

**Temptation, Fall, Decline and Death:
The Representation of the Fallen Woman
in *Adam Bede* and *David Copperfield*.**

Maria Joy Crawford

**A thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts
at the University of Otago, Dunedin
New Zealand**

Abstract

In the nineteenth century a specifically Victorian narrative of fallenness was constructed which reflected many of the anxieties of the age; consequently the fallen woman became a Victorian obsession. The narrative was utilised in *David Copperfield*, by Charles Dickens (1849-50), and in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), with different aims and outcomes. Both authors had personal experience of Victorian society's attitude to fallenness: Dickens, through his association with Urania Cottage and Eliot through her unconventional domestic life. This thesis investigates how contemporary discourse influenced the construction of fictional narratives of fallenness to variously confirm and challenge existing ideas about the nature of women and men, and their role and place in Victorian society. It explores the methods used to provoke understanding and sympathy for the plight of fallen women in each novel and speculates about the possible influence of the author's gender on the representation of fallenness. The fallen women in *David Copperfield* were purposefully created in an attempt to change social opinion and authorise a programme of rescue through emigration and in *Adam Bede* the fallenness narrative was used by Eliot to facilitate and explore the development and expansion of sympathy. However, in both *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* the fallen woman narrative was primarily used to emphasise the agency and nobility of the male titular characters who achieved heroic status and social advancement through their association with the fallen women.

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	3
Chapter 2: <i>David Copperfield</i> and the Narrative of Fallenness.....	19
Chapter 3: <i>Adam Bede</i> and the Narrative of Fallenness	50
Chapter 4: Writing the Narrative of Fallenness	80
Works Cited	115

Acknowledgements.

It has been more than four years since I began this thesis, during that time I have been sustained and supported by my Otago Residential College colleagues, many residents and all of my RAs. I particularly want to thank my workmates, especially Barry, Lyn, Brent and Marianne, who have endured ideas, theories and opinions over many coffee and lunch breaks. Many other friends have cheered me on and bolstered my confidence, particularly fellow postgrad students Karl Gorringe and Diane McCarthy. Ellie Sutton has supported and encouraged me and also provided invaluable help with proof reading and formatting in the later stages. I am especially grateful to the Dunedin City Tertiary Accommodation Trust, for their generous provision of a four-week sabbatical in 2009.

My husband, Bill Needs, deserves recognition for his love and tremendous patience; he has listened to my worries, read chapters, and provided hours of support making it possible for me to find the necessary time. Becky, Ryan and Max have been tolerant and uncomplaining about having an often distracted and preoccupied Mother and Grandmother.

Many thanks to Otago University English Department staff Dr Lyn Tribble and Dr Shef Rogers for their support and encouragement at the beginning, and to Dr Thomas McLean for a semester of supervision in 2008.

Finally and most importantly I will be forever grateful to my supervisor Dr Wendy Parkins, without her support, assistance and commitment I might have given up a long time ago. Wendy has read and reread draft after draft, helped me to find and retain focus and has been extremely tolerant of the length of time that this project has taken. I feel honoured and humbled by her interest and forbearance.

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Johnnie Crawford (1918–1995), from whom I learnt a love of literature, and of Victorian literature in particular. Always very proud and interested in my achievements Dad would have read every word of this thesis with interest and intelligence, and then we would have had an argument about my ideas!

Chapter 1

Introduction

The records of the human race, from the Book of Genesis downwards, through the whole range of ancient and medieval literature to the writings of our own day, bear witness to the perpetual presence among men of the daughters of shame. Kings, philosophers, and priests, the learned and the noble, no less than the ignorant and simple, have drunk without stint in every age and every clime of Circe's cup; nor is it reasonable to suppose that in the years to come the world will prove more virtuous than it has shown itself in ages past. From time to time men's purer instincts, revolting from the sin, have striven to repress it; but such efforts have too often ended in failure... To ignore an ever-present evil appears a mistake as fatal as the attempt to repress it. I am, therefore, an advocate of RECOGNITION.¹

William Acton's capitalised appeal for an honest and open discourse on the "prevention, amelioration and regulation of prostitution" was first published in 1857. By emphasising the universal and ageless nature of the issue he clearly hoped to stimulate discussion and reform through public debate. Although Acton's book deals primarily with the social evil of prostitution Chapter 7, "Prevention of Prostitution", specifically details the part played by seduction in the "making" of prostitutes and he advocates law reform to ensure that delinquent fathers would financially support illegitimate children and deserted mothers as a way to reduce the numbers of seduced women who fall into prostitution and infanticide from poverty and desperation. The book, which combines scientific, legal and moral arguments, makes an important contribution to the discourse of fallenness as it was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century and although Acton emphasised the ubiquitous presence of prostitution in every age he was responding to a specifically Victorian understanding of the

question. Acton's most cited and remembered assertion, that women "are not much troubled with sexual feelings of any kind" is frequently employed to show that he was a "prisoner of the fictions of his age" (Fryer, 12) concerning female sexuality; however his medically and scientifically based explorations of the social problems raised by human sexuality made an influential contribution to contemporary opinion. Acton also publicly explored aspects of masculine behaviour which were often concealed ("the honour of all women but those of his own house is so much a by-word with the Englishman – their bodies so often his sport –" (Acton, 201)), and challenged the prevailing notion that prostitutes committed suicide, died in a ditch, or perished of shame. Acton – a medical doctor specialising in venereal diseases – has variously been described as an intellectual, social historian, humanitarian, reformer and writer: terms which can comfortably be applied to the authors of Victorian fiction who explored similar issues.

Acton's book is an appropriate place to begin this study. Foucauldian theorists maintain that novels should be read beside other representations of gender because the "history of fiction cannot be understood apart from the history of other forms of writing in the nineteenth-century" (Levy, 17). The novel, for instance, "acts to include, state, affirm, normalise and naturalise values and ideas" (Said, qtd in Levy, 18), through devices such as characterisation, which may reflect the social anxieties of the age. William Acton's assumptions were part of a widespread discussion about gender and society explored in biomedical and sociological studies published in mid-nineteenth century Britain that influenced Victorian novelists, publishers and readers. Although there is no evidence that Dickens and Eliot were directly influenced by Acton's theories they were both engaged with contemporary ideas and were inevitably aware of the social and scientific assumptions entering into the discourse of the times. *David Copperfield* was written eight years before the publication of Acton's *Prostitution*, however because many of Dickens' stories and novels were set in London, prostitutes and fallen women had appeared in his works since the

beginning of his career. Amanda Anderson maintains that Dickens “like other Victorian social reformers, actively sought to challenge exclusively moral and religious discourses of the fall...by insisting that circumstances or context were to blame” (Anderson, 68). There is evidence in Dickens’ pamphlets, journalism and letters that he was heavily involved and affected by “contemporary events, public personalities and social theories [which] especially roused his anger” (Slater, *Dickens 1970*, 102). Dickens was also personally active in the rescue of fallen women and specifically hoped that his representation of Little Emily would influence public opinion. George Eliot’s career as a journalist and reviewer exposed her to the latest social and scientific theories, consequently she had an extraordinarily “broad grasp of historical, philosophical and literary issues” (Henry, 138), and Matus explicitly links the representation of Hetty in *Adam Bede* to “contemporary concerns about infanticide and maternal instinct” (Matus, 168), which were promulgated in a wide range of texts in the 1850s.² Eliot’s non-fiction writing also reveals her as a social critic who advocated gradual organic change. Acton and others who wrote medical and social texts contributed to the construction and development of a specifically Victorian discourse of fallenness, consequently the fallen woman became a Victorian obsession explored in non-fiction writing, theatre, art and literature.

This thesis was originally motivated by the observable inconsistency between commonly accepted notions of the Victorians’ narrow-mindedness and prudery and their apparent obsession with aberrant female sexuality frequently explored through the representation of fallen-women characters in Victorian literature. Through examination of the way the conventional narrative of fallenness was employed in two novels published in the middle of the nineteenth-century – *David Copperfield* (1849-50) and *Adam Bede* (1859) – I examine the meaning and significance of different representations of fallenness. Concentrating on the treatment of the fallen woman in comparison with her seducer I investigate how contemporary discourse influenced the construction of narratives of

fallenness to both confirm and challenge existing ideas about the nature of women and men and their role and place in Victorian society. I also explore the different methods used to provoke understanding and sympathy for the plight of fallen women in each novel and speculate about the possible influence of the author's gender on the representation of fallen women.

The fallen woman is a familiar figure in nineteenth-century literature and art, reflecting a Victorian fascination with women's sexual behaviour. She appears in many novels and stories, seldom as a central or title character but routinely as a minor character whose apparent role is to illuminate, imperil or educate other characters.³ Fallenness is typically associated with participation in sexually illicit relationships, and in the Victorian context includes a range of feminine identities: "prostitutes, unmarried women who engage in sexual relations with men, victims of seduction, adulteresses, as well as variously delinquent lower-class women" (Anderson, 2). The establishment of an ideal of Victorian womanhood based on the middle-class model led to the construction of mutually exclusive definitions; there was little room for degrees of fallenness.

The representation of the fallen woman in nineteenth-century literature was part of a wider discourse attempting to satisfactorily identify and define the special nature of women. This discourse was characterised by ambiguity, divergence and instability; scientific and social opinions simultaneously described women as having both a weaker and stronger sexual nature. As Foucault argues, far from being silent about sex the Victorians were caught up in a diverse and pressing necessity to talk about it, and translate it into discourses of "knowledge and power" (Foucault, 73). The rational, autonomous, ideal Victorian individual was male, and femininity and fallenness were "defined in opposition to a masculine ideal of rational control and purposeful action" (Anderson, 36). If the proliferation of accounts of fallenness indicated fears about the dangers to society from unregulated female sexuality, the variations of fallenness represented both the instability of beliefs about woman's sexual and social

nature and fears about the dangers inherent in a society that failed to control women because the fallen women represented both a cause and effect – a victim and a threat – and was representative of a lack of agency or self-control (Anderson, 67).

The Victorian age was one of great change and uncertainty, destabilised by an increasing emphasis on secularisation through the development of science and technology and by fears of violence and revolution, causing a move away from an acceptance of a literal understanding of the Bible (Harrison, 26). The resulting loss of religious faith, combined with uneasiness prompted by theories of geology and evolution, created doubts about the capacity of man to determine his own future. Attempts to rationally and scientifically formulate alternative ideologies led to the “construction and deployment” of representations of gender, which identified the fallen woman as a significant threat to Victorian society (Poovey, 4).

The influence of medical and scientific discourses on the establishment of middle-class hegemony is the subject of much of the recent critical literature which explores the representation of women and the development of the Victorian fallen narrative. The early nineteenth century offered the embryonic middle class a range of opportunities and threats; wealth from industry brought economic power which was transformed into political power by the Reform Bill of 1832. Consequently particular middle-class anxieties began to determine political programmes. “The need to control, regulate and dissipate the profound threat that the lower classes represented to the middle classes” (Levy, 25) and the need to justify and consolidate economic, social and imperial power, created a culture of regulation and reification of those members of society that were likely to threaten it. The formulation of threats and fears as ‘problems’ which could be ‘solved’ enabled the emergence of a new class of professionals, scientists, doctors, journalists and public officials, who proceeded to define and provide ‘objective’ solutions to the threats of the age on behalf of the class which they represented. Anita Levy outlines the growth of statistical sociological studies which “mapped the social regions where political resistance originated” creating “a specific notion of the poor

which was circulated and exchanged as truth” united with the cultural idioms of morality and sexuality to “represent the condition of the poor not so much a consequence of their economic deprivation but as a symptom of their pathological depravity” (Levy, 26). Theories about sex were “enlisted in the ideological work of gender...justifying specific forms of social organisation” (Matus, 24) resulting in discourses which were a product of the convergence of social and political ideas about science and nature. Women were identified as central to and largely responsible for this corruption. Victorian sociological research came to identify the ‘home’ as the centre of working-class disorder, and the absence of a ‘good woman’ from the home as the cause of many working class ills – including the drunkenness and violence of working-class men. Most importantly the fallen were most often depicted as labouring-class women, “simultaneously eroticised and denigrated”, corresponding to contemporary discourse where “sexuality [was] firmly positioned in relation to class” (Jones, 315). The failure of self-control was identified with promiscuous sexuality in the female poor and was profoundly threatening to a Victorian society worried about the threats of social disorder, over-population, disease, and the maintenance of Empire. Poverty, crime and the threat of social disorder would be subjugated by offering the working classes a pattern to live by which promised opportunities for advancement. The middle-class domestic living arrangement became the ‘norm’ and female sexuality became the basis on which institutional practices arising from a division of social, economic and political rights were founded, and economic and imperial superiority maintained.

The work of the newly recognised world of science was enlisted to legitimise hegemonic ideas about women; the home and family and “women’s social dependence on men was increasingly justified by... biological difference” (Poovey, 5). The development of the notion of ‘separate spheres’ was a crucial part of the ideology relating to the role and place of women in nineteenth-century society, away from the competitive business world. In her book *Uneven Developments*, Poovey illustrates the creation of the domestic ideal that

supported the middle-class economic model by linking morality to a figure immune to and separate from self-interest and competition. By exploring the way that biomedical discourses asserted that women were “dominated by their ability to spontaneously ovulate... which made sexual activity less important and increased the importance of maternal instinct” (Poovey, 7), Poovey shows how fallenness was often aligned with deviant maternity. Matus suggests that the question of “what makes a mother” is one with which the narrative of *Adam Bede* is “consistently concerned” (Matus, 168). She argues that “the diversity of mothers and mothering testifies to the novel’s interest in maternal relationships” (Matus, 168/169), asserting that *Adam Bede* challenges the hegemonic notion that mothering is woman’s natural role. Nina Auerbach also argues that Eliot’s representation of Hetty argues against the prevailing Victorian assumption that woman’s natural role is motherhood by ironically equating her with lush and fertile nature – “like Hetty, nature is an indifferent mother” (Auerbach 1980, 177).

The complexity and instability of the objectified and sexualised image of Victorian woman is demonstrated by Jill Matus who explores the “ways that biomedical writing produced accounts of differences among women even as it insisted on what was essential to all women” (Matus, 22). Matus identifies two dominant models: “woman as lesser or imperfect man, and woman as radically different from man and specialised for a particular destiny because of their reproductive physiology” (Matus, 23). In her study Matus emphasises the expediency of these conflicting representations, which makes a shift between the two a matter of social, political and cultural convenience, facilitating surveillance and repression. Both Matus and Levy suggest that this application of sexual instability authorised ways of defining differences among women of different classes, and those of different nationalities and races. “The feminine ideal was represented as a desirable and unsurpassable goal to which all women would *naturally* aspire” (Nead, 24, my italics), while to doubt or

argue against this assertion was at once to be identified as unnatural, deviant, and unwomanly.

In Victorian society the fallen woman was defined against a feminine ideal, 'The Angel in the House', whose role was to unselfishly dispense "love and moral guidance" (Adams, 129). Similarly the seducer is invariably characterised as representing a declining aristocratic heritage in opposition to the middle-class gentleman who exemplifies "inward fortitude, self regulation and a sense of duty" (Adams, 129), confirming hegemonic middle-class assumptions about the corrupt upper classes. In her book *Between Men*, Eve Sedgwick offers a theory of sociological change in the fallen-woman novel where an "aristocratic male hands over his moral authority to a newly bourgeois male over the sexually discredited body of a woman" (Sedgwick, 157). The female victim facilitates the exchange of power in the nineteenth century, from the aristocracy to the middle-class: a literary plot which mirrors the political reality of historical gender and class relations. In *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* the seducers, both symbolic representatives of the aristocracy, are rendered physically and socially impotent and the heroes assume moral and social power.

Although it is by no means clear that in reality the working classes cut adrift their fallen sisters and daughters, the imperatives of middle-class hegemony demanded that in fiction the fallen woman became a shameful outcast from society and family: despite the evidence gathered by Acton – whose research specifically challenged the theory – and other Victorian social commentators, that fallen women, including prostitutes, often married and "re-entered respectable society" (Acton, 73). Nina Auerbach has described the "absolute transforming power of the fall" in Victorian representations maintaining that "generally the fallen woman must die at the end of her story...because death [is]...the only honourable symbol of her fall's transforming power" (Auerbach 1980, 161). She is frequently portrayed as a wanderer and an object of the male gaze, denied the shelter of her 'proper' sphere because of her contaminating presence. Not only did the fall demand that the woman be

driven out of her family but also her family was frequently destroyed as a result of her actions, by despair and shame, death and social ostracism. Regardless of the imperatives of Victorian social reformers who sought to methods of rehabilitation, in literature there was no possible redemption.

It is clear that there are many links between the medical, scientific, legal, sociological, anthropological, literary and visual discourses of the nineteenth-century, which contributed to the various representations of fallenness. As Acton reminds us, the fallen woman story was part of a traditional narrative stretching back to the Bible itself, however the application of the story in nineteenth-century fiction was influenced by a specific range of Victorian anxieties and concerns.

Artists extended the audience for the notions of gender claimed in biomedical and sociological writings, underpinning, justifying and romanticising gender relationships, and playing a prominent role in creating and confirming the myth of the fallen woman. As a method of representation, illustration functions as a discourse in its own right and must be considered beside the rest. Visual imagery was very powerful in a society where many were illiterate and where illustration was an important accessory to the written word. The influence of illustration and painting on the creation of the mythology of the life and death of fallen women in the Victorian age is one of the questions that Lynda Nead explores in *Myths of Sexuality* where, as Nead argues, the images themselves came to be “called forth as evidence and assumed the status of truth” (Nead, 177). Fallen women became a popular subject in both high and low art, combining the contemporary fascination with female themes and the desire to reflect everyday life in art. A complicated language of symbols and signs evolved which made the public pictorial representation of fallenness acceptable and respectable. The narrative constructed reinforced the downward progression of fallen women often portrayed as being caught between two options: vice or death. Depictions of outcast women, forlorn families and contrite victims became part of a tradition of Victorian narrative painting. In

1858, for example, Augustus Egg exhibited a trilogy called “Past and Present”, which depicted the catastrophic consequences of a middle-class woman’s infidelity in three dramatic and theatrical paintings which employ many of the images which were central to the conventional narrative: arches, bridges, water, helpless children and prone bodies. The seducer is usually absent from the majority of visual representations of fallen woman, although he is sometimes suggested as an ominous shadow: the shame and consequences of the fall rested firmly with the woman and it is her misery that is most commonly portrayed.

The prone form of the fallen woman, whether dead or alive, came to encapsulate her entire narrative: the ‘fall’, her subsequent shame and isolation, and her usual end. Another symbol of fallenness commonly employed by visual artists and authors of the Victorian era to emphasise the despair and lack of alternatives available to fallen characters was suicide by drowning. “It was as though women drowned in their own tears or returned to the water of the womb” (Gates, 135), as Gates puts it, purified through their watery death, a kind of re-baptism into moral society. Suicide was a powerful part of fallenness mythology because it reinforced the ‘downward-path’ rhetoric even as it underlined the instability of the representation of fallenness: eliciting a sympathetic response by illustrating the ‘pure’ fallen woman whose guilt and desperation were so great that she would rather die than become a prostitute, the possibility of redemption through death was suggested. Throughout the nineteenth century women consistently had a suicide rate lower than that of men but most Victorians believed what they wished to believe about the frequency of female suicide. In the main they did so because they wanted and expected suicide, like madness, to be a “female malady” and this attitude was reinforced by popular imagery and literature (Gates, 125).

Although sexual non-conformity and seduction were common themes in art and literature before the nineteenth century a particular and specific narrative of fallenness was constructed in the Victorian novel where fallen characters became “a historical and distorted projection of social subjectivities” (Anderson, 19) reflecting “anxieties about class which

were refracted through gender issues” (Jones, 315). What John Blackwood called “the usual sad catastrophe”,⁴ was unambiguous in the Victorian context. He was referring to the “inexorable consequences” (Anderson, 18) determined by the loss of chastity in a woman. The fate of the fallen woman was embedded and widely articulated in Victorian society, she was doomed to a relentlessly downward path, of sin, suffering and death

The Victorian fascination with female sexuality has generated a great deal of historical and literary scrutiny; the body of knowledge is extensive and diverse and shows a distinct evolution over time. Contemporary reviewers often deplored the presence of fallen characters in nineteenth-century fiction as “unspeakably shocking” rendering the novels unfit for women to read.⁵ During the early decades of the twentieth century critics were inclined to place novels which highlighted fallen-women into a genre they called ‘social problem’ literature, defining the fallen woman not as a sexualised character but as a victim of the Victorian city and the rise of the industrial state. Authors were identified as passionate reformers who used their art to identify economic, political and social crises, which necessitated the reorganisation of society. Arnold Kettle sees both Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens in this light, “writing for the conscience of the middle class” (Kettle, 172).

Early feminist literary criticism, by contrast, focused on the sexual ‘double standard’, which was synonymous with notions of Victorian prudery and the repression of women, leading to a re-evaluation of the place of the fallen woman in literature as the victim of masculine society and male authors.⁶ Feminists criticised Dickens for his cloyingly sentimental and one-dimensional female characters while condemning George Eliot for “sanctioning the norm and making it normative” (Austin qtd in Barrett, 177).

More recent critical debate, influenced by social constructionism and the work of Foucault, concentrates on the way that representations of sexuality were generated in the nineteenth-century to facilitate and maintain middle-class hegemony.⁷ These studies show how Victorian discourse, by attempting to establish and identify ‘normal’ behaviour based on

a masculine middle-class ideal, objectified and sexualised women. The growth and pervasive influence of middle-class attitudes and values as articulated through the social, economic and medical discourses ensured that the fallen woman became a central concern in Victorian literature because of the threat she posed to the concept of the moral family.

The representation of fallenness in the Victorian novel commonly utilised silence and banishment as methods of removing the fallen woman from the centre of the narrative, leaving the emotional core of the story centred on the anguish of the extended family, especially male relatives. Staves demonstrates how fallen narratives primarily address masculine concerns, particularly a father's loss of his daughter and the death of the family, by placing the primary focus on masculine reaction to the fall. The fallen narrative confirms hegemonic values through "scenes of fathers weeping over the loss of their daughters, of fathers pining away with grief, and tearful scenes of final reconciliation when the errant daughter comes home repentant" (Staves, 120). This emphasis on the sanctity of the family accentuates the need for female dependence and women as "weaker vessels who must be protected" (Mitchell, 13).

The theories of autonomy and agency explored by Amanda Anderson in *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces* can be applied to both *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede*. Anderson argues that the fallen woman is reified in Victorian literature because of the fears she embodies or inspires about agency, self and society and the formation of individual character. Anderson asserts that Dickens perceived the fall as "socially predestined, unavoidable because of poverty, a degraded environment, [and] diminished options" (Anderson, 68). Anderson shows how Dickens uses the diminutive 'little' to foreshadow Emily's doom while Steerforth's name calls attention to his agency, and David Copperfield's ability to determine his own future is specifically emphasised by containing his progress within three different "versions of fallenness" (Anderson, 94). The representation of seducer and hero in *Adam Bede* also contrasts and emphasises the masculine agency of seducer and hero in comparison

to Hetty's apparent predestination. The emphasis on the fallen woman in the Victorian novel, which emphasised her lack of agency – determined by her gender, class, age, and nature – “allows other forms of characterisation to appear less determined: if she's so trapped, the narrative logic implies, the protagonist and the other privileged characters must be free” (Anderson, 9). Emily and Hetty both fulfil this role in their respective novels by authorising and emphasising the development and social advance of the free eponymous heroes.

Nead, Poovey and Matus in their discussions of Victorian prostitution, the ‘great social evil’ of the nineteenth century, identify the process by which the pain and ugliness of public life came to be represented by women. Deborah Epstein Nord's study of the place of women in the Victorian city illustrates how women came to be associated with contagion, disease and death. She discusses the emphasis placed on the vulnerability of women outside the domestic sphere were sexualised as ‘public’ women in fictional narratives. Her discussion of Dickens asserts that he “creates a middle-class vision of the city which deploys female fallen sexuality as the container or sign of urban pain and degradation” (Nord, 81) where the prostitute threatens the health and survival of the middle class. In novels and “social and sanitary reform literature...the threat of disease from unsanitary urban conditions and spreading epidemics merges with the threat of disease and degeneration from exposure to infected female sexuality” (Nord, 83). This made the possibility of rescue and reintegration to society impossible for a middle class determined to maintain the superiority of the British race. The spectre of the prostitute, a “trope for the dangerous aspects of the human condition”, hovers threateningly over fallen characters in literature (Nord, 75).

The rendering of fallen characters in fiction, then, reflected the inconsistencies of Victorian biomedical discourse and the fears of middle-class society. Fallen women were portrayed as objects of pity and fear; victims of what James Eli Adams calls an “unease with male sexual aggression” (Adams, 129). This attitude commonly led to the representation of the seducer as a representative of a decaying aristocracy rather than the hegemonic middle

class. Men's power was often attacked in novels "bringing them to their knees with guilt and remorse" (Mitchell, 9). However the sins of the seducer did not mitigate the consequences for women and even when the fallen were portrayed as beautiful, innocent, uneducated girls the perceived immorality was not diminished because any admirable qualities were frequently set against particular "feminine vices: vanity, caprice, self-indulgence [and] artifice" which were seen as dangerous to middle-class society (Anderson, 41). Although the Victorians struggled to resolve the woman 'problem' and the definition of woman was often paradoxical and unstable, the fate of the seduced fallen woman was clearly understood and widely articulated: she was doomed to a relentlessly downward path, from temptation and fall, to decline and death.

Understanding the place of the novel as part of the discourse of gender in the nineteenth century is crucially important to the study of the fictional fallen woman. Victorian medical, social and scientific writings were generally by and for men, aimed at and disseminated to a specific audience concerned with the problems of the age, as defined by men. Although a significant proportion of the discourse was concerned with the role of women in society, women were rarely consulted or informed about discoveries and findings that determined their nature and character and constrained their lives.⁸ As these discourses were disseminated they were modified for public consumption and picked up in popular literature and fiction, which "popularised the suppositions about the family, gender and desire that the social sciences discovered" (Levy, 17-8). By extending the audience for these ideas the novel carried out the hegemonic work of underpinning, justifying and romanticising gender relationships. For the newly literate, socially ambitious working class, fiction offered education about manners and morals and often celebrated class advancement by characters whose virtue brought reward, while women isolated in the home were provided with confirmation of moral values by creating a shared background and outlook (Mitchell, 2). The sexualised fallen woman came to symbolise many of the concerns about social disorder in

Victorian discourse and it was inevitable that she would also become a vitally important element in fiction where the mythology of fallenness became a punitive metaphor and a symbol of the double standard enshrined in the hegemonic, masculine ideal Victorian world.

At first glance the fallen woman narratives contained in the novels *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* are indistinguishable from each other and a dozen others. A simple country working-class girl has an illicit sexual relationship with a man who is her social better and whom she ought to realise will never marry her; suffers and ultimately dies. However a detailed examination of each novel reveals differences in style and significance through the emphasis placed on different elements of the conventional narrative. In the following chapters, the representation of fallenness in *David Copperfield* (Chapter 2), and *Adam Bede* (Chapter 3), is analysed, beginning with a discussion of the author's background and situation at the time the novel was written, followed by an account of the form, genre and narrative style of each novel. The balance of each chapter is organised under the headings "The Fallen Woman", "The Seducer" and "The Hero", reflecting the main focus of the study which concentrates on the representation of fallen characters in comparison with the representation of the seducer. The concluding chapter (Chapter 4) uses the elements of the conventional fallen narrative – temptation, fall, decline and endings – as a basis to compare the two novels and address how the representation of fallenness in each stimulates a sympathetic response to the plight of the fallen woman. Chapter 4 also identifies and discusses similarities and differences in the representation of fallenness in these novels which might be attributed to author gender.

The mythology of the fallen woman became one of the motifs for the unease of the Victorian age. Her significance was articulated in social, medical and scientific discourses, which came to identify women as representative of the best and worst of Victorian society. Defined by her sexual lapse and knowledge, her life (and death) pre-ordained, the fallen woman was an outcast from society sexualised by the gaze of male scientists and authors who

wrote her into the fiction and discourses of the nineteenth century. The price of female sexual disobedience in Victorian literature and discourse was immeasurable and inevitable. She generally had no voice of her own because she was defined by her behaviour and convention demanded that she must remain a mute witness, an emblem of her action, which was “determining of identity” (Anderson, 49). Marginalised and silenced by society the fallen woman has become a central figure in gaining an understanding of Victorian culture: its desires, fears and obsessions.

¹ William Acton. *Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social & Sanitary Aspects, in London and Other Large Cities: with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of its Attendant Evils*. 1857. Ed. Peter Fryer. New York: Fredrick A Praeger Publishers, 1969. (23-4)

² In a letter to the *Lancet* in 1859 Acton supported the employment of unmarried wet-nurses. (qtd in Matus, 162).

³ *Ruth* by Elizabeth Gaskell is a significant exception; Ruth is the title character and dominates the central narrative.

⁴ John Blackwood in a letter to George Eliot about the early chapters of *Adam Bede*. (qtd in Jones, 307)

⁵ Interestingly Elizabeth Gaskell did not allow her own daughters to read *Ruth* (Mitchell, 40).

⁶ See: Martha Vicinus Ed. *Suffer and Be Still*, Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1972.

⁷ Eg: Anderson, Poovey and Levy.

⁸ See Levy, Chapter 2 and Poovey, Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

David Copperfield and the Narrative of Fallenness.

This chapter will explore the use of the conventional elements of the fallenness narrative in *David Copperfield* and attempt to identify the importance of this narrative to Charles Dickens' overall purpose for the novel. Firstly I will examine the preoccupations and philosophies of Charles Dickens, as illustrated by his writings and activities, at the time the novel was written. Secondly, I will explore the structure, form and narrative style of the novel in an attempt to identify how these elements are used to enhance and expand the significance of the fallen narrative in the novel, especially the use of a naïve first-person narrator and the impact and importance of the use of elements of fairy stories. Thirdly, I will examine how the construction of the fallen narrative in *David Copperfield* corresponds to and differs from the traditional fallenness narrative, how the depiction of Emily and other female characters aids the development of sympathy for fallen characters, and how the representation of the seducer and other male characters conforms to or challenges the accepted narrative. Lastly I will consider the hero and how the fallen narrative is used to develop a new notion of the qualities of a true Victorian gentleman.

Background

David Copperfield by Charles Dickens was first published in monthly serial parts from May 1849 to November 1850. During this period the bleak social outlook for the fallen woman in Victorian society was at the front of the author's mind because of his close and active association since May 1846 with Urania Cottage, a charitable enterprise which had been established to 'rescue' prostitutes who wanted to make a new beginning (Slater, 1986, 341). Dickens' involvement in Urania Cottage included domestic minutiae: he settled how the house should be furnished and arranged; how the women would be dressed; how staff were selected; and how inmates were recruited. Most significantly, Dickens was closely

engaged with the establishment of the culture and philosophy of Urania Cottage which was specifically intended to emulate “an innocently cheerful family” (Slater, 1986, 342) where the inmates spent their time in domestic training: “order, punctuality, cleanliness, the whole routine of household duties - washing, mending, cooking” (Collins, 107). In *An Appeal to Fallen Women*, a leaflet published by Dickens intended for distribution to women taken into police custody, he outlined the aims of the enterprise which was to enable women whose “conduct shall have fully proved their earnestness and reformation, to go abroad where in a distant country they may become the faithful wives of honest men and live and die in peace” (Storey and Fielding, 698-9). The Urania Cottage philosophy was generous and sympathetic compared to other similar institutions, which were more punitive and religiously based. In a letter he wrote to the philanthropist Angela Burdett Coutts, the principal benefactor of the home, Dickens explained the reasoning behind his philosophy: “in the generality of cases it is almost impossible to produce the penitence which shall stand the wear and tear of this rough world without hope – worldly hope – the hope of at one time or other recovering something like the lost station” (qtd in Slater, 1986, 342). Dickens sincerely believed that prostitutes, “ruined temples of god” (Dickens, *The Haunted Man*, 56), were inwardly tormented by shame and remorse and eager to escape their lives of degradation and dishonour. He was determined that at Urania Cottage they would be treated with dignity and provided with the opportunity to retrieve their character.

During the period when he was writing *David Copperfield*, then, Dickens was working regularly in an enterprise that espoused a viable alternative to the conventional narrative of inevitable ruin. Dickens’ aims for Urania Cottage, based on the possibility of rescue and reform, are reflected in the novel’s depiction of Emily and Martha who articulate a desire for redemption. Dickens explicitly linked his concern for the reclamation of fallen women with his characterisation of Little Emily in a letter to William de Cerjat written in December 1849:

I had previously observed much of what you say about the poor girls. In all you suggest with so much feeling of their return to virtue being cruelly cut off, I concur with a sore heart. I have been turning it over in my mind for some time, and hope in the history of little Em'ly (who *must* fall –there is no hope for her) to put it before the thoughts of people in a new and pathetic way, and perhaps do some good. (Storey and Fielding, 682)

This letter and Dickens' involvement in Urania Cottage during this period supports the theory that Emily and Martha had their genesis in the women inmates of Urania Cottage and that there are correlations between the atmosphere of hope that he attempted to create in the administration and philosophies associated with Urania Cottage and the promotion of rescue and redemption in the novel.

In spite of the evidence collected by social investigators such as Acton and Mayhew, and Dickens himself in his interviews with the inmates of Urania Cottage, which suggests that many prostitutes were happy with their lives and the financial and social freedom they derived from their lifestyle, the fallen characters in *David Copperfield* are portrayed as penitent and aware of their disgrace. Given Dickens' close involvement with Urania Cottage it is not surprising that versions of fallenness play a central role in the novel and that David Copperfield "achieves a consolidation and recovery of self largely by defining himself against versions of fallenness" (Anderson, 94). The portrayal of a variety of fallen characters aids the construction of a fictional environment that facilitates the exploration of the themes of *David Copperfield*, including the loss and betrayal of innocence and the danger that comes from the "mistaken impulses of an undisciplined heart" (Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 564)¹.

Dickens' exploration of the plight of fallen women is consistent with his belief that many personal problems were rooted in the organisation of society (Kettle, 172). A strong sense of social purpose was an integral part of Dickens' early work: each of the seven novels before *David Copperfield* highlights some aspect of society crying out for reform and he had a reputation as a social reformer. Dickens' early novels also played a part in creating and

maintaining the acknowledged narrative of fallenness but in *David Copperfield* there is evidence of a conscious effort to modify the discourse, which proscribed exclusion and altered the accepted downward trajectory of temptation, fall, decline and death by enabling Martha and Emily to begin their lives again, through means identical to that offered to the inmates of Urania Cottage. The conventional narrative of the fallen woman's doom overshadows Emily's story where it is used to build the characterisation of Emily as spoiled, vain and desirous of social advancement, while the fully realised and detailed characterisation of Steerforth modifies the narrative by placing responsibility on the culpability of seducers, suggesting that fallenness is sanctioned by a society that venerates and tolerates dissolute masculine behaviour. Many elements of the traditional narrative of female fallenness are omitted from Emily's characterisation and relocated in the depiction of Steerforth, the seducer. This approach, combined with the presentation of a variety of fallen characters in *David Copperfield*, authorises a reinterpretation of the dominant cultural belief in the fixed and determined nature of the sexual fall.

Form, Genre and Narration

Emily's story exists in a novel about a young man making his way in the world; she is one of the hazards he must overcome. Fallenness is thus part of the narrative against which David's identity as a hero is created in a novel, which can be seen as a Bildungsroman. A novel of 'education' or 'formation' a Bildungsroman traces the spiritual, moral, social, psychological development and growth of the protagonist from childhood through varied experiences into maturity and the recognition of his identity and role in the world: a "conscious attempt by the part of the hero to integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by his experience" (Buckley, 13). There are broad conventions and traditions apparent in the Bildungsroman. An orphan or fatherless child of some sensibility grows up in the country. Because his first schooling is inadequate and suggests options not available in his present

setting, he leaves the restrictive atmosphere of home to make his way independently in the city – usually London – where his ‘real’ education begins. This usually involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing and one exalting, demanding that he reappraise his values. The process of maturing is long, arduous, and gradual, consisting of repeated clashes between the protagonist's needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by society. Eventually, the spirit and values of the social order become “manifest in the protagonist, who is then accommodated into society” and the novel ends with an assessment by the protagonist of himself and his new place in that society (Buckley, 17-21). In the “Victorian version one of the recurrent themes is the making of a gentleman” and therefore the acquisition of money is an important component in the English Bildungsroman (Buckley, 20-21). A sub-genre of the Bildungsroman, into which *David Copperfield* fits, is the Künstlerroman (‘artist-novel’) representing the development of a novelist or other artist into the stage of maturity in which he recognises his artistic destiny and achieves mastery of his craft. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, published in 1847, is generally accepted to have been influential in Dickens’ decision to write *David Copperfield*, which also includes elements of autobiography relating to Dickens’ early life and childhood experiences.

The Bildungsroman form presented a “particular challenge to the master of multiple plots” because “everything in the novel must ultimately relate to the hero” (Storey, 40). The structure of *David Copperfield* contributes to the understanding of David’s journey to maturity through the juxtaposition of comedic and tragic storylines, doubling of characters and situations, contrasts of good and bad behaviour, and positive and negative influences. Anderson’s contention about David “defining himself against versions of fallenness” is borne out in the structure of the novel where David’s ‘rise’ is measured against the ‘fall’ of many of the other major characters, male and female.

David Copperfield is written in autobiographical form, purporting to be the story of the main character looking back over his life; the voice is that of the protagonist who tells the

story as a first-person narrative affording the opportunity to be both helpless subject and powerful agent, with the aid of hindsight. This technique allows David Copperfield's story to be told through a child's eyes while simultaneously deriving benefit from an adult perspective. Dickens deliberately establishes an authentic portrait of how a child may think and feel, a retrospective view of childhood with the adult David intruding into the story filling in gaps and allowing for different interpretations of character and plot. Young David is a 'naïve hero' whose simplicity leads him to persistently misinterpret events and characters allowing the knowing reader to comprehend the reality (Storey, 23-5). By presenting the narrative from the point of view of the young and inexperienced David, Dickens creates a narrative that is unreliable: leading and misleading the reader simultaneously. This technique creates many of the elements of tragedy, suspense, tension and humour in the novel. In the second chapter of *David Copperfield*, "I Observe" the adult David, sets the mood: "if it should appear from anything I may set down in this narrative that I was a child of close observation, or that as a man I have a strong memory of my childhood, I undoubtedly lay claim to both of these characteristics" (15-16). Dickens wants to recover more than David's memories; he wants to recreate the feeling of being a child - "What else do I remember? Let me see" (16) - and convey those feelings in the novel. The mistakes and errors that David falls into through his childishness and innocence are an important ingredient in the major themes of the novel. Recognition of the "first mistaken impulses of an undisciplined heart" (564) is the most important lesson that David learns in his journey to adulthood. Long before the development of modern psychological analysis, *David Copperfield* shows how David's experiences and sorrows create the mature and responsible Victorian gentleman-author he becomes by the end of the novel.

One of the important influences on the development of the fictional novelist David Copperfield is the world of childhood literature. Dickens' belief in the ability of literature to "nurture the imagination" (Stone, 1979, 3) is celebrated in his characterisation of David.

Much of the imagery employed in *David Copperfield* is that of fairy tales, legends and storybooks. David's early life is described as a storybook idyll that vanishes when he becomes an orphan child with a wicked stepfather, after which he retreats into fiction, which becomes his "only and constant comfort" (52). Given this predisposition for stories and legends it is not surprising that Emily and Steerforth, and many of his early experiences, are described in the same terms as the stories that capture his imagination. The Peggotty boathouse is as charming as "Aladdin's palace, roc's eggs and all" (29) and the idea of living there is "romantic" (29) and "like enchantment" (32). Emily is romanticised and turned into a fairytale creature:

I am sure my fancy raised up something round that blue-eyed mite of a child, which etherealised, and made a very angel of her. If ...she had spread a little pair of wings and flown away before my eyes, I don't think I should have regarded it as much more than I had reason to expect. (36)

Thus the first Yarmouth visit is described wholly in fairy tale terms. On future Yarmouth holidays Emily is described as a "Fairy little woman" (128) and the wedding fantasy which completes the second visit could be directly from *Babes In The Woods*:

Ah, how I loved her! What happiness (I thought) if we were married, and were going away anywhere to live among the trees and in the fields, never growing older, never growing wiser, children ever, rambling hand in hand through sunshine and among flowery meadows, laying down our heads on moss at night, in a sweet sleep of purity and peace, and buried by the birds when we were dead! Some such picture, with no real world in it, bright with the light of our innocence, and vague as the stars afar off, was in my mind all the way. I am glad to think there were two such guileless hearts at Peggotty's marriage as little Em'ly's and mine. I am glad to think the Loves and Graces took such airy forms in its homely procession. (129)

David ends this day wishing “that a Lion serpent or any ill-disposed monster would make an attack upon us that I might destroy him and cover myself in glory” and “dreaming of dragons until morning” (130), longing for an opportunity to prove his devotion to Emily in an act of heroic glory. David’s use of innocent, fairytale images in these passages shows his youth and naivety compared to Emily’s more grown-up and knowing attitudes and point to David’s peril in misreading relationships. It is only when as an adult he recognises the extent and danger of his misreading and the naïve unreality of his expectations – “I loved my wife dearly, and I was happy; but the happiness I had vaguely anticipated, once, was not the happiness I enjoyed, and there was always something wanting” (593) – that David finally grows up. Significantly, storytelling remains a transforming power in David’s life and the means to make an honourable living.

Steerforth is portrayed throughout as a storybook hero, from the arrival of J Steerforth at Salem House school, which was “eagerly awaited” (76) because of the names carved on the gate “deep and often” (72), to his final appearance as an “active figure with long curling hair more conspicuous than the rest” (673) heroically waving the “singular red cap” while his life “hung by a thread” (674) in the storm off Yarmouth. At school David spends his nights as the “Sultana Scherezade” (82) compelled to tell stories to entertain Steerforth, who becomes a mythologised character associated with heroic stories told in the dark. The Scherezade image is important for two reasons, firstly because the child David is vaguely, uncomfortably aware that he maintains Steerforth’s patronage only as long as he can continue to entertain him. The adult David becomes a professional storyteller and Dickens himself was undoubtedly conscious of a parallel between himself as a novelist favoured by the public as long as he was able to keep them wanting to read the next instalment of his serialised narratives. Secondly the Scherezade reference is significant because it feminises David as storyteller compared to the heroic masculinity of Steerforth. David must break away from Steerforth’s influence and

validate the manliness of his chosen profession before he can reach his potential as an author and a gentleman.

David uses his narrative skills to introduce the dangerous Steerforth to the Peggotty family who are suitably amazed: “Peggotty said she would walk a score of miles to see him” (100). Emily is mesmerized, and her physical excitement is almost sexual: “her blue eyes sparkling like jewels, and the colour mantling in her cheeks” (125). Significantly since David has created a storybook quality to Emily’s life, he provides a hero ostensibly endowed with the ability to rescue Emily and her family. When the real Steerforth arrives his impact is no less impressive: “his easy, spirited good-humour; his genial manner, his handsome looks, his natural gift of adapting himself to whomsoever he pleased, and making direct, when he cared to do it, to the main point of interest in anybody's heart” (265); “how lightly and easily he carried on, until he brought us, by degrees, into a charmed circle” (271). Emily “looked, and listened, and her face got animated, and she was charming” (271) and even Mrs. Gummidge “that victim of despondency” said next day “she thought she must have been bewitched” (272). The basis of Steerforth’s irresistible charm is a magical ability to adapt himself effortlessly to any person or occasion. The adult David looking back over the years in full knowledge of Steerforth’s duplicity, maintains a warm memory of his allure:

There was an ease in his manner – a gay and light manner it was, but not swaggering – which I still believe to have borne a kind of enchantment with it. I still believe him, in virtue of this carriage, his animal spirits, his delightful voice, his handsome face and figure, and, for aught I know, of some inborn power of attraction besides (which I think a few people possess), to have carried a spell with him to which it was a natural weakness to yield, and which not many persons could withstand. (93)

The language used accentuates “enchantment”, charms and bewitchment. Steerforth’s ability to entertain and entrance his audience has an evil spellbinding influence on the imaginary

innocent children's Edenic garden that David has created of Yarmouth and provides the opportunity for his seduction of Emily.

Imagery connected to myths and legends continue to be an influence in the novel. Mr Peggotty's search for the fallen Emily is raised to the level of a heroic struggle, his travels become legendary: "when I came to a new village...I found they knowed about me" (497), and the search for Emily becomes the universal fairy-tale of the lost child spirited away by a bad fairy. Mr Peggotty's recitation of Emily's escape from Steerforth and her return to England are imbued with epic qualities and heroic feats. The narrative variant, which closes Emily's story with her restoration and rescue, has a bucolic, happily-ever-after quality. Emily and Steerforth are created in a world that is redolent of fairy tales and childhood imagination, a quality which creates a romantic and idealised view of Emily as an innocent victim and Steerforth as a wicked, charming, but ultimately false seducer. The use of a naïve narrator looking back on his childhood with "child's-eye vision" (Storey, 23) operates as a filter to the sordid reality of seduction and sanctions a sympathetic response to Emily's behaviour and ultimate rescue.

The Fallen Woman

It is apparent that Little Emily represents a development in Dickens' depiction of fallen women characters; his avowed purpose was to build an individual woman who would modify opinion and "do some good" (Storey and Fielding, 682). The fallen women of Dickens' early fiction – "emblems of suffering and social pain" (Nord, 68) – were mostly clichéd stereotypical characters who existed on the edge of the stories and society.² Because Emily is one of three characters in *David Copperfield* whose development from child to adult is recorded in detail³ – background circumstances, early education and temptations – her motivation is fully explained and justified and given a 'womanly' basis. This background information provides understanding of Emily's vulnerability to Steerforth's determined and

planned seduction, clearly signalling and expanding her victim status, and while Dickens uses most elements in the fallen narrative in his representation of Emily, he does much to mitigate them and create pathos by fully identifying her susceptibility to temptation.

Emily comes from a country working-class family; she is vulnerable outside her natural sphere and her seduction leads to the destruction of her family. Her abandonment propels her to London where she is at risk of becoming a prostitute. Although rescued and restored to her family Emily lives a “sorrowful”, penitent and saintly life (738), forever detached from society by her fallen status. However Emily’s portrayal also deviates from the conventional narrative of fallenness in that her desire for social promotion, to become a ‘lady’, has an appropriately womanly unselfish motivation: to raise her family from their poverty and protect them from the risks of fishing industry employment (made explicit by Ham and Emily’s orphan status) and although the family is broken up their dispersal is a direct consequence of their combined determination to reclaim Emily and restore her to their care rather than their great shame. Emily eludes death and emigrates with her Uncle to a new society where new social values are being established: “No one can’t reproach my darling in Australia. We will begin a new life over there” (620), establishing a variation of the fallen narrative, which coincides with the Urania Cottage philosophy, articulated by Dickens.

Critics of *David Copperfield* have made much of fallen Emily’s banishment from the novel, questioning Dickens’s stated objective. Literary convention and good taste required that after the fall the seduced woman was removed from society, and Emily is both banished and silenced long before her elopement. In *David Copperfield*, however, reader sympathy is maintained by placing Ham’s wretchedness and Mr Peggotty’s grief and determination to rescue Emily at the emotional centre of her story.⁴ Dickens also utilises melodramatic elements of the fallen narrative: when Emily speaks she does so in emotional outbursts (“I am not as good a girl as I ought to be” (292)), or in letters, stained by tears, full of contrition and guilt employing conventional images: “I am kneeling down to you...if I was to die tomorrow

(and oh, if I was fit, I would be so glad to die!) I would bless him and Uncle with my last breath” (500). One significant scene where Emily’s voice is heard is in her confrontation with Rosa immediately prior to her rescue. Emily says little, although goaded by Rosa’s anger and fury, but when she speaks she uses the language of the ruined woman: “I have deserved this, but it's dreadful! Dear, dear lady, think what I have suffered, and how I am fallen!” (610). This explanation conforms to the hegemonic belief in the motivation of the seduced maiden, and other firmly held ideas about the essential nature of women: “I was a weak vain girl” (612). This scene also makes explicit Rosa’s obsession and sexual passion for Steerforth and her jealousy and violent language generates sympathy for Emily.

Following the traditional fallenness plot Emily’s character is firmly determined early in the novel and her representation allows for little character development. The single opportunity for Emily to explain her hopes, dreams and motivation in her own words is when she is a very small child, aged six or seven, during David’s first Yarmouth visit. The instability of Emily’s depiction mirrors the inconsistencies used by Victorian society when attempting to illustrate the essential nature of women. Emily is called “little Em’ly” throughout the novel and often referred to as a baby; even after her sexual fall Mr Peggotty, Ham and David see her only in terms of a child: “when he talked of their old life in the boat-house... he mentioned Emily as a child. But he never mentioned her as a woman” (626). Much is made of her smallness, beauty and childlike qualities contrasted with her flirting, knowingness and “boldness”. While Emily is characterised as childlike the emphasis placed on her beauty suggests sexual danger: beauty in working-class women making them obvious targets for seduction. Emily’s rationing of kisses (30, 36), interpreted by the innocent David as diffidence, is clearly an indication of her development as a potential flirt and her understanding of intimacy as a transaction. This aspect of her representation is expanded during David’s second visit to Yarmouth when David wants to be consoled by Emily after his mother’s death but the “fairy little woman” she has become is an elusive “teasing”,

“coaxing”, “sly and shy”, “captivating”, “a cherry-lipped little puss” who “delighted in teasing me with her wild and childish whims” (123). Emily is no longer a ‘baby’ as evidenced by her “consenting and allowing me to kiss her” (128). David’s observation, that she had become “more of a little woman than I had supposed” (125), heightens and emphasises her danger because she has become a practised and determined tease:

with what a demure assumption of being immensely older and wiser than I, the fairy little woman said I was 'a silly boy'; and then laughed so charmingly that I forgot the pain of being called by that disparaging name, in the pleasure of looking at her. (128)

After David’s departure Emily continues her flirtation long-distance through Peggotty, whose letter contains the information that “Emily wouldn’t send her love but said that Peggotty might send it if she liked” (215). When David returns to Yarmouth with Steerforth for his third and momentous visit he catches a glimpse of her:

sitting at her work. I saw her, a most beautiful little creature, with the cloudless blue eyes, that had looked into my childish heart, turned laughingly upon another child of Minnie's who was playing near her; with enough of wilfulness in her bright face to justify what I had heard; with much of the old capricious coyness lurking in it; but with nothing in her pretty looks, I am sure, but what was meant for goodness and for happiness, and what was on a good and happy course. (262)

David’s assessment at this point seems to be mature and correct: Emily is about to announce her engagement to Ham, and what Mr Omer has defined as “waywardness” has ended; she is indeed on a “good and happy course”. Ironically David’s arrival with Steerforth is the catalyst for the re-emergence of her aspiration to become a lady.

At this point Emily’s character, motives and fate are fixed and determined and expressed through her flirting and waywardness as described by other characters in a context that helps to provide understanding and sympathy for Emily. Mr Peggotty relates the story of

Ham's patient courtship and his reward, while Emily's declaration of her intention to marry Ham reiterates her rebelliousness but points to her good intentions: "If you please, I am steadier now, and I have thought better of it, and I'll be as good a little wife as I can to him, for he's a dear, good fellow" (270). Ham's extreme distress and agony permeates the description of Emily's flight reflecting David's earlier thoughts about death and disgrace: "Oh, Mas'r Davy, think how she's run away, when I pray my good and gracious God to kill her sooner than let her come to ruin and disgrace!" (385). In a later scene explicitly intended as torment for the jealous Rosa Dartle, Littimer's subsequent account of Emily and Steerforth's illicit relationship dwells on Emily's admirable qualities. Littimer also emphasises Emily's horror and disgust at Steerforth's betrayal confirming the opinion of David who "think[s] the better of her for it" (570).

Class difference was an important element in the Victorian narrative of the fallen woman and while the fairytale qualities of Yarmouth life exist for David as a refuge from his troubled middle-class home, it underlines Emily's desire to escape the poverty and danger of a fisherman's life. Class differences are established early in the novel; this apparently conventional 'family' is not a family at all, and although David romanticises the boathouse as "like enchantment" (32) it would be clear to Victorian readers of Mayhew and Kay Shuttleworth that the small, cramped boathouse is a working-class dwelling representing moral danger, "an illicit mixture of bodies and sexes, a disordered space lacking appropriate boundaries" (Levy, 36). Juxtaposed with the imagery of fairy-tale narratives, then, Dickens also employs the language and imagery of social scientists who investigated the working classes and made judgements by making comparisons based on middle-class norms. David's introduction to Emily and the Yarmouth family is made among misinterpretations of relationships; as these are unravelled Mr Peggotty's goodness in assuming responsibility for a group of displaced people is underscored as is David's innocence and inexperience. Emily emphasises the disparity between the children, "your father was a gentleman and your mother

is a lady; and my father was a fisherman and my mother was a fisherman's daughter" (34), and although the children are presented as being of a similar age Emily is clearly more knowing and aware of the importance of class difference.

While upward social mobility was seemingly available to all through hard work and 'right' living, other more rapid means of advancement were discouraged especially among the female poor. Despite the emphasis that Dickens places on her love of home and devotion to her uncle – through her wish to save him from his dangerous occupation – Emily's sexual danger is manifest. The signs are clear: here is a child whose greatest desire is for social advancement as represented by "diamond buttons, nankeen trousers, a red velvet waistcoat, a cocked hat, a large gold watch, a silver pipe; and a box of money" (34). Love of fine clothes, social advancement and vanity were acknowledged female failings that were commonly assumed to lead to sexual compromise, a danger confirmed by the narrative observation of the older adult David who foreshadows Emily's certain tragedy:

little Em'ly springing forward to her destruction (as it appeared to me), with a look that I have never forgotten, directed far out to sea... there have been times since, in my manhood, many times there have been, when I have thought, Is it possible, among the possibilities of hidden things, that in the sudden rashness of the child and her wild look so far off, there was any merciful attraction of her into danger... There has been a time since when I have wondered whether, if the life before her could have been revealed to me at a glance, and so revealed as that a child could fully comprehend it, and if her preservation could have depended on a motion of my hand, I ought to have held it up to save her. There has been a time since – I do not say it lasted long, but it has been – when I have asked myself the question, would it have been better for little Em'ly to have had the waters close above her head that morning in my sight; and when I have answered Yes, it would have been. (35/6)

This passage employs hindsight and symbolism to convey that Emily is predestined to fall. The words “bold and fluttering” are repeated later in the description of the prostitute Martha, Emily’s threatening double. The passage also expresses the conventionally accepted understanding that death was a preferred alternative to sexual dishonour. Although the role of the devoted daughter risking all for her father is important to Dickens and one often repeated in his fiction, by emphasising Emily’s “bold, fluttering little figure” and her “sudden rashness” (35) her predisposition to take risks is foreshadowed. Emily’s care for her family is neither passionless nor sexless and is compared later in the novel to the daughterly devotion of Agnes Wickfield who would rather sink into genteel poverty, manual work, and disgrace than marry Uriah Heep to save her father. David’s observations suggest that Mr Peggotty’s worship and indulgence of Emily has contributed to her wilfulness, and are confirmed by Mr Omer whose judgement is that Emily is rebellious: “I’ll go so far as to say what I should call wayward myself, didn’t know her own mind quite; a little spoiled; and couldn’t, at first, exactly bind herself down” (262). The orthodox view that women should be controlled, restrained and trained for their role in life was particularly applied to working-class women and the fallenness narrative worked to legitimise this by emphasising the necessity of supervision.

After her reunion with her family Emily is removed from the narrative and Mr Peggotty relates her heroic struggle to return to England and her family: glimpses of her are obscured by veil and shadow. The final image of Emily establishes her as an emblem of penitent fallen-womanhood, “at her uncle’s side, and trembling on his shoulder... beautiful and drooping” (691). Martha, whose sin was greater, is permitted a happy marriage and a ‘home of her own’ while Emily is denied a happy ending because of her finer qualities of enduring sin and shame. Significantly Steerforth is also banished and silenced after the elopement, with other characters left to describe his actions and progress and in an unpredictable narrative shift some of the conventional elements of the fallen narrative are

transferred to Steerforth who dies the traditional death of the fallen woman, a point to which I will subsequently return.

Other Women

The depiction of Emily as fallen woman is expanded through comparisons and doubling with other women characters, a technique which Dickens frequently used in his writing. Emily makes her first appearance in the novel in the midst of David's misery over his mother's betrayal. The character traits emphasised are those which align with Clara Copperfield – innocence, childishness, and simple beauty – and David “replaces his love for his baby mother for worship of baby Emily” (Houston, 113). In an intimation of Emily's future danger, Steerforth is doubled and mirrored with Edward Murdstone, who will dominate and manipulate her as Murdstone dominates Clara. An important link established between Clara and Emily is that both are barely functional in household matters. Although much is made of Jane Murdstone's usurpation of her symbolic housewifely keys, Clara's part in domestic affairs is purely titular, while Emily's role in the Peggotty boathouse, despite her place as the daughter in a working-class household, is to sit on a locker and look like a “pretty toy” (36). The portrayal of both women is implicitly compared with the characterisation of the “little housekeeper” Agnes Wickfield: “a little basket trifle hanging at her side, with keys in it; ...[she] looked as staid and as discreet a housekeeper as the old house could have” (193). When Ham and Emily plan a home together it is Ham who has “took as comfortable a little house as you or I could wish to clap eyes on” and Ham who has decorated the house for baby Emily, “furnished right though, as neat and complete as a doll's parlour” (376), rather than Emily equipping the house in preparation for a grown-up life as Ham's wife. Domestic competence is a major indicator of female maturity in *David Copperfield*: Agnes, Clara Peggotty and Aunt Betsey are thrifty, prudent and rational in sharp

contrast to Emily, Clara and Dora whose innocence and youthful attitudes are equated with domestic ineptitude.

By contrast, Rosa Dartle generates reader compassion for Emily through her harsh and conventional attitude.⁵ As a middle-class woman she has escaped the sexual seduction that will be Emily's fate but she has been emotionally and physically disfigured by Steerforth's behaviour. The scar on her mouth frames and defines her just as the stigma of fallenness threatens to frame and define Emily. Despite the evidence that Steerforth has toyed with, hurt, scarred and abandoned both women, Rosa denies the resemblance – "I have come to look at you... I want to know what such a thing is like" – and rejects any suggestion of a shared experience: "what is there common between us?" (610) she asks. Rosa is the mouthpiece for the conventional belief that the fallen woman's fate should be suicide when she urges Emily to "take your flight to heaven" (613).

Emily's fall is not the only one portrayed in *David Copperfield*: her story is compared with other narratives of fallenness, and she is doubled with two other fallen characters, most noticeably Martha, her threatening alter-ego, and Annie Strong whose appearance and behaviour leads the young David and others to mistakenly imagine a sexual fall. Martha's entrance as a "bold and haggard and flaunting and poor" (278) shadow following Emily before her seduction is a warning to David, Emily and Steerforth about Emily's probable future, particularly as there are echoes of the young Emily ("bold, fluttering", (35)) in the adjectives used. Martha's appearance disturbs Steerforth ("what does it mean?" (279)), revealing the deliberately sinister nature of his pursuit of Emily and his campaign of seduction ("a strange thing that a beggar should take that shape tonight... I have been thinking something like it" (279)). David misreads Martha's condition, emphasising his innocence, while Steerforth is sexually aware and accurately identifies Martha as a prostitute. There is a subtle hint that Steerforth might have a conscience but it is overridden by his selfishness,

explicit in the discussion and word play with Miss Mowcher in a scene that follows immediately after Martha's appearance (280/281).

Martha's early role in the narrative is as a dramatic index of Emily's potential future. She is a stereotypical prostitute whose life will end in despair without intervention. Her story suggests the classic narrative of sin, suffering and death, as she explains to Mr Peggotty and David when they find her in London on the banks of the Thames contemplating suicide:

‘Oh the river...it's like me...it comes from country places where there was once no harm in it – and it creeps through the dismal streets defiled and miserable – and it goes away, like my life, to a great sea that is always troubled – and I feel that I must go with it!’ (581)

This episode illustrates the accepted and expected end to the seduced and abandoned woman's narrative, a representation frequently used in popular Victorian culture. The drowned fallen woman was one often reinforced by statisticians, social commentators, artists and authors. Hablot Browne's illustration for *David Copperfield* entitled "The River" (Part XVI, August, 1850) shows Martha staring out into the river, one toe in the water, with a ruined vessel jutting out behind her and St. Paul's dome in the background. The illustration uses many of the symbolic features common to the iconography of the fallen woman and in this case reinforces the role of the rescuers, David and Mr Peggotty, saving Martha from the usual watery fate of prostitutes.

This narrative reminds readers of the doomed future which awaits Emily if she makes her way to London, which was known for corruption, pollution, and prostitution euphemised in the Victorian lexicon as the "Great Social Evil". It also serves to suggest two certain features of Emily's probable future – prostitution and death – heightening the tension and drama of Mr Peggotty's search for her. David and Mr Peggotty know that Emily is "like to ...make her own poor solitary course to London" (583) and they furnish Martha with an honourable assignment: to seek out the lost Emily and save her from her certain fate, thereby

effectively rescuing both women. In a clever reversal of the fallen narrative it is Steerforth who drowns; he is discovered on the beach in the characteristically prone position of the fallen: “among the ruins of the home he had wronged – I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at School” (675). This description echoes another popular image, that of the poor fallen girl dead on the doorstep of the family home, reinforced by Mr Peggotty’s report that after her return to England Emily wished she might “crawl to the old doorstep, in the night, kiss it, lay my wicked face upon it, and there be found dead in the morning” (619). Placing the seducer in this pose reinforces his culpability and significantly modifies the expected narrative.

The creation of Martha, whose explicit role in the novel is to rescue Emily from prostitution and death, is one of the means by which Dickens attempts to “do some good” for fallen characters (Storey and Fielding, 682), through emphasising the importance of woman-to-woman rescue. Emily helps Martha, who rescues her in return; Dickens’ notation in the plan for number XVI is: “Emily to be the means of her redemption” (Stone, 173). Most other women characters, including Clara Peggotty, Mrs Gummidge and Aunt Betsey, are sympathetic and helpful to Martha and Emily after they are recovered and restored to the family. The quiet, womanly philanthropy displayed by Agnes in her secret visits to Emily aboard ship prior to embarkation suggests the real life example of Angela Burdett Coutts, who financed Urania Cottage. This is a radical ‘new’ solution to the challenge of fallenness, because of the accepted wisdom about the contaminating effect of fallen characters, which demanded that women especially had to avoid any kind of contact with them. Dickens is here modifying the narrative of fallenness by seeking to alter the conventions, and facilitate “the return to virtue” through the exercise of womanly sympathy (Storey and Fielding, 682). The illustration of female compassion and support for Emily and Martha in *David Copperfield* challenges the conventional stance articulated by Mrs Steerforth, who blames and characterises Emily as “a designing enemy” (573), and by Rosa Dartle whose display of

poisonous hatred greatly enhances the development of reader sympathy for Emily. Rosa reflects and articulates the hegemonic view of fallen women, but because she is also portrayed as jealous, vindictive and prejudiced, her attacks on Emily are irrational and unnecessarily violent and passionate. Seemingly unconscious of the brand of her own facial scar which marks her as another of Steerforth's victims Rosa declares: "I would have her branded on the face, dressed in rags and cast out into the streets to starve" (402). Emily makes a direct appeal for a different social response to fallen characters: "have some mercy on me! Show me some compassion or I shall die mad!" (611). By contrasting Agnes' gentle support of Emily with Rosa's malevolence Dickens makes a case for a new and radical alteration of the fallen narrative, authorising female intervention by the virtuous woman.

Opinions expressed by morally secure female characters are an important means by which Dickens creates sympathy for Emily. Two significant characters, Agnes and Clara Peggotty, convey compassion through their support for Mr Peggotty and their unobtrusive support of the recovered Emily. Aunt Betsey's attitude is realistic but not harsh matching her rational characterisation: "Don't talk to me about poor, she should have thought about that before she caused so much misery...I don't know where these wretched girls expect to go to" (428). Miss Mowcher's revelation that Steerforth's seduction and betrayal of Emily was orchestrated and planned over an extended period clearly places the blame on men and generates significant sympathetic understanding for Emily. Minnie Joram cannot help but judge Emily but she also challenges the hegemonic viewpoint that the intrinsic nature of the fallen woman is forever changed by her sexual experience and any contact with her is contaminating:

'What will she ever do?' sobbed Minnie. 'Where will she go? What will become of her?... My little Minnie,' said Mrs. Joram, 'has only just now been got to sleep. Even in her sleep she is sobbing for Em'ly. All day long, little Minnie has cried for her, and asked me, over and over again, whether Em'ly was wicked? What can I say to her, when Em'ly tied a ribbon off

her own neck round little Minnie's the last night she was here,
and laid her head down on the pillow beside her till she was
fast asleep? The ribbon's round my little Minnie's neck now. It
ought not to be, perhaps, but what can I do? Em'ly is very bad,
but they were fond of one another. And the child knows
nothing!' (302)

Minnie wants to believe that Emily is still the same person despite her sexual fall, as compared to the traditional narrative that defines her as irrevocably changed and damaged.

The enduring power of the fallen narrative is illustrated by the suspicion that descends upon Annie Strong after a series of misinterpretations indicates that she may have compromised her marriage. Annie Strong's "fall" has little direct association with Emily. They never meet. She exists as a falsely accused pure woman whose story greatly affects the character of the maturing David. She also introduces the central theme of the novel, the danger from the "mistaken impulses of an undisciplined heart" (564). The clues which David reads as a sign of Annie's fall – her pallid complexion, distraction, and laying her head "on the Doctor's shoulder" (211) – bear a striking similarity to the descriptions that David provides of Emily's emotional state prior to her elopement: "creeping to the other side of her Uncle, [she] bowed herself, silently and trembling, still upon his breast" (377). The range and variety of female characters represented in *David Copperfield* raise questions concerning conventional Victorian assumptions about the nature of women and contemporary definitions of fallenness; it also suggests the dangers of misreading and raises the prospect of rescue and recovery.

The Seducer

The representation of Steerforth employs most of the standard features of the predictable seducer of the fallen narrative; however because he is a particularly influential character in the story of *David Copperfield* his characterisation is necessarily more detailed than that of the conventional shadowy, stereotypical seducer. Many aspects of Jack Maldon's

character mirror those underlined in the representation of Steerforth but David never doubts or suspects Steerforth because he is completely blinded by his love and admiration. Emily is clearly predestined to fall, while Steerforth apparently has “no veiled future” (79). As a man he has the power of self-determination. Even his name indicates agency, which is borne out in his carefully premeditated scheme to ensnare and ruin Emily. However as Emily’s story unfolds Steerforth is directly blamed – “the cause of her flight is too well understood” (581) – a clear departure from the hegemonic belief that women carried the greater part of the responsibility for sexual wrongdoing. William Acton challenged many of the cultural assumptions about fallen women when he wrote: “It cannot be denied by anyone acquainted with rural life, that seduction of girls is a sport and a habit with vast numbers of men, married ...and single, placed above the ranks of labour” (Acton, 199). Acton’s narrative lends credibility to the portrayal of the sporty, adventurous Steerforth who seeks challenges because he has no worthy outlet for his talents. Any evaluation of Steerforth’s character reveals a catalogue of belittling and demeaning behaviour towards every person he encounters, unrelieved by compassion or empathy.

However Steerforth is absolved from some responsibility for his vicious nature by the provision of a bad mother, who “gratified [him] from a child in every wish” (401) and whose “pampering of his pride and passion” (677) has created a young man careless of the feelings of others. Steerforth’s background and family circumstances are fully depicted. Rosa Dartle makes it clear that Mrs Steerforth has created his “false corrupt heart” (402) by her “pampering of his pride and passion” (677) and Steerforth himself feels the need of a “judicious father” (275). Making inadequate parental guidance a feature of both Steerforth and Emily’s upbringing emphasises the danger of spoiling children and the character flaws which result provide a deeper understanding of both characters. Two examples are sufficient to illustrate Mrs Steerforth’s bad mothering. The first concerns Steerforth’s place at Salem School where the pupils are either the sons of minor tradesmen – “the coal-merchant’s son” –

(78) or, like David and Traddles, are inconvenient family encumbrances, exiled from their families and educated negligently and cheaply. Salem School is a mean and cruel place and Mr Creakle a brutal, ignorant schoolmaster, whose primary motivation is financial. Mrs Steerforth's justification for Steerforth's placement at the school suggests that despite his advantages of birth and wealth, a loving mother and a comfortable home, Steerforth has been purposely placed in the school to cultivate his egotism and arrogance: "My son's high spirit made it desirable that he should be placed with some man who felt its superiority...we found such a man there" (254). The second example, pertinent to his treatment of women, relates to Steerforth's relationship with Rosa Dartle, a distantly related orphan who has lived in the Steerforth home for some years as companion to his mother. Mrs Steerforth has condoned her son's physical and emotional abuse of a vulnerable and dependent female in a situation where Rosa should have had an expectation of support and protection. This situation creates a direct comparison between the Steerforth and Peggotty families. Mr Peggotty assumed responsibility for Emily and has fulfilled his responsibility in admirable ways. Mrs Steerforth's treatment of her son and Rosa shows her to be a morally pernicious influence. Bad schools and schoolmasters, and the blighting consequences of bad parenting, are recurring themes often linked in Dickens' fiction. In the creation of Steerforth the themes are linked again, providing a deeper understanding of Steerforth's character flaws, which take his portrayal beyond the description of the usual seducer, emphasising the importance of environment and culture on developing character.

The expanded and detailed characterisation of Steerforth which include stereotypical elements of the seduction-narrative villain – aristocratic, charming, handsome and selfish – helps to account for Emily's attraction. Convention and morality prevented the detailed depiction of Emily's seduction however the long and detailed description of the conquest and subjugation of the feminised David ("Daisy") provides a fuller understanding of Steerforth's power, foreshadowing Emily's subsequent capitulation. Emily herself confirms this view of

Steerforth – “He used all his power to deceive me and I believed him, trusted him and loved him” (612) – as David did. Every description, which David offers as illustrative of Steerforth’s aristocratic heroic character, employs dramatic irony, simultaneously revealing Steerforth’s “false corrupt heart” (402) and David’s “natural weakness to yield” (93). Steerforth enslaves David early in their relationship: “I admired and loved him” (83). David is blind to his faults and stoutly defends even Steerforth’s most questionable actions. Steerforth is portrayed throughout the novel as a person of great personal charm and attractiveness who has the ability to adapt himself effortlessly to any person and occasion, playing:

a brilliant game, played for the excitement of the moment, for employment of high spirits, in the thoughtless love of superiority, in a mere wasteful careless course of winning what was worthless to him, and next minute thrown away. (266)

By treating David as his property, and calling him “Daisy”, Steerforth feminises David, revealing his disdain for women, which is reflected in his behaviour towards his Mother and Rosa, and foreshadows his treatment of Emily. The gullible David exults in Steerforth’s behaviour: “a dashing way he had of treating me like a plaything was more agreeable to me than any behaviour he could have adopted” (258). Significantly Steerforth is also banished and silenced after the elopement, and while reports of Emily emphasise her charity and nobility, reports of Steerforth draw attention to his base and dishonourable behaviour.

The Hero

Although many critics consider Steerforth’s seduction of Emily as acting out David’s desires, thus saving him from dishonour⁶ it is possible to imagine an alternative view: that Emily exists as a sacrifice to David’s future happiness by providing the means for David to see the truth about Steerforth’s “false, and corrupt heart” (402), thus saving him from a destructive influence more lasting and significant. While Emily’s relationship with David is

linked to fantasy, fairytale and childish pleasures, Steerforth is linked to adult dissipation and cynicism, potentially jeopardising David's rise to be the "hero of [his] own life" (6).

Dickens's number plans for *David Copperfield* established Agnes Wickfield as David's "good angel"; the opposite to Agnes is Steerforth, the "bad angel" and Emily is merely a convenient plaything created to facilitate the exposure of his true character. Steerforth is the major obstacle that David must overcome, not Emily.

Both Emily and Steerforth tease and confuse David, but Steerforth's rampant masculinity makes him a powerful contaminant and his treatment of David is more corrupting and manipulating. Most importantly David never sees through Steerforth. Near the end of the novel the adult David is still in mourning for "him who might have won the love and admiration of thousands, as he had won mine long ago" (692). David fails to grasp Steerforth's amorality, which is illustrated in every facet of his representation especially in Steerforth's behaviour towards others: from Mr Mell to Rosa Dartle and Emily. This makes him a very dangerous friend and one who cannot remain an influence in David's life while he is seeking to be successful and have a good character. It is impossible to consider that Agnes would ever welcome Steerforth to the happy home described in the final chapters of the novel.

David's desire to show off their relationship leads him to introduce Steerforth to the Yarmouth family. There are clues, which David ignores, that Steerforth's introduction in Yarmouth will be disruptive and dangerous. He agrees to travel to Yarmouth with David only after he hears of the "pretty little niece" (252), which coupled with his comments about the working classes: ("that sort of people...are not easily wounded" (253)), indicates a sinister arrogant purpose. Steerforth's eagerness to "see the natives in their aboriginal condition" (259) suggests an imperial expedition intended to occupy and enslave. David's naivety is frequently illustrated in his dealings with people of all classes and is exploited by Steerforth, providing him with the means and opportunity to seduce Emily.

For the same reason that it is important to recognise that Emily's fallen narrative exists in a novel about a young man making his way in the world, it is important to appreciate Steerforth's part in creating and defining the man that David becomes. While the Victorians struggled with the concept of defining the essential nature of women they were also endeavouring to classify the essential nature of man. The question "what makes a man" is central to *David Copperfield*. In the Victorian context the question becomes what makes a "gentleman"? The traditional class system celebrated and admired the upper classes, often overlooking bad behaviour and immorality. Steerforth's central role in David's life is vitally important confirming Sedgwick's argument that the fallen narrative is used as a "tableau of homosocial bonding in which an aristocratic male hands over his moral authority to a newly bourgeois male over the discredited body of a woman" (Sedgwick, 157), ratifying the transition of political and moral authority from the aristocracy to the middle-classes during the nineteenth century. The gentlemanly virtues most admired and celebrated in the novel are made manifest in the example of the working-class characters; the loving and faithful Mr Peggotty, the compassionate Mr Oram and the faithful Ham are clearly valued higher than those of the highborn Steerforth. Ambition and self-improvement become the guiding influences in David's life. After Aunt Betsey loses her money and he becomes the family breadwinner, David comes to realise that social status and wealth is not indicative of real character.

David, like Steerforth, is a fatherless boy who must invent himself as a man without the example of a father. He must do this through contacts with, experiences of, and examples from, other men and through his relationships with women. Male examples exist to threaten his hopes of becoming a moral gentleman and it is only after he is removed from Steerforth's influence that he is able to appreciate and recognise that storybook heroics and a buccaneering life are hollow virtues compared to Traddles' goodness and Ham's true manliness. Questionable men populate the novel; consummate villains like Mr Murdstone,

Uriah Heep and Jack Maldon, are negative exemplars and Littimer's hypocrisy and treachery are emphasised. Littimer is the snake, the procurer and deceiver who aids Steerforth in his loathsome plan. Positive male characters, although admirable in other respects, have flaws and weaknesses: Dr Stone's blindness, Mr Wickfield's alcoholism, and Mr Micawber's financial disasters make them inappropriate masculine role models for David. Mr Peggotty unwittingly nurtures Emily's vanity and flirtatious behaviour and Mr Spenlow fails to train Dora for her domestic destiny. These men are unsuitable examples for David and correspondingly the women they nurture are inappropriate partners for the emergent Mr Copperfield. The most important lessons David learns come from the significant women in his life – Aunt Betsey, Clara Peggotty, and Agnes, all consummate housekeepers – consequently the man that David becomes is formed in relation to middle-class domestic virtues. Many of the male characters in *David Copperfield* exist as warnings to David: specifically Heep, Maldon, Murdstone, and Littimer, these predatory and otherwise morally inferior men and Steerforth's seduction of Emily, together, establish the central value of autonomous, moral agency for the hero.

Conclusion

It seems clear from his letter to William de Cerjat that Dickens intentionally created the character of Little Emily in order to write about the fallen woman in a “new and pathetic way, and perhaps do some good” (Storey and Fielding, 682). Emily's story also provided an opportunity to disseminate philosophies about the potential of benevolent rescue which were linked to Urania Cottage, a counter to the usually catastrophic consequences of fallenness in Victorian society. Another impulse for the novel appears to have been the fragment of autobiography, which Forster published in his biography, *The Life of Charles Dickens* (1872-74). There are many well-documented similarities between Dickens' life and the story of a self-made man, the novelist David Copperfield.

The relationship between Emily and Steerforth has a significant influence on the development of the hero and their illicit relationship required plausible representation making it believable to the reading public. Therefore Emily's representation is enclosed within a Victorian seduction narrative, which was assumed to be fixed and immutable, in order to suggest possible variations. Emily was written to "fall": "[she] *must* fall – there is no hope for her" (Storey and Fielding, 682), and the hegemonic markers of beauty, class and vanity are employed to ensure credibility. Emily's initial representation had to be believable, providing her with motivation for her actions and her subsequent disappearance and silence act to maintain reader sympathy and understanding. Emphasis is placed on Emily's beauty, her orphan status and her outward display of reluctance. She is shown either clinging or crying and usually in the hegemonic pose of prone submission. When she speaks, her statements employ conventional language of the fallenness narrative – "dear lady, think...how I am fallen" (610) – or are melodramatic acknowledgements of her profound shame: "I'm not such a good girl as I should be" (292). Her early removal from the plot allows the sentimentality of the story to be maintained through the filter of Mr Peggotty's pathos and pain, and Miss Mowcher's explanation of Steerforth's duplicity and design makes it apparent that Emily's seduction was the consequence of a long and sustained conspiracy rather than sexual passion. Steerforth is portrayed as romantic and dashing, but flawed, with the charm and ability to deceive everybody, except the morally superior Agnes. The expansion of the usually shadowy seducer role accentuates the corrupting influence of blatantly base men in contrast to the conventional view of the contaminating power of the fallen, represented by Emily and Martha who are portrayed as innately pure and virtuous.

An important omission from the fallen narrative is that neither Martha nor Emily becomes pregnant, customarily the inevitable consequence of sexual surrender. The existence of a child, proof of fallenness, would render redemption and rescue improbable for these characters. The omission makes it possible for Dickens to achieve his goal of authorising

rescue. The most radical digression from the seduction narrative is that both Emily and Martha survive and emigrate to Australia where they live useful and fulfilling lives. Emily, portrayed throughout as sensitive and educated, becomes a domestic angel, “kiender worn; soft, sorrowful... timid a’most” (738), while Martha the former prostitute is honourably married, a concept which would have been appalling to many Victorian readers if she had remained in Britain where fears about the contaminating power of sexually experienced women were at their height. However the removal of Martha and Emily to Australia mitigates the threat of fallenness through extreme distance and illustrates the possibilities of the stated objectives of *Urania Cottage*.

An important divergence from the accepted fallen narrative implicit in Emily’s representation is in the emphasis placed on rescue and redemption. Rosa and Mrs Steerforth express society’s view of the condition of the fallen woman and they are portrayed as mistaken, flawed and irrational. The value of woman-to-woman rescue is emphasised by Agnes’ example, which discredits the theory of contamination and, far from being the source of ruin to Emily, Martha is ultimately the agent of her salvation, challenging society’s assumption about the determining nature of the fall. Martha’s rescue on the riverbank, on the verge of suicide, is the turning point of Emily’s story, a reward for Mr Peggotty’s determination to find Emily. Ham’s compassion and Mr Omer’s sympathy are presented as examples of true nobility and accentuate masculine agency, necessary to any real redemption.

Looked at dispassionately, David is not endangered by his relationship with Emily. The adult David’s return to Yarmouth coincides with the announcement of Emily’s engagement to Ham. Middle-class values made an engagement legally and socially binding for David but not to Steerforth whose aristocratic attitudes and upbringing and disdain for the lower classes demonstrate his lack of respect for social forms and behaviours. Steerforth’s attitudes and actions make him an unsuitable companion and mentor for an aspiring gentleman, and his death is essential to make David truly safe. The removal of the ‘bad angel’

ensures that David can live happily-ever-after in respectable middle-class domesticity with Agnes his 'good' angel, having rejected the threat from false and dangerous aristocratic values.

In a variation of the accepted narrative of fallenness, many of the conventional elements of the narrative are bestowed on both Emily and her seducer equally and those omitted from Emily's representation are explicitly employed in the representation of Steerforth. Steerforth is dangerously contaminating, he is banished from his home and the plot and when he drowns he meets the fate usually imposed on the fallen woman. In the masculine Victorian world of *David Copperfield* the example and influence of Steerforth is a threat to David's future respectability and happiness. He is a dangerous friend, one from whom David must escape. Emily's fall is necessary to ensure David's rise. Emily was conceived as an opportunity to show the plight of the fallen woman sympathetically and her representation is compassionate and sentimental, but because her story is enclosed within a narrative that celebrates the social and economic rise of a man, her story is not sensational, or central. Emily remains a generalisation, a symbol of a social evil, rather than an attempt to show the consequences of an individual woman's sexual fall.

¹ Charles Dickens. *David Copperfield*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1992. All subsequent references will be to this edition.

² Nancy, (*Oliver Twist*), Edith Dombey and Alice Marwood (*Dombey and Son*) are more central characters however there is little attempt to explain in specific detail the circumstances of their 'fall'.

³ David and Agnes are the other two.

⁴ Susan Staves. "British Seduced Maidens". *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14, Volume 2. Winter 1981, 120.

⁵ Rosa Dartle and Miss Murdstone have similar roles, creating sympathy for Emily and Clara, which underlines the alignment between the two women.

⁶ For example see Poovey, 8.

Chapter 3

Adam Bede and the Narrative of Fallenness.

This chapter will explore the use of the conventional elements of the fallenness narrative in *Adam Bede* and attempt to identify the importance of the narrative to George Eliot's overall purpose for the novel. Firstly I will examine the preoccupations and philosophies of George Eliot, as illustrated by her writing at the time the novel was written. Secondly I will explore the structure, form and narrative style of the novel in an attempt to identify how these elements are used to enhance and expand the significance of the fallen narrative in the novel, especially the influence of the first-person narrator and the impact and importance of the use of realism. Thirdly I will examine how the construction of the fallen narrative in *Adam Bede* corresponds to and differs from the traditional fallenness narrative, how the depiction of Hetty and other female characters aids the development of sympathy for fallen characters, and how Eliot uses the fallen narrative to explore the transforming power of experience on individuals and a wider rural community to promote "tolerant judgement, pity and sympathy" (qtd in Auster, pg 38). Fourthly, I will examine how the representation of the seducer and male characters conforms to, or challenges, the accepted fallenness narrative. Finally I will consider the hero and explore how the fallen narrative is used to suggest a new understanding of the qualities of manhood.

Background

Adam Bede, George Eliot's first novel, was originally intended for serial publication in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. However after owner, John Blackwood, expressed reservations about the sensitive and sexual nature of the story that was "very different from anything the magazine had carried before" (qtd in Uglow, 97) the novel was published on February 1st 1859 in three volumes. Blackwood's concerns about the sexual nature of the story were heightened by his anxiety that if George Eliot was revealed as the pseudonym for

the notorious Marian Evans who was living in an ‘irregular’ relationship with a married man, reception and sales of the novel would be negatively affected. Given the level of speculation and curiosity excited about the true identity of the author of Eliot’s first published fiction – the three short stories which comprised *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857-8) – and the inevitability of eventual exposure, it is remarkable that a woman notorious for her scandalous domestic life and considered as a fallen woman by Victorian society should opt for fallenness as the major theme of her first full-length novel. However critical response to *Adam Bede* was overwhelmingly positive and a second edition was published within a few months.

The main story line of *Adam Bede* was based on an Evans family story derived from Eliot’s Aunt who had:

visited a condemned criminal, a very ignorant girl who had murdered her child and refused to confess – how she had stayed with her praying, through the night and how the poor creature at last broke out into tears, and confessed her crime. My Aunt afterwards went with her in the cart to the place of execution, and she described to me the great respect with which this ministry of hers was regarded by the official people about the gaol. (Appendix to *Adam Bede*, 541)

Eliot expanded and adapted the material to explore many of the ideas, attitudes and philosophies that she had been developing as a critic, essayist and journalist in the *Westminster Review* and other mid-Victorian periodicals. These ideas and attitudes emphasised the need for realistic portrayals of real lives as the appropriate material for novelists. In “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists” (Pinney, 300), an article written by Eliot immediately prior to beginning her fiction career, she outlined a literary manifesto for her future writing. In it Eliot condemned the “frothy, the prosy, the pious or the pedantic” and made a plea for novelists to write about real people in real situations with “genuine observation, humour and passion” (Pinney, 324). *Adam Bede* does this with a gritty realism and explicitness that was applauded by most contemporary critics.¹ The resulting novel tells a

story familiar to Victorian readers, the “usual sad catastrophe” (Blackwood qtd in Ashton, 193) of the seduction and betrayal of a naïve country girl by a member of the gentry. In *Adam Bede* the fallen narrative is employed by Eliot to facilitate the social analysis of a traditional country community and to explore the development and expansion of sympathy to even unlikeable and selfish characters.

Form, Genre and Narrative

Eliot brought to her fiction writing “a breadth of knowledge of contemporary social and scientific theory unmatched by any of her peers” (Shuttleworth, ix) and took on the role of natural historian and passive observer in the writing of *Adam Bede*, illustrating a philosophy she had been exploring over a number of years. In a review of Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* Eliot wrote: “The truth of infinite value that he teaches is realism – the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature” (qtd in Ashton, 156). In *The Natural History of German Life* published in July 1856 Eliot further expanded the idea of truthful representation by giving art a moral function. Art, she suggested, should develop sympathy by:

extending our contact with our fellow man beyond the bounds of our present lot...Falsification here is far more pernicious than in the more artificial aspects of life. It is not so very serious that we should have false ideas about evanescent fashions – about the manners and conversation of beaux and duchesses; but it is serious that our sympathy with the perennial joys and struggles, the toil, the tragedy, and the humour in the life of our more heavily-laden fellow-men, should be perverted, and turned towards a false subject instead of the true one.
(Pinney, 270-1)

Eliot’s goal, then, was to integrate philosophical and aesthetic methods in fiction to inspire moral and social action. Furthermore Eliot’s belief in the power of the artist, and the capacity of art as a “mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow man

beyond the bounds of our personal lot” (Pinney, 271) was an important factor in her decision to write fiction. Eliot’s goal was uncomplicated: “The thing for mankind to know is, not what are the motives and influences which the moralist thinks *ought* to act on the labourer or the artisan, but what are the motives and influences that *do* act on him” (Pinney, 271). Eliot believed that this understanding was a necessary precursor to responding to Victorian concerns about social and political unrest. When she turned to writing fiction, then, Eliot had a literary ideal which she wanted to fulfil, based on her belief that the “man or woman who publishes writings inevitably assumes the office of teacher or influencer of the public mind” writing to articulate “higher ideals in social duty” (Pinney, 440 & 442).

One of the most widely read and intellectual women in Victorian England, Eliot brought to her writing an understanding of contemporary moral and social ideas and an enormous literary experience that is reflected in her first novel. Eliot herself identified the novels of Sir Walter Scott as one of the formative influences on her writing career: she first encountered them as a child and her references to, and quotations from, them continued throughout her life. Although the legacy of Scott is less obvious in her more mature fiction *Adam Bede* includes narrative elements – fallenness, suspected infanticide, legal punishment and a long lonely journey – similar to *The Heart of the Midlothian* (1818) reflecting the example of the author whom she “worshipped” (qtd in Bodenheimer, 244). The influence of contemporary poetry is also apparent. *Adam Bede* begins with an epigram from Wordsworth’s *The Excursion*, a poem which includes an account of a young mother buried beside her dead baby, “a virtuous woman in pure youth” who was “delivered to distress and shame” by a lover who broke his promise to her and abandoned her when she was pregnant (Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 554n).² References are made to *Lyrical Ballads* in Chapter Five of *Adam Bede* when Arthur Donnithorne refers to it in a way that reveals his intellectual and emotional immaturity, while Hetty’s description of her child as “a heavy weight hanging around my neck” (453), employs an image from Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”. Eliot’s

knowledge and understanding of classical literary forms and traditions, particularly Aristotle's *Poetics*, is also perceptible. The main story of *Adam Bede* is contained in the first five books, which correspond to the five acts of a play: the sixth book, the epilogue, was an afterthought not contemplated in the original plan. Although the main characters are very humble, defying Aristotle's insistence on the high status of the tragic hero, the magnitude of scale and influence and far-reaching consequences to individuals and the Hayslope community from the tragic events of the novel arouse the requisite pity and fear demanded by Aristotelian theory. In *Adam Bede* pathos and tragedy are examined and revealed, making it possible for readers to sympathise with and pity the human weakness of even wanton characters. Eliot's wide knowledge of scripture and biblical interpretation, her solid understanding of doctrinal differences between Methodists and Anglicans, and appreciation of religious oratory is also reflected in the novel. Despite her deep understanding, knowledge and study of religion Eliot was an agnostic, a thoroughly modern woman who studied and "engaged in active dialogue with contemporary scientific thought" (Shuttleworth, xi). One aspect of this scientific understanding is reflected in the psychological representation of fictional characters, which explains the effects of outward events on inward lives and demonstrates a conscious understanding of the role of heredity, experience and environment on character development.

There were then, many influences and traditions involved in the creation of *Adam Bede* combined with specifically Victorian concerns which Eliot wanted to explore. The misery of the forsaken woman is so prevalent in literature that it is difficult to make any case for a direct line of influence to *Adam Bede*: however if, as Gillian Beer asserts, Eliot set out to revise Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*, published in 1853, "her enterprise had to ...distinguish itself from common assumptions, as well as question *Ruth's* idealisation" by "find[ing] a means of realising, not aggrandising, the face of ordinary tragedy" (Beer, 59). Eliot does this by presenting Hetty Sorrel as a flawed and egotistical character, largely responsible for her

circumstances, but still worthy of sympathy and understanding. Eliot created Hetty's story from an historical case of female suffering, adapting and modifying it to fit her moral viewpoint, reinforced by her extensive knowledge of traditional stories and folklore, contemporary debates about the nature of women and the 'unnatural' crime of infanticide, and scholarly works of scientific and social theory (Jones, 306). Self-consciously literary and learned, Eliot's wide understanding of the moral, social and literary issues of her age, augmented by her creative powers, resulted in the creation of a novel that was a critical and commercial success and an important work in the development of the novel.

Eliot wrote stories intended to be detailed, realistic and sympathetic depictions of rural life and society, expounding a moral philosophy that could be applied universally in Victorian society. The third-person narrator of *Adam Bede* is explicitly depicted as a passive natural historian relating events and characters that are known to him and "gathered from Adam Bede, to whom I talked of these matters in his old age" (179). The methodology of science and natural history required the artist to be guided "not by theory or imagination but by concrete observation" (Shuttleworth, i). Consequently the narrator maintains a position of shared distance with the reader on the edge of the setting, frequently halting the narrative to chat to the reader to explain a situation and pose questions. Eliot attempts to provide "a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind" but admits that "the mirror is doubtless defective" (175), dramatising the "conflict between her desire to portray her characters as representatives of fixed types and her awareness that such typology cannot capture the complexity of process and change" (Shuttleworth, 30). Mirrors and other methods of judging personality based on external characteristics are shown throughout the novel to be faulty and distorting and there is a narrative ambivalence in this "faithful account" which allows that other interpretations of the situation are possible. For example in Hetty's characterisation, explorations of her personal motivation and shallow thinking sanction condemnation of her actions, and the language used to describe Hetty is frequently

harsh and blunt. The narrator's tone however is generally one of mild despair and exasperation and includes sympathetic observations: "God preserve you and me from being the beginners of such misery!" (389). As Kaminsky points out, "even though George Eliot obviously disapproved of the vanity of Hetty Sorrel, she recorded Hetty's suffering compassionately, communicating the universal human feelings inherent in her tragedy" (Kaminsky, 1010).

While writing *Adam Bede* Eliot promised John Blackwood a novel that was to be "a country story – full of the breath of cows and the scent of hay" (qtd in Uglow, 97) and used her "Aunt's story" to illustrate her ideas and attitudes about community, the power of religion and the "inexorable law of consequences" (Pinney, 31). The story of *Adam Bede* relates to a whole village and a society, intended to stand as a microcosm for Victorian society although explicitly set in a pre-Victorian context and the structure of the novel closely follows the seasons and the rituals of a rural community and the farming calendar. Chapter titles emphasise places ("The Workshop", "Church", "The Dairy", and "The Hall Farm") and social gatherings ("The Preaching" and "The Harvest Supper"). Two chapters named "Links" and "More Links" stress the importance of social interconnectedness, which is accentuated in every aspect of the narrative, through repetition, echoing of incidents and doubling of scenes. The plot follows chronological time except for two important exceptions when time is distorted to create dramatic irony: when Adam sets out happily to bring Hetty home from Stoniton, and when Arthur journeys home to take up his inheritance, full of happy plans and schemes, blissfully unaware of the tragedy awaiting him. These distortions heighten and intensify the pathos of the circumstances.

Despite the attention to a specific time and place, *Adam Bede* begins by invoking an atmosphere of mythology and the exotic: "With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader" (6). However the scene that ensues is familiar

and domestic rather than exotic, and firmly placed in the recent English past, precisely dated, “eighteenth of June, in the year of our lord 1799” (6), and concerns ordinary working men labouring in a rural English carpenter’s workshop, revealed in detail and loaded with religious symbolism. Adam Bede, whose name combines that of the first man and the first British historian, is singing hymns: like Christ he is a carpenter and the description which follows asserts his superiority, physical prowess, upright bearing and refined mind. In the chapters comprising Book 1, the main characters are introduced, their circumstances are outlined, their role in the Hayslope community explored and the relationships between them depicted. Although Hetty’s narrative is the central story line she is not introduced until Chapter Seven, but prior to her introduction she is described and her fate hinted at through other characters. During these early chapters the strong sense of vocation felt by Adam and Dinah, the spirituality experienced by Seth and the character of the Reverend Irwine who “somehow harmonised extremely well with that peaceful landscape” (70) are described, providing a contrast to Hetty who is revealed as having no sense of vocation, no spirituality, and a worldly craving for the superficial beauty of cheap lace and earrings. The emphasis in these chapters is on establishing character, and the contrast is between those who have a social conscience and Hetty, the egoist whose selfish actions have deep and long lasting consequences for others.

The Fallen Woman

Hetty Sorrel’s story conforms to the conventional narrative of fallenness: temptation, fall, decline, and death. She is a naïve country girl who falls pregnant after a man of a higher class thoughtlessly seduces her. A lover of finery and vain about her looks, Hetty is dangerously devoid of the expected womanly devotion to motherhood and a clean house. She yearns for a life of luxurious ease and comfort, has a “pleasure craving nature”, and dislikes small animals and children (333). After Arthur’s departure and the realisation of her

pregnancy, Hetty contemplates suicide and becomes a wanderer, which puts her in grave danger of being lured into prostitution. Deeply shamed and vulnerable, Hetty abandons her child. When this act is exposed her shame threatens to break up and displace her family, and although Hetty escapes the hangman she dies before she can return to Hayslope.

Before her first appearance in the narrative, Hetty's character has already been established through the comments of other characters, beginning with Dinah. Established through her preaching as "too good and holy for any man" (33) and as a "seer", Dinah explains her reluctance to leave Hayslope because her "heart yearns over ... that poor wandering lamb Hetty Sorrel" (34). Seth Bede reinforces Dinah's judgment by suggesting that his brother Adam is unaccountably and mysteriously attracted to Hetty. Lisbeth Bede believes that no woman is good enough for her idolised son Adam and is predictably harsh: "He's set his heart on that Hetty Sorrel as 'ull niver save a penny, an' 'ull toss up her head at's old mother... he's set his heart on that bit of a wench as is o' no more use nor the gillyflower on the wall" (45). Immediately before our first sight of Hetty we are treated to a description of the Hall Farm, a gleaming illustration of Mrs Poyser's skill as a housewife. That Hetty's pleasure in these highly polished surfaces is only as a mirror to admire her own reflection illustrates her excessive vanity. Consequently, before we meet Hetty she has been depicted as a lost character, a sinner, and a vain spendthrift who has bewitched a good man, and when she is simultaneously revealed to Arthur and the reader she is performing a self-consciously voluptuous act in a sensual environment.

Delaying the revelation of Hetty results in the development of anticipation: arriving at Hall Farm with Captain Arthur Donnithorne the readers' eyes, like his, are eagerly "seeking something it could not find" (80), anticipating a glimpse of Hetty. Chapter Seven, "The Dairy", begins with a salacious masculine observation, "the dairy was certainly worth looking at" (83), and the dairy is seen through Arthur's eyes. His visit to Hall farm is not an excuse to inspect the dairy and in fact "one gets only a confused notion of these details when they

surround a distractingly pretty girl of seventeen” (83) whose presence is the true reason for his sudden interest in the production of cheese and butter. Mrs Poyser is manipulated by flattery and pride into showing off her dairy and her dairymaid, exposing Hetty to the gaze and temptations offered by Arthur. The dairy is described in very sensuous terms: “such coolness, such purity, such fresh fragrance of new-pressed cheese, of firm butter, of wooden vessels perpetually bathed in pure water; such soft colouring of red earthenware and creamy surfaces” (83). These are Hetty’s colours and qualities, as Arthur perceives them. Hetty’s butter-making is described as a ‘performance’, aligning her with the persona of performing public women.

George Eliot has been condemned for her harsh representation of Hetty, which seems devoid of the “tolerant judgement” she hoped to inspire in her readers, but there are a number of features of the characterisation that diminish the severity of the portrayal. Unlike other fallen women characters Hetty is not marginalised: she is clearly the narrative focus of the novel, her story is the compelling centre of *Adam Bede* and she is the link which binds the community of characters together. Hetty’s tragedy provides the lessons that allow the development of other characters and the growth of sympathy and understanding. Dorothea Barrett suggests that “the narrator’s lack of sympathy for Hetty defeats its apparent purpose – it wins readers to Hetty perhaps more than a gentler treatment may have done” (Barrett, 43), and she argues that Eliot would not have been unaware of the possible impact that this treatment would have. Clayton suggests an alternative interpretation drawing a connection between Eliot’s representation of Hetty and an important strand of feminist thinking going back to Mary Wollstonecraft, which identifies female sexual desire as a “trap that will prevent woman from achieving independence” (Clayton, 42). In an article about Wollstonecraft published in 1855 Eliot singles out this premise, pointing to the damage done by the “childish passions and selfish vanity” of uneducated women (Wollstonecraft qtd by

Eliot, Pinney, 202). This idea is expanded in the characterisation of Hetty, which emphasises her ignorance and lack of education.

In order to create a realistic portrait of a young woman capable of child murder it was necessary to initially invest Hetty with “a hard stone inside” (339) although many of the early brutal descriptions of Hetty are later mitigated by the detailed exploration of her trials, temptations and miseries presented from her perspective. In the early scenes Hetty is clearly shown as selfish, pleasure-seeking, vain and shallow, but in a departure from Victorian convention the reader is very nearly a spectator to seduction which locates blame in her seducer. Bored and diversion-seeking Arthur Donnithorne, who is unable to follow his usual country pursuits of hunting and shooting, purposefully pursues Hetty with flirtation in mind because it is “a desperately dull business being shut up at the chase in the summer months” (64).³ Hetty is easily seduced, however other stronger characters, including Adam Bede and the Reverend Irwine, are equally blinded by Arthur’s apparent decency, and clever managing Mrs Poyser is effortlessly manipulated and flattered by him, making it possible to appreciate the vulnerability of overworked, undervalued, naïve, inexperienced Hetty, “an uneducated-simple farmer’s girl, to whom a gentleman with a white hand was as dazzling as an Olympian God” (100). Arthur’s status as heir apparent to the Squire is very important to the community in the novel, he is the most attractive and powerful man Hetty has ever seen and he is purposefully courting her. Hetty is portrayed as under a “pleasant narcotic effect” (99) from Arthur’s attentions, and it is clear that Arthur understands the risks to Hetty from his flirtation: he is worldly, experienced and ignores the Rector’s advice against toying with Hetty’s affections. The reader is made aware of Arthur’s internal arguments and justifications for his behaviour. He knows his actions are base, and that “No gentleman, out of a ballad, could marry a farmer’s niece” (139), but proceeds with the relationship selfishly and egotistically, making him largely responsible for the events that ensue.

Hetty does not value her work and has no sense of vocation. She has little loyalty to the Poyzers and apparently no proper feeling towards little Totty Poyser. However the narrator who describes Hetty also describes the cloyingly spoilt and excessively indulged Totty. Grandfather Poyser is openly “indifferent” to Hetty “because she has that good-for-nought... Sorrel’s blood in her veins” (337), and the Poyzers see labourer Adam Bede as a suitable match for her only because she is not the daughter of the family. Hetty’s place at Hall Farm is ambiguous, she is neither a servant, with a wage and the right to seek work elsewhere, nor a valued and loved member of the family. As Barrett reminds us:

Hetty’s indifference to her work is used, together with her indifference to children, animals and the Poyser home to discredit her. But there is actually no reason for the dairy-worker to love the dairy as the dairy-owner does, for Totty’s baby-sitter to love her as her Mother does, or for a penniless relation tolerated in the house as an act of charity and source of cheap labour to love that home in the way a daughter of the family would. (Barrett, 45)

Most importantly, despite all that goes before, reader sympathy and compassion for Hetty is engendered in two key chapters, “The Journey in Hope” and “The Journey in Despair”, which begin the Fifth Book of *Adam Bede*. Wandering is a metaphor frequently employed in representations of fallenness as a symbol of the relentless downward path of fallen women. Hetty’s journeys, to Windsor in search of Arthur, and then aimlessly and hopelessly towards home, raise her status to heroine. The animal imagery, (kittens, “downy ducklings”, calves (83)) employed to diminish Hetty in Book One become positive animal qualities of survival in later chapters, giving her a dignity and significance during her journey in despair. As she travels she gains stature and nobility by remaining focussed on her ultimate goal and developing heroic stature and pride as she works through disappointments, frustrations and disasters, shown from her perspective. The pleasure-loving, lazy Hetty learns how to manage her money by finding cheap travel options, and although she often sleeps in

the open she remains sufficiently “neatly dressed and resolutely self-possessed” (381) to impress the land-lady of the Green Man who comments, “she’s not a common flaunting dratchell, I can see that. She looks like a respectable country girl” (377). At the beginning of Hetty’s journey the narrator reminds us that:

A LONG, lonely journey, with sadness in the heart; away from the familiar to the strange: that is a hard and dreary thing even to the rich, the strong, the instructed; a hard thing, even when we are called by duty, not urged by dread. What was it then to Hetty? With her poor narrow thoughts, no longer melting into vague hopes, but pressed upon by the chill of definite fear, repeating again and again the same small round of memories – shaping again and again the same childish, doubtful images of what was to come – seeing nothing in this wide world but the little history of her own pleasures and pains; with so little money in her pocket, and the way so long and difficult. (369)

By calling attention to the dread circumstances of Hetty’s quest, her inexperience and ignorance, the narrator invites the reader to imagine their feelings in her circumstances. In the Victorian context Hetty is in peril away from the safety of home and male protection, however she answers the narrator’s question by surviving admirably and courageously, showing growth, empathy and maturity, and attaining significant character development. One difficulty in interpreting and understanding the depiction of fallen characters in Victorian literature results from changes in attitudes and values. What contemporary readers may have interpreted negatively can seem more appealing now. An aspect of Hetty’s story that makes her attractive to the modern reader is her capacity for survival. Through her experiences on the road Hetty learns to value home and family and turns north towards Stoniton rather than take the ultimate path usually followed by fallen women: south to London and a life of prostitution.

Hetty’s experience and knowledge of the world is narrow, nevertheless she has a clear understanding of the probable consequences of single motherhood:

She thought of a young woman who had been found against the church wall at Hayslope one Sunday, nearly dead with cold and hunger – a tiny infant in her arms. The woman was rescued and taken to the parish. "The parish!" You can perhaps hardly understand the effect of that word on a mind like Hetty's, brought up among people who were somewhat hard in their feelings even towards poverty, who lived among the fields, and had little pity for want and rags as a cruel inevitable fate such as they sometimes seem in cities, but held them a mark of idleness and vice – and it was idleness and vice that brought burdens on the parish. To Hetty the "parish" was next to the prison in obloquy, and to ask anything of strangers – to beg – lay in the same far-off hideous region of intolerable shame that Hetty had all her life thought it impossible she could ever come near. But now the remembrance of that wretched woman whom she had seen herself...came back upon her with the new terrible sense that there was very little now to divide HER from the same lot. (378)

Hetty's memory of this young woman embodies much of the contemporary mythology and visual symbolism of fallenness; the prone form of the fallen woman, sheltering against a wall, clutching a tiny child, was frequently used in contemporary iconography to represent shame and isolation and the usual tragic end, creating a believable psychological basis for her subsequent behaviour (Auerbach, 1982, 153). The memory inspires in Hetty:

a strength of self-possession which is the sign that the last hope has departed...Hetty felt that no one could deliver her from the evils that would make life hateful to her; and no one, she said to herself should ever know her misery and humiliation. No; she would not confess. (383)

The development of Hetty's apparent coldness is detailed in the 'Journey' chapters, authorising sympathetic understanding. Adam, the jury, court officials and those in the public gallery interpret Hetty's pride and apparent poise as unwomanly "hard despairing obstinacy" (431) and she is condemned to death.

Hetty may never have read a novel but she is aware of the conventional watery fate, which is central to the fallen woman narrative, and Eliot employs the familiar emblem of suicide by drowning as an option for Hetty. On two separate occasions Hetty purposefully seeks a pool to drown herself. On the first occasion she rejects the notion of suicide in favour of an alternative: to seek out Arthur whom she trusts to help her find a solution to the problem of her pregnancy:

As she sat by the pool and shuddered at the dark cold water, the hope that he would receive her tenderly – that he would care for her and think for her – was like a sense of lulling warmth, that made her for the moment indifferent to everything else; and she began now to think of nothing but the scheme by which she should get away. (366)

The second occasion is after Hetty's discovery that Arthur has departed for Ireland. Despite the fact that her hopes of rescue are gone and she is aware of the hopelessness of her situation, "driven to and fro between two equal terrors" (387) Hetty finds it impossible to take her own life. Hetty has a strong life force and instinct to survive, no patient victim content to die to conceal her shame and betrayal:

The horror of this cold, and darkness, and solitude – out of all human reach – became greater every long minute. It was almost as if she were dead already, and knew that she was dead, and longed to get back to life again. But no: she was alive still; she had not taken the dreadful leap. She felt a strange contradictory wretchedness and exultation: wretchedness that she did not dare to face death; exultation that she was still in life – that she might yet know light and warmth again. (386)

Hetty's exaltation in her continued existence – "the very consciousness of her own limbs was a delight to her: she turned up her sleeves, and kissed her arms with the passionate love of life" (387) – is rendered naturally and genuinely and rings true because of the detailed exploration of her journeys. Hetty's reprieve from execution allows Eliot to further

emphasise her instincts for survival which apparently serve her well in exile, she lived “long enough for all the suffering” (540), and, defying the odds, Hetty is on her way home to England when she dies. Despite her ignorance, innocence, vanity and vulnerability she has survived seven years of the certain humiliations and degradations that transportation implied. Eliot’s portrayal of Hetty as earthy and determined to live on provides a contrast to the meek and angelic heroines and self-sacrificing, deeply repentant fallen women depicted in conventional Victorian fiction and art.

Unlike other fallen women of Victorian fiction Hetty is not completely silenced. In a dramatic and unique confession scene – the original basis of Eliot’s Aunt’s story – Hetty explains her actions and her intentions in her own words. This scene does much to account for Hetty’s behaviour by making explicit her despair, terror and misery and revealing her psychological motivation, allowing a detailed understanding of her predicament and her emotional dilemma. Hetty’s explanation of how she disposed of the child makes it clear that she is not completely cold and heartless:

I longed so to be safe at home. I don't know how I felt about the baby. I seemed to hate it – it was like a heavy weight hanging round my neck; and yet its crying went through me, and I daredn't look at its little hands and face. (453)

This explanation in Hetty’s own words reveals that far from being a cold-blooded child murderer she is a terrified, pitiful young woman, haunted by her crying baby. Her utterances are those of a child who scarcely understands the seriousness of her actions, displaying her pathetic naivety, making explicit the lack of options available to fallen women cast out from Victorian society. The scene in the cell ensures a sympathetic response, challenging the notion of the contaminating effect of fallen characters and authorising woman-to-woman rescue by emphasising the shortcomings of a narrow and harsh society, which forgives and rehabilitates the seducer but excludes and victimises the woman. The power of special women like Dinah (and Eliot’s Aunt Samuel) is also commemorated and honoured. Although

Hetty's crime threatens to break up and disperse her family and community it ultimately strengthens the Poyser-Bede family connection and raises Adam's status during Arthur's long exile. Arthur is eventually forgiven and welcomed back into the community, and Hetty dies. Her death completes her exile, confirming that the price of sexual nonconformity was paid entirely by women, a situation of which Eliot was personally aware.

Other Women

Hetty's representation is heightened and expanded through mirroring and doubling with other female characters. The first of these contrasts is with Chad's Bess, a very minor character whose small vanities and love of cheap jewellery are a comic parody of Hetty's preoccupations. At "The Preaching" Dinah calls upon her to "Tear off those follies! Cast them away from you as if they were stinging adders" (31). Bess complies and collapses into a sobbing heap. Bess's reformation is short-lived and by the time of Arthur's birthday celebration she is again "decked out in such small finery as she could muster" (274-5) and is once more reduced to public tears. The portrayal of Bess as an ignorant, silly girl provides a contrast with Hetty's display of strength and innate self-respect during her journeys. Hetty is also contrasted with Lisbeth Bede and Mrs Poyser; both women are ostensibly ideal housewives and mothers, however neither fits the Victorian 'angel of the house' ideal of the middle-classes. Lisbeth Bede reflects a Victorian literary stereotype of complaining, manipulative and clinging motherhood and Mrs Poyser is opinionated, sharp and comical, a burlesque of the middle-classes 'managing woman', a frequently mocked comic stereotype.

Hetty has lived with the Poyser since the age of seven, yet there is little evidence of emotional support or tenderness in Mrs Poyser's care of Hetty: "the one performance of hers that her Aunt allowed to pass without severe criticism" was the making of the butter (85) – Mrs Poyser gains financial reward and praise from Hetty's talents. The narrator's opinion that Hetty could have "cast all her past life behind her and never cared to be reminded of it again" (154) is reinforced by Mrs Poyser's belief that Hetty's "heart's as hard as a pibble" (156) but

ignores the reality of her family situation. Hetty escapes a scolding in Adam's presence because Mrs Poyser, very anxious for Hetty to make a good marriage "considered that a young girl was not to be treated sharply in the presence of a respectable young man who was courting her" (225). Hetty is a disruptive single woman who requires Mrs Poyser's constant supervision and control and Adam is an appropriate suitor for Hetty because she is a penniless niece, a financial and social burden. Marriage to Adam promises little pleasure for Hetty who would naturally share her home with jealous, moaning, querulous, fretful and self-pitying Mrs Bede, who is publicly acknowledged as a Hetty hater. Life with her is represented as a constant strain and trial, even for her loving sons. The characterisation of these other women amplifies Hetty's shortcomings and failings but also engenders sympathy and pity for Hetty by providing realistic psychological grounds for her vulnerability to Arthur.

Dinah Morris is presented as both the parallel and antithesis of Hetty. Like Hetty she is an orphaned niece of the Poyser family, significantly however she is living in the family as a guest while Hetty is treated as a servant. A young mill-hand and preacher, Dinah lives independently, she exemplifies individualism, autonomy and mobility in contrast to Hetty's predetermined character. Eliot sets up direct and explicit contrasts between these two young women, comparisons which include physical distinctions: Dinah blonde and Hetty brunette; Dinah dressed in a plain Methodist style, Hetty revelling in pretty clothes and jewellery. Other contrasts reflect and emphasise their differences in temperament and personality: Dinah has a deep religious faith, Hetty goes to church to be seen and see others; Dinah loves children, Hetty resents them. Dinah is serenely unconscious of her effect on others, while Hetty is self-consciously and coquettishly aware of her impact on men. Dinah is established as the ideal woman and the structure of the story is designed to display her superiority, a character whose "fervent desire to impose love and purpose on the world" echoes Eliot's desire for "men to grasp their relation to the universals that exist outside the range of their

serious perception” (Knoepflmacher, 105). Dinah is introduced very early in the story and is the focus of the second chapter where the power and influence of her preaching astonishes and impresses the villagers. Direct descriptions of Hetty diminish her whereas descriptions of Dinah emphasise her inner beauty and tranquillity, authorised by her faith and calling. Dinah surprises the stranger during her sermon with her “sincere unpremeditated eloquence” (32) and unconscious authority, while Hetty’s blushes in the dairy during Arthur’s visit are “not at all distressed”, tossing and patting “her pound of butter with quite a self-possessed coquettish air of self-consciousness so that no turn of her head was lost” (83). Hetty’s beauty causes men “to make fools of themselves” (83), whereas Wiry Ben wondered, “how Seth had the pluck to think of courting” Dinah (23). Hetty is condemned by her vanity and awareness of the effect her beauty has on others, specifically contrasted to Dinah’s spiritual beauty.

Eliot’s creation of both women is part of her plan for the story leading to the confessional scene in the prison cell, the inspiration for the novel. Dinah is based on Eliot’s Aunt, and her role as Hetty’s spiritual saviour necessitates her elevation in direct contrast to Hetty, the “very ignorant girl”. In a key chapter, “The Two Bed Chambers”, Hetty and Dinah are set side-by-side literally and figuratively. While Hetty delights in her mirror, preening and posturing, Dinah delights in her bedroom window, which allows her to look out on the “wide view” of the peaceful fields (157). The symbolism in this juxtaposition of scenes expands and illuminates the representation of each woman. Hetty is egotistic and self-absorbed, while Dinah looks outward, concerned about others. Hetty’s heart is full of plans and schemes, which put her at the centre of a drama involving Arthur Donnithorne; Dinah’s heart is full because she is about to leave “the dear people whom she has learned to care for” (157). Dinah the devout worshipper is contrasted with Hetty the devout worshipper of self. While Hetty deludes herself with dreams of marriage to Arthur and becoming a ‘Great Lady’, in her room next door Dinah “sees too clearly” the reality of Hetty’s selfishness: “her imagination had created a thorny thicket of sin and sorrow in which she saw the poor thing struggling, torn

and bleeding looking with tears for rescue and finding none” (158). To further emphasise the disparity the two women are brought together at the end of the chapter:

What a strange contrast the two figures made, visible enough in that mingled twilight and moonlight! Hetty, her cheeks flushed and her eyes glistening from her imaginary drama, her beautiful neck and arms bare, her hair hanging in a curly tangle down her back, and the baubles in her ears. Dinah, covered with her long white dress, her pale face full of subdued emotion, almost like a lovely corpse into which the soul has returned charged with sublimer secrets and a sublimer love. (159)

Significantly this scene emphasises Hetty’s luxuriant healthy beauty in contrast to Dinah’s corpse-like appearance, a direct pointer to their next face-to-face meeting where their positions are reversed. Later in the narrative Hetty emerges from her prison cell as a ghost of her former self at the very moment when Dinah moves to the central focus in the narrative, “in a subtle sense they drain each other’s nature” (Auerbach, 175).

In a later chapter the contrast between the women is highlighted again when, stung by Adam’s criticism of her vanity and admiration of Dinah Hetty is inspired to impersonate Dinah in her Methodist cap and plain black gown, which serves to accentuate her “round rosy cheeks and coquettish dark eyes” (228), increasing Adam’s admiration: “If I’d said you’d look pretty in ‘em, I should ha’ said nothing but was true” (228). This spirited and energetic display demonstrates a charming and humorous side to Hetty’s personality, which contrasts with Dinah’s serious and moralistic personality.

Dinah’s portrayal, however, does not simply provide the conventional Madonna/harlot contrast, which is a traditional feature of the fallen woman narrative. Like Hetty she is also a disruptive influence, an outsider, a wanderer, apart from society. Mrs Poyser worries that her preaching will offend the Rector and the Squire, causing trouble for the family. Critics have identified a “battle for centrality in the novel” (Barrett, 46; Auerbach, 1982, 177) between Hetty and Dinah and have questioned the basis of Dinah’s vocation,

suggesting that there are “strong indications that Dinah’s passion for ministry is in fact sublimated sexual energy” (Barrett, 39-40). Barrett argues that “the case against Hetty seems particularly weak when we see it, as we are encouraged to do, in contrast to Dinah. There is something either unconvincing or unhealthy about Dinah’s indiscriminate and forced loving” (Barrett, 45). Through a detailed analysis of Dinah’s relationships with individual members of the Hayslope community Barrett reveals examples of Dinah’s egoism, narrowness and vanity, questioning her role as moral opposite to Hetty who “acts simply and honestly from her true motives, and to a modern reader, provides a welcome relief from the forced artificiality of Dinah’s forced selflessness” (Barrett, 46). Dinah’s absence from the central chapters of the novel ensures that the central focus of the novel is on Hetty, whose suffering is the emotional core of the story, making explicit the harshness of society’s treatment of fallen women.

Early feminist critics, including Ellen Moers (192–200) and Gillian Beer (3), disapproved of the ending of *Adam Bede*, which put Dinah on a par with the pitiful Lisbeth “always on the outlook for Adam” (538). This analysis is part of wider critical feminist debate about Eliot heroines who submit to the duty of marriage and curb their desires rather than continue to be wilful, aspiring, unconventional and impatient of restraint. Eliot has been accused of supporting the prevailing values of Victorian culture by “living the revolution but not writing about it” (Showalter, 307). By revealing Dinah as basically conservative and marrying her to Adam, Eliot appears to be supporting the values of Victorian culture. Reducing Dinah’s power as an independent character may, however, signify a more subversive message in the conclusion. Even in exile Hetty continued to develop autonomy and independence and the skills to survive adversity. Barrett’s assessment that “what George Eliot tells us elevates Dinah and condemns Hetty, but what she shows us tends to question Dinah and vindicate Hetty” (Barrett, 44), suggests a more revolutionary Eliot than Victorian publishing conventions would allow.

The Seducer

Hetty and Arthur Donnithorne's relationship is one of predictable interclass seduction repeatedly played out in traditional literature. However Arthur's representation is not stereotypical and he differs from most Victorian seducers because his moral struggles are outlined in explicit detail, providing psychological insight into his motivation and thought processes, generating understanding and compassion for him.

Initially Arthur is portrayed as an ideal type of Englishman, "well-washed, high-bred, white-handed yet looking as if he could deliver well from the left shoulder, and floor his man" (61), an ironic description in light of subsequent events in the narrative. Arthur's overwhelming need to be liked and to cut a fine figure in society, coupled with his aspiration to be a reforming Squire, is established along with his youth, romanticism, moral justifications and the failings of his upbringing and education. Allowing insight into Arthur's inner dialogue reveals his vanity and egotism, which has developed in contrast to what he sees as his Grandfather's shortcomings. The narrative shows Arthur as offending through weakness rather than wickedness, doing what is easy rather than what his conscience tells him is right. By making Arthur's weaknesses human and universal, pity is invoked in contrast to other fictional rakes and despoilers whose actions are deliberately and intentionally immoral.⁴

Arthur's initial flirtation with Hetty is consciously planned, part of a premeditated antidote to boredom while "shut up at the Chase with a broken arm" (127). He deludes himself that his subsequent behaviour towards Hetty is based on thoughtfulness and "a desire to set things right with her by a sort of kindness which would have the air of friendly civility and prevent her from running away with the wrong notions about their mutual relation"(137). Despite his sincere intentions and his clear understanding of the "probable consequences" (138), his vanity and desire makes his surrender to temptation inevitable. Arthur also rationalises that "a man ought not to be blamed so much if he is betrayed into doing things ...

in spite of his resolutions” (172) and, conforming to the conventional double standard, he believes that a “man may be very firm in other matters, and yet be under a sort of witchery from a woman” (171). As the relationship with Hetty develops into a sexual union Arthur continues to absolve himself from guilt and responsibility by justification: “she was enough to turn any man’s head: any man in his place would have done and felt the same” (274). His portrayal is balanced by narrative descriptions of small-minded Hetty, who values gifts more than the giver and dwells on the advantages of the relationship rather than her love for Arthur, suggesting that Hetty is undeserving of pity and consideration because she has beguiled him through greed and vanity.

The structure of the novel is instrumental in mitigating judgement of Arthur. He is most blameworthy during his confrontation with Adam in the Grove when he lies about the extent of his relationship with Hetty and underestimates the consequences. Adam’s physical blows and the possibility that Arthur may be seriously hurt or even dead, however, restore sympathy. The subsequent description of Arthur as in “the wretched position of an open generous man, who has committed an error which makes deception seem a necessity” (305) helps to restore compassion and understanding. The following chapter – “The Next Morning” – reveals more of Arthur’s justifications, rationalisations and excuses, illustrating his naivety but also his innately caring nature. He contemplates a scheme to “carry Hetty away” (313) and the letter he writes to Hetty at Adam’s insistence is written in a kindly gentle style, as if to assuage a disappointed child. Arthur’s disappearance from the narrative at this point is vitally important to the development of the plot because Hetty’s vulnerability is heightened by his absence. Arthur’s subsequent efforts to help Hetty suggest that had he been present at the time of crisis he would have made attempts to protect and support her. In conformity with Eliot’s central theme, Arthur is characterised as an ordinary flawed man, rather than an evil stereotypical villain.

Arthur Donnithorne does not completely escape the consequences of his behaviour; his return to Hayslope and the narrative has a grimly ironic tone coming as it does immediately following Hetty's trial and death sentence, frustrating his sincere desire to be a good Squire at the very moment he inherits. Arthur is largely absolved from guilt by his melodramatic ride and last minute rescue of Hetty from the hangman's noose and his willingness to go into voluntary exile to prevent the Poysers and Bedes from displacement. His lasting remorse allows Arthur to be rehabilitated into the Hayslope community albeit as a much changed, reduced and reformed man; reader compassion is also authorised by the forgiveness shown to Arthur by the ideal characters, Adam and Dinah and eventually the Poysers.

The Hero

It is essential that both Hetty and Arthur be equally blamed and vindicated because they are the catalysts in the central story of the education and personal growth of Adam Bede, who is profoundly changed by his experience of tragedy. Adam's development is the significant narrative of the novel, which records his change from a hard unsympathetic man, intolerant of weakness, to attaining the "fuller life which had come to him from his acquaintance with deep sorrow" (530). Arthur Donnithorne comes to understand his responsibility and guilt partly as a result of Adam's attitude, fiercely articulated when he first discovers the lovers in the Grove and again when the extent of Hetty's suffering is revealed. Adam's condemnation is strong; he clearly identifies Arthur as the main architect of Hetty's downfall and he rails against a society which imposed harsh consequences on fallen women while the men implicated in their ruin escaped censure: "I don't care what she's done it was him that brought her to it and he shall know it" (421). Adam's emphasis on Hetty's youth, naivety and lack of experience underlines Arthur's culpability, restores balance and responsibility is evenly apportioned. Tolerance, sympathy and understanding wrought from

experience make Adam a better person, worthy of Dinah's love and the central and important place in the community that he eventually assumes. Adam has achieved what Eliot describes as the most pure and transforming love:

The mother's yearning, that completest type of the life
in another life, which is the essence of real human love, feels
the presence of the cherished child even in the debased
degraded man; and to Adam, this pale hard-looking culprit was
the Hetty who had smiled at him in the garden under the apple-
tree boughs – she was that Hetty's corpse which he had
trembled to look at the first time, and then was unwilling to
turn his eyes away from. (431)

By publicly supporting and defending Hetty, Adam offers a humane alternative to Hetty's own family and Victorian society, which casts out fallen women as a shameful disgrace. This self-sacrificing and self-denying, non-aggressive love, more commonly attributed to women and mothers, is Eliot's ideal and embodies her message that the experience of frailty and tragedy expands sympathy and understanding. The tragic possibilities of life and the fundamental importance of human sympathy have become apparent to all the main protagonists. Virtually the final sentence of the novel is "there's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for" (540), emphasizing the need to consider the consequences for others before taking action. Arthur's philosophy that past wrongs can be remedied by future action is explicitly exposed as harmful and naïve. Adam has achieved Eliot's principal objective, the extension of experience amplifying his sympathy, changing him from a man intolerant of weakness to someone who has the capacity to forgive, an exemplar of Christ-like charity in contrast to Christian society's treatment of fallen women.

The exploration of contrasting opinions and attitudes held by the male characters in *Adam Bede* illustrates the range of diverse opinions about the essential nature of women held in contemporary Victorian society and serves to highlight and underline Adam's advanced understanding and moral superiority, which is further emphasised when he is able to show compassion and forgiveness to both Hetty and Arthur. With the sole exception of Adam, the men of the Hayslope community do not acknowledge the part played by disparity in class and power in Hetty's seduction preferring to blame her fall on vanity and wickedness. Adam is deeply affected by Hetty's beauty, her soft prettiness suggests to him that "Nature has written out his bride's character for him in those exquisite lines of cheek and lip and chin, in those eyelids delicate as petals, in those long lashes curled like the stamen of a flower, in the dark liquid depths of those wonderful eyes" (153). Adam is drawn by Hetty's beauty, because he sees it as god-given and reflective of nature and he shows his disapproval of her trivial attempts at embellishment.

The other men in Hetty's small community admire and flatter her and she has many potential suitors. Mr Poyser feeds and encourages Hetty's vanity, often attempting to mitigate Mrs Poyser's harshness with flattery. Justifying this treatment with his conventional opinion that maternity and maternal feelings are innate and that magically "Hetty'll be all right when she's got a good husband and children of her own"(156). Later he proves to be harshly judgemental of Hetty's disgrace and refuses to visit her or support her in court: "I'll not go nigh her, nor ever see her again, by my own will" (413). Grandfather Poyser is also highly critical and disparaging of Hetty. Their knowledge and understanding of Arthur's role in Hetty's disgrace does not lessen her guilt in their eyes. The Reverend Irwine warns Arthur away from his flirtation with Hetty, "feeding her vanity, and filling her little noodle with the notion that she's a great beauty, attractive to fine gentleman... will spoil her for a poor man's wife" (101); however his testimony in court does not reveal Arthur's betrayal. George Eliot's

exploration of rural seduction explicitly identifies how Hetty is dazzled and confused by Arthur's attentions, "he was a great gentleman, and could have his way in everything" (151).

Bartle Massey's misogynist views are presented humorously echoing Victorian biomedical discourse (Matus, 169) emphasising that women are troublesome creatures, who "cackle and make mischief" (240) and are governed by a body specialised for reproduction rather than a highly developed mind. Vixen the dog is portrayed as Massey's prototype of "feminine folly" a "sly hypocritical wench"; Massey believes that she is like all women, who have "no head pieces to nourish" so their "food all runs either to fat or brats" (238-9). Massey's musings about Vixen and her puppies parody the issues raised in the main action of the novel, "Hetty's unwisely indulged sexual instincts, and questionable maternal instincts" (Matus, 170).

Conclusion

In Chapter Seventeen of *Adam Bede* "In which the Story Pauses a Little" (175) the narrator directly addresses the reader to expound a doctrine of the power and necessity of realism and truth in art. George Eliot's work was philosophic in intention, articulating the "inexorable laws of consequences" (Pinney, 31) a message that she saw as her task to promulgate in her non-fiction writing. Eliot saw the novel as an important representational form, which would allow her to initiate an intellectual discourse exploring the values of tolerance and responsibility through plots based on choice and the consequences of choosing, aimed at effecting ethical and social behaviour. *Adam Bede* was an early step in this process where Eliot used the trials and tragedies of ordinary and humble characters to demonstrate a wider lesson, applicable to her times and justified it thus:

These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are:
you can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit,
nor rectify their dispositions; and it is these people – amongst
whom your life is passed - that it is needful you should tolerate,

pity, and love: it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire – for whom you should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience. And I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we get up in the morning to do our daily work, that you would be likely to turn a harder, colder eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields – on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice; who can be cheered and helped onward by your fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your outspoken, brave justice. (176)

By exposing the inconsistencies, strengths, weakness and frailties of ordinary “real breathing men and women” (176) Eliot hoped to educate her readers to feel pity, understanding and empathy and apply those feelings to their lives as she did:

Through my union and fellowship with the men and women I *have* seen, I feel a like, though fainter sympathy with those I have *not* seen; and I am able so to live in imagination with the generations to come, that their good is not alien to me, and is a stimulus to me to labour for ends which may not benefit myself but will benefit them. (Pinney, 374)

To this end the characters in *Adam Bede* are fully revealed and their shortcomings and contradictions explored. Eliot used the familiar fallenness narrative in *Adam Bede* to focus attention on the development of individual sympathy rather than an attempt to directly challenge specific social ills. Consequently the surprising and unexpected judgments made by individual characters in response to Hetty’s misfortune reveal a variety of opinions and reactions reflecting gradual change and compassion. Mrs Poyser is surprisingly the first person to forgive the disgraced Hetty and rough and uncompromising Bartle Massey is gentle and tender in his care of Adam who has been rendered helpless by the tragic circumstances. Eliot stressed the need for “organic change”, emphasising the interdependence of the whole

rather than the freedom of the parts and the necessity for “gradual cumulative growth” (Shuttleworth, 4) as opposed to radical reform of social institutions: “what has grown up historically can only die out historically, but by the gradual operation of necessary laws” (Eliot in Pinney, 287). Various facets of personal character are explored in *Adam Bede* in an attempt to deliver “a faithful account of men and things” (175) and provoke greater understanding, leading to an extension of pity. Reverend Irwine is apparently rational and clear thinking but misreads and overestimates Arthur’s moral development; Lisbeth is silly and inane but correctly discerns the growing relationship between Adam and Dinah; and the ill-fated lovers are selfish and egotistical but are capable of individual bravery and resourcefulness. Even the apparently ideal characters have defects: self-sacrificing altruistic Dinah must acknowledge her own needs and recognise the positive contribution she can make as a wife and mother; and the seemingly faultless Adam must learn to be tolerant of weakness in others, to sympathise and forgive. Adam’s growth is most significant and compelling because of his obvious innate strength and nobility, resulting in his “quiet slippage upward from worker to owner” (Sedgwick, 144) and eventual displacement of both the Rector and the Squire as the influential central figure in the Hayslope community.

When writing *Adam Bede* George Eliot’s main intention was not specifically targeted at contemporary fears about infanticide or the position of fallen women in Victorian society. As Cross put it in his biography: “George Eliot’s great hope for the future was the improvement of human nature by the gradual development of the affections and sympathetic emotions” (qtd in Dolin, 146). Through the use of the fallenness narrative prevalent in Victorian literature and locating the novel in the recent rural past, *Adam Bede* authorised a fresh discourse on a subject of important contemporary concern which emphasised the universality of experience and suggested a potential response. This approach was influential with Eliot’s readers who responded positively to the novel in spite of its shockingly explicit rendering of sexual themes. Eliot was praised for her originality, “wisdom and charity”⁵ and

powers of observation. By eschewing literary convention and presenting the facts of the story in a psychologically and socially realist manner Eliot authorised the creation of a new narrative which neither completely blamed and demonised nor sentimentalised and victimised the fallen woman.

¹ One famous review condemned the explicit nature of the depiction of Hetty's pregnancy, as "like the notes of a man midwife". (qtd in Carroll, 76)

² George Eliot. *Adam Bede*. Oxford World Classics. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. All subsequent references will be to this edition.

³ William Acton's opinions about the frequency of seduction in rural England have been discussed in Chapters 1 & 2.

⁴ Such as, for example, Richardson's Lovelace, Austen's Wickham, and Dickens' Quilp.

⁵ From an Anonymous Review of *Adam Bede*. *The Westminster Review*, April 1859 (Baker, 7).

Chapter 4

Writing the Narrative of Fallenness.

Fictional plots are dramatic representations reflecting the anxieties and attitudes of an era, what a “culture believes to be true – or what it would like to be true – or what it is mortally afraid may be true” (Russ, 4). This chapter will explore the narrative similarities and differences between the representation of fallenness in *David Copperfield* and that in *Adam Bede*, and attempt to identify the meaning and significance of the variations that emerge. In this exploration, two questions in particular will be addressed. Firstly I will consider how the use of tragedy and pathos in the representation of fallenness in these novels stimulates a sympathetic response to the plight of fallen women in Victorian society. Secondly, and more speculatively, I will consider how the differences in representation may be attributable to the gender of the authors. In order to address these issues, this chapter will be structured around the major elements and events of the typical narrative of fallenness: temptation, fall, decline, and endings. I will conclude with a discussion of the differences that may be attributed to author gender and consider the capacity of those elements to stimulate sympathy.

The first issue to be acknowledged in this comparative chapter, however, is the discrepancy between the role and centrality of the fallen women in the two novels, which is the most obvious difference between the representations of Hetty and Emily. True to the standard fallen narrative, Emily is marginalised and often absent from the storyline of *David Copperfield*. She first appears in the narrative as a child and although some character development is portrayed – David is surprised on a later visit by how much of a “little woman” she has become (125), and on his last and third visit Emily is reportedly “wayward ...and a little spoiled” (262) – little Emily remains essentially unchanged throughout the novel, where she is predominantly presented through the filter of other characters’ opinions. Emily’s long absence from the central narrative emphasises her outsider status and although

the story of her seduction is important to the main plot it is Emily's relationship to Steerforth which has the major influence on the main character. Emily is also portrayed as a victim of determined and planned seduction, which authorises a sympathetic response but excludes a full understanding of her circumstances and motivations, making her a very generalised predetermined character. Conversely, Hetty is central to the plot of *Adam Bede*, her representation keeps her at the centre of the narrative even when she is absent from Hayslope, and the plot explicitly emphasises the links she has to her community and the larger consequences of her individual action, which are wide and long-lasting. Hetty is presented fully-grown with a developed personality and is early identified as a "poor wandering lamb" (34), however the changes that Hetty undergoes as a result of her experience are represented in detail resulting in significant character change and development. Hetty's representation, which includes an exploration of her dreams, plans and motivations, allows for a deeper understanding of her motives and experiences, making empathy and sympathy possible. Hetty is dismissed from the plot only in the final chapters of the novel where her absence is essential to the final resolution.

Emily's representation in *David Copperfield* also conforms to the conventional fallenness narrative because she is largely silenced and unable to explain her motivation. Her confrontation with Rosa Dartle is the single opportunity she has to vindicate herself and explain the circumstances of her seduction. All other accounts of her behaviour are recounted through other characters and through implication and suggestion. On her return to her Uncle's care his references to Emily emphasise her feelings of shame, penitence and "broken hearted tears" (620), and immediately after her rescue she is symbolically veiled from sight with a handkerchief over her face. David sees her "only once in a swoon" (626), and she is referred to only obliquely in the remainder of the novel. Emily's silence continues her marginalisation by placing greater emphasis on the predetermined nature of her fall and her lack of agency. Telling the majority of Emily's story through the eyes and reactions of others underlines the

sympathetic response of those who are responsible for her, especially her Uncle, and supports the cultural belief that women needed supervision and control.

In *Adam Bede* the direct description of Adam and Hetty's thoughts and feelings in court creates a detailed picture of Hetty's circumstances, authorising understanding and sympathy by suggesting that the lack of information inherent in masculine justice and social structures condemns women unjustly. In Chapter Seventeen of *Adam Bede* the narrator indicates a desire to tell the story: "as precisely as I can...as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath" (174). In the detailed representation of Hetty's court case that follows, witnesses tell a series of stories, allowing the reader to patch together what happened to Hetty and her baby. The provision of a variety of truthful accounts of Hetty's actions from the point of view of ordinary independent witnesses, uninfluenced by opinion or social criticism, allocates to the reader the role of jurymen, weighing up the evidence and coming to a verdict. The reader also has information not available to the jury: the background of Hetty's story, her personality, Arthur Donnithorne's part in her seduction, and her experiences alone and frightened on the road. This detailed knowledge facilitates greater understanding of her behaviour and bearing in the Courtroom, which is described in contradictory ways: she is described both as having a "blank hard indifference" and as "a statue of dull despair" (435). The portrayal challenges conventional legal and social assumptions made about the emotional state of infanticidal women. Providing detailed information about Hetty's experiences from her perspective allows greater understanding of her motives and choices, especially when compared to Emily's distant and less personal story. In *Adam Bede* the narrator frequently calls upon the reader to imagine themselves in Hetty's circumstances and this direct appeal for empathy calls attention to the need for understanding and the extension of sympathy.

Hetty's confession, "the major story that the novel has to tell" (Beer, 69), is unusual in a Victorian fallen woman-narrative because it allows the reader to hear Hetty's story in her

own words in her own pathetic childish voice. Utilising the visual image of the mirror used repeatedly throughout the novel, Eliot places Hetty and Dinah face-to-face, one telling the story, the other listening. Dinah's description of God, as "someone who has seen all your trouble and known your thoughts" who can provide love and "pardoning mercy" (449), significantly incorporates the reader who learns that Hetty did not actively and intentionally kill the "little baby" (452); that she hoped that "someone 'ud find it and take care of it" (453); and is haunted by the cries of the child. Eliot also employs a recognisable sentimental image of maternal love to indicate that Hetty resisted a natural impulse to love the child: "I daredn't look at its little hands and face" (453). By providing believable background details about the circumstances which cause child murder, Eliot highlights "the differences between idealised mother love and the complexities and ambivalences of real mother love in social situations" (Matus, 177), and calls into question assumptions made about the causes of infanticide, suggesting that a society that uses the existence of a child as a reason to ostracise the mother creates the necessity to deny nature. Many readers – especially women who had suffered postnatal complications and depression – would certainly have been able to relate to and sympathise with Hetty's circumstances. The confession scene represented a radical departure from the traditional fallen woman story, however Eliot employed the main elements of the conventional narrative to build her account of Hetty's fall.

Temptation

The first element in the narrative of fallenness is temptation, which places the emphasis on the predetermined nature of the fall, implying a lack of agency in fallen women who were predisposed to sin because of specific elements in their circumstances and their female nature. Religious imagery invoked Eve as a warning of women's weakness and propensity to entice men, and women were persuaded to view themselves as frail beings requiring the protection of men. This frailty and predisposition is employed in the

representation of both Emily and Hetty. Weakness and sweetness in women was romanticised, making women dependent on and controlled by their fathers and husbands. Unfortunately this also made women especially vulnerable when they were excluded from the usual familial protections. Both Emily and Hetty are portrayed as having an ambiguous social and familial position: both are orphans, which emphasises their vulnerability outside the necessary shelter of family and home. In Victorian literature a male orphan often had freedom and agency which enabled him to rise above financial and social barriers, allowing the opportunity to remake himself. By contrast the orphaned state was particularly dangerous to female characters because they lacked appropriate parental guidance and social control, leaving them vulnerable in two ways. Firstly, any possible protector was also a possible predator and, secondly, any desire to remake themselves through social promotion left them susceptible to seduction.

Emily and Hetty are both brought up by extended family: Emily is greatly loved, indulged and petted, her parents are revered and fondly remembered; Hetty, however, is raised by the Poysers as a duty, her parents are openly reviled and she is often dutifully chastised by Mrs Poyser because the “poor thing had no mother of her own to scold her” (84). The families are demographically and socially ‘elastic’, including different generations, distant relatives, inmates with no blood connection, and servants. Although the family members are individually idealised it is tempting to speculate whether the judgments of Victorian social scientists about the moral dangers inherent in family disorder influenced the representation of the Peggottys and Poysers. The major emphasis, however, is placed on the social vacuum and lack of proper supervision which leaves the women alone and unprotected, a point underlined when their seducers are welcomed and encouraged into their homes, conventionally the place of safety and security for women. The families are betrayed by their trust of these men and through their assumption that social class and ‘gentlemanly’ status will ensure that they will behave honourably. Steerforth underhandly deceives David, and Arthur

Donnithorne betrays his role as traditional community protector. The failure of their guardians to recognise the danger from these men engenders sympathy for the less experienced women, who suffer for their families' assumptions by being made vulnerable and accessible to their seducers.

Contradictions are apparent in the representation of the characters of the fallen women in *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* through the inconsistent elements employed in descriptions of their characters and in the careful use of conventional elements to indicate Emily and Hetty's likely vulnerability to temptation and seduction. Both characters are described as having both a passionate nature and a passionless motivation for their fall. Emily's danger is created by her childish wish to provide for her Uncle and remove him from the risks of his occupation, but she is also described as passionate and "wayward" (262). Hetty is variously described as aware of a "strange, happy languor" (100), produced by Arthur Donnithorne's attentions and is also portrayed as cold and mercenary: "she was not thinking most of the giver when she smiled at the earrings" (49). These inconsistencies reflect the contradictions of contemporary biomedical discourse relating to women and in particular to the very dangerous age between girlish innocence and passionless womanhood. The extreme youth of both women is emphasised: Emily is always referred to as "little", Hetty is frequently described as a "child" and consistently associated with newborn fluffy creatures, ironically indicating to Adam that she will be an ideal mother to her own children. By emphasising the extreme youth of Emily and Hetty and associating it with lush womanliness both authors build upon the belief that adolescent girls were sexual beings at grave risk when they reached puberty: "the menses, it was supposed, inflamed emotions and sensations, transforming the innocent child into the 'dangerous' pubescent girl" (Reynolds and Humble, 15). Emily and Hetty are thus at a very precarious age when they are faced with the temptations of their seducer.

Both authors combine dangerous youth with extraordinary beauty in their representations of Emily and Hetty, conforming to the assumption that this particular combination of traits in young impressionable women increased their danger and vulnerability to temptation. In some representations of women beauty was seen as a “sign of the specialised function of women and a means of fulfilling it” (Matus, 106), however in conjunction with youth and vanity, beauty often functioned as a signifier of moral peril. Mr Omer tells David that Emily “has such a face of her own that half the women in this town are mad against her” (261), and Hetty likes to imagine the jealousy of the women in Hayslope who are envious of her beauty. Narrative comments about Hetty’s beauty emphasise “the ‘dear deceit’ of beauty” (155) suggesting that nature is playing tricks by disguising her hard heart under a pretty face. The difference between appearance and reality is an important reason for misreading Emily and Steerforth and Hetty and Arthur Donnithorne. In *Adam Bede* this misreading is further emphasised by discussions about the capacity to read nature in outward appearance, which take place at the Rectory and at Arthur Donnithorne’s birthday celebration. Ironically Arthur’s guests, ignorant of the relationship between Hetty and Arthur, conclude that Hetty will be “thrown away among the farmers” (273).

External appearance indicated difference in class in Victorian society (Reed, 289) anything that blurred externals; hypocrisy, disguise and concealment were conventionally used in Victorian literature to indicate flaws in character. Even though Emily and Hetty’s beauty was ‘god given’, to enhance or use their beauty was morally questionable and specifically discouraged. Society’s tendency to base its judgement of personality on outward presentation is questioned in both novels. The moral frailty of both Steerforth and Arthur Donnithorne is exposed; Littimer, “the pattern of respectability” (256), is revealed as despicable; and Emily and Hetty’s beauty is used to indicate a predisposition to fall, suggesting a need to look deeper into psychology and personality before making character assessments. Contrastingly the ideal characters in both novels are presented as undisguised

and honest. Both novels explore the role that disguise and concealment played in seduction: both sets of lovers conceal their relationships and the true characters of both seducers are concealed. Sympathy for disguised characters was difficult to engender and there is an implication in both novels that Emily and Hetty are not worthy of sympathy because they actively enhanced their natural beauty to gain attention. However the secrecy and disguise of the older and worldlier seducers is clearly condemned leaving some compassion for their victims. Because for the Victorians appearance and dress indicated class, the capacity of clothing to blur social boundaries created anxiety.

A desire for clothes, leisure, comfort and security compared to a life of menial work, poverty and instability indicated a predisposition to fall and a vulnerability to the advances and false promises of seducers. Clothing was often used in literature as an infallible indicator of virtue; both Emily and Hetty are portrayed as narcissistic and obsessed with clothing, particularly dangerous when associated with working-class women because it indicated a desire for social advancement. Emily and Hetty love pretty things and dressing up and both are portrayed as “more fond of admiration than hard work” (Mitchell, 67). The part that vanity plays in seduction is also made explicit in the actions of the seducers: Steerforth describes Emily as a “most engaging little beauty” (272) and Arthur Donnithorne feeds Hetty’s vanity with gifts and flattery which is contrasted with Adam’s disapproval of her small attempts at embellishment. Arthur’s Aunt Lydia articulates society’s view: “I should not think of encouraging a love of finery in young women of that class” (275). The only successful means of containing beautiful, vain, adolescent girls was to arrange a safe and appropriate marriage: the Yarmouth and Hayslope families have husbands picked out, Ham for Emily and Adam for Hetty. Engagements are made and danger seemingly averted, however within weeks of her wedding day Emily elopes with Steerforth and desperate, pregnant Hetty runs away under the guise of a bridal shopping trip to seek Arthur Donnithorne, heightening the tragedy for those abandoned and substantiating Susan Staves’

theory about the displacement of sympathy onto the men left behind (Staves, 120). The closeness of the impending marriages also emphasises the fragility of the distinction between decency and fallenness and heightens the tension and drama of the disappearance of the women.

Familiar conventions and symbols, including youth, beauty, vanity and disguise, were used in the representation of Emily and Hetty to suggest their fallen nature and emphasise their tendency to yield to temptation. Other techniques like the mirroring and doubling of characters produced variations on the familiar narrative. In *David Copperfield* Emily's character is contrasted with a number of other women – Martha, Rosa, Annie, Clara and Dora – who represent a dangerous range of passions and frailties, and Agnes the ideal Victorian woman who would rather die than betray her principles. Although in many ways the outward presentation of Hetty corresponds to the idealised and romanticised Victorian child-woman, through careful comparison and mirroring with Dinah, that impression is stripped away. It is worth noting that most of the comparative female characters are either orphans, or possess an inadequate single parent, which acts to underline the moral superiority of Agnes and Dinah for their strength and resistance, and reduce sympathy for Emily and Hetty because their literary equals resist temptation. Matured and centred by the development of womanly skills, Agnes looks after her father and as the central figure in the household has agency and responsibility for the moral safety of others (the role of the 'angel'). Dinah is much older than Hetty and despite the danger she is exposed to through her mobility and association with factory work she is morally superior, has faith, commonsense and authority which comes directly from god. Dinah also has domestic skills as evidenced by her visits to Lisbeth, although her wandering makes her as potentially as disruptive as Hetty. Moral strength and lack of egoism is emphasised in the portrayal of Agnes and Dinah; they consider others before self, and use the agency and self-control they possess for good, channelling the noble

virtues of womanhood, particularly service to others, while Emily and Hetty emphasise and underline negative beliefs about women.

The representation of the tempter is also portrayed differently in the novels through the different techniques used to explore character. Although Steerforth's intentions are never explicitly revealed his deceitful and selfishly cruel character is established early in the novel and his role as tempter is identified in his manipulative relationships with David, Rosa, his schoolfellows and the ladies of the Creakle family. There is an indication of some conscience and awareness of wrong behaviour when he tells David, "I wish we were all good" (237) and "I wish I'd had a judicious father" (375). However, the repetition of the phrase "I wish" indicates that he blames his inadequacies on others. For all his wishes Steerforth never attempts to modify his behaviour or make changes. Emily's battles with her conscience are revealed when she tells David "I am not as good a girl as I ought to be" (292) and when she removes her hand from Ham's in Steerforth's presence. Steerforth's actions – establishing his reptilian manservant Littimer in Yarmouth, buying a yacht and naming it the "Little Emily", and his frequent visits to Yarmouth – signify determined intentional seduction. Steerforth exhibits anger and irritation at Ham's dogged faithfulness and at Martha's reappearance in Emily's life, fearing that his careful schemes will be overturned by these examples and portents. Steerforth's practised and determined seduction highlight Emily's victim status, eliciting sympathy for a poor ignorant girl at the mercy of a powerful and experienced man.

In a departure from the traditional shadowy representation of the seducer whose true nature is usually hidden or only hinted at, Arthur Donnithorne's struggles with his conscience are represented through psychologically realistic explorations of his efforts to resist temptation. Weakness is revealed through detailed explorations of Arthur's attempts to physically remove himself from Hetty's allure, while his initial determination to seek advice from the Rector and the justifications he employs to ignore his moral conscience are explicitly revealed. This struggle is presented entirely through Arthur's thoughts; he is clearly

aware of the dangers of his behaviour. In contrast Hetty's doubts are never about right or wrong behaviour merely about whether Arthur loves her and if she will ride in a carriage, wear pretty dresses and white stockings. Class difference plays an important role in the representation of fallenness in *Adam Bede* and the role and culpability of victim and seducer. Arthur has a sense of morality and a conscience and believes inherently that his class, education and good intentions will protect him from any wrongdoing and allow him to make amends. Hetty's belief that the young Squire was "a great gentleman, and could have his way in everything" (151), increases her vulnerability to temptation: her background, social position and experience has taught her unquestioning acquiescence to anything asked of her by the "young Squire" and his status makes his attention very flattering. She drifts along on the expectation that everything will go well, because he is a gentleman. Arthur's representation helps create sympathy for Hetty who is shown as giving in to class expectations while his gender, class and education imply choice and agency. Arthur's weakness and egoism are, however, similar to Hetty's. Class was a very important element in the construction of the Victorian fallenness narrative as it related to temptation.

Fall

The second – and central – element in the fallen narrative is of course the fall. This is important because it removes the possibility of redemption and confirms the inexorability of the downward path. In the presentation of Emily's fall Dickens continues to employ the conventional features of the fallenness narrative and conform to Victorian sensibilities by making the stages in Emily's seduction obvious only in hindsight. Emily and Steerforth are never seen alone together and David's failure to read the signs and signals of their relationship highlights his naivety and innocence while underlining and emphasising Steerforth's slyness and dishonesty. Emily's fall is only revealed by her disappearance and farewell letter: "When you, who love me so much better than I have ever deserved, even

when my mind was innocent, see this I shall be far away...never to come back, unless he makes me a lady” (386). The mystery created by Emily’s conduct and the suspicions about Steerforth’s behaviour are revealed – a carefully contrived surprise for her family and the reader. Emily’s letter reveals her shame and disgrace (“know what I suffer...I am so bad...try to think as if I died when I was little...I’ll pray for all, often, on my knees” (386)), and employs many of the traditional metaphors and beliefs about fallen women to depict Emily’s mental state: her experience of suffering and shame; her acceptance of the necessity of separation from her family; and her assumption of a psychologically and physically submissive position. The description of Emily’s actions focuses on the impact on other people: Ham is devastated; Mrs Gummidge falls silent; little Minnie Joram sobs; Mrs Steerforth is hurt because her son has “set this wretched fancy against his mother’s claims upon his duty” (401); and Aunt Betsy believes that Emily should have thought before she “caused so much misery” (428). The belief that the blemish of fallenness has the ability to destroy the lives of everyone who is contaminated by contact with the woman is confirmed and expanded by the plot. Emphasis on Emily’s innate purity emphasises her fate as a victim of Steerforth’s duplicity and makes her a victim of male sexual desire. Because she is a morally aware character she goes into voluntary exile, showing that she understands her sin and the narrative displacement of her misery on to others, especially her compassionate and forgiving friends, authorises reader sympathy.

In a reversal of the conventionally veiled and hinted at portrayal of seduction used in *David Copperfield*, Hetty’s fall is explicitly portrayed and assured from the moment she flirts with Arthur Donnithorne in the dairy. Hetty and Arthur are realistically portrayed as young and moved by natural sensuality to pleasure themselves and one another, showing the universality of desire. Several secret meetings in the woods where kisses are openly exchanged are portrayed in detail. Victorian readers would have correctly interpreted these meetings, the disclosure that Hetty had received and concealed gifts of jewellery from Arthur

Donnithorne, and the presence of her “little pink silk neckerchief” (304) in the Hermitage, as compelling evidence of a sexual relationship. The explicit portrayal of Hetty’s seduction had the potential to be very shocking; to overcome this George Eliot used hints, suggestions and metaphors to illustrate the dangers inherent in romantic sentiment and the absence of social and personal control. Neither Hetty nor Arthur have been properly guided, they childishly give in to urges and desires ignoring the impact on others or possible wider consequences. The emphasis placed on Arthur’s education and experience, his social and moral awareness and agency, allocates the responsibility to him but does not absolve Hetty from blame. She is complicit in her seduction, but her portrayal emphasises her lack of moral awareness.

Another reversal of the standard portrayal of fallenness is Adam Bede’s reaction when he discovers the lovers. His actions are unique: his anger and blame are entirely directed at Arthur Donnithorne and challenge the Victorian double-standard that exonerated the man and condemned the woman. Adam forces Arthur to make a confession of sorts, and he acts to protect and defend Hetty. There is no public disclosure, and he does not blame Hetty: “I’ll take care of you as if I was your brother. You’re the same as ever to me, for I don’t believe you’ve done any wrong knowingly” (322). Hetty dreads disclosure to her family only because “They would think her conduct shameful: and shame was torture, that was poor Hetty’s conscience” (336). Hetty is not ashamed of her behaviour, she is frustrated and angry about the end of her dreams; her main anxiety is how others will see her. Arthur Donnithorne also cares about how others will view him, but he at least is able to see himself “in the light of Adam’s indignation, and regard Adam’s suffering as not merely a consequence, but an element of his error... he stood face to face with the first irrevocable evil he had ever committed” (300). His pride hurt and desperate to avoid public exposure, Arthur Donnithorne compounds his errors by lying to Adam about the extent of the relationship and justifying his behaviour to himself: “he began to pity himself for the necessity he was under of deceiving Adam...But then, it was the only right thing to do” (313). As a result of his part in Hetty’s

fall Arthur Donnithorne is significantly banished from the plot while Hetty remains at the centre of the narrative, a variation on the common narrative where both lovers are banished from the central part of the story. Shared knowledge of the secret relationship links Adam and Hetty together resulting in their betrothal. Arthur has some conscience but misleads Adam. Hetty has none, her decision to marry Adam is a result of despair and sadness, establishing equal responsibility for the events that follow and compassion for Adam, whose attitude and response is portrayed sympathetically. The narrative of *Adam Bede* challenges both the Victorian double standard and sentimental representations of fallenness by realistically portraying the emotional and psychological motivations of all participants in the sexual fall.

In both *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* the breakdown of family and community is clearly identified as a consequence of sexual delinquency. Emily's actions result in the dispersal of her family group, ultimately resulting in the abandonment of a happy home and banishment of the family to the extreme ends of the Empire. In *Adam Bede* the breakdown of the Hayslope community and the threatened departure of the Bede and Poyser families is a consequence of Hetty's fall but the responsibility for this breakdown is firmly situated with Arthur Donnithorne whose behaviour has irretrievably destroyed his hereditary authority as protector and legal and moral centre of the district. Arthur's voluntary departure makes it possible for the families to remain but aristocratic influence is destroyed forever. Arthur's child is dead, and the emphasis on his weakness and impotence when he returns at the close of the novel specifically indicates the end of the Donnithorne family line. The representation of Arthur restores sympathy for him: Dinah repeatedly refers to him as "a poor young man" (538) – although his promotion to Colonel emphasises the inequality of the punishment and the harshness of Hetty's banishment. Unity is restored by the depiction of the Harvest Supper (515) where communal strength is restored.

To a large extent, the pathos and drama of the fall in *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* is emphasised by the emotional reaction of the men who love Emily and Hetty. Susan

Staves identifies the importance to the fallen narrative of “rendering the grief of the girl’s parents, especially of her father” (Staves, 120), which represents the death of the “family itself” (Staves, 122). The fate of Emily and Hetty rests on a loving man, a father substitute, who seeks them out in their misery. Mr Peggotty resolves to search for Emily; blaming himself for her failings he vows to find his “fallen child” (390). His meeting with Mrs Steerforth emphasises class differences and inequalities and destroys any remaining hope that Steerforth might ever make Emily a ‘lady’, confirming the urgent need for her to return to the protection of her Uncle. Mrs Steerforth speaks for her son making it clear that she is the source of her son’s selfishness and heartless behaviour, while Mr Peggotty’s shame and hurt are accentuated by her heartless words and insults. Mrs Steerforth’s assertion that marrying Emily would ruin her son illustrates the double standard of the fallenness narrative: working-class women are ruined by illicit sex; upper-class men are damaged only by unequal marriage. Emphasising the inequalities created by society’s rules creates sympathy for Emily and explains some of Steerforth’s weaknesses. When articulated by Mrs Steerforth, the blame which society places on women appears particularly unfair and unequal.

By contrast, Adam specifically repudiates class difference in his confrontation with Arthur Donnithorne: “I don’t forget what’s owing to you as a gentleman; but in this thing we’re man and man” (308). However Adam accepts Arthur Donnithorne’s lies in response to his question, “Either tell me that she can never be my wife – tell me you’ve been lying – or else promise me what I’ve said” (308), because Arthur is a gentleman. The tragedy of Adam’s situation is heightened by dramatic irony; unlike the reader he is not aware of the truth. His “trembling joy” (359) at Hetty’s acceptance of his marriage proposal makes him an object of sympathy and increases the suspense of the narrative. This scene also highlights Adam’s superiority: despite his class, his honourable behaviour and understanding raises his moral authority while Arthur’s dishonesty shows him to be the lesser man.

The issues of class and manliness are also raised by Mr Peggotty's search for Emily which is an essential and poignant element of the representation of fallenness in *David Copperfield* creating drama, sympathy and suspense. His grim determination is emphasised by his constant reiteration of one idea: "I'm a going to seek my niece" (389); "I'm a going to seek her far and wide" (404); "I'd go ten thousand mile, I'd go till I drop dead...and find my Emily" (501). The constant repetition of this idea intensifies the suffering and misery of his situation. David describes Mr Peggotty as "strong, and like a man upheld by steadfastness of purpose, whom nothing could tire out" (496) and increases the pathos by contrasting this description with a pitiful scene where he sobs aloud while recounting his dream of Emily falling; "like death afore me" (498). Interspersing Mr Peggotty's visits to David by long periods of the *David Copperfield* narrative relating to other elements of the multiple plots emphasises the passing of time and the futility of the search. Creating sympathy for Emily – who ironically does not know that she has been forgiven – and fostering pity for Mr Peggotty in his determination and loyalty.

Decline

The "infinite consequences" (Anderson, 133) of the sexual lapse are represented by the third element in the fallenness narrative, decline: the portrayal of the relentlessly downward path of the fallen woman into irreversible suffering and misery. One unvarying characteristic of the fallen narrative "reaching back to the Old Testament...is the absolute transforming power of the fall" (Auerbach 1982, 160), which changed the sexualised woman forever, confirming her outcast status from society. Dickens and Eliot project this aspect of the narrative onto both Emily and Hetty in their representations of fallenness. Emily is forever altered by her sin and her awareness of her shame and disgrace, changing her from a young vibrant woman full of life and promise into the stereotypical contrite and deeply shamed woman. All visions of the fallen Emily show her in a prone position, eyes averted,

head down, refusing all hope of happiness or redemption; an image of fallenness frequently portrayed in the art and iconography of the Victorian era. Mr Peggotty's final description of his niece – "a slight figure, kinder worn; soft, sorrowful, blue eyes; a delicate face; a pretty head, leaning a little down; a quiet voice and way – timid almost. That's Emily!" (378) – embodies the idealised and sympathetic view of the fallen woman. Emily lives out her life looking after others, "busy and doing good" (576) performing acts of contrition and self-denial, refusing help or comfort for herself, a penitent version of the Victorian domestic angel.

Externally Hetty remains a version of the ideal Victorian woman but she grows hard and hollow within. The changes to Hetty are a result of misery and experience rather than shame or contrition, challenging the notion of the fundamental change that sexual experience brings and locating the reason for change not in the woman's shame but in her suffering and the reaction of society. Hetty gains an appreciation of home and family (371), feels a sense of fellowship with helpless timid creatures (373), and for the first time in her life "wished no one would look at her" (374) because of her experiences rather than innate feelings of shame. In essentials Hetty does not change, however she is described as a "beautiful corpse" (377) and emphasis is placed on the external effect of the changes brought about by her experience of desolation and bitterness:

And yet even in her most self-conscious moments, the face was sadly different from that which had smiled at itself in the old speckled glass, or smiled at others when they glanced at it admiringly. A hard and even fierce look had come in the eyes, though their lashes were as long as ever, and they had all their dark brightness. And the cheek was never dimpled with smiles now. It was the same rounded, pouting, childish prettiness, but with all love and belief in love departed from it – the sadder for its beauty, like that wondrous Medusa-face, with the passionate, passionless lips. (384)

This description contrasts with that of Emily above, emphasising the damaging and hardening impact of experience.

Although both authors use the myth of the absolute transforming nature of the fall, there are different outcomes. Emily becomes more ‘womanly’, gentle, kind and self-denying; Hetty becomes less ‘womanly’, resulting in her inability to love and protect her child. This counts against her in the court case where the “the unnaturalness of her crime stood out the more harshly by the side of her hard immovability and obstinate silence” (436). Dickens praised Eliot’s “conception of Hetty’s character [which] is so extraordinarily subtle and true...skilful, determined and uncompromising” (qtd in Rignall, 3), he was also convinced that the author of *Adam Bede* was a woman because “no man ever before had the art of making himself, mentally, so like a woman” (qtd in Rignall, 95). That Dickens would “nail [his] colours to the Mast with ‘Eve’ upon them” because of the “exquisite truth and delicacy” of the story telling, and the narration of Hetty’s trial, which “affected me far more than any other, and exalted my sympathy with the writer to its utmost height” (Carroll, 85), as a factor in his conjecture about Eliot’s gender, establishes his compliance with orthodox assumptions about the nature of women.

The realistic depiction of the evolution of Hetty’s transformation creates an understanding of the events that led to infanticide and allocates blame equally: identifying the weaknesses and injustices inherent in society while not exonerating Hetty for her actions. Hetty is never portrayed voluntarily in the prone position, a departure from the conventional imagery of fallen women. She faints at the pronouncement of her death sentence and again when she is saved from the gallows, and she is ordered to her knees by Dinah in her prison cell but she is never willingly penitent, either as a result of her inability to comprehend the true nature of her sin or as a result of the hardness developed from experience. Eliot leaves the reader to decide but hints at a sympathetic and compassionate audience response by the representation of Hayslope community opinion. Even the servants at the Chase “who despite

the partisanship of household servants” were all longing to know “what was to become of pretty Hetty Sorrell” (441) and sympathy for Hetty is garnered by the cheerful, careless and self-justifying thoughts of Arthur Donnithorne as he rattles home to Hayslope in his carriage full of plans and schemes for the future, unaware of the tragic circumstances which await him.

Victorian society emphasised the importance of security and protection for women; consequently wandering, pregnancy, prostitution and suicide are the usual dangers used to represent the extreme dangers in the third stage in the life of fallen women. Wandering was both a result of and a symbol of the fallen woman’s outcast status. Both Emily and Hetty become wanderers. Emily’s banishment from the narrative makes it necessary to find a narrative method to bring the reader up to date with her situation and Dickens provides an opportunity for this when David is summoned to the Steerforth home to hear the story of Emily’s escape. The use of Littimer to describe Emily’s relationship with Steerforth reinforces the memory of Emily’s innate goodness and superiority while Littimer’s description of Steerforth’s cowardice and his immoral plan to pass her on to his servant highlights the depravity of both men. The news that Emily is alone and unprotected emphasises her peril, draws attention to her courage and authorises sympathy for Emily by emphasising the degradation of her position. Rosa’s presence at this scene makes it possible to raise the spectre of the anticipated end of fallen and ashamed characters – “she may be dead” (568) which is confirmed by Littimer, “she may have drowned herself” (270). Society’s beliefs and the iniquitous double standard of the fallenness narrative are thereby confirmed by two of the most insensitive and unlikeable characters in *David Copperfield*, exposing the hypocrisy of society and authorising an opposite and sympathetic judgment. This scene also emphasises the development of David’s maturity: his opinion and empathy is now based on knowledge and experience and he dares to challenge and doubt Littimer’s respectability.

Before she is discovered and rescued, Emily's despair and danger from prostitution are displaced in the text onto Martha, Emily's cautionary double. This fate is made explicit when David and Mr Peggotty follow Martha to the river where she clearly intends to commit suicide: an image frequently used in literary and visual representations of fallenness. Martha's reappearance in London at this time in the plot is a vivid reminder to readers of Emily's likely destiny: wandering, prostitution and suicide, increasing the urgency of discovery and rescue. Contemporary discourse routinely portrayed London as a place of contamination; the Victorian "Babylon" (Nead 2000, 3), a "place of commerce and exchange, display and selling of all things" (Nord, 1), and a dangerous place for unprotected women who were conventionally portrayed as either in danger or dangerous and frequently associated with urban blight and disease. In confirmation of that impression Emily is immediately tricked by a "decent woman" when she arrives in London (619). When she seeks out and saves Emily, "on the brink of more than I can say or think on" (619), the compassion, kindness and generosity shown to Martha by Mr Peggotty is rewarded.

Pregnancy was also a powerful symbol of fallenness in conventional tradition where it was frequently the only outward sign of the fall. Pregnancy and maternity were determined by biomedical discourse to be woman's natural role but in unmarried women it was an outward sign of sin and shame, a social stigma. Maternal love was deemed to be natural and instinctive to woman (Matus, 157), and much of the traditional fallenness narrative relied on pregnancy to redeem or condemn sexually delinquent women by creating a narrative crisis revealing character. Emily is restored to her family without this physical evidence of her fall, which would have made hope and rescue more difficult. Dickens saw infanticide as a socio-economic crime, one that was a result of adverse social conditions and a question of class (Matus, 164). He knew that neglected and abandoned women often had little choice and in January 1840 had served as a juryman at an inquest at the Marylebone Workhouse in the case of a young mother who was suspected of infanticide.¹ Despite this experience and

contemporary social concerns there is only a single exploration of infanticide in a Dickens novel.² Perhaps Dickens felt that making Emily pregnant would reduce the capacity for reader compassion and complicate the credibility of her rescue.

Hetty stays in Hayslope after her seduction, remaining the central focus of the *Adam Bede* narrative, and there are frequent narrative intimations of pregnancy. Arthur Donnithorne has a “dread...which deepened the shadow” (314) of his fears about Hetty; while Adam, ignorant of the true extent of the relationship is “thankful it’s been no worse” (324) and he has not seen Hetty “brought to sorrow and shame” (325). Other hints point to significant physical changes in Hetty: Mrs Poyser observes that she is “harder, older and less childlike” (352); Adam notes “a grave steadiness” (363) and “a more luxuriant womanliness” about her (359). Hetty’s condition is suggested by coded veiled references in the chapter entitled “The Hidden Dread” which includes allusions to “a worse difficulty” (362), which is “the bitterest of life’s bitterness” (365). The “on-coming of her great dread” (365) is finally and unambiguously confirmed in the parlour of the Green Man in Windsor (377). The narrative invokes the connection between pregnancy and suicide in the fallenness narrative through the image of Hetty sitting beside a pool, that she has “thought of often in the nights of the month just gone by”, where she “looks earnestly at it as if trying to guess what sort of bed it would make for her young round limbs” (365).

By keeping her at the centre of the story instead of banishing her from the plot Eliot provides insight into Hetty’s suffering and authorises the development of sympathy towards both her and Adam. A contemporary reviewer objected to the representation of Hetty’s pregnancy, complaining that it “read like the rough notes of a man-midwife’s conversation with a bride” (qtd in Carroll, 76), which stresses the originality of Eliot’s realist representation of both the seduction and the pregnancy in *Adam Bede*. Maintaining Hetty as the narrative focus of this part of the novel emphasises the inevitability of pregnancy and although by modern standards the inferences are subtle and oblique, the number and variety

of hints makes the pregnancy obvious. Eliot also uses the calendar of farming events to highlight the passing of time and the “coming of dread” (365). When she leaves Hayslope Hetty’s misery and motivation are apparent and her acceptance of her future reality as a “suppliant on the man who would think it a misfortune that she was obliged to cling to him” (367) shows the development of her understanding and assists the creation of compassion for Hetty’s suffering during her journeys of “Hope” and “Despair”.

In contrast to the depiction of Emily’s experiences on the road, recounted by her Uncle after her rescue, “poor wandering” Hetty’s experiences are portrayed in detail (389). Each misstep, each terror and each small triumph of the outcast’s journey is described from her perspective. At the beginning of her journey Hetty’s pain, “sadness in the heart” and “chill of definite fear” (369) are emphasised in conjunction with her ignorance, inexperience and isolation. Even the ironically entitled journey in “hope” is identified as hopeless because Hetty “could conceive no other existence for herself than a hidden one and a hidden life” (271). The narrator makes a direct appeal for reader understanding and empathy – “well-read ladies may find it difficult to understand her state of mind” (372) – and her thoughts and feelings are explicitly depicted, with descriptions of Hetty’s sadness, terror and inexperience balanced against her pride, determination and bravery. The adjectives used emphasise her inner strength at moments of despair – “fainting courage” and “proud nature” (372-3) – and create a fresh image of Hetty, illustrating her bravery in the face of desperation. “O what a large world it was, and what hard work for her to find her way in it” (374) is the narrator’s comment as he calls for sympathy and compassion for Hetty’s plight, pre-empting questions and doubts by reminding readers that what “seems a slight journey as you look at a map or remember your own pleasant travels to and from the meadowy banks of the Avon... how wearily long it was to Hetty” (374). The narrative explores Hetty’s thought process, her consideration of various alternatives, and underlines the absence of real choices, revealing the rationale for the decisions she makes. Episodes which represent Hetty dissolving in tears and

misery are contrasted by examples of her strength and determination. Hetty's mind is exercised by her dilemmas which underline the huge efforts that she makes to appear "neatly dressed" and "resolutely self-possessed" with an "air of self-reliance" (381), suggesting a depth and strength of character in Hetty unimaginable earlier in the story.

The uncertainty of Hetty's future is emphasised by the narrator's commentary where he interprets Hetty's self-possession as "a sign that the last hope has departed" (383), invoking the list of bleak alternatives available in the familiar narrative of fallenness: rescue; prostitution; suicide and death. Rescue is impossible: Arthur Donnithorne is too far away; Adam is unaware of her situation; and Hetty has determined not to confess. A life of prostitution would seem to be an option for the thoughtless drifting Hetty of the earlier narrative, but she turns her face resolutely northwards away from the temptations of London. Leaving suicide and death as the remaining options. Hetty's decision to "drown herself where her body would never be found" (383) is contrasted with her actions, "life was still strong in her" (384). Contrary to hegemonic assumptions about the shame-induced suicide of the fallen, Hetty decides that although she faces "desolation and cold, and a life of shame" (386) she cannot take the final step and drifts aimlessly towards an unknown fate, reduced to little more than a "trapped creature" (Hardwick, 187). The narrator asks, "What will be the end? – the end of her objectless wandering, apart from all love, caring for human beings only through her pride, clinging to life only as the hunted brute clings to it?" (389); a question deliberately intended to increase tension and sympathy at the conclusion of the "Journey" chapters when the narrative focus returns to Adam, leaving Hetty's destiny suspended.

Endings

The final element in the traditional fallenness narrative, a consequence of the belief in the contaminating nature of the fallen, was total banishment conventionally achieved by death in an act of self-destruction or self-abnegation. Dickens and Eliot had personal

experiences that led them to challenge the absolute notion of the contaminating effect of fallenness; Dickens' familiarity with the inmates of Urania House had led him to develop his philosophy of rescue, help and hope while Eliot was considered fallen and contaminated, she was excluded from social events where her partner was welcomed and the wives and daughters of their friends did not visit her at home. Despite this personal knowledge and experience neither author offers a radical alternative to the accepted fallenness narrative: both fallen characters are banished from the novel as a method of enabling a suitable romantic conclusion for the title characters. Interestingly both Emily and Hetty end their wandering in Australia, confirming Australia in the Victorian imagination as a place both of second chances and punishment, and the fallen woman as deserving of both an opportunity to reform and exclusion.

Dickens' solution for Emily emphasises his philosophy of second chances, hope and redemption: "to enable women whose conduct shall have fully proved their earnestness and reformation, to go abroad where in a distant country they may become the faithful wives of honest men and live and die in peace" (Storey and Fielding, 698-9). Emily and Martha's move to Australia aligns with Dickens' publicly stated belief in the ability of earnest women to reform, although as Philip Collins suggests: "Clearly one is supposed to admire Emily's resolution more than Martha's earthier pursuit of happiness" (Collins, 114). By contrast Hetty's transportation is a consequence of her crime rather than her sexual fall. Her future is the opposite of Emily's, alone in a desolate place without protection, exposed to reproach and humiliation – inevitably prostitution – a harsh life where, as Arthur Donnithorne acknowledges, she will "never know comfort anymore" (470). Hetty's banishment has two main purposes: infanticide was considered so thoroughly unnatural and horrifying that redemption was impossible. However she also needed to be removed from Hayslope because there was no real place for her in the community where she would have forever remained a symbol and reminder of sin and shame. Hetty's pardon and departure facilitated the happy

domestic partnership of Adam and Dinah and the eventual redemption of Arthur. Forgiveness for him would have been harder to justify had Hetty been executed. Both Dickens and Eliot needed to reward the moral development of their heroes with a happy middle-class marriage, conforming to the traditional romance plot, and in order to achieve this the fallen women need to disappear. Banishment was the easiest solution to the narrative dilemma.

The familiar trope of suicide by drowning frequently employed by visual artists and authors of the Victorian era to emphasise the despair and lack of alternatives available to fallen characters, is used by both Dickens and Eliot. In *David Copperfield* the image is first used when Emily is a child, “walking much too near the brink...springing forward to her destruction” (35) as a pointer to her eventual fall. After her fall Emily’s danger is displaced onto Martha, a woman of the streets who serves as “both victim and embodiment of threatening forces in the social environment” (Anderson, 78); one of a “phalanx of [Dickens’] fallen women moving toward the Thames” (Gates, 135), who is rescued from the river in time to help return Emily to her Uncle. Rosa Dartle, one of the most pitiless and unsympathetic characters in the novel, blatantly suggests suicide as an option for Emily. However Emily survives and Steerforth meets a watery end in her place but unlike the pathetic self-destructive remorseful drowning of fallen characters, Steerforth’s death has a heroic quality tempered by irony, coincidence and pathos when Ham dies trying to rescue him.

Suicide is also explicitly explored as an option for Hetty. On two occasions she is shown on the verge of self-destruction, but her innate life force is strong and she continues to search out other solutions to her problems. In her confession Hetty also reveals an intention to find a pool and drown her child; unable to rouse the necessary brutality to kill it directly she abandons it in the woods in a shallow grave: “I thought perhaps somebody ‘ud come and take care of it, and then it wouldn’t die” (453) suggesting that her experiences have increased her capacity for compassion and her heart is much softer than Mrs Poyser’s “pibble” (156). This

emphasises Hetty's childish personality and her own need for mothering and authorises a sympathetic response for her pitiful nature.

Rescue and reform were options that authors regularly explored in representations of fallenness. The large group of people looking for Emily, including her Uncle, David himself, Martha and Mrs Gummidge, confirms Anderson's opinion that Dickens does not "imagine women as potential agents of their own reform" (Anderson, 74), and the agency that enables Mr Peggotty and David to rescue Martha leads directly to Emily's rescue in return. The influence and kindness of others, especially other women, is an important aspect of Emily and Martha's subsequent lives. All attempts to rescue Hetty, however, fail; Arthur Donnithorne, Adam, and the Rector are equally unsuccessful, revealing Eliot's belief that redemption can only come from within, through self-knowledge and understanding. Adam states society's opinion explicitly: "her ruin can't be undone" (459). Hetty's ignorance and apparent hardness assure her final condemnation. The powerful image of the woman preacher with spiritual authority across class, gender, and religious boundaries, which formed the basis of *Adam Bede*, is celebrated in the representation of Dinah. Reporting to Adam Dinah tells him that Hetty's "poor soul is very dark, and discerns little above the things of the flesh, she is no longer hard: she is contrite – she has confessed all to me. The pride of her heart has given way and she leans on me for help and desires to be taught" (475). The last sight of Hetty shows her obeying Dinah's injunctions to ask for Adam's forgiveness, "like a little child", (460), but it remains ambiguous if she has been 'saved' in a religious sense, or even if she truly understands her crime.

In a melodramatic scene Hetty is saved from the "hideous symbol of a deliberately-inflicted sudden death" (461), at the last possible moment. This scene adds little to Hetty's representation but her dramatic rescue in sight of the gallows in a breathless thrilling paragraph redeems Arthur for some of his earlier behaviour:

the rider looks as if his eyes were glazed by madness, and he saw nothing... See, he has something in his hand – he is holding it up as if it were a signal...it is Arthur Donnithorne, carrying in his hand the hard-won release from death. (462)

Arthur has been able to reduce Hetty's sentence to one of transportation; his elevation to Squire is insufficient to achieve a pardon because the crime of infanticide is too unnatural and disturbing to society. Hetty is finally banished from the story, although she remains the link between characters and her actions contribute to Dinah's rising moral significance, as "the young Methodist woman who had brought the obstinate criminal to confess" (462). Dinah replaces Hetty at centre of the narrative and the "awe and hush" of the admiring gallows crowd is adopted by Arthur Donnithorne who asserts "I could worship that woman" (470) and by Adam who eventually realises that his love for Dinah "was better and more precious to him; for it was the outgrowth of that fuller life which had come to him from his acquaintance with deep sorrow" (530).

The emphasis on 'woman-to-woman' rescue in both novels is vitally important because it was the women in Victorian society – the guardians of the moral society and preservers of home and family – who were expected to shun the fallen and needed to be protected from their contaminating presence. By placing the emphasis on womanly kindness and forgiveness both authors are explicitly appealing to women, calling for social change and sympathy for individual weakness. Agnes and Dinah are identified as appropriate partners for David and Adam by the care and sympathy they have demonstrated for Emily and Hetty and they are tied to their husbands by shared experience and shared sympathy. The final chapter in each novel includes a cosy domestic scene, which reinforces the middle-class status of the hero and the continuity of community values. However, the role of the fallen women in the formation of domestic safety is not ignored and both novels end with a discussion of the fate of the 'poor wanderers'.

Conclusion.

Novels are part of a “complex web of images, stories, myths and beliefs that exceed the boundaries of identity” (Felski, 90) and gender. However at first glance it would appear that Eliot, the female author of *Adam Bede*, portrays the fallen Hetty with much less sympathy and understanding than Dickens does little Emily, substantiating the belief of the narrator of *Adam Bede* who asserts that it is “generally a feminine eye that first detects the moral deficiencies hidden under the ‘dear deceit’ of beauty” (155). Eliot’s depiction of Hetty appears overtly harsh: she is portrayed as ignorant, vain and selfish, and she is convicted of the most monstrous crime of Victorian womanhood. Hetty’s refusal to take responsibility, or even to admit giving birth, makes her appear utterly irredeemable. Hetty’s character is presented unsentimentally, and her fall is portrayed as the direct result of her ignorance, egotism, and emotional immaturity. In contrast Eliot’s representation of Hetty’s seducer, Arthur Donnithorne, draws attention to his moral awareness and good intentions; his guilt and anguish over Hetty’s tragedy is made explicit and his actions are portrayed as youthful indiscretions and a consequence of boredom and high spirits. Arthur’s ‘natural’ male passion is contrasted with Hetty’s ‘unnatural’ maternal feelings. Arthur is depicted as genuinely penitent and is eventually welcomed back into his community, a much reduced but wiser man.

Most of Dickens’ fallen characters exist on the edge of his novels and are explicitly used to convey moral lessons. Emily is one of a range of fallen women victims who drift through the margins of Dickens’ novels, symbols of Victorian concerns about disorder in society.³ Dickens emphasises Emily’s smallness, delicacy and need of protection and her representation makes it clear that her yearning for social advancement is motivated by misdirected ‘natural’ womanly self-sacrifice. In explanation of Emily’s fall Dickens makes much of Steerforth’s vicious, selfish nature and the representation of his purposeful and premeditated seduction emphasises his responsibility. The portrayal of Emily as a blameless

victim makes her a suitable candidate for rescue, and while she escapes the usual fate of fallen women, pregnancy and death Steerforth is doomed.

It might be possible to attribute the contrasting applications of the fallenness narrative in *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* to the gender of the author. However the similarities and differences in representation can be attributed to author intention rather than gender, and it can be argued that the complexities of the variations are primarily the result of the “development of the novel and changing social attitudes” (Armstrong, 49). Although both authors specifically intended their representation of fallenness to generate an extension of sympathy, their deeper aims were quite different. Dickens intended that his depiction of Emily would be “new and pathetic” (Storey and Fielding, 682), arousing an emotional response and an extension of charitable impulse for a specific social issue; while Eliot intended her use of the familiar metaphor of fallenness in *Adam Bede* as a way of extending our contact with others “beyond the bounds of our present lot” (Pinney, 270), inspiring an intellectual response, an expanded understanding of real and individual weakness and human frailty in general. For that reason the majority of characters in *Adam Bede* are portrayed as deeply flawed “real breathing men and women” (176), prejudices, weaknesses and imperfections are realistically rendered. Only Dinah Morris’s character is rendered in an idealistic way making her less believable compared to the other characters which may account for the difficulty this modern reader has in making a sympathetic connection with her but would have increased her attraction to a contemporary audience.

There are differences in the style and representation of the two novels that may be attributed to gender. *David Copperfield* is primarily concerned with men’s stories and the important and memorable characters are men; David, Steerforth, Mr Peggotty, Mr Micawber and Uriah Heap are represented in detail and their stories are the main focus of the plot. The important woman characters, Peggotty, Aunt Betsy, Clara, Emily and Agnes, are rendered in a stereotypical and symbolic way and exist to offer temptation or support, hindrance, aid and

reward to David. Contrastingly *Adam Bede*, despite the existence of a male titular character and a self-consciously male narrator, is primarily concerned with women's stories. There is extensive detail of women's lives and the story takes place mostly in domestic interiors. There is a great deal of emphasis on traditional community and home, and a very strong maternal presence, calling attention to the relationships between women as mothers, sisters and friends. Women's stories hold the focus of the plot and women's lives are influential and life changing; it was partly this domestic emphasis, which led Dickens to correctly deduce that 'George Eliot' was a woman. However, just as some of the events in the life of the young Charles Dickens were portrayed in the story of David Copperfield the domestic knowledge accumulated by the young Marian Evans found its way into *Adam Bede*, indicating a gendered difference in upbringing rather than the intellectual focus of the novels, and not having a substantial influence on the representation of fallenness in the novels.

Close examination and comparison of the representations of fallenness in *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* reveals structural and narrative elements which challenge the initial interpretation that Eliot's apparently unsympathetic representation of fallenness is gender-based. Hetty is represented uncompromisingly, her shallow and ignorant nature predetermines her fall, but because she remains at the centre of the plot her actions and emotions are explicitly represented and authorise the development of understanding and sympathy for her plight. Furthermore by allowing Hetty the opportunity to confess in her own voice Eliot extends a significant opportunity to Hetty which is absent from other fallen narratives, providing insight into her misery and terror, allowing understanding of her actions and motives and explicitly excluding the suggestion of cold-blooded cruelty towards her child. George Eliot's "careful and believable reproduction of emotional states which were not her own" and her exploration of feelings "psychologically perceptive of real human weakness" (Mitchell, 67) provides a detailed understanding of Hetty's helplessness while not excusing her weaknesses and failings. This fulfils Eliot's intentions as outlined in Chapter

Seventeen of *Adam Bede*, the portrayal of “these fellow mortals, every one, which must be accepted as they are... – amongst whom your life is passed – that it is needful that you should tolerate, pity and love” (176). Eliot’s representation of fallenness in *Adam Bede* is a direct challenge to a society which holds ‘traditional impressions’ of fallen characters as either manifestly pure victims or excessively evil sirens. This attitude is underlined in the narrative through the revelation that her critical Aunt, Mrs Poyser, is surprisingly “less severe than her husband” when she hears of Hetty’s disgrace and the narrator observes: “We are often startled by the severity of mild people on exceptional occasions; the reason is, that mild people are most liable to be under the yolk of traditional impressions” (413). That the widely admired Mrs Poyser can understand and sympathise with Hetty is an indicator of the ethical framework that Eliot is constructing in *Adam Bede*. Dickens’ portrayal of Emily is more conspicuously sympathetic however her fall is predetermined and the narrative establishment of her character focuses on childhood. Emily’s subsequent banishment and silence eliminates any opportunity for character development and realistic insight into her motivation.

A strong sense of social purpose – to help the poor, oppressed and outcast – was an integral part of Dickens’ writing. At the time that *David Copperfield* was written, Dickens was devoting his energies to many public and social issues through his involvement in reforming societies (including Urania Cottage), which were explored in his novels and other writings. *David Copperfield* was Charles Dickens’ eighth novel and his first with a first person narrator and draws directly on events from his own life that were publicly unknown until after his death.⁴ At the time of writing Dickens was a successful and famous author in mid-career, he had a reputation for producing humorous, heavily-populated novels, which often exposed and explored serious social themes and issues through a combination of comic, sympathetic and sentimental portrayals. Dickens had a strong sense of his audience and did not want to risk alienating or challenging middle-class conservatism. With a growing family and other social and economic responsibilities, one of Dickens’ motivations was by necessity

financial; consequently in creating Emily he continued to employ his well-established sentimentalised pattern and style and stopped short of radically confronting notions of good taste.⁵

Any discussion of George Eliot's representation of Hetty in *Adam Bede* cannot disregard the possible influence of her circumstances at the time that she was writing. *Adam Bede* was her first novel, written under a pseudonym to avoid the often prejudiced critical assessments of women's writing (Showalter, 93), which she feared would be further influenced by her personal scandalous circumstances. As an intellectual, experienced non-fiction writer engaged with contemporary issues, Eliot's venture into fiction was a risky endeavour on both a personal and professional level. However she was animated by a serious moral purpose and used *Adam Bede* to expand philosophies which she had explored in her non-fiction writing about the need for the realistic portrayal of ordinary people in ordinary situations as a direct examination of the basis of right conduct, using her 'Aunt's story' as the moral basis for the novel, and elements of her own life as background. Eva Figes identifies the particular problems that women writers faced and the conformity that was "required of her both on a personal level and as an author" (Figes, 17). Women writers faced a dilemma because the "feminisation of authorship derived its authority from an idealised representation of woman and the domestic sphere" (Poovey, 125), making it difficult for a woman writer to depart from the moral imperatives which gave her the authority to write, even when the author possessed unimpeachable credentials, as Elizabeth Gaskell found when *Ruth* was published in 1853.⁶ Any version of fallenness presented by Eliot, which deviated from the expected and conventional, had to be subtle and couched in a way that did not jeopardise the opportunity of publication, challenge accepted mythology, nor expose her to criticism that her own fallen status was contaminating others. Consequently *Adam Bede* is written from a male narratorial perspective and Hetty Sorrel is the physical, intellectual and spiritual opposite of Marian Evans: her motivation is portrayed as egoistic and shallow, and her rejection of

community values is punished remorselessly. However Eliot's exploration of Hetty's circumstances authorises the development of sympathy for her plight and highlights the callous attitudes of Victorian society.

Male authors also had to conform to social expectations. Phillip Collins has detailed how the representations of fallenness in Dickens' novels fell short of corresponding with his direct personal knowledge about the reality of the character and lives of fallen women, which he detailed in his written reports of interviews with potential inmates of Urania Cottage (Collins, 113). Cruel parents and victimised children are staple characters in Dickens' works but in the only representation of an infanticidal woman in Dickens' works there is a direct plea for sympathy and understanding for a woman who in poverty and desperation makes a plan to drown herself and her child:

Have mercy on her! As one in whom this dreadful crime has sprung from Love perverted; from the strongest, deepest Love we fallen creatures know. Think what her misery must have been, when such seed bears such fruit! Heaven meant her to be good. There is no loving mother on the earth who might not come to this, if such a life had gone before. (Dickens, *The Chimes*, 100)

Eliot makes a similar plea in *Adam Bede*, through the direct representation of the circumstances of Hetty's seduction, the development of her misery and the detailed explanation of her actions as outlined in the confession.

Authors make decisions about plot elements and narrative directions from the cultural elements available to them. Both Emily and Hetty are portrayed as silly girls who make silly mistakes, a common aspect of the fallen narrative. The important differences between these representations are the consequences of their actions: Hetty falls pregnant while Emily escapes this fate. Biologically it would seem more likely that Emily, who lives with Steerforth for months and possibly years, would conceive a child. Hetty and Arthur's sexual relationship is by necessity shorter (two months, according to the detailed time scheme) and

more erratic. Therefore we must ask the question: who makes Hetty pregnant and why? The narrative difference cannot be the result of ignorance but of purpose.⁷ Dickens' determination to present the fallen narrative in a fresh way, which emphasised a programme of rescue through emigration, ruled out the complication of a child. By contrast, infanticide lay at the heart of Eliot's 'Aunt's story' which became the basis of *Adam Bede* and was central to the character and plot development of the novel. The use of infanticide, a crime which was causing "prevailing debates about maternal instinct" (Matus, 168), gave Eliot a link into contemporary discourse and an opportunity to explore her thesis regarding the extension of sympathy to ordinary flawed characters regardless of the magnitude of their crimes.

The fallenness narrative is one of a series of traditional plots which have been written and rewritten in "endless chains of revision and repetition" (Felski, 95) providing a backdrop against which authors explored attitudes and philosophies about the nature of their society. The Victorian age was a time of great change and upheaval; long accepted religious beliefs were being challenged by science; political hierarchies were being threatened by revolutionary theories; and long-standing class structures were being dismantled. The universality of the fallen woman narrative highlighted the far-reaching and devastating consequences of flouting the rules. There were ten years between the publication of *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede*, and significantly fitting neatly between the two novels was the publication of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853), which took an idealised fallen woman from the margins of the novel and society and placed her at the centre of a novel as title character and heroine of the main plot. Eliot criticised Gaskell's portrayal of Ruth as lacking "the subdued colouring - the half tints of real life" (qtd in Rignall, 136). Gillian Beer's theory, that in the creation of Hetty Eliot was attempting to find a means of "realising, not aggrandising, the face of ordinary tragedy" by "delicately" distinguishing itself from "common assumptions" about the true nature of fallen women and by questioning their idealisation or demonisation in contemporary literature (Beer, 59), is substantiated by the sympathy that

Eliot is able to engender for Hetty in spite of the harsh representation of her shallow, thoughtless and egotistic personality. Ruth and Hetty (and Emily) have many similarities: they are uneducated country girls, but Ruth's extreme idealisation challenges credulity while Hetty's portrayal remains a fresh likeness of an ordinary seventeen-year-old girl.

Both *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* also employ another common plot, which Felski calls the "Oedipal story", outlining a "man's move towards self-knowledge, where a woman is an obstacle or a goal" (Felski, 104). The question 'what makes a man?' is at least as important to these two novels as 'who is the fallen woman?' The titular characters of both novels achieve Victorian heroic status and social advancement through their association with the fallen women. Emily is one of many dangers that David Copperfield has to overcome on his way to manhood and maturity and exists mainly to remove the more dangerous threat that Steerforth represents while Hetty's story is the central influence on the improvement of Adam's character and standing; his extension of sympathy and his resulting rise in social class. Both novels question the role and status of women and the role and status of men, neither forgives nor underestimates the dangers of masculine sexual excess which in much of Victorian society was, "openly condemned, secretly practised and tacitly condoned" (Groneman, 352) and through the exploration of the consequences of choice, engenders reader sympathy for fallen women. Both James Steerforth and Arthur Donnithorne appear "heroic" to their illicit lovers, heroic in a tradition based on class and gentlemanly status. By careful use of the fallenness narrative in *David Copperfield* and *Adam Bede* Dickens and Eliot create an alternative view of heroism and male characters that are appropriately manly and heroic to Victorian society.

¹ Charles Dickens' Journal – 1840: <http://dickenslive.com/1840.shtml> accessed September 2009.

² In *The Chimes* (1844) a young woman considers drowning herself and her child but changes her mind.

³ "Sketches by Boz" and Christmas Stories are heavily populated by prostitutes including Lilian (*The Chimes*) and a nameless woman in *The Haunted Man*. The novels include a range of fallen characters from prostitutes, Nancy (*Oliver Twist*) and Alice Marwood (*Dombey and Son*) to the aristocratic Lady Deadlock (*Bleak House*).

⁴ John Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, (1872-4) publicly revealed these details for the first time.

⁵ See Philip Collins, 114-5

⁶ Gaskell was fearful of what the responses to *Ruth* might be. Easson, Angus. "Introduction". *Ruth*. By Elizabeth Gaskell. London: Penguin Books, 1997.

⁷ Dickens had a very large family; Eliot significantly managed to avoid pregnancy.

Works Cited

- Adams, James Eli. "Victorian Sexualities." *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*. Ed. Herbert F. Tucker. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999. 123-137.
- Acton, William. *Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social & Sanitary Aspects, in London and Other Large Cities: with Proposals for the Mitigation and Prevention of its Attendant Evils*. 1857. Ed. Peter Fryer. New York: Fredrick A Praeger Publishers, 1969.
- Anderson, Amanda. *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture*. New York: Cornell UP, 1993.
- Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction. A Political History of the Novel*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Ashton, Rosemary. *George Eliot: A Life*. London: Penguin, 1996.
- Auerbach, Nina. "The Rise of the Fallen Woman." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 35, No 1. June 1980: 29-52.
- . *Woman and the Demon*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1982.
- Auster, Henry. *Local Habitations: Regionalism in the Early Novels of George Eliot*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1970.
- Baker, William, ed. *Critics on George Eliot*. London: Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973.
- Barrett, Dorothea. *Vocation and Desire: George Eliot's Heroines*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Beer, Gillian. *George Eliot*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986.
- Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994.
- Buckley, Jerome, H. *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1974.
- Carroll, David, ed. *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2000.

- Clayton, Jay. "The Alphabet of Suffering: Effie Deans, Tess Durbeyfield, Martha Ray, and Hetty Sorrel." *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*. Eds. Jay Clayton, and Eric Rothstein. Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1991. 37–57
- Collins, Philip. *Dickens and Crime*. 3rd ed. New York: St Martin's Press, 1994.
- Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield*. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1992.
- . Journal – 1840: September 2009 <<http://dickenslive.com/1840.shtml>>.
- . *The Haunted Man and The Ghost's Bargain*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004.
- . *The Chimes*. West Valley City, UT: Boomer Books, 2007.
- Dolin, Tim. *Authors in Context: George Eliot*. Oxford World Classics. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.
- Easson, Angus. "Introduction." *Ruth*. By Elizabeth Gaskell. London: Penguin Books, 1997.
- Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. Oxford World Classics. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- . "The History of 'Adam Bede'". *Adam Bede*. Ed. Valentine Cunningham. Oxford World Classics. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- Felski, Rita. *Literature after Feminism*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2003.
- Figs, Eva. *Sex & Subterfuge: Women Writers to 1850*. London: Pandora Press, 1990.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books, 1980.
- Fryer, Peter. "Introduction." *Prostitution*. By William Acton. New York: Fredrick A Praeger Publishers, 1969. 7–19
- Gates, Barbara T. *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988.
- Groneman, Carol. "Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality." *Signs*. Vol. 19, No. 2, Winter, 1994. 337–367

- Hardwick, Elizabeth. *Seduction And Betrayal. Women and Literature*. New York: Random House, 1974.
- Harrison, Anthony H. "1848." *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*. Ed. Herbert F. Tucker. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999. 18–34
- Henry, Nancy. *The Cambridge Introduction to George Eliot*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.
- Jones, Miriam. "The Usual Sad Catastrophe: From the Street to the Parlour in Adam Bede." *Victorian Literature and Culture*. 2004. 305–326.
- Kaminsky, Alica, R. "George Eliot, George Henry Lewes, and the Novel." *PMLA*, Vol 70, No. 5. December 1955. 997–1013.
- Kettle, Arnold. "The Early Victorian Social Problem Novel." *The Pelican Guide to English Literature Volume 6: From Dickens to Hardy*. Ed. Boris Ford. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958.
- Knoepfmacher, U.C. *George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism*. Berkley, CA: U of California P, 1968.
- Levy, Anita. *Other Women: The Writing of Class, Race and Gender, 1832-1898*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991.
- Matus, Jill. *Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity*. Manchester (UK): Manchester UP, 1995.
- Mitchell, Sally. *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading 1835-1880*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981.
- Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women: The Great Writers*. New York: Oxford UP. 1985.
- Nead , Lynda. *Victorian Babylon. People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London*. London: Yale UP, 2000.
- Nord, Deborah, Epstein. *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women Representation and the City*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995.

- Pinney, Thomas, ed. *Essays of George Eliot*. New York: Columbia UP, 1963.
- Poovey, Mary. *Uneven Developments: Women in Culture and Society*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1988.
- Reed, John R. *Victorian Conventions*. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1975
- Reynolds, Kimberley and Nicola Humble. *Victorian Heroines. Representations of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Art*. New York: New York UP, 1993.
- Rignall, John, ed. *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Russ, Joanna. "What Can a Heroine do? Or Why Women Can't Write." *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*. Ed. Susan Koppleman Cornillon. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972. 3–20
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.
- Showalter, Elaine. "The Greening of Sister George." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. December 1980. 292-311.
- Shuttleworth, Sally. *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- Slater, Michael. *Dickens and Women*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1986.
- . "Dickens's Tract for the Times." *Dickens 1970: Centenary Essays*. Ed. Michael Slater. London: Chapman & Hall, 1970. 99–123
- Staves, Susan. "British Seduced Maidens." *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14. Volume 2. Winter 1981. 109–134
- Stone, Harry. *Dickens and the Invisible World*. London: Macmillan, 1979.
- , ed. *Dickens' Working Notes for his Novels*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987.
- Storey, Graham and K. J Fielding, eds. *The Letters of Charles Dickens*. V,5. 1847-1849. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.

Storey, Graham. *David Copperfield; Interweaving Truth and Fiction*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991.

Uglow, Jennifer. *George Eliot*. London: Virago Press, 1987.