Yıldız, N. (2022). The female monsters or the monstrous others: George Eliot and her Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede*. *Uludağ University Faculty of Arts and Sciences Journal of Social Sciences, 23*(42), 583-607.

DOI: 10.21550/sosbilder.960874
Research Article

THE FEMALE MONSTERS OR THE MONSTROUS OTHERS: GEORGE ELIOT AND HER HETTY SORREL IN *ADAM BEDE*

Nazan YILDIZ*

Sending Date / Gönderim Tarihi: 1 July / Temmuz 2021
Acceptance Date / Kabul Tarihi: 10 September / Eylül 2021

ABSTRACT

In the Victorian society, the fallen woman was identified with the monstrous Other as in the case of George Eliot's Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede as well as the author herself. Both Eliot and her Hetty were monsters of their society as they violated the Victorian norms. Through the tragic story of Hetty Sorrel, Eliot depicts how the victimized female becomes a monstrous Other. This paper asserts that Eliot creates Hetty as her double to reflect her own unrest and anger in the conservative Victorian society. The paper also examines how, as a product of Eliot's complex mind, Hetty takes two polar opposite roles throughout the novel: a monster who contravenes the Victorian rules and a monstrous Other who is the victim of Victorian ethics and principles. Accordingly, Hetty becomes Eliot's madwoman who mirrors her own wrath and dilemma between the traditional role attached to woman and her rebellion against patriarchy.

Key Words: *Adam Bede, George Eliot, Hetty Sorrel, monstrous Other, Victorian woman*

Kadın Canavarlar veya Canavar Ötekiler: George Eliot ve *Adam Bede*'deki Karakteri Hetty Sorrel

ÖZET

Viktorya toplumunda düşmüş kadın George Eliot'ın Adam Bede'deki Hetty Sorrel karakteri ve yazarın kendisi gibi canavar Öteki kavramıyla özdeşleştirilirdi. Viktorya dönemi ilkelerini ihlal ettikleri için hem Eliot hem Hetty toplumlarının canavarlarıydılar. Hetty Sorrel'ın trajik hikâyesiyle, Eliot kurban durumundaki kadının

* Assist. Prof. Dr., Karadeniz Technical University Faculty of Letters Department of English Language and Literature, Trabzon / TURKEY, nyildiz@ktu.edu.tr

nasıl canavar Öteki'ne dönüştüğünü gösterir. Bu çalışma Eliot'ın muhafazakâr Viktorya toplumundaki huzursuzluk ve öfkesini yansıtmak için Hetty'i kendi çifti olarak yarattığını savunur. Çalışma aynı zamanda Eliot'ın karmaşık zihninin bir ürünü olarak, roman boyunca Hetty'nin nasıl iki zıt rolü üstlendiğini inceler: Viktorya kurallarına karşı gelen bir canavar ve Viktorya etik ve ilkelerinin kurbanı olan canavar Öteki. Bu bağlamda, Hetty, Eliot'ın yazarın öfke ve kadına atfedilen geleneksel rol ve ataerkil topluma karşı isyanı arasındaki çıkmazını yansıtan deli kadınına dönüşür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Adam Bede, George Eliot, Hetty Sorrel, canavar Öteki, Viktorya dönemi kadını*

Introduction

The Victorian era, along with the industrial revolution, technological improvements, class conflict and the debate between religion and science, was marked by the woman question– the nature and role of woman– a matter dates back to the origin of humankind. The appropriate role of woman has been associated with domestic traits such as raising children, doing the housework and educating herself in a lady manner to represent her husband in the best way. These well-acknowledged womanly attributes, corresponded with the image of the Angel in the house, have designated the private sphere of woman in the Victorian period. In her private sphere, Victorian woman lived under the hegemony of her father or husband. She could not take higher education and there were limited possibilities for her to work like being a governess, a private teacher, a nurse or a fallen woman– the foil of the Angel in the house. When Victorian woman asked for higher education and a full-time job, hence for financial freedom; it was seen as a threat to the entire community. That is why, the Victorians– through newspapers, magazine articles, conduct books, cartoons, novels, poems and plays– went to any extreme to keep this angel in the house since, as Dolin suggests, the image of the Angel in the house was– particularly by the ruling class– recognised as a decisive factor in preserving the social stability and moral prosperity of the whole nation (2015: 71). Thus, in the Victorian frame of mind, the image of woman was moulded by completely different

characteristics from that of man in every respect. Then, like her meek and submissive medieval counterpart whose inferior place, as stated by Power (1975: 9), was specified by the Church since she was believed to be lecherous and irrational; the Victorian woman occupied a secondary place and her merit was in parallel with her acceptance of her subordinate role. More importantly, to become a fallen woman in the eyes of the Victorians did not only cover having sex for money, but any deviation from the codes of the Angel in the house (Dolin, 2015: 143). In other words, any Victorian woman who –one way or another– refused to conform to the rules of the Angel in the house might be labelled as a fallen woman, which was closely identified with the Other, criminal and monstrous. In her "Professions for Women", Woolf ironically describes the Angel in the house as such:

> She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it--in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all--I need not say it---she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty--her blushes, her great grace (2).

For Woolf, moreover, the Angel in the house is a "phantom" (2), is an obstacle on her way of writing and she states that she needs to kill her to be able to go on writing. Woolf continues that "I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defence. Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing" (3). That is how Woolf rebels against the secondary role of woman in the Victorian period which also hinders her writing.

In line with Woolf's argument, the inferior status of Victorian woman was also true for women writers. Writing was uniquely identified with men and, as Gilbert and Gubar put it, "the writer 'fathers' his text

just as God fathered the world" which has been a well-accepted patriarchal belief in Western literary civilization (2000: 4). Therefore, to be taken seriously, Victorian women writers disguised their identities and adopted masculine pen names such as Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontē whose pen names were Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell respectively. That is to say, women writers were the Others of the Victorian literary circle. Expectedly, those Others, like the Brontē sisters, depicted the woman question or the plight of Victorian woman in their works through female protagonists-such as Jane in Charlotte Brontē's *Jane Eyre*, Helen in Anne Brontē's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and Lucy in Charlotte Brontē's *Villette*- locked in the patriarchal system; yet rebelled against the role of angel given to them by the Victorian society. To give an example, in *Villette*, Charlotte Brontē describes the plight of woman through the metaphor of attic:

> [...] to the solitary and lofty attic was I borne, put in and locked in, the key being on the door, and that key he took with him, and vanished. The attic was no pleasant place: I believe he did not know how unpleasant it was, or he never would have locked me in with so little ceremony. In this summer weather, it was hot as Africa; as in winter, it was always cold as Greenland. (1993: 123)

As Brontē encapsulates by means of the metaphor of attic, Victorian men lock Victorian women and keep the key in their hands and they are not alive to the predicament of women which they induce mostly. In addition to their independent female protagonists rebelling against the patriarchal society, Victorian women writers de(re)constructed men's texts; thus the well-accepted image of woman by the existence of a madwoman: a monster, an Other who is the polar opposite of the Angel in the house. Reflecting their rebellious impulses through mad or monstrous women, female writers dramatize their own self-division, their yearning both to accept the structures of patriarchal society and to reject them. Hence, the madwoman of women authors is not merely an antagonist or foil to the protagonist; yet, she is generally "the *author's*

double", a reflection of her own unease and wrath; that is to say, her fragmentation between her real and supposed female identity (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000: 76, 78). In other words, the madwoman is a kind of mirror image of the impasse of Victorian women writers, just like George Eliot, who are caught between the traditional roles assigned to them and their rebellion against the patriarchy for the sake of claiming their individual identity.

The Other and Monstrous: A Victorian Woman Writer Called George Eliot

George Eliot herself was one of the madwomen, monsters, thus Others of the Victorian society. George Eliot was the pen name for Mary Ann Evans who was born in 1819, in Victorian England as the gifted daughter of Robert Evans. Evans for a time was an Evangelical; however, later due to her own reading and the effect of her close friends, she became sceptical. The conflict with her father arose when she refused to attend regular Anglican Church worship which marked the beginning of her Otherness in the Victorian society. Later, she called this clash of opinions between her and her father as a "Holy War". Knowing Greek and Latin, not so usual for a Victorian woman, Eliot's literary career began in 1850, when she began writing for the well-known *Westminster Review*, and in 1851 she became the assistant editor of the review which made her a member of the London literary circle including Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes. Later, she had a relationship with her editor, Henry Lewes, whose wife had left him and their three children for an extra-marital affair. Eliot was rejected by her friends over her common-law marriage with Lewes which is reflected in *The Mill on the Floss*. Actually, Lewes was the first person to encourage her to write fiction and *Scenes from Clerical Life*, serialized in *Blackwood's Magazine* (1857). In 1859, Eliot became enormously popular by his first-full novel *Adam Bede* which even became one of the favourite novels of Queen Victoria. *Adam Bede* was succeeded by *The Mill on the Floss*

(1860) and *Silas Marner* (1861), both novels pictured the plight of social outsiders. Her other novels *Felix Holt, the Radical* and *The Legend of Jubal* were apparently political like in her masterpeace *Middlemarch* (1871) whose historical context is the Great Reform Bill (1832). Eliot's last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, was published in 1876. Eliot died in 1880 at the age of 61; yet, the burial in Westminster Abbey in the "Poet's Corner" was rejected due to her denial of Christian faith and her illegal relationship with Lewes, so she was buried in Highgate Cemetery in London– a burial place for religious dissenters (Levine, 2001: xiv-xviii). Then, Eliot did not lead a life proper to Victorian womanly codes listed in various conduct books and lived and died as a woman deviated from the image of the Angel in the house. Eliot, that is to say, apart from being one of the Others of the male-dominated Victorian literary circle, was also a fallen woman, a monstrous Other like the madwomen depicted through the pen of female writers like herself.

In fact, in spite of its female monarch, the Victorian era is well known for the concept of the "woman question" referring to the possible positions and roles of women in the Victorian society, a society of the inequality between men and women. Eliot, she herself a victim of this woman question, continuously brooded on the "woman question" in her works: how a woman should behave; should she cross the borders of her private sphere and violate the public sphere of men? If yes, to what extend? In *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), for example, Eliot depicts Maggie Tulliver, a girl who does not fit, like herself, traditional Victorian beauty and gender roles. She dreams of being an intellectual woman and taking education like her brother Tom does. Likewise, Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871) treats significant issues of the "woman question" such as the status of women, the nature of marriage and education through the story of Dorothea Brooke and underlines that women should guide their own lives.

The struggles of Eliot's heroines, yet, always end up with failure. Thus, although Eliot has a noteworthy voice in the "woman question" through her works, some feminists, such as Lee R. Edwards and Ellen Moers, are furious with Eliot as her female characters have nothing to do with her intellectual background and her own way of life: knowing classical languages, translating, publishing, editing, remaining single until she was middle-aged, and having a relationship with a married man. It was the case for all Victorian women writers since they also suffered from the taboos of the Victorian society and for that reason they delineated female protagonists reaching happiness only through marriage (Austen, 1976: 549-550). As Dolin points out, numerous feminist readers taken with the bravery of her adoring heroines were similarly discouraged by Eliot's "dispiriting endings, and by her failure to offer positive role models for women. For some, it was nothing short of a betrayal" (2005: 140). In like manner, Rignall suggests that "Eliot could not believe in the immediate widening of female vocation. [...] Despite her own great public success, she declined to build her plots around narratives of women making their way in the public sphere, as doctors, as teachers, as nurses, as novelists" (1994: 447). Therefore, it can be supported that there is a dilemma in Eliot which can be traced into her attitude towards her portrayals of woman in her novels. On one side, we have an Eliot who is open-minded, on the side of reform and women's rights; on the other side, there is an Eliot who sticks to the Victorian values. To put it another way, as Pinney argues, Eliot's mind was mixture of conservative and reforming tendencies (1963: 38). About Eliot's paradox, Levine states

> George Eliot who wrote the novels we are still reading was an amalgam [...] of the multiple facets of a deeply intelligent and troubled woman. She was at one and the same time the avant-garde intellectual, the learned, ironic, witty, and even caustic reviewer, the translator of heavy but intellectually radical German philosophy and history, the young provincial woman who had nursed her father through a long illness and revered the Midlands countryside, the sophisticate who risked scandal

> and suffered the consequences of her desire, and an enormously learned aspirant toward an ideal of intellectual and moral excellence that threatened throughout her career to cripple her emotionally (2001: 25).

Looking at her reforming tendencies, for Gilbert and Gubar, we see an Eliot for whom, the confidential injury of the female lies in their acceptance of patriarchy (2000: 470) which is directly in contrast with their search for finding their identity as women. In other words, rather than just underlying the encroachment of men, Eliot emphasises the subjection of women which has injected into the souls and minds of them. This mentioned acceptance is taken by Eliot as the most wicked type of feminine silliness as reflected in her essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (1856) which led her to punish her heroines in her novels. In "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists", Eliot criticizes the works of the women novelists of her time in that they do not reflect reality, but they are just imaginative accounts of their authors which appeal to fictional women readers, who want novels to be just what they like by emphasising the clichéd plots and characters:

> The heroine is usually an heiress, probably a peeress in her own right, with perhaps a vicious baronet, an amiable duke, and an irresistible younger son of a marquis as lovers in the foreground, a clergyman and a poet sighing for her in the middle distance, and a crowd of undefined adorers dimly indicated beyond. Her eyes and her wit are both dazzling; her nose and her morals are alike free from any tendency to irregularity she has a superb contralto and a superb intellect; she is perfectly well-dressed and perfectly religious; she dances like a sylph, and reads the Bible in the original tongues. (1896: 442)

However, as some feminists like Edwards (223) and Moers (496) argue, in her novels, Eliot herself, contrary to her rebellious nature, does not seem to exceed the borders of the subjection of women in her society. When we look at Eliot's conservative tendencies, we see that she almost does the same thing with the female novelists she criticizes since there was no happy ending, no marriage for *Adam Bede* in Eliot's mind and she was planning to end the novel with the execution of Hetty. However,

Lewes, her lover, suggested Eliot marry Adam and Dinah, and Eliot changed the end of the novel in line with his wishes (Diekhoff, 1936: 222). In other words, although Eliot had a radical career as a woman writer in the conservative Victorian period, her novels does not totally reflect heroines who force the limits of their gender. Therefore, she herself remarks that "[m]y own books scourge me" (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000: 466). With the same token, for Eliot, Virginia Woolf states that "for long she preferred not to think herself at all" which refers to Eliot's headaches and her refusal to write her own story (qtd. in Gilbert & Gubar, 2000: 466). As I have tried to underline so far, Eliot has an ambivalent attitude towards the subjection of women and gender inequality prevailing her times. It might be argued that this ambivalence in Eliot led her to create heroines as Others. Eliot's internalization of woman's role as the Other, suggested by Gilbert and Gubar, can be traced throughout her career "in her continued guilt over societal disapproval, her avowed preference for male friends, and her feminine anti-feminism [...]" (2000: 466). Probably, Gwendolen Harleth, Eliot's last heroine, in *Daniel Deronda* (1876) clarifies the ambivalence surrounding Eliot's incapability of depicting heroines totally rejecting traditional Victorian values as she is full of desires without any hope to fulfil them. In a way, Gwendolen stands for the unacceptability of an unexceptional woman or woman writer in the Victorian society, which Eliot plainly illustrates in her *Adam Bede* by means of Hetty Sorrel, a fallen woman and monstrous murderer who grows into a madwoman and a monstrous Other.

George Eliot's Hetty Sorrel in *Adam Bede*: The Female Monster or the Monstrous *Other*

Adam Bede is regarded as a great piece of work with its picture of rural life and the moral enlargement of its characters- Adam, Hetty, Dinah and Arthur. As its name suggests, the protagonist of the novel is Adam and it mainly narrates Adam's tragic growth. At the end of the

novel, Adam transfers "from proud, unsympathetic censoriousness to sympathy with those weaker than he" (Martin, 1974: 746). Hetty and her tragic story play the most significant part in Adam's growth. Adam is in love with Hetty, a very beautiful, yet selfish and shallow country girl of seventeen years old. Hetty's target, however, is someone else, Arthur Donnithorne, an heir to a respectable family. Hetty, deceived and left pregnant by Arthur, becomes a fallen woman from the perspective of the Victorian society. What is more, she abandons her illegitimate baby to death, and turns into a monstrous murderer. Eliot accounts this pathetic story of Hetty by an emphasis on the partial treatment of the society towards the criminal and questions the moral and sexual double standards of her time. More importantly, disclosing the details of Hetty's story, Eliot presents how Hetty transforms into a female monster and a monstrous Other, a criminal and a victim, at the same time due to the unfair attitude of the society towards an illegitimate relationship and consequent murder. The story of Hetty comes from the real experience of the Methodist aunt of Eliot. Eliot tells that:

> We were sitting together one afternoon at Griff, probably 1839 0r 1840, when it occurred to her to tell how she 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 al 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 jail. The story, told by my aunt with great feeling, affected me deeply, and I never lost the impression of that afternoon and our talk together […]. (Haldane, 1927: 140)

Apart from her Methodist aunt's story about a child-murderer, Eliot was also an admirer of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's works and just six months before beginning to write *Adam Bede*, she remarks that she finished *Aurora Leigh* (1856) for the second time, and most probably she would have known Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" (1848) -abolitionist child-murder poem. Eliot might also be

affected by the tensions of her time about the burial clubs and the infanticidal tendencies of the working class reported in Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843) and in Tennyson's *Maud* (1855) (McDonagh, 2001: 231). Moreover, it is known that while writing *Adam Bede*, Eliot made use of Robert Southey's *Life of Wesley*. John Wesley has a sister named Hetty whose story is told in *Life of Wesley*. Like Eliot's Hetty, Wesley's Hetty has a tragic story; she is seduced and left pregnant by an untruthful admirer (Carroll, 1989: 218).

Hetty's story, her Otherness as a female and a fallen woman is similar to her creator's life story. Eliot believed that she was less significant than her older brothers and she had to strive against her father's desires which restrained her chances for a better life through education. Eliot was also quite aware of the fact that her father and brother disapproved her way of life which was regarded as unwomanly by the Victorian society. Likewise, according to Gilbert and Gubar, Eliot's words for Hannah More, English religious writer, can be used for herself as well: "[s]he was the most disagreeable of all monsters, a blue-stocking- a monster that can only exist in a miserably false state of society, in which a woman with but a smattering of learning or philosophy is classed along with singing mice and card playing pigs" (2000: 466). As clearly reflected in her life story, Eliot was an outcast, an Other in the conservative Victorian society. As Gilbert and Gubar further suggest, Eliot could exist in the male-dominated society by defining herself as Other and this Other can also be associated with the female monster with a Medusa-face (2000: 477). In relation to all these arguments, it might be claimed that the aforementioned ambivalence in Eliot reveals itself in the double-sided character of her Hetty in *Adam Bede* in that she is presented both as a monster, who does not conform to Victorian conventions and leaves her illegitimate baby to death, and as a monstrous Other, who is the victim of Victorian values and gender inequality.

Analysing Hetty as a female monster, one meets Hetty as a child murderer. In 1624, the Act to Prevent the Destroying and Murdering of Bastard was passed and made child murder a crime linked inexorably with illegitimacy. Accordingly, "if an infant corpse were discovered and its mother identified, and if she had told no one of her pregnancy, then she would be considered guilty of murder, without any necessary proof of live birth" (McDonagh 239-240). At the time of the publication of *Adam Bede*, child murder was prevalent in England. According to the *Dublin Review* in 1858, infanticide was the great societal vice of the time (McDonagh, 2001: 233). In the novel, the innocent farm girl Hetty falls in love with wealthy Arthur Donnithorne, the son of the Squire, and dreams of marrying him: "[H]e would like to see her in nice clothes, and thin shoes and white stockings, perhaps with silk clocks to them; […] He would want to marry her, and make a lady of her […] (1994: 151). Indeed, Hetty is introduced as a very beautiful, pure young girl with whom everybody easily might fall in love: "How pretty the little puss looks in that odd dress! It would be the easiest folly in the world to fall in love with her: there is such a sweet babylike roundness about her face and figure; the delicate dark rings of hair lie so charmingly about her ears and neck" (1994: 152-153).

Seduced and left pregnant by Arthur Donnithorne, Hetty sets out on a journey in despair to find her seducer Arthur, at the end of which she leaves her baby to die in the woods and transforms into a monster, Eliot describes the "terrible beauty" on Hetty's face, as "the sadder for its beauty, like that wondrous Medusa-face, with the passionate, passionless lips" (1994: 366) "with all love and belief in love departed from it" (1994: 367). Therefore, just like her creator, Hetty is associated with Medusa, the female monster in Greek mythology. According to the legend, Medusa was one lovely priestess of Athena, yet she was cursed for violating the vow of chastity and had a relationship with the sea god Poseidon. As a punishment, Athena turned Medusa into an ugly, dreadful woman with her hair in the shape of snakes along with a greenish

skin (de Traci 1). Throughout the novel, Eliot also calls her "a brute", and associates her with "stone", and "death" (1994: 431). That is how just like Medusa's story, from a gorgeous girl, Hetty grows into a beast. An old man sees her in the woods after leaving her baby to death and likens her to a wild animal: "Anybody 'ud think you was a wild woman, an' look at yer." (1994: 370). She is like an injured animal looking for the ways of survival: "What will be the end, the end of her objectless wandering, apart from all love, caring for human beings only through her pride, clinging to life only as the hunted wounded brute clings to it?" (1994: 371). After she is arrested for child murder, Mr. Bartle describes her again like an animal and is shocked by the change in her: "I saw her myself, and she was obstinately silent to me; she shrank up like a frightened animal when she saw me. I was never so shocked in my life as at the change in her" (1994: 398). That is how a young girl changes and turns into a monster in the eyes of the people who once appreciate her as a pretty, innocent girl. Furthermore, as a foreshadowing, Eliot associates Hetty with evil and points out how difficult for one to believe the devilment of a sweet woman: "Before you despise Adam as deficient in penetration, pray ask yourself if you were ever predisposed to believe evil of any pretty woman—if you ever COULD, without hard head-breaking demonstration, believe evil of the ONE supremely pretty woman who has bewitched you" (1994: 153). Eliot herself answers her own question: "No: people who love downy peaches are apt not to think of the stone, and sometimes jar their teeth terribly against it" (1994: 153). Then, for Eliot, it is not always possible for us to see the reality behind the appearance. To put it another way, it is not conceivable to even visualize Hetty, the pretty girl, as a child murder. Indeed, Eliot seems to condemn Hetty so harshly and presents her to the reader as fallen for her luscious and sensual appearance. Hetty becomes a fallen woman because she wants to possess the social glamour and power of Arthur who is the heir of the landlord of the country. Hetty is also likened to the fertility of

nature along with her naivety and immaturity as a foreshadowing to her murder:

> 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. How she will dote on her children! She is almost a child herself, and the little pink round things will hang about her like florets round the central flower; [...]. (1994: 153)

Besides her identification with nature by her physical appearance, Hetty, by character, is a kind of rebel who resists the principles of nature, as argued by Auerbach, by "her revulsion against children, motherhood, and nurturing, culminating in her abandonment of her own child" (1980: 48) since Eliot's nature is, like that of Hetty, an indifferent mother. This clash between nature and the human beings is noticeably highlighted by Eliot in the novel: "There are so many of us, and our lots are so different: what wonder that Nature's mood is often in harsh contrast with the great crisis of our lives? (1994: 282). Thereby, as Manheimer claims, Hetty also "challenges the myth of natural mother love in her honest expression of ambivalence toward her child" (1979: 31): "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 daren't look at its little hands and face" (1994: 429). These words show Hetty's maternal conflicts as well. Hetty's killing of her child, even unintentionally, can be read as Eliot's rejection of the role allotted to women by patriarchy, being a mother and a wife accordingly which makes Hetty a monster in the eyes of Victorian society.

Furthermore, Eliot's constant comparison of Hetty to her cousin Dinah reflects her ambivalent attitude towards women together with the traditional roles assigned to Victorian women. Hetty is Eliot's fallen woman; she is seductive, selfish and indifferent to what happens around her. On the other hand, Dinah is Eliot's Angel in the house; she is

sympathetic, kind and interested in other people's sufferings. The dissimilarity between the two is like the contrast between day and night:

> 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. (1994: 159)

Hetty is portrayed as a "pink-and-white hot-house plant" (1994: 200) without roots. As Dinah describes her, she has a "blank in [her] nature", "an absence of any warm, self-devoting love" (1994: 157) whose most vivid proof is an infant buried alive. Then, rather than a nurturing woman, she is a senseless stone. When she decides to leave home to look for her secuder, she

> could have cast all her past life behind her and never cared to be reminded of it again […] she had no feeling at all towards the old house, […] how little she seemed to care about waiting on her uncle, who had been a good father for her […] Hetty would have been glad to hear that she should never see a child again; […] (116) […] her heart's as hard as a pebble. (1994: 154-155)

Unlike Hetty who is constantly compared to animals, birds and plants, Dinah is completely human which suggests that Hetty and the society are equally incompatible which also contributes to her monster identity. To put it another way, Hetty is a foil to her cousin Dinah who is a Methodist and, unlike Hetty who is selfish and indifferent to the sufferings of people, she devotes herself to ease the pains of human beings and to reach them to salvation as reflected in the following passage through her preaching: "[…] as she tried to bring home to the people their guilt their willful darkness, their state of disobedience to God—as she dwelt on the hatefulness of sin, the Divine holiness, and the sufferings of the Saviour, by which a way had been opened for their salvation" (1994: 38). Through this comparison, Eliot seems to make her

decision right at the beginning that we should blame Hetty. In the end, Dinah takes the place of poor Hetty and marries Adam in line with the values of Victorian society and novel tradition which takes us to a different Hetty, Hetty the victim and the monstrous Other.

Apart from being a monster, who does not comply with Victorian traditions and forsakes her illegitimate baby causing his/her death, Hetty transforms into a monstrous Other, who is the target of Victorian ethics and gender disparity. Hetty Sorrel is an uneducated country girl of seventeen years old, but she has a perfect beauty and this combination brings her to exile and death. And there comes the important question as Fyfe asks: Must ignorant Hetty be held responsible for her actions? Should she have been seduced and deserted after catching the attention of the young squier's grandson and become an outcast and punished so harshly? (1954: 134). Should she be a victim? The answer is yes in the Victorian society for the fallen woman.

Eliot answers "yes" in her novel as well. Right from the beginning of the novel, as stated, Hetty is associated with nature with the richness of Loamshire and she is likened to adorable animals and plants such as kittens and downy ducks (1994: 90), birds (1994: 84), an opening bud (1994: 134), a peach (1994: 134) and to "a round, soft-coated pet animal" (1994: 361). Here nature does not only stands for "simply an environment of landscapes, plants, and animals, but also a system of biological forces in which every human being is deeply embedded [...] (Herbert, 1975: 424) and in which nature turns into "a calamity for man" (Herbert, 1975: 426), a calamity for Hetty in relation to her tragic destiny. On her way to find Arthur, she even wants to commit suicide: "Hetty's calculus has to grapple with the temptation of suicide - the self-fulfilling its desire in self-destruction" (1994: 145). According to Auerbach, Hetty "is the most dramatic manifestation of the [...] Victorian vision of the fortunate fall" (1980: 49). She is saved from execution; yet, is turned into a living dead who is dead spiritually. In the following lines, Eliot describes Hetty's

tragic situation after reading Arthurs's letter in which he writes that he must leave her:

> There was a feeble datwn in the room when Hetty awoke, a little after four o'clock, with a sense of dull misery, [...] She had no tears this morning. She had wept them all away last night, and now she felt that dry-eyed morning misery, which is worse than the first shock, because it has the future as well as the present. (1994: 320)

After the dead body of her child was found, Hetty is sent to prison. In her prison cell, Hetty's tragic situation gets worse and she is no longer a monster, but a complete victim: "[t]he horror of this cold, and darkness and solitude- out of human reach-became greater every long minute: it was almost as if she were dead already, and knew she was dead" (1994: 368). In her prison cell, on the way of salvation, Dinah persuades Hetty to confess the murder and not the court but the reader learns that she does not kill her baby intentionally:

> I came to a place where there was lots of chips and turf, […] And all of a sudden I saw a hole under the nut-tree like a little grave. And it darted into me like lightning-I'd lay the baby there and cover it with the grass and chips [...] I thought it was alive... I don't know whether I was frightened or glad...I don't know what I felt. […] And when I'd put it there, I thought I should like somebody to find it and save it from dying; but when I saw it was gone, I was struck like a stone, with fear. (1994: 430)

Although she has no bad intention, because of a man's, Arthur's sin, a woman, Hetty is condemned. Hetty is so severely punished that even after over a lapse of years, she cannot return the country and dies in exile. Then, at the end of the novel, Hetty dies, but Arthur becomes a kind and helpful landlord and Adam is happily married to Dinah. With a single sentence, the reader learns that Hetty is dead and after her death, everything goes on what it was like before since "[b]y dying she has secured Arthur against the unhappiness and the moral necessity of marrying her. Mr. Irwine [her uncle] is proud and happy [...] (Diekhoff, 1936: 227). In other words, Hetty, in a way, sacrifices herself and

becomes the only victim of the wrong doing in line with a woman's destiny which is also highlighted by Eliot in the novel: "It is too painful to think that [Hetty] is a woman, with a woman's destiny before her," (1994: 243). Thus, Eliot's pitying scorn towards Hetty might be taken for the evidence of George Eliot's newly emerging feminist stance. She scorns Hetty because she accepts the role given to her by patriarchy as a "desirable object of the male gaze, with her earrings and ribbons and endless looking in the mirror" (Mitchell, 1990: 17). For Arthur, Hetty is a pretty toy and he wants to play with it. Eliot's description of Hetty in terms of animals might also be related to Arthur's attitude towards her in that Arthur's tenderness towards Hetty is similar to his love for his animals such as for his horse: "[h]e would amuse himself by seeing Hetty to-day, and get rid of the whole thing from his mind. It was all Irwine's fault. 'If Irwine said nothing, I shouldn't have thought half so much of Hetty as of Meg's lameness'" (1994: 131). Hetty is more or less the same for the protagonist of the novel, Adam as well. Adam is taken in by Hetty's mere appearance and she is also a sexual object for him.

In fact, according to Eliot, women include both the evil (Eve) and angel (Madonna) in themselves as reflected in two main woman characters in *Adam Bede*, Hetty and her cousin Dinah respectively. Eve and Madonna (The Virgin Mary) stand for the two opposite roles in Christian discourse in relation to the approach to women. Eve as the inventor of female sexuality is the opposite of Madonna who symbolizes purity (Tumanov 507). Furthermore, to some critics, Hetty's end is a tragic one since Eliot "was tormented by inner doubts concerning her relationship with Lewes, and so made Hetty and others of her characters atone vicariously for the burden on her own conscience" (Fyfe, 1954: 135). Therefore, we can support that Hetty is a victim and she is not only the victim of Victorian society and accordingly of Victorian novel tradition but of Eliot herself. In George Eliot's novels, accordingly, the heroines who offend against tradition are doomed like Hetty Sorrel in

Adam Bede. Hetty gives birth to an illegitimate child, murders it and die herself.

Hetty becomes the victim of the sexual double standards of the Victorian period, too. In the destiny of a victimized Victorian woman, there inevitably appears sexual double standard which comes to life in the mouth of the protagonist of the novel, Adam. Seeing the helpless situation of Hetty at the court, Adam questions the sexual double standard:

> It's his doing, he said; "if there's been any crime, it's at his door, not hers. He thought her to deceive- he deceived me first. Let 'em put him on his trial- let him stand in court beside her, and I'll tell 'em how he got hold of her heart and 'ticed her t'evil, and then lied to me. Is he to go free, while they lay all the punishment on her … so weak and young? (1994: 389-390)

Adam is quite right in his words since Hetty is a passive character in her own story which is shaped by others. Similarly, according to Martin, Hetty is a mindless victim in that she suffers the worst consequences of Arthur's wrong doings. Martin continues that

> Throughout the novel Hetty displays an amoeba-like unconsciousness of the world outside herself. True, she is unsympathetic toward others-consider her indifference to the news of Thias Bede's death-but even this want of sympathy is narrow and in a sense negligible. It involves not the wilful hardness shown by Adam, but a largely pathetic vanity harmful only to herself. Hetty's position as a woman totally without economic means or worldly sophistication is further reason for viewing her weakness and the crisis in her life as pitiable. (1974: 760)

It might be argued that putting the whole blame on Hetty and her severe punishment are not fair and Eliot seems on the side of Victorian society as she punishes Hetty mercilessly for her crime. As a passive character in her own story shaped by others, after her seduction, Hetty takes only two decisions, the first one is to marry Adam and the second is to leave Hayslope and find Arthur both of which, as Herbert points out,

underline her refusal of responsibility in which she dives into new dreams and hopes that she will find Arthur and he will take care of her (1975: 108). Finally, Hetty goes out from her dream world and tells her pitiful story to Dinah and then asks: "Dinah, do you think God will take away that crying and that place in the wood, now I've told everything?" (1994: 431). However, Hetty, the dreaming child of nature who brought Adam the ill fruits of experience, must be destroyed so that Adam's rebirth with his better love Dinah will be fulfilled. Hetty has to bear the real suffering in the novel and she can be a potentially tragic figure in the hands of another writer, but Eliot frequently goes into the scene and warns the reader against her by the words such as "little silly imagination" (1994: 105), "little brain" (1994: 306) and "poor narrow thoughts" (1994: 352). In the end, her "little silly imagination" incurs her obliteration and transforms her into a victim, a monstrous Other died away from her home and family. Similar to Cohen's monsters, Hetty as an Other "[d]wells at the gates of difference" (1996: 7) and is "an embodiment of difference, a breaker of category" (1996: x). Marking her outsiderness and displacement, she is, parallel to Cohen's monsters, "an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond […] (1996: 7).

Conclusion

Examining Hetty, it is seen that she possesses two polar opposite roles in the novel: a female monster as she is a child murderer and a victim who suffers from the partial treatment of society growing into a monstrous Other. Hetty's two paradoxical roles as a monster and a victim are in line with Eliot's complex mind and her life story. As in the case of the madwoman of women writers, Hetty turns into Eliot's double which is the mirror image of her own instability, anger and of her caught in between the ancestral position allocated to women and uprising against patriarchy. Hetty's story of Otherness is similar to her creator's life story. Whether as a monster or a victim, Hetty, "the prettiest thing God had made" (1994: 321), becomes "the Other" in the Victorian society. As in

Mitchell's claim that a beautiful woman becomes largely a symbol, an Other, a source for manly desire but not discernible distinct human being with her cravings and demands who can be a self (1990: 18); Hetty becomes twice the Other for her gender and her involuntary murder. Leaving her private sphere allotted to her by the Victorian society, Hetty dies in parallel to Citron's argument: the agony and cost always belong to woman since in the Victorian novel woman is to apprehend the world away from heaven (1989: 18). Eliot who was bereft of paradise in the Victorian world exhibits her nonconformity by her madwoman Hetty, a monster, yet still a monstrous Other created by the pen of another monster.

Information Note

The article has been prepared in accordance with research and publication ethics. This study does not require ethics committee approval.

References

Auerbach, N. (1980). The rise of the fallen woman. *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, *35*(1), 29-52.

Austen, Z. (1976). Why feminist critics are angry with George Eliot. *College English*, *37*(6), 549-561.

Brontē, C. (1993). *Villette*. Wordsworth.

Carroll, A. (1989). Tried by earthly fires: Hetty Wesley, Hetty Sorrel, and Adam Bede. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *44*(2), 218-224.

Cohen, J. J. (1996). Introduction. In J.J. Cohen (Ed.), *Monster Culture (Seven Theses). Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (pp. 3-25), Minnesota University Press.

Citron, J. A. (1989). Delusions of gender. *The Women's Review of Books*, *7*(2), 18-19.

De Traci, R. (2021, September 9). The Curse of Medusa from Greek Mythology. https://www.thoughtco.com/greek-mythology-medusa-1524415

Diekhoff, J. S. (1936). The happy ending of Adam Bede. *ELH*, 3(3), 221-227.

Dolin, T. (2005). *George Eliot*. Oxford University Press.

Edwards, L. R. (1972). Women, Energy and Middlemarch. *Woman: An Issue*, *13*(1), 223-238.

Eliot, G. (1896). Silly novels by lady novelists. *Westminster Review*, 66, 442-461.

Eliot, G. (1994). *Adam Bede*. Penguin Books.

Fyfe, A. J. (1954). The interpretation of Adam Bede. *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, *9*(2), 134-139.

Gilbert S. M. & Gubar, S. (2000). *The madwoman in the attic: The woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination.* Yale University Press.

Haldane, E. S. (1927). *George Eliot and her times*. Appleton and Co.

Herbert, C. (1975). Preachers and the schemes of nature in Adam Bede. *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, *29*(4), 412-427.

Levine, G. (2001). Introduction: George Eliot and the art of realism. In G. Levine (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot* (pp. 1-20), Cambridge University Press.

Manheimer, J. (1979). Murderous mothers: The problem of parenting in the Victorian novel. *Feminist Studies*, *5*(3), 530-546.

Martin, B. K. (1974). Rescue and marriage in Adam Bede. *Studies in English Literature*, *12*(4), 745-763.

McDonagh, J. (2001). Child-murder narratives in George Eliot's Adam Bede: Embedded histories and fictional representation. *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *56*(2), 228-259.

Mitchell, J. (1990). George Eliot and the problematic of female beauty. *Modern Language Studies*, *20*(3), 14-28.

Moers, E. (1977). *Literary women*. Anchor Books.

Pinney, T. (1963). *Essays of George Eliot*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Power, E. (1975). *Medieval women*. Cambridge University Press.

Rignall, J. (2000). *Oxford reader's companion to George Eliot*. Oxford University Press.

Tumanov, V. (2011). Mary versus Eve: Paternal uncertainty and the Christian view of women. *Neophilologus*, *95*(4), 507-521.

Woolf, V. (2021, September 9). Professions for Women. https://www.wheelersburg.net/Downloads/Woolf.pdf

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to portray the position of the female monstrous who has to bear all the blame alone in the Victorian society and who accordingly becomes a monstrous Other through the tragic story of Hetty Sorrel, the fallen woman of Adam Bede, similar to her creator's life story. Through examining Eliot's life story, which is in parallel with the tragic life of her character Hetty Sorrel, and reading of selected passages from the novel, this paper examines how Eliot creates her double as a token of her own disquiet and acrimony due to the conservative Victorian society. Both Eliot and her Hetty are monsters of their society; they transform into Medusa, the female monster in Greek mythology in the male-dominated Victorian world. The fruit of Eliot's complex mind, a blend of conservative and reforming attitudes, is Hetty Sorrel, a monster, who violates the Victorian laws and a monstrous Other, who is the target of Victorian ethics and principles. I argue that the multifaceted mind of Eliot along with her life story reverberate in the two puzzling roles of her character Hetty Sorrel. As in the case of Eliot's female contemporaries, Hetty becomes Eliot's madwoman who turns into her double which is the mirror image of her own fluctuation and ire as she straddles the border between the inherited position allotted to women and rebellion against patriarchy.

Living within their private spheres away from the public sphere of men, the two precise roles attributed to women in the Victorian period were between the two extremes, the Angel in the house and the fallen woman. Unlike the former, the latter was generally associated with the Other and even with the criminal and the monstrous as reflected both in George Eliot's own life and her portrait of Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede. In the novel, the innocent country girl, Hetty Sorrel, seduced and left pregnant, turns into a fallen woman in the eyes of the conservative Victorian society. Through their noncompliant characters rising against the patriarchal society, Victorian women writers de(re)constructed men's texts; therefore, the well-received image of woman by the existence of a madwoman: a monster, an Other who is the polar opposite of the Angel in the house. Mirroring their defiant urges through mad or monstrous women who are befittingly disciplined in the work, female writers enact their own self-division, their desire both for admitting the patriarchal society and for rebuffing it.

Through the portrayal of Hetty's abandonment of her illegitimate baby to death, and the presentation of the crime of this seventeen-year-old child, apart from the partial treatment of the society towards the criminal, Eliot displays her own dilemma as a monstrous Other ostracised by the Victorian society. Taken from real life, the tragic story of Hetty shows how the female becomes the criminal and the monstrous Other while the male is judged mildly. Waiting for the trial with the fear of execution in her

prison cell, she herself a child, the destiny of the child murderer Hetty is left in the hands of her seducer Arthur Donnithorne. Hetty's trial also becomes one of the turning points of the protagonist's (Adam Bede's) tragic growth in the novel. In spite of the rescue of Hetty from execution by Arthur, which signifies a happy ending in line with the traditional Victorian novel, Adam Bede is underlined with its writer's call for the human kind to re-evaluate their perceptions of the criminal and the monstrous, in other words, of the Other.

Analysing two roles of Hetty, the reader meets Hetty as a female monster as she is a child murderer. Child murder was prevalent at that time in Victorian England and Hetty leaves her new born baby to death in the woods and is sent to prison for punishment. Therefore, from the pretty little girl, Hetty transforms into a monster, who mercilessly kills her baby. Apart from becoming a relentless murderer, throughout the text, Hetty can be analysed as a victim, a monstrous Other, too. Her story as an Other is parallel with the Otherness of her creator. Hetty is the victim of the sexual double standards of the Victorian period. The typical fate of a victimized Victorian woman comes to light in the mouth of the protagonist of the novel, Adam. Similar to her Hetty, Eliot could survive in the male-dominated society by characterizing herself as Other and this Other can be also identified with the female monster with a Medusa-face.