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GEORGE ELIOT AND THE FEMALE TRADITION: A LITTLE-KNOWN SOURCE
By Lorna J. Clark

In an essay published in the *Westminster Review* in 1856, George Eliot delivered a scathing indictment of ‘Silly Novels by Lady Novelists’ which (she claimed) lack verisimilitude, ‘intellectual power’ and ‘moral qualities’. The skill of such a writer ‘is in inverse proportion to her confident eloquence’; the picture of life that she draws is ‘totally false’. Her motivation is merely ‘the foolish vanity of wishing to appear in print’ or ‘busy idleness’. Finally, these hapless female novelists are likened to La Fontaine’s ass.¹ Not surprisingly, faced with such a sweeping condemnation, critics have found Eliot’s relationship with gender issues and female writers to be problematic (to say the least) as is reflected in the title to Zelda Austen’s article, ‘Why Feminists Critics are Angry with George Eliot’.²

Eliot’s essay has been explained as an ‘effort to call forth from women the same standards and demands for quality she made for men’,³ or ascribed to a belief that ‘the world of men was where genius flourished, and ... that was where she wanted to be.’⁴ Perhaps, as her biographer suggests, ‘Working through this material allowed Marian Evans to think carefully about the kind of writing she wanted to avoid. By showing what a novel should not be, she was setting out a literary manifesto for her style of fiction.’⁵ It is probably no coincidence that Eliot’s essay was finished just ten days before she herself began to write fiction with *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858), followed by her first novel, *Adam Bede* (1859). Her wish for dissociation is reflected in her choice of a male pseudonym to avoid the stigma attached to an identifiably female writer and to protect her own privacy: ‘to keep a crucial psychological distance from any criticism directed towards her work’.⁶

To mark a contrast with such light-weight practitioners, Eliot made careful preparations for each of her works, gathering information, quotations and observations into a notebook which served as a quarry of ideas.⁷ Her notes for *Adam Bede* show her doing historical research – on the Methodists, on fashion, and on meteorology. Her own account of the ‘germ of “Adam Bede”’ was an anecdote told to her by her Methodist aunt on whom the character of Dinah was based; her father’s experiences inspired the upright Adam.⁸ Other sources are possible, however, despite Eliot’s claim that her work contains ‘only the suggestions of experience wrought up into new combinations’,⁹ since it was ‘her usual procedure to have definite sources, but to deny’ that she did.¹⁰ The sources may be literary, stemming from her wide-ranging reading that (writes Gillian Beer) ‘gave her a repertoire, or grammar, of fictional relations which she could then refine’.¹¹ David Leon Higdon’s’s view is that, ‘Literature influenced the creation of her scenes, her characters, and her actions.’¹² Margaret Anne Doody suggests that we look beyond the classics in the search for influences and ‘take into account the tradition established by the “Literary Women”, many half-forgotten novelists of the eighteenth century.’¹³

In this paper, I shall be exploring the work of one such writer and suggesting as a possible source for *Adam Bede* a text which was not mentioned in Eliot’s notebooks. Given Eliot’s strong views on female novelists, it may appear unlikely. Nevertheless, this little-known novel
by a little-known woman writer contains remarkable similarities to *Adam Bede* which (I would suggest) may be more than purely coincidental. Published when Eliot was twenty, it may well have whiled away an evening and remained in her memory, suggesting the outlines of a story composed almost twenty years later. Eliot’s tendency to adhere closely to stories she had heard or read, especially in her early works, is attested to by the protests aroused by *Scenes of Clerical Life* from those claiming to be the real-life prototypes of her characters.  

The tale is by Sarah Harriet Burney who lived from 1772 to 1844, and whose literary career spans a period of fifty years. The author of five works of fiction, she published the first in 1796 and then one every decade to her sixties. She is a transitional figure whose work builds on the conventions of the eighteenth-century novel and brings them forward into the nineteenth. Grounded in the female tradition, with echoes of Austen, her work points forwards to Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy. These innovations are nowhere more evident than in the last tale she ever wrote, *The Hermitage*, the second of two tales in *The Romance of Private Life* published in 1839.

Although there is no direct evidence that Eliot was aware of Burney’s work, there are some tantalizing references in her notebooks prior to writing *Adam Bede*. On one page, she jots down a list of writers and works that might have been current in the decade in which she set her novel (1790s). Her list includes *Evelina*, written by Burney’s half-sister Frances. Eliot also takes notes on farm life and practices from a book by Arthur Young, Burney’s uncle whose farm she visited and whose theories she heard first-hand. Another connection comes through Eliot’s partner, George Henry Lewes, a man of wide-ranging interests, who attended an ‘excellent’ school run by Burney’s nephew.  

Burney’s *Romance* was published two years after Victoria’s accession to the throne, just as Dickens was beginning to make his name. She appreciated the genius of Dickens’s early works which she found ‘delightful’, and was the kind of woman novelist he would encourage to write for his *Household Words* (1850-59). The first of Burney’s two tales, *The Renunciation*, celebrates the virtues of a heroine called Agnes, the name of a virgin saint that evokes Agnus Dei or Lamb of God; Burney plays with the angelic connotations of the name ten years before Dickens would exploit them more fully in *David Copperfield*. Moreover, her work includes Freudian doubles long before Steerforth runs off with David’s childhood sweetheart ‘little Em’ly’. Not only Dickens but Wilkie Collins may have been aware of Burney’s work: *The Hermitage*, a cross between a novel of manners and murder mystery, bears an eerie resemblance to *The Moonstone* which it pre-dates by thirty years and may well be the earliest example of the genre. Finally, as in Hardy’s novels, Burney’s heroines experience a moment of complete desolation in the face of an uncaring universe and the atmosphere is suffused with grey.

But it is George Eliot among the Victorian novelists who seems the most indebted to her little-known predecessor; more than one of her novels contains scenes or situations that had appeared in Burney’s works. Here there is space to consider just one, *The Hermitage*, in which there is a sub-plot remarkably similar to that of Hetty in *Adam Bede*, the tale of a fallen woman (it was an early example of this type – Ruth, little Em’ly and Tess were all in the future). There are so many points of resemblance between the two (shape, structure and numerous details) that it is
difficult to resist the idea that Eliot may have come across it even though it was not on the shelves of her library at her death.\textsuperscript{20} As Doody notes, ‘in seeing the relation of her fiction to eighteenth-century novels, the critic must proceed on inference’.\textsuperscript{21} In *The Hermitage*, George Eliot may have found the kind of ‘millet-seed of thought’\textsuperscript{22} on which she liked to construct her fiction.

The opening sentence of *Adam Bede* strikes a common chord: ‘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.’\textsuperscript{23} The metaphor for the shaping vision of the artist comes from Edward Lane’s *Modern Egyptians*, a work that was also read by Burney and accounts for the strong oriental influence in her tale – an exotic Temple of Fortune and a sinister Egyptian dagger. Eliot’s narrator continues setting the scene in the village of Hayslope in the year 1799. The placing of her tale sixty years earlier in a pastoral landscape is noteworthy, although Charles Palliser has argued that ‘what she is interested in is not so much the truth about the past, as the way in which we understand it’.\textsuperscript{24}

Burney’s tale, too, has the atmosphere of an earlier era, which is partly due to the fact that she was completing in 1839 a manuscript begun twenty years earlier. Even then, she was already looking back thirty years to the last decades of the previous century, hence some Gothic touches and the mention of a poem, William Cowper’s *The Task* (published in 1785). Eliot uses the same kind of detail to date her tale when a parcel of new books arrives that includes *The Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. The mood of nostalgia seems appropriate in both works that evoke the passage of time and the compelling power of memory.

The figure of the fallen woman fascinated the Victorians, as is reflected in the literature and iconography of the age.\textsuperscript{25} Eliot’s tale has been read as a revision of ‘a powerful female text’, Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Ruth* published six years earlier, her purported purpose being ‘to question *Ruth’s* idealization.’\textsuperscript{26} (The name Ruth could have come from Burney’s tale and the trajectory of her fall is parallel.) Both Eliot’s Hetty and Burney’s Ruth are low-born lasses living in tenant-farms on a country estate. Both are strikingly beautiful and attract the attention of a handsome young squire who will inherit the estate from an elderly incumbent who is not his father. Both are marked as alien or ‘other’ in some way to their milieu, like the ugly duckling that grows into a beautiful swan. Hetty, the orphaned niece who comes to live at Hall Farm is brought up somewhere between upper servant and child; Ruth, too, has been raised elsewhere and educated with the daughters of an earl, which gives her an air of distinction above her class. The displacement that marks their presence in the household of an uncle explains the rootlessness that signals their vulnerability as ‘unsettled wanderers by nature and vocation’.\textsuperscript{27} In Burney, Mrs Nelson (although actually Ruth’s mother) seems in an aunt-like relation to her daughter of whom she stands in awe.

The lack of maternal relations is characteristic of both writers. ‘Critics have long noted the lack of warm, easy mother–child relationship in Eliot’s novels. Mothers are often dead and if they survive, then … they are both intrusive and rejecting, swamping and fretful.’\textsuperscript{28} The same is true of Sarah Harriet Burney whose fiction is filled with dysfunctional families; ‘parental figures are absent, unsatisfactory or simply dead’, with a high rate of fatality applying particularly to mothers.\textsuperscript{29} *The Hermitage* includes the only mother who survives to the end, though hardly
exemplary; she is left bitterly musing over her own failings which helped provoke the
catastrophe.

Almost every important character in Eliot's tale has its counterpart in Burney. Mrs Poyser,
whose pithy sayings and vitality are at the heart of Adam Bede has a paler equivalent in the
plain-spoken Mrs Nelson. Mrs Nelson's brother runs the farm with a firm hand like Martin
Poyser. Eliot's Rev. Irwine and Burney's Rev. Kirby are good clergymen whose charitable
judgments reflect the best side of village life. Even where there is no direct prototype, various
rural types are sketched in: Eliot's Wiry Ben and burly blacksmith are comparable to Burney's
huntin' fishin' squire and gossiping housekeeper. Beyond these, is the wider circle of household
servants and country-folk who make up the world of the novel, and who respond like a Greek
chorus to events as they unfold. For instance, Arthur Donnithorne's long-awaited home-coming
when he is greeted by 'grave and sad' faces (AB 443) is directly prefigured in Burney when the
heir is 'painfully struck by the expression of countenance of almost every man he met' on his
way home.30

The first view of both Ruth and Hetty comes through the eyes of the gentry. In Adam Bede,
Arthur Donnithorne makes excuses to watch Hetty in the dairy, showing off the 'prettiest
attitudes and movements' as she makes the butter. Ruth's beauty is first glimpsed through
the window of the farm. What links these scenes together is the element of reification; both young
women are seen as the object of the male gaze. Eliot suggests this through the use of animal
imagery: Hetty is likened to 'a kitten, a duck, a lamb, a calf (all these on her first appearance),
a butterfly, a pigeon, a canary and a Brazilian monkey. She
is also a rose-petal, a blossom, and
downy peach.'31 All of these similes link her 'to lower forms of life'.32 Similarly, Ruth's
beauty is objectified by likening it to a 'masterpiece of Grecian sculpture' valued as a painter's
model (though she is likely to be turned into a 'still life' along with - 'stalls of vegetables,
baskets of fish, earthen-ware pans, and bright-copper kettles' (Rom. 267, 253).

Further details of their appearance confirm their similarity. Both have what it takes to drive
men to distraction. Mr Poyser remarks on 'the pints of a woman' that makes 'the men ... run
after' Hetty (AB 190), just as Ruth turns the head of even the happily married Mr Fitzmaurice,
who gazes at her 'with the rapt attention of a connoisseur' (Rom. 267). In Eliot's dichotomous
scheme, Hetty is a dark beauty whose prime ingredients are 'large dark eyes', 'long lashes' and
luxuriant hair that falls in 'dark delicate rings on her forehead'; similarly Ruth's 'eyes and long
eye-lashes, [are] ... of a deeper tint' than her 'dark brown hair, glossy and luxuriant'. Hetty has
cheeks 'like a rose-petal' where Ruth has the 'bloom' of beauty on her delicate skin. Both of
them have figures to match: Ruth has 'finely rounded limbs'; Eliot, though more reticent, hints
at 'how lovely was the contour of her [Hetty's] pink and white neckerchief'. Here the
comparison fails, for Ruth's bearing is regal; Hetty's 'was a springtide beauty; it was the beauty
of young frisking things' (AB, 84-5; Rom. 255).

In Burney's tale, it is Ella the heroine who shares Hetty's friskiness, though otherwise she so
closely resembles Ruth that she could be her younger sister, with 'deep, dark' eyes and 'finest
eye-lashes', a 'quantity of glossy, silken, raven-black hair' and 'a figure that was all ease and
symmetry'. But Ella has the same 'dimpling ... smiles' around the mouth and sparkling eyes
as Hetty. Where Hetty is associated with a kitten, Ella sports playfully with a poodle (Rom.
230-1).
In The Hermitage, Ella’s resemblance to Ruth to whom she is a foil implies a hidden association; their connection continues a pattern of pairing, a form of ‘structural doubling’ that is a feature of both novels. In Adam Bede, the contrast is between Hetty and Dinah, though here (as Pauline Nestor points out) ‘this set of oppositions is gradually deconstructed to reveal ... a more shifting reality ... a perception of likeness in the midst of difference.’ In Eliot’s pairing, the two women appear to be polar opposites, yet are oddly in conjunction. Hetty’s rosy sensuousness is contrasted to Dinah’s pale otherworldliness; Hetty is dark and buxom; Dinah fair and waif-like; Hetty’s love of finery contrasts with Dinah’s sober plainness. The physical contrast (and hidden identification) is made explicit when Hetty dresses up in Dinah’s clothes with ludicrous effect. Hetty is associated with ‘sunshine’, Dinah (a variant of Diana) with ‘moonlight’ but in Adam’s vision they appear intrinsically linked (AB 116).

The contrast is made explicit in the famous chapter of ‘The Two Bed-Chambers’ when Dinah gazes out her window on the ‘wide view over the fields’, her heart ‘very full’ of altruistic love, while next door Hetty parades around in her finery, entranced by her own reflection, her vision turned inwards and lost in delusive dreams of grandeur.

Just as Ella’s fate seems wrapped up in that of Ruth (‘I never can forget her’ she vows; Rom. 323) so the distinctions between Hetty and Dinah begin to blur: when their tears mingle together or when they stand cheek-to-cheek in the jail cell (Hetty now as pale as Dinah) and ride together to face execution. Later, Dinah turns rosy under Adam’s gaze and develops a ‘more matronly figure’ after their marriage (AB 536). With the ‘shifting and unstable nature of opposition’, and the collapsing of identities, the two facets of female nature – the sexual and spiritual – though suffering self-division in the patriarchal world, are eventually reconciled.

But the pairing extends to the male characters as well, both between the two narratives, and within each narrative. The parallels are remarkable. Ruth, like Hetty, has a humble lover in her own class, a carpenter (like Adam Bede), who is similarly jealous as a lover though protective in a brotherly way (Wilfred is actually Ruth’s cousin). Adam contrasts with his brother Seth but blends with his desires when he marries the woman Seth had wished to wed. But the strongest pairing in Eliot’s novel is of hero with anti-hero and the same is true in Burney. In The Hermitage, Frederic (the heir) and Ernest (the hero) have been ‘considered as brothers’ (Rom. 297) and are closely associated, like Adam and Arthur. The character of the young squire: handsome and charming but self-indulgent, rings true for both Frederic Ormond and Arthur Donnithorne and each has a more sober companion as foil. It is Adam who urges on Arthur the inescapable consequences of his deeds; in Burney, it is the aptly named Ernest who remonstrates with Frederic, delivering unwanted sermons. But Ernest is also identified with Ruth’s humble lover Wilfred (they share the same foster-mother), so much so that Wilfred’s murderous deed is thought to be his own.

In both novels, male and female figures conflate; the shifting identities result in love-triangles and the wooing takes place in the open air. While Adam courts Hetty by helping her pick berries in the garden, Arthur is meeting her surreptitiously in The Chase. In The Hermitage, the two foster-brothers engage in ‘strange doings’ down at the farm; Frederic is seen ‘walking ... in the orchard with his arm round her [Ruth’s] waist’; Ernest is observed ‘in very earnest talk ... and looking very sweet upon her’ (Rom. 283-4). The confusion of identities and the slippage
between the roles implies self-division; the doubling of characters suggests the acting out of subconscious impulse through a surrogate (a pattern that is also seen in Dickens).

The action builds up in both novels to a communal feast that highlights the class-differences that divide the lovers and reveals the hidden relationship that threatens the social order. Many features correspond: the mixed assembly of country-folk and the handing out of prizes; the patronizing airs of the gentry in marvelling at the beauty of the farmer's niece who dances with the young squire. The feast occurs at the height of summer (and of the affair), just before the onset of autumn; thus the pattern of human events is mirrored in the rhythm of the seasons as befits these pastoral tales.

Both tales build to a climax in a violent encounter out of doors. A grove of trees is the site of the altercation between Arthur and Adam that almost ends fatally; when Arthur is knocked senseless to the ground, Adam kneels before his motionless body 'like an image of despair gazing at an image of death' (AB 302). In Burney's tale, the heated argument between Ernest and Frederic does end fatally. Frederic's lifeless body is discovered stabbed through the heart with the Egyptian dagger. The cataclysmic event in both works acts as a great divide, between innocence and experience, a frozen moment of transition that marks the passage between childhood and adulthood. 'For the rest of his life he [Adam] remembered that moment ... as a man remembers his last glimpse of the home where his youth was passed, before the road turned, and he saw it no more' (AB 297).

At the centre of the web of intrigue stands the Hermitage; hidden in the woods (a place often associated with moral confusion or loss of identity), it operates outside the confines of society. Burney's Hermitage is featured in the title, a 'picturesque' building, it is reached by a path bordered with trees; the light inside is 'subdued' (Rom. 245, 285). Eliot's hermitage is also isolated and dimly lit; reached by 'a narrow path', it stands 'within the circle of fir-trees' that allow the 'moonlight to enter in at the windows.' The rustic setting evokes the imagery associated with the fall; it is the scene of Hetty's seduction, signified by the pink handkerchief which Arthur 'thrust deep down' into a receptacle (AB 305-6), the counterpart of the neck-cloth that Frederic Ormond lays aside.

The Hermitage is a dark and private place, in which the primal scene is enacted; those characters who emerge from it are irrevocably changed. The nature of the crime and the imagery in Burney's tale are more stark. Ella enters the building when she hears her brother and her lover quarrelling; later she returns to find her brother stretched on the ground, apparently asleep. In a finely wrought scene (Rom. 285-6), she plants a kiss on his forehead but finds it unnaturally chill; she then feels for his heart but 'withdrawing her hand she beheld it dyed in blood, and felt the warm stream dropping from her fingers upon her garments!' She sinks 'senseless on the floor', weltering in blood; left alone with the corpse, she bathes it in kisses and tears. When she finally stagers out, in a harrowed and bloodied state, she is changed forever, the innocence of childhood irretrievably gone in what seems like a symbolic rite of initiation. The imagery of violation is unmistakably sexual in content. The loss of Ella's youthful beauty, like that of Hetty's, is the visible sign of the change.

Clutched beneath Ella's stained garments is the reeking dagger (that phallic symbol), which she contrives to cast into deep waters to hide the evidence of the crime (perpetrated, as she
believes, by her lover). This chapter compares to the powerful sequence in Adam Bede in which Hetty arises from child-bed, and travels dazed across the countryside, the baby hidden under her cloak, seeking a pool in which to drown it, as the cause and sign of her shame. The symbolism is identical.

After emerging from the Hermitage, Ella staggers home, and collapses on her bed from which she does not rise for months; speechless and motionless, she is immobilized, internalizing the guilt and taking it on her own body in a form of expiation. Hetty, too, is in a similar stupor; acting solely on instinct and sullenly denying her crime, she is reduced to the condition of an animal. Both female characters could be seen as scapegoat figures bearing the burden of guilt on their bodies in a form of emotional and spiritual death. Although Hetty seems more sinned against than sinning, this charitable view is not shared by the narrator who would deny her any sympathy. Eliot’s presentation is considered by critics to be ‘ungenerous and rebuffing’, so much so that Hetty ‘is increasingly seen as a victim – not only of circumstances, but also of the fictitiously male narrator’. The woman pays (although not immediately) with her life; she must be expelled before the community can confront the tragedy, absorb it and move on. Jenny Uglow notes that, ‘in the disturbing plots of her [Eliot’s] early fiction the sacrificial victim is inevitably a woman.’

The same is true of Burney – and though Gillian Beer believes that Eliot’s ‘treatment of Hetty is … a radical challenge to stereotypical portrayals of virgins and fallen women’ there is very little difference between the two endings. Burney is perhaps more straightforward: the wages of sin are death for both Ruth and Frederic. Eliot’s Arthur does survive, though in failing health (so perhaps not for long) and burdened by ever-lasting regret.

The effect of the crime, the impact of the secret sin on both communities is comparable, like a blood-stain spreading across the rural landscape. The sense of underlying guilt that erodes the social fabric is captured in Eliot’s famous image of the web that traces the consequences of an evil deed. In The Hermitage, the family at the farm is destroyed: Ruth commits suicide, Mrs Nelson sickens and dies; her brother and nephew leave and pine away in exile; within a year, all are dead. This is the fate foreseen by Eliot’s Poyzers but averted. While insisting on the ineradicable effects of error, Eliot shows the growth that comes through sorrow. The tragedy is absorbed and overcome, the passage of time brings round the season of renewal.

Both novels could be said to figure the Christian cycle of sin, suffering and redemption and both end the same way – with a wedding. In Burney’s novel, it takes a year to pass through the stages of recovery before Ella and her faithful Ernest come together in marriage; it takes eighteen months in Eliot’s fiction for Adam and Dinah to do the same. The concluding marriages will symbolize the healing of the community, the cleansing and rebirth, with the enlargement of sympathy and understanding. As the sign of their fall, Burney’s Ella has been chastened in looks and character; Eliot’s Adam feels ‘a tinge of sadness in his deep joy’ even on his wedding-day (AB 534). The two characters fulfil their emblematic names that signify the male and female principles.

In conclusion, Sarah Harriet Burney’s The Hermitage and George Eliot’s Adam Bede are remarkably similar both in general outline and specific detail. There are obviously differences in scope and depth (Eliot’s is the more serious and profound) but Burney’s tale of love, betrayal
and death is stark and moving and merits further attention. Eliot (it has been said) was ‘continually affected by the literature of others and it, in turn, saturated her own novels’. Doody recommends that ‘it is time to revisit some writers who rest in unvisited tombs’ and ‘proceed on inference’. Although it is difficult to prove definitively that Eliot had read Burney’s fiction, it is certain that the debt she owed to women writers – yes, even to those ‘Silly Novels by Lady Novelists’ – is a closer and far more complex one than is generally believed.

Notes


2. Zelda Austen, ‘Why Feminists Critics are Angry with George Eliot’, *College English*, 37, no. 6 (1976), 549-61. Austen is not the only one with a problem: ‘George Eliot has been a knot of controversy for feminist critics’, according to Gillian Beer, *George Eliot* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1986), p. 3; Ellen Moers claims that George Eliot ‘as her readers have always been surprised to discover, was no feminist’, *Literary Women* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 194; Elaine Showalter discusses how Eliot ‘became the most difficult and controversial figure for feminist literary criticism, the focus of a troubled anger’ in ‘The Greening of Sister George’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 35, no. 3 (1980), 299.


10 Karl, p. 278.
11 Beer, p. 52.
14 A good account of the real life prototypes is in Haight, *George Eliot’s Originals and Contemporaries*, pp. 9-12.
15 For the notes made by Eliot on Arthur Young, see Wiesenfarth, ‘George Eliot’s Notes’ 131, 139 150, 155; for her mention of *Evelina*, see 141. Karl believes Charles Parr Burney’s school had an ‘excellent scholastic reputation’ (p. 158). Rosemary Ashton has a less favourable view of the school that Lewes attended between the ages of 13 and 15, quoting a contemporary’s opinion that it was a ‘huge, unregenerate school’ where the pupils were ‘ill looked after and poorly fed’ and subject to ‘bullying’ (Rosemary Ashton, *G. H. Lewes: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 13.
17 Several features of *The Moonstone* are present in Burney’s tale: the return of a childhood companion, the exoticism from the East with an underlying threat of violence; the sexual symbolism of the crime; and the strain of Rachel’s self-imposed silence about her lover’s apparent guilt. *The Hermitage* may well be the earliest example of the genre of murder mystery. See Lorna J. Clark, ‘*The Hermitage*: Late Gothic or Early Detective Fiction?’ *Lumen*, 23 (2004), 165-78.
19 The counterpart of several scenes and situations in Eliot’s works can be found in those of Sarah Harriet Burney, the most striking of which is an in-depth study of a mismatch of a naive young girl with a Casaubon-like pedant; the important scene in the gallery in Rome where Dorothea is observed contemplating the marble sculptures also has a forerunner. The two writers are similar in their use of epigraphs (some self-created) and in their use of the figure of Antigone as an image of self-less idealism and moral courage.
21 Doody, p. 260.

George Eliot, Adam Bede, ed. Stephen Gill (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1980), p. 7. All further references to this work will appear in the text, abbreviated as AB.


Nina Auerbach explores the figure of the fallen woman that ‘lies at the heart of some of the most powerful literature and art the age produced’ in ‘The Rise of the Fallen Woman’, Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 35, no. 1 (1980), 30.

Beer, p. 59
Auerbach, 46.
Hughes, p. 16.

Auerbach, 45.
See the discussion in Nestor, pp. 46-7.
Auerbach, p. 45.
Beer, p. 69.
‘The Woman Pays’ is a phrase that would be used by Thomas Hardy as an ironic commentary on the burden of blame falling hardest on the woman in such a situation.
It appears as the title of ‘Phase the Fifth’ of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: A Pure Woman* (1891).

40 Beer, p. 69.

41 Higdon, 147.

42 Doody, p. 260.