology. What, then, is the relationship between utopia and ideology? In *Ideology and Utopia*, Karl Mannheim proposes a dialectical understanding of ideology and utopia. Mannheim defines ideology as the complex of ideas directing activity

towards the maintenance of the status quo and utopia as the complex of ideas directing activity towards changing the status quo. For him, both ideology and utopia are noncongruent with reality, but ideology legitimizes the existing order, while utopia shatters it. Utopian thinking and writing is a manifestation of counter-ideology, which is the articulation of an alternative to existing reality. In this definition, ideology and utopia can be understood as competing ideas in any given period of history: therefore, utopian ideas, once realized, will swiftly become ideological (192-204).6

Mannheim's notion avoids the danger of oversimplifying utopia and ideology and reducing them to binary opposites, neither being tainted nor compromised by the other. Indeed, the utopian impulse can operate within the ideological, both helping it along and pulling against it. Utopia can be seduced and enslaved into the service of the system itself. If an individual is to be motivated by a system of ideological practices, he or she must be offered at least the promise of specific gratifications in return for 'willing' behavior consistent with the ideology in question. Then, the utopian impulse working in the ideological manages, defuses, and channels subversion into the limited satisfaction and range of behaviors offered by the dominant social formation. exactly the point made by Jameson: 'the ideological would be grasped as somehow at one with the Utopian, and the Utopian at one with the ideological' (286). Obviously, the utopian can be the ideological and *vice versa*.

Yet, utopia can move beyond cooptation by a given system, for it subsumes a positive drive toward the future in the radical insufficiency of the present. As Ernst Bloch notes, there is the need to distinguish an abstract utopian fantasy from the utopian impulse in terms of their subversive potential. He argues that while utopian fantasies may be simply fictions of ideology, a poeticizing of the present, the utopian impulse can be adversarial, part of a criticallywilled hope for something better. By drawing on the driving forces of the opposition to domination and hierarchy, utopia should open a political possibility to a better world (Philosophy of the Future 89, 90. 96). Within this deeper understanding of utopia lies the possibility for a revived and more radical use of that impulse to resist and move beyond the current system. In liberating utopia from its enclosure and collaboration within ideology, that subversive impulse can be reappropriated as an instrument of opposition.

Characteristically, a major 'redemptive pattern' of the mid-Victorian novel tended to be embodied in its teleological narrative movement towards a home utopia. By setting up an ideal home as a textual telos, the Victorian novel often promised redemption from the constraint of reality even without escaping into a transcendental and religious realm. An ideal home was often portrayed as a walled garden separated

from the indifference of a business-oriented world. invoked a pre-industrial refuge from the evils of urban capitalism. Such a concept of the home is given one of its most articulate expressions in John Ruskin's lecture, "Of Oueen's Gardens" (1865). Ruskin notes that the home 'is the place of peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division.... So far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it...it ceases to be a home; it is then only a part of the outer world which you have roofed over and lighted fire in' (82-83). In the same vein, Coventry Patmore understands the bourgeois home as 'a tent pitch'd in a world not right' ("The Angel in the House" 36). The idea of the home as an enclosed realm can be seen as a Victorian form of nostalgia for a lost Eden in the modern world, as illustrated in Max Schulz's argument that '[t]he idea that one can construct facsimiles of lost Eden without waiting for the end of time, the illud tempus, has been firing historically emancipated imaginations secularized and insistently since the seventeenth century' (xi).

Obviously, the middle-class domestic ideal articulated a ruling definition of a social order based on the separation between the public/political-economical/productive sphere and the private/domestic/reproductive sphere. Many Victorians vehemently advocated the home as an autonomous and morally fortified space which defied the bad influences of the social realm. As the place of cooperation and harmony, the home was

regarded as a controllable utopian space which was not swayed by the world of commerce and production. The home stood in opposition to the terribly anonymous world of commerce and industry, 'a world alien, not your world... without father, without child, without brother' (Carlyle 274). In short, the home was a 'counterimage' of the modern market place which operated on the principle of competition.

Furthermore, the home was considered the foundation of the proper social order. In his celebration of bourgeois ethics, Self-Help (1859), Samuel Smiles argues: 'The Home is the crystal of society--the very nucleus of national character; and from that source, be it pure or tainted, issue the habits, principles and maxims, which govern public as well as private life. The nation comes from the nursery; public opinion itself is for the most part the outgrowth of the home' (294). Here, the family home was defined as the nucleus of the state, and a breakdown in domestic order was understood in terms of a total social disintegration: a stable hearth meant a stable world. In this sense, Gelda Lerner argues that the family 'not only mirrors the order of the state and educates its children to follow it, it also creates and constantly reinforces that order' (217).

It is clear that, for Victorian middle classes, marriage and home served as a potent symbol of social stability in the age of social disintegration. Tony Tanner notes that 'for bourgeois society marriage is the all-subsuming, all

organizing, all containing contract. It is the structure that maintains the Structure' (15). Tanner goes on to argue that '[t]he bourgeois novelist has no choice but to engage the subject of marriage in one way or another, at no matter what extreme of celebration or contestation. He may concentrate on what makes for marriage and leads up to it, or on what threatens marriage and portends its disintegration, but his subject will still be marriage' (Ibid.).9

It is natural, then, that, in its tendency to uphold the middle-class social order, domestic utopian vision in the Victorian period assumed an increasingly central ideological function (Burn 247; Minz 11-20). The insistently aphoristic language in which Victorian domesticity finds its articulation suggests that, underneath its sentimental, self-assured veneer, fundamental socio-political realities threatened to expose its ideology as artifice. Lawrence Stone locates nineteenth-century familial values as part of a great 'tidal wave of moral regeneration and repression, 'directly arising from an overriding sense of social and political crisis, a fear that the whole structure of social hierarchy and political order is in danger (677). Not only did memories of 1789 but also urbanization and geographic mobility which dislocated the impoverished from parental and communal restraints continually threatened a potentially unstable future of social upheaval (679). It is clear that the family became a means of social control in British fear of social

dislocation and unrest. Thus, Victorian domestic utopian vision set out to consolidate the dominant middle-class social order, helping to override increasing threats from class and gender conflicts.

Another aspect of domestic utopian vision as ideological apparatus is that it argued for the division of gender identities and roles which systematically excluded middle-class women from the public sphere. Backed by contemporary economy, 'science' and evangelism, domestic ideology about a woman's 'proper' place and special mission rapidly gained ground in the first half of the Victorian period. 10 Expressed very simply, this domestic ideology saw the world divided into two spheres, one for men and one for women. Men were to go out to work, make money and support their families financially, while women were to stay at home, creating a haven for their children, and for their husbands. Women were to be dependent on their husbands financially, and were certainly not expected to join the work force. Gender identities became organized around this idea of separate spheres. Its universalist language was inherently gendered to justify a dichotomy between a 'public' (male) and a 'private' (female) sphere. Increasingly, women were defined as domestic beings, 'naturally' suited to duties in the home and with children, whereas men were associated with the public sphere, the world of business and politics. Women are removed from the spheres of work and instead placed in the sphere of the

home, where they are to exercise moral 'influence,' but not political and economical 'power.' It is clear that, when Victorians idealized the role of the bourgeois family, they naturalized and rationalized the substantial removal of women from the public sphere.¹¹

Ray Stretch also points out that this idealization of women's domestic function became necessary because the duty of female submissiveness was no longer being taken entirely for granted, due to women's new consciousness about their social roles (44). Then, Victorian domestic utopian vision, closely intertwined with its gender ideology, hid its ideological motives and played a role of legitimizing patriarchal, middleclass social formation. In this sense, the Victorian domestic utopia was an ideological utopia which did not get beyond an ideological cooptation, but prevented the envisioning of an alternative social order.

However, Victorian middle-class hegemony cannot be considered an absolute one. McGregor's sweeping picture of middle-class dominance as 'compelling conformity from above and attracting aspiration from below' needs to be much qualified (63). First of all, the middle class was not a single or unified entity; nor can middle-class domestic ideology be considered monolithic. The Victorian middle class was composed of a diverse range of occupational groups and levels of income. Davidoff and Hall argue that, from 1780 to 1850, estimates of the income for the middle class ranged from

100 to 1000 pounds a year (23).¹³ R. S. Neale and D. Smith have also suggested that there were at least five identifiable social classes in Britain in the nineteenth century, while two or three fractions were often subsumed under the blanket term 'middle class.' ¹⁴ In terms of the complexity of mid-Victorian social structure, then, the notion of a single, uniform middle-class ideology is questionable.

Furthermore, despite their proselytizing effect, middle class ideologies could not embrace all social strata. instance, the ideology of separate spheres--the division of labor along the lines of gender -- was inherently unstable, in that it did not reflect the reality of working-class women's life. Working-class women had to work outside the home for economic reasons, although they might regret the necessity for working in light of middle-class domestic ideology. Whatever the expectations within the middle-class domestic ideal, in an increasingly industrialized society, working-class and lowmiddle-class women had to find ways to earn income in lieu of, or in addition to, support from their father, husband, or other male relatives (Roberts 14-16; June 17-18, 48-70). is clear that the idea of separate spheres was not a description, but a prescription, of reality. 15 In this sense, the notion of the existence of a single, static, dominant, domestic ideology is not tenable.

It may be true that, as a cultural product, literature not only reflects a society's ideological formation, but also

contributes to it. As Eagleton confirms, literature is a 'vital instrument for the insertion of individuals into the perceptual and symbolic forms of the dominant ideological formation' (Criticism 52). In playing this role, however, Victorian texts inevitably incorporate the process of negotiation involving the clash of, and compromise among, opposing ideologies. Although the middle classes constructed class-specific ideals of domestic femininity, the power of the dominant ideology was never total or secure but had to be continually struggled for, won, and maintained. As Tony Bennet argues, the 'consent... is not guaranteed.... It has ...incessantly to be produced. In this sense, hegemony refers not to an achieved state, but to a process: to the ideological processes whereby such consent is continually reproduced and secured--or lost' ("Popular Culture" 30).16

Then, one can understand why, while Victorian literature outwardly celebrates the ideals of domestic harmony and conjugal bliss, it so often dramatizes domestic conflicts and anxieties. Contradiction is inevitably built into the attempt to establish class and sexual hegemony. As a result, even when these ideals are celebrated, the reader may wonder why they need to be. In this sense, one can agree with Mary Poovey's argument that 'the middle-class ideology we most often associate with the Victorian period was both contested and always under construction; because it was always in the making, it was always open to revision, dispute, and the

emergence of oppositional formulations' (Uneven Development 3).

It is no accident that, in Dickens and Eliot, middleclass domestic ideology is continually deconstructed and reconstructed, revealing the gaps and contradictions in its monolithic thesis. Their texts take issue with domesticity as the ideal social code for middle-class society, and reveal an undercurrent of conflicts which fails to brace that ideology.¹⁷ In my exploration of domestic ideologies in Dickens and Eliot, thus, I will not focus on their ideological wholeness but on the gaps and absences which they contain.

2. THE POLITICAL SCOPE OF DOMESTIC UTOPIAS IN DICKENS AND ELIOT

Like many other mid-Victorian novelists, Dickens and Eliot frequently adopt the courtship and marriage plots which create a significantly structured 'salvational narrative' (Bersani, A Future for Astyanax 53, 63). Apparently, their envisioning of an ideal home as the textual telos may provide a reassuring myth about Victorian society. For the family was, based on the cohesive principle of cooperation, considered to have a mission to counter the malignant, disintegrative tendencies of the larger society. Nevertheless, Dickens and Eliot inescapably produce certain lapses, omissions, and incoherence within the ideological

discourse they use. In their work, domestic ideology is revealed as unstable and constantly in need of reconstruction and revision.

In Dickens' case, the normative resolutions of his novels revolve around the successful setting up of a happy home. frequently rewards his male and female protagonists by placing them in the midst of a secure family of their own at the conclusions of his novels. Dickens' 'reputation of being the novelist of happy family life' (Monod 9) reflects the ideological matrix of his narrative that, if all human relationships conformed to the familial model, society would be a better, more human entity. Simultaneously, however, many home lives in Dickens' novels offer the replication of the actual injustices of a repressive nineteenth-century ethos of marriage. In many dysfunctional homes of his novels, the benevolent principle of a paternalistic home is absent or corrupted. If an ideal home for Dickens is not the norm, but a concept based on its absence, it evidences the resistance of Dickens' text towards domestic ideology.

Eliot's stance towards Victorian domestic ideology is more complex than Dickens' in terms of her gender allegiances. Eliot consciously takes up a paradoxical project of challenging, as well as accepting certain Victorian domestic paradigms. While generally accepting the equation of women's sphere and domesticity, Eliot powerfully challenges the distorting effects of this idealogy in her novels. In view of

Eliot's complexity, Jacque Donzolot's argument--bourgeois women, coopted by the offer of domestic sovereignty collaborated actively in the dissemination of the new bourgeois ideology (45-46)--or Bonnie Smith's contention that nineteenth-century women writers utterly resisted the unitary bourgeois discourse (13-14) sound like only partial truths. It comes closer to truth that, with her hesitations and inner contradictions, Eliot creates in her novels an 'aesthetic totalisation deeply suspicious of ideological totalities' (Eagleton 119).

I have selected two novels each of Dickens and Eliot, in order to demonstrate the ways in which these representative mid-century novelists intensely probed the domestic utopian vision and the related gender politics of I have chosen only four novels in order to their age. maintain an in-depth focus, rather than spread out and dilute my critical attention. In choosing Bleak House and Middlemarch, and Great Expectations and The Mill on the Floss, I have taken into consideration that these novels include wide-ranging views of Victorian homes. Furthermore, these novels include at least one important plot of female Bildung in relation to which I can investigate the influence of Victorian domestic ideology on the patterns of female development. In Part I of this dissertation, I will attempt to explore the conflicts and contradictions in the domestic utopian visions of Dickens and Eliot. Even though my focus is

on the four novels, it is not exclusionary of other works by the same authors: I will try to establish a connection between the four novels and others.

In Bleak House (1853), Dickens criticizes the whole society as a failed home for its inhabitants. The symbolism of 'bleak houses' connects Jarndyce's Bleak House proper, Chancery, Tom-All-Alone's (one of the most abject districts of and Chesney Wold (an aristocratic mansion), intimating that the whole society is a vast 'bleak house.' The portrayal of these 'bleak houses' in gothic and demonic imagery suggests that the 'uncanny' reality--failed paternal rule and failed homekeeping--lurks outside the ideal of the bourgeois home. Apparently, the new Bleak House established at the end of the novel is intended to offer a vision of a society that itself resembles a restored home, founded upon benignant paternal arrangements and а woman's proper housekeeping. However, the novel only reveals the limits and internal conflicts in the miniature domain of Bleak House II, which provides a weak relief against the failed homes extensively deployed in the novel.

Great Expectations (1861) even deviates from the pattern of providing an ideal home for the main characters. Pip the protagonist is given no home of his own at the end of the story, despite a belated hope for one in the second version of the ending. One rarely finds proper maternal homekeepers or benign but powerful paternal figures in the novel. Although

the reward of a happy family remains available to such characters as Joe and Biddy, and Herbert and Clara, the novel is crammed with dysfunctional homes. Even Wemmick's ostensibly utopian Castle is not totally separated from the force of market and Newgate. Despite its ideological matrix, Dickens' text clearly shows that the reward of happy domesticity cannot settle all social contradictions.

As a woman writer situated outside the patriarchal order, Eliot takes up a peculiar stance towards the bourgeois vision of home. In *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch*, Eliot challenges the ideology of separate spheres, exploring its ill effects on women characters. She clearly demonstrates that the very condition of being born female and hence of being marginalized, rendered invisible and effectively excluded from public life, is an insuperable barrier to female self-definition and development.

In The Mill of Floss (1861), Eliot takes up a double-edged project of lamenting the loss of the old organic values of traditional middle-class homes such as the Dodsons and the Tullivers, and of criticizing their debilitating limits.

Lacking any other social guidance, the heroine has the only two major forms of binding ethics available for her: those of the past and home. Eliot clearly deplores that withdrawal from the public sphere and self-abnegation are her heroine's necessary guidance of life, while Tom Tulliver, as a man, is able to engage in the battle of life, tackling more

substantial obstacles and gaining more definite conquests. Eliot seems to succumb to Victorian domestic ideals when she makes Maggie's final journey bound home, letting Maggie die with Tom. However, Eliot also problematizes Maggie's nostalgic return to the home, by opening up the gaps between her happy memory and reality.

In Middlemarch (1871-72), Eliot expresses her underlying skepticism about the family and the home. Dealing with two unhappy marriages -- between Casaubon and Dorothea, and between Lydgate and Rosamond-, along with two happy marriages--between Fred Vincy and Mary Garth, and between Ladislaw and Dorothea --Eliot attempts a balanced appraisal of Victorian middle-class Nevertheless, marital conflict is homes. represented as simply a personal tragedy but as an ongoing battle that can never be resolved within the existing gender ideology. Nor does the successful setting up of a home for Fred and Mary, and for Ladislaw and Dorothea solve the question whether homekeeping can be an ultimate realization of woman's 'full nature.' Thus, Eliot's writing discloses her persistent resistance to the androcentric premises of her society and culture. Overall, her novels show her persistence in recognizing, exposing, investigating, and critiquing the power struggles played out in gender relations.

3. GENDERED PLOTS AND THE HOME AS THE GOAL OF FEMALE BILDUNG

To read a Bildungsroman which represents the development identity is to understand culture's questions assumptions about the nature of the self, especially the gendered self. Victorian gender ideology prescribed that the success of home as an utopian realm depends on the unfailing fulfillment of the 'natural' female vocation of marriage and motherhood. The ideality of domestic life was considered to be maintained by moral influence and attendance of respectable In this way, the ideologies of the home and the women. feminine ideal reinforced each other. At one extreme of the spectrum, there were domestic madonnas; at the other, prostitutes. While gender definitions can never be essential, they are frequently taken to be so by the culture which produces them. Hence, when one examines so-called 'essential' definitions, one is really examining cultural understanding and needs. It is perhaps no accident that the arguments over a woman's position expose the nineteenth-century's need to invest in socially constructed roles as essential identities.

In "Of Queen's Gardens" of Sesame and Lilies, for example, Ruskin voices a most dogmatic view of the differences between the sexes, known as the doctrine of separate spheres:

Now their separate characters are briefly these. The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and

invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle; and her intellect is not for invention or recreation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is praise; she enters into no contest.... So far as she rules, all must be right, or nothing is. She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good, instinctively, infallibly wise, --wise not for self-development, but for self-renunciation (82-83).

Here, the nature of the woman is defined in contradistinction to the man. In this system of binary opposition, woman's identity is defined as the 'other.' Ruskin gives the sense that woman's power is everything that man's power is not. The grand corollary of his argument is that the woman is not to 'self-development,' but rather in in renunciation.' An obvious contradiction in Ruskin's thesis is that woman's great domestic power is accompanied by psychological traits generally associated with powerlessness-submission, humility, and selflessness. In framework, it is clear that, however elevated her domain may be, woman is ultimately subject to male power.

Nevertheless, Dickens and Eliot take a complex stance

towards such ideology about feminine nature and the pattern of female development. When they give primacy to their female characters, they acknowledge women's important role as the preservers of the home, through their moral influence as well as homekeeping. Both organize gender relations by reference to a 'natural' order of the separate spheres. Yet, despite their endorsement of essential feminine attributes, the texts of Dickens and Eliot, covertly or overtly, mount a powerful critique of the gendered opposition of the familial and the vocational. Especially, Eliot, as a woman writer, manifestly tackles the problem of woman's education and vocation to which Dickens often pays little attention.

The Bildungsroman, a major nineteenth-century novel form, is associated with bourgeois humanism, which includes faith in progress and the value of the individual. The Bildungsroman readily accommodated the concerns of a new middle-class reading public, whose collective experience of social mobility might be rendered as the individual's pursuit of an ideal of self-development. Central to the genre is the notion of individual selfhood achieved through growth and of social experience as an education which forms that self. The projected resolution of this process is some kind of adjustment to society. Thus, the Bildungsroman linked the individual's moral, spiritual, and psychological maturation with his economic and social advancement. 18

Yet, as recent feminist critics have pointed out, gender

can play an important role in the definition of the Bildungsroman. When the notions of development and experience are defined in essentially male terms, the normative Bildungsroman is based on the male plot of ambition and desire. If the novel deals with female Bildung, the gender is seen to seriously modify every aspect of the Bildungsroman, for the nature of women's experience is different from that of men, social pressures and expectations are different, and options are different.

Peter Brooke defines plot as a form of desire, arguing that desire is 'narrative thematic,' 'narrative motor,' and 'the very intention of narrative language' (54). that the desire of a hero or heroine provides not only a novelistic theme, but also a dominant dynamic of plot. many nineteenth century texts, however, a woman often develops in relationship to the dominant ideology which fixes her within the limits of someone else's desire. So often, women's roles remain significant only in relation to the heroes whose identities they strengthen: they have no desires except to be chosen and adored by heroes. Consequently, the desires of the female protagonist are shaped by her need to fit herself into patriarchal structures (Benjamin 83). It holds true of many of Dickens' domestic angels -- such as Florence Dombey, Esther Summerson and Little Dorrit -- and also some of Eliot's female characters. In this sense, Annis Pratt argues that the female Bildungsroman of the nineteenth century highlights not the growing-up but rather the 'growing-down' of women in a patriarchal society (14). In their texts, however, Dickens and Eliot foreground the contradictions and conflicts inherent in the Victorian concept of proper female development. Their female Bildungsromane subsume many unsolved tensions and pains of Victorian womanhood.

In Part II of my dissertation, I will compare Bleak House and Middlemarch, and Great Expectations and The Mill on the Floss respectively. The first set of novels contains both the plots of the heroine's successful integration into marriage and a normative social order. The second set of novels is noted for its female plots which lead to death. categorization of female plots is in accordance with Nancy K. Miller's analysis of the two narrative poles of the eighteenth century novel governing the heroine's ascent and integration into society and her descent into death. According to Miller, the 'euphoric' pole, with its ending in marriage, is a successful integration with society, in which the gain is both financial and romantic success in the 'heterosexual contract'; the 'dysphoric' pole, with an ending in death, is a betrayal by male authority and aggression (Heroine's Text Miller sees little definitive narrative change in xi). nineteenth-century texts: 'The ideological underpinnings of the old plot have not been threatened seriously: experience for women characters is still primarily tied to the erotic and the familiar; ... female Bildung tends to get stuck in the

bedroom' (151).

However, nineteenth-century 'heroine's texts' are much more complex in their handling of a woman's developmental They subsume a darker, resistant subtext which pattern. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar explore in The Madwoman in the Attic. The intense conflicts between desire and duty, autonomy and dependence, power and powerlessness, world and home, and rebellion and submission are obvious parameters of the nineteenth-century female plots. It is true that the female plots of social integration in Bleak House and Middlemarch show narrative movements towards marriage and the re-establishment of existing social values. Nevertheless, Summerson's plot and Dorothea Brooke's respectively, evidence many self-divided conflicts in the process of their adjustment to patriarchal demands. Dickens and Eliot both qualify the heroines' successful integration into the appropriate female sphere with a considerable degree of regret, hesitation, and doubt.

In Bleak House, Esther, as an illegitimate orphan, struggles to take her right place in society. By the end of the novel, Esther is safely ensconced within patriarchy as wife, housekeeper and mother of children. In the novel, however, Esther writes the memoir of her life, thereby, dangerously mingling paradoxical vocations--writer and housekeeper. Even though she takes great care to suppress her 'unfeminine' self-assertion and pretends not to be the heroine

of her own story, Esther's narrative frequently subverts her official endorsement of the domestic ideal.

In the "Prelude" to Middlemarch, Eliot overtly laments that women's aspirations and desires are only possible to achieve inside the institution of marriage. In spite of her intellectual ambition, Dorothea can, unlike male characters, develop only in one direction--through marriage. Dorothea develops in accordance with a society that confines her, reshapes her aspirations, makes her aware of her limitations, and leads her to resolve her quest only in socially available terms. Eliot's mixed feeling is clearly manifested when she intimates a certain sadness about the heroine's limited fulfillment of vocation in the "Finale." The marriage closure of Middlemarch is not explicitly revealed as the satisfactory endpoint of female Bildung. Ultimately, Eliot is concerned with the 'imperfect social state' that demands the 'sacrifice' of 'many Dorotheas,' rather than with a domestic utopia ("Finale" 896).20 Thus, Eliot disturbs the smug conclusion of the conventional marriage plot.

On the other hand, Great Expectations and The Mill on the Floss contain female plots which lead to death, as well as plots of frustrated male development. Obviously, these female plots embody a form of social alienation. The process of female and male growth ends not with the ideal of harmonious integration with social values, but in dissatisfaction and disillusionment with society. In Great Expectations, Miss

Havisham's arrested development and her failure in the female vocation of marriage and motherhood is thematically paralleled with the plot of Pip's frustration in gentlemanly vocation. In the novel, the existence of the disproportionately large number of failed, unmotherly women characters, as compared with domestic ones, considerably disturbs the Victorian domestic ideology about the innate feminine vocation.

In The Mill on the Floss, the locus classicus for Maggie Tulliver's dilemma is the image of the medieval trial for This Victorian version of the double bind witchcraft. condemns a woman for having demonic power if she swim, and celebrates her innocence if she drown. The development of Maggie is complicated and hindered by the lack of available options and alternative models for female 'being.' It is true that the heroine's final journey to the home demonstrates that the idea of nome is still a categorical imperative of her consciousness and behavior. Nevertheless, it carries a certain subversion: her death prevents her from fulfilling her feminine vocation of marriage and motherhood. The seeming resolution of Maggie's problems in her reunion with her brother in a liebestod leaves one with many questions about the unrealized potentiality of her development.

In both novels, the Bildungsroman mode for Miss Havisham and Maggie is explicitly a 'Bildungsroman manque': Dickens and Eliot both problematize the normalistic female bildung prescribed by social convention. The difference between

Dickens and Eliot is that while Dickens finds the original source of Miss Havisham's destruction in her failed marriage, Eliot finds Maggie's in the harm of wasting female talent. By transforming the mode of female Bildungsroman into a form of gender-specific tragedy, Eliot manifestly protests dominant sexual ideologies of her time.

Badri Raina complains that Dickens struggled 'weakly and wistfully within the bourgeois Victorian Zeitgeist' (136). Similarly, many modern feminist critics have felt uneasy about Eliot's feminist allegiances, because they suspect that she did not sufficiently antagonize patriarchal monuments in her texts. It is undeniable, however, that, to borrow Bersani's expression, the novels of Dickens and Eliot foreground the 'play of complicity and resistance which characterize the innumerable local confrontations of power in human life' ("The Subject of Power" 6). Although their texts may shy away from the direct political impact of subversion, they certainly register a powerful challenge to Victorian cultural paradigms.

NOTES to INTRODUCTION

1. One must acknowledge the controversial connotations of the term 'utopia.' As is well known, 'utopia' was the title of Thomas More's famous book (1516): his neologism 'utopia' connotes a place which is both good and which is nowhere. Since 1516, the term has been used to denote an ideal society

or, pejoratively, an impossible society--or both.

Traditionally, classical Marxists tended to focus on the negative side of utopianism. Frederick Engels was impatient, for example, to set his 'scientific' communist agenda apart from the illusory fantasy of the so-called utopian socialists such as Fourier, Owen and Saint-Simon: 'The solution of the social problems, which as yet lay hidden in undeveloped economic conditions, the Utopians attempted to evolve out of the human brain.... [T] he more completely they were worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure phantasy' (Socialism: Utopian and Scientific 40). Lenin keeps this tradition of the negative interpretation of utopia. He argues in his discussion of the concept in 1912: 'In politics utopia is a wish that can never come true--neither now nor afterwards, a wish that is not based on social forces and not supported by the growth and development of political, class forces.' He goes on to make a claim in the same discussion that 'Marxists...are hostile to all and every utopia' (qtd. in Geoghegan 54)

Lukacs's case is somewhat complex. Although Lukacs professes to be a classical Marxist, he does not go beyond the Hegelian idealism in *The Theory of the Novel* in that he assumes the origin of history (Greece in the case of the Western civilization) as an inviolable utopian ideal which governs history by its absence. Although he avoids using the word 'utopia,' his view of the novel is undeniably

overshadowed by his utopian nostalgia.

Unlike these classic Marxists, however, new Frankfurtian leftists such as Ernst Bloch, Herbert Marcuse and Karl Mannheim began to highlight the 'good' utopian dimension in Marxism, by reformulating the concept of utopia. They firmly believed that utopias perform an important political function: utopias explicitly criticize existing political and social arrangements from a radical, rather than a reformist, perspective, thereby offering new alternative ideals of society.

For example, Bloch develops a positive perspective of the word 'utopian,' denuded of unworldliness and abstraction, as forward dreaming and anticipation of a good society. In The Principle of Hope, Bloch urges us to view utopia as a concretization of hope and 'real possibility' (I:195-223). Herbert Marcuse further details the positive operation of the human imagination and its fantastic and utopian production. In Bros and Civilization, his discussion concerns the function of fantasy and utopia. Against the 'affirmative culture' of the dominant ideology, art which taps the fantastic and utopian opposes the image of humanity as a free subject to institutional repression (143). Thus, utopian images as preconceptual figures of the negation of present contribute to the general opposition to the dominant capitalist relations to production and ideology. As will be shown, my concept of 'utopia' is influenced by Bloch,

Mannheim, and Paul Ricoeur.

- 2. In a different perspective from Lukacs', Ernst Bloch also sees the articulations of utopian impulse in narrative form. Block sees an intrinsic relation between narrative and utopian dimension. The utopian impulse may be presented as a metonymic drive through a realist narrative toward something better than what the text sets up as reality in the present. In contrast to Lukacs' nostalgia, however, Bloch is not so much interested in what has been, as in the 'latency of being to come at work' and the 'figures of hope' which foreshadow the human potential in the future (On Karl Marx 172).
- 3. Ermarth's weighted emphasis on consensus, however attentive she is to the gaps and fissures within realism, prevents her from discussing the ideological pattern underlying realism.
- 4. It may be impossible to define ideology in simple terms: ideology has been defined in diverse ways for the last two centuries. The concept of 'ideology' originated in the late eighteenth-century effort by the philosophers of the Institut de France to oppose medieval metaphysics based in religion and revelation, to empirical science. 'Ideology' was then the science of the formation and interaction of ideas (See Kavanagh James H, 'Ideology' 306-20 and Larrain, The Concept of Ideology). Napoleonic France and Romantic Germany took it up to represent two things at once. To them an ideology was a systematic outlook on the world, both a theory

and a program, showing a coherence of logic and/ or feeling, but it could also be a distorted outlook, departing from positivistic objectivity to embody the passions, fears, desires, or mere errors of the ideologue. Later in the works of Hegel, Marx and Engels, ideology was taken out of the pure realm of ideas and linked to the moving forces of history and economics; ideology was seen both as the ideas held by a group or a class and as the illusions which mask the real relations of history in a false consciousness. Ideology was therefore a presentation of the world in falsified terms. Then, ideology tended to be contrasted with a more objective kind of knowledge (See Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature, 55-77).

But in neo-Marxist critics, ideology does not necessarily refer to the system of values held or put in circulation by the ruling class to establish a consensus in society. Nor is it necessarily a 'false consciousness.' Ideology, once understood as simply a set of illusions or as false consciousness, is seen by Pierre Macherey and Louis Althusser to be a more general set of practices that shape the self-understanding of individuals. It is a representational system of values, opinions, knowledge, and images which articulates the individual's lived relationship to the transpersonal realities of the social structure as experienced by a particular social class.

According to Macherey, ideology is a complex system of

illusory social beliefs; it is complete in itself, but only on the condition that there are certain things it cannot see or say (Theory of Literary Production 261, 291). Reformulating Macherey and Lacan, Louis Althusser also defines ideology as a 'representation of imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' ("Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, " in Lenin and Philosophy 162). By means of these projected imaginary relationships that overlay the actual historical situation, ideology re-presents society in a way that conceals contradictions and doubts in favor of a total picture within which the individual can live and carry out the needs of her or his class. He thus argues that 'ideology interpellates individuals as subjects' (Ibid. 160). Interpellation is the name of the process which places the in his individual imaginary relationship to society. Influenced by Macherey and Althusser, Terry Eagleton defines ideology as: 'set of values, representations and beliefs which, realized in certain material apparatuses... guarantee those misperceptions of the 'real' which contribute to the reproduction of the dominant social relations' (Criticism and Ideology 54).

Then, I draw an eclectic conclusion of mine that ideology is a sign system, held in a given period of history, which portrays the beliefs, attitudes, habits of feeling, and behavior that a society inculcates in order to generate an automatic reproduction of its structuring premises. Ideology

is the lived experience of people and the dimension of social experience in which meanings and values are produced. Thus, ideology preserves social power through culture in the absence of direct coercion.

- 5. A strategy of containment is a way of achieving coherence by shutting out seemingly irreconcilable conflicts and contradictions. It is an ideological apparatus which allows society to provide an explanation of itself that suppresses its underlying contradictions. For Jameson's dismantling of 'strategies of containment' in the writers such as Balzac, Conrad, and Gissing, see chapters 3, 4, 5 of The Political Unconscious.
- 6. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur follows Mannheim's model in placing ideology and utopia in a common framework. He sees ideology and utopia as two forms of imaginative practice, two expressions of what he calls 'the social imaginary.' While ideology tends to integrate the social order by closing gaps in it, utopia tends to subvert the social order by creating a gap, by projecting a possible future of what present society could be. Ricoeur thus argues that 'the only way to get out the circularity in which ideologies engulf us is to assume a utopia, declare it, and judge an ideology on this basis' (172).
- 7. The tendency of the separation of the two spheres began with the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century and was consolidated into the dominant way of social ordering

with the rise of the middle class. See Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere 14-26.

- 8. The term, 'counterimage' is borrowed from Herbert Marcuse, Negations, 88-133.
- 9. Andrew Blake observes that marriage was a topic of considerable importance in the literary production of the Victorian era (91). Deborah Gorham also states that domestic utopian vision--'vision that perceived the family as... excluding the outside world'-- is a 'major recurrent image in Victorian literature, art and social commentary' (4).
- 10. In "The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology," Catherine Hall argues that the formation of Victorian domestic ideology was mainly done in the period 1780-1830, when the industrial bourgeoisie was emerging as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Middle-class domestic ideology was closely intertwined with gender ideology. The domestic manual and guide books which began appearing in the 1830s and 1840s, such as those by Sarah Ellis, emphasized that women's proper place was the home.
- 11. According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere marked a progressive historical episode as the medium for an oppositional movement against absolutist monarchy. He argues that the bourgeois public sphere, as a liberal and egalitarian space, 'anticipated in principle that all human beings belong to it' (85). However, despite its hypothetical full 'openness,' the bourgeois public sphere was still closed to

women. As Joan Landes indicates, the same bourgeois construct [sphere] replaced 'the older patriarchy' with a 'more pervasive gendering of the public sphere' (2). To Landes, therefore, the bourgeois ideal of the home was the ideological product of a male-dominated discourse and, as such, the foil against which an exclusively male public sphere was defined. When Victorian idealized the role of the bourgeois family, they naturalized and rationalized the substantial removal of women from the public sphere.

12. Obviously, this is a social arrangement based on According to Carole Pateman's Sexual power relations. Contract, the formation of bourgeois civil society was strongly buttressed by the theory of the social contract. The theory of the social contract assumed that the civil government originated from a voluntary contract between the two parties who existed independent of social relationships. Then, the ruling power of the social body was ratified in terms of an individual's act of voluntary submission to it for his best interests. Pateman goes on to argue that while the idea of a social contract was designed to secure civil rights for men, it did not assume the women were party to the original contract. Sexual difference thus becomes political difference. Furthermore, the social contract 'sexual secretively presupposes a contract,' which rationalized men's 'sex-right' over women. Sexual hierarchy is considered the law of 'nature' assumed by willing subjects.

Its main premise is that the female relinquishes political control to the male in order to acquire exclusive authority over domestic life. This idea justifies the female's lack of access to economic and political power. Thus the theory of the original contract identifies man's political rights with his 'patriarchal right' or 'sex right' (Pateman 1-18). See also Nancy Armstrong, "The Logic of Social Contract" and "The Logic of Sexual Contract" in Desire and Domestic Fiction. pp. 30-36, 36-42.

- 13. The lower-middle-class and the 'very wealthy' both are considered as the middle class. In J. A. Bank's classic work on the middle-class and family size, he reckoned that maintenance of the 'paraphernalia of gentility' in the late nineteenth century required a sum of about 700 pounds a year. But as Patricia Branca pointed out, large numbers of middle-class wives were responsible for making ends meet on incomes of 200-300 pounds (qtd. in Jane Lewis 7).
- 14. See Neal, Class in English History 1680-1850, and Smith, Conflict and Compromise: Class Formation in English Society, 1830-1914.
- 15. There is possibility that domestic ideology was strengthened as a reaction to the increasing threats of working women. In fact, the 1851 census itself showed that three-quarters of unmarried women worked, or lived on their own earnings (Milne 171). In the middle of the century, more and more attention was drawn to the 'redundant women' who had

to earn a li/ing: 'One great... cry rises from a suffering multitude of women, saying, "We want work", wrote Barbara Bodichon in 1857 (6). By 1865, a third of the women over twenty-one were wage-earning workers, as Harriet Martineau pointed out ("Nurses Wanted" 409). All these reports indicate the economic reality of women who had to work for a living and the insufficient opportunities offered to them.

- 16. The same idea is expounded by Robert Gray in his article "Bourgeois Hegemony in Victorian England": 'Because bourgeois hegemony involved negotiated re-definitions of values and the emergence of distinctive versions of the dominant ideology, and because the ideology could give no convincing account of aspects of real social experience, there were important tensions and contradictions in ideological relations between the classes' (246). He thus arques. ideology ha[s] differentiated versions 'Hegemonic and interpretations, and was constantly argued out and reformulated' (243). See also Andrew Blake, Reading Victorian Fiction, 15-39, for the multifariousness of ideological process.
- 17. Literary theoreticians and critics have asked how the realist novel is capable of critiquing its own ideological underpinnings, if it can disguise the very selective process of representation and deploy the facade of nature for its ideological choice. 'The novel's realistic bodying forth of a world,' as Edward Said observes, 'is to provide

representational or representative norms selected from among many possibilities. Thus the novel acts to include, state, affirm, normalize, and naturalize some things, values, and ideas, but not others' (176). In particular, Marxist critics has made considerable contribution to the development of several theories as to how the realist novel can expose contradictions and gaps in the multi-layered process of 'naturalization.'

Engels noted that, although Balzac was politically a reactionary, a supporter of the Bourbon restoration after 1815, who sympathized in his work with the nobility, he also satirized this very class and showed admiration for his political opponents, the Republicans. Engels says of this that Balzac was 'compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, that he saw the necessity of the downfall of his favorite nobles... and that he saw the real men of the future.' This, Engels concludes, is 'one of the greatest triumphs of Realism' (Selected Correspondence 480). However, Engels does not attempt to explain how this can happen; how the writer's work can run counter to his conscious ideology.

Lukacs seems to offer an answer to this. In his essay of 1934 on Balzac's Les Paysans, he picks up Engels' observations by saying that what Balzac intended to write was not what he actually wrote (Studies of European Realism 27). He goes further than Engels in theoretical terms by demonstrating that

the form of Balzac's novel corresponds to reality and by suggesting that it is through this formal reflection that the work runs counter to Balzac's ideology. Thus, Lukacs greatly plays down the role of the author in the process of literary reflection. It is not Balzac, but the realist form of the novel that reflects reality accurately. Again, however, Lukacs does not attempt to explain the exact process in which Balzac came to 'betray' his ideology.

Pierre Macherey's theory about literary production provides a much more cogent explanation of why Balzac problematizes his own reactionary ideology. Unlike Lukacs, he does not treat the text as a self-contained artefact, but regards it as a 'production' in which a number of disparate materials are worked over and changed in the process. Theory of Literary Production, Macherey argues that the novel is not an expression of an author's ideology or a reflection of the society around him; it is a fictional 'working' or production of both. Ideology enters a text as one of its constituent elements; the text gives ideology a shape and contours it could not otherwise possess as ideology. However, once ideology is in the text, it is set to work with other elements, and thus is no longer the same thing as it was before (261, 291). Thus, an author's ideological expression undergoes much distortion on the printed page. Macherey sees the coherence of an ideology as radically modified when it enters a literary text: in this sense, he

argue that 'literature challenges ideology by using it' (133). Obviously influenced by poststructuralist assumptions about language, Macherey does not see texts as coherent and self-sufficient totalities that need only 'transposition' (15) by a critic who, as the texts' 'accomplice' (17), prepares them for consumption. He argues that, while a text manifestly gestures toward coherence and self-sufficiency, thereby producing ideology, it also includes its other, what it does 'not say' (85). Thus, the text is latently incoherent, fragmented, and uneven, and so is not organized around a 'single meaning' (76). In this way, the text always reveals the 'gaps in ideology' (60) and makes ideology's presence visible.

Althusser further develops Macherey's theory in his own theoretical system about the relationship between ideology and art. In Lenin and Philosophy, Althusser situates art between ideology and ideologically-free, scientific (obviously Marxist) knowledge. For him, art does not give a properly conceptual understanding of reality, neither does it merely express the ideology of a particular class. Althusser thus declares that art 'makes us see,' in a distant way, 'the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes' (28). Thus, while art is itself produced within an ideological context, it nevertheless allows one to perceive the nature of its own ideology.

- 18. See M.M. Bakhtin, "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism" 10-59; Patricia Alden, Social Mobility in the English Bildungsroman 1-5; Fritz Martini, "Bildungsroman--Term and Theory" 1-25; Jeffrey Sammons, "Bildungsroman for Non-Specialists" 41-42; Franco Moretti, The Way of the World 15-17.
- 19. See Abel, Voyage In 3-14; Eve Bannet, "Rewriting the Social Text" 195-201; Elaine Baruch, "The Feminine Bildungsroman" 335-3; Penny Brown, The Poison at the Source 1-10; Rita Felski, "Feminist Bildungsroman" 133-38; Laura Fuderer, The Female Bildungsroman in English 1-7; Heller, The Feminization of Quest-Romance 1-21; Esther Labovitz, The Myth of the Heroine 1-6.
- 20. Subsequent quotations from novels will be cited parenthetically in this dissertation. I will include chapter references and page numbers.

PART I. THE POLITICAL HORIZON AND THE LIMIT OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS DOMESTIC UTOPIAN VISION

Hegemonic ideology cannot be construed as a monolithic entity but as something being constituted and reconstituted continually by the people who participate in it. There is no single, unchanging dominance, but an interactive process which is constantly changing with conflict and compromise. In Victorian England, the hegemony of a dominant, male, middle-class ideology was neither static nor uniform, but formative and transformational. The resistance that it provoked was found everywhere in Victorian writing. It is no accident, then, that contradictions were frequently present in the ideological practice of mid-Victorian writers like Dickens and Eliot, and that their works evinced the possibility of alienation, subversion and rebellion.

The most dogmatic form of Victorian utopian vision delineates the home as a 'place of security, order and emotional fulfillment,' against the divisive forces of industrialism and capitalism (Mintz 67). Thus, the home as an ideal micro-community was expected to operate as an oppositional bulwark to the deteriorated and dehumanized social condition and its materialistic values. The Victorian

home required two constitutive factors to sustain its utopianism: a male head of the household and an angel in the house. Men were expected to provide sustenance and protect and guard domestic peace and comfort by their patriarchal but benign rule. Women were supposed to maintain the ideal space by performing domestic duties and providing moral influence. As guardians of the private sphere, women were expected to play an essential role in the construction and perpetuation of domestic order, but under their husbands' paternal supervision.

However, any hegemonic ideology is normally full of contradictions and unresolved conflicts. Williams argues that 'no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention' (Marxism and Literature 125). That is, any dominant culture must select from, and hence exclude, the full range of human practice, thereby exposing inevitable gaps and contradictions. Williams' own model of cultural process--the residual, the dominant, and the emergent -- is helpful to explain the complex working of a dominant ideology. By the dominant, Williams means the central system of practices, meanings, and values of people in a society at a particular time. The residual are those meanings and values which are formed in the past, but are still active in the present. The emergent are those meanings, values, practices which are being created in opposition to the dominant (*Ibid.* 121-27). Victorian middle-class domestic ideology seems to fit into this model, in its incorporation of the residual and the emergent elements.¹ As for the residual, middle-class home utopia developed paternalistic nostalgia for an old hierarchical order, creating the myths of 'good old families' in which fathers used their paternal authority to ensure domestic order and harmony.² However, there were also those emergent elements which provided effective opposition to what was dominant. For example, women's increasing awareness of their educational, economic, and political rights began to pose a continual challenge to paternalism and the myth of the angel in the house.

The novels of Dickens and Eliot show the interaction between these dominant, residual, and emergent elements in domestic ideology, and divulge unavoidable conflicts. The power relations between family members--between adults and children, and between the sexes--are seen not as stable, but as constantly shifting. Barickman thus argues that, while the family is 'the origin of Victorian ideals,' it also appears, more and more frequently, as 'the breeding ground for conflicts in sexual identity and for the forces of oppression and repression which inevitably spring from these conflicts' (8).3

While longing for a stable order of the home, Dickens and Eliot mount a critique of Victorian family structures and marital ideals. Their portrayals of paternal authority are

often ambivalent and contradictory. The failure of paternity abounds in their novels. The paternalistic ideal backfires, converting the domestic scene not into an utopian bliss, but into a battleground. Father figures can become abusive, or ineffectual and weak: abusive, or powerless, defeated, supplicating fathers crowd their fiction. In this sense, Dickens and Eliot manifest what Sadoff calls 'Victorian ambivalence' to 'paternal authority': 'the desire for its stability, decisiveness, and cultural validity [developed] side by side with the hatred of its narrowness, stubbornness, and social domination--oppression--of those without such authority' (6).

Furthermore, the novels of Dickens and Eliot show that, far from being a 'walled garden' or a 'haven in a heartless world,' the Victorian family reflects the ills of the outside world. They give textual presence to the awareness that hostilities and aggressions underpinning the social world also infiltrate the domestic realm, thereby dismantling the ideological division of spheres. Their representations of middle-class homes are also consistent with sociological realities. As Jurgen Habermas observes, the private sphere 'as the domain of pure humanity and freedom' depended upon the public sphere, 'the sphere of labor and commodity exchange,' for its financial sustenance (46). Thus, when the ideology of separate spheres assumes the home as an autonomous entity, separated from the hostilities of the public sphere, it

carries contradictions within itself. The private and the social realms cannot be absolutely separated from, but are mutually influenced by, each other.

However, Victorian domestic utopian vision advocates only one positive way of spanning the distance between the domestic and social realm. The mission of the home is to infuse society with the harmonious spirit of family life, reversing the disagreeable tendencies of modern society. Sarah Ellis, an advocate of domestic influence, declared that the home 'has now become the center of a circle of influence, which will widen and extend itself to other circles, until it mixes with the great ocean of eternity' (Wives of England 23). is that society should become, metaphorically, a large, benevolently controlled family (Gallagher 57). However, as long as the home relies upon the public realm for its sustenance, a reverse influence is always possible: the family can be infiltrated with commercial and materialistic ills of society. Dickens' novels, in particular, demonstrate the keen sense of the negative infiltration of society into a home.

Moreover, Victorian domestic utopianism prescribed that the success of home as the utopian realm depended on the unfailing fulfillment of the female vocation of wifehood and motherhood. In the novels of Dickens and Eliot, however, submissive angels in the house rarely exist, or they are overshadowed by a large number of strong-willed women. These non-conforming, strong women resist the containment of their

desires within the domestic sphere. Even though they often satirize these women, Dickens and Eliot meticulously present them as disrupting the ideological economy of female sacrifice, and focus on their destabilizing challenge to the construction of the bourgeois family.

Despite his ideological promotion of a paternalistic home utopia on the surface, Dickens' delineation of middle-class homes in Bleak House and Great Expectations shows overwhelming cases of paternalism gone awry. In the former, the extortionate patriarchal families like the Smallweeds and the Turveydrops loom ominously behind the ideal picture of Jarndyce's Bleak House. By depicting fathers displaying predatory, rather than protective intentions, Dickens shakes the myth of benevolent paternalism and implies, contrary to the prevalent views, that the 'protective' stance of the Victorian male is self-serving at best. In Great Expectations, the vision of a home utopia is further undermined with its contradictory combination respectability and criminality, love and violence. Thus, the novel disturbs the accepted status of the home as 'sanctuary' by suggesting that private relations are permeated by attitudes of aggression, not simply bonds of affection and cooperation. Inscribed in the predominant rhetoric of consumption and even cannibalism is the perception that hearth and home, the center of domestic life, is as susceptible to the same ruthless dynamics as the Stock Exchange and the Courts.

Eliot also disturbs a complacent view of marital paradise by subtly revealing power struggles beneath the serene surface of middle-class home life. Eliot is iconoclastic in throwing a suspicious glance on the patriarchal structure of the home in The Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch. She mounts a caustic critique of sexual division and power imbalance in Victorian domestic arrangements. It is true that Eliot does not challenge the fundamentals of women's innate domesticity, but valorizes their moral role and rescuing influence. Nevertheless, Eliot sees Victorian domestic ideology requiring reconstruction and revision.

Dickens and Eliot at once endorse and subvert Victorian domestic utopian vision in their novels. Even though they frequently set up domestic utopias as the final resolutions of the narrative movements, their narratives contain conflicts and tension, and thus undermine, overtly and covertly, their own promulgation of domestic ideology. Dickens and Eliot do not convey domestic ideology uniformly as restricting women to subservient roles under patriarchal determination, but explore the ways to establish a non-exploitative relatedness as the essence of marriage and the home. Their texts, while seemingly compliant to the cult of domesticity, often covertly alter its premises at the same time.

NOTES

- 1. I am indebted to Rod Edmond for linking Williams' cultural model to the working of Victorian domestic ideology. But our analytical focuses are different. See Edmond, Affairs of Hearth, 9-10.
- 2. Rosemary Bodenheimer argues that paternalism made its theoretical claim as the 'natural order of harmony in social relations—an order temporarily and mistakenly broken by the industrialization and capitalization of the market place' (22). In general, the concept of paternalism celebrates an order of allegedly humane hierarchical social arrangements in which the poor and the week are 'protected,' rather than merely used, by those above them. In Paternalism in Early Victorian England, David Robert points out three principal sets of duties (among many) that the conscientious paternalist felt he must perform: 'ruling, guiding and helping.' Rule and guidance more than mere benevolence underlay the paternalist's sense of duty. Benevolence was rather only a part of a wider set of duties (10).

Gerda Lerner provides the valuable definition of 'paternalism' in relation to the concept of 'patriarchy' in The Creation of Patriarchy: 'If patriarchy describes the institutionalized system of male dominance, paternalism describes a particular mode, a subset of patriarchal

Dominance, describes the relationship of a dominant group, considered superior, to a subordinate group, considered inferior, in which the dominance is mitigated by mutual obligations and reciprocal rights. The dominated exchange submission for protection, unpaid labor for maintenance' (239).

3. Stephen Mintz attempts to place this conflict between old hierarchism and emerging individualism: 'the special stresses and problems of the Victorian home reflect the broader historical problem of adapting the values of a deferential, hierarchical, patronage society to the values of an increasingly contractual, individualistic society' (5). But he wrongly ignores gender problems embedded in the Victorian family structures.

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CHAPTER 1. THE DISMANTLING OF CONSOLATIONS OF THE HOME IN CHARLES DICKENS' BLEAK HOUSE AND GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Dickens has been frequently categorized as a writer who had endorsed middle-class hegemony. As early as 1855, Dickens was identified by Mrs. Oliphant as a 'class writer' in Blackwood's Magazine: 'we cannot but express our conviction that it is to the fact that he represents a class that he owes his speedy elevation to the top of the wave of popular favour....[H]e is... perhaps most distinctly than any other author of the time a class writer, the historian and representative of one circle in the many ranks of our social Despite their descents into the lowest class, and scale. their occasional flights into the less familiar ground of it is the air and breath of middle class fashion. respectability which fills the books of Mr Dickens' (Collins 327). In a similar vein, one contemporary critic said of him: 'He typifies and represents, in our literary history, the middle class ascendancy prepared for by the Reform Bill' (Collins 476).

In keeping with their view of Dickens' middle-class allegiances, many contemporary reviewers assumed that Dickens was an uncritical supporter of the middle-class idealization

of home, and responsible for its creation and endorsement. One reviewer elevated Dickens as a god of the domestic hearth-as 'a writer of home life, a delineator of household gods, and a painter of domestic scenes' (qtd. in Lane 154). In his 1869 essay, Richard Holt Hutton attacked what he perceived as Dickens' melodrama of home: 'His picture of domestic affections...seems to us very defective in simplicity and reserve' (Collins 490). Even twentieth-century critics such as Welsh claim that 'if the problem that besets [Dickens] can be called the city, his answer can be named the hearth' (Welsh 142).

It may be true that Dickens wrote for a middle-class reading public, and the themes of his novel were closely bound up with the 'great expectations' and disappointments of the class to which he belonged. However, Dickens' relationship with his middle-class readers, and his imaginative commitment to their domestic ideology and values is far more complex and problematic than these critics have suggested. Nevertheless, in their efforts to eulogize or criticize Dickens' vision of the home, these critics deliberately downplayed Dickens' dark portrayals of dismantled families and made apparently self-evident assumptions that are not so self-evident upon closer inspection. A close reading of Dickens' works always turns up a galaxy of unhappy families which can ultimately serve to dismantle his theoretical celebration of household gods.

In Dickens' novels, the 'ideal' family characterized by

the father's benevolent rule and the mother's nurturing care is rarely portrayed. Rather, his novels teem with the delineations of broken and unhealthy families. These families are usually fatherless, motherless, or both: his heroines and heroes are often orphans or illegitimate children. despite Dickens' apparent desire to place the happy family at the center of his novel, Sylvia Manning finds happy families, natural or constructed, only 'under exceptional circumstance or at the boundaries of [his] novels' (141-42). The dichotomy between idolizing familial love and detailing domestic friction seems to spring from Dickens' observation of reality existing in Victorian domestic scenes.3 Thus, Dickens' complex perspective on Victorian home utopias undermines the common assumption of his 'romance of the home' (Langland 131).4

In his later novels, Dickens' use of Victorian domestic ideology reveals increasingly deep complexities, gaps, and incoherences. He is conscious of diverse and even contradictory aspects of the home and depicts family conflicts and tensions overshadowing the hearth. In Dombey and Son (1848), Dickens locates the ills of society in a prosperous middle-class household which is improperly ruled by a frigid and icy patriarch: he portrays Dombey as 'the Head of the Home-Department' in a house of 'dismal state' (3:74). Florence Dombey tries to create an ideal domestic environment by being a dutiful daughter. However, frustrated by her

father's rigidity and coldness, she leaves her father's home, and finds a surrogate father in the little midshipman, Sol Gill, and marries Walter Gay with his help. Only after her father's bankruptcy and subsequent repentance does her new household include Dombey.

A wider spectrum of unhappy family life appears in David Copperfield (1850): the death of David's mother at the hands of the autocratic Murdstone; the destruction of the Yarmouth boat-home of Mr. Peggoty and Little Em'ly by Steerforth; the betrayed affections of Betsey Trotwood; the crippled lives of Rosa Dartle and Steerforth's mother. At the end of the novel, the estranged Little Em'ly returns 'home,' into Peggoty's fatherly arms. But Little Em'ly, as a fallen woman, has no other choice but immigrate to Australia with Peggoty, which symbolizes her banishment from English society. In contrast, David's successful setting up of a home with Agnes Wakefield reaffirms a middle-class domestic utopian vision. David, an orphan boy, successfully makes his way through the world to the point where 'advanced in fame and fortune, [his] domestic joy [is] perfect' (63:803).

Bleak House (1853) represents a 'high point' in Dickens' home utopian vision (F. Armstrong, Concept of Home 106), in that it emphasizes the regenerative social function of the restored home. At the same time, however, the novel also portrays the irretrievable failures of many homes, and thus exposes contradictions in any utopian premises of the home.

John Jarndyce and Esther Summerson's Bleak House is intended to be a center of moral redemption and social regeneration. At the same time, the novel reveals that the social ills represented by the domineering presence of Chancery are continued. Furthermore, the emergence of strong, independent materfamilies such as Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle challenges patriarchal family structures and renders them shaky.

In Hard Times (1854), Dickens intensifies his delineation of a gloomy picture of Victorian middle-class domestic life. Louisa Gradgrind's union with Bounderby is a farce from the start, based upon the false materialistic, utilitarian values of the Victorian era. The marriage of Stephen Blackpool plunges his life into a living hell for which there is no apparent remedy. Only Mr. Sleary's circus, with love and care between its working-class members, emerges as Dickens' ideal picture of domesticity. It is a deep irony that this nomadic circus-family provides an ideal model of a Victorian home; it suggests Dickens' growing disillusionment with the middleclass nuclear family. Moreover, Dickens does not end his novel with the cheerful wedding of its nominal heroine. Instead, Louisa returns to her father in a state of infantile dependency and becomes an ancillary figure at Sissy's newlyestablished domestic hearth.

Dickens' negative restatement of Victorian domestic scenes continues in *Little Dorrit* (1857). In the novel,

inadequate homes exert a powerful, but usually destructive The lack of a home and the lack of a mother influence. underlie social diseases and corruption. The home for Little Dorrit, with her extortionate father, is literally a prisonhome, just as Arthur Clennam's home is symbolically another cold prison cell. Eventually, Little Dorrit's role as a 'little mother' for people reverses the process of negative influence of the home as prison and helps Clennam find a true home in her maternal presence. Yet, the wedded sanctuary of the Clennams is less a solution to the problems of the world than an escape from them. When Arthur and Little Dorrit walk through the noisy streets, untouched by the chaos around them, it is doubtful that their blessed union will have any influence on the 'usual uproar' of the outer world (34:894). Significantly, no details of their married future are given, nor is it easy to imagine any future they might have in the decadent world of the novel.

In Our Mutual Friend (1865), Dickens's painful effort to affirm the home utopia is partially accomplished, yet is again dismantled. The novel presents a portrait of a society and homes decaying from within. Lizzy Hexam has grown up in a home papered with descriptions of people who have drowned. Mr. Boffin's home, euphemistically called 'Boffin's Bower,' is symbolically located among the dust mounds and sustained by the income earned from them. Jenny Wren, a little doll-maker, deals with her bleak home environment created by her alcoholic

father, by inverting the father-child relationship--by making her father her child. Nevertheless, against the negative apocalypse of society on the verge of collapse, Dickens insists upon his usual final-curtain weddings. The marriages of John Harmon and Bella Wilfer, and of Eugene Wrayburn and Lizzy Hexam affirm a conventional home utopian vision, but not without the premonition of its increasingly dark vista.

Great Expectations (1861) is unique among Dickens' novels, in that Dickens does not provide a blessed wedding as the resolution of its main courtship plot. The deliberate haziness of even the second version of the ending reveals his disinclination to indulge in cozy speculation about the future wedded happiness of Pip and Estella. In many dysfunctional homes, traditional paternal authority is either weakened (Joe), or distorted (Magwitch); motherly women rarely exist. The violent and cannibalistic aspects of home life are predominant. Even some happy marital homes in the novel---Wemmick and Miss Skiffins, Herbert Pocket and Clara, and Joe and Biddy--seem too weak and confined to exert their wholesome influence on the public realm.

Dickens' representation of Victorian homes demystifies the idea of the home as a protected and ordered space in a hostile and competitive world. The home itself has become intense and hostile, analogous to rather than distinct from the outside world of economic and social competition. Thus, Dickens' portrayals of the home do not sustain the clear

distinction between the public and the private spheres, and between social ills and a domestic enclosure. By examining Bleak House and Great Expectations for my analysis, I attempt to reveal the multi-layered complexity of the Dickensian homes and expose the gaps and voids inherent in his seemingly cozy vistas.

1. Bleak House

Bleak House depicts the spiritual and moral decay resulting from the inhumanity and lovelessness epitomized by the causes and effects of a Chancery suit on an ever-widening circle of victims and victimizers. Both adults and children become foundlings in this blighted world. In this sense, Kevin McLaughlin places the novel in the 'genre homelessness' (885). The question of Joe the crossingsweeper, 'What's home?' (11:199), symbolically points to the lost state of a social system, which functions as 'indifferent parent' to the 'child[ren] of the universe' (6:122). The novel, then, presents images of an alternative way of life, focusing on the values of love, compassion, and the little family crystallizing around Esther. Esther's 'circle of duty' takes in those victims of Chancery. At the same time, however, the predominance of pervasive social ills represented by Chancery overshadows the potentiality of family as an emotionally fulfilling bastion against the dehumanizing effects of an insensitive society. By delineating the overwhelming power of the Court of Chancery, Dickens thus undermines the salutary influence of family which he is ostensibly promoting.

The novel builds its depiction of Victorian society with a series of 'bleak houses.' The picture of bleak houses ranges from a working-class home to an aristocratic household. The novel presents Chesney Wold as the crumbling fortress of aristocracy, Tom-All-Alone's as the miserable tenement for the poor, and intersperses in-between dysfunctional middle-class homes. It is significant that one of the projected titles for the novel is 'Tom-All-Alone's/ The Ruined [Mill] House/ That got into Chancery/ and never got out' ("Appendix" to Bleak House 937). These juxtaposed names indicate that the novel abounds in ruined homes and those homes represent the general dissolution of social order. The implication is that the present state of the whole society is defined as a vast Bleak House--a failed home.

In Bleak House, the Court of Chancery is an infamously ineffective, but powerful institution which represents the malfunctioning 'system' as a whole, just like the mythic Circumlocution Office, in Little Dorrit, which specializes in red tape and 'How Not To Do it' (Little Dorrit 10:145). Gridley, one of the aggrieved Chancery suitors, deplores: 'The system! I am told, on all hands, it's the system. I mustn't look to individuals. It's the system' (15:268). Chancery is

said to be located 'at the very heart of the fog' (1:53). This nebulous information indicates the very difficulty of locating the range of Chancery's negative power, since there is 'fog everywhere' (1:49). As a faceless and omnipresent power, Chancery subsists on the general failure of families and on the price of human lives. Like a giant vampire, Chancery has sucked people's lives away, by the elaborate and costly procession of 'bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters, [and] (1:50).masters' reports' An essential condition Chancery's vice is the protraction of its proceedings. dilatoriness of Chancery points to its evasiveness, to its failure to take decisions, its failure, that is, to fulfil its social function of taking responsibility in issues brought before it.

To be sure, those who work for 'the system' see its workings very differently. One of its defenders, a lawyer called Conversation Kenge presents his case for the system: 'We are a great country, Mr. Jarndyce, we are a very great country. This is a great system, Mr. Jarndyce, and would you wish a great country to have a little system?' (62:900). However, his exuberant pride about the existing system is put under ironic scrutiny, as the novel portrays him as 'gently moving his right hands as if it were a silver trowel, with which to spread the cement of his words on the structure of the system, and consolidate it for a thousand ages' (Ibid.).

This phrase strongly implies that 'the system' is in fact disintegrating and dissolving, creating chaos and anomie.

Nearly all the characters in the novel are involved in the cause of Chancery, either as parties to it administrators of it. Virtually, Dickens presents no Chancery client who has not been victimized by its procedure: it 'has stretched forth its unwholesome hand to soil and corrupt' untold number of people (1:53). For the suitors, their absorption in Chancery proves deadly. Tom Jarndyce, Miss Flite, Mr. Gridley, and Richard Carstone are driven to madness, suicide, or an early grave by Chancery's harm. third-person narrator's warning, "Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!"' (1:51), effectively indicates the wide-ranging harm of the Chancery by alluding to the inscription over the door of Dante's Inferno. Chancery clearly functions as a murderous predator that consumes the whole social organism. 6 The predatory and consumptive images of Chancery show a case of 'a monstrous barbarism masked as civilization' (Gissing 250), suggesting that Victorian order is a violent one, and that violence is not merely an individual, but a structural problem.

Given that 'the system' won't work in the novel, the ideal of the home operates as an implicit criticism of the generally deteriorated social condition--materialistic values and the loss of community. Dickens seems to choose, not blowing up Chancery but Esther Summerson's setting up of a

home utopia, with her determination to 'let [the] circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself' (8:154) to the chaotic and inhuman society. That expanding circle of domesticity is presumed to be an antagonistic deterrent to Chancery's predatory power. However, Dickens also seems to acknowledge that, where there has been too much suffering, death and destruction, it is not easy to accept a happy home as a power great enough to unseat the 'system.' representing the threats posed to the communal values of the home, Dickens' text exposes the instability of Victorian middle-class domestic utopian vision. First, the novel shows that the inhuman, predatory social order directly affects the domestic order which is supposed to be isolated from it: a is not a moralistic island, but a part of the consumerist, capitalist world, exposed to its influences. Second, even though a domestic enclave was considered a 'precious emotional unit that must be protected with privacy and isolation from outside intrusion' (Shorter 227), it can also be an 'emotional prison' of 'exploitation or frustration' between members (Wohl, "Introduction" 16): Thus, the tension is noted between a cherished ideal of a loving community, and a specific perception of family life which engenders a pernicious climate and fosters the growth of exploitive and demoralized relations.

Domestic scenes of middle-class households in *Bleak House* are chaotic and confusing. To be sure, working-class families

like the brickmaker's home, and aristocratic families like the Dedlocks are also portrayed as failed and disrupted homes: poverty, alcoholism and domestic abuse destroy the former, and sexual transgression, the latter. However, middle-class families in the novel dominate the whole negative picture of domestic scenes. First, the families such as the Smallweeds, the Turveydrops, and the Skimpoles demonstrate a grotesque parody of an ideal family in which paternalist values have gone awry. Second, the families such as the Jellybys and the Pardiggles provide the examples of strong materfamilies who In all of these households, the fail as homemakers. traditional mode of ideal family life is not available. Fathers are extortionate or ineffectual patriarchs; mothers neglect their domesticity for their desire for a wider realm; daughterly figures resist their instrumentality as domestic servers. It may be a natural corollary, then, that these families implicitly include internal conflicts and violence, not love and care, between their members. By representing these uncomfortable domestic scenes, Dickens seems contradict the possibility of a middle-class home utopia based paternal rule and the submission of women and children.

First, the disenchanted case of middle-class home life is illustrated by the Smallweed family. In their confined home, the intimacy between the Smallweed family members turns pernicious and violent. The household consists of Grandfather and Grandmother Smallweed, and their grandchildren, the twins

Bartholomew and Judith. A generational gap exists because of the son's death. The novel situates the Smallweed residence on 'a little, narrow street, always solitary, shady, sad, closely bricked in on all sides like a tomb' (21:341). It is in this cramped house where Bartholomew Smallweed 'passes that limited portion of his time on which the office and its contingencies have no claim' (*Ibid.*), thus drawing on the popular notion that the home provides a haven from the jungle of the capitalist, competitive, impersonal world. However, their insular familiar circle is an impairment mistaken as a familial virtue.

Grandfather Smallweed is greedy and cruel, but he is physically helpless, gasping for breath and confined to a porter's chair. The demented Grandmother Smallweed outrages her husband by her shouting and yelling. She has a habit of breaking into ravings about money, whenever Grandfather Smallweed speaks a number: 'Twenty pounds, twenty twenty-pound notes in a money-box, twenty guineas, twenty million twenty per cent, twenty--'(21:352). When she erupts in this fashion, the enraged Grandfather Smallweed shuts her up by hurling at her a cushion he keeps handy. But the effort causes him to collapse in his chair 'like a broken puppet....until he has undergone the two operations at the hands of his granddaughter, of being shaken up like a great bottle, and poked and punched like a great bolster' (21:343). Grandfather Smallweed's attack on his wife's speech brings on his own collapse and a beating by his own granddaughter, who shakes and punches him. It is evident, then, that the nature of the Smallweeds's domesticity is mutual violence--between husband and wife, and between grandparents and children. The Smallweed children's suppressed rage for their Grandfather leads them to wish his death: 'A close observer might perhaps detect, both in [Judy's] eye and her brother's, when their venerable grandsire anticipates his being gone, some little impatience to know when he may be going, and some resentful opinion that it is time he went' (21:347). It is clear that in this smoldering resentment, there is no room for ideal domestic harmony and love.

It is notable that Judy is much more violent than her twin brother. At least, Bartholomew can avoid a terrible domestic scene by developing a career outside the house. However, despite a supposed apprenticeship to an artificial flower-maker, Judy remains at home without other outlets. Her violence--punching up her grandfather, and developing her 'systematic manner' of flying at a maid to perfect her 'accomplishment in the art of girl-driving' (21:348)--is a deviant venue for her unused energy and frustration. Thus, Dickens' delineation of the Smallweeds implies a hidden protest of sexual politics inherent in Victorian domestic arrangements.

Moreover, the Smallweed household is dominated by the principles of mammonism of the public sphere. Now a

desiccated old man and usurer, Grandfather Smallweed has devoted all his mental power to the single object of acquiring cash. In his home, marriage is required as a contract to accumulate wealth; love and emotions are replaced by practical consideration. Bartholomew and Judy 'never owned a doll, never heard of Cinderella, never played at any game' (21:344). In its avarice, malice, and smallness of body, mind, and spirit, the Smallweed household clearly shows that a home is not separated from the corruptions of the public sphere, and that the distinction between the moral haven of a home and immoral outer society is very tenuous.

The Turveydrop family represents a showcase of abusive paternalism. At the center of the Turveydrop household is Mr. Beau Turveydrop, who is well-versed in the art of exploiting everyone around him. Although he never earns any money, he garners more than enough to provide for his pleasures at others' expense by obliquely insisting upon his prerogatives as a touchstone of 'Deportment' and patriarch of the Turveydrop family. He extorts the sacrifice of men and women in the name of duty. Indeed, Mr. Turveydrop not only lives off the labor of his son, Prince, and later his daughter-in-law, Caddy Jellyby, but has already, in a leech-like manner, used up the strength of his prematurely deceased wife. When Turveydrop sanctifies his late wife as an angel, it is for his own self-interest: 'If the spirit of a sainted Wooman hovers above us, and looks down on the occasion, that, and your

constant affection, will be my recompense. You will not fail in your duty, my son and daughter, I believe?' (30:481). Turveydrop's self-serving worship and canonization of his abused wife secretly disturbs the logic of Victorian idolization of an angel in the house.

Caddy Jellyby embraces marriage with Prince as a means of escaping the thankless servitude of a daughterhood spent working day and night as her mother's secretary, helping her 'telescopic philanthropy' (4:82). Caddy struggles to break away from her fate as an instrument of her mother's obsessive philanthropic designs on Africa. But in marrying into the Turveydrop family, Caddy has only ended up exchanging her painful daughterhood for the servitude of a daughter-in-law who lives with the specter of the first Mrs. Turveydrop, who died of exhaustion. To make matters worse, Prince later becomes lame through his exhausting regimen as dance master in his father's school of deportment. In her narrative, Esther marvels at Caddy's capacity to overcome many adversities: 'With her husband and her poor little mite of a baby to love and their home to strive for, what a good creature Caddy was! So self-denying, so uncomplaining, so anxious to get well on their account, so afraid of giving trouble, and so thoughtful of the unassisted labours of her husband and the comforts of old Mr. Turveydrop' (50:739). However, despite Esther's intention to eulogize Caddy as a selfless madonna, one cannot repress the feeling that Caddy is a prisoner of extorting patriarchy.

However, Caddy's story subsumes a certain subversion of Victorian domestic ideology, by portraying her struggle to achieve a measure of independence. Eventually, she ends up running a complicated and demanding business--the dancing school (man's work in the Victorian period) -- on her own. last glimpse Dickens gives of Caddy is that she makes a good job out of it, and achieves financial success (she rides around in 'her own little carriage' (67:933) and female Thus, Caddy's extra-domestic work, which is independence. forced on her, becomes the source of her independence. Like her mother, Mrs. Jellyby, Caddy ends up running a business outside the home. Another potential subversion of Caddy's story lies in the fact that Caddy does not produce a son to perpetuate the Turveydrop family's particular brand of exploitation; instead she bears a deaf and dumb daughter, with whom she learns to communicate. It is significant that this communication is only conducted between mother and daughter. Caddy's deaf and dumb child might be taken as a sign of a woman's refusal to communicate with, and to conform to, the male-dominant order.

Harold Skimpole is another example of an exploitive father. At first sight, Skimpole's effeminate and childish behavior seems to set him apart from such an exploiting patriarch as Turveydrop. However, Skimpole also exploits people around him. He views his centrality within his

household as his privilege, despite the lack of apparent work to maintain it. Like Mr. Turveydrop, Skimpole has the best 'apartment' in the house, and is given every consideration, from the best furniture, to a selection of his favorite delicacies at mealtime.

Skimpole has also generated a cluster of parasitic children, who are virtual replicas of his own worst traits. The Skimpole children remain childish in their adulthood: they sing a little, sketch a little, live on whoever will let them. Unlike the first Mrs. Turveydrop, however, Mrs. Skimpole has refused to work to support the irresponsible patriarch or her children. Interminably sitting at the parched window and sighing, she has opted for a kind of low-grade invalidism-- 'a complication of disorders' (43:653) -- as a means of not coming to terms with her domestic reality. Even though there is no sign of aggression in her attitude, this invalidism might be interpreted as a non-verbal expression of her unhappiness about, and her resistance to, Skimpole's extorting patriarchy.

All these portrayals of failed patriarchal homes in the movel tend to disrupt and dismantle the middle-class domestic middle. An utopian picture of a middle-class home is shown as mirage in the array of ineffective paternal benevolence, mutual violence among family members, and women's and children's covert and overt resistance to patriarchal extortion. Moreover, innate contradictions in patriarchal

premises are further exposed in the delineation of the households dominated by strong women--the Badgers, the Bagnets, the Snagsbys, the Jellybys, and the Pardiggles. The portrayals of the first two households are rendered in good humor. But the descriptions of the last three households are marked by certain anxiety about the emerging challenge of female power to patriarchal domestic arrangements.

As for the Badger household, where Richard Carstone is apprenticed for medicine, its real head is Mrs. Badger. the surface, Mrs. Badger is an innocuous, leisured lady that Victorian upper-middle-class might valorize. In her drawingroom, she is surrounded by various objects, indicative of 'her painting a little, playing the piano a little, playing the guitar a little, playing the harp a little, singing a little, working a little, reading a little, writing poetry, botanising a little' (13:224). But her dominance in her home is very palpable. Mr. Badger, third husband of Mrs. Badger, is a 'pink, fresh-faced, crisp-looking gentleman, with a weak voice' (13:225). He speaks only within profound reverence of his two august predecessors -- Captain Swosser and Professor Dingo. It seems that the only value or luster he possesses as a human being derives from his marriage to a woman who has had By himself, he feels a sort of two illustrious husbands. 'nemo,' far inferior to his predecessors. On the surface, Mrs. Badger respectfully maintains a patrilinear tradition by keeping the pictures of her two late husbands on the wall.

But, in fact, the only person she reveres is herself.

The Bagnet family is another home headed by a strong materfamilias. As wife of an ex-military man, Mrs. Bagnet is a 'soldierly-looking woman' (27:438). She runs the whole family on a military model, with exacting discipline as its key feature. As an impeccable housekeeper, Mrs. Bagnet's 'military' efficiency, which might have handled the logistical arrangements of an entire army, is confined to 'develop[ing] an exact system' of parcelling out boiled pork and greens (27:442), and performing her 'household duties' in the most efficient and productive way.

However, Mrs. Bagnet does not confine herself within the domestic realm. Her independence and freedom is manifested in her unlimited mobility in the outside world. With her umbrella, she once made her way 'home to Europe' from 'another quarter of the globe' (27:441). When she decides what the imprisoned George Rouncewell needs is a visit from his estranged mother, who is the housekeeper of Chesney Wold, she simply takes off to Linconshire, leaving her children in her spouse's care, and dramatically effects a reunion between George and his mother.

Obviously, Mrs. Bagnet is the effective ruler of the family in that she dominates her home, her children and every man in sight, starting with her grateful husband. She has even determined her husband's career for him. A first-rate housekeeper, Mrs. Bagnet is also a successful female

entrepreneur, who has begun a thriving musical instruments The business has nothing to do with mid-Victorian women's occupations such as governess job, needlework, or school-teaching. In addition, Mrs. Bagnet frequently makes family decisions and policies, and dispenses wisdom. But she does so under the guise of merely presenting her husband's opinion. Matthew Bagnet ostensibly nominates his wife as his spokeswoman: '"Old girl," goes his refrain, "give him my opinion. You know it. Tell him what it is' (27:443). guise is necessary because, in Mr. Bagnet's words, '[d]iscipline must be maintained' (27:442). But it fools no it is a matter solely of form. Mrs. independence, will power, and intelligence implicitly challenge a Victorian domestic hierarchy based on sex as fictional. In this sense, Langland's outright fulmination --'Mrs. Bagnet's seeming autonomy and even authority is comic grotesquely of the reversal of her actual domestic subjection' (150) -- seems too biased. In the Bagnet family, the patriarchal form of marriage remains only as fiction.

The threats of growing female power to the patriarchal family structure are portrayed more intensely and negatively in the households of the Snagsbys, the Jellybys and the Pardiggles. As for the Snagsbys, they even drop a fictional guise about traditional domestic hierarchy. A timid law-stationer, Mr. Snagsby always lives in constant terror of his wife; 'Mr and Mrs Snagsby are not only one bone and one flesh

but, to the neighbors' thinking, one voice too. That voice, appearing to proceed from Mrs. Snagsby alone, is heard in Cook's Court very often' (10:179-80). A tyrannical wife, Mrs. Snagsby ruthlessly controls both her husband and her maid, Guster: 'she manages the money, reproaches the Tax-gatherers, appoints the times, and places of devotion on Sundays, licenses Mr. Snagsby's entertainments, and acknowledges no responsibility as to what she thinks fit to provide for Insanely jealous, she nourishes her dinner' (10:181). suspicions of his infidelity with incessant nagging and spying, a course which Dickens calls 'the great high road that is to terminate in Mr Snaqsby's full exposure and a matrimonial separation' (54:790). Called 'little woman' (33:515) by her husband, Mrs. Snagsby is actually its ironic antithesis. Mr. Snagsby constantly feels that he must expiate a sin which he did not commit. Easily intimidated, he starts to crumble and even considers 'delivering himself up to justice, and requiring to be cleared, if innocent, and punished with the utmost rigour of the law, if guilty' (33: 516). It is as if Mrs. Snagsby carries out the public role of a detective or a law-enforcement officer in the domestic realm.

The Jellybys and the Pardiggles are ruled by strong materfamilies, who engage in 'good works,' at the obvious expense of their families' well-being. Like Mr. Badger, Mr. Bagnet, and Mr. Snagsby, the husbands of Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs.

Pardiggle are weak and ineffectual, and have let their women get out of hand. Rather than policing their own families, Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle go around stirring up trouble in spheres not appropriate to their sex, according to Victorian gender ideology. Indeed, Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle, by extending their desires into the public sphere, destabilize the underlying logic of the bourgeois family, based on feminine self-sacrifice and good housekeeping.

Mrs. Jellyby has a face of an ordinary, feminine woman--'a pretty, very diminutive, plump woman of from forty to fifty, with handsome eyes' (4:85). On the surface, Mrs. Jellyby's small figure fits into an ideal image of a Victorian 'little woman.' The valorization of women's physical smallness in Victorian culture helped inscribe women as leisurely, delicate decorative accessories rather than as independent, able-bodied workers. Their little fragility was regarded as a token of her husband's or father's wealth (F. Armstrong, "Gender and Miniaturization" 404). Jellyby dismantles such a stereotype of a delicate woman, and turns out to be an indefatigable woman with formidable stamina, given to talking and letter-writing. Nested in papers, she drinks coffee, dictates letters and discusses the Brotherhood of Humanity with people. Her eyes are constantly ≠ixed on the natives in Borrioboola Gha, Africa, rather than on her child, who is sometimes stuck between the area railing Or on the dish of potatoes which has become mislaid in the

coal bucket. Pursuing charity business, Mrs. Jellyby refuses to see her own houseful of neglected children and slatternly, lazy and drunken servants as a problem.

The text shows that Mrs. Jellyby views her philanthropic She admits that her project as an alternate mothering. 'public duties' are 'her favorite child' (23:387). remonstrated by Esther because of her undutiful attitude to her mother, Caddy explodes with candid rancor: '0! don't talk of duty as a child, Miss Summerson; where's Ma's duty as a parent? All made over to the public and Africa, I suppose! Then let the public and Africa show duty as a child' (5:96). Obviously, Mrs. Jellyby's mothering is far from selfsacrificing motherhood. Mrs. Jellyby exclaims, 'What a happiness it is to be so much occupied as I am, to have this necessity for self-concentration that I have' (23:387). Mrs. Jellyby's 'self-concentration' and self-contentment with her public work diametrically contradict the patriarchal perception of women's 'natural' selflessness and their 'essential' domesticity.

Mrs. Pardiggle is a different sort of philanthropic mother, whose main mission is to visit and preach to the poor of the city. Distinguished by a loud voice and enormous skirts that 'knocked down little chairs...that were quite a great way off' (8:151), Mrs. Pardiggle represents a more combative version of female aggression. Her concept of 'charity by wholesale' (8:159) has a determining effect upon

the poor as she applies 'benevolence to them like a straitwaistcoat' (30:479).When she visits the destitute brickmaker's squalid cottage, she obliterates the husband's authority in his own household. She pulls out the Bible, 'as if it were a constable's staff, and took the whole family into Obviously, her intervention in the custody' (8:158). bricklayer's family is something like a police action. Mrs. Pardiggle tries to exercise, not the feminized form of power-moral influence --, but authority like a man. Just as Mrs. Snagsby performs her role of a detective in her home, Mrs. Pardiggle plays a policeman in her charity, blurring the distinction between feminine/masculine professions. Mrs. Pardiggle's moral and evangelical language, it is clear that the scene at the bricklayers' is charged with barely concealed violence. Her 'rapacious benevolence' (8:150) has also a devastating impact on her own family. Mrs. Pardiggle's five sons are oppressed little men, like their father who also throws in 'his limited donation, under [Mrs. Pardiggle's] direction' (8:153).

In Myths of Sexuality, Linda Nead argues that, in the Victorian period, bourgeois women's philanthropic action was increasingly regarded as 'an extension of her maternal role' (205). That is, philanthropy was seen as women's work extended from her domestic role of care and love. Of course, the female philanthropist intervened from outside the family relationship but on behalf of the interests of domesticity.

Thus, philanthropic discourse shifted and expanded bourgeois notions of the feminine ideal, situating them between the domestic and the public. However, this new definition of femininity subsumed a dangerous threat to Victorian gender ideology based on the strict division of spheres. There was always a possibility that women's self-public role as philanthropists can be fully expanded to the social realm. (196-97, 203-8).

In his acrid caricatures of Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle, of course, Dickens conveys his awareness of the possibility that philanthropic women might claim a wider, public role for themselves. It is evident in Mrs. Pardiggle's strong pride in her public identities: 'I am a School lady, I am a Visiting lady, I am a Reading lady, I am a Distributing lady; I am cn the local Linen Box Committee, and many general Committees; and my canvassing alone is very extensive--perhaps no one's more so' (8:152). It is no accident that Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle associate with embattled feminists such as Miss Wisk, who indignantly proclaims: 'the idea of woman's mission lying chiefly in the narrow sphere of Home was an outrageous slander on the part of her Tyrant, Man' (30:479).Here, Dickens shrewdly observes that women's charitable activities can be easily linked to women's rights movement.

In Dickens' unattractive portraits of Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle, John Stuart Mill, author of Subjection of

Women (1859), found clear hostility, and thus vehemently wrote to his wife in 1865: 'That creature Dickens, whose last story, Bleak House, I found accidently at the London Library the other day & took home & read--much the worst of his things, & the only one of them I altogether dislike--has the vulgar impudence in this thing to ridicule the rights of women. It is done too in the very vulgarest way--just the style in which vulgar men used to ridicule "learned ladies" as neglecting their children & household &c' (Later Letters I:190). Many of modern feminist critics also sustain their belief that Dickens 'condemn[s] the feminist in Bleak House' (Senf 26).

It may be true that Dickens satirizes strong women in their semi-public roles, who are independent from, and in some measure, antagonistic to, their husbands and children. Through their independent way of thinking and behavior dissociated from their domesticity, these women could pose potential threats to the self-confidence of male-dominant culture. However, Dickens also shows that, if strong women characters in the novel were given an opportunity to develop their capacity in the public realm, they could be competent public figures: Mrs. Bagnet, a fine soldier; Mrs. Snagsby, a detective; Mrs. Jellyby, a congresswoman; Mrs. Pardiggle, a policewoman. Without any outlets to develop their potentials in the public realm, these women destructively live out these roles inside the home.

Moreover, Dickens' text implicitly suggests that women's

desire to acquire a wider social role may become irreversible historical movement. When the African project fails, Mrs. Jellyby begins to engage in even heavier correspondence in support of women's rights: Mrs. Jellyby is last glimpsed going in for 'the rights of women to sit in Parliament' (67:933). It may be a logical corollary that, once philanthropy and writing take her outside of the acceptable patriarchal confines, she ends up working for the change of Victorian sexual politics. Indeed, Ellen Moers has noted a large number of 'agitating women' in Bleak House, whose independent activities point away from female dependency to the growing possibilities for female achievement outside the home in mid-nineteenth century. Moers has rightly observed the positive inflection with which these 'agitating' female figures may be read.

Nevertheless, the novel still propagates the traditional ideal of a good home. Given that the Victorian system of 'bleak houses' will not work, John Jarndyce's Bleak House, restored from its near destruction, functions as a regenerative center for the whole society. The renovated Bleak House aims to be a bulwark against bad influences of those bleak houses, redressing their failures. Jarndyce organizes and administers Bleak House, converting the desolation caused by Chancery into a private asylum. Jarndyce's home is intended to enact benevolent paternalism on the family members in its circle. Thus, the sheltered

domestic enclave stands for the work of reform that can be accomplished on a private level.

Yet the regenerative function of Bleak House is furthered only by employing Esther as housekeeper. Esther, willing servant and custodian of all that Bleak House represents, ensures that the domestic paradise be built not only on good paternal principles but also on good housekeeping. Jarndyce portrays Esther as the 'little old woman' of a fairy tale, who 'will sweep [the cobwebs] so neatly out of our sky, in the course of your housekeeping' (8:147-48 emphasis added). here implies that changes can be made at least in one's own sky, owning to a good domestic woman. Esther herself willingly accepts her domestic mission: 'I thought it best to be as useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could, to those immediately about me; and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself' (8:154). The metaphor of the expanding 'circle of duty' comfortably matches with the idea of women's work in their proper domain. Esther is thus expected to be 'intent upon the perfect working of the whole orderly system of which [she is] the centre' Whereas Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle, in (37:587).conducting missions, and pursuing charity business, resist the containment of their desires for public function, Esther will provide refuge for men, doing her duties.

On the surface, Jarndyce' Bleak House fits well into the formalities of a Victorian home utopia, with a competent and

benevolent paternal figure and a self-sacrificing angel in the house. But beneath it, one finds that Jarndyce's home is an anomaly, composed of an old father figure, two cousins, and a young daughterly figure, who plays a stand-in role as little mother. Appearing in a 'fatherly way,' Mr. Jarndyce acts as a benevolent guardian to the three orphans of Chancery-Richard, Ada and Esther (6:112). Living detached from the public realm, Jarndyce confines his fatherly attention and loving concern only to those who can respond to his kindness in his house.

However, the relationship between Jarndyce and Esther is ambiguous, complex and convoluted, since it is tinted by what Jean H. Hagstrum has called an 'erotic coloration' (7). As an orphan, Esther is under the mercy and rule of Jarndyce, 'some one in authority at Bleak House' (4:94). Although Esther continually mentions how grateful she is to Jarndyce for all he has done for her, she is evidently wary of her equivocal position in Jarndyce's home. Jarndyce's role ranges from guardian and benefactor to suitor and seducer, and ultimately from surrogate father to a divine figure. Esther is bound to Jarndyce in confusing attachment: is she his wife-to-be or daughter? When Esther arrives at Bleak House, Jarndyce confers upon her a host of names, all indicative of old women characters from fairy tales. The over-determination of these names -- 'Old Woman,' 'Mrs Shipton,' 'Dame Durden' -- turns Esther into some kind of an old housekeeper. Still, these

names cannot remove the fundamental uncertainties and anxieties of her position in Mr. Jarndyce's home. For Esther, a young woman no older than her teenaged cousin, Ada, is expected to play the role of an old woman, who can be a match for the old Jarndyce.

Jarndyce's clandestine advances towards Esther are confirmed when he admits, despite his fatherly behavior, that he had thought about marrying Esther from very early on. In proposing to Esther, he confesses, 'I renewed the old dream I sometimes dreamed when you were very young of making you my wife one day' (64:913). This means that Jarndyce's interest in Esther has never been totally disinterested, but romantically motivated. When he benevolently took Esther in the Bleak House family, he also secretly desired for a January-May relationship between himself and his powerless ward.

Even if Esther knows Jarndyce's hidden motive, she is not in the position to condemn him outright. In a complex way, however, Esther's narrative includes instances of her deliberate refusal to acknowledge Jarndyce's desire. Going downstairs, one day, Esther inadvertently finds a troubled Jarndyce in the Growlery, and he proceeds to tell her what she has earlier refused to hear about her parentage. In response, Esther 'blesses the Guardian who is a Father to her!' In the moment, she notices that 'at the word Father, I saw his former trouble come into his face. He subdued it as before,...but it

had been there.... None that I could readily understand!' No, it was true I did not understand it. Not for many and many a day' (17:291). Rather than admitting the implications of Jarndyce's 'trouble,' Esther's narrative swerves into gratitude for Jarndyce's benevolence. But it is clear, that from the very beginning, Jarndyce's looks in her direction have been full of a meaning she has refused to see. The distortions and juxtapositions of her text reveal that she may be aware of Jarndyce's non-fatherly desire. What Esther needs is a caring father, but not an old husband.

This implies that beneath a serene domestic surface of Bleak House lies an implicit conflict and struggle between Jarndyce and Esther. Linda Zwinger argues that, in many of nineteenth-century novels, a sentimental family plot with the father figure-daughter paradigm requires a submissive and dutiful daughter and a patriarchal father. When father-daughter seduction is in question, it barely veils certain coercion in which a daughter's need for love and approval is glossed as the mutuality of attraction. But Zwinger argues that this sentimental plot is inevitably charged with the daughter's simultaneous acquiescence to, and refusal of patriarchal heterosexual desire (3-9).

Indeed, when Esther accepts Jarndyce's marriage proposal, she emotionally collapses, in spite of her apparent calmness. On the same night, Esther takes out a now withered bunch of flowers--a gift from Woodcourt--, steals into Ada's room and

presses this memento of her loved one onto Ada's lips, and burns them until they are dust (44:669). Even though this scene is sort of a rite de passage for Esther's renunciation of romantic desire, it is reverberant with sexual innuendos. Ada becomes Esther's sexual alter ego, so that what Esther dares not do out of her love for Woodcourt, the unconscious Ada must perform. This act is at once of renunciation and of sexual resistance.

Fortunately, however, Jarndyce arranges a happy denouement: he takes Esther to inspect the house he has bought, in a remote Yorkshire town, for her and Allan Woodcourt, and reveals his benign plan for their marriage. The whole affair seems very odd and strained. Has Jarndyce finally become convinced of Esther's buried love for Or does he find Esther's covert resistance Woodcourt? not show the invincible? The novel does intricate psychological process, which has led to his decision. eulogy of Esther's self-sacrificing womanhood--'she will sacrifice [her love for Woodcourt] to a sense of duty and affection, and will sacrifice it so completely, so entirely, so religiously, that you should never suspect it, though you watched her night and day' (64:914) -- sounds self-complaisant and somewhat inane. Jarndyce adds that he 'sacrifices nothing' (64:915) in giving Esther to Woodcourt, as he will be more than welcome to visit the new Bleak House as often and for as long as he likes.

The final resolution is, at any rate, that Esther does not become a housekeeper/ companion to old Jarndyce, but wife to the young man whom she had timidly and secretly loved but In Esther's psyche, the transition of had to renounce. Jarndyce from a suitor to a father figure needs certain deliberate effort. In the final chapters, she dares to turn Jarndyce into sort of providential deus ex machina: 'I felt as if the brightness on him must be like the brightness of the Angels' (64:913); 'He is the object of our deepest love and veneration.... I feel towards him as if he were a superior being' (67:934). This canonization of Jarndyce into a saintly figure hides Esther's certain subversion, in that symbolically ensures that she is saved from the father's seductive power. A saintly, divine figure cannot be a sexual threat. Just as Turveydrop apotheosizes his late wife for his own self-interest, Esther's apotheosis of Jarndyce may not be for religious veneration but for her own self-protection.

Jarndyce has no other choice but to dissolve her ambivalence further, concerning his relationship to her by resuming his 'old fatherly ways': 'I am your guardian and your father now. Rest confidently here!' (64:913). But the fact is, despite his continued existence in Bleak House II, Jarndyce is displaced out of the center of Alan Woodcourt and Esther's home. Esther and Woodcourt even build a little 'Growlery expressly for [their] guardian (67:934), as if it were their wishful thinking to relegate this powerful

patriarch to this little space in their home.

In the novel, a domestic utopian vision is finally asserted in the second Bleak House of Woodcourt and Esther. Esther gathers to herself a happy circle of the family and community from which her illegitimacy has at first barred her: she declares that she is 'the happiest of the happy' (67:932). At the novel's end, indeed, Esther and other characters ultimately come together in seemingly harmonious adjustment. However, the various painful events leading up to this ending show that this utopian harmony may gloss over many As illustrated in the novel's contradictory examples. copiously documented case against Chancery practice, it is clear that the public and institutional world repeatedly invades and destroys the private world of the family. Ada is a domestic angel figure, as illustrated in her attitude: 'Esther, my dearest, I want to be a good wife, a very, very good wife indeed. You shall teach me' (60:880). But being an angel in the house is not sufficient to save her husband from a fall under the ravages of the larger world. The marriage of Ada and Richard is poisoned and blighted by the corruption and greed of Chancery. It is clear that the glimmering utopianism the home in Dickens' text rather highlights the contradictions and gaps in the construction of the middleclass family as refuge from the outside world.

Among many failed homes in the novel, Bleak House II, along with Bleak House I which was redeemed from near-

destruction, seems only an exception. The little 'doll-house' of Bleak House II, located in Yorkshire, is far removed from London. But it is not very far from the contaminating scenes where Chancery continues in its perpetual course. This shows that the local success of Bleak House II cannot put an end to Chancery's all-pervasive domination and bring about the redemption of society on a large scale. Obviously, the middle-class ideal of the home as a refuge from, and a bastion against the outside chaos, fails, when the power of Chancery is still dominant. Furthermore, if Chancery's unlimited miasma once swallowed up the first Bleak House, one can raise a question how it is possible to assume that its successor is somehow less exposed, more impermeable than its predecessor. Bleak House II itself may not be free from the influence of the outside world, which has shaped both its history and that of its inhabitants.

To be sure, there is no textual evidence that Dickens knows all the contradictions of domestic ideology that I have demonstrated. But Dickens' text continually displays the other side of domestic utopianism, even if he may not consciously understand it. Overall, in playing both sides of irreconcilable pictures of middle-class families, and exposing underlying contradictions in Victorian domestic arrangements, Dickens' text seems to undermine its own alleged thematic assertion of middle-class domestic utopianism.

2. Great Expectations

Like Bleak House, Great Expectations is full of stunted, even perverse, families which dismantle the glorification of the home. The novel even deviates from the pattern of placing the hero and the heroine in the midst of a secure family of his and her own at the ending. If in Bleak House, homes are rarely portrayed as moral islands but as part of the public domain, the interpenetration of the social and the domestic realms becomes even more evident in Great Expectations. industrial, mercantile society invades families and incites their constituents to exploit each other for power and money. As Gail Houston argues, the 'rigid ideology of the separation of home and market place is rapidly disintegrating' in the The celebration of domesticity as a sanctuary novel (17). from the vicissitudes of the cash nexus is eroded everywhere: such words as 'money,' 'capital,' 'portable property' are closely connected with Pip's love, Herbert's marital hope, and Wemmick's paradisal home. While strongly harboring a nostalgic desire create true home. the novel to a simultaneously demonstrates its impossibility in a culture dominated by the powers of money and commodity.

Great Expectations thus delineates the process of what Lukacs calls 'reification' and its devastating effects on families. Reification is the dehumanizing process by which a

world of human relationships appears as a set of relationships between commodities. Lukacs argues that, as capitalism develops, individuals increasingly obtain the commodity status, and social relationships assume the form of exchange relationships. Written at the height of 'the age of capitalism,' the novel shows that Victorian domestic arrangements were increasingly affected by the divisive forces of commercialism and materialism. Positive interactions between family members are rare, as each member regards the others in terms of their commodity value. The aggression and competition of the public domain flows into the domestic realm: in short, market infiltrates the home.

Moreover, the novel subverts the ideology of sexual hierarchy by showing the increasing dominance of many strong-willed, non-motherly women. Traditional motherhood rarely exists in the novel. Those women who bear children die, like Pip's mother, lose custody, like Molly, or prove destructively inept, like Mrs. Pocket. Apart from biological motherhood, other women such as Mrs. Joe, Miss Havisham, and Estella twist the maternal ideal, primarily because they deny nurture. Except for Biddy, Clara Barley, and Miss Skiffins, women in the novel tend to become hateful and ultimately violent, refusing to accept their domestic role of providing nurture. Dickens' text clearly deplores the disasters stemming from the general failure of sacrificial and nurturing motherhood. At the same time, however, it shows that the assumption of

women's natural domesticity and motherly propensity can be no longer sustained.

Father figures also fail in their paternal role. Joe Gargery is a weak and ineffectual father figure for Pip: he is just a fellow victim of Mrs. Gargery. The role of Wemmick's 'Aged P' is very perfunctory. Old and deaf, he has lost his paternal power: he must be fed, dressed, and ordered to do something by his son. Also, Magwitch's paternal identity is put under dark scrutiny. At first, Magwitch makes possible Pip's dream of improving his social status. But his paternal benevolence and provision is swaddled in criminality and commercial ownership, and finally shatters Pip's dream. Great Expectations thus portrays a general dissolution of Victorian domestic premises based on the angel-in-the-house and the benevolent but potent father.

It is true that there are examples of happy homes in the novel such as Wemmick's extraordinary castle, the new home of Joe Gargery and Biddy, and the home of Herbert Pocket and Clara Barley. Wemmick's castle retains a powerful image of the Edenic home; Joe is rewarded by a good wife in the form of Biddy for his good-naturedness and faithfulness; Herbert Pocket is rewarded with a wife and a home, and a stable economic status. However, these examples are too sporadic to overshadow the general disintegrating process. The wide range of ruined homes depicted in the novel presents the difficulty of enforcing the Victorian domestic ideal. The novel clearly

demonstrates Dickens' darker skepticism about the viability of Victorian domestic utopian vision.

The very first scene in Great Expectations shows that a general sense of bereavement, loneliness and disinheritance pervades the world of the hero. Little Pip's first 'impression of the identity of things' (1:35) in the marshes is that of his own solitude and lack of familial identity. The paradigmatic church yard scene, where Pip stares at his parents' tombstones and the tiny graves of his five little brothers, presents Pip's fundamental homelessness in the emblematic starkness. Significantly, Pip connects the early death of his siblings with their economic failure. Each of the brothers appears to him to have given up trying 'to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle' (35). This reminds the reader of the tenet of social Darwinism which endorses the survival of the fittest in the socio-economic Given the hostility of the social world around dimension. him, Pip's existence also seems precarious. perceives himself as a 'small bundle of shivers,' enacted upon by a hostile physical universe (36), the coldness and shivering he experiences indicate his alienation from, and his primal need for, the cozy warmness of the hearth. Pip's dream to reinstate a family is not successfully realized in the novel.

The home in which Pip is raised is not a happy home. Pip's sister is the only mother he has ever known, but she

rejects her role as a mother. Mrs. Joe Gargery frequently equates her status as a housewife with that of a 'slave' (4:53) and regards her additional role of an adoptive mother Forced to raise a child she does as a cruel cut of fate. not want, Mrs. Joe makes Pip pay a high price for her maternal services. She always wears a coarse apron with a square bib in front so 'full of pins and needles' (2:40). Her inaccessible breast does not represent motherly nurture but female aggression. The pins and needles often get into the bread she is cutting, hurting the family she serves. Also, by obsessively cleaning everything, she makes cleanliness more uncomfortable than dirtiness. Mrs. Joe thus transforms her 'feminine' housekeeping role into a form of rage against men. The novel never clarifies why she has become such an angry What it shows, however, is that she is raging against domesticity and motherhood which are forced upon her.

In this violent home, Joe Gargery is another Dickensian weak father: Pip describes him as 'a mild, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, dear fellow' (2:40). Joe's powerlessness as the male head of the home ironically contradicts the complacency of the proverb that he often quotes: 'a Englishman's ouse is his Castle' (57:475). The fact is that, in the inverted order of his home, Joe is an ousted patriarch. Ironically, the novel reveals that Joe's father abused and enslaved his mother, and that the present Gargery household repeats its violent cycle, only with the

inversion of the gender role between the victim and the victimizer. Thus, while fulminating against Mrs Joe's unmotherly cruelty, Dickens' text problematizes the sexual inequality and the ensuing power struggle inherent in Victorian familial structures.

Furthermore, the novel dramatizes not only the physical violence directed against Pip, but also the metaphoric violence which dehumanizes him as a commodity. The rhetoric cannibalism dominates of consumption and even the representation of Pip's early family life. Commercial language, combined with cannibalistic imagery, conveys the particular vulnerability of children at the hands of abusive adults. 12 At the family Christmas dinner, for example, Uncle Pumbleshook refers to Pip as 'sixpennorth of halfpence' (4:56) and later identifies him with Christmas ham which is about to be devoured. If Pip were a 'Squeaker,'--which Mrs. Joe heartily affirms he is -- he 'would have been disposed for so many shillings according the market price of the article, and Dunstable the butcher... would have shed your blood and had your life' (4:58). The image of butchering suggests here that Pip becomes a consumable 'object,' subject to the market and its predatory practices. The family feast on Pip, revelling in the cannibalistic symbolism of the eucharist. Thus, the Christmas feast as a 'travesty of sacramental communion' (Gilead 234) points to the failure of familiar solidarity in a home fuelled by 'emotional and economic cannibalism'

(Thurley 192).

Indeed, Pip's familial relation with his uncle and his sister is replaced by 'market' relations. Their chief interest in Pip is what fortune they can accrue through him. Even the few shillings Pip earns doing odd jobs as a boy, is confisticated by Mrs. Joe. Later, Mrs.Joe and Pumbleshook contrive to hire Pip out as a companion to Miss Havisham. In the event that Miss Havisham passes Pip's indentures and premium to Joe, Pip is obviously being bought and sold. It is no accident that Mrs Joe unconsciously confuses 'Pip' with 'Property' in her delirious moanings in her sick bed (18:170).

The Pocket household is another example of a failed home. On his arrival in London, Pip befriends Herbert Pocket and adopts Herbert's family as his own, wishing to become like the gentlemanly Herbert. But the Pocket home does not conform to any ideal domesticity, although it includes biological parents and children--a rare phenomenon in the novel. However, a closer look at the Pocket family reveals tension and ambivalence, which fit into the novel's dark perspective for Victorian micdle-class domesticity.

Mrs. Pocket is a caricature of a bad housekeeper and non-mothering mother, whose interest lies not in looking after her children, but in the constant perusal of a book of peerage. Her 'aristocratic disposition' is engendered by her father's knighthood and her conviction that her grandfather could have been made a baronet. But, despite her 'aristocratic

disposition,' Mrs. Pocket's home life is in an unendurable mess: she has given up on any proper management of her home. Her immersion in aristocratic genealogy, then, represents the empty notion of 'good' family, while true family ties are neglected, derogated, or broken.

Mr. Pocket knows the inadequate state of his home, but he is weak and powerless to discipline his household. Ironically, Mr. Pocket is 'a most delightful lecturer on domestic economy,' with his highly-regarded textbooks on the management of children and servants (33:291). This suggests that the Victorian ideal of the home is sustained only in theory. Curiously, all the Pocket children are portrayed as 'particularly anxious to be married,' despite their awareness of the shortcomings of their home. As Herbert comments, for example, little Jane's desire for marriage is so strong that 'you might suppose her to have passed her short existence in the perpetual contemplation of domestic bliss' (30:272). the Pocket children have formed their longing for a perfect home based on its total absence, it becomes evident that a Victorian domestic utopia exists as a mirage, not as in reality.

It is important to note that the domestic unhappiness of the Pocket household seems to have originated from the fact that Mr. Pocket married too young without enough 'capital,' and botched his better prospects by becoming a 'Grinder'--a boring and low-paying tutoring job. Mrs Pocket's self-

absorption in a book and total indifference to domesticity may be interpreted as part of her escape from the disillusionment of her marital expectations. Financial problems in the Pocket home seem to explain why Mr. Pocket cannot function as a potent patriarch and Mrs Pocket feels justified in not acting as a domestic angel. In The Dark Angel: Aspects of Victorian Sexuality, Fraser Harrison argues that, in both economic and sexual terms, Victorian men were required to postpone marriage and sex until they become financially stable. financial security was a fundamental condition of a happy home (21-22). Not accidently, Herbert decides not to repeat his father's precedent: he will marry, only after he 'realize[s] Capital' (30:273). Herbert's combination of emotional and economic reasoning regarding his engagement to Clara Barley makes it clear that the world of production is inseparably connected with the world of reproduction. Thus, the example of Herbert's home seriously contests the idealization of the home as a separate, autonomous sphere, by exposing its fundamental dependency on the economic realm.

Wemmick's construction of Walworth castle, with a moat and a drawbridge, is a self-conscious attempt to create an autonomous, self-contained, utopian space by his own labor and craft. It includes a man-made edenic garden with its bower, lake and fountain. However, Wemmick's enchanting castle, with its moat, abundant estate, an inimitable pig, and a senile father, gently parodies the premises of a Victorian

ideal home. Although Wemmick is going to marry Miss Skiffins, Wemmick's castle does not necessarily require her role as an angel-in-the-house to maintain its domestic felicity. Also, Wemmick's home lacks a potent paternalist figure. The decline of paternal authority reaches its apex in Wemmick's 'well-cared-for, but immensely deaf' father (25:230). Nevertheless, the novel portrays Wemmick's home as apparently the most joyful home that Pip has ever visited. Thus, the novel subverts the Victorian assumption that an domestic angel and a paternal authority figure are the requirements of a happy home.

On the surface. Wemmick's Walworth castle seems to conform to the Victorian idea of the home as a haven detached from the business world. It is intentionally separated from the everyday world of law, business, prisons, and criminals. Wemmick wants to keep a firm distinction between his work and his personal life, as he tells Pip, 'The office is one thing, and the private life is another' (25:231). However, the 'compartmentalization' of Wemmick's life (Schwartzbach 190) is, at best, very precarious. No matter how Wemmick enjoys his Castle, he is doomed to return the following morning to Little Britain where he plunges into Lawyer Jaggers' dirty It is 'portable property' gained in his official business. sphere that pays for Wemmick's private life, as he admits: 'my guiding star is always is "Get hold of portable property"' (25:224). Although he 'brushes the Newgate cobwebs away'

(230), it is undeniable that Wemmick's castle is made possible only by the business connections with Newgate from which he tries to keep his distance. His collection of household curiosities, that includes 'several manuscript confessions written under condemnation' (231), intensifies the sense of the inseparability between Newgate and his home. In short, Wemmick's castle does not achieve an absolute separation of the domestic realm from the influence of the public realm such as prison and money.¹⁴

interpenetration between the domestic and the business realms is most visible in Lawyer Jaggers' home. While waiting in Jaggers' office, significantly, Pip finds the death-masks of executed criminals staring at him and mistakes them to be 'Mr Jaggers's family' (21:189). It suggests that Jagger's former clients consists of his pseudo-family: Jaggers has no other human bond outside his legal profession. Jaggers' handwashing ritual in the closet of his office as if to remove ill effects of criminal contact (26:233) suggests that he may feel tainted by his work. But he brings his work home all the more. In chapter 48, dinner at his private home is conducted in a dry mood, as if it is an extension of his office work. He makes quests sit there 'in a state of perpetual readiness for cross-examination' (48:404). Jaggers never tries to distinguish his office life from his home life as Wemmick does.

Furthermore, the portrayal of Jagger's high-handed

dominion in his home shows the sinister aspect of paternalism gone awry, undermining the premise of its benevolence. Even if Jaggers is a bachelor, the relationship between Jaggers and his housekeeper, Molly, is marked by signs of marital dominion and subjugation. However, the signs of simmering tension and struggle between them signify that Jaggers' domination over Molly is neither uniform nor stable. Jaggers had helped Molly, Esther's birthmother, to win acquittal a murder charge and she has since stayed at Jaggers' house. Strong, sullen, conceivably mad, and with 'some gipsy blood in her' (48:405), Molly poses a problem for the Victorian concept of passive femininity. Not surprisingly, numerous allusions in the novel link her to the fiery, revengeful witch of Colchis (26:235). Even though Jaggers repeatedly describes Molly as 'the wild beast tamed'(48:404), Molly is far from completely domesticated, and the battle for control between them is far from concluded. Jaggers is constantly conscious of Molly's potential revolt and subversion symbolized by her strong, 'murderous' wrist. When he claims that 'he kept down the old wild violent nature whenever he saw an inkling of its breaking out' (51:425), the word 'whenever' intimates that Molly's violent revolt has occurred more than once, and can repeat itself anytime. The novel shows, then that Jaggers' strong patriarchal rule is constantly threatened by Molly's suppressed aggression. The depiction of the Jaggers home thus dismantles the notion that the home offers a refuge from the

tyrannies of power.

The tyrannies of power are also evident in the relationships of adults and children, as illustrated in the adoptive families of Miss Havisham and Estella, and of Magwitch and Pip. The benevolent parent-child relationship is not available in their households: the parents either 'own' children as their fantasy self, or exploit them for their own revenge. It is no accident that motifs of cannibalism and predatory consumption are prevalent in the relationships between Miss Havisham and Estella, and between Magwitch and Pip.

heiress of a successful bourgeois father, Miss As Havisham has been the victim of an economic design and conspiracy of her half-brother and her lover, Compeyson. Miss Havisham's worth to them was measured by the monetary gains they believed they could make at her expense. conspirators' eyes, Miss Havisham was a commodity, which could be bartered and exchanged between them. When Compeyson deserted her on their wedding day, Miss Havisham began her morbid existence in Satis House as a jilted and consumed Even in her present state, Miss Havisham cannot get beyond her commodity status. She is aware that her 'scheming' relatives are waiting to inherit her money and 'consume' her. Miss Havisham believes that her cousins wait to 'feast' on her at her death, on the same table where the spiders feed on her rotting bridal cake (116). When the object of consumption is a human being, the image of consumption of a commodity is easily transmuted into that of cannibalistic ingestion. In figuring familial relations in terms of the eater and the eaten, the text thus effectively exposes the infiltration of predatory capitalism into the domestic realm.

Ironically, however, Miss Havisham herself indulges in cannibalistic appetite. She has bred and educated Estella for a single purpose--to act as her proxy to take revenge upon the male sex whose deficiencies are encapsulated in Compeyson. By doing so, however, she 'devours' the whole being of Estella. In assuming that she can appropriate her ward for the purpose of answering her displaced desire, Miss Havisham forges her link with the novel's most ruthless predator -- Compeyson. '[G] reedily' eager in her manner, and exhibiting a 'miserly relish of Estella's moods' (12:123), Miss Havisham hungers with 'ravenous intensity' (29:261) for news of Estella's sexual conquests. She draws sustenance from these victories, 'as though she were devouring the beautiful creature she had reared' (38:320). Consequently, when Estella admits to Pip that '[she] ha[s] no heart' (29:259), she points to the operation of forces which make the life of the dutiful daughter empty and void. Forced to conform to parental demands, Estella's heart, the symbolic source of love, is invariably sacrificed to adult self-interest. Thus, despite her effort to redress the wrongs done to the female sex, Miss Havisham's home unhappily replicates the pressures and

coercions ingrained in the power structures of the Victorian society.

Just as Havisham and Estella form a mother-daughter relationship, Magwitch and Pip also form a pseudo-family as a adoptive father and son. Since the convict was touched by Pip's charity and sympathy, he nurtured memories of Pip in the Australian outback, and was able to keep his humane feeling alive and overcome his loneliness. On his return to London, he confesses to Pip that he frequently envisioned Pip sitting near him at a family dinner table: 'I says, "Here's the boy again, a looking at me whiles I eats and drinks!"' (39:337). Magwitch goes on to declare: 'I am your second father. You're my son--more to me nor any son' (Ibid.). Pip is thus included in Magwitch's imaginary family as his child, replacing Estella who Magwitch believes is dead. Clearly, Magwitch projects on Pip his thwarted paternal love and has made his plan to give the boy those opportunities he himself has never had.

However, Magwitch turns out to be an unnatural father to Pip, just as Miss Havisham is an unnatural mother for Estella. For all the charitable impulse of his plan, Magwitch's newlyfound fatherhood is entangled with his idea of revenge against society. Magwitch recalls his days in Australian outback when he watched the gentlemen riding high on horseback-- those who scorned the low-born but self-made Magwitch. At such moments, it was 'recompensen' for him to think 'I'm making a better gentlemen nor ever you'll be.... If I ain't a gentleman...I'm

the owner of such. All on you owns stock and land; which on you owns a brought-up London gentleman?' (39:339). Clearly, Magwitch sees Pip as a vehicle for his fantasies of revenge over 'gentlemen.' Ironically, by making Pip into an instrument of his revenge, Magwitch in fact creates an authentic version of the social type that Compeyson, his arch enemy, had counterfeited--the gentleman by money, not by character.

Magwitch, gentility is merely money and ostentatious articles of dress, appearance, and display it can Magwitch approvingly notes Pip's linen, clothes and books, and regards his watch and ring not merely as signs or symptoms of gentility but as the very thing itself. The word 'brought-up' suggests 'bought-up' and goes along with the 'equations of property and personality' that go on throughout the novel (Tambling 17). Thus, Magwitch 'reifies' Pip as a commodity, bought over for display, and confuses fatherhood with ownership. When Magwitch takes Pip 'by both hands and surveyed [him] with an air of admiring proprietorship' (39:338), it suggests that his fatherhood is indistinguishable from his capitalist sense of property ownership. once the 'father and 'owner' of a gentleman son. Clearly, market values infiltrate the adoptive familial relationship between Pip and Magwitch. No domestic sanctuaries in the novel remain intact from the force of the market.

Although the reward of a happy family remains available

to Joe Gargery, Wemmick, and Herbert, Pip is denied a successful marriage plot. His failure is somehow foreshadowed by the symbolism of Estella's name--star. Pip glimpses the stars in the sky on his way to Satis House: 'I looked at the stars, and considered how awful it would be for a man to turn his face up to them as he froze to death, and see no help or pity in all the glittering multitude' (7:80). At Satis House, Estella comes to Pip 'along the dark passage like a star' (8:89). Like a cold star, indeed, Estella has never experienced domestic warmth in her birth and upbringing. It is unlikely, then, that Pip's love for Estella will result in building a domestic hearth between them.

It is notable that, in his attachment to Estella, Pip repeats the pattern of his first emotional experience at the hands of Mrs. Joe. In Pip's psyche, some kind of connection exists between Mrs. Joe and Estella, as if Pip's association with Estella were rooted in his childhood: 'I fancied, as I looked at her, that I slipped hopelessly back into the coarse and common boy again. O the sense of distance and disparity that came upon me, and the inaccessibility that came about her!' (29:256). Pip feels himself always a boy with Estella, just as a child might feel towards a superior and remote mother whose love can never be his. In Pip's eye, Estella thus merges with Mrs. Joe as a cold, inaccessible mother figure. Pip's unconscious search for maternal love is once more seized and rent by the perpetuated pattern of maternal

rejection. 16

The denial of a close marriage plot for Pip persists through his failed plans to return to Biddy. In the rendering of Estella and Biddy, one gets the common nineteenth-century split between an erotic woman and an domestic woman. Loving Estella, Pip has no desire for Biddy until towards the end of the novel when he is morally reformed, chastened, and wanting a mother figure as a companion. He decides to offer himself to her, 'like a forgiven child,' but to no avail (57:481). When he returns to the forge, Pip finds Biddy married to Joe.

Thus, not only is Pip denied a place in his childhood family, he is also denied the domestic reward of a family as an adult. This is presaged when Pip returns to London with the knowledge that he has lost Estella to Bentley Drummle. He receives a message from Wemmick, 'DON'T GO HOME' (45:380). The warning, meant as a precaution to protect Magwitch, becomes for Pip an indication of his symbolic homelessness. As Pip broods on the words in a hotel, they become intensified in their repetitious and obsessive rhetoric: 'When I dozed, in sheer exhaustion of mind and body, it became a vast shadowy verb which I had to conjugate. Imperative mood, present tense: Do not thou go home, let him not go home, let us not go home, do not ye or you go home, let them not go home. Then, potentially: I may not and I cannot go home; and I might not, could not, would not, and should not go home; until I felt that I was going distracted' (45:381). Obviously, here, Pip associates the loss of Estella with his inability to go home, an inability that becomes an impossibility. Literally, there is no compelling reason why he should not go home. But Pip's incantatory language stresses Pip's earlier recognition that he has no real home.

After losing Magwitch's inheritance, with no home to turn to, Pip chooses to live abroad as Herbert's clerk in order to pay his creditors. It is notable that no married couple in the novel successfully establishes domestic felicity, without also being somehow dissociated from contemporary England. Joe and Biddy inhabit an forge already relegated to the past in advanced industrialism; Herbert and Clara prosper in Cairo; Wemmick and Miss Skiffins live in a moated, miniature castle that they wish protects 'Walworth sentiments' from Little Britain's heartlessness. their Moreover, domestic arrangements are too isolated cases to be the effective 'counterpoint to social evil' at a large scale (Wilson 17). Years later, Pip returns to England, to find Joe and Biddy and their two children living in domestic bliss. However, despite this apparently circular concluding framework, he is no longer really a part of the family, but only a temporary visitor. Pip does not end up living happily in a home of his own, surrounded by a loving family. Even though the second version of the novel's conclusion intimates that this remains a possibility, it does not present Pip as establishing a hearth of his own. 18

In this sense, Great Expectations clearly deviates from the usual pattern of Dickens' other novels which set up a happy home for the hero and the heroine at the end. Even if Dickens allows a final setting up of a happy family as in Bleak House, the bulk of the narrative leading up to that point focuses on troubled families. In Great Expectations, Dickens extends the questioning of the Victorian family ideal, by showing that the home as an exclusionary utopia does not exist in the culture of growing commodification and monetary predation. The majority of Dickensian families have little in them worth prescribing to a society seeking a familial antidote for social ailments. His portrayals of family dynamics which are ravaged by the force of market are clearly at odds with domestic idealism with which he is allegedly associated. This demonstrates that Dickens, the alleged proponent of Victorian domesticity, actually had an acute awareness of its unreality and belatedness.

NOTES to CHAPTER 1

- 1. This comment was made by a reviewer of The Battle of Life for The Morning Chronicle, in 1846.
- 2. James M. Brown makes a similar point. See "Dickens as a Bourgeois Writer," in his book, 38-54.
- 3. Many of Dickens' biographers suggest that Dickens' negative portrayal of families were drawn upon his childhood

traumas: the experience of being sent to labor in a blacking warehouse, the neglect of the bankrupt father, the coldness of his mother (Johnson 45-46). Also, in his later years, he experienced a terrible conjugal tension with his wife in the process of divorce (Kaplan 376-407). Of course, one cannot not make a unwarranted conclusion about the influence of Dickens' real-life psychology on his work, based on his autobiographical fragments. Even so, one can infer that Dickens's own experiences may have influenced his delineation of the dark side of middle-class homes.

- 4. Frances Armstrong recognizes 'the complexities of the Victorian concept of home' in Dickens' works (1), but she sometimes seems to join Dickens in his eulogy of home as a utopian center in a chaotic world, without examining its ideological underpinnings. For example, she argues that 'it is those who have a certain amount of control over the chaos of their own homes,... who are able to face and even begin to control, the chaos of the world. Successful little systems are the place to start' (103).
- 5. For the novel's symbolism of 'bleak houses,' see Kelly 253-54. A close correlation between Chancery, a London slum (Tom-all-Alone) and former Bleak House is suggested in a passage in which John Jarndyce tells Esther of the decay of some Jarndyce property in London.

There is, in that city of London there, some property of

ours, which is much at this day what Bleak House was then....It is a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyes stoned out; without a pane of glass, without so much as a window-frame, with the bare blank shutters tumbling from their hinges and falling asunder; the iron rails peeling away in flakes of rust; the chimneys sinking in, the stone steps to every door (and every door might be Death's Door) turning stagnant green; the very crutches on which the ruins are propped, decaying. Although Bleak House was not in Chancery, its master was, and it was stamped with the same seal. These are the Great Seal's impressions, my dear, all over England. (8:146-47)

First, Jarndyce identifies Tom-All-Alone's with the former Bleak House, and he argues that the former Bleak House and Tom-all-Alone are 'stamped with the same seal' of the Chancery's bad influence. This kind of triple correlation between Tom-All-Alone's, Chancery, and Bleak House makes a strong manifestation of social blight and dilapidation as a general phenomenon.

6. Lawyer Vholes is exemplary of Chancery's predation. Vholes represents Richard in Jarndyce and Jarndyce, but he is portrayed as a dangerous and cannibalistic creature where Richard's welfare is concerned. The narrative says that Vholes is 'always looking at the client, as if he were making

- a lingering meal of him with his eyes as well as with his professional appetite' (39:607). When Esther envisions Vholes as 'the Vampire' (60: 876), her allusion to the figure of gothic horror draws attention to the lawyer's predatory role. Nevertheless, among his colleagues in the legal profession, Vholes is considered 'a most respectable man' (39:604). This assessment depends, of course, on the legal profession being understood to be voracious toward its clients: 'Make maneating unlawful, and you starve the Vholeses!' (39:605). The novel suggests that this legal predation is part of the British social order based on primordial barbarism and violence. See Dan Fredericks and Benjamin Fisher IV, for a detailed study of vampire images in Bleak House.
- 7. Lorna Duffin argues in her study of Victorian women's invalidism: '[their] illness may well have been used by women as a way of escaping from the tedious chores and equally tedious social events which comprised the greater part of their lives' ("The Conspicuous Consumptive: Woman as an Invalid" 51).
- 8. Mrs. Bagnet's umbrella is a 'faithful appendage, ...invariably a part of [her] presence out of doors' (34:530). Obviously, Mrs. Bagnet's umbrella is a phallic symbol which stand for her independence and power (Budd 201).
- 9. Dickens himself actively participated in philanthropic works, such as the Urania Cottage Project for 'fallen women' and Governesses' Benevolent Institution. He maintained his

friendship and collaboration with Angela Burdett-Coutts, one of the greatest women philanthropists in the Victorian age. See Kaplan 146-50, 228-29. Thus, it seems that, for Dickens, it is not philanthropy itself but the manner and spirit of women's engagement that is offensive. His negative opposition is that Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle are sacrificing their families.

- 10. In History and Class Consciousness, Lukacs argues that 'the commodity structure' 'penetrate[s] society in all its aspects and ... remould[s] it in its own image' (85). The process 'destroys those bonds that had bound individuals to a community in the days when production was still "organic" (90). For the detailed discussion of 'reification', see "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" in the same book, 83-222.
 - 11. See Eric J. Hobsbawm, Age of Capitalism: 1848-1875.
- 12. James E. Marlow argues that 'the themes of orality, predation, and the translation of human flesh into economic gain--all metaphoric cannibalism--dominate [Dickens' later] fiction' (655).
- 13. Wenmick's house shows a ideal picture of a preindustrial household before the creation of the division of
 labor: Wemmick boasts, 'I am my own engineer, and my own
 carpenter, and my own plumber, and my own gardener, and my own
 Jack of all Trades' (25:330). The pastoralism of Wemmick's
 house reflects the trend of rural nostalgia in its

retrospective look on the merry old days of rural England. Martin J. Wiener observes that, by 1851, more than half the Victorian population lived in towns, and England had become the world's first major urban nation (47). Hobsbawn notes that a wide-spread rural nostalgia existed in the industrialized urban culture (Industry and Empire 142). A deep vein of rural nostalgia gave birth to pastoral retreatism as is apparent in Wemmick's Castle. What is at issue is not the working of the rural economy, but the 'psychic economy' of the urban middle class.

- 14. In 1858, Dickens wrote to his friend and fellow novelist Wilkie Collins, confessing his doubts about the absolute distinction between spheres: 'Everything that happens...shows beyond mistake that you can't shut out the world; that you are in it, to be of it; that you get into a false position the moment you try to sever yourself from it; and that you must mingle with it, and make the best of it, and make the best of yourself into the bargain' (6 September 1858, The Letters of Charles Dickens, 1833-1870 461).
- 15. There is a strong parallelism between Magwitch and Pip, in that Magwitch's domestic fate has been in generative essentials identical to Pip's own. Magwitch had 'no more notion where [he] was born than [Pip has]--if so much' (42:360). The naming of Abel Magwitch was arbitrary (in its nonsignificance) as that of Pip was: 'I know'd my name to be Magwitch, chrisen'd Abel. How did I know it? Much as I know'ed

the birds' names in the hedge to be chaffinch, sparrer, thrush' (360). As a child, Magwitch has encountered the same rejection that Pip has, having 'grow'd up took up' (361) as Pip was 'brought up by hand.' Whereas Magwitch gives Pip his chance to be respectable, there was no such protection for Magwitch when he was 'athieving turnips for my living' (360). And young Magwitch, 'a ragged little creetur' (Pip, one recalls, remembers himself as 'a bundle of shivers'), thus 'got the name of being hardened' (361). Like Pip, Magwitch has craved the basic necessity of fire, shelter, and an entry into human society. Thus, Pip becomes Magwitch's substitute self to fulfill Magwitch's own dream.

- 16. For the detailed study of the relation between Mrs. Joe and Estella, see Gwen Watkins 50-59.
- 17. However, Biddy is not just a 'feminine,' nurturing woman. It is true that, after Orlick's smash-up of Mrs. Joe, Biddy moves into the forge and 'manages' the 'whole domestic life... wonderfully' (17:153), bringing a 'greater quiet' into Joe and Pip's life. Biddy's presence transforms what was a divided and unhappy domicile into a harmonious and smoothly functioning home. Nevertheless, in both her knowledge of forge skills and her intellectual accomplishments, Biddy proves herself Pip's equal: 'She was equally accomplished in the terms of our trade, and the names of our different sorts of work, and our various tools' (153). She even teaches young Pip and Joe to read and write. Thus, Biddy is another strong

woman whose 'masculine' proficiencies are combined with her 'womanly' nurturing.

18. For a thorough examination of the revision, see Jerome Meckier and John Cloy. In the first cancelled ending, Pip and Estella meet, speak briefly, and part: Pip is left alone. However, the second ending, which Dickens wrote following Bulwer-Lytton's criticism of the original ending, is more optimistic than the cancelled one about the marital prospects of Pip and Estella. Even so, their marriage remains only a possibility: its prospects are quite sedated rather than elated. For supporting views, see Irwin Weiser 35-36 and Barbara Weiss 73.

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CHAPTER 2. THE HOME UTOPIA AND THE LOT OF THE DOMESTIC WOMAN IN GEORGE ELIOT'S THE MILL ON THE FLOSS AND MIDDLEMARCH

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Like Dickens, Eliot also explores the territory of wedded life and exposes the problems embedded in Victorian marriage and family structures. Under her scrutiny, marriage becomes more and more doubtful as a guarantee of social stability and the cement of social order. Unlike many other Victorian novelists who present the marriage of the hero and the heroine as the culmination of, and a reward for, a long and arduous struggle, Eliot explores marriage as the 'beginning' of 'the home epic' (Middlemarch 898) and of its struggles.

It is true that the term 'home epic' elevates home and family to the epic level, thereby associating the idea of 'home' with that of 'ideal.' Donald Hair argues that a home epic is marked by 'an heroic treatment of domestic themes, images and actions' (122). He further argues that, 'both as an image of desire and aspiration, and a readily accessible experience,' a home has the 'ability to suggest a 'fusion of the real and the ideal, to embody ethical and national aspirations in the common and the familiar' (8). However, if a home epic suggests the unreserved 'domestication of epic impulses' (Rosenberg 39-40), it is not true of Eliot's novels.

They continue to foreground unresolved tensions between domesticity and epic grandeur. In particular, Eliot's novels demonstrate that the conflict between epic ideal and domestic reality is a consequence of the existing sexual inequality, based on the idea of separate spheres and the ideology of proper womanhood.¹

Eliot's critique of Victorian marriage and family in terms of gender inequality finds its theoretical ally in John Stuart Mill. In the first chapter of The Subjection of Woman (1869), Mill repudiates the limits imposed upon women by the argument of 'the intention of Nature' (430) or 'Nature's own dictate' (440). He argues that we cannot learn the true nature of a woman, because she has been kept in an unnatural state. 'What is now called the nature of women,' he write, 'is an eminently artificial thing--the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others' (430). The implication is that the prevailing definitions of woman's nature were a construct of culture, not a given of nature.

This statement is directly connected to Mill's analysis made in the second chapter, of the inequalities enforced by the marriage contract. Mill argues that in all areas of contemporary life but one, the movement from status to contract has created egalitarian tendencies that have transformed modern politics and morals. The one exception is the marriage contract, for it has not created a genuine 'unity

of feeling and community of interests' (455) but 'a relation of command and obedience' (477). Only when a woman is allowed intellectual, legal and economic equality, a perfect marriage will be possible between two persons of 'cultivated faculties, identical in opinions and purposes, between whom there exists that best kind of equality, similarity of powers and capacities with reciprocal superiority in them' (541).

Eliot shares the basic tenets of Mill's argument in her view of woman's 'nature' and marriage. Two years before the publication of Mill's book, George Eliot already called the argument of the intention of nature 'a pitiable fallacy' (George Eliot Letters IV:364). Her correspondence reveals that she read Mill's book and called its second chapter 'excellent' (George Eliot Letters VIII: 458). Like Mill, she makes connections between prevailing definitions of woman's nature and the conditions of the marriage contract. It is no accident that Eliot persistently delineates the destructive courses of patriarchal marriage based on the idea of women's inferiority and subjection. She also overturns the ruling definitions of woman's nature in her characterizations of female characters such as Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Rosamond Vincy: by exposing their intellectual aspiration or their will to mastery, she subverts the ideology of an angel-in-the-house.

However, Eliot's critique of Victorian gender ideology and marriage is qualified by her tendency to uphold the

'feminine' ideal. While believing that women should be granted equality with men, Eliot also believed in the positive value of uniquely 'feminine characteristics' such as affection and self-sacrifice. She argues in her 1868 letter to Emily Davies, the founder of Girton College: 'And there lies just that kernel of truth in the vulgar alarm of men lest women should be unsexed. We can no more afford to part with that exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness, possible maternity suffusing a woman's being with affectionateness, which makes what we mean by the feminine character, than we can afford to part with the human love...which is also a growth and revelation beginning before all history (George Eliot Letters Eliot feared that the feminist movement would make women more like men, contributing nothing to the society, except oppression, exploitation, and victimization, which she associates with 'masculine' culture. Rather she was rather interested in achieving a society that valued the traditional feminine virtues of tenderness, affection, gentleness, and tolerance. Although there was no uniform doctrine among nineteenth-century feminists, at least one liberal branch of the feminist movement worked toward equality between the sexes and stressed characteristics that were perceived to be masculine, such as intelligence and ambition. While Eliot is acutely aware of the oppression and exploitation of women and had friendship with feminists activists and suffragists such as Barbara Smith Bodichon, Emily Davies and Sophia Hennel, she

valorized 'woman's peculiar constitution for a special moral influence' (George Eliot Letters IV:468) and women's moral power which comes from 'a sublimer resignation' (George Eliot Letters VIII: 409).

As Susan Graver argues, Eliot's feminism thus combines the liberal feminist concern with self-realization and the evangelist idea of woman's moral influence ("Incarnate History" 73). Despite her support for the equality between the sexes, Eliot's argument obviously entails a danger of reinstating the essentialism of sexual difference and sanctioning some of the constrictions which assigned women to the domestic sphere. Accordingly, her novels reveals the contradictions and tensions between the different versions of her female stance against patriarchal society: between self-assertion and selflessness, and between aspiration and self-abnegation.

However, Eliot's valorization of 'feminine traits' powerfully envisions a new familial and social order in which the feminine ethics of care overcomes the abuse of masculine power and sexual hierarchy embedded in the Victorian social structure. Her exposure of the weaknesses of patriarchal figures and her delineation of many strong female characters in Victorian homes subvert the existing power imbalance between the sexes. Indeed, Eliot's valorization of strong matriarchs such as Romola and 'feminized' male characters such as Will Ladislaw and Daniel Deronda anticipates a world in

which head and heart, masculine and feminine combine to produce an alternative sexual order.

In Adam Bede (1859), the eponymous hero experiences unsatisfactory family life under his alcoholic father, suffers from his unrequited love for Hetty Sorrel, learns the lesson of suffering, and is eventually rewarded by another love in Dinah Morris. The reader last sees Adam in the midst of good work and quiet joy, surrounded by his new family. thatched home in a timber-yard is an image of a prosperous rural family. Set in 1807, however, Adam's family anticipates some characteristics of a Victorian middle-class family long before that social form becomes dominant. The novel shows a sexual division which takes place in Adam's household, along with his marked economic rise through his successful carpentry business. Dinah has ceased preaching in public, because of a methodist decree against female preachers, with which Adam explicitly agrees. She no longer works in the cotton-mill nor does productive home agricultural work like Mrs. Poyser to make money. Dinah is thus transformed into a domestic woman whose concern is confined to proper housekeeping. However, the novel strongly implies that if she be permitted to use her resources and powers as an individual, Dinah could have larger influence on her world.

Furthermore, the fate of Hetty looms over the idealized domesticity of Adam and Dinah. The last scene of their happy life parallels the narrative disposal of Hetty. Hetty dies on

her way home from exile as if her return to Adam's village might pose a certain threat to Adam and Dinah's domestic tranquility. Thus, the novel suggests that the picture of the seamless home utopia is neither self-confident nor all-encompassing: it is wary of outside subversion.

The Lifted Veil (1859) presents a discomforting picture of the domestic life of Latimer and Bertha in a supernatural aura. Despite his power of clairvoyance, Latimer cannot see through the ultimate dark barrier of Bertha's mind and heart. Neither is Bertha willing to open her heart to her husband, because she regards his ability to read the thoughts of others as infringement on her autonomy. Despite their superficial maintenance of Victorian domesticity, when the 'veil which had shrouded Bertha's soul' (47) is finally 'lifted,' all Latimer can find is her murderous rage toward him. The indefatigable power struggle between Latimer and Bertha, and Latimer's final discovery of Bertha's plan to poison him are terrifying portraits of a Victorian home.

In The Mill on the Floss (1861), Maggie Tulliver, the aspiring heroine with epic desire, is surrounded by patriarchal middle-class households which see her only in terms of domestic existence and continually interfere with her full growth and development. Kinship and family are still conceived organically, but function as a negative organism, where the domestic habits and values of the Dodsons and Tullivers operate as a powerful check on the development and

growth of Maggie. The novel thus mounts a critique on the ideology of separate spheres which impede a woman's 'full life' by assigning women to household tasks alone.

In Romola (1863), the tension between woman's epic desire and her domestic destiny is further intensified. Eliot deflates domestic idealism by showing a hidden power struggle in a domestic setting. In Tito Melema and Romola de Bardi's marriage, dominance and egoism are exercised by the husband, whereas submission and suffering are required of the wife. Because of the intolerable circumstances of her marriage, Romola is impelled, in the end, to leave her husband. only now that she achieves her full potential. She reaches a plague-stricken village, and emerges as a madonna and mother to a community, by helping suffering people. Finally, on returning to Florence, Romola establishes a new, alternative family, when contrary to all conventional expectations, she offers shelter to her husband's mistress-wife and her two Romola's home set up by the end of the novel is children. almost a 'matriarchal' one (Paxton, 143; Schoenbauer 230), where overt patriarchal authority is negated with the death of Romola's father, her husband, and Savonarola. In this subtly subversive process of a woman's progress from a dutiful daughter to a materfamilias, Eliot challenges the patriarchal logic of the Victorian view of proper womanhood. prepares the way for Eliot's strong female heroines to follow.

In Middlemarch (1871-72), the Victorian idealization of

domesticity is seriously undermined in several marital In particular, the two couples--Dorothea and situations. Casaubon, and Lydgate and Rosamond--are deadlocked in their respective wretched marriages. Here, marital conflict is no longer represented simply as a personal tragedy but as a result of the existing sexual ideology. Both Lydgate and Casaubon have preconceptions about the women they will marry, based on notions of submissive, angelic wifehood. novel's portraits of Dorothea and Rosamond overturn such a ruling definition of woman's nature. The Lydgate and Casaubon marriages make clear how the absence of sexual equality and identity of interests between husband and wife significantly contributes to marital failure. The novel also shows that even an egalitarian marriage based on true identity of interests can leave a woman's life incomplete, as in the marriage of Dorothea and Ladislaw. The narrator manifests ambivalence about the final status of Dorothea as a housewife, despite her domestic happiness.

In Eliot's last novel, Daniel Deronda (1876), domestic happiness is no longer available to the heroine: Gwendolen Harleth and Grandcourt's wedded life proves less a hopeful beginning than an emphatic dead end. Gwendolen is even more implicated in the death of her husband than Rosamond is in Lydgate's early demise. Nor does the novel neatly wind up Gwendolen's remorseful life with her remarriage. Interestingly, almost every female character in the novel is

in revolt either openly or tacitly against a patriarchal family. Not to mention Gwendolen and Alcharisi, Daniel's mother, Catherine Arrowpoint rebels against her parents' matrimonial plans and chooses her husband; the Meyrick sisters do not have a father but they support themselves, quietly satirizing the male-oriented economic arrangement of a patriarchal family. Even Mirah has run away from her father's domination.

Thus, Eliot's novels from Adam Bede to Daniel Deronda persistently investigate the problematic relationship between the Victorian ideal of the home and domestic reality, and take issue with the underlying patriarchal logic of Victorian marriage and family. By choosing The Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch for a comparative analysis, I intend to show the tension and conflicts which derive from Eliot's critical resistance to Victorian domestic ideology.

1. The Mill On the Floss

The Mill on the Floss is set at a time when industrial and economic changes were taking place in the rural community of St. Ogg's. Set in the 1820s, the novel marks the passing of an apparently pre-industrial social formation, a distant precursor of the Victorian middle class, and its replacement by a newer mercantile middle-class economy. In the novel, thus, the provincial families are exposed to the challenges of

a new bourgeois social force. The novel clearly shows how industrial capitalism was making inroads into the traditional ways of life. However, when Philip Fisher refers to The Mill on the Floss as 'the epic of the first home, the home always lost' (200), he seems to represent its main problematic only partially. It may be true that the sanctified memory of the heroine's past home is cherished through this autobiographical novel. Nevertheless, the novel intertwines its nostalgia for the past home with its unsentimental observation of failings.

E. S. Dallas, a contemporary reviewer, saw in the novel a malicious portrayal of provincial middle-class characters, along with the total disintegration of their sense of community. He argued, "We are launched into a world of pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy, envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness... We have the petty gossip and malignant slander of village worthies painted to the life... Everybody in this tale is repelling everybody, and life is in the strictest sense a battle' (Carroll 132-33). In response to this criticism, Eliot furiously defended her portrayal of the middle-class families in the novel:

I have certainly fulfilled my intention very badly if I have made the Dodson honesty appear 'mean and uninteresting,' or made the payment of one's debts appear a contemptible virtue in comparison with any sort of 'Bohemian' qualities. So far as my own feeling and

intention are concerned, no one class of persons or form of character is held up to reprobation or to exclusive admiration. Tom is painted with as much love and pity as Maggie, and I am so far from hating the Dodson's myself, that I am rather aghast to find them ticketed with such very ugly adjectives. (George Eliot Letters III:299)

Unlike Dallas, modern critics tend to complain about Eliot's defense of the middle class families in the novel. Examining The Mill on the Floss, for example, Tony Davis fulminates: ':here is a persistent, mawkish nostalgia for what she calls the golden gates of childhood, and a patronizing facetiousness in the rendering of the petit-bourgeois... households' (258). The notion that Eliot sees ideological limitations with the middle-class households of St.Ogg's, yet refuses to attack the political and social roots of the problems is the cause of Davis's criticism. Similarly, Margaret Homans deplores Eliot's partisanship for the middle class. Homans argues that 'for Eliot, whose writing career took her from the bottom of the middle-class to the top, from estate manager's daughter to wealthy Londoner, middle-class life may have encompassed all the possibilities of life itself' (156).

Nevertheless, this is too sweeping a judgment of Eliot's position regarding Victorian middle-class homes. In fact, Eliot describes the hostilities, jealousies and petty quarrels

of family life in the novel. She shows her strong ambivalence towards the Victorian home utopian vision. seriously challenging its ideological underpinnings such as the sexual division of spheres. It becomes evident that the narrator and the heroine have never felt particularly comfortable with the small-minded relatives and generally narrow world of St. Ogg's, and even less with the imbalance of power relations embedded in patriarchal domestic arrangements. In the novel, Maggie Tulliver is surrounded by an extended family, the 'emmet-like Dodsons and Tullivers' (238). St. Ogg's is a community in transition between the verities of Tulliver's rural traditionalism ('water is water') and the new commercial capitalism (bringing steam-power to the mill) which has produced the Dodsons. Mr. Tulliver remains in the preindustrialized, pre-commercial rural world, whose material center is the mill. All the Dodson sisters, with the exception of Mrs. Tulliver, are more or less linked to the commercial world of St. Ogg's through their successful husbands. The decline of Mr. Tulliver's Dorlcote Mill with its long history of operation by one family is diametrically opposite of the bustling trading business of Guest & Co which rides the tide of industrial capitalism most successfully. In this rapidly changing social spectrum of the novel, it is hard to reconstitute communal values.

The result is a fragmentation of values and schisms in families where a shared communal ethic is no longer available.

On the surface, the Dodson clan is proud of its sense of familial obligations: 'the right thing must always be done towards kindred' (240). They firmly believe that the only valid relationships are guaranteed blood relationships. Living in close proximity, they regularly visit and consult There is no lack of communication among them: they share village gossip, compare one another's housekeeping and economies, and show off their prized possessions. However, such intimacy is as illusory as Aunt Glegg's false 'fronts' of glossy curls (49). The Dodson clan system does not have any inner solidarity between its members: 'it is remarkable that while no individual Dodson was satisfied with any other individual Dodson, each was satisfied, not only within him or herself, but with the Dodsons collectively' The public face--the Dodsons 'collectively'--is the (40). vestige of an intimate family; as separate human beings, the Dodsons constantly antagonize each other. In this sense, when Jenni Calder calls The Mill on the Floss a 'tragedy of a family dependent on an integral unity which it doesn't, cannot, have' (135), she makes a valid point.

In the first chapter of Book IV, the narrator provides a historical perspective of the Dodsons and the Tullivers by pondering over the contrasting European rivers of the Rhone and the Rhine, and drawing comparison between the Rhone and the Floss. The castles on the Rhine belong to 'the grand historic life of humanity,' providing the 'vision of an epoch'

and a 'sense of poetry' (239). In contrast, the Rhone village represents human life as a 'narrow, ugly, grovelling existence' (238). It is the community of the Rhone that symbolizes the society of Eliot's own time: 'these dismal remnants of commonplace houses...were but the sign of a sordid life, belonging in all its details to our own vulgar era' (237). True to their Rhone-like lives, the narrator states, the Dodsons and the Tullivers are 'irradiated by no sublime principles,' representing 'the most prosaic form of human life' (238). Especially, the Dodsons are the primary target of the novel's subtle and sometimes open critique.

It is true that the narrator nostalgically enumerates some positive elements about the respectable, rural, Dodson families: 'Obedience to parents, faithfulness to kindred, industry, rigid honesty, thrift, the thorough scouring of wooden and capper utensils, the hoarding of coins likely to disappear from the currency, the production of first-rate commodities for the market, and the general preference for whatever was home-made' (239-40). They cling to the sense of 'traditional duty or propriety': marriage, domesticity, death and inheritance all follow prescribed patterns. The narrator acknowledges their traditionalism as a contribution to society: 'society owes some worthy qualities in many of her members to mothers of the Dodson class, who made their butter and their fromentry well, and would have felt disgraced to make it otherwise' (240).

But immediately, the positive meaning of such attributes obedience, faithfulness. honesty, and thrift as syntactically undermined by a taxonomy that makes wealth and domestic cleanliness semantically equivalent to high moral virtues. It reduces all the virtues of the Dodson's to mere commodity values. The novel shows that the domestic sanctities of the Dodsons--their closets, linen and wills--are inextricably combined with its materialism: 'To be honest and poor was never a Dodson motto...; rather, the family badge was to be honest and rich; and not only rich, but richer than was supposed.' (240). Immersed in materialism, the Dodson sisters consider even their marriages as important business deals. They have invested so many years of their lives, plus their hand-embroidered tablecloths, for the legacies they anticipate at their husbands' deaths. Mrs. Glegg, for example, is quickly reconciled to her husband after one of their rows at the thought of the 'testamentary tenderness' (113) she is sure will be forthcoming.

It is clear that Dodson solidarity, loyalty and sense of duty are only maintained on the surface. In reality, personal relations for the Dodsons take second place to the laws of exchange, legacies, and interest rates. Tenderness is testamentary. This is harshly demonstrated at the Tulliver bankruptcy when the Dodson sisters refuse to recover their sister's precious objects--her 'teraphim or household gods'--and, apart from a few things they need themselves, allow

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everything to be sold. For them, affection does not interfere with the commercial judgment expressed through the ineluctable workings of the market. Mrs Glegg says, 'The disgrace is, for one o' the family to ha' married a man as has brought her to beggary. The disgrace is, as they're to be sold up. We can't hinder the country from knowing that' (188).

The narrator thus expresses bitterness at the heroine's situation in the Rhone-like environment: 'You could not live among such people; you are stifled for want of an outlet towards something beautiful, great, or noble; you are irritated with these dull men and women, as a kind of population out of keeping with the earth on which they live-with this rich plain where the great river flows for ever onward, and links the small pulse of the old English town with the beatings of the world's mighty heart' (238). Here, the narrator suggests that, while the family should provide the heroine the necessary human context of the larger movement of society and history, it instead stifles her individual endeavor and development. Maggie Tulliver is presented as unable to conform to the requirements of the Dodsons, and torn by her strong desire to be accepted and her equally strong longing for more that the Dodson values can offer.

Eliot's excoriating criticism of the Dodsons also underlies her attack on Victorian sexual politics which render women's lives so empty and meaningless. This is evident in the case of Sophy Pullet, a representative example of the

'leisured lady.' Mrs. Pullet's clothing, in contrast to Sister Glegg's mouldy and yellow-spotted garments, is meant to display her husband's money. Her 'architectural bonnet' and 'large buckram sleeves' are purely ornamental and highly restrictive of bodily movements as well (51). Even her domestic work is marked not by its usefulness, but by its non-purpose. Confined to her domestic sphere, she is given to her frenetic, but meaningless house-cleaning, making her highly polished stairs a hostile 'trial by ordeal' for any visitors (79). Also, the fact that Mrs. Pullet's life is in a continual state of siege against illness--'there wasn't many months in the year as I wasn't under the doctor's hands' (53)--emphasizes her less than vibrant existence as a leisured lady.

The vacuity of middle-class domesticity represented by Mrs. Pullet is well dramatized in the event of the unveiling of her new bonnet. Maggie, Lucy and Mrs. Tulliver are ushered into a diminishing closet of a large house. After the drawnout solemnity of waiting, the object is finally disclosed. However, its banality is unendurably disappointing to Maggie: 'The sight of the bonnet at last was an anticlimax to Maggie, would have preferred something more who strikingly preternatural' (80). When she puts on the bonnet and turns slowly round, like a 'draper's lay-figure,' Mrs. Pullet becomes a pure embodiment of an ornament. Mrs. Pullet's ornamental function is closely linked to her total economic dependency upon her husband, as is manifested in her remarks:

'Pullet pays for it; he said I was to have the best bonnet at Garum Church, let the next best be whose it would' (81). Thus, this scene dramatizes the unproductive triviality and boredom of a middle-class woman's routine as a ornamental being.

Like Mrs. Pullet, Susan Deane's status also depends entirely on the money and position of her husband, a manager of Guest & Co. In keeping with her economic dependence, she does not even form an independent thought of her own: she would make a 'small well-considered speeches on peculiar occasions, repeating them afterwards to her husband, and asking him if she had not spoken very properly' (183). When she dies, the novel does not provide any detail about her death. It seems that Mrs. Deane exerts so little power and has so little status of her own that even her death is almost without effect.

Unlike Mrs. Pullet or Mrs. Deane, Mrs. Jane Glegg is least subject to the idea of the sexual division between the domestic and economic realms and has the strongest domestic and economic influences. Married to a wool-stapler, an occupation which predates industrialization, she is a producer of domestic goods such as cheese and butter. Mrs. Glegg is, of course, a vestige from another time, when the agricultural family was an economic unit and when women made visible contributions to the sustenance and income of the family. Based on her assessment of her economic function, Mrs. Glegg

has a far greater sense of personal influence and importance than Mrs. Pullet or Mrs. Deane. Mrs. Glegg demands to be recognized as the 'head o' the family' (398). She is the only woman who confronts Mr. Tulliver's patriarchal authority with the same degree of matriarchal authority.

Mrs. Glegg is conscious of her 'feminine' dominion and her rhetoric reflects it: 'Don't lower yourself with using coarse language to me, Mr. Glegg' (111); 'Mr. Glegg... if you're going to be undelicate, let me know' (398). Through Mrs. Glegg's example, the novel thus suggests that before the formation of the ideology of separate spheres, women might have enjoyed more economic/ domestic power, other than moral influence.4 Thus. the Victorian idea that submissiveness is dictated by 'nature' is put under ironic It is no accident that Mr. Glegg is always scrutiny. bewildered by the fact that Mrs Glegg--'a creature made...out of a man's rib' -- should be assertive and domineering. To him, this is 'a mystery in the scheme of things to which he had often in vain sought a clue in the early chapters of Genesis' (108).Mr. Glegg never finds an answer. Through the portrayal of the Glegg household, the novel thus criticizes the arbitrariness of the Victorian idea of woman's natural submission and sexual inequality between man and woman.

Unlike Mrs. Glegg, Bessy Tulliver is married to a man who will have no part of female power. As the 'feeblest' of the Dodson family, she lacks the temperament for living up to Mrs.

Glegg's self-confidence. Thus, the marriage of the Tullivers is unreservedly committed to patriarchal values. Tulliver's need for marital dominion is apparent in his decision to marry 'a buxom wife conspicuously his inferior in intellect' (22). Tulliver's first requirement in a wife is not that she contribute to the family's economy but that she submit to his will. Mrs. Tulliver indeed dresses to please her husband and even her household routines are circumscribed by Tulliver's requirements (49). It is Tulliver who sets the dinner hour and determines what dinner will be served. The novel shows that Tulliver's control over his wife is based on his power as bread-winner. As Bessy explains to her sister Glegg, 'Mr Tulliver says he always will have a good dinner for his friends while he can pay for it....and he's a right to do as he likes in his own house' (50). Clearly, Mrs. Tulliver points to the fact that money a man makes in the business realm empowers him to be a master in the domestic realm. Thus, the so-called separate spheres are linked to each other, espousing male dominion.

Apparently, Mrs. Tulliver is an angel-in-the-house: she was 'the flower of her family for beauty and amiability' in her maiden years (13) and, after marriage, is completely committed to her domestic function. However, the novel satirizes this idea of a domestic angel, by associating Mrs. Tulliver with 'those early Madonnas of Raphael, with the blond faces and somewhat stupid expression,' who are 'ineffectual'

(13). While it is true that George Eliot most often invokes the Madonna to represent feminine saintliness and goodness (as in the case of Romola and Dorothea Brooke), here she criticizes the culture which imposes the saintly image of the Madonna to ineffectual, passive womanhood. In her essay on Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft, Eliot castigates the reluctance of men to treat women with 'justice and sober reverence, 'as opposed to making them idols 'fit for nothing but to sit in her drawing-room like a doll-Madonna in her shrine' (Essays of George Eliot 205). By invoking the 'stupid' and 'ineffectual' image of Raphael's Madonna in her portrayal of Mrs. Tulliver, Eliot obviously derides the powerlessness of Victorian domestic angels behind their sanctified image. Just as Marian Warner explores in Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary, Eliot finds the subtle denigration of women implicit in the 'very celebration of the perfect human woman' (xxi).6

However, Mrs. Tulliver subverts her angelic image through her self-centered reactions to her husband's bankruptcy and the subsequent auction of her household goods. The narrator ironically comments that she is not a 'woman who could shed abundant tears, except in moments when the prospect of losing her furniture [becomes] unusually vivid.' In the family crisis, all her worries are about the possible auction of furniture which she spent endless hours polishing. She also mourns the loss of her money she brought in marriage, and her

linen and china that she bought with her money before marriage--such as her tablecloths on which the 'Elizabeth Dodson' is embroidered (179, 180). While the novel satirizes Mrs. Tulliver's self-centeredness, it also raises a question about the Victorian law regarding married women's property.

Marriage in nineteenth-century England was regulated by the law of 'coverture' which signifies 'that husband and wife are treated at Common law as one person indivisible, the personal and separate existence of wife being legally considered as absorbed and consolidated in that of her husband, from which it is judicially indistinguishable, and under whose wing, protection, and cover she acts' (Wharton 311-12, emphasis mine). Until the passage of the Married Women's Property Act (1882), this law automatically transformed married women's property into their husbands's.7 Along with Mrs. Glegg who always asserts that 'my money,...not yours, Mr. Glegg' (189), Mrs. Tulliver also persistently keeps her sense of her separate self and property. In doing so, she not only dismantles the Victorian legal assumption that regards women's existence as 'absorbed' into that of her husband, but also subtly subverts her image of a submissive and selfless domestic angel.

The novel continues to raise doubts about Victorian femininity in the portrayal of Mrs. Gritty Moss, Tulliver's sister. She suffers the disgrace of marriage to a poor man and bears the burden of raising eight children in poverty (54-

55, 75). She is too exhausted by toil, poverty and children to have strength left for any pride: 'Mrs Moss did not take her stand on the equality of the human race: she was a patient, prolific, and loving-hearted woman' (71). This statement made by the narrator is deliberately ambiguous. First, it may mean that while Mrs. Moss's 'patient' and 'loving hearted' nature qualifies her for an angel-in-thehouse, the same qualities also turn her into an inferior being. Second, the statement may connote that Mrs. Moss has been reduced to an animal existence seen in her 'prolific' production of babies: sexual pleasure on her husband's part necessitates Mrs. Moss's tiresome motherhood. It is clear, then, that the novel mounts a formidable critique of the Victorian idealization of wifehood and motherhood, turning it into the rhetoric of female powerlessness.9

Mrs. Moss is rather fortunately protected by Mr. Tulliver's brotherly consideration. Mr. Tulliver's desire to make Moss pay back three hundred pounds recedes at his sister's petition, and at her analogy of the relationship between Mrs. Moss and himself, to one between Maggie and Tom. He treats Gritty with tenderness because he fears if he is severe with his sister, Tom will be 'hard and cruel' to his sister, Maggie. But his paternalistic exemption of his sister's debt hastens him into a financial mire, just as his unsolicited paying off of his debt to Mrs. Glegg does. His debt to Mrs. Glegg need not have been paid off immediately but

for his male ego: 'a male Tulliver [is] far more than equal to four female Dodsons' (140). Tulliver's patriarchal pride hastens only his downfall.

The Mill on the Floss in fact registers the process of the decline of Tulliver's patriarchal authority. Mr. Tulliver owns Dorlcote Mill by virtue of one hundred years of family possession. According to Mr. Tulliver, 'water [is] water' (141), and his right to the water is based on the genealogy of fathers who have handed the mill on to sons. He believes that he has inherited the privilege and authority, along with its ownership. However, Pivart, who has recently bought the farm upstream, tries to change the direction of the Floss. To Mr. Tulliver's simple thinking, Pivart has no right to meddle with the river's water-flow. In this transitional society, Mr. Tulliver confesses that he cannot read 'the maze of this puzzling world'. Tulliver 'goes to law' thinking patrimony guarantees him legal right to water. Predictably enough, Tulliver goes bankrupt and loses his mill. The novel thus shows that his inability to interpret a complex, changing world correctly and to act upon it is incompatible with his patriarchal pride, thereby overriding his 'subjective' sense of superiority over women.

Despite witnessing the decline of his father as the head of the family, Tom Tulliver inherits his father's sense of gender hierarchy even more strongly. After his father's loss of a suit, Tom joins Mr. Dean's firm, enters the peddling

business, pays his father's debts, buys back the mill from Wakem, and becomes the mill's 'master.' Obviously, Tom's modest, hard-earned business successes entitle him to a place in the lower echelons of the new commercial middle class. He fills the place his father has vacated and fills it with more authority than his father has done . Tom emphasizes to his sister that he is the master. Even in his childhood, he 'was very fond of his sister, and meant always to take care of her, make her his housekeeper, and punish her when she did wrong' This is later translated into his adult promise to (36).Maggie--'I shall always take care of you. But you must mind what I say' (207). What is notable is that his paternal benevolence excludes any consideration of Maggie's own independent desires: 'my kindness can only be directed by what I believe to be good for you' (342). For him, the idea of the middle-class family under the paternal rule is undisputable.

Tom's movement up on the social ladder makes his belief in the sexual division more severe: 'I should like to enter into some business where I can get on--a manly business where I should have to look after things and get credit for what I did. And I shall want to keep my mother and sister' (202). In Tom's view, 'business' is a 'manly' thing; his mother and sister are to be taken care of by him. Obviously, Tom reiterates the patriarchal norm of the dependency of women on men for livelihood. Ironically, here, Maggie is almost commodified by her equation with 'things' that Tom seeks to

'look after.' It is natural, then, that when Maggie fails to obey Tom, his rejection of her should invoke the language of the loss of ownership: 'I wash my hands of you for ever. You don't belong to me' (423).

Maggie resists Tom's patriarchal oppression and imposition of a leisured lady's life style on her. Maggie declares: 'I can't live in dependence--I can't live with my brother--though he is very good to me. He would like to provide for me; but that would be intolerable to me' (361). Maggie sews for money and later teaches at a school rather than let Tom support her. Predictably, Maggie's struggle to keep her independence and her failure to conform to a passive middle-class lady cause constant conflict between her and Tom. However, the novel also shows that, despite Maggie's determination, the job options for nineteenth-century women are too limited to provide a sense of self-fulfillment. Rather, Maggie's low-paying work outside the home takes a physical and emotional toll on her.

In book 6, chapter 2, Maggie visits Lucy Dean's pleasant salon during holidays from schoolwork. After the general deprivation she has been suffering during the two years since her father's death, Maggie finds the leisurely life in the Dean household 'intoxicating' (350). Dean's home has a 'well-furnished drawing room with an open grand piano,' a garden, and a boat house (316), all of which indicate a leisured-class life. Maggie's 'joyless days' as a school teacher in a

'third-rate schoolroom' has made her vulnerable for the first time to the delights of a 'young lady's life' represented by Lucy's (326, 335, 350). With her sweet demeanor and fashionable clothes, Lucy is an ideal portrait of middle-class femininity.

The painful contrast between Maggie's lower-middle-class working life and Lucy's upper-middle-class life of leisure cannot be more cogently revealed than when they make plans for the charity bazaar. Lucy in Stephen's presence describes Maggie's plain sewing as 'exquisite,' worth displaying as the sort of 'fancy work' women of leisure do (330). understands woman's work as ornamental. Selling 'effeminate futilities' to male purchasers for charity is only playselling, whose actual function is to mark the high status of women who do not actually need to sell anything. 10 Maggie, however, it was more than that -- an economic necessity. As she confesses to Lucy, '[p]lain sewing was the only thing I could get money by; so I was obliged to try and do it well' (330). However, Maggie appears at the bazaar with Lucy as one of her kind who does not need to earn. This shows that Maggie is caught between her desire to assert herself as a proud working woman and her other desire to be like Lucy.

It is natural, in this context, that Maggie's relationship with Stephen Guest reflects her oscillation between self-assertion and submission, and between her desire to defy the Victorian feminine norm and her desire to conform to it.

Stephen is a symbolic representative of 'good society.' In book 4 chapter 3, the narrator comments: 'good society has its claret and its velvet-carpets, its dinner-engagements six weeks deep, its opera and its faery ball rooms; rides off its ennui on thoroughbred horses, lounges at the club, has to keep clear of crinoline vortices, gets its science done by Faraday, and its religion by the superior clergy who are to be met in the best houses' (255). This 'good society' is now palpably present in the form of Stephen Guest, with his 'diamond rings, attar of roses, and air of nonchalant leisure, at twelve o'clock in the day' (316). As the privileged son of the owner of 'the largest oil-mill and the most extensive wharf in St. Ogg's' (316), Stephen can enjoy all the quintessential luxuries of upper-middle-class life.

However, the novel implies that this upper-middle-class life retains its dark side: 'good society, floated on gossamer wings of light irony is of very expensive production, required nothing less than a wide and arduous national life condensed in unfragrant deafening factories, cramping itself in mines, sweating at furnaces, grinding, hammering, weaving under more and less oppression of carbonic acid' (255-56). Thus, the upper-middle-class life seems to be predicated upon the sacrifices and toil of working-classes. The novel suggests that capitalist society as a whole lives on class hierarchy and power imbalance between exploiter and exploited, master and slave.

The novel, then, demonstrates that in an unequal society, inequality is found not only in class but also in gender. Class hierarchy in a larger society translates into sexual hierarchy in the domestic realm. In their mutual entanglement, class inequality and sexual inequality are presented as the two sides of one coin. It is important to note that Stephen is deeply immersed in his 'tendency to predominate' (363), which governs his view of women. conscious of Lucy's inferior position as 'the daughter of his father's subordinate partner' (323). Lucy's 'insipidity' (317) adds to his sense of superiority. He has chosen Lucy for their difference in class and her 'insipidity' -- 'a circumstance which gives a young man an agreeable consciousness of his own dignity' (323). Obviously, he is not very different from Maggie's father, who also chose a spouse who would bolster his own sense of male power. This suggests that 'good society,' the highest destination of middle-class social mobility, is no different from the lower-middle-classes in the culture of male dominion.

However, Stephen's preference for weak, and inferior womanhood is challenged by his increasing infatuation with Maggie. Since he firmly believes that the 'proper function of women' is 'the duties of the domestic hearth' (353), Stephen accordingly determines that Maggie is not his type. Unlike Lucy, Maggie is not the domesticated woman Lucy is. Stephen perceives the disturbing combination of 'the delicate

in Maggie's eye--'defying and deprecating, contradicting and clinging, imperious and beseeching' (357). He is confused by the strange attractiveness of Maggie's character which paradoxically combines female power and powerless, and self-assertion and self-denial. Confronted with Maggie's womanhood unexplainable to his fixed notion of women, Stephen loses his self-control to unknown passion. Still, he tries to justify his infatuation in terms of male mastery: 'To see such a creature subdued by love for one would be a lot worth having' (357). However, the novel shows that Maggie's defiant side is not to be totally subjugated to his On the contrary, Stephen is subjugated to Maggie's witch-like charm. In this sense, the relationship between Stephen and Maggie dismantles the idea of male domination.

The novel's portrayal of exuberant sexuality in Stephen and Maggie's relationship is another strong subversion of the Victorian ideology of sexless women. As they walk in the conservatory, 'a mad impulse seized on Stephen, and he darts 'towards [Maggie's'] arm and shower[s] kisses on it, clasping the wrist' (387). Even though Maggie attempts to resist his advance, she also falls under sexual spell working between them. It seems to me that this portrayal of sexual tension between Maggie and Stephen is the most frank description of sexuality among Eliot's novels. Again and again, there is a close- up rendering of the movement and allure of two sentient bodies and physical notation of fingers, arms, eyes,

In "Borne Along by the Tide," Maggie hair and voice. languidly allows herself to be led by Stephen into the boat: 'Maggie felt that she was being led down the garden among the roses, being helped with firm tender care into the boat...--all by stronger presence that seemed to bear her along without any act of her own will, like the added self which comes with the sudden exalting influence of a strong tonic' (407). Here, one has to note the significance of the word 'the added self.' Maggie's behavior driven by desire is not a momentary aberration, but an expression of her other unalienable self which emerges from the physical reality of her body and its powers. That is, this 'added self' of Maggie's is bound up with her incarnate desire and passion. All this description challenges the Victorian idea of woman's 'natural' lack of sexual desire. 12

Ultimately, in this sense, Maggie's conflicts between passion and duty, love and home, and self-assertion and self-denial are fundamentally unresolvable one. Maggie pits her sense of duty and home--'There memories and affections, and longing after perfect goodness, that has such a strong hold on me' (418)-- against Stephen's 'natural law' of 'feeling': 'We have proved that the feeling which draws us toward each other is too strong to be overcome' (417). But both the law of duty and the law of passion are rooted in Maggie's self, causing a tragic clash without a guarantee of a handy resolution. Thus, The Mill on the Floss refuses to show the moralizing victory

of one side of Maggie's nature over another one.

Furthermore, the novel shows the disparity between Maggie's idealization of her home and her domestic reality. When Maggie resists Stephen in the name of duty and loyalty to her family, she evokes a powerful religious, utopian image of her home as a 'haven' -- a 'sanctuary where sacred relics lay, where she would be rescued from more falling' (420). However, the truth is that such inner, idealized landscape of the home has found no actualization in her life. always been 'weary of [her] home' (293), which denies her any intellectual and emotional outlet. She has 'rebelled against her lot' which confines her to the domestic realm according to the ideology of separate spheres. Her one-time immersion in romance novels was her attempt for a 'flight from home' (252). She also tried hard to lead an independent life away from her brother's patriarchal rule. Clearly, the novels thus reveals the contradiction between Maggie's evocation of an utopian home and its unpalatable reality, and undermines her utopian fantasy of the home.

Predictably, Maggie's wishful thinking of her home as a haven is immediately destroyed when she returns home to St. Ogg's where Tom refuses Maggie a shelter and forgiveness: 'You will find no home with me.... You don't belong to me' (423). In his thinking, her sister has overstepped the bounds of patriarchal domesticity. The disillusioned Maggie tries to be strong and independent once more. When Aunt Glegg offers her

shelter at her own house, Maggie, insisting on her 'independence,' stays at Bob Jakin's house and does needlework instead. She later takes a position with Dr. Kenn, an Anglican clergyman, as caretaker of his motherless children. But by book 7, chapter 5, Dr. Kenn, who has grown sensitive to the local gossip and feels he should avoid even the 'appearance of evil,' asks Maggie to leave and offers to find her a position in another town. It is clear that the whole community abandons Maggie: 'There was no home, no help for the erring' (449).

However, the novel puts Maggie's unfortunate situation in an ironic light, placing moral blame on society's ideology, not on Maggie's digression from their superficial norm. Maggie's painful renunciation of desire and her revocation of her trip with Stephen are interpreted by her community as moral transgressions. What is ironical is that the middle-class society of St. Ogg's would have welcomed Maggie and Stephen if they had married by eloping. This fact raises a question about the validity of the bourgeois idea of marriage as a foundation of moral/social order. At best, it is a facade of order which hides its arbitrariness.

Ostracized both by her family and society, there is no possibility for Maggie to find a home. The novel does not show Maggie returning to her brother's home begging her acceptance, nor does it show her retrieving the situation with her persistent moral ardor. The novel's final resolution--

Maggie's death by flood with her brother--is charged with contradictory connotations. Its interpretations vary from her defeatist death to tragic liberation, from Maggie's aggression to the possibility of androgynous wholeness. will discuss its convoluted complexity, in relation Maggie's final 'masculine' role of rescuer in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. But here, I would like to state that the utopian unity established between Maggie and her brother in their euphoric death should be put into ironic perspective. It almost seems that this double-death replaces the final bliss of home in the normal Victorian courtship plot: 'brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted' (456). And the narrator portrays the death of the brother and the sister as the restitution of their first, most paradisal state: 'living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together' (456). But the problem is that this narrative revival of a utopian memory is hardly justified by one's view of the frustrating relationship between Tom and Maggie in their childhood, which casts doubt on this pastoral unity of their childhood. In this sense, the narrator's apotheosis of the ecstatic reunion of brother and sister in death rather heightens the reader's awareness of the disparity between the ideal of tight family bond and the reality of emotional distance among them. So great is the psychological and gender rupture between Maggie and Tom that it is only a

cataclysmic event like the flood that gives the reader the momentary illusion of seeing them reunited.

It is no accident that the novel subtly subverts the utopian nature of Maggie's reconciliation with Tom in death. Maggie feels 'that mysterious wondrous happiness that is one with pain' (456). It is ironical that Maggie's feeling of 'happiness' is combined with her sense of pain. One cannot forget that the novel has hitherto demonstrated that Maggie's pain is that of female existence in the patriarchal society which relegates women to a subordinate station, denying them an opportunity to realize their 'full life.' The novel here intensifies its subtle criticism of Victorian gender ideology by showing that Maggie, a failed domestic woman in society's eyes, is unable to overcome her pain of womanhood even in her last moment.

2. Middlemarch

In Middlemarch, Eliot intensifies her critique of genderand power-related domestic arrangements, by demonstrating the
negative consequences of a problematic 'social faith'-patriarchy. The novel as a whole shows that the existing
state of wedded life can be an emphatic dead end. In this
context, Joseph Allen Boone can be justified in calling
Middlemarch 'the swan song of courtship tradition' of 'happily
ever after' which dominated classical narratives since the

eighteenth century (141).13

In particular, the novel provides a sardonic view of Victorian marriages whose order encodes male dominance and female submission. Such an unequal distribution of power renders the relationship of the sexes profoundly asymmetrical, an asymmetry that has derived, in Mary Jacobus' words, from the 'ultimately conservative and doom-ridden concept of [sexual] difference as opposition' ("Difference" 12). Within this framework of binary opposition, wedlock is at best viewed as the union of complementary opposites, or, at worst, as that of polar antagonists. For example, the home for Dorothea and Casaubon, or for Lydgate and Rosamond cannot be construed as a paradisal garden of harmony but as a battlefield of mortal sexual war. These marriages dismantle an assumption that the domestic realm is separated from the outer world competition and power struggle. Moreover, Middlemarch's critique of bourgeois marriage focuses on the price that male as well as female characters pay when they mindlessly act out their prescribed gender roles. Casaubon's and Lydgate's patriarchal preconceptions about the women they will marry, based notions of angelic womanhood, substantially on contribute to the failure of their marriages.

It may be true that Eliot sustains certain domestic idealism in her portrayal of the marriages of Mary Garth and Fred Vincy, and Dorothea and Ladislaw. Their comparative domestic happiness lies in their mutual affection and

complementarity. Their non-hierarchical sexual relationship represents a certain removal from the patriarchal prescription of sexual polarity. Even so, Eliot mounts a critique of the bourgeois form of marriage which inevitably contributes to the exclusion of women from public life. The lives of both Mary and Dorothea are largely confined within the domestic realm. The novel implicitly deplores the lack of a social condition in which these women might have developed their full potential.

Middlemarch begins with all its young couples sharing a naive 'contemplation of that matrimonial garden-scene, where, as all experience showed, the path was to be bordered with flowers' (10:111). But their idealism eventually confronts a different reality. First of all, Dorothea Brooke's marriage to Edward Casaubon is presented as a Quixotic pursuit of intellectual and moral idealism on Dorothea's part, and as the male delusion about woman's nature on Casaubon's part. Dorothea's notion about marriage derives from her 'exalted enthusiasm about the ends of life, an enthusiasm which was lit chiefly by its own fire' (3:50). She wants to unite with Casaubon in purposes whose tenor is 'unsuited...to the commoner order of minds,' to 'help him in his life's labour' -- but with the understanding that the labor is 'something greater, which she could serve in devoutly for its own sake' (5:66, 48:520). Clearly, Dorothea's rhetoric of 'great' wifely duties is closely connected with her epic desire to 'lead a grand life here--now--in England' (3:51).

In particular, for Dorothea, marriage is the means to fulfill her intellectual aspirations. She believes that her participation in Casaubon's intellectual pursuits would provide her 'new vistas' on 'that toy-box history of the world adapted to young ladies which made the chief part of her education' (10:113). Fed up with poor education for middle-class women, Dorothea is thrilled at the chances to acquire 'masculine knowledge' such as Latin and Greek (7:88). Thus, the novel clearly shows that Dorothea's displaced desire to get education through marriage to a scholar-husband stems from the Victorian educational system which denies women intellectual opportunities.

Just as Dorothea's marital desire unconsciously subsumes her own need, Casaubon is centered on his own need, blind to Dorothea's separate desire. He sees marital relations in terms of female tenderness as well as accession to his wishes: 'he observed with pleasure that Miss Brooke showed an ardent submissive affection which promised to fulfill his own agreeable provisions of marriage' (7:87). Clearly, Casaubon envisions that Dorothea serves only his need--'to supply aid in graver labours and to cast a charm over vacant hours' (5:66). Casaubon's internalization of the angel-in-house ideology makes him assume Dorothea's childlike innocence as an angelic purity, not as a symptom of embryonic immaturity.

Both Dorothea and Casaubon are making each other 'the Other,'

the construction of their own desire. It is natural, then, that the courtship plot leads not to marital harmony, but to the confrontation of their conflicting desires.

Contrary to her marital expectations for a 'fuller life,' Dorothea is isolated by Casaubon from his work rather than drawn into it. Dorothea is left only with 'the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty' of filling her time with frivolous and insignificant activities: 'Marriage, which was to bring guidance into worthy and imperative occupation, had not yet freed her from the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty' (28:307). Thus, the novel calls attention to the destructive qualities inherent in the ideology of the angel-in-the-house itself. Dorothea's eagerness to serve is not gratifying to Casaubon, who sees her passionate dedication to his concerns as an infringement on his personal liberty and a threat to his academic self-esteem. Casaubon feels threatened by her yearning for knowledge, because he fears--rightly, with just cause -- that she will discover that narrowness and futility of his scholarly pursuits. Ultimately, Dorothea becomes the terrible agent of exposure, a 'cruel outward accuser' who seems 'to present herself as a spy, watching everything with a malign power of inference' (20:232-33) and reminding him of his own shortcomings. Casaubon identifies Dorothea with a 'cruel outward accuser...in the shape of a wife' Casaubon's notion of the devoted angel has come to symbolize the angel of destruction.

Moreover, the novel satirizes the Victorian notion of an ideal wife whose existence is 'absorbed' into that of her husband, by showing that Casaubon's unhappiness also stems from his perception that Dorothea has desires separate from his own. Casaubon argues against Ladislaw's projected visit to Lowick, even before Dorothea has ventured an opinion about it. Her angry response, 'Wait at least till I appear to consult my own pleasure apart from yours' (29:316), pinpoints the central issue of their marital problem. Even though Dorothea has not yet allowed her desires to diverge from his, Casaubon resents even the potential in her for such an assertion of difference.

Casaubon fails to see the depth of Dorothea's nature, because he is too deeply immersed in the stereotypical, patriarchal notions of women. He sees Dorothea's unexpected behavior and frame-breaking femininity as mysterious, threatening, and subversive -- 'most unaccountable, darklyfeminine' (20:232). In order to suppress the threatening aspect of a woman's self, Casaubon--like Tom Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss--misuses his masculine power, assuming the voice of despotic authority: 'Dorothea, my love, this is not the first occasion, but it were well that it should be the last, on which you have assumed a judgement on subjects beyond your scope' (37:410). But the novel demonstrates that this fault lies not totally in Casaubon as an individual but in society: '[Casaubon] had done nothing exceptional... -- nothing but what society sanctions' (29:312). The novel then makes it clear that society's patriarchal ideology turns a marital home into a 'virtual tomb' for both man and woman (48:516).

Nevertheless, Dorothea does not remain subjected to When he falls ill, she naturally performs her Casaubon. wifely duty. But her wifely duty is removed from its association with the notion of feminine subjugation. pities him with a 'presentiment that there might be a sad consciousness in his life which made as great a need on his side as on her own' (21:243). What is noteworthy is that Dorothea is discovering the path of duty not through Casaubon's strength but through his weakness. She is not a self-forgetful angel in the house, in that she is sadly conscious of her own need as well as Casaubon's need. is some validity in Casaubon's suspicion that Dorothea's 'wifely devotion' might be 'a penitential expiation of unbelieving thoughts' and that her acquiescence, 'a selfapproved effort of forbearance' (42:455-56). In this context, Dorothea's complete wifely submission and merely duteous devotion represents 'only the ideal and not the real yoke of marriage' (48:523).

Casaubon's fear of Dorothea's autonomous desire is so intense that he attempts to exert his power over her even further by asking her to promise that she will always 'avoid doing what [he] should deprecate' (48:518). Through his codicil, his 'dead hand' seeks to extend his influence beyond

even his own lifespan, to 'keep his cold grasp on Dorothea's life' (50:535). However, Dorothea is able to counter his mute power with her own silence, which is her 'suppressed rebellion' (42:455). She is finally saved by Casaubon's death from giving her consent. Casaubon dies by a deus ex machina that frees Dorothea from the consequences of her wrong marital In this sense, Dorothea and Casaubon's short-lived marital life fits neatly into what Carol Christ has described as a pattern of 'aggression and providential death' (130). When Dorothea starts to express repressed anger toward her husband, the object of her anger becomes ill and finally dies. This symbolically suggests that the married life of Dorothea and Casaubon was one of the explicit mutual aggression. Dorothea's potentially murderous rage is given a postmortem expression when she admonishes Rosamond in chapter 81: 'There is something very awful in the nearness [marriage] brings.... and then the marriage stays with us like a murder' (81:855). It seems that Dorothea is in fact talking about herself. He who came 'too near' was killed. In this sense, Dorothea surprisingly aligns herself with femme fatales such as Rosamond and Madame Laure who bring about their husbands' early death.

In the novel's thematic structure, Lydgate obviously parallels Dorothea, and he suffers both social and matrimonial 'fetters,' without the privilege of being freed by the conventional death of his spouse. Lydgate pays for his wrong

choice as long as he lives, giving up his professional dreams, accepting 'his narrowed lot with sad resignation,' and 'carrying that burthen pitifully' (81:858). The young Lydgate and Rosamond's marriage begins as an untested romance. them, marriage is synonymous with 'Ideal happiness (of the kind known in the Arabian Nights, in which you are invited to step from the labor and discord of the street into a paradise where everything is given to you and nothing claimed)' (36:385). This is a paradisal vision of marriage as elevated human existence. Especially, Lydgate is blithely confident that marriage to his flower-like enchantress, Rosamond, will be 'a paradise with sweet laughs for bird-notes, and blue eyes for a heaven' (11:122). Lydgate believes that his good taste and his wife's apparent submissiveness can create an ideal home life he desires -- an idyllic retreat which will not interfere with the conduct of his career as surgeon and medical researcher. Rosamond believes that Lydgate's aristocratic blood and her charm are sufficient to assure them an income necessary to maintain her desired standard of living. But both are mistaken: Lydgate and Rosamond's illfated union echoes Adam and Eve's dissention in Eden.

Despite his supposedly disinterested and scientific optic, Lydgate adheres to customary views about women's nature. Lydgate's advanced conception of medical reform is strangely at odds with his obstinately traditional sense of women and marriage: 'the complexities of love and marriage'

are the 'subjects on which he felt himself amply informed by literature, and that traditional wisdom which is handed down in the genial conversation of men' (16:193). The passage makes it clear that Lydgate has internalized conventional ideas about woman's nature, circulated among men. Lydgate is portrayed much more sympathetically than Casaubon, but, like the older man, Lydgate also believes that 'one of the prettiest attitudes of the feminine mind' is 'to adore a man's pre-eminence without too precise a knowledge of what it consist[s] in' (27:301). Clearly, Lydgate anticipates that his wife will be an adornment whose personal angelic function will be to serve and adore him. He sees Rosamond as an embodiment of 'perfect womanhood,' 'who was instructed to the true womanly limit and not a hair's-breadth beyond--docile, therefore, and ready to carry out behests which came from beyond that limit' (36:387). Lydgate's patriarchal view of women is a sign of the times: it is part of education of a well-bred man, one who has successfully absorbed the gender biases of his culture. 14 As in Casaubon's case, however, his view of a domestic angel is to be cruelly dismantled by real womanhood and domestic reality.

The portrayal of Rosamond certainly fits a stereotypical feminine 'ideal.' She combines physical beauty with perfect disinterest in 'masculine' concerns--even Lydgate's vocational and financial concerns. Rosamond, 'the flower of Mrs Lemon's school' (11:123), bases her attitude on the premise that for

a woman to be an ornament, she has to be provided by her husband with all that she needs: 'There was nothing financial, still less sordid, in her previsions; she cared about what were considered refinements, and not about the money that was to pay for them' (12:146). Rosamond focuses her energy on the domestic sphere, since the home is the only thing she can claim as her own. It is noteworthy that Rosamond's idea of a proper home is not separate from her idea of furniture, plates, linen, and luxury, echoing Mrs. Tulliver's idea of the home in The Mill on the Floss. Rosamond regards herself as blameless in using all her wiles to protect her 'home.'

In doing so, however, Rosamond displays the dark side of the Victorian feminine ideal. The apparent perfect childangel wife demonstrates the corrosive effect of her selfpleasing and tenacious vacuity. Rosamond knows so little about the world of everyday realities that her only response to Lydgate's impending financial ruin is helpless tears and the infuriating 'What can I do' (58:640). She adopts a silent and subversive aggression towards her husband to protect her from the loss of her home and forces him to provide her with a home of 'all flowers and gilding' at tremendous personal sacrifice ("Finale" 893). Ironically, all of Lydgate's pains are taken for granted as a fulfillment of the expectations of Victorian society for a woman of Rosamond's exquisite femininity. When Lydgate compares Rosamond to a 'basil plant' which feeds on the murdered man's brains ("Finale"

893), he clearly sees Rosamond as a kind of parasite or even a vampire. He has married her because she resembles a beautiful fragile flower; but he comes to see the noxious cannibalism of that flower. However, Rosamond's economic predation is sanctioned by social values that prohibit middle-class women from contributing to the family economy or even from understanding economic matters. The novel implies that Rosamond and other women are trained to be parasitic egoists by society. With cannibalistic imagery, the Lydgate marriage thus parodies the ideal bourgeois marital arrangement that requires the absorption of the woman's life in man's. In fact, it becomes a grotesque reversal of that ideal.

The problem with Lydgate and Rosamond's marriage is obvious in their shared idea of sexual polarity. Lydgate's internalization of Victorian domestic ideology leads him to regard women as belonging to a different species. The narrator says, 'Lydgate relied much on the psychological difference between for the sake of variety I will call goose and gander: especially on the innate submissiveness of the goose as beautiful corresponding to the strength of the gander' (36:391). As for Rosamond, the novel shows how much her character has been shaped by the Victorian idea of the 'feminine' role-- that of cultivating the superficial qualities that would make her admired, especially in her glamorized appearance and demeanor. This prepared Rosamond nicely for attaining a husband but not for relating to one.

She tenaciously sticks to her feminine sphere, refusing to try to understand her husband's financial and emotional difficulties.

Given Lydgate's own use of different-species imagery, it is ironic that he is later troubled with the discovery that Rosamond sees things the same way. After an argument about the furniture inventory he reflects despondently: 'It seemed that she had no more identified her self with him than if they had been creatures of different species and opposing interests' (58:642-43). As for Rosamond, 'He was always to her a being apart, doing what she objected to' (75:814). If Rosamond is a victim of Lydgate's myopia, Lydgate, is, in turn, an alienated victim of the female otherness around him. The novel thus shows that Lydgate and Rosamond's domestic tragedy is a consequence of their internalization of Victorian sexual ideology.

The novel also demonstrates that the breakdown of mutuality and communication between the genders brings out an obvious power struggle in the domestic realm. As Robert Kiely has shown, 'From the beginning, he and Rosamond have regarded each other as types, capable of being dominated but not understood' (120). The narrator says, 'Lydgate's anger rose: he was prepared to be indulgent towards feminine weakness, but not towards feminine dictation' (64:700). But Lydgate and Rosamond are much alike in their will to power. Neither cannot hold absolute power: '[Lydgate] had a growing dread of

Rosamond's quiet elusive obstinacy, which would not allow any assertion of power to be final' (64:710). The result for Lydgate is an 'amazed sense of his powerlessness over Rosamond' (58:631). His desperate effort to keep his masculine superiority intact is thus seriously undermined in Middlemarch. The horror of Rosamond and Lydgate's story is that they remain trapped together in the interminable bond of wedlock, neither ever free from, nor in control of, the other. In this sense, their marriage comes close to the kind of mortal sexual battle enacted in the legend of Ghost's Walk in Bleak House. Marriage as a legalized frame of sexual mastery becomes invidious in the light of its permanency.

It is no accident that behind Rosamond lurks the even more frightening specter of Madame Laure, whose slaying of her husband concretizes woman's rage against male authority. Madame Laure serves as a symbolic marker of the transgression of a patriarchal social form, as she tells Lydgate, 'I do not like husbands. I will never have husbands' (15:183). When Lydgate falls in love with Rosamond 'with wonderful rapidity, in spite of experience supposed to be finished off with the drama of Laure' (36:380), he mistakenly imagines her as the antithesis of Laure. Not surprisingly, however, he discovers that underneath Rosamond's delicate gentility lurks another Laure, plunging a knife into his soul, although she wields no actual weapon. Lydgate's response to the breakdown of his marriage reveals his deep-seated fear: he asks inwardly,

'Would she kill me because I wearied her?' (58:638). Women's implicit or explicit revolt against pervasive patriarchy ends up in emotional or sometimes physical violence. When Dorothea admonishes Rosamond about marriage, by saying that '[T]he marriage stays with us like a murder,' its irony reverberates not only in Dorothea's marriage but also in Lydgate dies at the age of fifty, Rosamond's (81:855). indifferent to his worldly success, regarding his life as a Rosamond feels rewarded by Lydgate's death, and failure. presumably feels lucky in finding a second husband who is both wealthy and elderly. The breakdown of domestic mutuality and communication persists.

The novel strongly suggests that this kind of tragic outcome may be 'due to the conditions of marriage itself' (75:810) embedded in patriarchal ideologies. By revealing Lydgate, like Casaubon, to be a victim of his own perspective of women, Eliot makes the point that both sexes may aid in perpetuating a system which is damaging to everyone. Lydgate's failure is ultimately a cultural, as well as an individual, responsibility: 'society' shares much of the blame for his failure. Consequently, Eliot clearly demonstrates here that the idea of 'different species' is inimical to the ideal of Eliot's 'ethic of sympathy,' namely the 'deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men' (61:668).

In contrast to Lydgate and Rosamond, Nicholas Bulstrode

and Harriet Bulstrode stay together even in difficult times. As a traditional housewife, Mrs. Bulstrode does not draw central attention until chapter 74. Yet, here she is shown learning of her husband's public disgrace, comforting him, resigning herself to a diminished sorrowful life, and making herself one with her suffering and broken spouse. husband's moral disgrace may have destroyed the admiration she had felt for him: she has been an affectionate and loving wife who has revered her husband, even believing him to be 'one of those men whose memories should be written when they died' (36:382). Her husband's public fall will separate her from the town where she has lived all her life and hoped to end her Yet, Harriet Bulstrode, as an 'imperfectly taught days. woman, whose phrases and beliefs were an odd patchwork' (74:807), is sufficiently moved by loyalty, compassion and tenderness towards the man with whom she has shared her life. She determinedly puts aside her usual fine clothes and jewellery in favor of plain garments. Ready to assume poverty, she shows utmost compassion to her husband in a nonjudgmental way. Harriet's unexpected noble action which rescues her husband from despair clearly contrasts with Rosamond's chilling response to the plight of her husband who is also under suspicion for the death of Raffles. Ironically, as her husband's image as a great man is tarnished, Harriet becomes a great female hero through her supreme sympathetic Thus the novel dismantles the patriarchal assumption act.

that nature has intended 'greatness' only 'for men' (39:424).

It is significant, however, that a full exchange of confidences between Harriet and Bulstrode over his actions seems impossible. They shrink from words in their crisis: 'She could not say, 'How much is only slander and false suspicion?' and he did not say, 'I am innocent' (74:808). Harriet does not dare to ask for explanations, nor does Bulstrode provide them. In this sense, I agree with D. A. Miller's comment that '[t]he Bulstrode's story is brought to term, but the term seems only a permanent state of suspensiveness. The actual meaning of their scene together remains in the air: blindness matching up with concealment? or both transcending themselves?' (Narrative and Its Discontents 228). It is very doubtful, then, that spousal sympathy between Harriet and Bulstrode necessarily represents their complete marital union.

Among all the Middlemarch couples, Fred Vincy and Mary Garth seem to offer the purest pastoral version of marriage. Mary is allowed to live in the nostalgic and unchanging world of childhood in a way which Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea are not. The novel emphasizes rootedness as the distinction of Mary's and Fred's relationship: 'She had never thought that any man could love her except Fred, who had espoused her with the umbrella-ring, when she wore socks and little strapped shoes' (52:561). Thus, the marriage of Mary and Fred perpetuates the myth of their ideal childhood.¹⁷

However, Mary Garth's character does not necessarily conform to the portrait of a submissive, domestic woman who dreams of marriage as the only venue of her life's fulfillment. Mary, who belongs to the lower middle class, is contrasted with Dorothea or Rosamond. Along with Miss Morgan, the governess for the Vincys, Mary Garth and her mother, Susan, are the only women in the novel who work and financially contribute to their family. Because Mary works-an excellent seamstress, a hardworking nurse to Peter Featherstone -- , she is pitied by Rosamond: 'It is a wretched life for you' (12:141).18 Mary, of course, refuses such a logic. Like his father, she enjoys her work. Unlike the young Dorothea and Rosamond, Mary is a realist as far as marriage is concerned: she has no illusions about how her husband will transform her life intellectually or materially. Neither does she succumb to the notion that marriage is the only way of a woman's life. When Fred's prospects look unpromising, she resolves to remain in defiance of the stereotype of the old maid, 'single and merry' (86:886).

Even in her marriage, unlike young Dorothea who looked for a 'sort of father' for her first husband (1:32), Mary does not assume a daughterly position toward her husband. A subversive element of Fred and Mary's marriage is that Mary chooses a brother-sister-like marital relationship and resists a role of submission to the traditional sources of patriarchal authority. According to Boone, the brother-sister

relationship ideally participates in a 'non-combative mode of male-female relationship, one that is unthreatening because 'gender difference is rendered secondary to the bond of bloodlikeness, familiarity and friendship' (154). Since Fred is incompetent in dealing with money and career, Reverend Farebrother's proposal is a 'painful' temptation for Mary to indulge 'fleeting visions' of a better life (57:625). Mary finally marries Fred rather than Mr. Farebrother, partly because she cannot allow any 'cheapening' of her original affection for Fred (Ibid.) The happy closure of her courtship plot is thus achieved, in part, by the sacrifice of her upwardly mobile desire. At the same time, however, Mary's decision to marry Fred seems to reflect her need to stand in a position of authority over her husband, as she playfully says to her father: 'husbands are an inferior class of men, who require keeping in order' (86:887). Indeed, she directs the course of Fred's career. This is a subtle subversion of the Victorian idea of domestic hierarchy between husband and wife.

In this sense, Mary seems to be repeating the pattern of her parents' marriage. Caleb Garth is a honest, competent and knowledgeable land agent. He is adored by his children as a heroic figure like Cincinnatus--the Roman king, captain, farmer, and equivocal tyrant. However, he is portrayed as a failure in his business, a man who allows his family to become destitute because he does not bother to charge for his

services. Despite his moral disregard for mammon, thus, Caleb's religious dedication to work cannot necessarily make him the all-around 'hero.' He must be backed by a strong wife: Mrs. Garth 'very early made up her mind to [Garth's] incapacity of minding his own interests, and...met the consequences cheerfully' (24:274). Caleb, as Farebrother reports, 'would hardly have pulled through as he has done without his wife' (17:205). A governess turned housewife, Susan is proud of being able to teach her pupil and work in the kitchen at the same time. She is very concerned with proving that she is not 'a useless doll' (24:275).

Nevertheless, Mary and her mother never question the power imbalance inherent in Victorian domestic arrangements. She is content to be a wise and helpful housewife and knows how to wield her feminine power to influence her man. Exercising her indirect influence on her husband, she cheerfully finds a niche within the Victorian gender system. The novel shows her acceptance of patriarchal values in symbolic ways. In the "Finale," Mary becomes the mother of three sons and, the narrator comments, 'was not discontented that she brought forth men-children only' (891). Similarly, Mary publishes a book entitled Stories of Great Men taken from Plutarch. Mary's book becomes a subject of an acutely ironic gaze by the narrator. This is a most tremendous literary achievement made by a woman in the novel: even Dorothea does not make it. But the title suggests that Mary's

literacy and intellect is used to endorse a masculine heroic tradition. Mary does not seem to share the historical sense of the narrator who poses the question at the beginning of the novel: 'Who that cares much to know the history of man,.. has not dwelt, at least briefly, on the life of Saint Theresa?' ("Prelude" 25). This question poses an ironic challenge to a male-oriented perspective of history writing. The narrator that history, celebrating the accomplishments of powerful men, hitherto ignored women, putting them, even if they are St. Theresas, on the periphery of history. However, Mary does not seem to ponder over the fact that Plutarch's history of male greatness might exclude female greatness, with which the narrator herself is greatly concerned. She does not problematize the history written by men for men, but accepts it as it is and helps to propagate it. Mary's wonderful grasp of masculine knowledge and her scholarly potential are very commendable. But at the same time, it is ironical that her 'masculinized' knowledge makes her contribute maintenance of masculine values.21

It is no accident that Mary's two siblings, Ben and Letty, reappear in the "Finale," as if to raise a question about Mary's comfortable settlement in the Victorian gender system. Ben and Letty are another version of the hierarchical sibling relationship seen in Maggie and Tom Tulliver, and the children of the "Brother and Sister" sonnets. From the beginning, Ben is seen as an aggressive child obsessed with

power: he uses Fred's whip to torment a cat. He see the embodiment of male greatness in his father. On the other hand, Letty's life is continually 'checkered by resistance to her depreciation as a girl' (57:617). She appears in the "Finale," like Maggie, using book knowledge to defeat her brother's assertions about male superiority--only to be refuted by the 'oracular sentence' of her mother who prefers boys over girls. The unmitigated frustration of Letty in the midst of the happy closure of Mary and Fred's marriage plot intensely demonstrates that even Mary's marital fulfillment cannot smoothe over the persistent problem of gender inequality.

Like the marriage of Fred and Mary, the marriage of Dorothea and Will Ladislaw includes a subversion of the patriarchal mode of marriage. In her marriage to Ladislaw, Dorothea accomplishes a radical reversal of the submissive response to the paternal authority of the late Casaubon: she rejects the codicil in Casaubon's will forbidding her marriage to Ladislaw. Like Fred and Mary, they share a sense of mutuality and communal love. Like Fred, Ladislaw is 'feminized' enough to be able to receive a woman's directions for his life.

In the beginning, Ladislaw, as a cosmopolitan artist, lacks social rootedness, inhabiting a dissenting space outside a bourgeois order. With his Polish background, his resemblance to his disinherited grandmother, and his

metaphoric association with gypsies, Ladislaw is generally connected with marginalization. Will prides himself on the 'sense of belonging to no class' (46:502). This is doubly evidenced by his state of disinheritance, and his disregard for a definite 'profession' in bourgeois society. His artistic pursuit only makes him into a dilettante. Ladislaw's romantic life also places him outside of the bourgeois marital order: he plays a light-hearted role of 'courtly lover' to Dorothea as well as to Rosamond (McMaster 115; Brady 165). No wonder, many critics have attacked his lack of conviction and manliness--for his failure to conform with the contours of the standardized bourgeois hero.

Ladislaw has been the subject of so much denigrating criticisms. He has been regarded as the unclear character who is part dilettante, part idealist, part effeminate do-nothing, and who seems unsuitable for the passionately ideal Dorothea.22 However, feminist critics, such as Gilbert and Gubar, regard the unconventional dimension in Ladislaw as an asset, referring to it as 'Eliot's radically anti-patriarchal attempt to create an image of masculinity attractive to women' (528-29). Symbolically, in the novel. Ladislaw repetitiously described in very 'feminine' terms such as his blond curly hair, delicate neck. He is the 'slim young fellow with his girl's complexion' (60:657). Mentally, Ladislaw is a man of 'feminine' sensibility and flexibility. His strong resemblance to the female rebel--his grandmother, Julia Casaubon-- further distances him from a patriarchal bloodline. In contrast, Dorothea is a woman of independent means and 'masculine' strength of character. Then it may not be too farfetched to say that Ladislaw's 'feminine masculinity' needs to be complemented by Dorothea' 'masculine femininity.' In this sense, Ellin Ringler argues that 'Eliot soon makes it evident that Ladislaw requires Dorothea's steadiness and depth of character to focus his own comparatively flighty nature' (58). Thus, the novel explodes Victorian sexual ideologies that invoke difference between the sexes to devalue women. By dismantling gender category, the novel shows that a fulfilling relationship between a man and a woman may presuppose mental androgyny.

Indeed, the novel shows that Ladislaw succeeds because of the strength and constancy of Dorothea. In love with Dorothea, Ladislaw leaves behind his dabbling in various forms of art in order to devote himself to the political life that will please her: 'but for the desire to be where Dorothea was, and perhaps the want of what else to do, Will would not... meditat[e] on the needs of the English people or criticizing English statesmanship' (46:501). Finally, he leaves Middlemarch with his bride for London and national politics, a career in Parliament. It is Dorothea who shapes Ladislaw into an 'ardent public man,' through her 'wifely help' ("Finale" 894). It is interesting to note that the portrayal of Ladislaw adopts the epithet -- 'ardent' -- which has been usually used for the description of Dorothea. It suggests that Dorothea may have shaped him in her own image. Thus, the marriage of Will and Dorothea subverts the dualisms of masculine and feminine, and the sexual ideologies they foster. The very conception of Dorothea--a woman with an ardent mind-fuses the gender division between feminine emotion and masculine mind.

However, the novel demonstrates that Dorothea pays a price for her marriage with Will. Will, a member of Parliament, is actively involved in his work, while Dorothea is relegated to offering 'wifely help.' Dorothea willingly accepts a niche in the private and domestic sphere. The woman who once made a misquided choice is now rewarded with 'a life filled with a beneficent activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and making out for herself' ("Finale" 894). Dorothea is happy, but it can scarcely escape the attention of the modern reader that she has also chosen to abdicate her autonomy and let someone else 'discover' and 'make out' the right course for her. The result is that she is 'absorbed into the life of another' and is 'only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother' (Ibid. italics mine). ideologically charged word, The reappearance of the 'absorbed,' signifies that the author of the novel herself is precisely aware of Dorothea's sacrifice of personal autonomy.

Despite domestic happiness and the comparatively egalitarian relationship Dorothea enjoys, the novel clearly

demonstrates that Dorothea is reduced to fit the narrow dimensions of her female role, as she is surrounded by her husband and two children. Eliot said of the "Finale" to Middlemarch in a letter to Sara Hennell, 'Expect to be immensely disappointed with the close of Middlemarch. But look back to the Prelude' (George Eliot Letters V:330). Probably, she means that despite the setting up of a happy marriage for Dorothea, the conflict and tension between the epic ideal and 'the common yearnings of womanhood' ("Prelude" 25) still continue. One cannot forget that Dorothea has been defined as a 'foundress of nothing' in the "Prelude." Thus, Eliot makes traditional marriage closure problematic for Dorothea, by revealing that her life potential is not fully realized.

In the novel's penultimate paragraph, the "Finale"'s darkest statement is made: 'But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know' ("Finale" 896). The narrator implies that the whole society participates in producing the 'lives of many Dorotheas' circumscribed by their domesticity. Curiously, the narrator's use of 'we' adds self-accusation to a strong charge against the whole patriarchal culture that demands a 'sacrifice,' in some form, from all of its women. It seems that Eliot herself acknowledges the limit of the 'home epic' she has written. Middlemarch thus

dismantles the Victorian celebration of a home utopia, critiquing its underpinning ideologies which circumscribe and limit female lives. The future that Eliot implicitly envisions is one which will enable both sexes to develop to their full emotional, intellectual, and moral potential.

NOTES to CHAPTER 2

- 1. In this sense, my view is opposed to those of Kenny Marotta and Marianna Torgovenick. Marotta largely ignores Eliot's underlying sexual/textual politics, and argues that, although in the 'Prelude' Eliot shows epic and domestic experience existing at different levels of life, the gradual accretion of epic vocabulary around domestic experience prepares the way for an eventual synthesis of both. See Marotta "Middlemarch: Home Epic." Torgovenick also argues that, in her 'home epic' Eliot shows the 'impulse to suppress doubt and criticisms about the ethos of family and bourgeois values' (Torgovenick, "Closure" 6).
- 2. About such danger, Gilbert and Gubar 498-99, and Graver, "Mill, Middlemarch, and Marriage" 63. Especially, Deidre David complains that Eliot believed that 'woman must make her essential, and essentialist contribution to cultural development,' as she understood it (180).
- 3. About the social change taking place in The Mill on the Floss, see Ebbatson 56-58 and Homans 68-69.

- 4. Jane Randell sees that the accelerated construction of the different spheres occupied by men and women took place around 1830. See chapter 2 and, especially, 49 of her book.
- 5. Mr. Tulliver's need for patriarchal dominion is also apparent in the projections of his fears and aspirations onto his son. He 'eddicates' Tom so that he will not rob his father of his position at the mill and, at the same time, prepares Tom to stand in for his father in the 'cock-fight' of legal struggle. A logical extension of Tulliver's self-protective notion that sons should represent fathers without displacing them is his view that daughters are commodities in a male-dominated sexual economy. Although he admires the cleverness of his 'little wench,' he merely translates this admiration into a worry that her intelligence will be a disadvantage in the marriage market.
- 6. Obviously, Eliot is aware that the image of the Madonna is a highest form of womanhood that can trap and cramp female potential. For the multi-layered complexity of the Madonna image in Eliot's work, see Jill L. Matus, "The Iconography of Motherhood."
- 7. See Mary Shanley's Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, for an excellent study of the historical development of laws regarding women's marriage and property in Victorian England.
- 8. As in many other cases, however, Eliot's own practice is different from her fictional critique of married women's

lack of control over their property. Eliot dutifully paid her enormous earnings into George Henry Lewis's bank account in spite of the fact that, being unmarried, they were legally hers. Until the passing of the Married Woman's Property Act in 1873, if she had been legally his wife, her money would have been his. By merging her own earnings with Lewes', Eliot probably tried to act her namesake, 'Mrs. Lewes' that she insisted everybody call her. For details, see Jenni Calder 126.

- 9. Gritty Moss brings to mind Eliot's sister, Chrissey, who had six children, and was unable to work when her husband went bankrupt; and at his death, had to accept humiliating charity from her brother, Isaac. George Eliot must have been appalled by the powerless situation of her sister, as much as she pitied her. For Eliot, Chrissey represented the weakness of conventional femininity. It seems to me that her portrayal of Mrs. Moss may reflect her reservations concerning her own sister. See Ruby Redinger, George Eliot 166, 175, and Harriet Adams, "Domesticating the Brutal Passion" 9.
- 10. I am indebted to Margaret Homans for this interpretation of the bazaar scene. For details, see Homans 174.
- 11. Harriet Adams argues, in general, that 'Of all English novelists to the time of Hardy...George Eliot endowed her heroines with the most frankly sensual passion and allowed that passion to work a great deal of trouble for them' (8)

- 12. Many contemporary male critics noticed Eliot's sensualism in The Mill on the Floss, and resentfully linked it to that of George Sand, or Charlotte Bronte. For example, an anonymous reviewer of The Mill on the Floss for Saturday Review argued: 'Currer Bell [Bronte's early masculine pen name] and George Eliot, and we may add George Sand, all like to dwell on love as a strange overmastering force which, through the senses, captivates and enthralls the soul.... Curiously, too, they all like to describe these sensations as they conceive them to exist in men. We are bound to say that their conceptions are true and adequate. But we are not sure that it is quite consistent with feminine delicacy to lay so much stress on the bodily feelings of the other sex' (Carroll 118). From this angry accusation of these writers' violation of their 'proper' femininity, one can infer that the frank portrayal of sexuality by female writers posed a transgressive threat to Victorian gender ideology of women's nature -- that of sexless and selfless women. Modern critics such as Daniel Vitaglione and Thelma Jurgrau find George Sand's specific influence on Eliot in her descriptions of passion and sensuality. See Vitaglione, George Eliot and George Sand 6-7, and Jurgrau, "The Linking of the Georges" 133-34.
- 13. The later three decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a tremendous increase in both social and fictional attacks on the institution of bourgeois marriage.
 - 14. For the Victorian view of woman's nature in terms of

physiology, see Lorna Duffin, "The Conspicuous Consumptive" and Mary Poovey, "Scenes of an Indelicate Character." For a sociological and anthropological view of women, see Duffin, "The Prisoners of Progress," Carol Dyhouse, "The Role of Women," and Millett, 'The Debate over Women."

- 15. In her early essay, "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft," Eliot suggests that men have to pay the price for women being trained to become parasites: 'Men pay a heavy price for their reluctance to encourage self-help and independent resources in women....So men say of women, let them be idols, useless absorbents of precious things, provided we are not obliged to admit them to be strictly fellow-beings to be treated, one and all, with justice and sober reverence' (Essays of George Eliot 204-5).
- 16. For a general study of the imagery of vampirism and cannibalism in *Middlemarch*, see Carol Senf, "The Vampire in *Middlemarch* and George Eliot's Quest for Historical Reality."
- 17. However, this pastoral marriage myth is denied elsewhere in Middlemarch. Many critics claim that the story of Fred and Mary is separated from the others. For example, John Kucich, while noting the warmth of the Fred-Mary story, argues that, in contrast to the others, it is 'relatively ahistorical, outside the possibility of progress and ... the need for an effective social relationship' (58).
- 18. The Vincys' contempt for the governess, Miss Morgan, is much more evident: 'Miss Morgan...was brown, dull, and

resigned, and altogether, as Mrs. Vincy often said, just the sort of person for a governess' (16:191). According to Peterson, the Victorian stereotype of the governess was of a woman who was born and bred in comfort and gentility and who, through the death of her father or his financial ruin, was robbed of the support of her family and was driven to earn her own living. While employment in a middle-class family was intended to provide a second home for the governess, her presence there was evidence of the failure of her own middle-class family to provide the protection and support she needed (Peterson 6-7).

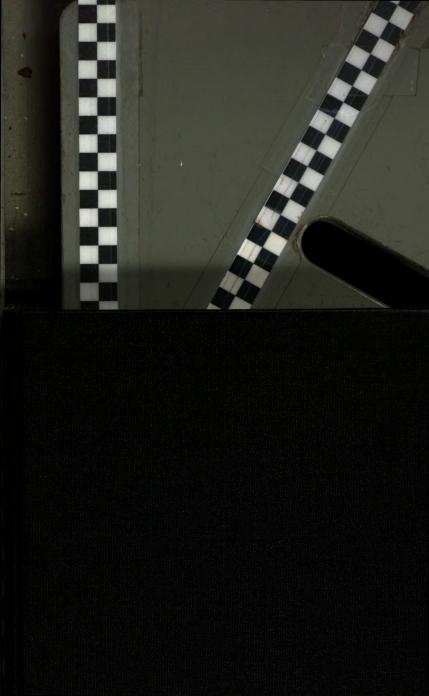
- 19. However, the brother-sister relationship between Tom and Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* does not achieve such gender equality--except in death. See also "Brother and Sister" in *George Eliot: Collected Poems* 84-90. For the discussion of the poem in terms of the archetypal brother-sister relationship in Eliot's work, see Homans, "Eliot, Wordsworth, and the Scenes of the Sisters' Instruction" 120-41.
- 20. Of course, Susan Garth cannot be considered as iconoclastic of Victorian sexual ideology. Rather she expresses views of gender that are in their way as essentialist as those of Mr. Brooke, Chettam, Casaubon and Lydgate. As the narrator remarks, she was 'apt to be a little severe towards her own sex, which in her opinion was framed to be entirely subordinate. On the other hand, she was

disproportionately indulgent towards the failings of men, and was often heard to say that these were natural' (24:275). Given these views, it is not surprising that Susan Garth saves money to educate only her sons and even uses Mary's hard-earned income for this purpose. See also Kristine Brady 170.

- 21. Homans suggests that contrary interpretations are possible about Mary's adaptations of Plutarch's book--Maggie's paradoxical combination of the maintenance and subversion of masculine literary tradition. She argues: 'Mary's Stories of Great Men, taken from Plutarch, transformations of formal, abstract Latin prose into English and presumably into her lively narrative style, is the literary counterpart of her other docile female repetitions. That its authorship is attributed to Fred, the former classical scholar, reinforces the containment of this writing within Victorian paradigms of female propriety. At the same time, the title, taken from Plutarch, suggests a daring theft, undertaken under the cover of such propriety' (Bearing the Word 151). But there is no textual evidence that Mary rewrites the history of great men in a deconstructive/feminist way. One can note that the author of Middlemarch herself does not tell a story of Great Men but of a woman.
- 22. Henry James long ago noted that Ladislaw seemed to him 'a beautiful attempt' but finally a failure, 'the only eminent failure in the book.' The portrait of Ladislaw, James said, 'lacks sharpness of outline and depth of color' and

'remains vague and impalpable to the end' (Carroll 355-56).

David Cecil regarded him as 'a schoolgirl's dream, and a vulgar dream at that' (qtd. in Haight 24). Even feminist critics like Kathleen Blake call Ladislaw 'a slight figure beside [Dorothea]' ("Middlemarch and the Woman Question" 310).





THESIS

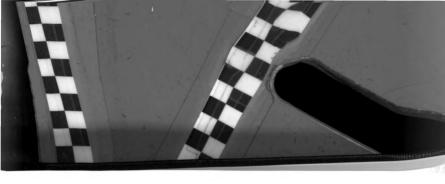
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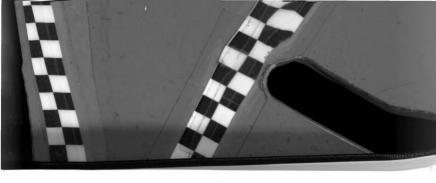


PART II. GENDERED PLOTS AND THE PROBLEMATICS OF FEMALE BILDUNG

In Part I, the discussion focused on the examination of the inherent contradictions and conflicts in the domestic utopian vision presented in the four novels by Dickens and Eliot. The portrayals of Victorian homes and families show that they replicate the injustices of a repressive, patriarchal ethos of society. By doing so, the novels challenge the ideology of separate spheres and expose its harmful effects on both men and women. Victorian marriage frequently symbolizes the self-limiting social contract that binds the individual to the community's norms. However, these novels show that, even if the event of marriage is intended as an important socio-cultural goal toward which the hero or the heroine has to move, the successful setting up of the home does not necessarily works as a 'material sign' of the satisfactory merging of individual desire and social interests.

Significantly, these novels heighten their critique of Victorian domestic ideology by exploring the process of Bildung of major female characters. Given that marriage and motherhood are the only societal goal legitimately available



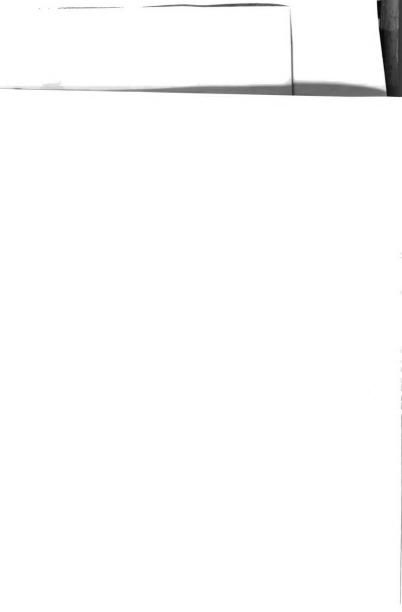


185

to Victorian women, the movements of female Bildungsroman plots toward marriage necessarily subsume the conflicts and contradictions between women's desires and the demands of patriarchal society. In a classic male Bildungsroman, individual identity is dialectically defined as the result of a complex interplay between individual and social forces. However, the female Bildungsroman cannot but problematize the possibility of individual growth which fully accommodates social expectations.

In his study of the European Bildungsroman, Franco Moretti argues that a Bildungsroman involves a compromise or a conflict between two conflicting forces—between individual autonomy and social demands. Moretti claims that a classical Bildungsroman modelled on Goethe's Wilhelm Meister offers 'one of the most harmonious solutions... to a dilemma coterminous with modern bourgeois civilization: the conflict between the ideal of self-determination and the equally imperious demands of socialization' (15). Here, the idea of individual development and 'maturation' is fused with the idea of the internalization of social norms and social legitimation. Moretti thus criticizes a classical Bildungsroman for being the 'comfort of civilization' (16) that smoothes over the potential conflict between individual desire and social normality.'

In contrast, Moretti valorizes the continental Bildungsromane such as those of Stendhal, Pushkin, Balzac and





186

Flaubert whose plots are the products of a 'disequilibrium between the spiritual physiognomy of the protagonist and the values implicit in the way society functions' (199). In this light, he devaluates the English Bildungsromane from Tom Jones (1749) to Great Expectations (1861), contending that they accepted the stability of basic cultural assumptions in their narrative forms. Moretti argues that English Bildungroman is a form of 'preservation' and restoration rather than that of 'transformation.' While the form of transformation supports the idea of Bildung as constant change and freedom, the form of restoration supports a conservative 'culture of fairy tale justice' (205, 207).

Interestingly, Moretti makes George Eliot an exception to his scorching criticism of 'insipid' English Bildungsromane, although he does not conduct an in-depth investigation for Eliot's peculiar position as a woman writer. He praises Middlemarch as the 'only one which dares to deal with the major theme of the European Bildungsroman: failure' (216). But he does not deal with the question of how Victorian gender politics induces such failure in the Bildung of the two leading characters--Dorothea and Lydgate--in the novel.

Moretti's views, despite his many valuable insights and points, are suspect or faulty in two respects. First, he oversimplifies the variations of the English Bildungsroman, making Tom Jones and David Copperfield, which take the form of successful social integration, as his main models for



187

scrutiny. He thus ignores the 'transformational' aspects of Dickens' Bildungsromane. Specifically, Great Expectations dismantles one of the century's greatest illusions that social progress and individual growth can be parallel processes. One can see, thus, that Moretti's analysis exaggerates Eliot's difference from Dickens and other English novelists. Second, Moretti's discussion is seriously marred by a case of genderblindness. He utterly disregards the possibility that the factor of gender intensifies the tragic discrepancy between the positive desire of Eliot's heroines and the realistic possibility offered to them by existing society.

It may be true that, in its high Victorian form, some English Bildungsromane tended to link the individual's moral, spiritual and psychological maturation with his economic and social advancement. However, even mid-Victorian novels such as Thackerey's Vanity Fair (1848) and Meredith's The Ordeal of Richard Feveral (1859) seriously challenged the sanguine view of social mobility and social accommodation. The later developments in the Bildungsroman register a process of increasing disintegration within bourgeois society and identity. In Great Expectations (1861) and Hardy's Jude the Obscure (1895), the protagonists' ideal integration into an appropriate social world is further called into question. Great Expectations depicts a world in which money has usurped the place of genuine values and ideals. Upward mobility which formerly led to freedom and self-development now leads only to

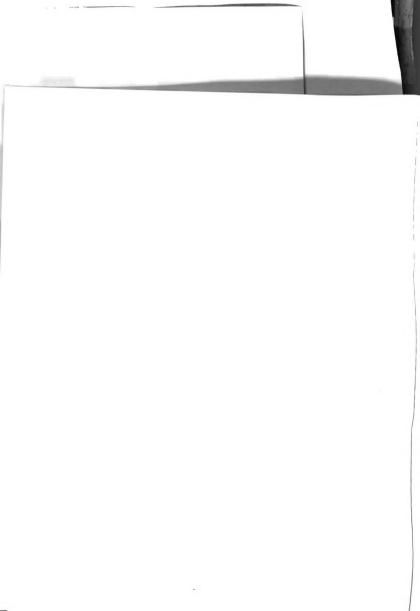


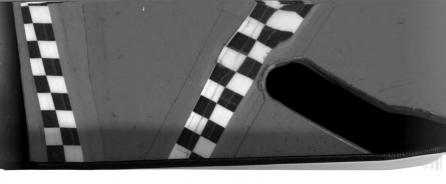


188

alienation and moral compromise. Also, Jude the Obscure shows that the individual is no longer sustained by society but frustrated by it and, consequently, alienated from it. In these novels, Dickens and Hardy find only the possibility of self-betrayal which leads to disintegration of both self and society. The society that Pip and Jude aspire to is revealed to be as spurious as themselves; individual and society are perfectly harmonized in their mutual inauthenticity. These novels give us a satirical or tragical inversion of the Bildungsroman, pointing to the impossibility of combining bourgeois social formation and individual cultivation.

The implications of gender also cannot be left out of the discussion of the Bildungsroman. If the Bildungsroman is centered on the production and formation of identity in the generic sense, female identity is one of its very problematic issues. For the dominant function of gender in defining identity necessarily complicates the dialectic of individual and society which underlies the Bildungsroman genre. The basic notions of development and experience in a Bildungsroman have been defined in essentially male terms. Desire or ambition is a motivating factor that drives the male protagonist forward until the ends of ambition have been clarified, through success or failure. But the female protagonist takes a conflicting stance toward ambition and toward the assertion of selfhood. She seems sometimes entrapped by social restrictions and definitions of female



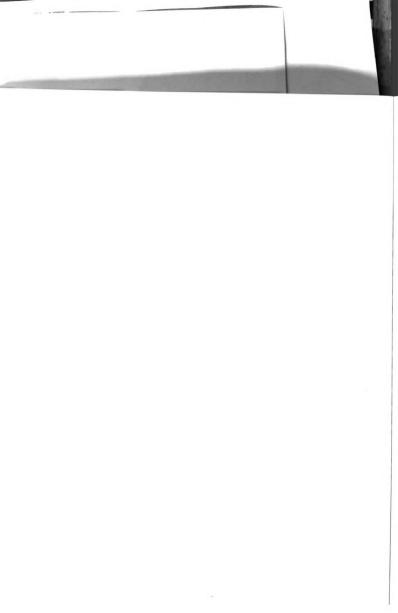


189

'goodness' that demand their passivity, submission, and obedience.

Frequently, the climactic event of marriage confers on the heroine her entire personal identity as well as 'vocation' as wife and mother. In contrast, a male Bildungsroman often uses the marriage plots as a kind of narrative scaffolding upon which to hang the various independent concerns of the hero's growth to adulthood and social integration. The discovery of his 'true identity' and 'vocation' precedes his achievement of romantic satisfaction, while, in the female Bildungsroman, marriage confers all identity on the woman. In the developmental trajectories tracing the growth of male figures, the love interest remains only one of the several aspects defining a man's career. In this sense, Susan Fraiman argues that 'for the male protagonist, marriage is not a goal so much as a reward for having reached his goal' (129).

However, these views overlook a considerable degree of inner conflicts and potential subversion underlying Victorian female plots, even though they seem to embody a socially acceptable female developmental pattern. In Dickens' Bleak House and Eliot's Middlemarch, the female protagonists develop in accordance with a society that confines them, reshapes their aspirations, makes them aware of their limitations, and leads them to resolve their quest in socially available terms. However, the novels reveal that this process of social integration entails painful self-suppression and self-doubt on

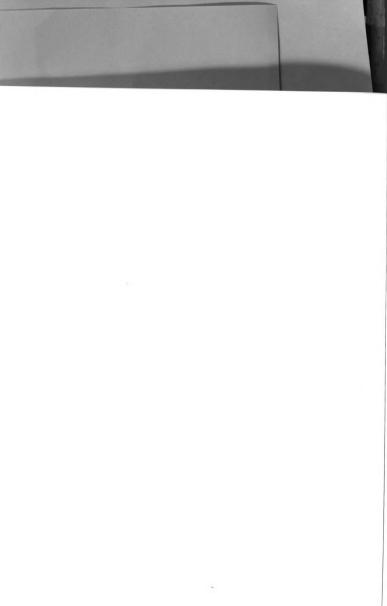




190

their side. Despite its ideological promotion of a domestic woman on the surface, Dickens' narrative does not diminish her psychological complexity and foregrounds the conflicts between her need to assert her inner self and her outward conformity to patriarchal authority. Eliot also makes it evident that the resolution of Dorothea Brooke's quest through marriage demands the sad resignation of the heroine's epic desire. In this sense, Cathy Comstock argues that Middlemarch 'posits a good marriage as both the most important goal in women's life and the frustration of the most important goal' (31). Evidently, although by no means exclusive to female development, conflicts between autonomy and dependence, world and home, rebellion and submission, active and passive behavior, and internal and external exploration are presented as the intense ingredients of female Bildung in Bleak House and Middlemarch.

The major female plots of Great Expectations and The Mill on the Floss take the form of a truncated female Bildungsroman--those of Miss Havisham, Estella, Molly, and of Maggie Tulliver, for example. Even though the novels still retain some successful domestic women figures, the predominant number of strong-willed women, failed marriage plots and final resolutions in death clearly dismantles a smug notion about female Bildung prescribed by a patriarchal society. These patterns manifestly pronounce that, under the existing gender ideology, the endpoint of female development can be

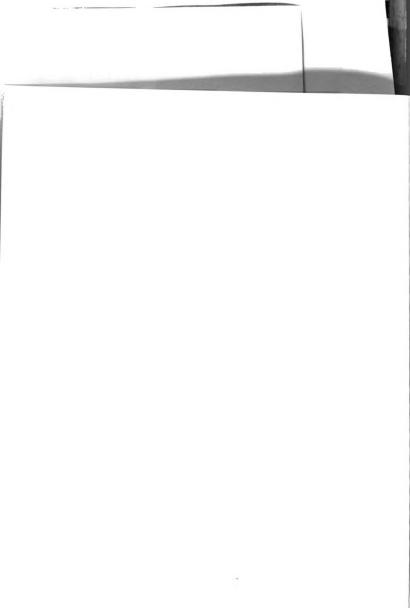


alienation, rather than social integration.

To be sure, Dickens attempts to defuse Miss Havisham's rebellion a little, and to accommodate her into the Victorian social boundary by restoring her womanly feeling and her friendship with Pip. But his novel soon shows that containing of Miss Havisham's rage, symbolized by the fire, is next to impossible. In the characterization of Maggie Tulliver, similarly, Eliot emphasizes the unresolved conflict between society's demands and the heroine's longing to move beyond the very limits that society imposes on her. Their unusual deaths-by fire and by water--defy any handy interpretations. A wide range of meanings from suicidal defeat to tragic liberation deepen the sense of uneasy irresolution. Thus, the novels of Dickens and Eliot both convey the sense of resistance to the ideology of their day.

NOTES

- 1. The term is borrowed from Franco Moretti, 5.
- 2. Since the publication of the prototype of Bildungsroman-- Goethe's Wilhelm Meiser Lehrjahre (1795-96)--, the definition of Bildungsroman has been a hot issue among scholars. It has been recently discovered that the word Bildungsroman was first coined in 1819 by an German professor of rhetoric, Karl von Morgenstern. Morgenstern defined the Bildungsroman as the novel which embodies the concept of





192

Bildung, and he linked the word Bildung to the hero's organic development, experience, and a harmonious form of cultivation. But it was Dilthey who popularized the term. In Das Leben Schleiermachers (1870), he designated as Bildungsromane those novels that make up the 'Wilhelm Meister School.' In the discussion of Morgenstern and Dilthey, two meanings of Bildung are significant: first, Bildung as a developmental process and, second, as a collective name for the cultural and spiritual values of a specific people or social stratum in a given historical epoch and by extension the achievement of learning about that same body of knowledge and acceptance of the value system it implies. (See Franz Martini, "Bildungsroman -- Term and Theory" 1-25.) In other words, Bildung was the early bourgeois, humanistic concept of the shaping of the individual self from its innate potentialities through acculturation and social experience to the threshold of maturity.

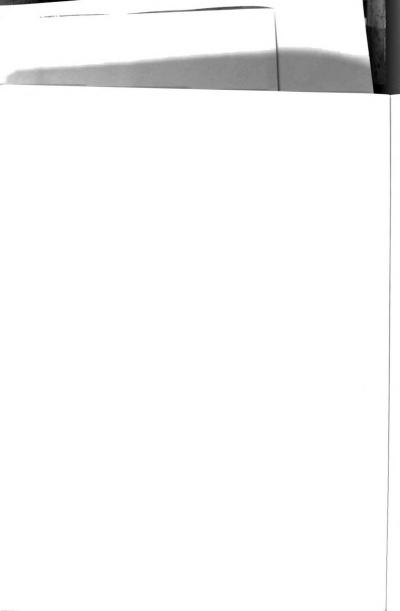
However, defining Bildungsroman as a novel embodying the ideals of Bildung presumably extant in the age of German Enlightenment can be problematic, for Bildung is a slippery and historically-fraught concept. There is an agreement among scholars that the category of the Bildungsroman should not be defined too narrowly. First, it is necessary to define the category broadly enough to accommodate historical and national variations and to transcend the specifically Germanic connotations of Bildung. As will be discussed later, Hirsch





and Moretti have conducted insightful comparative studies of the Bildungsroman in the European context. Second, one needs to acknowledge the factor of gender in the definition of the genre. The authors of Voyage In protest that 'even the broadest definitions of the Bildungsroman presuppose a range of social options available only to men' (7). Many feminist critics in the 1970s and the 1980s challenged the conventional definition and produced alternative ideas of female Bildungsroman, which resulted in Laura Sue Fuderer's annotated bibliography of the female Bildungsroman in English.

- 3. This may be part of the reason why the Bildungsroman became a dominant bourgeois genre in the age of social mobility. Patricia Arden, in Social Mobility in the English Bildungsroman, argues that "[the Bildungsroman] readily accommodated the concerns of a new middle-class reading public,... gratified to see how its collective experience of social mobility might be rendered as the individual's pursuit of an ideal of self-development (1-2).
- See Rita Felski, "Feminist Bildungsroman," 133-38 and note 25 in 210-211.
- 5. Marianne Hirsch also expresses a view about the progressive nature of the later nineteenth-century English Bildungsroman, as compared to its German counterparts. While Moretti firmly believes that the later Victorian Bildungsroman is basically a conservative genre supporting a status quo, Hirsch believes that it rather dismantles the complacent





harmony between the individual and society. Certainly, I support Hirsch's view.

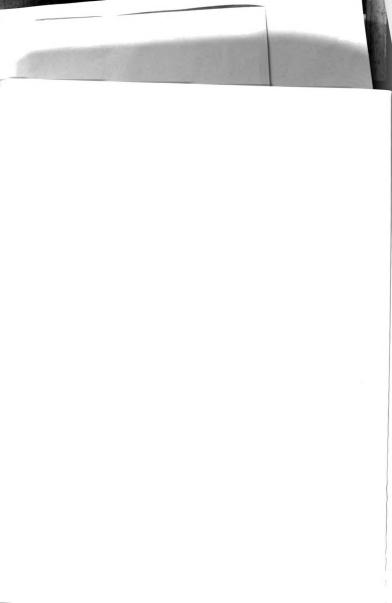
6. Rachel Brownstein poignantly notes the traditional distinction between the hero and the heroine: 'The paradigmatic hero is an overreacher; the heroine...is overdetermined. The hero moves towards a goal; the heroine tries to be it. He makes a name for himself; she is concerned with keeping her good name' (82-83).

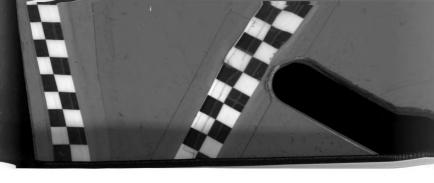


CHAPTER 3. THE FORM OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND ITS PRICE: BLEAK HOUSE AND MIDDLEMARCH

The Victorian period may have been, as Kate Millet argues, 'the first in history to face the issue of patriarchy and the condition of women under its rule' (122). The debate about the status, the role, and the very nature of women was a major preoccupation of Victorian culture. It was inevitable that the male and female novelists of the period were deeply, if uncertainly, involved with a reconsideration of the place of women in society. While the ideology of domestic femininity might persistently shape the Victorian narratives, there was also growing resistance to that appeal to woman's nature and to the invocation of a timeless feminine ideal. Frequently, the anxiety and latent rage at women's domestic imprisonment and social subordination, and economic privation was expressed in the form of a stifled or half-realized rebelliousness.

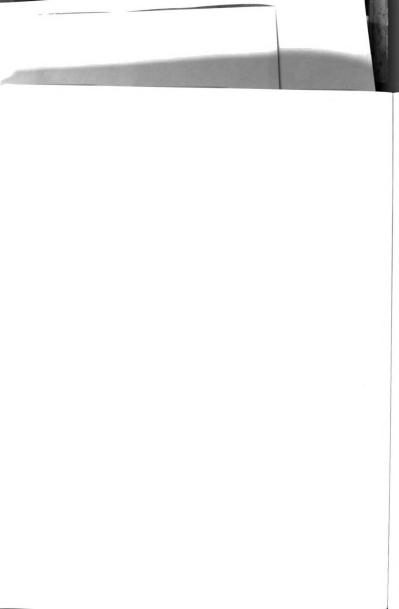
It may be undeniable that in his real life, Dickens kept a strong sense of proper femininity, as illustrated in his public opposition to women seeking employment outside the home. Condemning the exploitation of female labor in 1842, Dickens wrote a powerful letter to *The Morning Chronicle* in





support of Lord Ashley's Bill to prohibit the employment of women in the mines. The main tenet of his indignation is that the employment of women in the mines had the effects of blotting out from their sex 'all form and stamp, and character of womanhood,' making them 'so many weaker men' (Letters of Charles Dickens III:282). This clearly shows that Dickens was uneasy about women engaging in vocations other than domestic activities, as well as about the people who economically exploit them. Asked in 1849 by one of the editors of Household Words to write an article about women's work, Harriet Martineau took this opportunity to accuse Dickens of being one of those who 'ignored the fact that nineteentwentieths of the women of England earn their bread...' (Autobiography II: 419). Kate Dickens herself--his daughter-is reported to have said, 'My father did not understand women' (qtd. in Knoepflemacher, "From Outrage to Rage" 75).

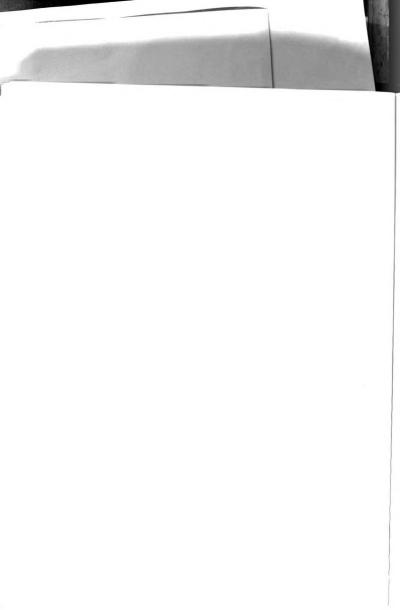
However, as one of the most acute observers of Victorian society in all its complex and myriad dimensions, he might be aware of feminist tremors which were challenging the traditional pedestal of Victorian womanhood. Injustice of the power relations between male and female was absorbed by his eager imagination and translated, consciously or inadvertently, into his works of fiction. It may be true that, in Bleak House, Esther Summerson is apparently intended to set an example of what a Dickensian ideal woman should be. A nourishing mother figure, Esther gains her place in society





by conforming to the social expectation of a domestic woman. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the fact that Dickens' taking over a feminine narrative voice problematizes the ideological stance of the Victorian feminine ideal. Despite Dickens' effort to preserve a coherent feminine identity based on the cultural ideal of the 'Angel in the House,' the novel reveals the gaps and inner contradictions which overshadows the heroine's outwardly successful female Bildung. Esther's narrative is an exemplary case of a writer's struggle to 'accommodate a cultural belief in the socially coherent self and an intuitive sense of a potentially deconstructed self' (Bersani, A Future for Astyanax x-xi).

Eliot clearly believed that as long as women were not granted the same opportunities as men to educate themselves and to cultivate their minds, they were not ready to shoulder responsibilities for society. She expressed: 'I would certainly not oppose any plan which held out any reasonable promise of tending to establish as far as possible an equivalence of advantages for two sexes, as to education and the possibilities of free development' (George Eliot Letters IV:364). Eliot's conviction about the need for women's equal education and development was linked to her awareness of the need for an alternative mode of women's life, as she stated in her 1870 letter: 'We women are always in danger of living too exclusively in the affections; and though our affections are perhaps the best gifts we have, we ought also to have our



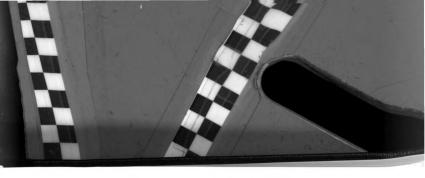


198

share of the most independent life--some joy in things for their own sake' (George Eliot Letters V:107). It is no accident, thus, that, in her novels, Eliot constantly touched on the current debates about women's work and education, and initiates the discussion about women's 'ability,' apart from the dominant model of feminine 'influence' in the domestic realm. She emphasized that, under the Victorian condition of education and law regarding women, the channel through which female desire might be legitimately expressed was narrow, and not infrequently blocked.

To be sure, Eliot seems to have internalized the current Victorian creed about women's moral power, which makes her ideas of womanhood paradoxical. Dickens would have agreed with Eliot in her definition of what actually constitutes true womanliness: 'that exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness, possible macernity suffusing a woman's being with affectionateness ... makes what we mean by the feminine character' (George Eliot Letters IV:468). She viewed with uneasiness and apprehension any emancipation of her sex which would weaken its moral influence by distracting women's attention to the outside world or which would corrupt the feminine nature itself. Thus, a certain contradiction is inevitable when Eliot tries to match her idea of equality of opportunity and what she calls women's 'special moral influence' (George Eliot Letters IV:468). In this sense, Beer observes that Eliot is torn between the 'intransigence of



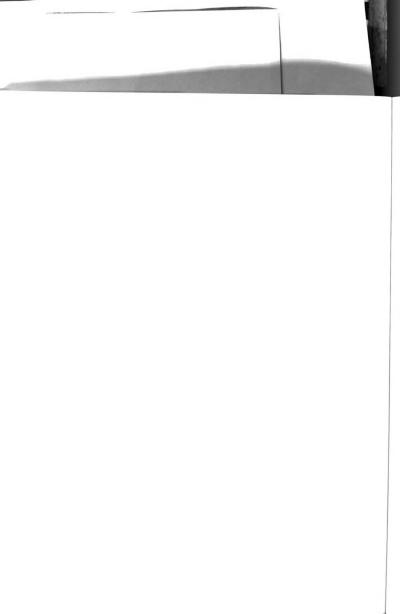


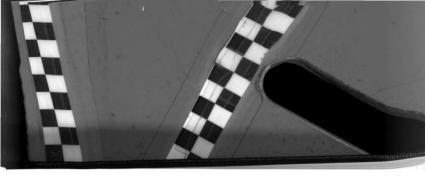
199

Antigone' and 'the passivity of a Madonna' (George Eliot 12).

Eliot's complex attitude to the 'Woman Question' is reflected in Dorothea Brooke's characterization. With her ardent nature and her intelligence, and her zeal to change the world, Dorothea is a new character to nineteenth-century fiction. Dorothea refuses what has been decreed as proper to Victorian womanhood in her yearning for something grand and intellectual. However, Dorothea is not an impossible rebel, in that she is torn between the desire to be different from her world and her recognition of the impossibility of being so. By the novel's end, Dorothea's desire initially so great as to constitute a threat to the gender ideology of her society, has been confined and diverted to the domestic realm. The book's conclusion is paradoxical, in that the narrator accepts, but at the same time, deplores, the domestic resolution of the heroine's story with considerable degree of regrets.

Both in Bleak House and Middlemarch, the processes that cumulatively shape the heroines' lot are dominated by society's assumptions and attitudes concerning the nature of women's vocation. However, each novel reveals what price the heroines must pay for their successful incorporation into a dominant system. By the time Esther declares herself 'the happiest of the happy' at the end of the novel (67:932), her narrative has already displayed the evidences for the psychological price that she has had to pay. In the "Finale"



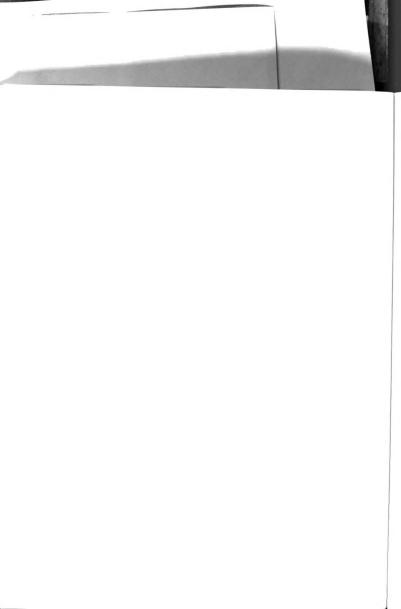


of Middlemarch, Eliot clearly laments that the heroine's epic desire is subject to either a 'surrender of desire or its reductive rescaling' (D. A. Miller, Narrative and Its Discontents 149), and she indicts society that prevents fulfillment by failing to offer opportunities to women.

1. Bleak House

In his unsigned article entitled "My Girls, " Wilkie Collins expressed his most jingoist view of woman's nature: 'Women have, or should have, no identity wholly their own, no separate existence in themselves--this is treating of women in their natural state of alliance with men. If a woman (speaking generally) so allied, has any thought at all, except for her husband and children, she is nothing' (370). Here, Collins defined a woman as a 'relative creature' and did not allow any room for her to have any independent subjectivity or occupation.

In the light of the existence of such gender ideology, what is most striking about Esther Summerson in Bleak House is her deep self-consciousness about her own autonomous identity: she is a writer as well as a housekeeper. It seems that Esther dangerously crosses the border between the selfless role as a housekeeper and the self-conscious role as a professional writer. The potential contradictions and conflicts between these two roles for a Victorian woman are





201

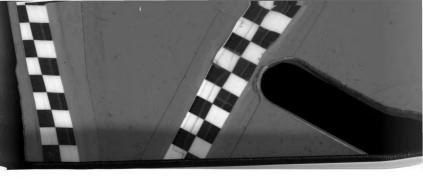
pointed out by George Brimley, a contemporary reviewer of *The Spectator*.

[Dickens'] heroine in Bleak House is a model of unconscious goodness... her consciousness and sweet humility of disposition are so profound that scarcely a page of her autobiography is free from a record of these admirable qualities.... Such a girl would not write her own memoirs, and certainly would not bore one with her goodness till a wicked wish arises that she would either do something very 'spicy,' or confine herself to superintending the jam-pots at Bleak House. (Collins 285 italics mine).

The sarcastic assumption of this reviewer is that if Esther were the 'good' girl her narrative portrays her to be, she would not be writing at all, but would rather focus on her proper duty--housekeeping. When Esther is placed in the position of discovering and commenting on her own life, her narrative, by the mere fact of its existence, problematizes her ideal femininity.

Dickens himself was well aware of this problem and once admitted his uneasiness in creating an important female narrator in his novel. He confessed to Grace Greenwood, a young American woman writer, that the task of constructing the voice of Esther Summerson, 'cost him no little labor and





anxiety.' And he asked her, 'Is it quite natural, quite girlish?' (qtd. in Slater 255). Dickens' difficulty implies his deep concern about the 'proper' femininity of Esther's voice. Interestingly, his difficulty reflects the same problem that Victorian women writers faced themselves. While the Victorian period was characterized by the impressive productivity of professional women writers, the problem women writers confronted was that, as Mary Poovey observes, 'the cultural pressure to conform to the image of proper femininity directly contradicted the demands of professional authorship' (Proper Lady 241). Obviously, Victorian domestic ideology pits the claims which literary labor makes on women writers against the selflessness required of Victorian domestic women.

The only way for Dickens to avoid an incrimination of the potentially dubious femininity of Esther as writer is to present her as irreproachably 'respectable' by confining her writing exclusively to the topics and issues of the domestic sphere, and to deploy Esther's writing as performing the same function as women do at home--moral guidance. Dickens' strategy is to glorify Esther as housekeeper, but to limit her role as storyteller and shaper of her world. In this sense, Esther's narrative is inevitably appropriated and recruited into a patriarchal agenda.

In his very attempt to create the voice of an ideal woman of his culture, however, Dickens inescapably foregrounds the



problematics of female voice and identity. Projecting himself into a woman's consciousness, Dickens seems to uncover the more radically fragmented nature of the Victorian female psyche than he has expected. While Esther's narrative is confined within the culturally legitimate domain for women's thinking and action, it inevitably reveals the deforming impact of the self-suppression that characterizes most Dickensian virtuous women. In other words, Esther's narrative exactly registers the unresolvable conflicts of female authorship between self-assertion and self-denial, between work and feminine duty.

Esther's narrative is an autobiographical writing, or more modestly a memoir. An autobiography is necessarily concerned with the production and formation of self-identity, yet Esther's narrative is extremely wary of centering her self. Esther is as modest as can be about her writing: she never plans to publish it, but her audience is a private receiver of her writing -- 'the unknown friend to whom I write' She also manifests that she has a difficult beginning: 'I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning to write my portion of these pages, for I know I am not clever' This kind of self-effacement reveals her as an unwilling narrator whose articulation of desire or self is difficult. By foregrounding her 'anxiety of authorship,'9 unmistakably, Esther here demonstrates that she does not transgress her culture's prescriptive norms of





204

bourgeois femininity.

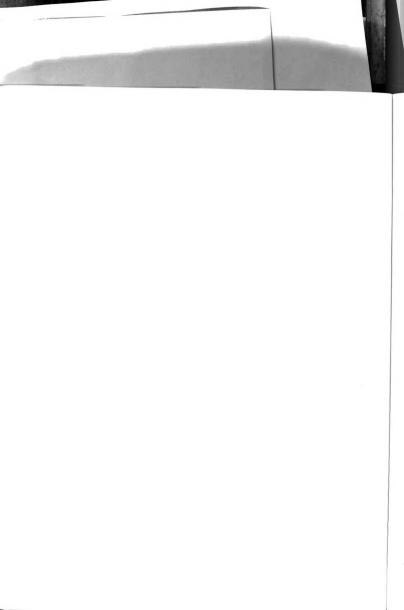
Moreover, she is aware of the third-person narrator, the writer of the other 'portion' of the pages. Esther's narrative, if not precisely embedded in or framed by another narrative, exists in a relationship of contiguity to that narrative. Esther's narrative cannot be the novel's master text, because it is enclosed, 'holding its place' as does its author, within an overarching third-person narrative. Esther's own story is never completely told by herself; it is completed from another narrator. In this way, Bleak House consistently displaces Esther as the authoritative subject of the first-person narrative.¹⁰ Clearly, the novel's dual narrative structure marks the binary habit of mind endemic to a culture which insists upon the beneficent distinction between the public, male realm, and the private, domestic, female sphere.

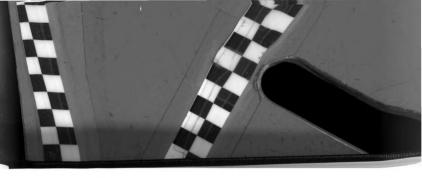
In her effort to inscribe her acceptable middle-class feminine subjectivity, Esther embodies what Diane Sadoff argues about the gender distinction of autobiographical narration: 'The son writes autobiography to engender the self; the daughter writes autobiography to efface the self' (Monsters of Affection 558-59). In a Victorian daughter's autobiography, then, the resultant contradiction between self-denial and self-assertion is unavoidable. Sadoff, therefore, argues that Esther Summerson 'both is and is not the subject of her narrative and that 'being female and daughter, she



brings to her story a sense of her fragility as a subject to herself, and as a subject of narrative' (59). It is 'this paradoxical inscription and effacement of the self [that] structures [her] narrative' (58).

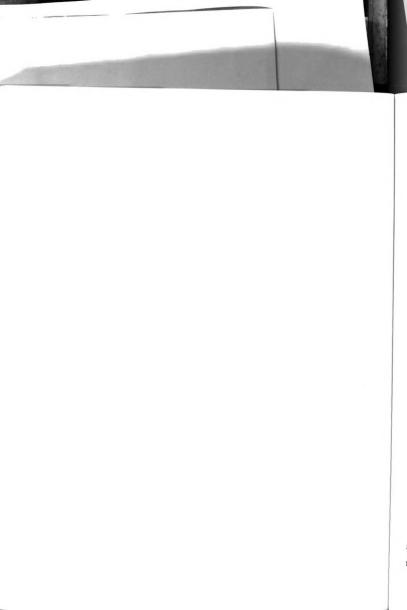
Sadoff's observation of Esther's paradox is very perceptive. Faithful to Victorian gender ideology, on the one hand, Esther effusively disclaims her role as a writer in the narrative: 'It seems so curious to me to be obliged to write all this about myself! As if this narrative were the narrative of my life! But my little body will soon fall into the background now' (3:73-74). Esther tells her story not strictly as her own, arguing 'My lot has been so blest that I can relate little of myself which is not a story of goodness and generosity in others. I may well pass that little and go on' (43:647). Here, her proposed narrative is 'a story of goodness and generosity in others,' as if she exists entirely through and in the people in her life. Throughout the novel, repetitiously and obsessively emphasizes 'littleness' and the unimportant nature of her own story. In this respect, Esther can be seen as a typical example of Monique Wittig's argument: 'The result of the imposition of gender, acting as a denial at the very moment when one speaks is to deprive women of the authority of speech, and to force them to make their entrance in a crablike way, participating themselves and apologizing profusely' ("The Mark of Gender" 67).¹¹





On the other hand, if desire is the driving force behind the plot, it is hard to write an autobiography about a nondesiring self. Esther cannot but draw attention to her self so often: 'I don't know how it is, I seem to be always writing about myself. I mean all the time to write about other people, and I try to think about myself as little as possible, and I am sure, when I find myself coming into the story again, I really am vexed... I hope any one who may read what I write, will understand that if these pages contain a great deal about me, I can only suppose it must be because I have really something to do with them, and can't be kept out' (9:162 emphasis mine). Here, Esther tries to assure the reader that when she writes about herself, she does so, inadvertently, and only to discuss others. However, Esther subtly acknowledges that she cannot be excluded from her own story. This is obviously a 'foregrounding of the suppressed Bildungsroman' of her own (Helena Michie 205), although crowded out by other people's stories.12

As a result, Esther's secret sense of self frequently undermines her otherwise unified and assured voice. Esther's narrative is cluttered with her own ambivalence, mixed motives, and deceptions. In this sense, her narrative is double-voiced. A dominant voice is cheerfully accepting and selflessly accommodating; and a muted one is inquiring, critical, and discontented but also hesitant, self-disparaging, and defensive. It is well revealed in her

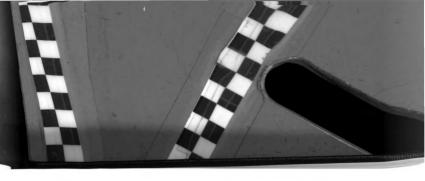




following statement uttered in response to perceiving that Mrs. Woodcourt is cunning, and to her own unvoiced and suppressed feelings for Mrs. Woodcourt's son: 'sometimes she almost made me uncomfortable. I had no right, I knew very well, to be uncomfortable.... I don't know what it was. Or at least if I do, now, I thought I did not then. Or at least--but it don't matter' (30:467). This is an example of what Judith Wilt calls the 'grammar of suspension,' frequently marked by the use of dashes or parentheses ("Confusion and Consciousness" 288). This kind of rhetorical pattern reiterates in Esther's narrative. Another example comes when Esther tries to hide her dejection over her situation: 'I was wakeful and rather low-spirited. I don't know why. At least I don't think I know why. At least, perhaps I do, but I don't think it matters. At any rate, I made up my mind to be so dreadfully industrious that I would leave myself not a moment's leisure to be low-spirited' (17:288). Esther's narrative thus shows the extent to which she is alienated from her inner self and deepest feelings.

It is true that bourgeois respectability and femininity are the developmental goals that Esther seeks to achieve through her autobiographical self-representation. This may be the ground of Laurie Langbauer's sweeping judgement that 'Dickens's fullest representation of the inside of a woman's mind...shows one so brainwashed by and intent on maintaining the male order' (153). What is clear, however, is that the



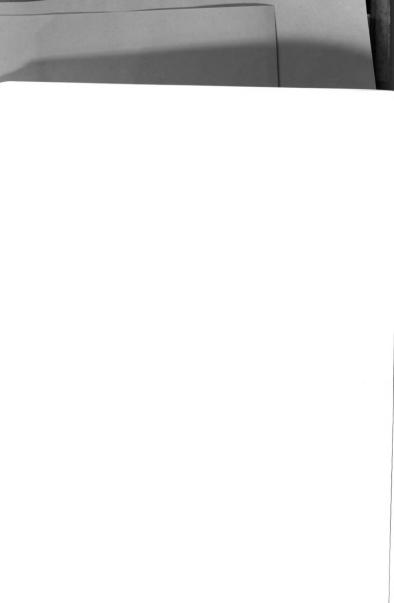


208

basic assumption of a stable and teleological self in a Victorian Bildungsroman is not available in Bsther's narrative. Esther's narrative demonstrates that her subjectivity is fragmented and destabilized.

Interestingly, Esther contrasts with Dickens' only other female narrative persona, Miss Wade, in Little Dorrit. Viewed together, their narratives form a diptych of possible extremes of female response to the restraints of a patriarchal society. Miss Wade is, like Esther, homeless and parentless; she lacks the inner core of self-worth. In her "History of a Self-Tormentor, " Miss Wade recounts her story in the tone of neurotic resentment, showing her inability to readjust herself into a patriarchal order. The "History" begins with lines precisely the reverse of Esther's modest stance: 'I have the misfortune of not being a fool. From the very early age I have detected what those about me thought they hid from me. If I could have been habitually imposed upon, instead of habitually discerning the truth, I might have lived as smoothly as most fools do' (Little Dorrit 21:725). In contrast, Esther's narrative maintains a relatively happy temper by not 'discerning the truth.' However, it implicitly illustrates the problem of the choice women face in Victorian society. Esther's narrative subsumes the underlying fear that she must either conform to a male order and find a niche in it, or face the unsatisfactory and lonely life of an outsider.13

Esther's narrative begins in Chapter 3, and is titled "A





Progress." Ostensibly, Esther's 'progress' in the world, which constitutes her story, is to be placed in society. The desire to find a place in a respectable society dominates Esther's formation of self. In the beginning, Esther as an orphan is portrayed as 'friendless, nameless, and unknown Her obscure status is compounded by her (17:290). illegitimacy, which militates against any claim to a name. Esther once thinks to herself, 'I was no one' (4:94). It is symbolic that 'Nemo' is the alias of Captain Hawdon, Esther's birth father. Guiding her development throughout the novel is her resolution 'to repair the fault I had been born with' by striving 'as I grew up to be industrious, contented, and kindhearted, and to do some good to some one, and win some love to myself if I could' (3:64, 4:73). Esther's options are limited to choosing a father or a husband, either of whom would possess the power to name, and therefore to place, her, in a patriarchal order.

When Esther arrives at the Bleak House, Mr. Jarndyce confers upon her a host of names, all deriving from nursery rhymes: 'This was the beginning of my being called Old Woman, and Little Old Woman, and Cobweb, and Mrs. Shipton, and Mother Hubbard, and Dame Durden, and so many names of that sort that my own name soon became lost among them' (8:148). It is significant to see that Esther's own name is lost among the welter of these diminutive, fairy-tale names. By naming her, Mr Jarndyce apparently delineate the dimensions of Esther's

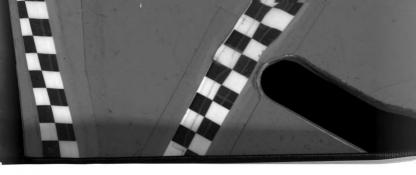




role at Bleak House, drawn from those models of housekeeper. The general effect is to stress Esther's reformulation into the sexless, elderly mother and housekeeper. Other aspects of Esther's individual identity are, thus, sacrificed to her instrumentality as a housekeeper. As Alexander Zwerling has pointed out, furthermore, this regressive identity imposed on Esther makes her a fit companion for a 'keeper' who is 'nearer to sixty than fifty' (41). As J. Hillis Miller argues, 'to give someone a nickname is to force on him a metaphorical translation and to appropriate him especially to oneself' ("Introduction" to Bleak House 24). In other words, this is a set up for the power arrangement between Jarndyce and Esther. By making Esther his housekeeper, Jarndyce gives Esther a limited amount of power, but it is power which increases her dependence upon him.

Esther has no other choice but to adopt her role as a Dame Durden personage. Her new name, thus, signals her acceptance into the Bleak House domestic enclave. She comes to be 'properly' ensconced 'at the centre of her own little orderly world,' as Harold Skimpole puts it (37:587). She is cheery in her domestic role and well-pleased with her little basket and double bunch of keys which signify housewifely possession and responsibility. As a capable housekeeper, she can fulfil her childhood resolution: 'I thought it best to be as useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could, to those immediately about me; and to try to let that





211

circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself' (8:154). Others begin to approve of her and help her to build her sense of self-worth. 'They said,' she writes, 'there could be no East Wind where somebody was; they said that wherever Dame Durden went, there was sunshine and summer air' (30:482); 'You're a pattern, you know, that's what you are,' Detective Bucket tells her, 'you're a pattern' (59:704).

As a housekeeper, Esther carries out a form of labor restricted completely to the domestic sphere and represents it in a way that does not acknowledge its status as work. Domestic labor differs from other forms of work in the way in which it is viewed by its subjects as self-imposed rather than mandated by wages (Danahay 417-18; Robert 12). Esther's work is always called 'duties, but not a 'profession' or 'occupation' (Safa 3). It is not surprising to see, in this context, that Esther dismisses any suggestion of skill or intelligence in the exercise of her duties by using diminutive epithets such as 'little' and 'foolish.' No doubt, those modesty tropes that Esther Summerson uses correspond to a general hegemonic definition of women's work in the Victorian period.15

In her image as a competent housekeeper, Esther is intended to be differentiated from the circle of women who are shown as destructive of their own households because their energies are directed outward toward society rather than inward into preserving the domestic sphere. In the novel, the





circle of female philanthropists and activists boldly transgress the gendered boundaries of the private/the public and work/home. Conducting 'missions' and charity business, Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle refuse to contain their desires for public function, destabilize the basis of the bourgeois family, and disrupt the gender economy of selfsacrifice. Furthermore, Miss Wisk entirely dismantles the logic of separate spheres by arguing: 'woman's mission was man's mission' (30:478). By concentrating their energies on issues outside the home, all three women challenge the ideological division of labor along the gender lines. Despite her intended difference from these women, however, Esther as a writer is uncannily similar to Mrs. Jellyby, a prolific writer, who writes hundreds of letters regarding the Borioboola-Gha campaign and, when the African project fails, engages in even heavier correspondence in support of women's rights (67:933). Esther's writing is associated with her potential for self-assertion.

Esther is also intended to be set apart from another type of failed homemakers such as the first Lady Dedlock and her own mother, Lady Honoria Dedlock. But she is disturbingly linked to them in symbolic ways. Lady Honoria Dedlock, with her secret of sexual transgression, challenges the patriarchal notion of a desireless and sexless woman. 16 As Taylor Stoehr mentions, she has defied social laws by having given herself to 'a wild love affair' (105). In addition, Lady Dedlock is





presented as an ambitious and aspiring woman: 'she had beauty, pride and ambition, insolent resolve, and sense enough to portion out a legion of fine ladies' (2:57). Despite her past, her achievement of social prominence and her arrival at 'the top of the fashionable tree' (ibid.) is entirely her own doing and determination. The society, which polarizes the bride types and gorgon types of women, punishes women like Lady Dedlock. Driven into the streets, she eventually dies, clinging to the iron gate of a graveyard where her dead lover is buried. However, an irony is that Esther, a 'pattern' homemaker, is unveiled as the illegitimate child of Lady Dedlock, a domestic woman. Esther's secret tie to her very sexual mother, thus, blurs the strict Victorian distinction between a maternal woman and a sexual woman, reminding the reader of 'their common sexuality as women' (Steven Cohan 116).

Also, Esther is even further linked to the first Lady Dedlock, a prototype of independently-willed, rebelling woman. The Dedlock ancestress brought ruin on the family through defying her husband, and cursed its descendants, swearing to haunt them forever.¹⁷ The present Lady Dedlock is obviously the agent of this curse: if the story of her sexual relationship with Captain Hawdon and the birth of Esther comes out, the house of Dedlock will be disgraced. Significantly, Esther takes herself for the ghost made flesh, as the physical proof of her mother's sexual secret: 'my echoing footsteps



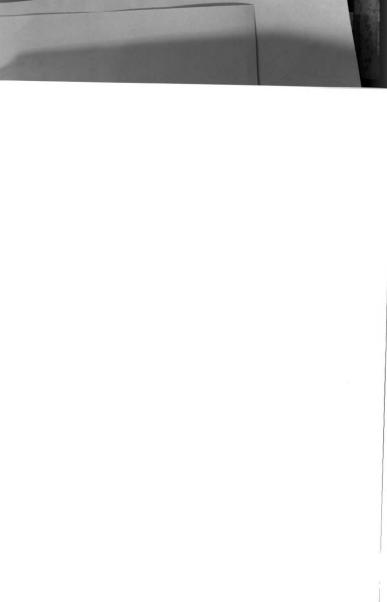


214

brought it suddenly into my mind that there was a dreadful truth in the legend of the Ghost's Walk; that it was I, who was to bring calamity upon the stately house; and that my warning feet were haunting it even then. Seized with an augmented terror of myself which turned me cold, I ran from myself and everything' (36:571). Identifying herself with the 'Ghost,' ironically, Esther inadvertently aligns herself with the strong-willed first Lady Dedlock. By doing so, she establishes her identification with Honoria Dedlock and the first Lady Dedlock, who disturbed a patriarchal order. 18

In the novel, however, Esther's identification with her mother takes a complex pattern, symbolized by the image of a 'broken glass.' Esther's narrative registers her first encounter with her mother in a church, as if it is an encounter with a mirror: 'why her face should be, in a confused way, like a broken glass to me, in which I saw scraps of old remembrances; and why I should be so fluttered and troubled... by having casually met her eyes; I could not think' (18:304). Obviously, the face of Lady Dedlock figures for Esther as a mirror because it is the face in which she can see her own. However, the surface of the mirror where the two women can merge into a single identity is 'broken' and damaged. Thus, the novel implicitly suggests that a complete reconstruction of the mirror of identification between mother and daughter never happens.

In the reunion with Esther in chapter 36, while the

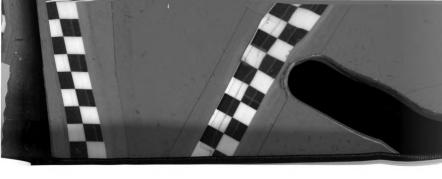




knowledge of her mother's love is a restorative to her, Esther feels relieved that the disfigurement resulted from her previous disease sets her apart from her mother: 'I felt, through all my tumult of emotion, a burst of gratitude to the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness; as that nobody could ever now look at me, and look at her, and remotely think of any near tie between us' (36:565). They agree that they belong to two different worlds, forever barred from expressing love and pity for each other. Even so, Esther's narrative subtly reflects her unquenchable longing for her mother and her conflict about the need to suppress her feeling: 'It matters little now, how much I thought of my living mother who had told me ever more to consider her dead.... It matters little now how often I recalled the tones of my mother's voice, wondered whether I should ever hear it again as I so longed to do,... It is all, all over' (43:647). Esther's repetitive denial -- 'it matters little' --, rather intensifies the extent of her yearning for mother.19

Lady Dedlock's final death signals an ultimate separation between mother and daughter. As Van Boheemen argues, Lady Dedlock must die 'in order to cleanse and purify --to exorcise--'the implications of Esther (123). 20 As a result, Esther affiliates herself with a father figure, not a maternal one. In refusing to replicate her mother's fall, Esther tries hard to adopt the values of the patriarchal society she



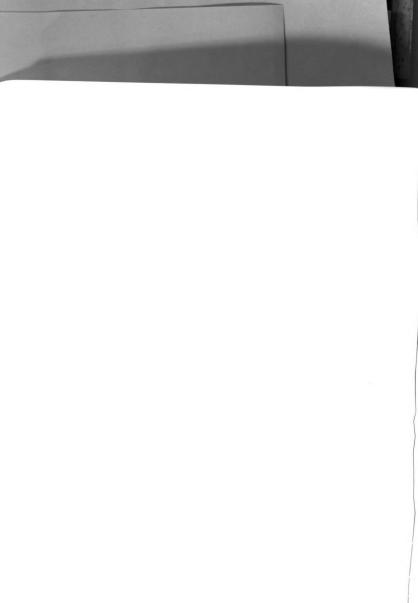


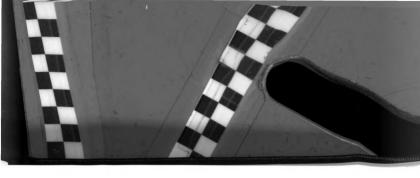
216

inhabits. Esther's attempt to dissociate herself from the danger of female sexuality represses her physical attraction to Woodcourt, and keeps the role of Dame Durden.

Nevertheless, Esther's narrative clearly shows that she pays a high price for her struggle to become a pattern woman. Her narrative includes a series of ordeals, of tests, of assaults on her psychic frame. For example, Esther moves around jangling a bunch of keys--the magic talisman of a good housekeeper --, enjoying the 'magnitude of my trust' (6:118). However, the keys soon take on a hectoring quality, objectifying for her the heavy demands of feminine duty. Thus, Esther periodically manifests a subliminal anxiety associated with her role as housekeeper as in the following dream: 'I was in such a flutter about my two bunches of keys that I had been dreaming for an hour before I got up that the more I tried to open a variety of locks with them the more they were determined not to fit any' (8:142). Sometimes, their jangling is a sign of an unacknowledged unease, as when she accepts Jarndyce's proposal of marriage: she writes, in an off-hand, irritable tone, 'I had done jingling about with my baskets of keys' (45:670). The keys lose their plangency and make cacophonous sounds, indicating that something is uncomfortable in Esther's life.

Esther's illness functions as the most dramatic reminder of the pain of fulfilling cultural expectations for a woman. Esther's sense of the onerousness of the duties, tasks, and



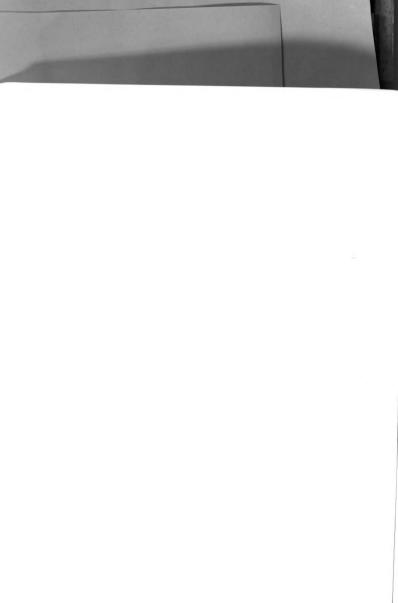


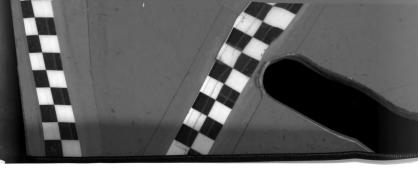
217

responsibilities that she must shoulder all figure prominently in her two dream deliriums during her illness. The first one is an anxiety dream of laboring up 'colossal staircases, ever striving to reach the top' (35:544). The vision of 'colossal' stairs which haunts Esther figures the uphill struggle she has had. The phrase curiously resonates with Esther's early formula for success: 'I would try, as hard as ever I could, to repair the fault I had been born with... and would strive as I grew up to be industrious, contented, and kind-hearted, and to do some good to someone,--and win some love to myself if I could' (3:64 italics mine). But Esther's success formula here turns into the sense of futility and frustration.

In another dream, Esther projects an image of herself as one bead linked to many others in a 'flaming necklace, or a ring, or starry circle of some kind.' She feels it 'inexplicable agony and misery to be a part of the dreadful thing,' and prays 'to be taken off from the rest' (35:544). This vision intimates Esther's entrapment in an interconnected and circular chain of enforced participation in a system over which she has no control. Here, she feels herself colonized and fragmented by the roles she has to play. This intensifies her sense of ultimate powerlessness.

Esther's illness thus signifies a crisis for her narrative itself, for it involves a loss of the progression and development of identity. Esther's hallucinatory confrontation with her past allows her to see her whole life





218

at once. Here, Esther's reminiscence of a 'child,... an elder girl, and the little woman I had been so happy as' yields to an overwhelming sense of feeling 'oppressed by cares and difficulties adapted to each station' and 'by the great perplexity of endlessly trying to reconcile them' (35:543). This ultra-temporal moment candidly intimates the gaps and voids at the center of a supposedly progressive female Bildungsroman.

The climax of Esther's 'career' as a Dame Durden personage is to become the 'mistress of Bleak House' (44:666, 67:932). Esther is aware that she cannot continue her life in Jarndyce's household without any 'official' status. However, even though Esther's prospective marriage to Jarndyce symbolizes the climactic event of her placement and legitimation, her inner heart is entangled with contradictory feelings. She nearly collapses when the proposal is made: 'I cried very much,... as if something for which there was no name or distinct idea were indefinitely lost to me. I was very happy, very thankful, very hopeful; but I cried very much' The use of contradictory expressions reveals Esther's turbulent state of feeling. In accepting Jarndyce' proposal, Esther's own desire for Allan Woodcourt will be pushed to the margins, forever. Esther forces herself to be cheerful: 'When you are mistress of Bleak House, you are to be as cheerful as a bird' (668). Her deepest fear is that her inner desire for another man will leave her discontented with



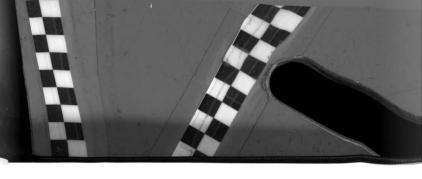
her present lot. Esther tries to regard Jarndyce's offer as 'the close of the benignant history [she has] been pursuing' (667). However, Esther's narrative clearly reveals that she cannot fully convince herself of her own providential logic.

Nevertheless, if Esther has settled for the role of total self-renunciation, the episode in the next chapter is an odd digression from, and a subversion of, that role. She makes an independent journey to the port of Deal to intervene in Richard's wrong move in career as an army officer. But this journey turns out to give her opportunity to be 'among the first to welcome [Woodcourt] home to England' from his trip to India (45:680). Esther seizes it and, on her motion, arranges a private interview with the young doctor. In a significant gesture, she raises her veil to him. Her ostensible motive is to show him the ruins of her beauty, destroyed by illness. But the effect of Esther's action is to renew rather than terminate the love affair, as Esther admits: 'I felt for my old self as the dead may feel if they ever revisit these scenes. I was glad to be tenderly remembered, to be gently pitied, not to be quite forgotten' (45:682).

It is important to note that Esther eventually regains Woodcourt in a sequence of events that brings her to her new -her very own--Bleak House. This process retains the fraught issue of power in the relation of Esther and Jarndyce.

Jarndyce's idea is to pretend to hold Esther to her marital promise to him, to arrange secretly a marriage to the man he



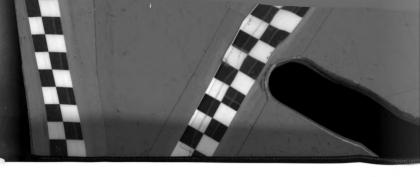


knows she loves, and to trick her into overseeing the preparation of her own marital house. When Jarndyce hands Esther over to Woodcourt, the act is designed to demonstrate Jarndyce's benevolence consummately: 'take from me a willing gift, and best wife that ever man had' (64:915).

However, as I have already shown in Chapter 1, Esther's game in controlling her destiny is not totally dependent on Jarndyce. Esther remains silent as her guardian recounts the events leading up to the moment when he bestows her upon her new fiance, as if she is not really responsible for her marriage to her love-object. The irony is, however, that she has been always a 'willing' lover for Woodcourt. Thus, the expression 'willing' has a double entendre, suggesting that Jarndyce's control has not extended to the true state of her feeling. Secretly, in this sense, Esther is an active participant in this marriage transaction.

In her concluding narrative, to be sure, Esther effusively attributes her successful marriage to Woodcourt to the benevolence of Jarndyce, her guardian angel. Jarndyce is her husband's 'best and dearest friend,' her children's 'darling,' and 'object of our deepest love and veneration,' the 'fondest father,' and 'a superior being' (67:934). Esther even argues that she has never lost her old names: 'I have never lost my old names, nor has he [Jarndyce] lost his; nor do I ever, when he is with us, sit in any other place than in my old chair at his side. Dame Trot, Dame Durden, Little



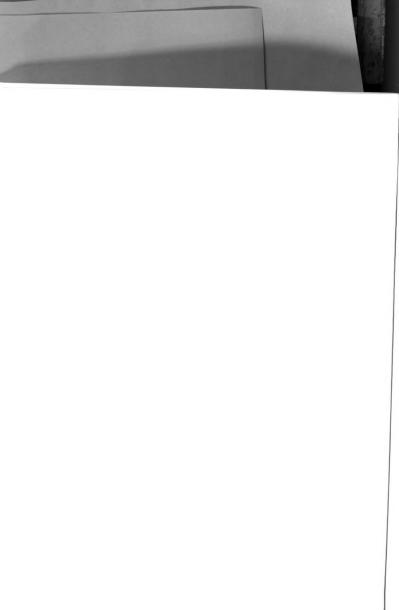


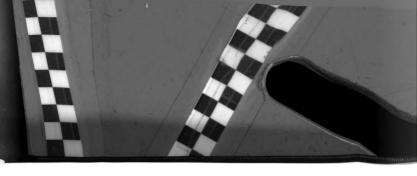
221

Woman!--all just the same as ever; and I answer, Yes, dear guardian! just the same' (67:934). But it is hard to take her words at face value, because things are not 'just the same as ever,' as she maintains. The relationship between Jarndyce and Esther has changed. The novel makes it clear that it is Jarndyce who must make personal renunciation, but not Esther.

Nevertheless, the novel problematizes Esther's bildung which still takes a form of integration into a patriarchal At the end of the novel, Esther is successfully ensconced in her place as wife, housekeeper, and mother of children. But one hardly gets any sense of the fulfillment of Esther's bildung, since her narrative retains its insistence on her own marginal status to the last: 'The people even praise Me as the doctor's wife. The people even like Me as I go about, and make so much of me that I am quite abashed. I owe it all to him, my love, my pride! They like me for his sake as I do everything I do in life for his sake' (67:935). Esther seems here self-contented with her possession of everything that a traditional heroine could want--husband, house, children: she is named, placed, and praised as 'the doctor's wife.' In the light of Esther's refusal to register any independent sense of self-progress, Suzanne Graver makes an excoriating statement: the life that Esther recounts illustrates 'not growth but stasis, not progress but arrest.' ("Writing in a 'Womanly' Way" 7)

Obviously, the ending shows that Esther attempts to take



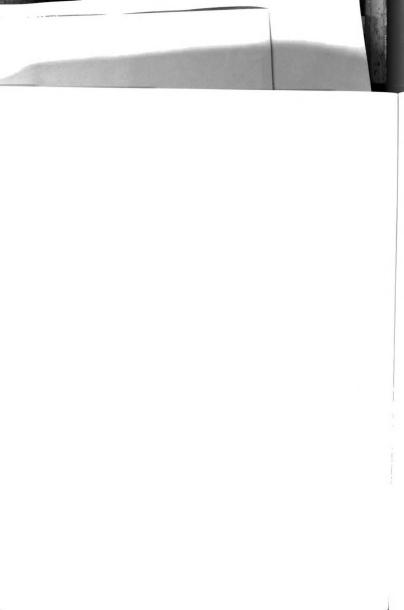


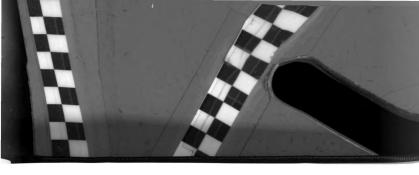
222

leave of the reader as a fulfilled, emotionally well-balanced woman who has been, for 'full seven happy years,' the mistress of Bleak House. However, the final lines of her narrative still resonate with subtle uncertainties about her identity. When Allen says that Esther is 'prettier that [she] ever [was]' (67:935), this touches on Esther's womanly identity manifested in beauty--facial or mental. Esther's response is that 'I did not know that; I am not certain that I know it now' (935). Instead, she believes:

my dearest little pets are very pretty, and that my darling is very beautiful, and that my husband is very handsome, and that my guardian has the brightest and the most benevolent face that ever was seen, and that they can very well do without much beauty in me--even supposing-- (67:880).

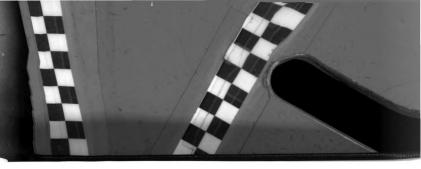
Here, Esther dismisses the discussion of her own 'beautiful' self as an unimportant subject. She implies, instead, that her beauty is, if anything, the reflection of others' beauty. As a woman, and a wife and mother, she is the mirror who reflects Allan's 'handsome' face, the 'pretty' looks of her 'dearest little pets' and the 'brightest and most benevolent face' of her guardian. In this uncompleted sentence, Esther, the ostensible subject, is non-existent, or, at best, only half present.





Furthermore, one is confronted with the ambiguity of the last sentence. It is so incomplete that there is no terminal punctuation, only the dash, '--even supposing--'. It seems that Esther's last utterance simply fades away rather than concludes her narrative. Obviously Esther's 'grammar of suspension' is sustained even to the last. This is a symptom of 'counter-finality,' the term which D. A. Miller adopts from Sartre (Narrative and Its Discontents 201-2). finality' resists a narrative closure and a one-dimensional meaning of the ending. Esther has repetitiously hidden information from us throughout the novel, and it seems that she still conceals some part of her self in the final scene. This radically suspended ending demonstrates that, despite the ideological constraints in operation, Esther's narrative cannot ultimately close the gaps and fissure inherent in the female plot of successful social integration. Thus, despite its celebration of Esther's domestic choice as a maxim of a woman's developmental trajectory, Bleak House clearly shows the lingering ambiguities and the traces of conflicting female psyche embodied in the apparently normalistic plot of the Victorian female Bildung. As a result, the domestic ideology advocated in the novel is subtly undercut by its own textual dissent.





2. Middlemarch

Dorothea Brooke's story reveals, much more manifestly than Esther Summerson's, the irreconcilable conflict between the socially-prescribed trajectory of female Bildung and the heroine's desire for an alternative mode of life. It is true that, like Dickens, Eliot chooses the domestic resolution of the heroine's story. At the same time, however, Eliot strongly deplores that Victorian society yields alternative life plots for the young heroine. Eliot's explicit foregrounding of the 'Woman Question' in Middlemarch helped to elicit some negative reactions about it among contemporary critics. R. H. Hutton, a contemporary reviewer, complained in his review that the "Prelude" and the "Finale" of the novel mistakenly attempted 'to represent the book as an elaborate contribution to the "Woman's Question, "... [for] the creative power of the author is yoked to no specific doctrine' (Carroll 307).

Likewise, Frederick Broom, another contemporary reviewer, revealed his fundamental reservation about recurring women's issues in the novel:

There is a certain school which will find satisfaction in thinking that Dorothea's story involves some special impeachment of the fitness of the present female lot. We





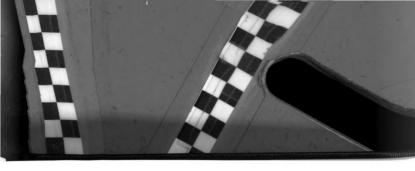
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do not think this is at all intended, and if it be intended it is certainly not justified. George Eliot gives us a noble portrait and an affecting history of a woman who nearly spoilt her life by attempting to rise above her opportunities, but her failures and mistakes are not due to the fact of her being a woman, but are simply those which belong to the common lot of human life. Just as she married a husband who did not suit her, so a man may marry a wife who does not suit him.... The fetters she wore are too common to humanity, but the weight of them is felt far more by men than by women (3).

Broom argues that Middlemarch does not deal with a woman theme but a human theme in general. But the very insistence of the argument which translates a woman question into a human question appears to betray the real fear behind it, that women might have a 'justified' complaint. In commenting on the heroine's development, Broom confuses the concepts of marriage and women's 'opportunities.' He disregards the way in which the novel problematizes the fact that the heroine cannot conceive of having any opportunities outside of marriage--'no one stated exactly what else was in her power' ("Finale" 894). Indeed, this may well be a valid point of 'impeachment of the fitness of the present female lot.'

Eliot makes it clear that the 'Woman Question' cannot be excluded from general socio-historical observations: it is a

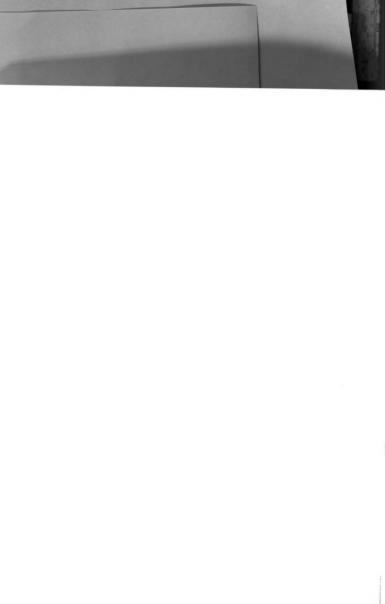




226

prime and fundamental problem of human history. In the "Prelude," the narrator suggests, tongue in cheek, that all those who care to know nothing less than 'the history of man' surely have dwelt, however briefly, 'on the life of Saint Theresa' ("Prelude" 25). The narrator further argues that Herodotus, forefather of Greek historians, also 'thought it well to take a woman's lot for his starting-point' in telling human history (11:123).²¹

At the heart of the 'Woman Question' in Middlemarch is what critics have come to refer to as the 'Saint-Theresa Syndrome' (Laurence Lerner 243), the terms for which are laid out by Eliot herself in the novel's "Prelude." sixteenth century, St. Theresa's passionate, ideal nature demanded, and founded, an epic life. But 'many Theresas' born into the modern world have found 'no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action' (25). The point is again underlined in the "Finale": 'A new Theresa will hardly have the opportunity of reforming a conventional life, any more than a new Antigone will spend her heroic piety in daring all for the sake of a brother's burial: the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is for ever gone' (896). Thus, the 'Saint-Theresa syndrome' poignantly recapitulates the problematic of female destiny which demands an epic life but finds no outlet for achievement apart from the socially limiting role of common womanhood, i. e. marriage. In the novel, marriage is thus associated with the limits as well as



possibilities, of female life.

Dorothea's plot, that adopts marriage as the final resolution of the heroine's quest, has angered many modern feminist critics. Zelda Austen argues that many feminists have expressed 'some resentment of George Eliot for making her heroines so much less venturesome than she was in her own life'(550). For example, Ellen Morgan argues that, withholding the promise of other fulfillment from her heroine, Eliot, along with other nineteenth-century novelists, arranged matters so that 'the world was pruned to fit the confines of the social role which eventually circumscribed her' (qtd. in Labovitz 6).

However, Eliot's stance about women's domestic destiny is much more complex than monolithic conformity. In the "Prelude," Eliot strongly suggests that the conventional definitions of women's nature are no longer workable in a rapidly changing society: 'some have felt that these blundering lives are due to the inconvenient indefiniteness with which the Supreme Power has fashioned the natures of women: if there were one level of feminine incompetence as strict as the ability to count three and no more, the social lot of women might be treated with scientific certitude. Meanwhile the indefiniteness remains' ("Prelude" 25-26). Apparently, Eliot deplores the 'indefiniteness' of woman's lot in Victorian society, and the 'lack of coherent social faith and order' (25) which prevents women's fulfillment by failing

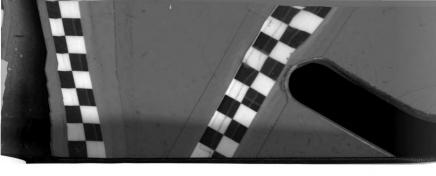


to offer opportunities.

At the same time, however, Eliot's recognition of women's 'indefiniteness' becomes the very idea of eluding limits, especially those of 'scientific certitudes' of Victorian assumptions about woman's innate nature. In the novel, for example, Mr. Brooke assuredly pronounces his belief in women's inferior intellect: 'your sex are not thinkers, you know-varium et mutabile semper -- that kind of thing. You don't know Virgil. I knew' (6:77-78).22 Obviously, he believes that intellectual inequality between the sexes is the 'intention of nature.' However, the narrator later satirizes Mr. Brooke' gender ideology comparing him with Dorothea: 'but nature has sometimes made sad oversights in carrying out her intention; as in the case of good Mr Brooke whose masculine consciousness was at this moment in the stammering condition under the eloquence of his niece' (39:424 emphasis mine). Mr. Brooke is a dilettante incapable of the sustained thought or action, but Dorothea has real intellectual potential. Mr. Brooke's basic inability to solve the puzzle of female identity is revealed: 'woman was a problem, before which Mr Brooke's mind felt blank' (4:65). In the novel, the hubristic pomp of the male mind which retains a stereotypical concept of women undergoes excoriating reality checks. Bliot thus strongly suggests that the so-called woman's innate nature may be a product of culture which dictates rather than reflects woman's nature.

Interestingly, Eliot's presentation of Dorothea

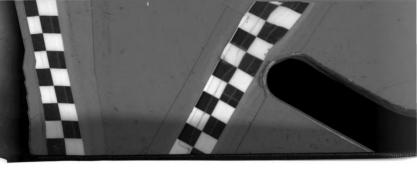




emphasizes that there is no single key to unlock her character, no single image to capture her essence. Significantly, Dorothea is called the 'Blessed Virgin' (1:29), a 'perfect young Madonna,' a 'Christian Antigone' (19:221), 'Santa Clara' (22:249), 'Beatrice' or 'Laura' (37:397), the 'Virgin Mary' (76:826), a 'mater dolorosa' (80:847) and so on. Those images -- a Madonna, a daring rebel, a martyr, a lover, a mother-- indicate that Eliot uses multiple parallels to trace the implications of the portrait of Dorothea, thereby escaping any imprisoning single image. Clearly, Eliot's emphasis on the 'indefiniteness' of woman's being has subversive potential, in that it indicates infinite possibilities of women's life which cannot be defined in terms of a dominant domestic ideology.²³

The question of vocation is central to Middlemarch, which is, in one way or another, the story of those who mean to 'shape their own deeds and alter the world a little' (15:174). Like any male protagonist of a Bildungsroman, Dorothea strives for a form of personal fulfillment which integrates individual desire with social demands. However, the male ideal of Bildung, the harmony of the inner and the social, does not apply to Dorothea. For her, the ideal connections between the self and society are ruptured because the public roles of women are in no way commensurate with their personal force. It is true that quite a few male characters in the novel fail to achieve their goals. Lydgate is a tragic case because his



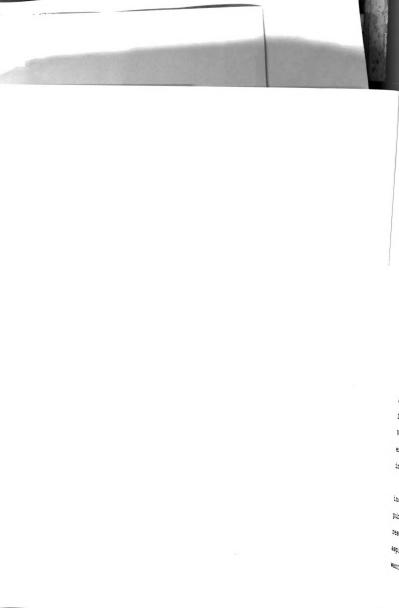


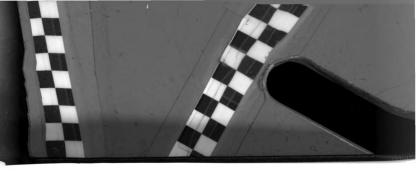
230

energy, which has yielded to 'the small solicitations of circumstances' (79:841), falls short of the task he has dreamed. The same is true for Casaubon, but for a different reason. However, each man goes further with what he has than Dorothea can. In their intellectual pursuits, they have the direction and inspiration of their education as well as the small increments of felt achievement that reinforce their sense of strength and so carry them forward to further effort.²⁴

In contrast, Dorothea has only the meagerest education In the novel, Dorothea's peculiarly female predicament is represented by the dominant image of a 'labyrinth,' a structure that dissipates energy and impedes the free flow of force. The image of a labyrinth first occurs to describe Dorothea's ardor, impeded by the entanglements of Middlemarch society: 'with such a nature struggling in the bands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency' (3:51). Unable to find a full current in the 'walled-in maze,' Dorothea's energy is blocked, dissipated by socially created friction.25 Clearly, Eliot makes protests against the limitations of education and opportunity imposed upon her heroine by the 'imperfect social state' ("Finale" 896).

Dorothea's characterization can engage the sympathies of

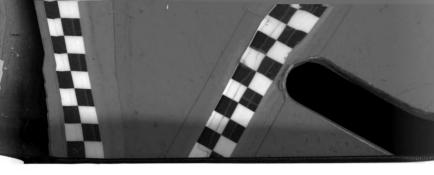




modern feminist critics, precisely because her aspiration seems to refuse what has been decreed as proper to true womanhood. At the outset, Dorothea is portrayed as an ardent searcher for something beyond a conventionally 'feminine' occupation: 'To her the destinies of mankind, seen by the light of Christianity, made the solicitudes of feminine fashion appear an occupation for Bedlam.... Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world...' (1:30). Clearly, Dorothea is obsessed with her future life as focused on vocations other than a conventional marriage. During her conversation with Sir James in chapter 3, Dorothea identifies woman's lot with that of a 'tiny Maltese puppy.' She argues: 'It is painful to me to see these creatures that are bred merely as pets.... They are too helpless: their lives are too frail. A weasel or a mouse that gets its own living is more interesting' (3:52). Dorothea's analogy between a puppy and a woman implies that Victorian society offers women little to do besides the exercise of their affections, while women need work and independence.

It is no accident that Dorothea's notion of marriage incorporates her desire for an intellectual achievement and a public action: to study and help her future husband with his research and to build tenants' housing. In addition to her aspiration to be 'useful' to her scholarly husband, Dorothea wants to correct her uncle's negligence toward his tenant





232

farmers and plans habitable cottages for them. With these purposes, Dorothea envisions her marriage to Casaubon as an epic mission to 'lead a grand life here--now--in England' (3:51). Undeniably, Dorothea's idea of marriage reveals her own immaturity. But at the same time, her anomalous concept of marriage poses a serious challenge to the Victorian domestic ideology which denies women other dimensions of life than domesticity.

Predictably, Dorothea's real married life shatters her elated hopes. First, her dream of building the improved tenant homes is crushed. When she becomes mistress of a large estate in Lowick, Dorothea wants her home in a parish which has 'a larger share of the world's misery,' so that she might have 'more active duties in it' (9:103). Soon, however, she is disappointed to discover that the poor of the Lowick are clean and well taken care of, leaving little room for her reformist role. The public agenda which Dorothea has cherished as an important part of her married life never materialize in reality. Instead, 'the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty' (28:307) is Dorothea's lot in Lowick.

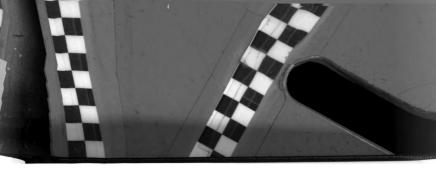
Furthermore, Dorothea's marriage stifles her intellectual desire to learn and participate in her husband's research project. An Victorian ideological dictum for woman's intellectual development is that women be 'wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation'--as Ruskin puts it ("Of Queen's Gardens" 83). Casaubon's applause for Dorothea,



when she agrees to marry him, ominously represents their opposing expectations of marriage: '[t]he great charm of your sex,' he tells her 'is its capability of an ardent selfsacrificing affection, and herein we see its fitness to round and complete the existence of our own' (5:73). Obviously, the novel here conveys its open-eyed awareness of men's unreserved exploitation of women's finer feelings and affections. It is ironical that Casaubon self-servingly attaches the epithet 'ardent' to what he assumes as Dorothea's 'natural' desire for womanly duties. In the novel, in fact, the word 'ardent' has been frequently used to describe the extent of Dorothea's epic and intellectual desire. Yet, the novel makes it clear that Dorothea herself has not 'reached that point of renunciation at which she would have been satisfied with having a wise husband: she wished... to be wise herself' (7:47). Dorothea marries in hope of finding work through her husband, but Victorian domestic ideology prescribes that her work become the husband himself.

It is clear, then, that by marrying Casaubon, Dorothea has committed herself to an imagined solution which, in fact, only produces the restatement of her problem. Casaubon's demeaning attitude toward the female mind ultimately clashes with Dorothea's gradually developing perceptivity. Casaubon refuses to let his wife be his helpmate in research, suppressing her ambition to be useful and wise. Casaubon casts over the impressionable Dorothea 'a sort of mental





shiver' (20:228). Moreover, Casaubon not only chills Dorothea mentally but also physically and emotionally. At the heart of Dorothea's character is a sensuality, despite her suppression. Early on, it has betrayed itself by her enjoyment of riding, for which she has felt guilty, and her attempt to discover mystical joy in her appreciation of her mother's emeralds. However, Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon retards her emotional development because he does not encourage her to pour forth her womanly feeling. Casaubon meets her shyly offered caresses and womanly feeling with a formal politeness that is far from the passionate ardor of a new bridegroom.

Unhappy Dorothea goes through a painful process of discovering the path of wifely duty. Her intellectual desire and reformist ardor are pitiably replaced by 'her passionate cry to be taught what would best comfort that man for whose sake it seemed as if she must quell every impulse in her except the yearnings of faithfulness and compassion' (58:638). However, Eliot does not posit Dorothea as a domestic angel with mindless devotion. The novel clearly shows Dorothea's agonizing fluctuations between rebelliousness and submission. Casaubon rightly regards 'her wifely devotedness' as a 'penitential expiation of unbelieving thoughts' and her acquiescence as a 'self-approved effort of forbearance' (42:455-56). Overall, Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon is not presented as the desired destination of female development but as a claustrophobic deadlock: 'Having once embarked on your

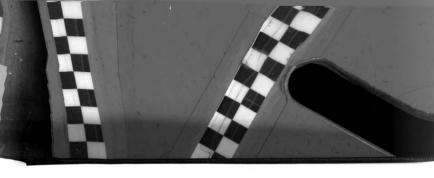


marital voyage, it is impossible not to be aware that you make no way and that the sea is not within sight--that, in fact, you are exploring an enclosed basin' (20:228).

When Dorothea is luckily freed from the bindings of her first marriage through Casaubon's death, she envisions an independent life ahead of her. As if answering Casaubon's instructions to her, she writes a note and seals it within his own envelope: 'I could not use it. Do you not see now that I could not submit my soul to yours by working hopelessly at what I have no belief in?--Dorothea' (54:583). This symbolic declaration serves to cut her relationship with the past. By accepting the fact that Casaubon was unworthy of her affections, she frees herself from his attempts to control her life, even after his death.

However, although she inherits expanded financial resources, Dorothea is again without focus, with a need once more to find a meaningful channel for her energies. Lacking the structured opportunities to discover a vocation, which men inherit with their sex, Dorothea's energy endures, diffuse and unchannelled, but still charged. Trying to dispel people's meddling concern about her future, she declares that she will be completely engrossed in carrying out a new set of public plans. This time, she is not concerned with anything so modest as a few model cottages. What she has in mind is to build a radically new utopian community: 'I should like to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make a little





236

colony, where everybody should work and all the work should be done well. I should know every one of the people and be their friend' (55:594). This statement sounds like the idea of an Owenite, proto-socialist, egalitarian commune. The 1830s, in which the novel is set, were the peak of Robert Owen's utopian community movement. As an owner of the New Lanark Mills, Owen successfully remodelled the workers' housing according to his reform plan in the first decade of the nineteenth century. In this sense, Dorothea's housing project potentially portends her socio-political vocation in a large scale.

However, Dorothea soon abandons the plan. Neither her politics nor housing plan ever materialize, now that her passionate attention is more and more intensely drawn towards Ladislaw. She thus changes from a woman with a personal political conscience and a devotion to the people of rural England, to a woman in love. Dorothea's remarks to Ladislaw presage her change: 'I used to despise women a little for not shaping their lives more, and doing better things. I was very fond of doing as I liked, but I have almost given it up' (54:589). Clearly, Dorothea's 'common yearning of womanhood' ("Prelude" 25) begins to overpower her vocational desire. Her yearning for Ladislaw replaces all her other ambitions.²⁴

At this stage, Dorothea's development is presented in her recognition of her true emotional/sensual needs. In his role as Romantic painter-poet and Cavalier lover, Ladislaw is sensual enough to compensate for the sterile deficiencies of

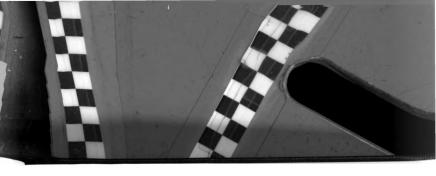


Casaubon. Indeed, Dorothea increasingly recognizes the force of her passionate desire for Ladislaw and the pointlessness of the injunction imposed upon her by her dead husband.²⁹

Casaubon's codicil which prohibits her from marrying Ladislaw on the peril of losing inheritance seems to be a main obstacle for Dorothea's Bildung and self-realization. Surely, many critics have been disappointed by this transfer of Dorothea's idealistic energy from the larger world to the Henry James once noted with disapproval that lesser man. Dorothea's personal development gets ultimately restricted to the question: 'will she or will she not marry Will Ladislaw?' Yet, for him, the 'question seems relatively trivial and the implied struggle, factitious' (Carroll 355). In the same vein, D. A. Miler points out that the original unsolvable opposition between the 'meanness of opportunity' and an 'epic life' is replaced by an 'reduced opposition between Casaubon and Will' (Narrative and Its Discontents 148). Indeed, the novel rewrites Dorothea's desire so that her second marriage represents an apparently fitting satisfaction.

Dorothea happily shocks her neighbors even more than she did by marrying Casaubon, by leaving the money for the young, radical, sexy man. She literally abandons her 'luxurious shelter' (80:846) for her union with Ladislaw: 'We could live quite well on my own fortune--it is too much--seven hundred-a-year--I want so little--no new clothes--and I will learn what everything costs' (83:870). According to Patricia Branca, a



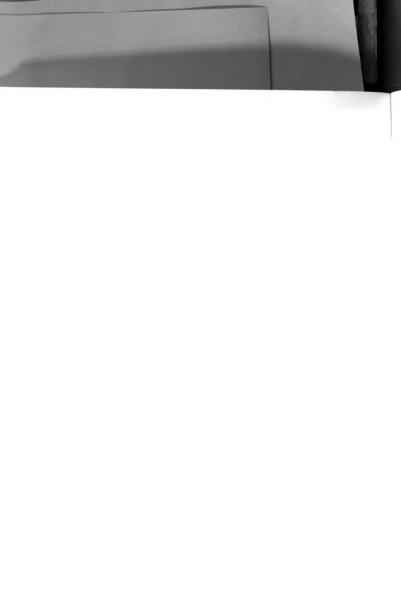


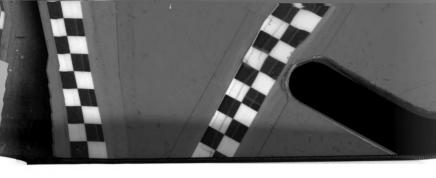
238

large number of Victorian middle-class wives were responsible for making ends meet on incomes of 200-300 pounds (qtd. in Jane Lewis "). Then, 'seven hundred a year' is quite sufficient income to set up a middle class household, provided that Dorothea is intent on careful consumption. It almost seems that the final terminus of Dorothea's intellectual, emotional, epic quest is now reduced to middle-class domestic happiness.³⁰

However, the novel's perspective for marriage as the goal of Victorian female Bildung is not simple. In fact, Eliot's text deplores that Dorothea's epic desire and her 'common yearning of womanhood' remain mutually exclusive of each other. Dorothea herself is aware that her marriage is a limited choice: 'It is quite true...that I might have done something better, if I had been better. But this is what I am going to do, I have promised to marry Mr. Ladislaw; and I am going to marry him' (84:879-80). This shows Dorothea's self-consciousness that, as the domestic partner of Ladislaw, she may remain as far from fulfilling her original epic aspirations, as she had been as Casaubon's wife. 31 She is aware that 'domestic reality' may continue to keep her in a narrow sphere.

Eliot began her novel by lamenting the unsung Saint Theresas 'who found for themselves no epic life', but she concludes by reminding the reader that her heroine has found a home. The "Finale" offers a series of compromises in





response to the vexed question of how the energy of the talented woman is to be channeled. Dorothea does not reshape the world, but has domestic and moral influence which emanates from her 'being' (as mother and wife) rather than from her 'doing' (vocation). At the same time, however, the novel blames society on the circumscription of the heroine's domestic life. The head note introducing chapter 46-- 'Since we cannot get what we like, let us like what we can get' -seems to express the underlying tenor of the "Finale."32 The implied regret is that, in a restrictive socio-historical medium, women has no other choice but to grab what is nearest rather than to long for the unattainable. Then, the ultimate blame is on the society, as the epigraph of chapter 4 suggests: 'Our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves, but it is the world that brings that iron' (4:53). As Levine indicates, Eliot thus betrays her 'quiet anger' in that society does not provide an alternative life for women ("Repression and Vocation" 8).33

Certainly, the novel casts doubts on a Victorian domestic ideology which requires that 'so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another' ("Finale" 894 emphasis mine). It thus shows that the traditional settlement of marriage and family for Dorothea's quest is not a sufficient solution: her problems transcend such conventional settlement and arrangement. It is no accident that the final paragraphs are full of melancholy



notes.³⁴ At the same time, however, Eliot attempts to express her positive acknowledgements for women's unique contribution to society and history, despite their exclusion from sociohistorical realm. She thus tries to provide 'mental sunshine' for the historical perspective for Victorian women's lot.³⁵

is noteworthy that, with this purpose, deliberately contradicts the social evolutionary theory of Herbert Spencer in the "Finale." Spencer regards the destiny of women as unfavorable in the course of biological evolution, because of their small brain. He thus argues that women were excluded from independent intellectual evolution and were entirely dependent on being selected by men for their survival (Education 187). However, Spencer tries to recuperate women from their 'natural' inferiority, by giving them a sense of historical mission. He argues that in the evolutionary process of history and society, women's positive role is that of motherhood--producing and raising the future generations. He then tries to justify the sacrifice entailed by motherhood as a biological/historical dictum for women: 'because of physical tax which reproduction necessitates...because of the tax, physical and mental, necessitated by rearing children... assuming the preservation of the race to be a desideratum, there results a certain kind of obligation to pay this tax and to submit to sacrifice' (Principles of Ethics I:533).36 In this view, reproductive biology defines women's historical role as motherly sacrifice.



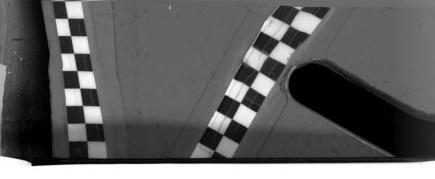
Nevertheless, Eliot resists Spencer's theory, transforming its terms from biology to morality.³⁷ In her 1867 letter to John Morley, editor of *The Fortnightly Review*, Eliot emphasizes woman's moral contribution, rather than reproductive one, to the evolution of society.

I mean that as a fact of mere zoological evolution, woman seems to me to have the worst share in existence. But for that very reason I would the more contend that in the moral evolution we have 'an art which does mend nature'-- an art which 'itself is nature.' It is the function of love in the largest sense, to mitigate the harshness of all fatalities. And in the thorough recognition of that worst share, I think, there is a basis for a sublimer resignation in woman and a more regenerating tenderness in man (George Eliot Letters VIII:402).

Eliot, here, emphasizes that the harshness of women's condition in 'zoological evolution' could be mitigated by 'moral evolution.' She hopes that a growing moral force of women will ultimately lighten 'the pressure of hard non-moral outward condition' (VIII:403). It is clear that Eliot firmly believes that women can participate in history as the carrier of morality and love, not just as the biological agency for the future generation.

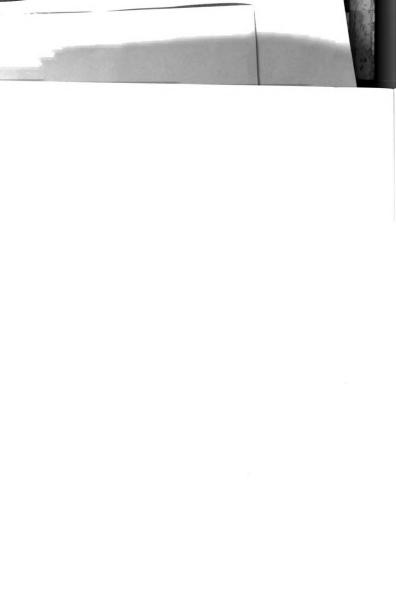
It is not surprising, in this light, that the "Finale"





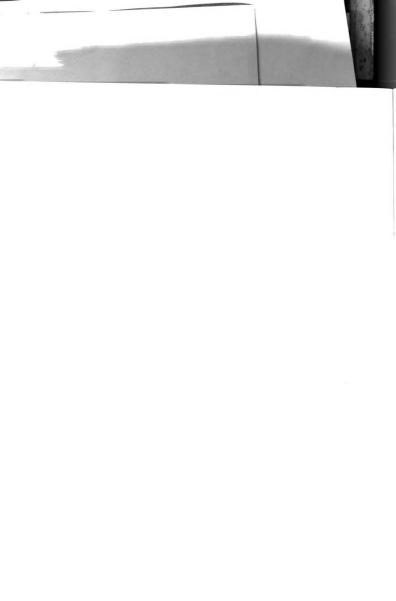
turns the strength of Dorothea's feminine role to good by celebrating 'the effect of her being on those around her': 'The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistorical acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs' (896 italics mine). Dorothea's divine efficacy becomes 'incalculably diffusive.' 'Diffusive' recalls the 'dispersed' of the 'Prelude' but also reinterprets it with the hope that the incalculable effects of such hidden lives contribute to 'the growing good of the world.' Contributing to the 'growing good of the world,' a woman functions as a transforming agency, embodying and transmitting through her altruism the values of culture. In portraying the positive role of women in history, Eliot clearly reaffirms the importance of female virtues which are not inferior to male virtues. She tries to convert 'femininity' from a liability into an asset by locating woman's special mission in the progress of history.

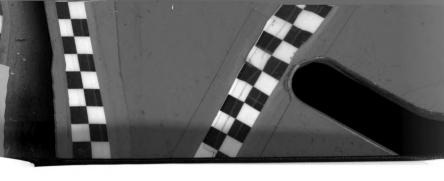
Yet again, Eliot's valorization of female traits includes the danger of reinstating the essentialist view of sexual division, which she has criticized. Obviously, many modern critics have been disturbed by Eliot's premise that women can have a great historical mission, not through their own public achievement, but through their morality and resignation. For them, Eliot shifts the terms of Dorothea's Bildung from specific, ideologically-determined social situations to



abstract, moral issues. For example, Patricia Stubbs speaks for many discontented feminists when she deplores the limited arena of action that Dorothea shares with so many other women in the English novel. They are: 'firmly place[d] ... in a private domestic world where emotions and personal relationship are at once the focus of moral value and the core of women's experience' (x). Furthermore, Christina Crosby argues that Eliot's women characters are 'systematically excluded from the properly world-historical' realm' (7).38 Terry Eagleton also criticizes Eliot for displacing history into the ethical and timeless terms, which he calls 'an ethical reduction of history' (121). Crosby and Eagleton are disturbed by the fact that Eliot's eulogy of Dorothea's moral influence has the effect of celebrating an abstract ideality of Dorothea in exalted language, rather than of challenging the society which sustains the gender inequality in the developmental goals.39

However, it is clear that Eliot is fully aware of the limitation of influence that female moral power can extend on history. It is important to note that the passage quoted above from the "Finale" is changed from the manuscript version, qualifying the unbridled optimism about women's historical role. In the published version, according to Susan Meikle, the 'growing good of the world' becomes only 'partly' as opposed to 'greatly dependent on unhistorical acts' of the original manuscript. Similarly, our debt to those 'who lived

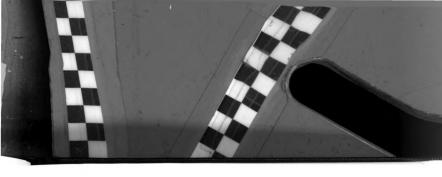




faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs' is reduced from 'owing' to 'half-owing' (186-87). It is clear that the published version of the closing paragraph of the "Finale" qualifies considerably the optimism about the epic grandeur of woman's domestic mission. Clearly, Eliot here tries hard to reconcile the two contradicting agendas that women are the victims of social restrictions, excluded from the public sphere, and that women can powerfully function in the domestic realm as anonymous, moral agents of human progress. As Harriet Adams argues, George Eliot's writing and rewriting of the final paragraphs may be the 'evidence of her uneasiness' and 'her final version fails to resolve the difficulties' ("Prelude and Finale" 10). It is clear, then, that Eliot does not make a preemptive compromise in the "Finale," without questioning the domestic ideology which confines women to a narrow domain.

At this point, one must remember a passage from Eliot's essay on Mary Wollstonecraft and Margaret Fuller: 'If you ask me what offices they [women] may fill, I reply--any. I do not care what case you put; let them be sea-captains if you will. I do not doubt there are women well fitted for such an office' (Essays of George Eliot 203). Taken together with this statement, the "Finale" clearly shows that Eliot does not settle for easy, conventional answers for the Victorian female lot. Even to the last, she exposes and criticizes social forces that conspire to confound a woman's public aspirations





245

and to steer her towards a private conclusion.

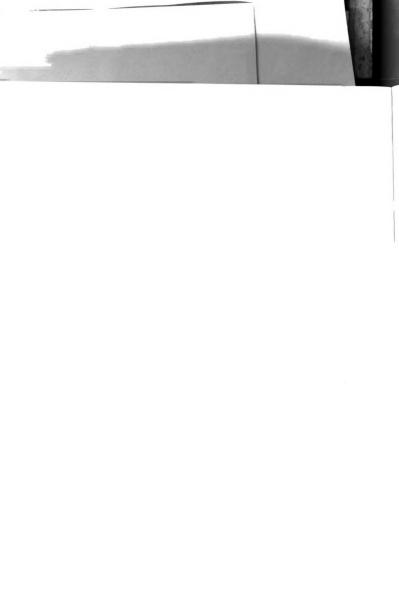
NOTES to CHAPTER 3

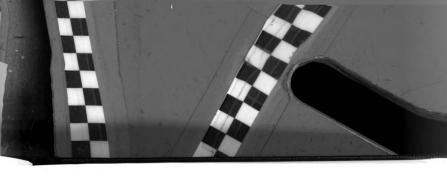
- 1. Helsinger, et al argue that '[a]lmost any public statement bearing on the Woman Question--whether an essay, a review, a novel, a poem, a lecture, a cartoon, or a painting-was likely to generate an chain of responses, to be read as a response to prior statements in an ongoing public discussion' (I:xi).
- 2. Ann Oakley in her tripartite history of the housewife denotes the period 1840-1914, within which the novels we deal with fall, as marking 'the rising popularity of the belief in women's natural domesticity' (34).
- 3. This term is used emphatically by Sarah Ellis' Women of England (123). According to Ellis, a 'relative creature' loses her own identity by the feeling of 'disinterested love' for others, showing sympathy 'until she becomes identified as it were with their very being, blends her own existence with theirs, and makes her society essential to their highest earthly enjoyment' (160).
- 4. Especially, women writers' intense involvement in novel writing and cultural resistance to it in the Victorian period is evidenced by George Henry Lewis' remarks: 'the group of female authors have become every year more multitudinous and more successful.... [T]hey are ruining our profession.



Wherever we carry our skillful [sic] pens, we find the place preoccupied by a woman....[T]he women have made an invitation of our legitimate domain' ("Vivian" 189). See also Gaye Tuchman's article "When the Prevalent Don't Prevail" or her book, Edging Women Out.

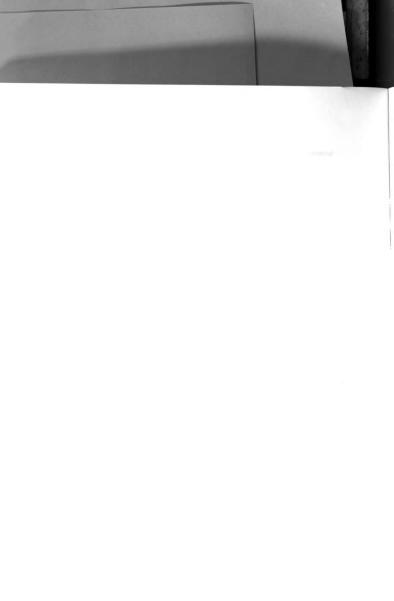
- 5. In her second husband's view, George Eliot is an exemplary case of the furious effort to reconcile her writing career with her domestic femininity. Cross in his biography of George Eliot states: 'She was keenly anxious to redress injustices to women... but as a woman she wished to be, above all things feminine.... She was proud, too, of being an excellent housekeeper.... Nothing offended her more than the idea that because a woman had exceptional intellectual powers, therefore, it was right that she should absolve herself...from her ordinary household duties' (George Eliot's Life 624).
- 6. Madeleine Kahn's view of the male appropriation of female voice in the eighteenth century novel can hold true of Dickens. Relating the psychology of transvestism to eighteenth-century male writers's use of a female first-person narrator, Kahn argues that this narrative transvestism is an appropriation of female voice that achieves, for male authors like Richardson and Defoe, 'participation in and control over a gendered voice that is simultaneously attractive and threatening' (Narrative Transvestism 29). Looking specifically at Dickens, Jean Fergusson Carr also argues that in crossing gender as a writer, Dickens 'carves out a possible space for

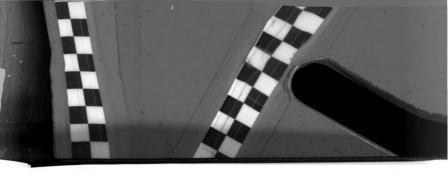




women writers in his culture but...also takes over that space as [his] own' (174). In *Middlemarch*, interestingly, Eliot assumes a masculine narrative persona that takes up all the prerogatives of learning and wordily experience that many other women writers denied themselves. Alison Booth evaluates that 'Eliot's narrative cross-dressing [in *Middlemarch*] was more successful than Dickens' in *Bleak House* (Booth 134).

- 7. Dickens himself was classified as a 'feminine' writer by Richard Holt Hutton, a contemporary critic (Hutton 477). For the 'feminization' of Dickens, see also Elsie B. Michie, Outside the Pale 164-67.
- 8. The memoir, a form usually considered generically inferior to autobiography proper, became in the hands of some Victorian middle-class women an important means of representing themselves. According to Corbett, the formal properties of memoir enabled 'its practitioners both to speak and to remain silent about themselves, almost in the same gesture, by focusing on others.' See Corbett, Representing Femininity 12-13.
- 9. As Gilbert and Gubar indicate in their massive study of nineteenth-century women writers, women authors have suffered from the 'anxiety of authorship,' while male writers may suffer from what Harold Bloom terms the 'anxiety of influence.' See 46-53. Esther's anxiety about writing is well illustrated in chapter 36 when Esther praises a bride who marks an 'x' on a register, even though she can write.

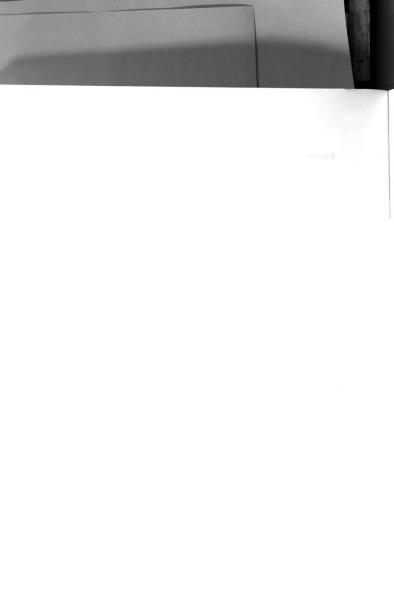




Because the groom can't write, the bride does not want to shame him by demonstrating that she can. At this act of modesty, Esther exclaims: 'there was this nobility in the soul of a labouring man's daughter' (36:562). This signifies the cultural attitude that regards women's writing as a threat to male self-confidence and to marriage itself. The bride avoids a public exhibition of her literacy, her power over language, in order to defer to the patriarchal ideal of the husband as stronger and wiser.

10. In contrast to Esther's narrative, the egoistic Skimpole's posthumous autobiography, Life, is marked by its self-centeredness. Considering himself the 'victim of the world's conspiracy against an amiable child' (61:887), Skimpole sees himself at the center of a world. His sweeping judgements of others from his own selfish point of view comes as no surprise: "Jarndyce, in common with most other men I have known, is the Incarnation of Selfishness' (61:887). The tone of Esther's narrative is far from such egotistical self-assertion. Moreover, Esther's narrative is also distinguished from Pip's narrative in Great Expectations in that, as George Levine argues, the latter focuses 'intensely around a single consciousness and absorbs the world into that consciousness' needs' (Realistic Imagination 239-40).

11. In this sense, Michael Ragussis' argument--'Esther's womanhood is confirmed in the power of the discourse that she finally commands' (88)--is not very persuasive.

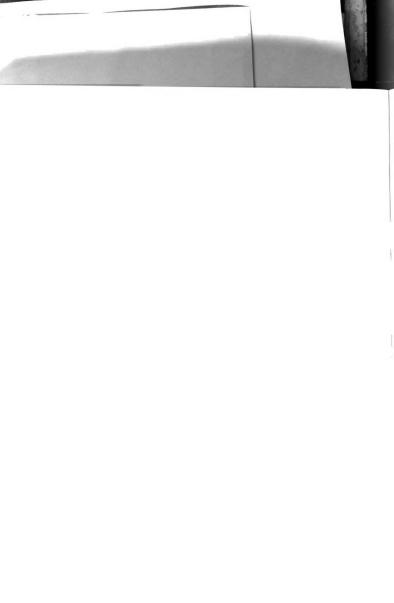


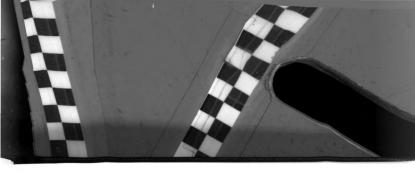


12. The way Esther continually calls attention to herself while denying her significance has bothered many readers of Bleak House. Much has been made of Esther's cloying 'coyness' in her self-presentation, of her almost pathological need to include validations of her kindness, intelligence and importance in a narrative that pretends to marginalize and to discount her own experiences. Many have found her narrative voice irritating--simpering, sentimental, disingenuous, backhandedly self-laudatory, at times faltering, maddeningly deferential. Esther has also been faulted for her 'obliqueness,' for not telling us what she knows or believing, although she alerts us to her withholding of information.

Alexander Zwerling's 1973 essay can be considered a watershed for the psychological apologetics for Esther Summerson. He argues that the quality and tone of Esther's narrative is psychologically consistent with her experiences as emotionally abused child. See Zwerling, "Esther Summerson Rehabilitated" 429-39. Leavis also argues that '[t]he psychology of an illegitimate child of her time can never have been caught with greater fidelity" (156). But, other critics such as Jane McCuster regard her attitude as a tactic of survival. Norman Page also senses that 'for all her innocence and naivete, she is a sharp-eyed observer and capable of being a shrewd judge of and ironic commentator upon character and behavior' (63).

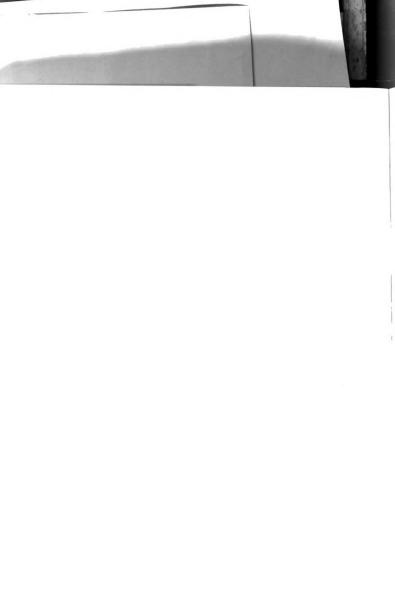
13. In Miss Wade's case, her outsider position is further

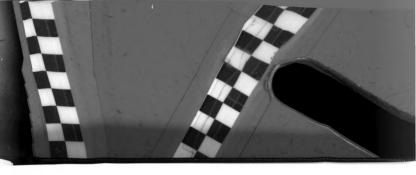




determined by her potential sexual identity as a lesbian in the heterosexual order of Victorian society. See Geoffrey Carter 145.

- 14. Monica Feinberg argues that the literal sense of these names and the rhymes in which they appear imply failure and impotence. For example, the prophecies of Mother Shipton, a sixteenth-century witch, remain unfulfilled; nor is 'Dame Durden' which refers to 'a nineteenth-century song ridiculing an old maid who, though passionately desiring a husband, remains unloved amid the lovers she serves' (9-10).
- 15. Arm.strong argues: 'The emphasis on physical smallness in women would seem to presuppose a culture in which women's physical labor is not essential. And certainly the popularity of the ideology of littleness in England increased with the rise of the middle class' ("Gender and Miniaturization" 404).
- 16. For Victorian attitudes about female sexuality, see Nead 1-11 and Laqueur 1-41.
- 17. During the English civil war of the seventeenth century, the Dedlock ancestress found herself torn between her brothers' and husband's conflicting political loyalties, until her favorite brother was killed in battle by her husband's kinsman. She then tried to avenge his death by laming her husband's favorite horse. Caught by her husband in the stable, she resisted, but became lamed in the hip in the middle of the struggle. She never reconciled with her husband, but 'from that hour began to pine away' (7:140). On

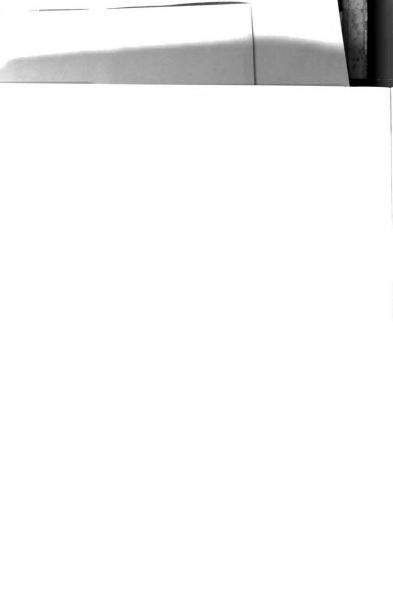




251

her death, she cursed the Dedlock family on an upcoming disaster.

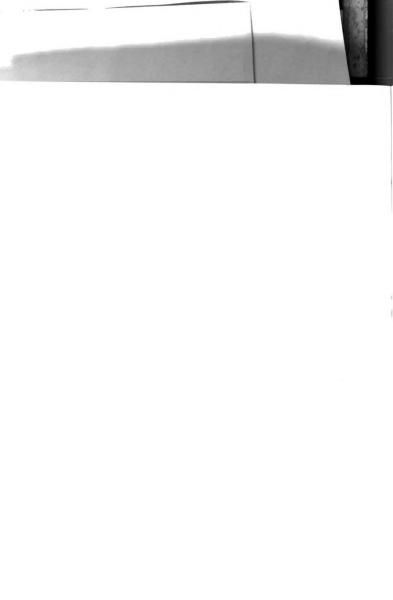
- 18. Symbolically, throughout the novel, Esther's identity keeps merging with that of other women. While Esther belongs with the angels in the house--Ada, Charley, and Caddy Jellyby-, she also has a disturbing connection to sexually transgressing, or violent women. For example, Jo, a Tom-All-Alone's tramp, confuses Mademoiselle Hortense with Lady Dedlock and those two with Esther: 'If she ain't the other, she ain't the forrenner. Is there three of 'em then?' (31:488). Lawrence Frank and G. D. Arms suggest that the purpose of the merging of identities is to make Esther see that she is like Lady Dedlock and Mademoiselle Hortense, two very passionate women who shatter the Victorian frame of domestic women (Frank 63-83; Arms 84-97).
- 19. Baruch Hochman argues that *Bleak House* as a whole shows 'a preoccupation with the maternal function and with mother-deprivation' (75).
- 20. In a similar vein, Virginia Blain argues, using Rene Girard's theory, that society itself makes Lady Dedlock a 'scapegoat to purge its own sins of violence, both sexual and social.' Esther has to '"kill" her mother within herself, in order to escape her contagion' (155).
- 21. In the first Book of Herodotus' Histories, women play a prominent part both as resourceful, determined rulers and as objects of male desire and dominance. The wife of Candaules,

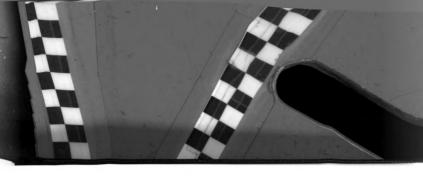




who instigates her husband's murder, and Tomyris, the fierce queen of the Massagetae, are examples of the former; the latter is reflected in the story of woman snatchings that leads ultimately to the conflict between Greece and Persia.

- 22. Sir James Chettam, who is not so bright, also presumes 'a man's mind ...has always the advantage of being masculine--as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm---and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality' (2:44).
- 23. Julia Kristeva, a modern French feminist critic, appropriates the concept of the 'indefiniteness' of women's being in a subversive way. In defining 'woman,' Kristeva argues, 'I therefore understand by 'woman' that which cannot be represented, that which is not spoken, that which remains outside naming and ideologies' (qtd. in Moi 163). Kristeva obviously sees the revolutionary potential in the undefinable nature of women in the phallocentric order.
- 24. Ladislaw's case offers an optimistic example. Will Ladislaw can attempt and reject a number of vocations, before finding his niche as a member of Parliament. Married to Dorothea, and serving as a 'public man,' Ladislaw comes closer than any other character to fulfilling a telos that is both individual and social.
- 25. For the study of the important imagery of 'labyrinth,' 'flow,' 'river' and 'channel,' see Chase, Eros and Psyche 179-87 and Shuttleworth, George Eliot and

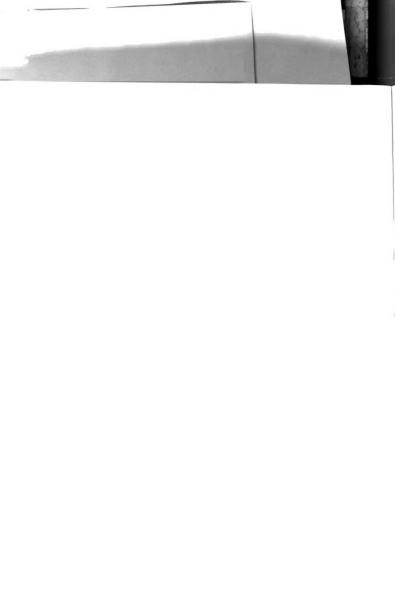


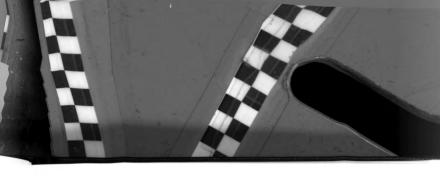


253

Nineteenth-Century Science 157-58.

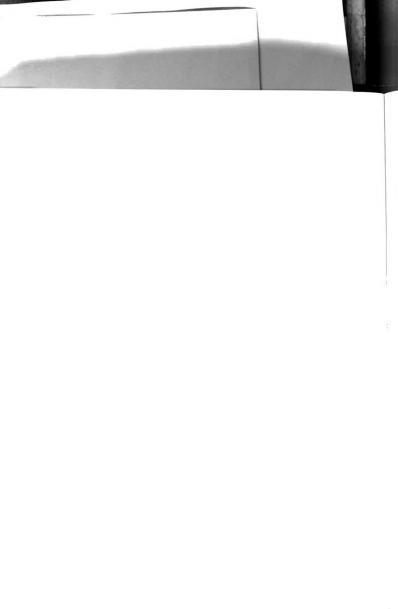
- 26. According to G. M. Trevelyan, the improvement of cottages was one of the genuine advances in rural life in the years after 1832: 'In the fifties and sixties, while agriculture still flourished, good brick cottages with slate roofs and two or even three bedrooms apiece were being built landlords as estate cottages.... The bad cottages were the old ones' (540). It is clear, then, that Dorothea's dream of building cottages is a timely socio-political agenda.
- 27. In 1825, Owen built an utopian/egalitarian community in New Harmony of Indiana, U. S. A, although it would fail eventually. About the utopianism of the Owenite movement, see Manuel and Manuel 676-93 and Kolmerten 13-29. Also see Barbara Taylor's Eve and the New Jerusalem, for a detailed discussion of the relationship between Owenism and feminism.
- 28. Florence Nightingale found Dorothea's vocational aspiration ineffectual, contrasting her to the housing reformer Octavia Hill. In a critique of Middlemarch, she complained, 'Could not the heroine, the "sweet sad enthusiast," have been set to some such work as this?' (" A 'Note'" 567). Nightingale had never been impressed with the legend of St. Theresa either: 'What was her monastery for, and the life she intended to live? To live at other people's expense and pray all day" (Suggestions II:99).
- 29. To be sure, Barbara Hardy points out Eliot's 'refusal even to suggest' a sexual realism in the relationship of Will

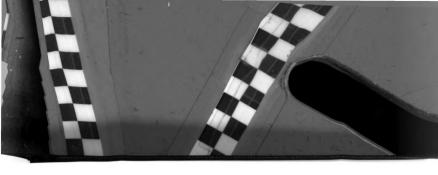




and Dorothea (Particularities 17-18), and she argues that Middlemarch was written 'within a restricted convention of reticence' (Ibid. 19). Indeed, it may be true that the novel emphasizes the child-like qualities of the relationship of Dorothea and Ladislaw as in their love scene in chapter 83: 'they stood, with their hands clasped, like two children, looking out on the storm' (83:868). However, it is evident that the sexual tension between them is symbolically transferred to a thunderstorm. Soon, they passionately kisses and confess their love for each other. It is clear, then, that Eliot's narrative does not totally censor or domesticate passion and sensuality.

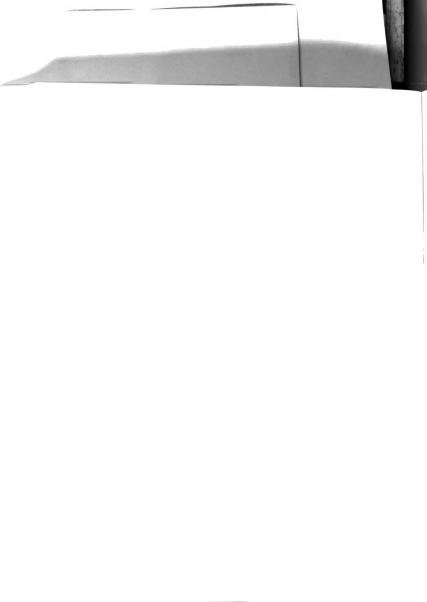
- 30. D. A. Miller makes a poignant comment: 'Dorothea's vision of totality has shrunk to the dimension of mere monogamous marriage: a middle-class couple ('seven-hundred-a-year') uniting in opposition to the "angry spirit" of the world' (Narrative and Its Discontents 188).
- 31. Many a time in the "Finale," Eliot uses what Raymond Williams calls the 'grammar of desire,' which mainly consists of the verbs of the subjunctive mood: 'if she had only been better and known better' (893); 'no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done' (894). See Williams, "Utopia and Science Fiction" 207.
- 32. See also the epigraph of chapter 1: 'Since I can do no good because a woman,/ Reach constantly at something that is near it,' which is quoted from The Maid's Tragedy. Or the

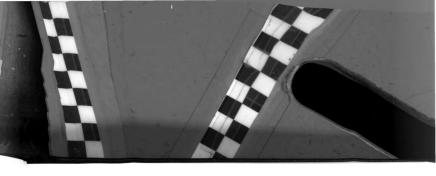




narrator's comment on Esther Lyon, heroine of Felix Holt: The Radical (1866) may reflect the resignatory tone of the 'Finale': 'After all she was a woman, and could not make her own lot...her lot is made for her by the love she accepts' (43:524-25).

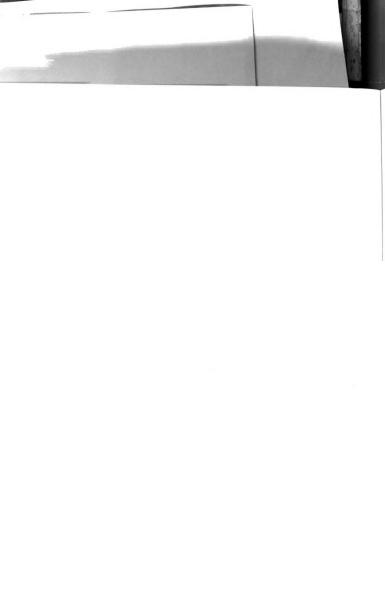
- 33. A sentence from the "Finale" is in the same tenor: 'For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it' (896). The incrimination of society was much stronger in the first edition of Middlemarch, which bitterly attributed Dorothea's failures to the 'prosaic conditions' of her society. That passage was removed in later editions. See Harvey, "Contemporary Receptions" 133-34. The earlier edition is reprinted in Gordon Haight's Riverside edition (1958): 'Among the many remarks passed on her mistakes, it was never said in the neighbourhood of Middlemarch that such mistakes could not have happened if the society into which she was born had not smiled on propositions from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age--on modes of education which makes a woman's knowledge another name for motley ignorance -- on rules of conduct which are in flat contradiction with its own loudlyasserted beliefs' (612).
- 34. A recurrent late-Victorian complaint was that the novel was a 'melancholy' book. For another instance, the reviewer for *The Spectator* sighed that 'George Eliot never makes the world worse than it is, but she makes it a shade





darker' (qtd. in Karen Chase, Middlemarch 88) And Sidney Colvin, writing in The Fortnightly Review (1873) wondered whether a large and ambitious work of literature such as Middlemarch is obliged 'like life itself, to leave us sad and hungry' (Carroll 338).

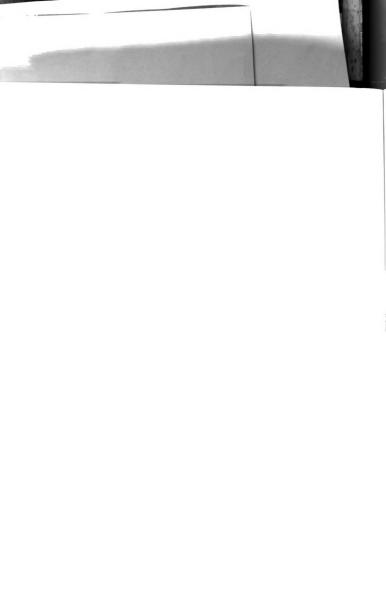
- 35. In an illuminating letter to Alexander Main, a young man who wished to compile a collection of Eliot's wisest writings, Eliot confided some misgivings about composing the balanced conclusion to Middlemarch: 'I need not tell you that my book will not present my own feeling about human life if it produces on readers whose minds are really receptive the impression of blank melancholy and despair.... I am too anxious about its completion--too fearful lest the impression it might make (I mean for the good of those who read) should turn to naught--to look at it in mental sunshine' (George Eliot Letters V:261 italics mine).
- 36. See Lorna Duffin's article, "Prisoner's Progress: Women and Evolution," for the further contemporary discussions of the woman's role in the social evolutionary theory.
- 37. Paxton argues that, 'through the 1870s, George Eliot and George Henry Lewes collaborated in resisting Spencer's-and Darwin's--easy application of the principles of natural selection to human life; they stressed, instead, the mediating power of human society in shaping and qualifying human behavior' (183). For the general analysis of Spencer's intellectual influence on Lewes and Eliot, see Postleswaith,



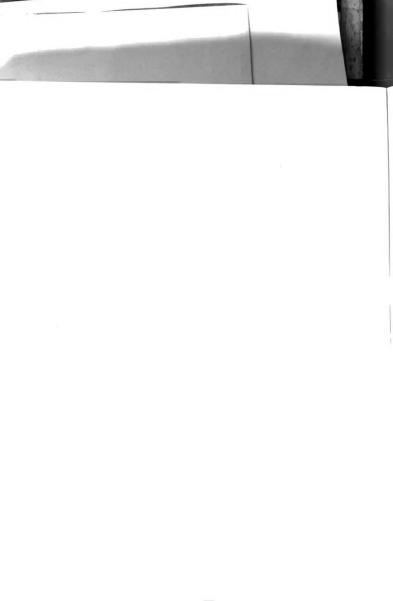


Making it Whole 178-231 or Paxton, George Eliot and Herbert Spencer.

- 38. Especially, Crosby analyzes Daniel Deronda to show how Eliot foregrounds the male protagonist (Daniel Deronda), not the female protagonist (Gwendolen Harleth), as a world-historical human agency who explores the new path of history. See Crosby 12-43.
- 39. A century ago, Abba Gould Woolson registered her grievance about the unheroic endings for Eliot's heroines: 'It is not merely that George Eliot's novels end unhappily, but that never, save in one instance [obviously in The Mill on the Floss], is the ruin brought about after the grand, heroic, stormy fashion which readers love.... George Eliot's heroines do not die; they do not plunge wildly into sin, suffer stout martyrdom, or surrender proudly to fate. They simply fail, and live on' (104-6). Also to Virginia Woolf, it was unsatisfactory that Eliot consigned Dorothea to 'a hidden life,' which she called 'the incomplete version of the story of George Eliot herself' ("George Eliot" 160). She thought that Eliot foreclosed the possibilities of Dorothea's life. Modern feminist critics like Ellin Ringler intensify their complaint that, in the last sentences of the novel, Eliot 'seems ... to shrink from the implications of her own novel,' as she attempts feebly to 'mend the rupture' she has portrayed between the 'public roles of women' and 'their personal force.' Ringler wishes Eliot had expressed 'a healthy anger,'



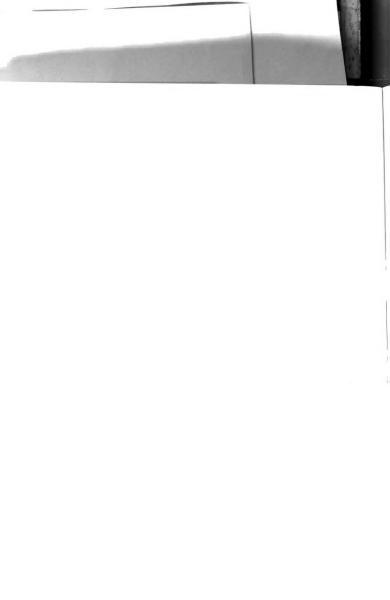
and concurs that, in the last analysis, 'the feminists' uneasiness about *Middlemarch* is justified' (59). She clearly believes that Bliot's portrait of the unjust channelling of women's 'full natures' into a narrow domain demands more than the expression of melancholy resignation.





CHAPTER 4. THE FORM OF ALIENATION AND THE INVERSION OF VICTORIAN WOMANHOOD IN GREAT EXPECTATIONS AND THE MILL ON THE FLOSS

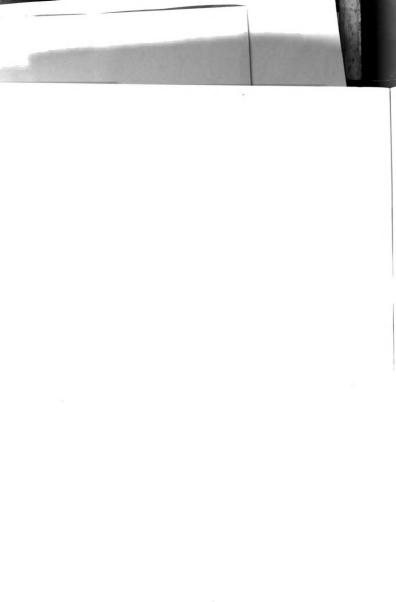
Both Dickens' Great Expectations and Eliot's Mill on the Floss were published in the same period (1860-1861). Despite their different gender and narrative perspectives, both authors present a form of alienation in which the reconciliation between main characters' desire and social structure is seriously obstructed. Great Expectations, a first-person narrative, focuses on the male protagonist whose life takes a form of disillusionment and alienation in a deteriorating capitalist city. The Mill on the Floss, a third-person narrative, concentrates on the female protagonist whose full development is hampered by a repressive provincial setting. However, each novel includes important Bildungsroman plots of the other sex. While in Great Expectations, Pip's plot of development is more conspicuous, it does not entirely overshadow those of Miss Havisham and Estella. Similarly, in The Mill on the Floss, Maggie Tulliver's plot does not totally displace Tom Tulliver's. This form of the Bildungsroman, with its focus on both male and female Bildung, provides a complex way of comparing and contrasting male and female forms of Bildung. It also highlights the way in which a society that



rigidly differentiates between male and female gender roles limits the full development of women and men alike. Of course, in this chapter, my major concern is on female characters, but I will also examine how female plots are interconnected with male plots in a symbiotic way.

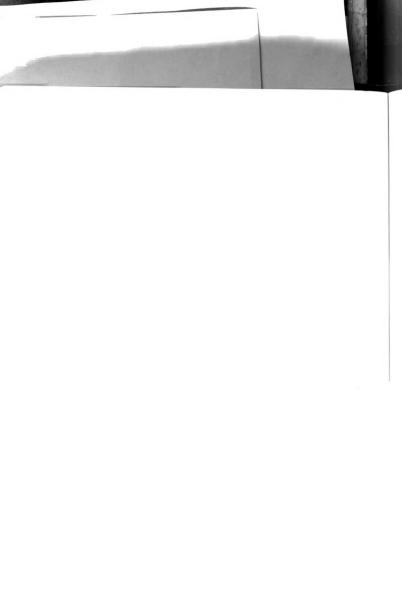
In Great Expectations and The Mill on the Floss, one faces the problematic of an anti-Bildungsroman for female characters that leads not to their marriage, but to their deaths. Miss Havisham's death by fire and Maggie's death by water are violent, catastrophic endings for female plots. These endings do not show a neatly closed synthesis of conflicting meanings, but rather a permanent dialectic between them. This suggests that both Dickens and Eliot deal with uneasy and disturbing aspects of a woman's Bildung in Victorian society.

In a chapter entitled "Charles Dickens's Anti-Women," Francoise Basch contends that 'the single women in Dickens's novels, however varied they may be, pathetic or grotesque caricatures, symbolic figures, have, like his wife-mothers, one common characteristic: they explain neither the particularity nor the complexity of human beings, not the specific problems of a particular condition or profession.... The representative of a socio-professional category... becomes a grotesque archetype of the sadist, and mutilating her, he relegated her to anti-woman' (151). Granted, some of Dickens' female characters do seem 'mutilated' and 'grotesque.' For



example, Rosa Dartle in David Copperfield, Miss Wade in Little Dorrit, and Miss Havisham in Great Expectations come to mind immediately: they are portrayed, with more or less tragi-comic taints, as solitary, vindictive, passionate women who are abused or betrayed by men. But what Basch ignores is that they also represent Dickens' deep understanding of female psyches which are aberrated and frustrated in the Victorian social milieu. As a keen observer of the Victorian gender system, Dickens willy-nilly seemed to perceive the growing anger and hostility of many Victorian women, particularly single women who remained aloof from marriage and motherhood.

In Bleak House, Dickens has demonstrated the divided psyche of a woman who tries to conform to the expectations of Victorian society. In Great Expectations, however, Dickens goes even further to represent a female character who no longer adheres to the ideal of feminine self-denial, but crosses the line into a potentially threatening form of female assertiveness. Miss Havisham has been humiliated by a man, and therefore has been effectively devalued by a society that bases female worth on male approval and marriage. Although stigmatized by male rejection, she is not resigned to self-despair and helplessness. Motivated by her fierce anger (much of it self-directed, as I will later explain), she seeks vengeance on men and, by analogy, against the unjust patriarchal society. Miss Havisham maintains her fierce independence and indignation, and turns her feminine energy,



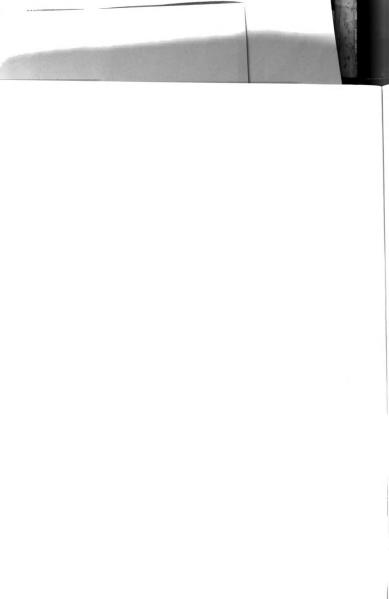


262

not into generating 'moral influence,' but vindictive revenge.

Dickens undoubtedly portrays the figure of Miss Havisham as bizarre and appalling, but he provides this cruel, unhappy woman with a sympathetic, and profoundly psychological dimension, by exploring the extreme of female desperation and pain. The stirrings of a smoldering female rage, however perverted and vengeful, is thus treated and documented seriously by Dickens. In this respect, I agree with Slater that Dickens' resentful, passionate (I would add unmarried) women characters indicate Dickens' 'latent, awareness... that the world he was reflecting in his novels was one that dealt harshly with women who could not or would not conform to socially approved patterns of feeling and behavior' (265). Thus, Dickens' representation of distorted female Bildung in Great Expectations indicates his latent understanding of the ideological contradictions in the patriarchal norm that insists upon the inherent selflessness of female nature.2

If Dickens' representation of Miss Havisham reveals hidden contradictions in a Victorian gender ideal, Eliot's investigation of Maggie's development deeply problematizes the possibility of female Bildung in Victorian society. Eliot's heroine is torn between her sense of domestic duty and her longings to move beyond its limits towards a sense of intellectual and professional achievement. As opposed to Miss Havisham's marriage plot which is violated by an imposter-





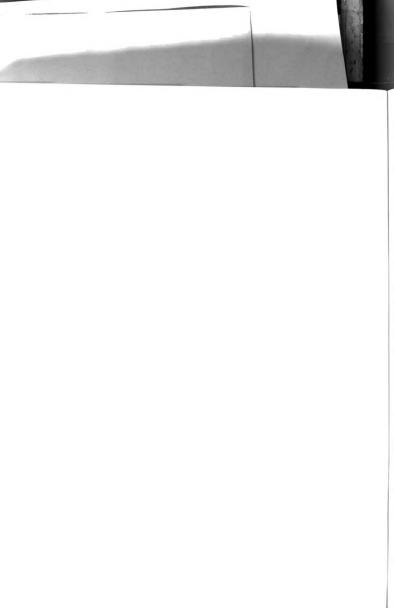
263

lover, Maggie's is curtailed by her own decision. However, Eliot does not show that Maggie bears its consequences for the rest of her life, but lets Maggie face a heroic and tragic death. Deliberately, Eliot does not clarify whether Maggie's death is a womanly sacrifice or a flare of punitive energy against an oppressive patriarchy.

It is true that both Dickens and Eliot eventually initiate the reconciliation between genders--between Pip and Miss Havisham, and Pip and Estella, and between Maggie and Tom. However, the traces of the turbulent struggles which these female characters go through against patriarchal society and their challenge to the innate power structure in sexual relations are not easily removed even at the novels' endings. Both novels heighten the complexity of the Victorian debate over women's life and role. The economy of patriarchy--which in nowhere more succinctly expressed than in the conventions of courtship and marriage--is both assumed and then problematized in the texts.

1. Great Expectations

The novel takes the form of Pip's autobiography, in which the normalistic process of Bildung for the hero is problematized. While in David Copperfield, the standard rewards of home and vocation are given to the protagonist's quest, in Great Expectations, they are not available to Pip.





264

Along with the problematic of class and money, the Woman Question is central and crucial to Pip's narrative of truncated Bildung. In the upside-down world of the novel, the reader rarely encounters domestic, motherly women: women tend to be dominant, passionate and often violent. Since his childhood, Pip's masculine identity is continually threatened by 'phallic' women such as Mrs. Joe and Miss Havisham.

Dickens' passionate women are, of course, in sharp contrast to 'the angel in the house' who assumes a passive role. A strong will or passion in a female seems to be equated with the transgression of her proper femininity, and thus with female wickedness. Many critics have made a summary judgement of Dickens's representation of such women. example, Jenni Calder arques: 'In Dickens passion means aggression, or self-destruction, and often self-contempt. Passionate women are profoundly discontented. They cannot win happiness; the comfort of hearth and home with which the good women are rewarded...cannot be theirs. They destroy themselves -- Lady Dedlock in death, Edith Dombey in lonely expulsion -- as their passionate natures exiled them from a normal life' (111). It may be true that Dickens often allots a frozen life or a premature death to his women characters who are endowed with passion. Nevertheless, Dickens' vivid representation of those women's resentment or protests against their situations or against those who have exploited and injured them demonstrates that, although disturbed by the



quality of passion or aggression in women, Dickens might be sympathetic with their plight. Through his portrayal of the psychological complexity of these women characters, Dickens' texts expose the problems in the patriarchal world which condemns them.

In Great Expectations, Miss Havisham is a part of the interwoven narration of the novel and Dickens provides only a brief summary of her life, offered to Pip by Herbert Pocket in chapter 22. But her significance in the novel is not disguised by the brevity of details. Not only is she involved with Pip and Estella and Pip's 'great expectations,' but also her relationship to Compeyson, who is connected to Magwitch, helps to tie the various strands of the novel's plot together. The reader cannot read Pip's narrative without feeling the presence of Miss Havisham. The unravelling of her life story as well as Estella's, and Pip's interpretation and gradual understanding of them have a great deal to do with the development of Pip's narrative.

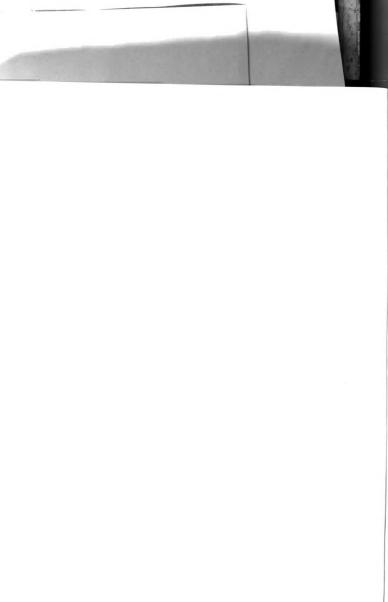
By the time Pip meets Miss Havisham, her existence has been defined by male betrayal. After being chased and abandoned by Compeyson, an imposter in gentleman's clothing, she has withdrawn from the world and laid her whole residence waste and barren. She dedicates herself to angry spinsterhood, condemning her sexual body to infertile disuse. Like a waxwork or a morbid artefact, she presents her life as a completed spectacle, and a deathly still life. Pip notes:





'She was dressed in rich materials...all of white.... But, I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, ... and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes' (8:87). Constantly dressed in her tattered bridal finery, Miss Havisham is nothing more than a hideous bride-corpse, which is a macabre inversion of life, beauty, and freshness normally associated with brides. Aborted romance and marriage has led Miss Havisham to imprisonment and death in an ancient bridal gown. Her bodily life in that costume heightens the visual effect of her psychic/emotional paralysis. Miss Havisham has been blighted just at the moment of sexual flowering: 'Altogether, she has the appearance of having dropped, body and soul, within and without, under the weight of a crushing blow' (8:91)

Also, the remains of the aborted wedding--the table still laid for a feast--visibly enacts a gap between the bridal promise and the atrophied reality in Miss Havisham's life. It has become a frozen text with a fixed symbolic meaning. By clinging to the event as it was once set down, her life story takes a tone of self-arrest in Pip's eye: 'I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago' (8:89-90). Although Miss Havisham had led a happy life as the only daughter and center of her father's attention, her growth was arrested at



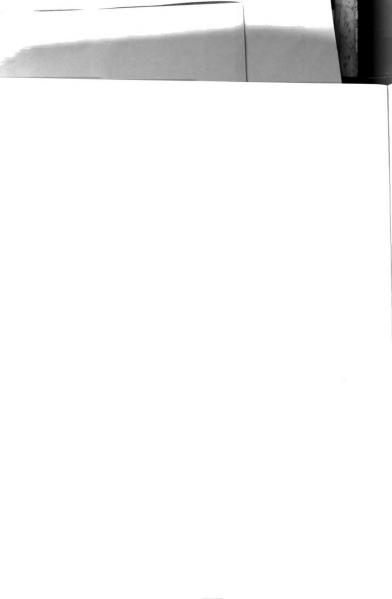


267

the threshold of becoming a wife and mother. Miss Havisham makes the eternal moment of shock and grief the central meaning of life.

Thus, Miss Havisham's existence bears a constant reminder of failed expectations of a Victorian woman, for whom matrimony and motherhood is the only socially sanctioned raison d'etre. When her spinster-status condemns her body and mind to disuse, Miss Havisham cannot but mummify and decay. Miss Havisham's mind is warped and damaged by her circumstances and her bitterness--'a mind mortally hurt and diseased' (38:320). An angel in the house turned rancid, she fails to thrive within the confines of her privatized existence. It is no accident that she begins to take on supernatural qualities in Pip's eyes: she becomes 'the Witch of the place' (11:113), and later 'a very spectre' (38:321). Her vampire-like nocturnal existence is emphasized by her aversion to 'the light of day' (49:411). These uncanny images of Miss Havisham reveal that she exists in the subterranean area outside the bourgeois marital/social order.

However, Miss Havisham also emerges as an enraged woman who refuses the Victorian gender arrangements that assign women to the role of enduring victims. Miss Havisham's humiliation at the hands of a false lover and a treacherous step-brother has fueled her ferocious hatred towards men: in her mind, one specific 'smiter'--Compeyson--expands to include all men. She is so completely monomaniacal and consumed by



her overpowering resentment that she wages an all-out sexual war. This reaction can be understood, in terms of her having become a victim to a plotting arranged by a 'homosocial alliance.' In Between Men, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick coins the word to refer to 'social bonds between persons of the same sex' (1). In a patriarchal society, she argues, it typically applies to 'the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men' (26). In other words, a homosocial alliance finds its strength in the systems which insures women's subordination--in legal, social and economic matters.

In the novel, the working of this alliance is exemplified when Miss Havisham has been exchanged like property in the monetary contract between her half-brother, Arthur Havisham This homosocial alliance was and her lover, Compeyson. facilitated by the Victorian code of coverture which defined married women as the legal wards of their husbands (Davidoff and Hall 200). At the urging of Compeyson, her husband-to-be, she has bought out her half-brother Arthur's brewery stock at an enormously inflated rate so that her husband might exercise absolute control over the business. In this, she acceded to common Victorian practice, for wives often were 'de facto partners' in the family enterprise, their dowries having supplied seed money for a husband's business (Walsh 92-93). Obviously, Miss Havisham's emotion was played upon, 'in a systematic way,' so that Compeyson could get 'great sums of



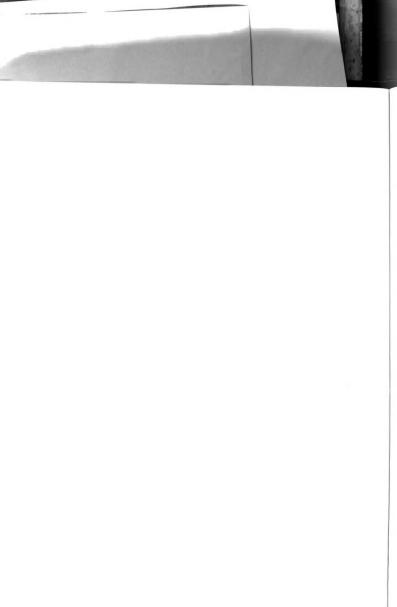


269

money from her... on the plea that when he was her husband he must hold and manage it all' (22:205).4

Miss Havisham's mortification is not only due to a romantic and financial fraud, but also due to her wounded pride--'Mr Havisham was very rich and very proud. So was his daughter' (22:203) -- and her realization that she 'plac[ed] herself too unreservedly in [man's] power,' with 'all the susceptibility she possessed' (22:205, 204). When Havisham defines love in sado-masochistic terms -- 'It is blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, trust and belief against yourself and against the whole world, giving up your whole heart and soul to the smiter--as I did!"' (29:261) --, one can tell that her anguish over Compeyson is neverending. But her statement includes more than that. Miss Havisham astutely and bitterly correlates love with power relations. She perceives the sexual relationship as the imbalance of the power structure between the sexes. Stark as she may sound, she adroitly points to the male dominion and the fundamental powerlessness of women inherent in the Victorian patriarchy.

When Miss Havisham is psychologically fixed in a moment of original injustice and injury, this 'narcissistic rage' becomes the modus operandi of her life. According to Linda Raphael, Miss Havisham's narcissistic rage occurs when she incorporates the image of the loved/hated Compeyson into her self. When Miss Havisham identifies with the aggressor and





270

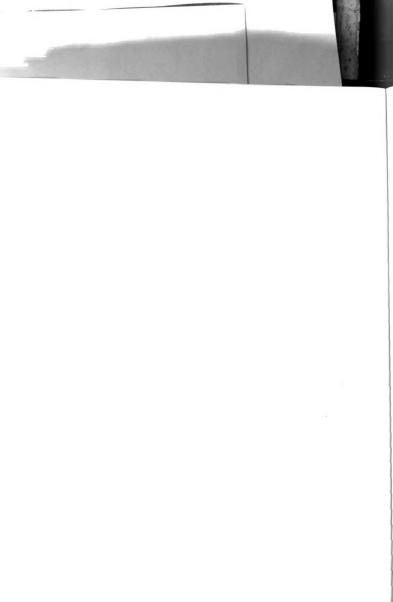
his power, she is able to seek revenge for past humiliations (408-9). She plans to strike back at men by training an avenging angel, Estella, to 'break [the] hearts' of men. Her revenge is based on the Lex Talionis--eye for eye, heart for heart-- and her strategy is to have Estella, like an ornamental object of desire, dangled before men to tantalize them and break their hearts. When Miss Havisham cries, 'Who am I, for God's sake, that I should be kind? (44:373),' one discerns her determination for indiscriminate emotional carnage. Thus, Miss Havisham converts her pitifully passive role into an active one.

Through Estella, Miss Havisham sets out to create an inverse power relationship between the sexes. She speaks to Pip, 'Love her, love her, love her! If she favours you, love her. If she wounds you, love her. If she tears your heart to pieces... love her, love her, love her,' while she draws arms round Pip's neck, and draws his head 'close down to herself as she sat in the chair' (30:261). This potentially sexual gesture implies that Miss Havisham turns herself into Estella and Pip into Compeyson in her fantasy of revenge. It is natural that Pip reacts to her remarks with a shudder: 'if the often repeated word had been hate instead of love--despair-revenge--dire death--it could not have sounded from her lips more like a curse' (ibid.). In Leslie Fiedler's words, thus, Miss Havisham turns a 'notion of love' into '[an ultimate] war of the sexes' (71).





Miss Havisham creates a powerful femme fatale in Estella. Estella herself meets her daughterly obligation to satisfy Miss Havisham's expectations by internalizing the role assigned to her. In contrast to domestic women who sacrifice themselves to men, femmes fatales disconcert, remain unconcerned about, and unneedful of the men they encounter. Referring to femmes fatales in film noir, Janey Place explains that their characters are 'fundamentally and irredeemably sexual' and 'self-interest over devotion to a man is often [their] original sin...and metaphor for the threat [their] sexuality represents to [men]' (47). Clearly, a femme fatale uses her sexuality as a weapon in a power game. Groomed to be the object of male desire, Estella has learned to be without feelings or desires. Although love is still an emotionally charged word for Miss Havisham, love for Estella is a non-emotional business to achieve the goal of 'deceiv[ing] and entrap[ing]' men (38:329). When Estella rewards Pip with a kiss, she dispenses her favor as she might give 'a piece of money' (11:121). Here, erotics assumes the quality of commodity transaction. In addition, Estella declares that she has no heart or sentiments for love. 'It seems,' she says, 'that there are sentiments, fancies -- I don't know how to call them--which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me, I know what you mean as a form of words; but nothing more. You address nothing in my breast, you touch nothing there. I don't care for what you say at all'



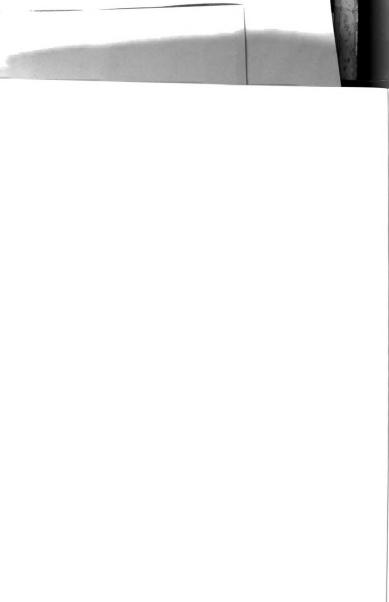


272

(44:376). In Estella's speech about love being merely 'a form of words,' one finds the drastic crumbling of the idealistic understanding of love.

In raising Estella, Miss Havisham disrupts the Victorian norm of motherhood. The concept of motherhood was the ideological center of the Victorian bourgeois ideal. hears endlessly of the mother's sacred mission to rear children, and of her spiritual grace which fills the domestic sphere. Yet the very ideological centrality of these ideals ensured that motherhood was 'not the still point but rather a field of potent conflict in itself' (Shuttleworth, "Demonic Mother" 31). Dressed as the bride and acting as the aggressor, Miss Havisham effectively functions as a 'bad' mother or an anti-mother by raising a travesty of a Victorian ideal woman. The 'immensely rich and grim lady' of Satis House does not raise up a dutiful daughter as a future partner of a family man. Estella is no 'moral guarantor,' the role which Poovey suggests that nineteenth-century domestic ideology imagined for Victorian women within laissez-faire capitalism (Uneven Development 36).5

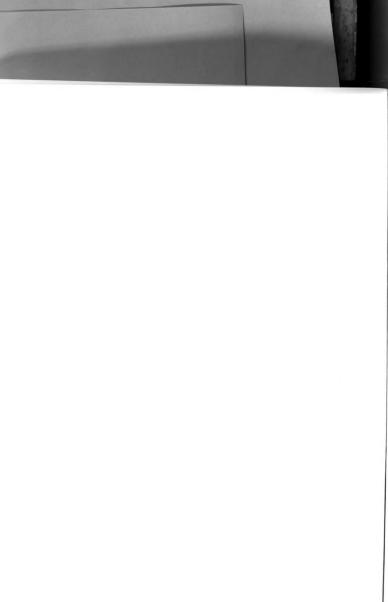
Raised by Miss Havisham primarily as the means by which to achieve a vicarious victory over 'the male sex' (22:200), Estella is a refined version of Miss Havisham's life. She is created as a 'more beautiful and invulnerable version' of Miss Havisham (Hutter 113). As an extension of Miss Havisham, Estella becomes what Sciolino calls 'Miss Havisham's ego-



ideal' (102). It seems natural, then, that, as Pip notices, 'In some of her looks and gestures there was that tinge of resemblance to Miss Havisham which may often be noticed to have been acquired by children, from grown persons' (29:259). Miss Havisham holds withering power over Estella's nature and destiny, as she attempts to remake Estella in her own image. This is an travesty of the normative parent-child relationship.

When Estella becomes a perfect product of her creator, Miss Havisham -- she confesses to Miss Havisham, 'I am what you have made me' (38:322) --, the destructive impact of adult power over the growing child is intensified by the allusion to a Frankenstein image. In raising Estella, Miss Havisham has relentlessly created a monster perhaps even more grotesque than herself. As Pip notes, Miss Havisham has molded an 'impressionable child' into the 'form that her wild resentment, spurned affection, and wounded pride found vengeance in' (49:411). Estella is not physically deformed. Metaphorically, however, she has no heart, and therein lies her deformity.7 Under the shaping hand of Miss Havisham, Estella has become inhuman: she is a 'statue,' as Pip realizes (33:288). Estella's being is invaded and appropriated by Miss Havisham's need for revenge. Her life is bound by 'Miss Havisham's plans' for her (33:290); her character is shaped by a role her guardian has selected, defined and imposed.

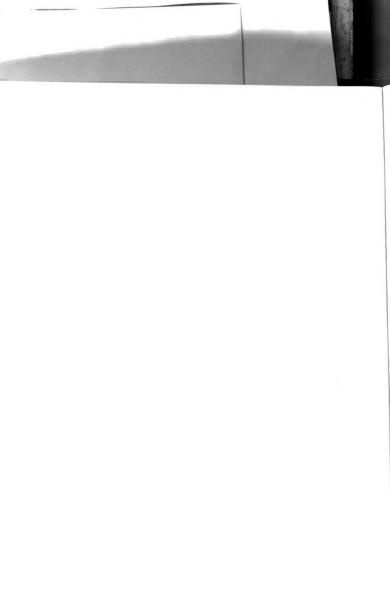
Estella's glamour, refinement, and exclusivity function

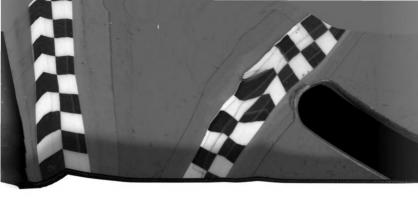




as a carefully constructed image of desire. In the process, Miss Havisham constructs Estella into a commodity. There is a theme of counterfeiting and forgery that runs through Great Expectations.8 Estella is not the daughter of blue-blood: inscribed with the outward signs of high birth, she is actually the daughter of the criminal father and the murderess mother.9 Estella could be 'the bad half-crown of somebody else's manufacture' (28:247), a 'lady' forged by Miss Havisham to enter the economy of high society. The irony is that Miss Havisham seeks revenge upon false society on its own terms. As her adopted daughter grows more beautiful, Miss Havisham sees her chances to exact reimbursement enhanced. salesmanship of this precious commodity is practiced upon Pip. When he pays a visit to Satis House during his apprenticeship, Pip observes that Miss Havisham often asks him with a 'miserly relish' of Estella: "Does she grow prettier and prettier Pip?" And when I said yes (for indeed she did), would seem to enjoy it greedily' (12:123 italics mine). Havisham seems overjoyed by the increase in Estella's value. As the guardian of Estella, she assumes 'rights' of possessorship. hungers with 'ravenous intensity' (29:261) for news of Estella's sexual conquests, drawing sustenance from these victories 'as though she were devouring the beautiful creature she had reared' (38:320).

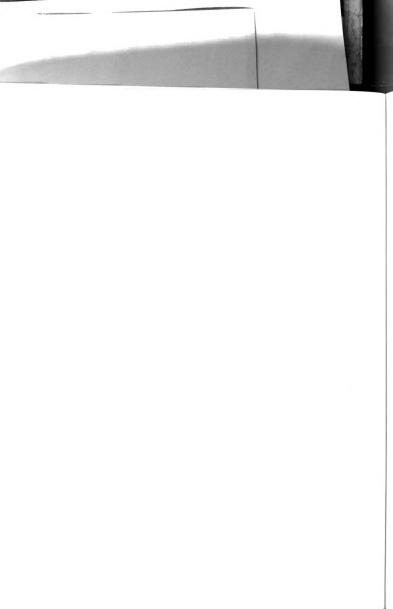
It is notable that Estella repeatedly uses commercial terminology to describe how Miss Havisham has used her. After





a quarrel with her guardian, Estella observes that she was 'no party to the contract' that had bound her to Miss Havisham in infancy, and that, nonetheless, she has learned her lessons well; they are 'not forgotten, but treasured up in memory' (38:323 italics mine). In rare moment, the cold Estella attempts to have Pip understand what constituted her upbringing at Satis House: as she grew, she opened her 'round childish eyes wider and wider to the discovery of that imposter of a woman who calculates her stores of peace of mind for when she wakes up in the night' (33:287 italics mine). It is no accident that Estella thus keeps an ironic distance from her commodified and alienated self, as Pip observes: 'you speak of yourself as if you were some one else' (33:286).¹⁰

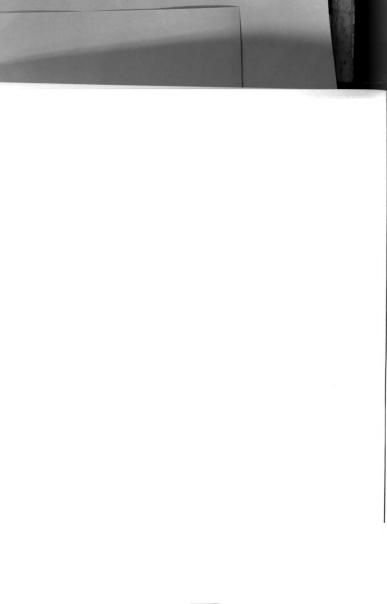
Pip assumes precisely the part which Miss Havisham wants the male world, the world at whose hands and through whose hypocrisy she has suffered, to play. Pip constructs Estella as a ultimate reflection of the great expectations intended for him. Pip presumes the existence of a 'rich attractive mystery,' written by Miss Havisham, of which he is the 'hero': 'Estella was the inspiration of it, and the heart of it' (29:253). For Pip, Estella is the princess awarded him by his fairy godmother. He supposes that Miss Havisham has 'reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a-going' and 'do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess' (29:253). Estella's status as a 'looking-glass' of





Pip's masculine narcissism is further emphasized when Pip confesses his love for her: 'You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line I have ever read, since I first came here, the rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then.... You have been the embodiment of every graceful fancy that my mind has ever been acquainted with... Estella, to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character, part of the little good in me, part of the evil' (44:378). Despite all the romantic hyperbole, his words suggest that Pip may have some inkling of the self-referential quality of his love--namely the quality of 'narcissistic identification' (Kusnetz 151)."
The insistent identification of the loved one with the self and with virtually the entire world outside the self clearly reflects narcissism on Pip's part.

Furthermore, Pip's desire for Estella is not separable from its underlying economics: 'Truly it was impossible to dissociate her presence from all those wretched hankerings after money and gentility that had disturbed my boyhood--from all those all-regulated aspirations that had first made me ashamed of home and Joe' (29:257). Here, one can notice the economic grammar beneath the language of love. As a 'sign of social success' (Sciolino 100), Estella links Pip to his aspirations for a good life; his infatuation for her is indistinguishable with his own dream of gentlemanship. Thus, the novel clearly shows that Estella is a part of Pip's wider



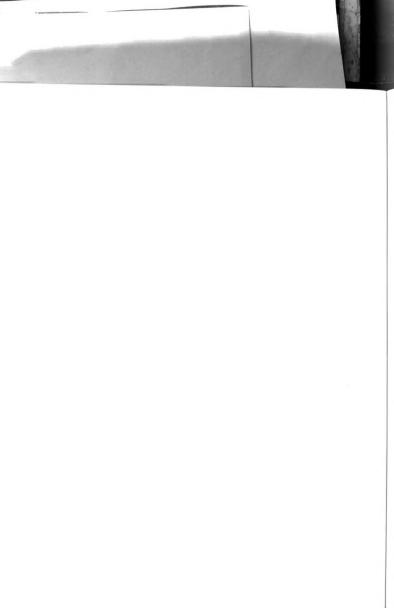


277

ambition towards a societal goal.

However, Estella is not a ideal domestic woman who can fulfil the dream of the hero: she cruelly baffles Pip's expectation. Pip's love story exactly repeats Miss Havisham's old story of pain and suffering: 'I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all; I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be' (29:253-54). Pip becomes obsessed with what he cannot have, and finds himself incapable of pursuing a more satisfactory love. When he later contrasts Biddy and Estella: 'Biddy was never insulting, or capricious... she would have derived only pain, and no pleasure, from giving me pain; she would far rather have wounded her own breast than mine. How could it be, then, that I did not like her much the better of the two?' (17:157-58). Nevertheless, Pip is not fascinated by a maternal woman, but by a femme fatale.

Like Pip, Miss Havisham is also condemned to experience disappointment in the ideal which she attempts to create in Estella. Like Frankenstein's monster, Estella overtakes her creator's vision. Miss Havisham is 'dreadfully fond' (38:320) of Estella and wants to have her love reciprocated. The double message that she has sent to Estella is that nothing in the world is worth loving, but that Estella should love her. Like Pip, however, she suffers from the crippling effect of



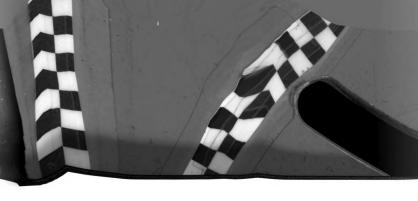


278

rejection from Estella. Despite her practical dependence on her adoptive mother, Estella assumes a powerful position over Miss Havisham, who has to plead for her love and acceptance.

The close link between Pip and Miss Havisham as Estella's ploys comes to the fore, when Pip accompanies Estella to Satis House and witnesses the following confrontation between Miss Havisham and Estella. In response to Havisham's claim for love from her, Estella coldly replies: 'Mother by adoption,... I have said that I owe everything to you. All I possess is freely yours. All that you have given me, is at your command to have again. Beyond that, I have nothing. And if you ask me to give you what you never gave me, my gratitude and duty cannot do impossibilities' (38:323). Miss Havisham's monster, Estella, has rebounded on her. Estella may be echoing the poignant cry of Milton's Adam which also stands as the epigraph to Shelley's Frankenstein: 'Did I request, Maker, from my clay/ To mould me man? Did I solicit thee/ From darkness to promote me?' (Paradise Lost Book X. 11.743-45). After Estella demonstrates the extent of her inability to love, Pip notes that Miss Havisham's manner toward her has 'something like fear infused among its former characteristics' (38:326). Miss Havisham's reaction to Estella's remark is of utter shock, as if she were going through another rejection: Pip sees Miss Havisham 'going along [the passage] in a ghostly manner, making a low cry' (38:325). Here, Miss Havisham faces the fact that the life she has created for herself has only





279

resulted in another failure. She finally begins to see Estella's life deprived of the feeling she still seeks for herself, and finds herself in possession of emotions that she has denied Estella.

When, in chapter 44, Pip feverishly confesses his love to Estella in front of Miss Havisham, he cannot but notice Miss Havisham's changed attitude.

In what ecstasy of unhappiness I got these broken words out of myself, I don't know. The rhapsody welled up within me, like blood from an inward wound, and gushed out. I held her hand to my lips some lingering moments, and so I left her. But even afterwards, I rememberedand soon afterwards with stronger reason--that while Estella looked at me merely with incredulous wonder, the spectral figure of Miss Havisham, her hand still covering her heart, seemed all resolved into a ghastly stare of pity and remorse' (44:378).

The passage is particularly revealing in that the transition of Estella to Miss Havisham suggests a substitution of one for the other. Throughout this scene, Pip finds Estella uncomprehending or unresponsive to his words, while marking their profound effect on Miss Havisham. This is almost as if he is courting Miss Havisham herself. The sympathy between Pip and Miss Havisham becomes more evident when Miss Havisham





finally sends for Pip to beg his forgiveness. In facing a reality which is contrary to her desire. Miss Havisham arrives at a more compassionate understanding of the other sex. As she tells Pip, 'until I saw in you a looking-glass that showed me what I once felt myself, I did not know what I had done. What have I done! (49:411). Here, Miss Havisham identifies with Pip, not with Estella. Pip also sees his own suffering mirrored in the face of the other. Their unfulfilled longing for, and betrayal by love, has created a strong bond between them. Although he himself is hurt and confused, Pip can look upon this embittered woman with bewildered compassion. pities 'her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed, ' and understands her 'sorrow which had become a master mania' (49:411). Thus, a sense of unity exists in chastened victims in their intense and hard-fought, intra-psychic struggles.

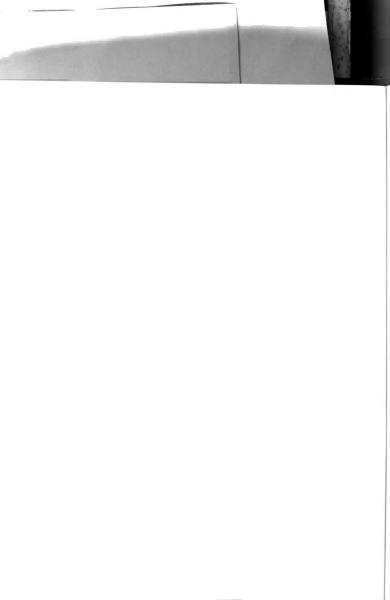
One has to note, however, that Pip does not take issue with the Victorian gender system that works against 'odd women' who do not fulfil the woman's mission of marriage and motherhood. While sympathizing with Miss Havisham, Pip rationalizes her tragedy as the natural consequence of her rebelling spirit: 'that...she has secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences; that, her mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased, as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker; I knew well' (49:411 italics mine). What does Pip understand

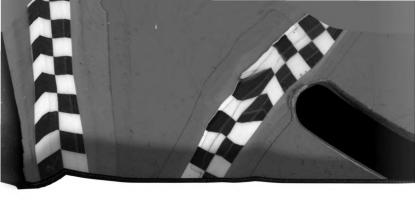




as 'the appointed order' of things? The answer is suggested in the text. Miss Havisham is 'saved,' partly because she undergoes a transformation, as if she returned to her old womanly self, as Pip notes: 'There was an earnest womanly compassion for me in her new affection' (49:411). The demonic woman is converted into a properly feminine woman. Since his childhood, Pip has long assumed a feminized position in the power relations between himself and strong-willed women. Here, however, the humbled Miss Havisham's plea for forgiveness reverses old power relations between her and Pip. Miss Havisham takes on an image of a helpless baby, for she begs him 'with her folded hands raised to me in the manner in which, when her poor heart was young and fresh and whole, they must often have been raised to heaven from her mother's side' (49:410).

However, the story of Miss Havisham does not end with this serene image of her conversion. Miss Havisham does not begin a life of penance, but faces a death by fire, immediately after the scene of reconciliation. Such an ending of Miss Havisham's plot is very ambiguous and problematic; one never knows for sure whether it is simply an accident, a symbolic realization of Pip's murderous fantasy or an expression of Miss Havisham's final suicidal rage. Critics such as Richard Witt oppose any symbolic interpretations of Miss Havisham's death, arguing that her death is very realistic representation of the common accidents that happened



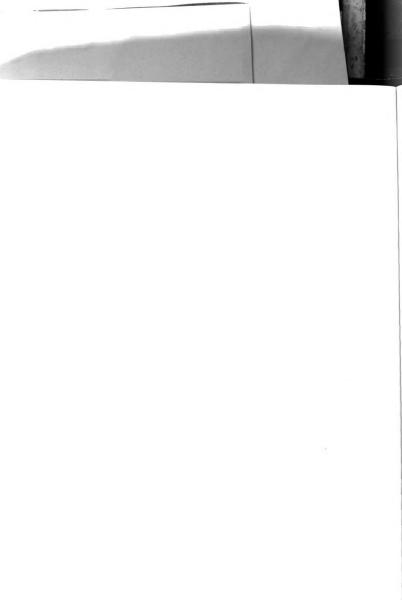


282

to Victorian women, when their long skirts, made of highly combustible material like crinoline, caught fire (151-56). Yet, one can hardly think that death by fire is an ordinary death.

Miss Havisham's death takes a much more complex meaning, when it coincides with Pip's murderous vision. Miss Havisham's death can be interpreted as punishment to her deviance and her aggression to male sex. When Pip leaves Miss Havisham after the reconciliation and walks into the old brewery, he sees a vision of Miss Havisham's hanging from a beam. This is a repetition of an earlier vision that he saw in his first visit to Satis House.

In chapter 8, Pip's fancy seemed to originate in the agony he endured at the hands of Estella. Estella beat and 'beggared' him in a ritualized form of violence--in the card game named 'Beggar my Neighbor' (8:89). After the game, Estella took him out to the garden, and fed him like a 'dog.' After this humiliation, he had the first hallucination of Miss Havisham's hanging: 'I saw her pass among the extinguished fires, and ascend some light iron stairs, and go out by a gallery high overhead, as if she were going out into the sky. It was in this place, and at this moment, that a strange thing happened to my fancy....I saw a figure hanging there by the neck. A figure all in yellow white, with but one shoe to the foot; and it hung so, that I could see that the faded trimmings of the dress were like earthy paper, and that the





face was Miss Havisham's' (8:92-93). Estella, who aroused Pip's hidden anger and grief, overlapped Miss havisham's image. In this context, Julian Moynahan suggests that the hallucination of hanging should be viewed as giving expression to Pip's 'aggressive drives' 'towards his adult tormentor (75, 77). Similarly, Sadoff interprets this fantasy of hanging as Pip's wish to 'castrate' or punish a strong, 'phallic mother' ("Locus Suspectus" 218).

In chapter 49, Pip fancies this hanging again, immediately after learning that Estella has married and that Miss Havisham regrets her actions: 'I turned my head to look back. A childish association revived with wonderful force in the moment of the slight action, and I fancied that I saw Miss Havisham hanging to the beam' (49:413). When Pip feels a sudden need to confirm that 'Miss Havisham was safe as well as [he] had left her,' Pip finds Miss Havisham burning in a fire and running towards him, 'shrieking, with a whirl of fire blazing all about her, and soaring, and soaring at least as many feet above her head as she was high' (49:414). Is it that Pip's subconscious wish for Miss Havisham's punishment comes true? But why is she burned by fire rather than hanged?

Here, the blazing figure who rushes at Pip almost seems a demonic specter threatening a blazing engulfment, as well as a victim frantic for help. It is noteworthy that, in the next scene, Pip's action of rescue is indistinguishable from his self-defensive counterattack: Pip tries to save Miss Havisham

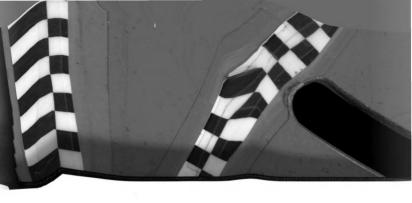




with an embrace that resembles a violent struggle. He and Miss Havisham fall 'on the ground struggling like desperate enemies' and Pip 'held her forcibly down with all [his] strength' as if she were 'a prisoner who might escape' (49:414). Clearly, Pip's reaction presents a mixture of aggression and rescue. In Hartog's psychosexual interpretation, this scene connotes rape or 'violent sexual assault' (259). Stephen Cohen also argues that Pip's 'act of saving Miss Havisham from fire is, in fact, an act of aggression against her' (127). If so, why is this violent struggle and Pip's subjugation of Miss Havisham's body necessary, if she has become only a woman after all?'

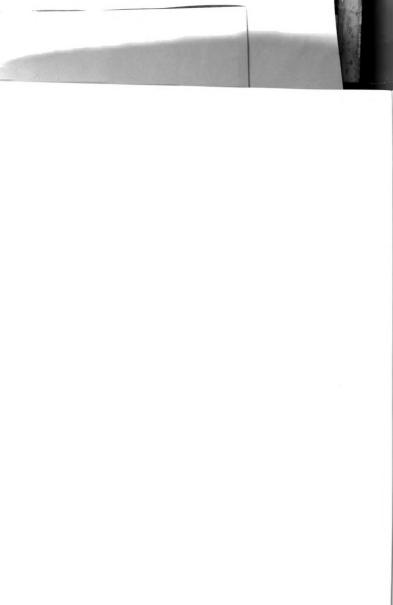
It seems obvious to me that, even after her contrite confessions, and expression of womanly feeling, Miss Havisham's residual rebellious spirit, symbolized by fire, still burns and consumes her. Despite recovering her womanly heart, Miss Havisham has been too marginalized from the Victorian order to be successfully reintegrated into it. Death seems to occur when society offers no alternative space for her. Then, her death by fire can be seen as a way of expressing revolt and protest against the Victorian gender order through self-immolation. Rachel Duplessis argues, woman's violent death in the nineteenth century novel frequently becomes a 'symbolic protest against the production of a respectable female and the connivances of a respectable community' (16).

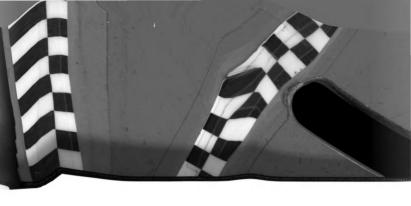




Although Miss Havisham does not deliberately destroy herself, her death by fire can be symbolically linked to Bertha Mason's death in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre (1847). Rochester's insane wife destroys herself in the fire she sets herself. Her death can be interpreted as the expression of her last, mad self-assertion and violent rage against Rochester and the patriarchal system which supports him. It seems logical, then, that her fire severely wounds Rochester and reduces him to a condition in which he can meet a woman as equal rather than as master. In this sense, Bertha's death by fire is at once self-destruction and the final exit to liberty.

Likewise, Miss Havisham's death by fire is a tragic but logical coda for her life-story. Despite the sympathy and friendship established between Miss Havisham and Pip, Miss Havisham must continue to live a death-in-life in the rarified atmosphere of the unchanged patriarchal social order. Then, her death brings her liberation as well as destruction. In his desperate attempt to save Miss Havisham, Pip metaphorically and literally tears down the cobwebs as he drags the great cloth off the table on which the rotting wedding-cake stands. And the old wedding dress, preserved inviolate but decayed, is burnt to ashes. The spell is lifted and Miss Havisham dies, with her 'profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed.' Miss Havisham's death is, then, a disconcerting combination of accident, male



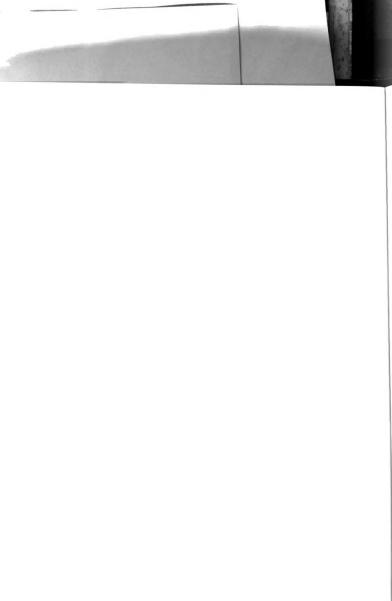


286

punishment, and female protest and liberation, with unresolved tension between them.

However, although assuming a disturbing presence against Victorian gender ideology, Miss Havisham's role of a 'feminist' avenger is ambiguous and contradictory. When she has played a man-hating envoy, her mission has not been to alter the unequal sexual order based on patriarchal hegemony, but to reverse the role of victim and victimizer. That is a major limit of her rebellion. It is no accident that Estella as a guerilla in the gender war meets with failure, when she is made to marry the brutal Bently Drummle. Miss Havisham gives Estella away as a commodity in the marriage market. Despite her original intention for Estella--to 'save her from misery like mine' (49:415) --, she is directly responsible for placing Estella in a miserable situation -- that of a battered wife. Miss Havisham thus fails to offer a hope for a different future for the next generation of women: obviously, she is not portrayed to be in the position to do so.

The argument over the two different endings of the novel is not worth taking up, for both endings do not envision any formulary resolution about gender harmony. Even though the first ending more clearly refuses romantic expectation with its flat tone¹⁵, the second ending with its tentative promise of reunion between Pip and Estella is not unambiguous. One has to be reminded that they are united in the ruined garden of Miss Havisham. Estella confesses that she now has been



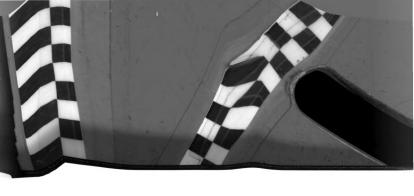
'bent and broken,' hopely, into a 'better shape.' Markedly, the novel ends in Pip's comments: 'I saw no shadow of another parting from her' (59:493). But Pip's final remarks ignore Estella's perspective on their relationship, after all she said, 'And [we] will continue friends apart.' Is there any certainty that Estella is no longer a Frankensteinian monster of Miss Havisham, and that Pip no longer plays 'Hamlet to Miss Havisham's Ghost' (31:279)? Pip and Estella, hand in hand, are about to embark on an uncertain road and fade into autumnal ambiguity. The novel's deliberate ambiguity overhangs Estella's alleged conversion into a better woman, and her new future.

2. The Mill on the Floss

The Mill on the Floss creates a Bildungsroman structure, tracing Maggie Tulliver's passage into painful womanhood and distinguishing this passage from that of the male, particularly of her brother, Tom Tulliver, with his more active and externalized experiences. 16 The Bildungsroman form of the novel becomes problematic when a normalistic Bildung is bitterly denied to the novel's heroine. Thus, the novel exposes the painful experience of being a woman in a patriarchal society. It reveals that the ideology of separate spheres, which assigns woman to the domestic realm, men to the public realm, hinders women's harmonious development. Thus,



TITE SHOOT

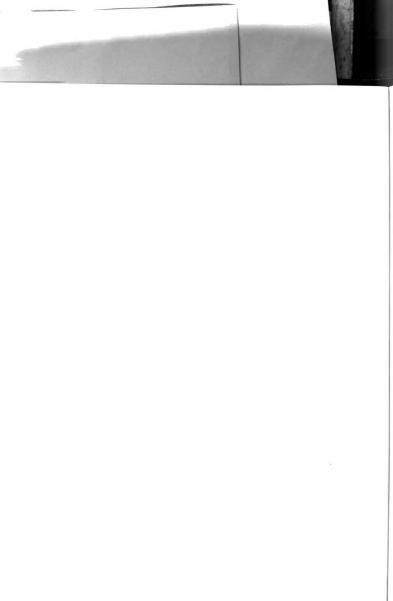


288

the text mounts a critique of the ideology of separate spheres which asserts sexual division as a natural order, and exposes it as an arbitrary belief held by the patriarchal culture.

In the first stage of her life, Maggie is introduced as a sensitive and imaginative child growing up in a repressive social setting. The narrator closely examines the influence of patriarchal norms on Maggie Tulliver in her childhood, when gender roles are yet to be defined for her. When she is first introduced at the age of nine, Maggie is portrayed as a 'mistake of nature' (13). Maggie's parents complain that she has inherited the characteristics of her father rather than her mother, and her traits and desires run counter to those construed as feminine. Mr. Tulliver worries about Maggie's smartness, because 'an over-'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep' (12). Here, he represents a patriarchal belief that smart women are useless aberrations of nature. Obviously, the prevailing sexual norm, which prescribes feminine identity not by intelligence but by looks, demonstrates the magnitude of Maggie's dilemma in her first developmental stage. Her brother, on the other hand, has the feminine 'pink-and-white' (30, 91) complexion of his mother's family and lacks masculine intellect of 'apprehending signs and abstractions' (150), but he remains, nevertheless, the bearer of his family's expectations.

Despite Mr. Tulliver's firm belief in the natural fixity of sexual traits, folk-evolutionary biology echoes in his

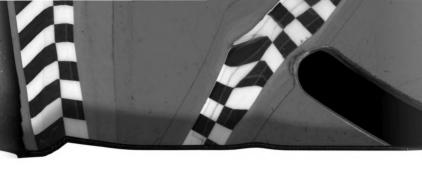




complaint of nature's reversal of Tom's and Maggie's temperaments. Mr. Tulliver laments that the 'crossing o' breeds' (12) has produced strange results in his children. Although one must be careful not to talk of a direct influence of Darwin's Origin of Species on Eliot's work, 17 one can see the reverberations of one of its dominant themes in Tulliver's remarks: sexual selection by the 'crossing' of species. Darwin's theory of sexual selection argues that human nature, like animal nature, is a volatile mixture of the predictable-that offsprings will inherit characteristics from both parents -- and the unpredictable -- the impossibility of knowing precisely which characteristics will predominate in any given case (Darwin 435-7). In Darwinian theory, then, what Mr. Tulliver regards as a 'mistake of nature' -- character traits 'cross' the lines of gender -- is an act of 'nature.' Thus, the novel shows that Mr. Tulliver's folk-Darwinian language dismantles his own ideology of the 'natural' division between 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits and reveals their arbitrary categorization in Victorian culture.18

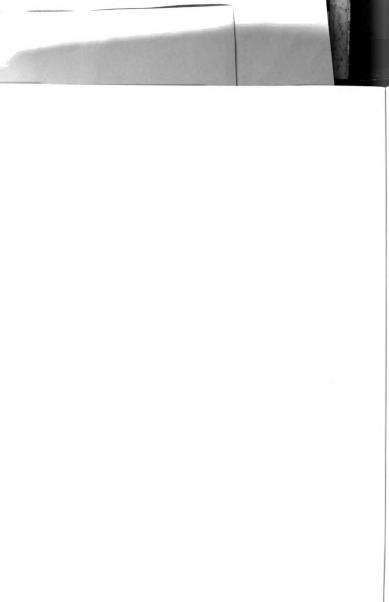
Nevertheless, Maggie must struggle to adapt to the inherited sexual ideology and the conditions in which she is growing up. Maggie's father expresses love for his 'little wench' and admires her cleverness, but his commitment to patriarchal values makes him see his unconventional daughter simply as one more puzzlement in a world 'turned topsy-turvy' (18). However, Tom Tulliver is not overly concerned, because

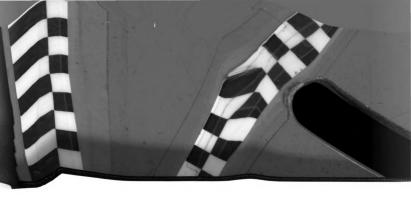




ne believes Maggie is by definition inferior to himself, and her quickness does not alter his 'contemptuous conception of a girl' (90). These attitudes reveal the ideological ambience which hampers the 'full life' (267) for a Victorian woman. If Maggie were a man, only if, indeed, she were Tom rather than Maggie, her intelligence would find a place and function in the community. As a woman, however, Maggie's intellect does not have any socially approved outlet.

Maggie's estrangement from Victorian femininity is further suggested by the various labels which designate Maggie as 'mulatter' (60), 'Pythoness' (79), 'medusa' (91). Most notably, her unruly, dark hair stands out as an emblem of her irrepressible, mold-breaking vitality, as opposed to Mrs. Tulliver's 'curls and capstrings' (30) or her blonde cousin Lucy's 'row o' curls round her head, an' not a hair out o' place' (12). 19 The young Maggie's unsuccessful confrontation with the Victorian norm is well dramatized in a mirror scene. When Mrs. Tulliver's visiting relatives make negative comments about Maggie's dark skin and hair, she seeks revenge by running upstairs and cutting her hair (56-58). After cutting off her luxuriant hair, Maggie stands cropped before a dazed Tom, feeling 'a sense of clearness and freedom, as if she had emerged from a wood into the open plain.... she didn't want her hair to look pretty--...she only wanted people to think her a clever little girl' (58). But when she succumbs to Tom's ridicule, her act of rebellion fails: '"O, Maggie," said





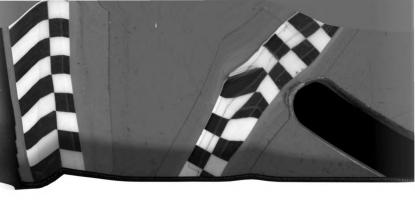
291

Tom, jumping round her, and slapping his knees as he laughed, "O, my buttons, what a queer thing you look! Look at yourself in the glass" (58). Then, Maggie's attempt fails, and she ends up 'crying before the glass' (59).

Janijoy La Belle argues that the 'mirror scene' -- the contemplation of one's image in the glass--in the nineteenth century novel is frequently used as the moment of 'selfidentification' for female characters. Unlike masculine identity, a woman's identity is established through her identification with her 'mirror image' (53). Here, the exteriority of the mirror functions as society's norm. At first, Maggie feels clean and free and hopes to be accepted as 'clever,' but immediately Tom enlists the power of the mirror, to show her that the world will continue to define her by her looks. From the perspective of the glass, her action is impulsive and foolish. In later years, the symbolic power of a patriarchal mirror continues to define the normative However, Maggie's resistance to it also femininity. increases: 'Maggie always writhed in under [the] judgment of Tom's....[I]t seemed as if he held a glass before her to show her own folly and weakness...and yet, all the while, she judged him in return' (343 italics mine).

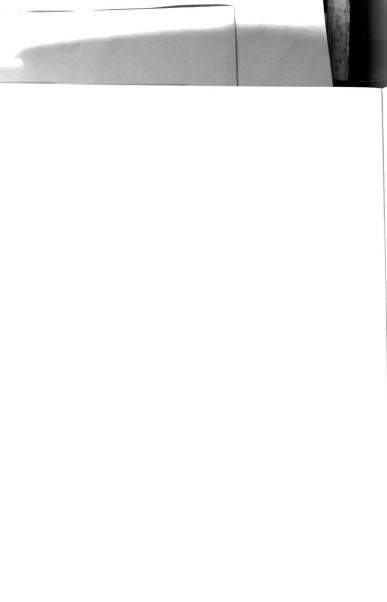
Under the continuous scrutiny of a patriarchal mirror, thus, Maggie is confronted by her own conflicting desires. She wants acceptance into, and at the same time, rebels against, the Victorian sexual economy. She continually





resists patriarchal arrangements and values, but at the same is overpowered by her strong need for the approval of her father and brother. On the one hand, the need of male approval and 'the need of being loved' are deeply rooted in Maggie's nature (342). She wants to submit to those who will reward her obedience with affection. The narrator asks, 'if life had no love in it, what else was there for Maggie?' (208). Whenever love and affection take the central position in Maggie's life, Tom is always able to dominate Maggie by threatening to withdraw his affection. Thus, the narrator comments: 'It is a wonderful subduer, this need of love -- this hunger of the heart' (35). On the other hand, Maggie's inner yearnings for a freer life continue, as she later declares to Philip Wakem, 'I can't live in dependence.... I wish I could make myself a world outside [love] as men do' (361). But Victorian gender ideology confines her within the domestic realm, providing little chance for a 'full life.' Thus, Maggie's response to life is a prolonged and unresolvable oscillation of antinomies.

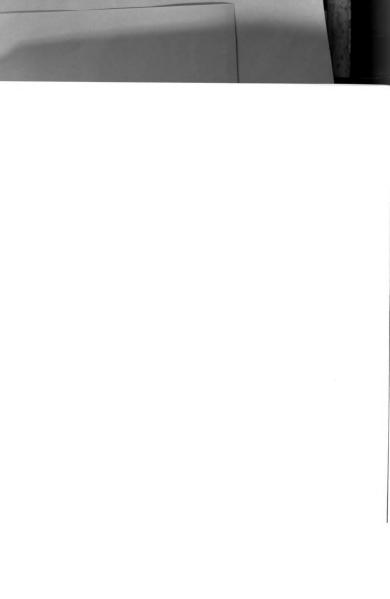
Maggie's inner conflict is intensified in the second phase of her life as an adolescent, which is overclouded by the family bankruptcy. When her father is financially ruined due to the loss of a lawsuit, both Tom and Maggie seek to recover the mill which they have lost. But Maggie's grief is exacerbated by her helplessness to affect either the family fortunes or her own. The novel continually emphasizes how

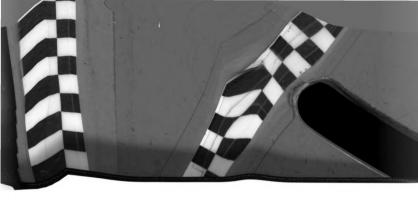


limited Maggie's vocational possibilities are, compared to Tom's. Tom plans to recover and manage the mill, both to avenge his father, and because, as he explains, 'I want to have plenty of work' (348). But he does not want his sister to work to help pay the family debt. While her brother sets out to conquer the world, Maggie is left passively, only battling with her sense of deprivation.

The narrator uses an epic image to portray the negative influence of the ideology of separate spheres on women's existence: 'so it has been since the days of Hecuba, and of Hector, Tamer of horses; inside the gates, the women with streaming hair and uplifted hands, offering prayer, watching the world's combat from afar, filling their long empty days with memories and fear: outside, the men, in fierce struggle with things divine and human quenching memory in the stronger light of purpose, losing the sense of dread and even of wounds in the hurrying ardour of action' (269-70). While men may fight, women must weep and wait. Woman's struggle is only an inner one, 'battling with the old shadowy enemies that were forever slain and rising again' (269). How can Hecuba be outside the walls, unless she breaks down the walls? As Nancy Miller argues, 'Everywhere in the Mill on the Floss, one can read a protest against the division of labor that grants men the world and women love' ("Emphasis Added" 47).

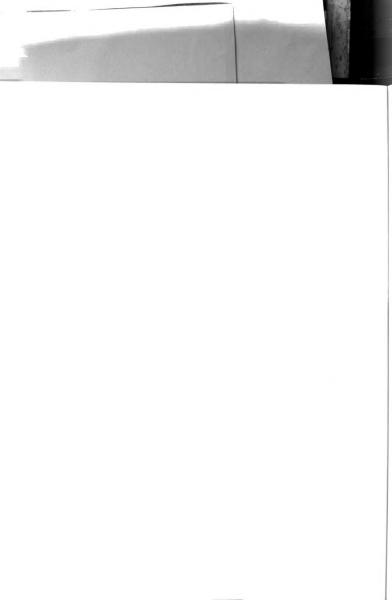
To be sure, the struggle is not confined to Maggie; Tom also has to make a sacrifice. But Tom's sacrifice brings

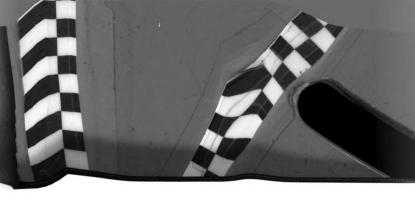




forth a visible result, as he restores his father's name and lays the foundation for his own wealth. Eventually, Maggie does get a job within the Victorian ambience of female work such as plain sewing and school teaching. However, whereas Tom's rise in trade is carefully documented in the novel, Maggie's work experience as a teacher in a 'third-rate schoolroom, with all its jarring sounds and petty rounds of tasks' is, like Maggie's schooling, very briefly recounted (335). Clearly, Maggie's work as a teacher of young girls counts for little in the bustling, mercantile world of St. Oggs.

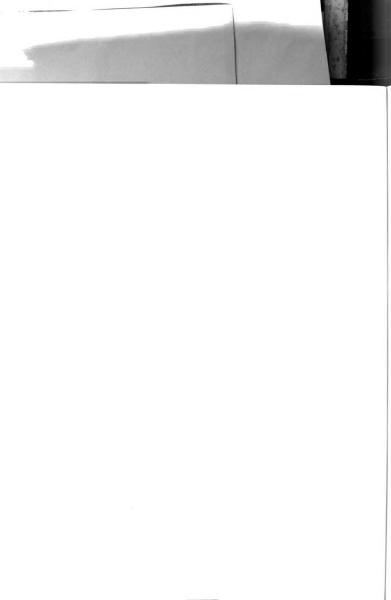
The conflict between Maggie's desire and her confining gender restrictions undermines the reconciliation which a classic Bildungsroman seeks to achieve between individual desire and social demands. It seems that Eliot here recreates the tragic tension similar to that of Sophocles' Antigone. In her 1856 criticism of the Greek tragedy, Eliot discusses the tragic 'antagonism between valid claims' and 'the struggle between elemental tendencies and established laws' in which neither side can be exonerated as blameless martyr or condemned as hypocritical tyrant ("The Antigone and Its Moral" Essays of George Eliot 264). It is the clash between outer laws and inner imperatives that Eliot sees as the crux of Antigone's dilemma. In following her overwhelming need to bury her brother, Antigone refuses the passivity attributed to her. By refusing allegiance to the state as well as marriage

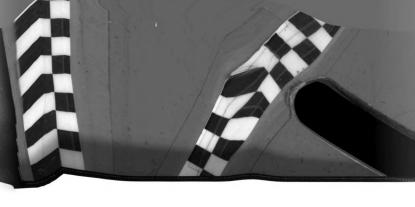




to Creon's son, Antigone brings that clash into the open. Likewise, Maggie's conflict between her inner desire and the outward condition leads to a collision rather than harmony. The normalistic pattern of Bildung, in which the growing ego of a young protagonist comes to terms with society, cannot be embodied in Maggie's case. She is neither able to be totally integrated into the conventions of society, nor is she able to forge independently a path of her own. The narrator predicts, 'No wonder, when there is this contrast between the outward and the inward, that painful collisions come of it' (208). ²⁰

Maggie's tragic condition is very gender-specific. Jeanette King argues that, in The Mill on the Floss, Eliot combines 'the basic elements of her modern tragedy--the woman's situation, with its forced passivity and pathos, and the stifling of the individual by artificial social roles-with more traditional concepts of tragedy' (78). novel, tragedy as a 'female mode' effectively obstructs and disrupts the progress of a Bildungsroman which is originally a 'male mode.' The continuous tension between the generic modes--Bildungsroman and tragedy--, thus, ruptures any harmonious narrative movement of the text, producing a dialectical conflict.21 The narrative shifts in the novel and the resultant disruption of a Bildungsroman plot for the female protagonist has drawn much critical attention. Susan Fraiman argues that it shows 'Eliot's engagement and struggle with the dominant paradigm' of the Bildungsroman. Thus, she



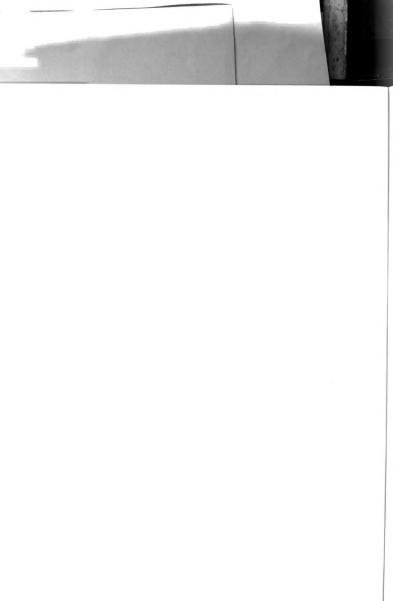


296

pelieves that critics should focus on the 'continual collisions between gender and received genre in *The Mill on* the *Floss*' (126-27). For Oliver Lovesay, the disruption of the linear narrative is a subversion of the stereotypes of female romantic plots (48-49).

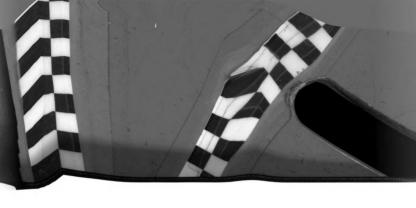
When the novel moves away from the marriage plot, it draws the reader's attention to the very question of how female desire, other than the normative domestic desire, is constructed, obstructed, and displaced in a patriarchal society. Nowhere is the conflict between developmental expectations and the life of a Victorian woman more clear than in the adolescent Maggie's struggle with educational and intellectual deprivation. As Maggie sits by the bed of her paralyzed father, looking at the 'dull walls' of the room that is the 'centre of her world,' the narrator describes her as a creature with a 'thirst for knowledge' and yearning 'for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life and give her soul a sense of home in it' (208). Maggie longs for 'masculine wisdom' represented by 'Latin, Euclid and Logic,' which she believes 'made men contented and even glad to live' (251). If she were a man, this form of Lukacsian homelessness and thirst would provide her a Bildungsroman momentum for the journey to intellectual fulfillment. However, Maggie receives scanty education.

Maggie tries to resolve the conflict between inward impulse and outward reality, by more and more frequently



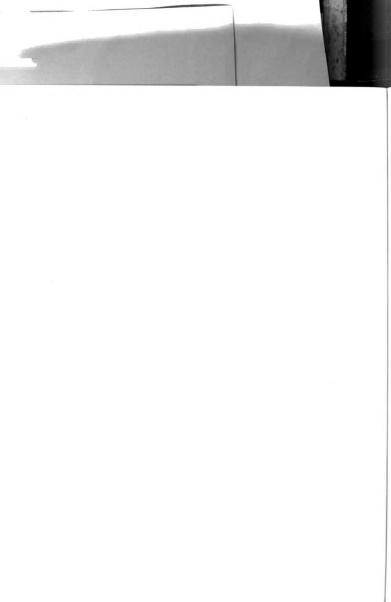
fantasizing in the dream world of books. She turns to romance novels to fulfil the emotional and intellectual void that By preventing middle-class women from surrounds her. participating in the public sphere, Victorian society confined them to an insulated world with little to do but cultivate fantasy. As Lisa Gerrard argues, the 'superficial education, the absence of meaningful work, and the narrowness of daily activities' provided women with the 'insulated conditions in which romantic fantasies might flourish' (10-11). When Maggie is rapt in reading 'feeble literature and false history' (252), the narrator pities Maggie: 'The world outside the books was not a happy one, Maggie felt' (208). conflict between her imagined world and reality becomes more and more unbearable to Maggie. Similarly, when Maggie takes to Thomas a Kempis' ascetic teachings, the narrator makes it clear that Maggie's self-renunciation is nothing more than the maximization of what is only available for her: the 'inward life' (257). Philip calls her self-denial a 'long suicide' (288) and 'monomania' (293). The narrator also lets Tom criticize her 'ridiculous flight first into one extreme and then into another' (304). The novel thus shows that Maggie's self-renunciation is not so much a moral as pathological tendency: Maggie's immersion in both fantasy and asceticism functions as a proof of an clinical impoverishment of female desires in Victorian society. Here, Eliot vividly dissects Maggie's life of nonachievement.





In this sense, Elaine Showalter's denunciation of Eliot for 'elevat[ing] suffering into a female career' (125) seems too sweeping a judgment, considering that Eliot, in the novel, places enormous weight on social pressures which hamper ideal female development. Maggie deplores that years of privation and confinement have turned her into a being like a 'poor uneasy white bear' she once saw at a show. She compares herself to the bear who 'got so stupid with the habit of turning backwards and forwards in that narrow space, that he would keep doing it if they set him free' (325). Then, Maggie's plot of Bildung as the search for autonomy and cumulative progress is out of the question. She never learns to reconcile the opposing claims of self and society, duty and the vision of a wider life. In this sense, the Bildungsroman mode for Maggie is a 'Bildungsroman manque' (Fleishman 249), or an 'anti-bildungsroman' (Bushnell 389).

Maggie's struggle reaches the final phase when she returns to St.Ogg's after three years of teaching and self-renunciation. Coming under the influence of Stephen Guest, the 'negative peace' of her life is disturbed irrevocably as she glimpses again the 'brighter aerial world' (336) of her hopes. Again she faces the unresolved conflict between her loyalty to Tom and Philip, and her romantic pursuit. Maggie's 'Great Temptation' is the impulse away from self-repression and towards freedom and self-expression. The first time she and Stephen are alone together, Maggie is aware of the



potential danger but is incapable of thought or moral resistance. The sexual gravity between them is incontestable. In the scene of "Borne Along By the Tide," Maggie loses all sense of time and place and obligation, overwhelmed by Stephen's charm: 'in spite of her resistance,..[she] was borne along by a wave too strong for her' (365-66). But soon, Maggie recovers her old sense of responsibility, with the realization that she has broken away from community's ties: 'she had rent the ties that give meaning to duty, and had made herself an outward should, with no guide but the wayward choice of her own passion' (413). By coming back home, Maggie once more chooses duty over desire, self-denial over self-assertion.

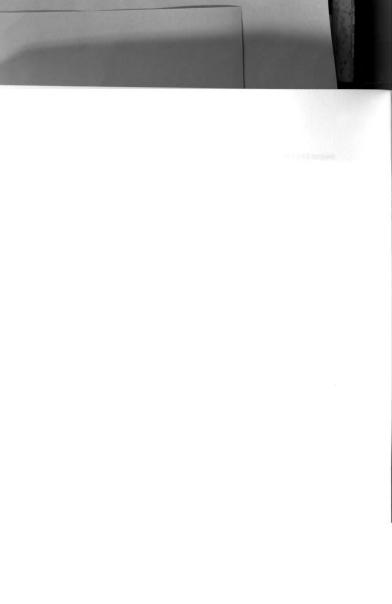
Nevertheless, the novel does not end in the celebration and the reward for Maggie's moral victory, but in her death by flood. Maggie's life is cruelly cut short at the age of nineteen. By refusing a happy end, the novel refuses to affirm a developmental success story. The novel's denouement permits a range of contradictory interpretations: from suicidal defeat to tragic liberation. Any resolution can have traces of the conflicting materials that have been processed within it. Obviously, narrative closures troubled George Eliot: 'Conclusions are the weak point of most authors, but some of the fault lies in the very nature of a conclusion, which is at best a negation' (George Eliot Letters 2:324). Eliot here seems to acknowledge the problem of ideological

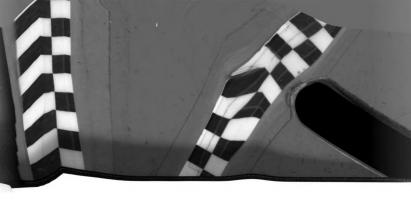


negotiation in the choice of a resolution.

In her 1861 review of the novel, Dinah Mulock did not hide her cynicism about the ending of The Mill of the Floss, asking whether it is intended as 'escape' an 'translation' to 'an immediate heaven' (Carroll 158). Twentieth-century feminist critics seem to follow Mulock's dichotomy in their interrogation of the fraught meaning of the I term the two contrasting views the 'negative ending. hermeneutic' and the 'positive hermeneutic,' respectively. The thrust of the negative hermeneutic, represented by Barbara Hardy, Elaine Showalter and Elizabeth Ermarth, is that Eliot and her heroine have succumbed to a death wish, and to the desire for escape into fantasy.2 On the other hand, the young Gillian Beer, Nancy K. Miller, Mary Jacobus, and Marianne Hirsch consider the ending of The Mill on the Floss as Eliot's feminist Aufhebung of the masterplot of realism and the 'utopian' fulfillment of the heroine's longing.23 they valorize fantasy over realism, a circular development pattern over a linear one.

It seems to me that the negative hermeneutic leans towards the emphasis on Eliot's pessimism. But a leap into fantasy is not necessarily a defeatist escape, but can be an outlet for subversion. Maggie's death can be a devastating critique of Victorian cultural institutions regulating women's desire and aspirations. When critics regard Maggie as suicidal, they do not see Maggie's potential for female



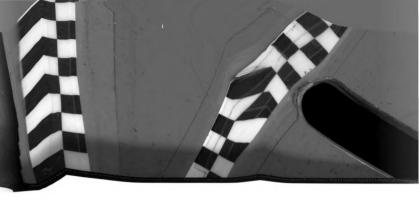


neroism in the flood scene. In contrast, the positive hermeneutic also seems biased in its unwarranted, idealized view of female submersion and plenitude. My proposition is that the ending can be regarded neither as a dubious escape nor as a realization of unbounded female desire. Rather, one must see the lapses and omissions underlying the 'utopian' settlement of the ending, and potential subversion and resistance encoded in it.

In the novel, the final flood actually provides Maggie with the chance of a heroic act. Most of the narrative of the flood centers on Maggie's superhuman energies, when she rows against the tide in what suddenly becomes a 'story of almost miraculous divinely-protected effort' (455). At the time of the en masse destruction, Maggie is the only character who musters intense life-saving energy. The encroaching water forces Maggie to stand and act: 'without a moment's shudder of fear,' she climbs into the boat and finds herself driven 'out on the wide water' (451-52). In her water-journey to save her brother and mother, she is no longer a dependent soul, but a free self 'in action' (456). No longer adrift, she travels purposefully through chaos, 'as if her life were a stored-up force that was being spent in this hour, unneeded for any future' (456).

Maggie's epiphany or transfiguration into a powerful woman may have a possible source in the legend of the Virgin of the Flood, told by the narrator in Book 1 chapter 12.25



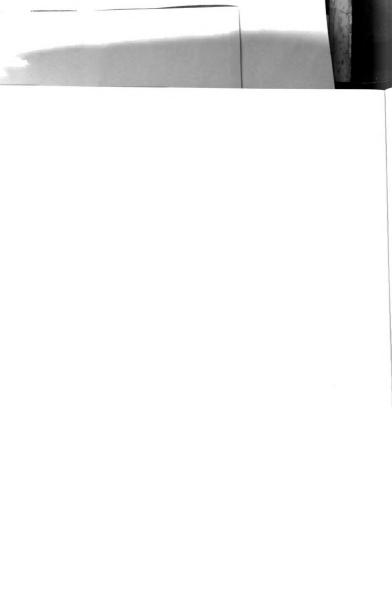


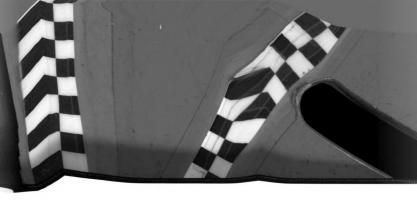
302

Like the Madonna on the water, Maggie's female heroism is evident in her role of woman-as-rescuer. Maggie's mournful image after the rejection of her family and community is miraculously transformed into that of a female hero with her full potency and sublimity. It is true that Maggie's powerful, Madonna-like image overlaps her image as a domestic angel, as Maggie's heroic journey is strictly home-bound: she fights her way back to her family. When Maggie drowns in an attempt to rescue Tom, her act is self-sacrificial and domestically motivated. Michael Wolff thus argues that, in her journey back home, Maggie superimposes the 'womanly behavior of loving submission on an unwomanly act of rescue' (208).

However, one should note that the ending also sets up a scene of revenge in which Maggie triumphs over Tom. Tom, once rescued, suddenly understands what has happened to him, he is 'pale...with a certain awe and humiliation' (453). This represents a complete reversal of all previous confrontations between Tom and Maggie in which Maggie was always in awe of Tom and went through a long succession of humiliating experiences. When he is 'unable to ask a question,' Tom is like St. Ogg who, succumbing to female will, did not ask a question. But Tom is not blessed, but dies eventually. It almost seems that Maggie rewrites the story in which the dark woman triumphs, 'because it would restore the balance' (291).

It is not surprising that many critics have found an

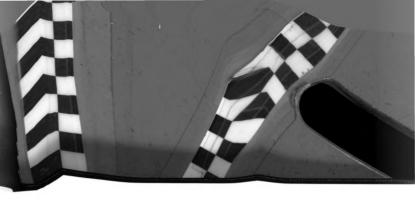




expression of female anger or rage in Maggie's selfsacrificing gesture (Newton, Women 156-57; Johnstone 102).
Since Auerbach wrote her article, "Power of Anger" (1975-76),
the emphasis on Maggie's witch-like violence has been a
powerful critical strand. Tracing the demonic and uncanny
imagery of the novel, Auerbach argues that 'a woman whose
primordially feminine hunger for love is at one with her
instinct to kill and to die' (249). Gilbert and Gubar also
argue that 'in her effort to "save" her brother from the
rising tides, [Maggie] only drags him down into the dark deep
in her "embrace" of death.' They thus see that Maggie,
despite her effort to be an 'angel of renunciation' (491),
becomes an 'angel of destruction' (493). Obviously, the
ending of the novel does not fully sublimate the subversive
female energy into the traditional image of a loving Madonna.

Nevertheless, the narrative makes one final attempt to establish a wishful, presexual utopia between sister and brother in their death. It seems that, for a brief moment, the flood is the breaker of boundaries, the temporary end of gender scripts, creating the undivided embrace of two 'daisyfield' children. The narrator views Maggie's dying embrace with Tom as a return to her first, most paradisal memory: 'living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together' (456). Here, the narrator uses the pastoral mode as a strategy of containment—a way of shutting out the

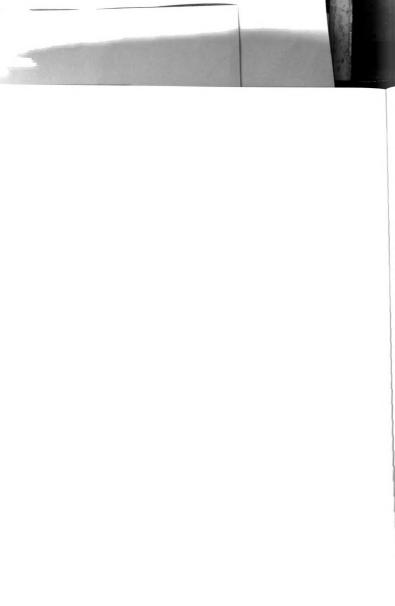




contradictions in Maggie's relationship with her brother. The statement signifies the reconciliation of female and male polarities: in drowning their separate adult identities, the gender-divided brother and sister can return to an undifferentiated childhood Eden. But this is clearly a suppression of reality, for the earlier parts of the novel show that there were very few periods of harmony between sister and brother. Maggie is portrayed to relive the 'one supreme moment,' of her childhood with Tom; nevertheless, one must hold this serene moment up against the childhood scenes of frustration in the earlier chapters. Thus, this statement rather calls attention to fissures and instabilities in the pastoral harmony it endorses.

Another problem with the *liebestod* of Maggie and Tom is that their sexual division is melded only in the apocalyptic moment of death. This means that the desired union of Maggie and Tom is made only at the cost of a disruption of historical process. What is imaged is only a momentary utopian harmony which the historical and temporal realm cannot contain. Beer thus argues, in her updated criticism of the ending, that '[t]he subversive vehemence of Maggie's fate both releases from the bounds of social realism and yet neutralizes its own [social] commentary by allowing her the plenitude which is nowhere available within her society' (George Eliot 104).

However, Eliot adds the novel's "Conclusion" that places the deaths of Maggie and Tom in a historical perspective. It





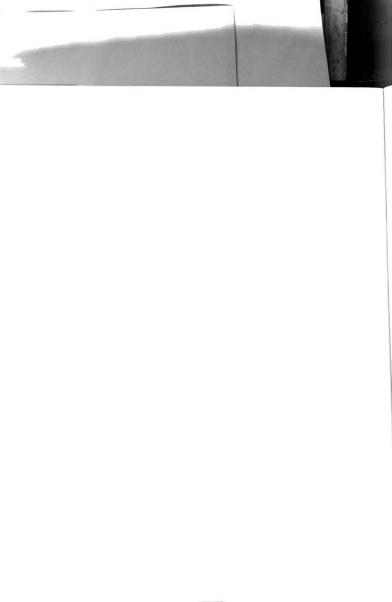
starts with the phrase, 'Nature repairs her ravages,' as if to show that the social order of St. Ogg's has not been changed by their death at all. But the phrase is soon revised as 'Nature repairs her ravages -- but not all' (457). This subtly negates the completeness of the restored order. Then, the reader is given a glimpse of Stephen, Lucy and Philip, visiting Tom's and Maggie's graves in later years and enhancing the tragic import about the waste of historical possibility of Maggie's life. Clearly, the serene resolution of the biblical text-- 'In their death they were not divided' (II Samuel 1:23) is not in full accord with the tragic realities of Maggie's life and death. The reconciliation of King Saul and his son in death has no clear relevance to the gender-specific tragedy of the novel. Elizabeth Weed even argues that the Samuel reference concerning the tie of father and son works as evidence of another exclusion of Maggie from patriarchy (444). The ending is indeed a 'negation,' revealing the disjunction between both stories. Overall, the heroine's elimination by a natural catastrophe indicates a serious disturbance in the process of female Bildung. signals a challenging fissure in the traditional form of female Bildung which rewards a virtuous heroine with marriage. and punishes a passionate heroine with punitive death.





NOTES to CHAPTER 4

- 1. Betsey Trotwood in David Copperfield is an exception. Even though she is a single, jilted woman, Trotwood does not sacrifice her humanity in her desire for independence and power. Angry as she is, her femininity is redeemed through her role of a fairy godmother to David. She successfully directs her anger towards her proper sphere and so is loved and valued in return.
- 2. Annette Federico argues that Dickens' portraits of female resentment in a way provided the raw material for later feminist heroines such as Sue Bridehead (*Jude the Obscure* 1894), Clara Middleton (*The Egoist* 1879), Rhoda Nunn (*The Odd Women* 1893). See Federico 165.
- 3. To be sure, the novel contains merely two 'angels in the house'-- Biddy and Clara-- and they are not central characters.
- 4. Whereas Victorian marriage supposedly gives a woman status and household authority, it paradoxically divests her of all legal rights. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 was the first step in protecting women's legal status, but important changes such as education and political rights did not come about until the Married Woman's Property Act in 1870. Basch thus argues: 'The girl who contracted a marriage--which the entire weight of nineteenth-century ideology put forward





as being the culminating point of a woman's life--lost at one stroke-all her rights as a 'femme sole,' that is to say a free and independent individual' (16).

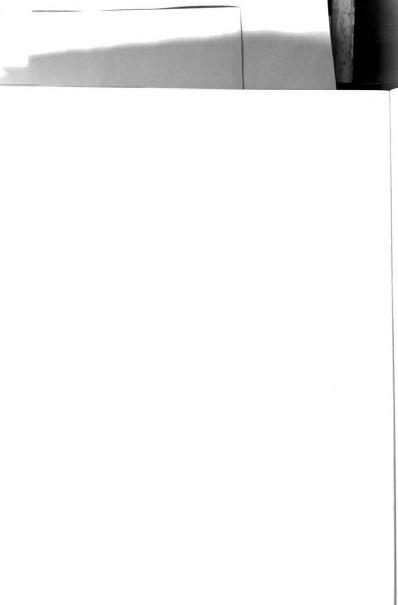
- 5. Fatherhood is an important issue in the novel, too. But I cannot digress to discuss it. For the problematic of the father in *Great Expectations*, see Douglas Brooks-Davies, 60-114.
- 6. The identification of Miss Havisham and Estella is hinted on many occasions in the text. One is implied by the incidence in Pip's first visit to Miss Havisham, in which the young Pip tells her that her house looks so 'strange' and 'melancholy,' and Miss Havisham reacts inscrutably.

Before she spoke again, she turned her eyes from me, and looked at the dress she wore, and at the dressing-table, and finally at herself in the looking-glass.

"So new to him," she muttered, "so old to me; so strange to him, so familiar to me; so melancholy to both of us! Call Estella."

As she was still looking at the reflection of herself, I thought she was still talking to herself, and kept quiet. "Call Estella,' she repeated, flashing a look at me... (8:89).

And she gazes into the mirror, see herself, and names the qirl. What is implied is that Miss Havisham is Estella. Such





a hint of the identification of Miss Havisham and Estella is reinforced in Pip's hallucinatory vision in chapter 8. When Pip walks into the garden of the old brewery at Satis House, Estella fades in and overlaps with the hanging image of Miss Havisham, as if she is an extension of the latter, and vice versa (8:93-94). What is suggested here is that Estella and Miss Havisham become virtually interchangeable.

7. The Frankenstein allusion is much more explicit in the relationship between Magwitch and Pip. When Pip comes to know that Magwitch is his benefactor, he perceives himself as a monster created by Frankenstein: 'I [was] pursued by a creature who had made me, and recoiling from him with a stronger repulsion, the more he admired me and the fonder he was of me' (40:354). Here, Magwitch, the maker and owner of a 'brought-up London gentleman' (39:339), is perceived as a repulsive creaturely creator, a sort of monsterly Frankenstein that Pip would like to run away from. Rewriting Mary Shelley's myth, Pip establishes a strange confusion between creator and creature, for, in Shelley's myth, it was the maker who was repelled by his creature. Here, on the contrary, it is the creature who wishes to shrink from his misshapen creator, and, probably, from his own misshapen self. For more detail, see Filmer 177. This revision holds true of the relationship between Miss Havisham and Estella, for, as I will show later, it is Estella who withholds love from her creator.





- Houston deals with this issue in much detail. See
 "'Pip' and 'Property' 13-25.
- 9. Interestingly, Estella and Molly, her birth mother, are identified with each other by the resemblance of their hands. Of course, Estella's hands are not like Molly's in shape: Estella has the white hands of a lady, Molly the sinewy grip of a man, and wrists 'disfigured' and 'scarred' (26:236). But Pip notices that what connects them is an action common to both: the movement of knitting fingers (47:403). From the first, Molly's hands have been associated with an image of female violence latent even in the feminine act of knitting: Jaggers argues, 'Very few men have the power of wrist that this woman has' (26:236). Thus, the identification between Estella and Molly by their hands takes on an image of violent womanhood.
- 10. In assuming she can appropriate her ward for the purpose of answering her 'displaced and confused desire' (Kincaid 15), Miss Havisham forges her link with the novel's most ruthless 'consumer' of others, the ravenous Compeyson. Compeyson is the very character who, along with Magwitch, has terrified Pip in the first scene of the novel: 'That young man has a secret way pecooliar to himself, of getting at a boy, and at his heart, and at his liver' (1:38). Miss Havisham becomes a devourer of hearts, not unlike Compeyson. Thus, in relation to Estella, Miss Havisham unhappily replicates the pressures and coercions ingrained in the power structures of





the Victorian society.

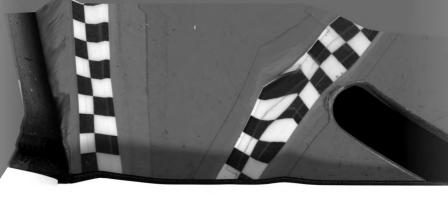
- 11. Carolyn Brown calls Estella Pip's 'narcissistic reflection' (61). Curt Hartog also argues that Estella is 'Pip's mirror, a symbol of an imagined self that is rich, powerful, and glamorous' (258).
- 12. In the novel, strong women are often held violently in check. Orlic 'tames' Mrs. Joe by smashing her skull with convict chains. The tigerish Molly, Estella's actual mother, is restrained by Jagger's strong hand. Bently Drummle beats Estella after marrying her.
- 13. In Great Expectations, the image of fire is frequently associated with violent energy. Pip's sister is murderously struck down by Orlick's blow on the head when 'she stood facing the fire,' at home (16:147). Here, the hearthside is symbolically converted into a scene of violence. When Pip sees the face of Molly, Estella's birth mother, 'as if it were all disturbed by fiery air,' like a face passing behind 'a bowl of flaming spirits in a darkened room' (26:235), he unconsciously registers violent passion that lurks within the woman. Later, Pip narrowly escapes from being burned in Orlick's lime-kiln. The only exception is the fire of Joe Gargery's forge which represents the cozy comfort and security for Pip in his childhood. For a detailed discussion of the image of fire, see John Carey, The Violent Effigy 11-16.
 - 14. Obviously, I am influenced by Gilbert and Gubar's



interpretation that Bertha is Jane's enraged alter ego. See Madwomen in the Attic 359-62

- 15. Forster argues that the original ending, in which Pip only re-encounters Estella by chance in London, after she has suffered much and remarried, is 'more consistent with the drift, as well as natural working out, of the tale' (737). In this sense, Charlotte Goodman regards the novel as a 'double-bildungsroman' (28-29). Jerome Buckley also argues that the novel is a 'double life' (97). But it is undeniable that the novel more focuses on Maggie's life that on Tom's, placing Tom's developmental plot off the center.
- 17. Darwin's Origin of the Species was published in November 1859, when Eliot was nearing the end of her novel, See Rosemary Ashton, The Mill on the Floss: A Natural History 30.
- 18. Furthermore, the novel shows that the concept of femininity is not confined to biological females, but is indicative of an inferior power position for either sex in social relations. Interestingly, both Philip and Tom experience feminization, when placed in an inferior position. Philip's disability render him more passive and feminine. He is marginalized by his deformity as women are marginalized by their gender. Also, most of the major characters are given an opportunity to comment on Philip's womanish qualities. When Tom wants to insult Philip, he refers to his deformity and his resulting disinclination for manly exercise: 'You are no





better than a girl' (154). When Maggie bends to kiss Philip in the Red Deeps, she sees him with Tom's eyes: she 'stooped her tall head to kiss the pale face that was full of pleading, timid love--like a woman's' (295). Lucy and Mr. Deane consider Philip's ignorance of 'business knowledge,' a result of his having been raised 'like a girl' (368).

Confronted with an education he cannot understand, Tom also experiences his emasculation by Stelling's pedagogy: 'Yet, strange to say, under this vigorous treatment Tom became more like a girl than he had ever been in his life before....
[H] is pride got into an uneasy condition which quite nullified his boyish self-satisfaction, and gave him something of the girl's susceptibility' (125). This passage demonstrates that the humiliating experience at Mr. Stelling's school temporarily puts Tom in the powerless position of a girl. It signifies the decline of Tom's self-confidence in terms of a change in the gender identity. This may be read as a critique of the patriarchal gender system in which femininity is understood negatively in reference to a normative and putatively universal masculinity.

19. Nina Auerbach argues, in her famous essay on *The Mill* of the Floss, that the image of Maggie's hair is linked to the serpent tresses of the Greek Medusa, the 'wanton ringlets' of Milton's Eve, and to a later Victorian vampire story (235-36).

20. In the manuscript, this sentence is followed by a paragraph omitted from the first edition: 'A girl of no

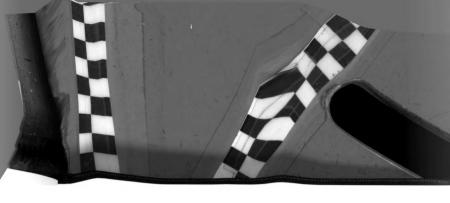




Startling appearance, and who will never be a Sappho or a Madame Roland or anything else that the world takes wide note of, may still hold forces within her as the living plant-seed does, which will make a way for themselves, often in a shattering, violent manner.' This manuscript version is printed in page 320 of the Penguin edition of the novel (The Mill on the Floss. Ed. A. S. Byatt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). This passage possibly predicts a violent, catastrophic ending of Maggie's plot.

- 21. U. C. Knoepflmacher takes a different position on the state of generic modes within the novel, emphasizing the harmonious fusion of generic strands in *The Mill on the Floss*, instead of the tension between them. He argues that, by fusing contrary genres like history (a male mode) and romance/myth (a female mode), Eliot tries to 'harmonize the gender divisions she so persistently sought to reconcile' (96). His focus is different from mine because he discusses history and romance, but not Bildungsroman and tragedy. It seems to me, anyway, that the dynamics of different genres do not guarantee such easy harmony.
- 22. Barbara Hardy condemns the ending as a 'solution by fantasy,' and 'an act of bad faith,' arguing that 'Maggie, the dreamer, pitiful in her failure to imagine a better life for herself, chooses to escape from the real world, chooses in fact to die in the novel's climactic flood' (Critical Essays on George Eliot 45). Showalter describes Maggie as someone



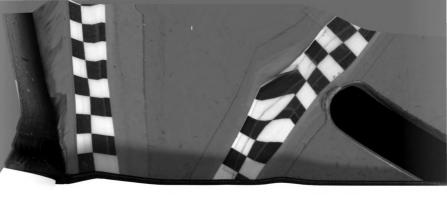


'perversely drawn to destroy all her opportunities for renewal,' someone 'who finds it easier, more natural, and in a mystical way more satisfying, to destroy herself than to live in a world without opium or fantasy, where she must fight to survive' (128, 131). Similarly, Ermarth dismisses the ending as the climax of Maggie's long suicide and masochism ("Long Suicide").

23. Beer argues that the flood 'allows [Maggie's longings] fulfillment in a plot which simply glides out of the channeled sequence of social growth and makes literal the expansion of desire' ("Beyond Determinism" 88). (However, Beer later revises her interpretation with a new emphasis on sociological outlook in her 1986 book on George Eliot). Miller argues that dominant ideology, embodied in expected resolutions of the male form, is rejected for 'the peculiar shape of a heroine's destiny' ("Emphasis Added" 44). Jacobus, the death by flood is part of a 'utopian feminist gesture' which embodies the 'moment of attempted transcendence in the timeless death embrace which abolishes the history of division between brother and sister' (Jacobus 52). Hirsch also argues that 'death might, in fact, provide the only means to reverse the growth into limitations and subordination that is reserved for women' (37).

24. In Fantasy: The literature of Subversion, Rosemary Jackson argues that fantasy 'resists being incorporated into the general ideological flow' of narrative, presenting





'socially subversive energies' (131).

25. According to the ancient legend of St. Ogg's, at the end of a day of plying between the banks of the Floss, Ogg the ferryman encountered a woman who begged for passage, even though other travellers discouraged her from crossing at that time. But Ogg took her across because, her 'heart's need' (105) was reason enough for him. When they arrived at the other bank, she revealed that she was the Virgin Mary, thanked him, and blessed his boat, so that, from then on, he and his boat were protected from floods and he was given the power to rescue people and animals from floods.

26. The image of woman as a rescuing Madonna is more strongly embodied in *Romola*. Romola floats in a boat to a village decimated by plague. By selflessly devoting herself to helping people there, she is canonized by them as 'the blessed Lady.'



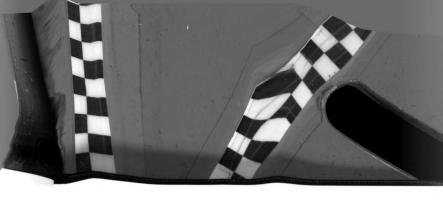
CONCLUSION

To build a new fabric of social happiness comprehending equally the interests of all human beings, has never been contemplated (William Thompson, Appeal of One Half the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain Them in Political and thence Civil and Domestic Slavery (1825) xiv).

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out and, seeing a better country, sets a sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias (Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man under Socialism" (1891) 34).

The novels of Dickens and Eliot include a dual hermeneutic of Victorian culture and society: a 'negative hermeneutic' that discloses society's ideological contradictions and failings, and a 'positive hermeneutic' that recuperates utopian hope from present reality. Of course, this does not mean that Dickens and Eliot delineate an alternative future in their texts. Utopian impulse for an

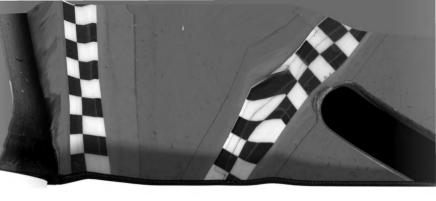




alternative social order need not bring forth a systematic program, but rather present the hope and possibility for change against the poeticizing of the present. As Bloch argues, utopian hope is bound to 'the real Possible' or 'positive Being-in-possibility' (Principle of Hope I: 208-9). Embedded in reality, then, an utopian vision cannot but be the 'accumulative process of action/reaction within a dynamic system of power relations tending to overcome historical obstacles' (Khouri 49). In this perspective, the flawed present and the perfect future are in a dialectical relationship with each other.

In the previous chapters, I have proposed that Dickens and Eliot's novels evince the desire for an alternative order by posing a serious challenge to the existing patriarchal and sexist structures of Victorian society. Even though Dickens and Eliot accept the Victorian cultural paradigms about women's moral nature and their domestic mission, they produce lapses, omissions, and incoherences of Victorian ideological formations in their texts. In this sense, Eagleton argues that although Dickens and Eliot's novels are sometimes driven to create ideological closures, their formal and thematic discontinuities 'lay bare the imprint of the ideological struggles which beset the texts' (124). It is not surprising that the texts of Dickens and Eliot frequently present images of fragmentation contained within ordered aesthetic forms and that their chaotic fragments are not always redeemable by the



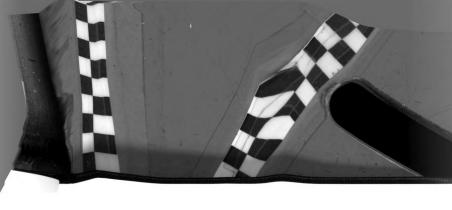


318

dominant ideology.

These traces of dislocations in Dickens and Eliot's texts should not be regarded as weaknesses. Adorno argues that 'the successful work...is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure' ("Cultural Criticism and Society" 32). unveiling contradictions inherent in Victorian domestic utopias, Dickens and Eliot mount a critique of a 'spurious harmony' of Victorian society. They challenge the ideological nature of 'utopian' home life and question belief in the 'natural' order based on the ideology of separate spheres and gender hierarchy. They explicitly and forcefully subvert what they regard as society's sentimentalization of family life. It is no accident that they frequently depict sexual relations as power struggles, problematizing the idea of the 'natural' subordination of the wife. The novels of Dickens and Eliot thus register a deep sense of society's injustice for women. In their female Bildungsroman plots which end in marriages, Dickens and Eliot deal with the problem of the sacrifices that the heroines must make for their integration into a patriarchal system. Even though they set up a domestic utopia as the textual telos, Dickens and Eliot foreground the heroines' struggles and regret which may contradict their outward effort to place themselves in an intransigent

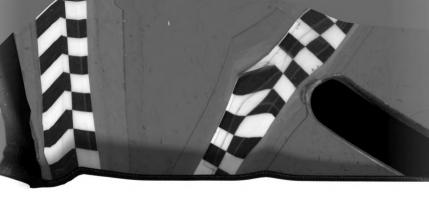




patriarchal society. In their female Bildungsroman plots which end in death, Dickens and Eliot further intensify their critique of the tragic effects of the patriarchal system on aspiring women. In doing so, they implicitly connect the difficulties of individual cases with the problems of the Victorian social system.

It is true that Dickens and Eliot frequently denied the political implications of their social critiques. repeatedly asserted that their novels were non-political and rejected the notion that political action could bring about a better social state. According to Forster, Dickens recognized, as early as the 1840s, 'the hopelessness of any true solution of either political or social problems by the ordinary Downing-street methods,' through Carlyle's writings, as well as through his own observations. Consequently, Dickens tried to 'convert society' by showing that its happiness rested on 'the same foundations as those of the individual, which are mercy and charity no less than justice' (Forster 347). Eliot also made it clear that as a writer, she shied away from politics of any kind. In her letter to Mrs. Peter Taylor, Eliot argues: 'I thought you understood that I have grave reasons for not speaking on certain public topics.... My function is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher -- the rousing of the nobler emotions, which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artistic mind, however





320

strongly moved by social sympathy, is often not the best judge' (George Eliot Letters VII:44).

In view of these statements, it seems that Dickens and Eliot were eager to confine their art within non-political realms. However, despite their valorization of non-political, humanitarian terms--'mercy and charity' in Dickens' words and 'social sympathy' in Eliot's words--, their novels could not remain detached from political implications completely, when they intensely mounted critiques of Victorian society. As Jameson arques, every narrative is a socially symbolic act embedded in the political unconscious. Their 'negative hermeneutic' of Victorian society -- their challenge to, and subversion of, its ideological paradigms--cannot but be political acts. Thus, despite their professed withdrawal from the political arena, their critiques of the Victorian concepts of home and gender obviously contribute to the political possibility of a better world, and evoke political desire for change.2

To be sure, because of their inescapable participation in certain dictates of their culture, Dickens and Eliot operate within the limits of conservative liberal-humanist politics. Both Dickens and Eliot prefer evolution to revolution, a gradual social change to a drastic reformulation of the existing system. Many critics have attributed their conservatism to their middle-class allegiance. Regarding Dickens, Badri Raina caustically notices Dickens'

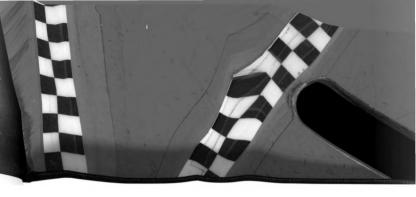


contradictions in that he both 'aspired to the substantive fruits of the bourgeois culture that surrounded him and intensely despised the living expressions of bourgeois Victorian insensitivity' (13). However, it is undeniable that, despite Dickens' conservatism, his novels still embody a politics of subversion. Dickens' texts reveal his deepseated suspicion of the Victorian social system, and surreptitiously dismantle whatever ideological paradigms he might outwardly adopt in his narrative.

Similarly, Eliot's novels have disappointed modern feminists who emphasize immediate political praxis to bring about an alternative future, who look to Eliot to deliver 'a world whose shadowy existence [they] have long suspected, but whose reality has been perpetually denied' (Edwards, "Women, Energy, and Middlemarch 232). It may be true that feminism cannot separate itself from a positive hope of the future which envisions the happy state of equality of the sexes. this sense, Sara Webster Goodwin argues: 'Since any definition of feminism must include an impulse to improve the human community, feminism seems to have at least an inherent utopian inclination' (1). However, when Lee Edwards summarily denounces Eliot for the 'failure of her imagination to create ... alternatives' (Psyche as Hero 101), she underestimates the fact that Eliot's tremendous critique of Victorian social arrangements which put women at serious disadvantage is part of an 'utopian' act, to realize the 'real Possible' in the



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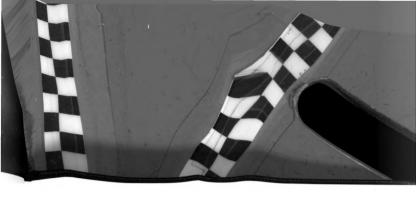


future.

If a proper utopian impulse must have a dialectical relationship with present reality, Eliot cannot be said to shrink from the political implication of her novels, just because she does not present a fantasy of fulfillment. As Block argues, utopian tales which are merely 'voyeuristic palliation' can be the embodiments of 'historical deceit' (Philosophy of the Future 87). Feminist critics have attacked Eliot for not offering her heroines a field in which they can develop and for not giving them the chances Eliot had herself.3 But one cannot disregard the fact that Eliot was an exceptional woman, whom Woolf called 'the first woman of the age' (Letters of Virginia Woolf II:322). If Eliot had depicted Maggie and Dorothea as having achieved a wonderfully fulfilling life which reconciles outward conditions and inner desire, it would have been a betrayal of the general reality of Victorian society.4

Indeed, while Eliot was not a political activist, there can be no doubt that her ideas were profoundly feminist. She was as attentive as any modern feminists to conspicuously unequal gender relations in Victorian society, and aware of the terrible price paid by both sexes for perpetuating their traditional relationship. Although Eliot does not batter down the monuments of a patriarchal system in her novels, it is undeniable that she makes a protest against the existing social order. Of course, her protest takes a form of a





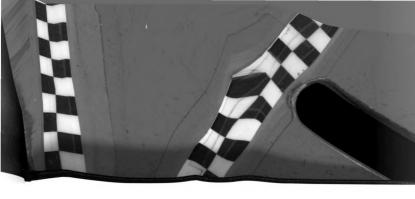
critique rather than a crusade. As Beer argues, her 'method was not one of zealous confrontation but of persistence' (8), not of public campaign but of silent resistance. Nonetheless, Eliot's novels provide a 'powerful stimulus to improvement,' and towards a 'more perfect social state.' They evidently suggest, and look forward to, an alternative social order beyond existing sexual inequality.

Clearly, Dickens and Eliot register their strong awareness of the historical claims of women to rights to inclusion and equality. Their texts imply the possibility that if women, as a social group, have educational, economic, and legal power, equal to men's, the resolutions of the 'heroine's text' will eventually be able to reach beyond the limits of Victorian domesticity, even if neither novelist presumes to describe what that delimited world might be.

NOTES to CONCLUSION

1. In this sense, I disagree with Barickman's argument that, in dealing with the 'Woman Question,' these novelists never took issue with the Victorian social system as a whole. He argues that '[s]ome of the most determined explorers of [the Women Question],... retreat from the kind of scrutiny of the whole system of sexual values that seems promised by the initial terms of their novels. Rather than appearing as a necessary consequence of the Victorian social system, their

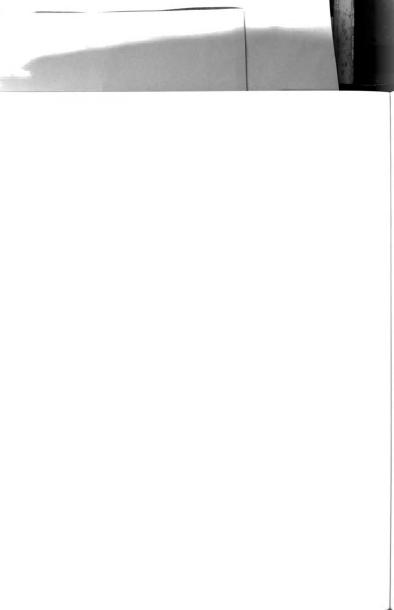


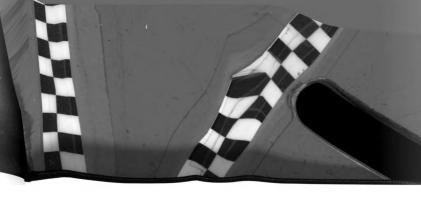


heroines' constricting circumstances are finally treated as accidents of a particular social situation, to be remedied through the standard choice of an appropriate husband (3). My view is that Dickens and Eliot were aware that they were dealing with a general social situation.

2. As a woman writer, in particular, Eliot was particularly concerned with politics which would affect women's position. It is true that, asked to champion the cause of women's political emancipation, she shied away from campaigning or writing pamphlets, probably because of her already difficult social situation--'the peculiarity of my own lot" as she described it in a letter to John Morley on the issue of votes for women (George Eliot Letters IV:364). Certainly, Eliot's unlegalized 'marriage' to George Lewes entailed a great deal of social ostracism. For example, Anthony Trollope's wife Rose would not visit her, or allow her to come to the Trollopes' home. Anthony had to see 'Mrs. Lewes' by himself (Glendenning 300-2).

However, even though she did not engage herself in public actions, Eliot supported the struggle for political issues such as changes in laws concerning married women's property, and above all she endorsed campaigns for raising the standard of existing educational institutions for girls as well for establishing new ones. In May 1867, Eliot sanctioned a petition drawn up in 1856 by Barbara Leigh Smith calling for amendment of the laws related to married women.



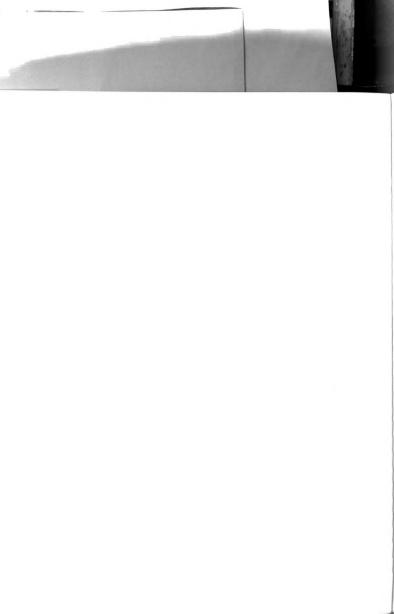


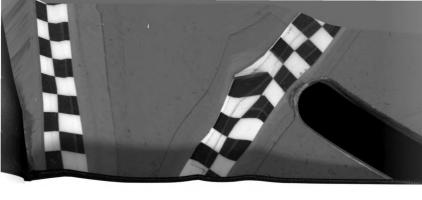
325

Congratulating Sara Hennell for having 'taken up the cause' in signing the petition, Eliot emphasized that she thought the proposed laws 'would help to raise the position and character of women' (qtd. in Redinger 292). In May 1867, Eliot was sympathetic with John Stuart Mill's agitation for women's rights in Parliament and emphasized that women should be 'educated equally with men' (George Eliot Letters IV:366). In 1867, she also supported the plans for Girton, contributing 50 pounds to the first women's college.

To be sure, beyond legal and educational concerns about women, Eliot was critical of political agitations like the suffragist movement. Her conservative political stance is evident in her 1867 letter to Sarah Hennell: 'I proceed to scold you a little for undertaking to canvass on the Women's Suffrage question. Why should you burthen yourself in that way, for an extremely doubtful good?' (George Eliot Letters IV:390). About the suffragist movement, Eliot maintained that, unless women improved and cultivated their minds first, no extensive alterations in enfranchisement could or should be carried out.

- 3. Feminist critics such as Kate Millett and Lee Edwards believe that Eliot could have used her talent to portray characters with successful experiences like her own. They accuse her of 'living the revolution but not writing about it' (Zelda Austen 550).
 - 4. It should be remembered that Eliot did attempt an

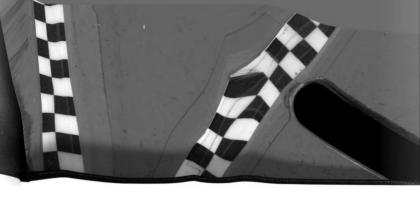




utopian kind of writing as her first fictional work when she was working as a reviewer of Westminster Review. Tentatively entitled The Idea of a Future Life, the book was about a Comptean perfect society. I cannot find any detailed explanation of why the book remained unwritten. But according to Chase, Frederic Harrison, a friend of Eliot and one of the leading English exponents of Compte's positivism, proposed that she write a novel illustrating the perfect society that Compte's theories could bring into being. Eliot admitted the attraction of the project, but she worried that it would turn a novel into a 'diagram' and it would appeal to the scientific mind but would not lead the emotions to an 'aroused sympathy' (Chase, Middlemarch 42-43). See also Beer, Darwin's Plot 183 and Byatt 79.

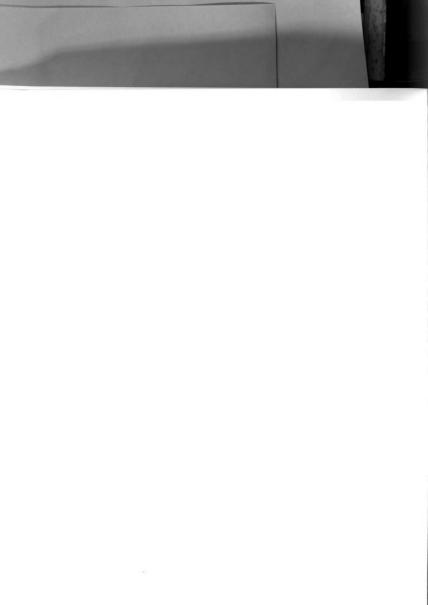
5. These phrases are quoted from "Prospectus of the Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review" which Eliot wrote in 1852. See Eliot's Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings, 4, 5.





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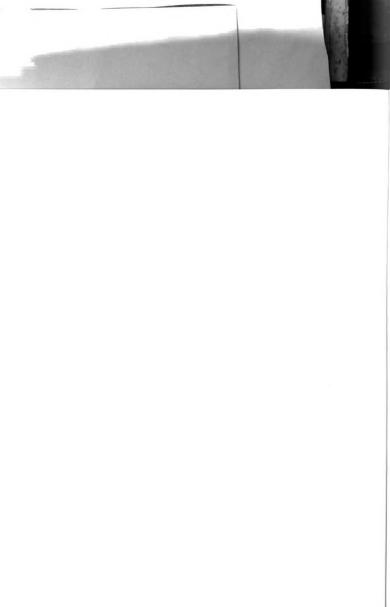
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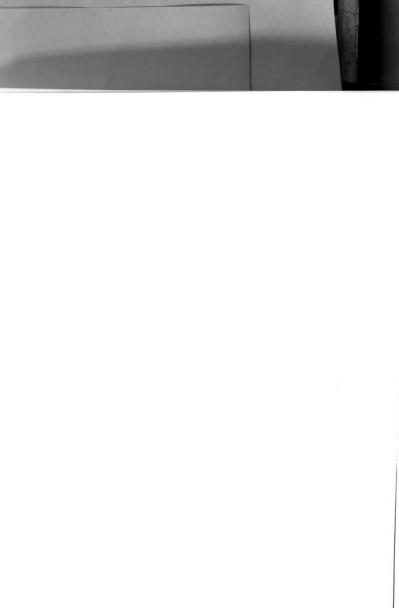
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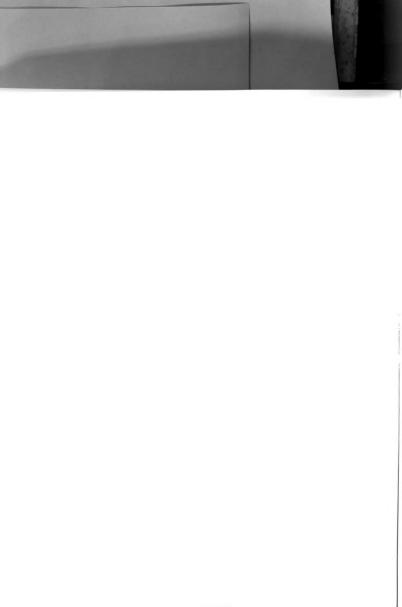


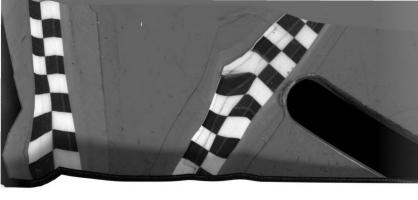
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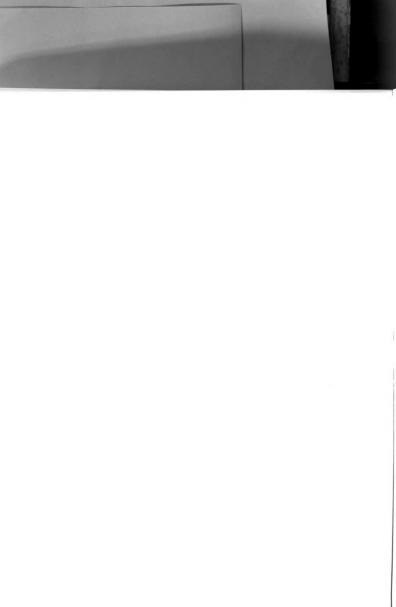
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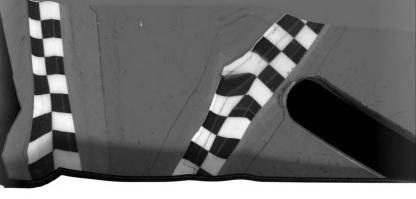
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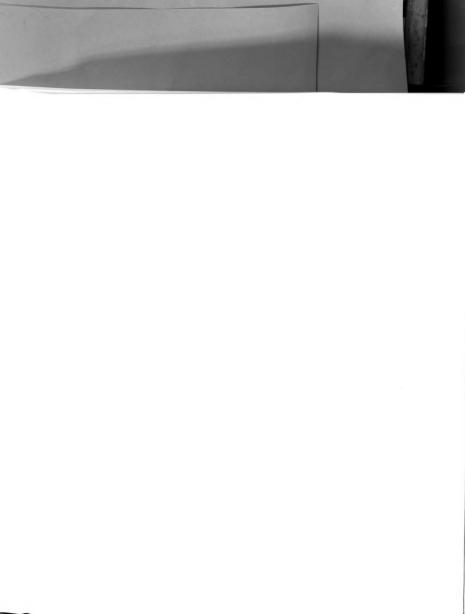
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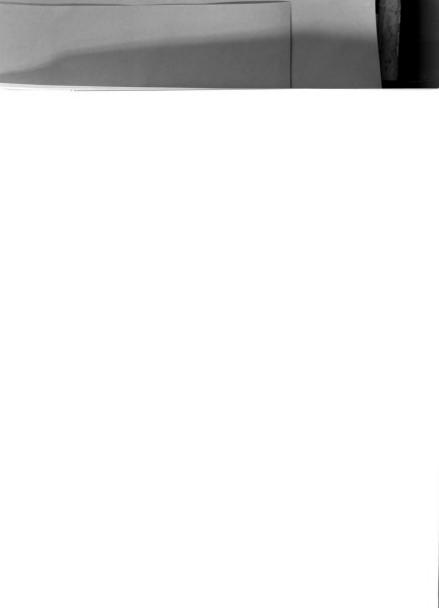


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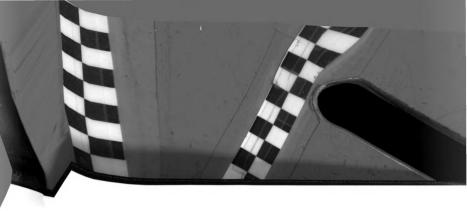


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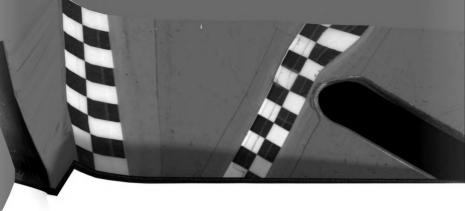
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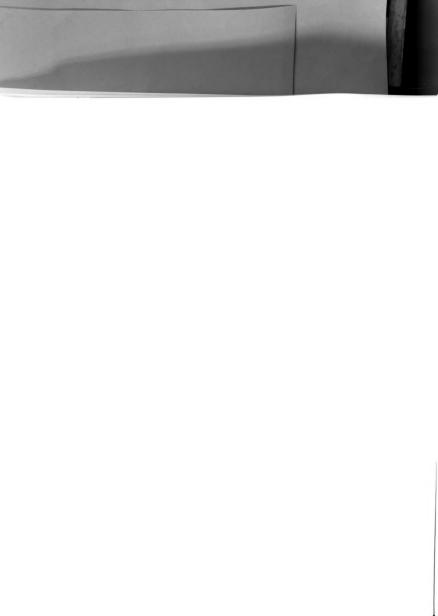
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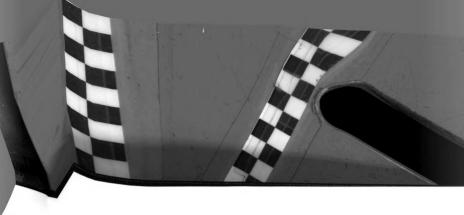
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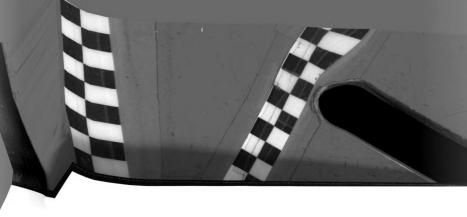




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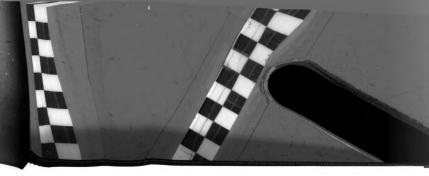
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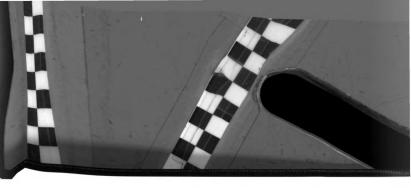




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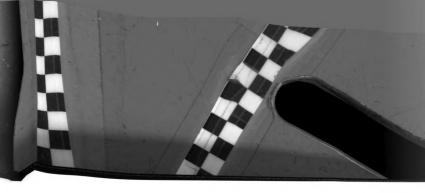
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