

INCOGNITO, INTERVENTION, AND DISMEMBERMENT IN *ADAM BEDE*

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During Adam's narrative, Mr. Irwine had had time to recover his self-mastery in spite of the painful thoughts that crowded upon him. It was a bitter remembrance to him now—that morning when Arthur breakfasted with him and seemed as if he were on the verge of a confession. It was plain enough *now* what he had wanted to confess. And if their words had taken another turn . . . if he himself had been less fastidious about intruding on another man's secrets . . . it was cruel to think how thin a film had shut out rescue from all this guilt and misery. He saw the whole history now by that terrible illumination which the present sheds back upon the past.

—George Eliot

There is . . . some fault to be found with the manner in which the author intrudes himself in the book.

—Anonymous review of *Adam Bede*

If only he had intruded on Arthur's secrets, Mr. Irwine could have prevented the whole history of *Adam Bede*. Given that this assessment comes from an author renowned—and occasionally reviled—for the intrusiveness of her narrators, we must think carefully about the implications of this disingenuous lament. Mr. Irwine's intrusion upon Arthur's secrecy could have effected a rescue: a rescue of Arthur from temptation and thus Hetty from ruin, as opposed to the more dramatic (and novelistic) rescue of Hetty from the gallows that occurs near the end of the novel. Yet such a premature rescue would, of course, have undone the very plot of the novel. That plot seems already to be perched perilously on the edge of obliteration: it is a very thin "film" that separates the guilt and misery of the novel from the ambiguous "rescue" of non-narratability. Mr. Irwine's regret is the tragic version of the jokes that William Makepeace Thackeray's more ironic narrator makes throughout *Vanity Fair* about the contingency of his own narrative: "That bowl of rack punch was the cause of all

this history.”¹ The difference between these two moments is instructive. Thackeray’s narrators are also famously intrusive, and this jokey aside to the reader is of a piece with countless moments of narratorial commentary throughout his novel; Eliot, on the other hand—usually never shy about directly addressing the reader in the guise of the narrator—chooses to present Mr. Irwine’s similar insight in free indirect discourse, as the thoughts of the character and not the directive commentary of the narrator. For if the narrator had lamented the discretion of Mr. Irwine, he would not only be taking a turn toward Thackerayan irony (certainly not Eliot’s intention in *Adam Bede*), he would also be in the strange position of advocating intrusiveness as a way of forestalling plots—of acknowledging that the epistemological transparency that comes from intruding (on a friend’s secrecy, on a reader’s ignorance) is counterproductive of narrative.²

Instead, we are left with an equally strange and discomfiting implication—that if Eliot’s philosophizing narrator does not agree with Irwine’s assessment, and instead would prefer a rattling good plot to openness and honesty between friends, then he (and by extension Eliot) advocates both unintrusiveness and secrecy. The second has unsettling implications for Eliot’s moral aims, the first for her narrative style. Of course, Mr. Irwine, while not acceding to the perfectly authoritative position of the narrator, is nevertheless a respected personage in Hayslope as well as in Eliot’s estimation: it is to his defense that the narrator rushes in the sustained intervention of chapter 17, “In Which the Story Pauses a Little.” Certainly there is some force, some instructive and moralistic taint, to his regret, regardless of the lack of narratorial imprimatur. Insofar as his insight is a blueprint for moral behavior, Eliot must want to endorse it wholeheartedly through her narrator’s approval. The fact that she hangs back, allowing Irwine to draw the obvious conclusion while hiding her narrator behind the hedge of free indirect discourse, signals her own ambivalence about the practices of secrecy and intrusiveness that she herself engages in as an author.

This sense of the intervening narrator as problematic (and of secrecy as morally ambiguous) is one that Eliot shared with other mid-Victorian advocates of literary realism. Certainly for the original critics of Eliot’s novels, the intrusive philosophizing and directive interpreting of their narrators is an aesthetic, if not a moral, failing—a criticism whose motivation is understandable when we consider how the narratorial intervention seems to undermine cherished

Victorian claims for realism.³ I would like to re-examine the problem of the interventionist narrator as it appears in *Adam Bede*—particularly the problem of gendered authorship as Eliot herself saw it in the early stages of her career, while her identity was still a secret from the reading public. My suggestion is that Eliot's negotiation of the problem of female authorship should be read within the context of a set of metaphors for (and of) literary creation which circulated in Victorian culture as a whole. The issue of female authorship generally, and the interventionist narrator specifically, is part of a larger rhetorical framework that located the source of literary creativity in the sympathetic understanding of the maternal authoress, whose gender was the guarantee of a certain kind of insight and text-birthing capacity.⁴ Eliot's masculine incognito—her own repository of secrecy—posed a serious problem for this guarantee of feminine sympathy and maternal insight and, as I will argue, became a projection for several narratological problems with which she grappled throughout her career.

In this essay I will consider the provenance and implications of what we might call Eliot's narratorial gender dysphoria from several angles. I will begin with a brief discussion of Eliot's own attitude toward her incognito, and its relationship to her conception of feminine sympathetic realism and the practices and responsibilities of narration. I will then examine a specific case study in *Adam Bede*, the intranarrative pause and its homology with masculine narratorial intervention. Finally, I will consider the broader cultural context of Eliot's gendering of narratorial techniques—the rhetoric of obstetric medicine in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and its metaphors of invasion and dismemberment. Eliot's incognito works within, and draws upon, a wide range of cultural associations of certain kinds of knowledge with masculinity and femininity. The figure of Hetty Sorrel—simultaneously kittenish and hard-hearted, fertile and unmaternal—brings together, threatens to destabilize, and ultimately helps to resolve the tensions inherent in Eliot's masculine incognito and her narrative project writ large.

I. IRON(IC) DISTANCE: THE INCOGNITO

For Eliot, her gender as author and her practices as narrator are inextricable from the material fact of her alias, or as she called it, her "incognito." The following two quotations are from letters Mary Ann Evans wrote to her publisher, John Blackwood, at the beginning of her literary career, immediately after the great success of *Scenes of*

Clerical Life and *Adam Bede*, and while she was still known to the public only as “George Eliot.” As she claims in defense of her right to refuse inquiries about her true identity: “An incognito can be maintained on no other condition [than direct contradiction], and in such a case one ought to say ‘No’ to an impertinent querist as one would decline to open one’s iron chest to a burglar.”⁵ And in response to a kind letter Dickens had written about her work (and in which, incidentally, he contradicted public opinion in declaring definitively that the author George Eliot must be a woman), she writes: “the iron mask of my incognito seems quite painful in forbidding me to tell Dickens how thoroughly his generous impulse has been appreciated” (*L*, 2:424–25). What is instructive about these moments (aside from the striking repetition of the “iron” metaphor, to which I will return) is the way they reveal Eliot’s obsessive concern with concealment at this point in her career, the point at which she has recently finished a novel depicting a heroine’s desperate attempts to hide the evidence of her sexual transgressions (the “hidden dread” of Hetty Sorrel’s pregnancy) and is interrupting her work on *The Mill on the Floss* to pen a Gothic horror tale entitled “The Lifted Veil.”⁶ At issue in this strategy of concealment, of course, is the construction of an authoritative persona, a person with the right to enter into public discourse as an author. It is this same concern with the construction and maintenance of an authoritative persona, according to the feminist narratological analyses of Nancy K. Miller and Robyn Warhol, that leads Eliot (not wholly consciously) to adopt the strategy of narratorial intervention throughout her novels, and thus to bifurcate her texts into action and justificatory commentary on that action.⁷

However, as we have already seen, Eliot’s attitude toward the necessity of disguise, concealment, and secrecy is deeply conflicted. These two quotations, aligned through the use of the “iron” metaphor, demonstrate one aspect of Eliot’s ambivalence. Her incognito is figured variously as a stronghold protecting the secret “treasure” of her real identity, or as a prison within which her authentic self is trapped. Insofar as the assumed name allows her to enter a sphere of discourse from which she had believed herself excluded, it is itself a treasure; insofar as it actually further constricts the sphere in which she is allowed to speak (by preventing her from corresponding with Dickens), it is a burden. Yet these contradictory metaphors register an even deeper conflict. By concealing her real name, Eliot is of course concealing her gender: this is the very purpose of the incognito. It is the taking on of the male identity, with its attendant

authority, which is important about her alias. We can see a fantasy of masculine re-embodiment elsewhere in Eliot's correspondence; for example, in a letter where she argues with Blackwood about the scene in "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story" where Caterina wields the dagger, she also comments on her alias:

I am glad you retain a doubt in favour of the "dagger" [dagger], and wish I could convert you to entire approval, for I am much more satisfied when your feeling is thoroughly with me. . . . For several reasons I am very anxious to retain my incognito for some time to come, and to an author not already famous, anonymity is the highest *prestige*. Besides, if George Eliot turns out a dull dog and an ineffective writer—a mere flash in the pan—I, for one, am determined to cut him on the first intimation of that disagreeable fact. (*L*, 2:309–10)

Her fighting to retain the dagger on behalf of her heroine, with all of its sexual implications, is juxtaposed with her fighting to retain her alias, with all of its phallic possibilities. This fantasy of masculine power is somehow imagined to be transferable to the (female) author herself, for it is she, Mary Ann Evans, who will "cut" the male pretender George Eliot if he proves burdensome: it is she who will retain the castrating dagger.

Yet Eliot's attempt to re-embodiment herself as a male author is deeply problematic to her. While the authority of masculinity is undeniably attractive—and is perhaps even necessary to prevent that judgment of her work based on her sex that is anathema to her—it also undermines what Eliot sees as the real source of the sympathetic identification that is the heart of her novelistic project: her womanhood. As she writes in a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe:

Letters are necessarily narrow and fragmentary, and when one writes on wide subjects are liable to create more misunderstanding than illumination. But I have little anxiety of that kind in writing to you, dear friend and fellow-labourer—for you have had longer experience than I as a writer, and fuller experience as a woman, since you have borne children and known the mother's history from the beginning. I trust your quick and long-taught mind as an interpreter little liable to mistake me. (*L*, 5:29–31)

It is the womanliness of the author that ensures her interpretive powers; her explicitly female body, and its life-giving ability to bear children, is the source from which springs the ability to understand

and write with sympathy.⁸ How, then, to assume the masculine voice and retain the feminine sympathetic insight?

This is a problem to which she later returns in *Daniel Deronda*, her most markedly bifurcated text. About halfway through the novel, the narrator indulges in a long passage of direct commentary on Daniel's character, which teeters on the edge of free indirect discourse before falling in several pages later. Daniel is analyzed as a person whose deep sympathy and almost supernatural insight into others' moods, feelings, and characters render him incapable of making a decisive judgment about anyone or anything. The scope of Daniel's vision is so broad it paralyzes him:

His imagination had so wrought itself to the habit of seeing things as they probably appeared to others, that a strong partisanship . . . had become an insincerity for him. His plenteous, flexible sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy. . . .

A too reflective and diffusive sympathy was in danger of paralysing in him that indignation against wrong and that selectness of fellowship which are the conditions of moral force.⁹

Daniel's problem is not caused by lack of thought or reflection; it is only after Daniel's inherent predilection to sympathy is intermingled with a "reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy" that he becomes paralyzed. Daniel sees too much, which in turn causes him to feel too much (which ultimately nullifies all particular feeling): he is approaching the epistemological crisis of Latimer, the first-person narrator of "The Lifted Veil" whose ability to read others' minds causes him torment. Just as several critics have noted the parallels between Latimer's curse and the epistemological crisis of the protomodern narrator, so can we see in Daniel's dilemma Eliot's commentary on the process of narrating, and novel-writing, more generally.¹⁰ Elsewhere in the same paragraph, the narrator comments that Daniel "hated vices mildly, being used to thinking of them less in the abstract than as a part of mixed human natures having an individual history, which it was the bent of his mind to trace with understanding and pity" (*D*, 412). This description of the application of Daniel's sympathy reads like a prescription for Eliot's own sympathetic narrative project. In her most famous manifesto of realism in fiction, the chapter of *Adam Bede* entitled "In Which the Story Pauses a Little," Eliot reminds us that the particular task of the novelist is to present to her readers true-to-life characters whose

foibles and imperfections will train us to understand and forgive those of our actual neighbors:

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. (A, 176)

It is through realism that this training in understanding is to be effected; presumably by schooling her readers in acceptance through art, the novelist will also school them in empathy in life: “I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence” (A, 177). Understanding, for Eliot, is only possible through painstaking accuracy in representation, through the “rare, precious quality of truthfulness” (A, 177) that is realism. This is the source of Daniel Deronda’s preternatural empathy; Daniel “trace[s] with understanding and pity” the histories and characters of his companions, precisely because he engages in a sort of characterological realism: rather than seeing them “in the abstract,” it is his gift to apprehend the faults of his neighbors “as a part of mixed human natures having an individual history” (D, 412).

In Daniel’s case, the gift is also a curse. He is in a double bind, caught between the “plenteous, flexible sympathy” that is his natural predilection and the “reflective analysis” (D, 412) which is the enemy of partisan feeling, and thus of action. In the logic of Eliot’s description, Daniel’s predicament is a kind of gender dysphoria. It is the especial province of the female author to engage in sympathetic understanding of the “mixed human natures” (D, 412) of her characters: as Eliot claims in “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists,” a woman of true learning and accomplishment “is the least formidable of women, because she understands you. . . . She does not give you information, which is the raw material of culture,—she gives you sympathy, which

is its subtlest essence.”¹¹ For Eliot, “information” and “analysis” are coded masculine, while “sympathy” is consistently associated with femininity.¹² The narrator of *Daniel Deronda* describes this tug-of-war between sympathy and analysis in markedly gendered terms: in a startling passage which heralds the return of the “iron” trope, he opines: “To pound the objects of sentiment into small dust, yet keep sentiment alive and active, was something like the famous recipe for making cannon—to first take a round hole and then enclose it with iron; whatever you do keeping fast hold of your round hole” (*D*, 414). While this passage refers to the somewhat epicene Daniel’s desire to become a man of action, we can also read it as meditation on the narratological problem Eliot struggles with her entire career: to combine, in one figure, the incisive analytical vision of the masculine narrator with the sympathetic insight of the womanly author. Or in other words, to enclose the “round hole” of her womanhood with the iron sheath of phallic masculine authority—and not lose that original source of feminine empathy.

For Eliot this struggle takes place on two registers. First there is the artistic conundrum: how to balance the competing imperatives of narration—analysis and sympathy. Eliot conceived of this problem in different ways throughout her career, from the interest in painterly realism of the early novels to the quasiscientific analytical mode, with its metaphors of microscopic vision and probing examination, in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, to which I will return. Second, there is the reification of the philosophical and artistic problem in the form of the incognito. Evans sees herself as a woman locked behind the iron mask of her masculine alias; just as with the cannon image, her womanly center threatens to cave in on itself when encased in the crushing iron of masculine authority. The center of the cannon is, of course, a void—an absence that signals the loss of self in a process of imminent collapse. The procedure of iron-encasement threatens to nullify the subject: the combination of “reflective analysis” and “flexible sympathy” (*D*, 412), unless balanced perfectly, will leave Daniel a paralyzed weakling; Evans feels unable to speak to her admiring public, and is ironically voiceless and without identity, behind the mask of her incognito. At least in this early part of her career, the incognito is a trade-off that Evans is willing to make; the risk of symbolically denying her womanhood, the very source of her writerly sympathy, is worth the respect and authority her masculine alias garners. This is less a recipe for making cannon than a strategy for making the canon.

While certainly striking, the repeated appearance of the iron metaphor in Eliot's prose is not merely a lexical oddity.¹³ The word "iron" has a long history as a metaphor for human, especially masculine, instrumentality with regard to nature, and I will argue later in this essay that its repetition here helps to place Eliot's anxious justifications within a larger discourse about scientific intervention and interference—particularly medical interference with women's bodies.¹⁴ As several critics have claimed, Eliot's narrative style is deeply influenced by the scientific interests she shared with her biologist-cum-literary-critic partner, George Henry Lewes. The thrust of many of these critical claims is that Eliot became more engaged with biological pursuits as her career unfolded, and that her later novels are somehow more scientific than her early work. In his recent article "Fiction as Vivisection," for example, Richard Menke argues that Eliot's later novels use "language and techniques translated from Lewes's physiological psychology to develop a type of fictional psychology that takes her far from the humble realism of *Scenes of Clerical Life* or *Adam Bede*," while George Levine claims that Eliot's early philosophical realism is irrevocably challenged by the scientific developments of the latter part of the century.¹⁵ Sally Shuttleworth, on the other hand, summarizes the development of Eliot's narrative method in the preface to *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science* thus: "In *Adam Bede* . . . [Eliot] adopts the role of natural historian, a passive observer of organic life, concerned only to record the unchanging details of external form. . . . In *Daniel Deronda*, however, her narrative method is closer to that of the creative, experimental scientist."¹⁶ According to Shuttleworth's analysis, the Dutch-realist narrator of *Adam Bede*, who is so concerned to paint faithfully his "pictures of monotonous homely existence" (A, 177), to simultaneously register and create humbly realistic *tableaux*, is also engaging in a kind of scientific enterprise—albeit that of the natural historian rather than the aggressive experimenter.

Whether we conceive of the difference between these narrative preoccupations as between the painterly and the scientific, between natural history and experimentation, or between feminine sympathy and masculine analysis, I would contend that the tension between these modes persists throughout Eliot's career and is present, in varying degrees, in all of her fiction. As we have seen, Eliot worries about this balance no less in *Daniel Deronda* than in her correspondence with Blackwood following the publication of *Adam Bede*. Furthermore, it is important to remember that one of the primary

registers of this tension is aggressively evident from the first novel to the last: the instructive, directive, expounding, philosophizing narratorial intervention. Eliot's habit is to use the intervention not only to direct her readers' interpretation of the plot (to defend the plausibility of her tale), but also to superintend their philosophical engagement with theories of narrative and literary representation generally. The shape and tenor of these interventions demonstrate Eliot's circumspection regarding the ethical implications of her literary technique, a deep and abiding concern for "the responsibility involved in publication" and "the sacredness of the writer's art" ("S," 323) that takes the form of an oscillation between—a dialectics of—the sympathetic and the analytic mode. Ironically enough, one of the subjects of Eliot's particular anxiety would seem to be the technique of narratorial intervention itself.

II. WHAT GRAND BREECHES!; OR, IN WHICH THE STORY PAUSES A LITTLE

In *Adam Bede* we see the full force of these difficult conflicts. In her first novel, Eliot is particularly anxious to link—at both the conceptual and descriptive levels—the directive commentary of her narrator and the project of sympathetic realism and identification. So concerned, in fact, that she halts the unfolding of the plot with her heroine on the very brink of seduction by the local squire, Arthur Donnithorne, in order to treat her reader to a disquisition on realism, representation, and sympathy in the oft-analyzed chapter entitled "In Which the Story Pauses a Little." This interruption of the story is the *sine qua non* of narrative intervention: it not only halts the forward movement of the tale, but is explicitly thematized by the narrator as doing so.

But before we turn to the famous chapter 17, let us pause a moment to consider some other emblematic pauses the text is at pains to describe, taken under decidedly humbler circumstances. The first two occur in the opening chapter of the novel and concern the strange figure of the elderly horseman, who appears in the first few pages to guide our attention to our hero and heroine, disappears for over forty chapters, and then mysteriously pops up again as the magistrate in charge of the prison where Hetty Sorrel awaits execution:

As he reached the foot of the slope, an elderly horseman, with his portmanteau strapped behind him, stopped his horse when Adam had passed him, and turned round to have another long look at the

stalwart workman in paper cap, leather breeches, and dark-blue worsted stockings.

Adam, unconscious of the admiration he was exciting, presently struck across the fields, and now broke out into the tune which had all day long been running in his head:

“Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noon-day clear,
For God’s all-seeing eye surveys
Thy secret thoughts, thy works and ways.” (A, 12–13)

Thus ends the first chapter, wherein the reader was already introduced to the novel’s eponymous hero through much more conventional novelistic techniques. Why, then, this rather bizarre passage? It both defamiliarizes Adam and eroticizes him as passive aesthetic object, who earlier in the chapter was described using an almost comically manly and “stalwart” vocabulary: “broad chest,” “large-boned,” “muscular,” “air of a soldier at ease,” “likely to win the prize for feats of strength,” and so on (A, 6). The horseman’s appreciation is pointedly aesthetic, and the personality of Adam as an individual, which Eliot was at pains to describe a few pages earlier, melts away in the burning heat of the stranger’s appraisal. As several commentators have noted, the figure of the horseman in *Adam Bede*, like other outsider-observer figures in Eliot’s fiction, helps the author guide her readers’ attention as well as subtly direct their interpretation; according to Hugh Witemeyer, for example, these figures are “guides and tutors, demonstrating the quality of perception that the reader must learn to apply to the world within the novel.”¹⁷ This would seem to indicate that the horseman is here to train us in appropriate sympathetic response. Yet the horseman’s relation to Adam is objectifying and dehumanizing. Even Adam’s own “unconscious” response to the stranger’s gaze seems to underscore the omniscient and analytical properties of our surrogate narrator rather than his potential sympathetic identification: for his “all-seeing eye surveys” Adam’s manly physique, and perhaps even his “secret thoughts, [his] works and ways.” Here the pause on the part of the stranger is explicitly in service of a connoisseurship which is frankly erotic and markedly classbound.¹⁸

The “all-seeing eye” of the horseman is next trained on Adam’s future wife, in the passage in which we find our second emblematic pause:

The traveller put his horse into a quick walk up the village, but when he approached the Green, the beauty of the view that lay on his right

hand, the singular contrast presented by the groups of villagers with the knot of Methodists near the maple, and perhaps yet more, curiosity to see the young female preacher, proved too much for his anxiety to get to the end of his journey, and he paused. (A, 17)

The passage then continues with one of the most famous descriptions of landscape in Eliot's fiction, the scene of Dinah preaching on the green. This second pause on the part of the horseman is another moment of aesthetic engagement, this time of a much more conventional variety. Any contemporary reader of Eliot's would have recognized this pause as a very particular activity on the part of the gentleman traveller: he is engaged in an appreciation of the picturesque. As John Barrell notes in his study *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place*, the "contemplation of landscape was an activity with its own proper procedure, which involved recognising the stretch of land under your eye . . . as a complex of associations and meanings, and more important, as a composition, in which each object bore a specific and analysable relationship to the others." This practice of carving up natural scenes into compositions, furthermore, was so pervasive and socially important an activity that "a person of much education in the eighteenth century would have found it very hard, not merely to describe land, but also to see it, and even to think of it as a visual phenomenon, except as mediated through particular notions of form."¹⁹ Our aristocratic horseman cannot help himself. He is a lecherous figure, full of multitudinous desires: leather breeches, picturesque views, crowds of villagers, pretty young preachers—all give him pause, engage his appreciative gaze, and divert him from his chosen path. It would have been a nearly involuntary reflex for him to assess natural scenes—and such rustic inhabitants thereof as carpenters and lay preachers—in terms of aesthetic and painterly categories which enable him to frame, judge, and appreciate. The pause is in service of this very particular class privilege.²⁰

Yet Adam also pauses:

These pleasant thoughts about Arthur brought a milder expression than usual into [Adam's] keen rough face: perhaps they were the reason why, when he opened the old green gate leading into the Grove, he paused to pat Gyp, and say a kind word to him.

After that pause, he strode on again along the broad winding path through the Grove. What grand beeches! Adam delighted in a fine tree of all things. . . . No wonder that, notwithstanding his desire to get on, he could not help pausing to look at a curious large beech which he had seen standing before him at a turning in the road, and

convince himself that it was not two trees wedded together, but only one. For the rest of his life he remembered that moment when he was calmly examining the beech, 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. (A, 295)

Adam, like the traveller on horseback, pauses not once but twice—first at the prompting of his “pleasant thoughts about Arthur” (which, in a somewhat mysterious process of displacement, cause him to bestow an affectionate pat on his dog), and then at the prospect of some “grand beeches” which excite his admiration.²¹ For both characters, the movement is the same: admiring, appreciative thoughts of another man; a pause; the immediate distraction of a natural object or scene with attendant aesthetic assessment; and a second pause, one which this time explicitly interrupts the admirer’s forward movement (“proved too much for his anxiety to get to the end of his journey”; “notwithstanding his desire to get on”). Each character thus indulges in two pauses: the first a pause of quasi-erotic engagement and feeling of attraction to another man, the second a pause of quasi-artistic engagement and feeling of attraction to a landscape.

However, the structural similarity of the passages is undermined by a crucial difference. The horseman’s appreciation both of Adam and of the scene on the town green is, as I have noted, essentially picturesque: he does not feel empathy for, or interest in, Adam *qua* human subject as much as he feels admiration for a strapping workman *qua* object in a bucolic scene; neither does he show, in Barrell’s phrase, “evidence of caring that the topography of [the] landscape was a representation of the needs of the people who had created it.”²² He is a rural *flâneur*. Adam’s reactions, on the other hand, are decidedly outside the essentially aristocratic discourse of the picturesque. His first pause is occasioned by thoughts of his friend and mentor Arthur, a person with whom he has a real and long-standing relationship—not a stranger striding by in admiration-exciting leather breeches. And the second pause, while it is indeed induced by a tree, is a direct reversal of the particular kind of engagement with nature associated with picturesque appreciation. Adam is, after all, a carpenter who anticipates becoming the manager of Arthur’s woods when the latter inherits the estate. His preoccupation with the curiously formed beech tree is professional—the interest of an artisan rather than the appraisal of an artist. I quote now the part of this passage that I elided above:

Adam delighted in a fine tree of all things: as the fisherman's sight is keenest on the sea, so Adam's perceptions were more at home with trees than with other objects. He kept them in his memory, as a painter does, with all the flecks and knots in their bark, all the curves and angles of their boughs; and had often *calculated the height and contents of a tree trunk to a nicety*, as he stood looking at it. No wonder that, notwithstanding his desire to get on, he could not help pausing. (A, 295, my emphasis)

Eliot's likening of Adam to a painter is something of a red herring. His eye and memory for detail may be as meticulous as a painter's, but his appreciation of the tree is neither painterly nor aristocratic-picturesque. Eliot seems to invite the mistake: the "flecks and knots" and "curves and angles" that Adam notices are close enough to the vocabulary of the picturesque to court comparison, yet just as the reader is (pleasantly) bemused by the sight of an indifferently educated country carpenter engaging with a landscape in such theoretical terms, Eliot sharply reminds us that he is most likely calculating the amount of wood to be harvested from such a tree.²³

For both Adam and the travelling horseman, the second pause—the pause occasioned by natural objects—is a pause of analysis. In each case, the pauser engages in a highly specialized connoisseurship, with its own terminology and assessment criteria, that is appropriate to his class position. The first pauses, on the other hand—to admire Adam, to appreciate Arthur—we might call pauses of sympathy, or at least pauses with the superficial form of sympathy. (As we have seen, in the case of the horseman this moment is essentially a hollow imitation of sympathetic identification.) The structural similarity of the passages, with their doubled rhythms of movements and pauses, invites us to contemplate their thematic similarities. Yet the differences I have noted also signal Eliot's ambivalence about the analytical mode we can ascribe to our *flâneur*-horseman. As Hugh Witemeyer persuasively argues in his book *George Eliot and the Visual Arts*, Eliot was strongly influenced by John Ruskin's condemnation of the picturesque mode in *Modern Painters*.²⁴ As Witemeyer characterizes Ruskin's argument, the "apprehension of the surface-picturesque involves a failure of the moral-aesthetic imagination . . . for the viewer not only fails to grasp the true nature of what he contemplates, but he also fails to sympathize with the human suffering which ruins and broken cottages so often imply."²⁵ Granted, the horseman in *Adam Bede* is gazing not upon ragged peasant children, ruined abbeys, and desperate banditti, but rather at a well-fed carpenter, a

pleasant village scene, and a well-tended estate.²⁶ However, his appraising analysis, as I hope I have shown, partakes fully of the aristocratic privilege of the picturesque, of which Eliot shared a deep suspicion with Ruskin.²⁷ The latter characterized the lover of the picturesque as “kind-hearted, innocent, but not broad in thought; somewhat selfish, and incapable of acute sympathy with others.”²⁸ Or as Eliot’s narrator himself puts it, “I have observed this remarkable coincidence, that the select natures who pant after the ideal . . . are curiously in unison with the narrowest and pettiest” (A, 183). The horseman is, at best, a deeply ambivalent figure.

This ambivalence is particularly important for my purposes because there are several homologies between the horseman and the narratorial perspective of the novel. We have already seen the metonymic association of the horseman’s gaze with the omniscient eye of God in the hymn that Adam sings to himself. As I also already noted, Eliot has a habit of using a participant-observer figure in her novels, and even at times collapses the narratorial voice with the voice of this observer.²⁹ In the case of the horseman in *Adam Bede*, the function of the observer seems to be to justify indirectly the inherent interest of the novel’s main characters. Just as in chapter 17, where the novelist pauses to assure us of the moral rectitude of her artistic choices, so in the chapter where the horseman pauses to admire Adam are we repeatedly reassured that the carpenter is a very interesting personage indeed:

“Well, it’s a pretty spot, whoever may own it,” said the traveller, mounting his horse, “and one meets some fine strapping fellows about too. I met as fine a young fellow as ever I saw in my life, about half an hour ago . . . a tall broad-shouldered fellow with black hair and black eyes, marching along like a soldier. . . .”

“Ay, sir, that’s Adam Bede, that is, I’ll be bound—Thias Bede’s son—everybody knows him hereabout. He’s an uncommon stiddy fellow, an’ wonderful strong.” (A, 17)

And the laudatory description actually continues long after we have got the point. Earlier in the conversation, the traveller spends just as much time discussing the “young female preacher,” where she comes from, and her right to preach “just under [the] nose” of the parson (A, 15). Taken in the context of the long justification of chapter 17, these quasi-metanarrative moments serve to underscore the need Eliot felt to defend such idiosyncratic novelistic choices—and, more impor-

tantly, to emphasize further the congruence between the horseman's observational stance and Eliot's view of her narratorial responsibilities.

In order to draw out these congruences more fully, I would like to consider the possible connections between the intranarrative pauses I have been describing (which nonetheless occasion temporary interruptions in the actions of particular characters) and the extranarrative pause that frames the interventionist commentary of the narrator in chapter 17. We can sketch a taxonomy of pauses in the novel by returning to look more closely at our interrupted hero standing rapt before a beech tree. (Elsewhere in the novel the narrator tells us that "there was something enervating in the very sight of" beech trees [138]—they induce pauses!) The reason this pause is so significant is that it occurs immediately before Adam sees Hetty and Arthur embracing in the Grove; this moment, this pause, is to form the boundary between a blissfully ignorant hero and a sadder, wiser one. As the narrator opines, Adam's second pause is one that he will always remember "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." As Future Adam himself characterizes this phenomenon in conversation with the narrator in chapter 17, there are "times when feelings come into you like a rushing mighty wind . . . and part your life in two a'most, so as you look back on yourself as if you was somebody else" (A, 181). Adam's speech here is in direct service of the pedagogical aims of the narrator; the similarity between the axiomatic words of the narrator in describing Adam's pause, and of Adam himself in putative conversation with the "narrator," signals Eliot's anxiety about the reception of both her interpretive commentary and her aesthetic project of sympathetic realism that is the subject of chapter 17.³⁰

Realism as Eliot envisions it requires the pause. Sympathetic identification with individual characters—what Daniel possesses and Eliot hopes to inculcate in her readers by example—is only one part of the project of realism: what we might call the synchronic component. The diachronic component is the tracing of actions and consequences, an awareness of the far-reaching repercussions on our fellow human beings of any potential act, however seemingly isolated. The great mistake of Arthur is his failure to imagine that the consequences of his own actions could affect anyone other than himself:

Unhappily there is no inherent poetical justice in hobbles, and they will sometimes obstinately refuse to inflict their worst consequences on the prime offender, in spite of his loudly-expressed wish. It was entirely owing to this deficiency in the scheme of things that Arthur had ever brought any one into trouble besides himself. (A, 169–70)

Of course the deficiency is not in “the scheme of things” but in Arthur himself; it is his failure of imagination that causes his blindness to consequence. He is always rushing to act, both in the name of his own pleasure and in the name of recompense, before the repercussions of his actions are clear: “There was no knowing what impulse might seize him to-morrow” (A,129). This impulsiveness directly contradicts a sensitivity to consequences: “And across all this reflection would dart every now and then a sudden impulse of passionate defiance towards all consequences. He would carry Hetty away, and all other considerations might go to” (A, 313; original ellipses). The failure of imagination (. . . .) is a failure to pause.

The pause is necessary to the diachronic component of Eliot’s realism because it enables—perhaps even necessitates—a retrospective reading that clarifies the subsequent consequences of past actions. The character needs to pause in order to reflect, yet the intranarrative pause also marks an epistemological shift that becomes apparent only from a future perspective, whether the individual character’s or the narrator’s (and by extension, the reader’s). In other words, the kind of reading that takes place in the moment of the pause (the picturesque, the assessment of lumber, the weighing of consequences) is an analogue for the kind of retrospective reading that will engage the character in the future, when he remembers this moment as the last of his innocence, or connects the young girl in his prison with the figures he encountered while traveling on horseback many months before, or realizes how he has hurt others through his impulsiveness. These pauses open up spaces in the temporal logic of the narrative that enable the tracing of consequences that normally would be available only to the omniscient eye of the narrator. It is not a coincidence that Adam’s pause before the beech tree is explained as such a defining moment only in the course of conversation with the “narrator” during the long pause of chapter 17.

The pause is necessary, yet it is also a dangerous narrative tactic. We have already seen in our opening epigraph (wherein Mr. Irwine sees “the whole history now by that terrible illumination which the present sheds back upon the past”) how the moment of retrospective

reading that the pause enables can threaten to expose the radical contingency of the narrative itself. Furthermore, even as the pause enables the backward reading necessary for the diachronic component of realism (the tracing of consequences), it threatens the operations of the synchronic component of realism (sympathetic identification). Most obviously, the long extranarrative pause of chapter 17 itself disrupts the unfolding of the plot and rudely reminds the reader of the very *un*-reality of the novel making such strident claims to realism, and thus to sympathy.³¹ But perhaps less obviously, the intranarrative pause that partakes of the analytical mode is also inimical to the operations of sympathetic identification. The pause of the horseman objectifies and aestheticizes Adam, as if he were a tree being measured for lumber. For Eliot, too much sympathy threatens to nullify the subject (Daniel Deronda, Latimer, the hole at the center of the cannon), yet too much reflective analysis threatens to nullify the object (the striding carpenter, the soon-to-be-lumber beech tree).

This tension between the necessity of the pause and its danger, and more broadly between the demand for sympathy and the strictures of analysis, comes to bear most directly on the character of Hetty. It is in Eliot's treatment of Hetty that her ambivalence is most painfully apparent; the pretty yet spoiled, naïve yet coquettish, innocent yet guilty Hetty is an *omnium-gatherum* of the author's most enduring artistic problems.

III. BAD HETTY

Eliot's project in *Adam Bede* is the careful delineation of consequences and motives; the novel is envisioned by its author as both a perfectly enclosed system of cause and effect and an accurate depiction of reality. At the same time, it is a novel concerned above all else with concealment. The relationship between these two characteristics is complex and problematic. During the course of the conversation between Arthur and Mr. Irwine, wherein the latter fails to intrude adequately upon the other man's secrets, he also echoes the earlier words of the narrator in declaring to Arthur that "consequences are hardly ever confined to ourselves . . . [a]nd it is best to fix our minds on that certainty" (A, 172). Mr. Irwine fails to force a confession from Arthur—the pivotal nonevent that allows the unfolding of "all this guilt and misery" (A, 407)—because he is too busy lecturing him about the central ethical insight of the novel. Had he

heard Arthur's secret, rather than delivered the moral of the story, he would have prevented the demonstration of that moral through the exercise in consequences that follows. Concealment is necessary to narrative, while the strictures of sympathetic realism demand that it be condemned. Yet it is an attractive and seductive strategy—for the novel's characters, for the demands of plot, and for its author, who, as we have seen, is engaged in a game of concealment herself insofar as the publication of the novel was in fact rushed by Eliot, who wanted it printed before rumors about its author could be confirmed.

The obsession with the power and control garnered by concealment is enacted in *Adam Bede* in the character of Hetty Sorrel, who stands in for the author in her obsession with hiding. Hetty is the figure of the ignorant female reader: "Hetty had never read a novel: if she had ever seen one, I think the words would have been too hard for her: how then could she find a shape for her expectations?" (A, 181). It is but a short step from this ignorant female reader, as Eliot argues in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," to the ignorant female writer.³² Hetty is the anti-Deronda: the scope of her consciousness is so constricted that she is unable to perform the imaginative identifications necessary for the true sympathy that is the hallmark of the insightful author. As the narrator of *Adam Bede* repeatedly reminds us, Hetty's understanding is shriveled by ignorance and selfishness: she sees "nothing in the wide world but the little history of her own pleasures and pains" (A, 369). It is this narrowness of perception that makes her a bad author: sympathetic realism demands a broad scope of vision, and Hetty is thus incapable of writing the ending of even her own "little history." The end of the chapter, entitled "The Journey in Despair," which describes Hetty's hopeless wanderings after she fails to find her seducer at Windsor, signals this failure of imagination: "What will be the end?—the end of her objectless wandering?" (A, 389). This pessimistic outburst is particularly noteworthy because it is poised between the consciousness of the narrator and the consciousness of the character: the passage begins with free indirect discourse ("Perhaps death would come to her") and ends with a direct narratorial intervention ("God preserve you and me from being the beginners of such misery!"), and in between posits the question "What will be the end?" (A, 389). This is a question—or rather an anxiety—that the narrator/author seems to share with Hetty. They also share, of course, the strategy of concealment, which in the logic of the narrative is intimately connected to Hetty's failure of writerly imagination. She cannot imagine how her story will end, since she

can “conceive no other existence for herself than a hidden one” (A, 371). Her desperate efforts to hide her pregnancy have siphoned off whatever rudimentary ability she might have had to imagine a course of action and a future for herself: “After the first on-coming of her great dread . . . she had waited and waited, in the blind vague hope that something would happen to set her free from her terror. . . . All the force of her nature had been concentrated on the one effort of concealment” (A, 365). Although for Mr. Irwine—and Eliot—narrative demands secrecy, for Hetty, narrative contraindicates disguise.

It is her inability to formulate expectations which marks Hetty as a bad author—as opposed to the good author whose understanding springs from her womanly sympathy—for it is the careful delineation of consequences and motives which is the primary concern of the novel itself. Hetty represents Eliot’s nightmare possibility of female authorship: her narrative mode, as opposed to Mr. Irwine’s, is one in which concealment threatens to halt the unfolding of consequence that is the author’s central ethical and artistic project. Hetty’s concealment is not in the service of a plot that will ultimately demonstrate the moral truth of the uncontainability of consequences; it is a selfish motivation that, if successful, would undermine that demonstration. Arthur’s secrecy enables the plot; Hetty’s would forestall it.

What is striking about the transgressions of Hetty, when seen in light of Eliot’s own concerns about the gendering of her authority, is that, in each case, the key issue is the ability to give birth: in her letter to Stowe, Eliot specifically links this life-giving power to interpretive—and therefore authorial—skill, while it is Hetty’s unwanted and problematic pregnancy that disrupts the easy resolution of the plot of *Adam Bede*—the alternative plot, which is worked out between Arthur and Adam, wherein Hetty is to be exchanged from lover to unwitting husband. It is through her pregnancy that her body thwarts both Arthur’s attempt to work his ethical recompense by handing her over to the man who loves her, and her own status as token of exchange—for it is in her pregnancy that she of course betrays her shame, her great transgression of the code which enables such exchanges in the first place. Hetty’s virginity is the imprimatur of her desirability as a token in the masculine exchange system of marriage, and the fact that Adam unknowingly has been robbed of this most important dowry gives even Arthur pause: “Adam was deceived—deceived in a way that Arthur would have resented as a deep wrong if it had been practised on himself” (A, 361). But it is important to note that this is a deception; it is only when the “hidden dread”

manifests itself that the extent of Arthur's treachery and Hetty's transgression becomes clear. It is only through the uncontainable and relentless workings of her maternal body that Hetty does violence to the tidy alternative plot that the men had worked out together. It is Hetty's pregnancy alone which prevents the neat resolution of the dilemma—and thus it is her pregnancy alone which is also the enabling event of the novel's real plot. Through the operations of the woman's body a narrative is generated, a species of *écriture féminine*, which challenges the stability and readability of the dominant, masculine plot. The subversive potential of this alternative narrative is sharply circumscribed, however; as Eve Sedgwick points out in *Between Men*, the "sexual narrative" of Hetty "occurs with the overtaking of an active search for power of which she is the *subject*, by an already-constituted symbolic power exchange between men of which her very misconstruction, her sense of purposefulness, proves her to have been the designated *object*."³³ While her transgressions may constitute a challenge to the constraints of Victorian morality, this challenge is readily quashed; it is the uncontainability of the sexual narrative within the constraints of the novel's symbolic economy that ultimately necessitates Hetty's banishment and death.

However, while Hetty's transgressions—both sexual and narratological—may ultimately founder at the level of plot, it is the trope of her problematic and unwieldy body that enables the resolution of a persistent tension between the modes of masculine and feminine in the novel. Hetty, for all of her overabundant womanliness, remains a strangely androgynous figure. Comely, coquettish, and of course fertile, she is nevertheless utterly lacking in sympathy generally and maternal, and readerly, instincts specifically. She is persistently figured, both by the narrator and by her Aunt Poyser, the repository of feminine wisdom and acerbic insight in the novel, as hard-hearted, uncaring, unfeminine. As Jill Matus has pointed out, Eliot carefully prepares the reader for Hetty's infanticide later in the novel by consistently describing Hetty as utterly unmaternal: "Hetty hates nasty little lambs, hates hatching time, and finds the Poyser children 'as bad as buzzing insects that will come teasing you on a hot day when you want to be quiet.'"³⁴ For the mid-Victorian reader, of course, this characterization of Hetty as unmaternal is tantamount to calling her unfeminine, even unnatural. While her obsession with finery, display, and costume, her narcissistic self-love and self-containment, and of course her remarkable beauty all constitute practically a parody of high femininity, her hard-heartedness and lack

of maternal instinct simultaneously mark her as an unnatural creature: an admixture of masculine and feminine, an androgyne. (As is Daniel Deronda: while Hetty is a woman who lacks sympathy, Daniel is a man who has too much.)

Yet Hetty's androgyny does not belie the fact that the central event of the novel (no less central for its being concealed and oddly unnarrated) is her pregnancy, childbirth, and infanticide. An understanding of this central nonevent on its own terms—that is, within the context of the contemporary discourse and practice of obstetrics—is crucial to a reading of the novel as a whole. First, there is the obvious fact that this central event is a birth, and a birth that recalls the fantasized utopian process of a kind of prelapsarian natural childbirth without medical intervention. Second, there are compelling reasons to consider Hetty's confessed infanticide under the rubric of obstetric practice more generally. Until well into the nineteenth century, there was no sharp distinction made between professional obstetric intervention and newborn child murder: as we shall see, what modern commentators might well term infanticide was part of a continuum of obstetric practices, and could not be radically separated from those practices. Third, there is the fact that the composition of *Adam Bede* took place during a time of unprecedented public discussion of the problem of infanticide, in the 1850s and 1860s. It was in 1862, for example, that Dr. William Burke Ryan published his landmark work *Infanticide: Its Law, Prevalence, Prevention, and History*:

The feeble wail of murdered childhood in its agony assails our ears at every turn, and is borne on every breeze. . . . In the quiet of the bedroom we raise the box-lid, and the skeletons are there. In the calm evening walk we see in the distance the suspicious-looking bundle, and the mangled infant within. By the canal side, or in the water, we find the dead child. In the solitude of the wood we are horrified by the ghastly sight; and if we betake ourselves to the road rail to escape the pollution, we find at our journey's end that the mouldering remains of a murdered innocent have been our travelling companion; and that the odour from that unsuspected parcel truly indicates what may be found within.³⁵

The extreme melodrama of this passage—scarcely can the respectable Victorian go about the daily routines of comfortable middle-class existence without having to deal with the annoying problem of another infantine corpse—betokens the intensity of the public debate over this issue. In fact, it was these two decades, the 1850s and

1860s, that saw a crucial rhetorical shift in the characterization of infanticide as a severe social problem rather than as an unfortunate expedient. One possible reason for this shift, as Lionel Rose argues, is that the birthrate is declining throughout the nineteenth century, and thus individual infants' lives were now seen as more precious.³⁶ Whatever the reason, infanticide was only at this moment becoming rhetorically separated from a whole range of interventionist obstetric practices. In order to place Hetty's child murder in context, then, we need to examine the rhetoric surrounding obstetric practice in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, particularly regarding the usurpation of the female midwife by the male obstetrician—and the disturbing figure of the androgynous “man-midwife.”

IV. IRON INSTRUMENTALITY: INTERVENTION, INVASION

As several recent studies have documented, the eighteenth century saw a radical shift in the techniques, practices, and culture of childbirth.³⁷ Through the end of the seventeenth century, childbirth in England had remained a nearly exclusively female domain: the laboring mother would be brought to a darkened birthing chamber, where she would be attended by a midwife and a circle of her women friends (“gossips”), who would help her through the birth and care for her during the lying-in period afterwards. There were no men allowed in the chamber—either during the birth itself or throughout the lying-in period, which could last up to a month after delivery. The only exception to this women-only rule was when there was a severe problem with the birth. Fully 98% of births were unproblematic, and resulted in a safe delivery if left to their own course.³⁸ Because most women's experience was that births tended to resolve themselves eventually, the midwife and gossips would usually wait—sometimes days—with an obstructed birth before they would call in a male surgeon, who would usually arrive when the child was already dead; his only job at this point was to perform a craniotomy on the dead child (with a sharp iron hook called a crotchet) in order to remove the body from the birth canal. Occasionally an obstructed baby would still be alive, in which case the surgeon might, in consultation with the gossips and midwife, decide to perform a craniotomy on a living child in order to save the life of the mother. As Adrian Wilson argues, this tendency to wait before calling in a surgeon reinforced the popular association of male medical intervention and death: “mothers' fears effectively conspired with the material circumstances . . . to

produce a self-perpetuating system. Long delays ensured that the child was usually dead before the surgeon was called, which reinforced the practical dominance of craniotomy.³⁹ There was thus a clearly gendered division of labor associated with the care of women in childbirth: female midwives delivered live babies without any kind of overtly medical intervention, and male barber-surgeons delivered dead (and dismembered) babies by interventionist means with the aid of iron instruments.

In the early decades of the eighteenth century, a revolution in childbirth management took place. By 1800, the female midwife had all but disappeared among the English upper classes and the lower urban classes, replaced by the male *accoucheur* or obstetrician. This extremely rapid change in practices of childbirth was nothing short of a revolution, since for centuries the mere presence of a man in the birthing room had been a harbinger of death which laboring mothers (and their friends and attendants) had feared and avoided above all else. As Hugh Chamberlen, one of the seventeenth century's most famous publishing "man-midwives," himself put it: "Where a man comes one or both [the mother or the child] must necessarily die."⁴⁰ The crucial question for medical historians of the period is thus: how did such a radical change take place so quickly? How did the male practitioners gain access to the birthing chamber, and to the trust (and custom) of deeply suspicious—even fearful—women who had previously avoided them at all costs?

There are of course many overlapping causes of this revolution in practice, but most historians agree that one of the crucial contributing factors is the introduction of the midwifery forceps—the so-called secret instrument.⁴¹ The four generations of the Chamberlen family of male *accoucheurs*, who practiced "man-midwifery" in London from about 1620 to 1730, possessed instruments that enabled them to deliver live infants obstructed by the head: the midwifery forceps (which compressed the fetal skull), as well as the vectis and the fillet (a blade and a pliable loop, respectively, used to retract the infant's head).⁴² These were quite literally secret instruments: the Chamberlen family manufactured and used them, but did not publicize their practice or publish the details of their invention for well over a hundred years. It was only with the death of the last member of the Chamberlen family in 1733 that the technology of the forceps was finally published. Suddenly, male practitioners could deliver a living child with the use of instruments. The self-perpetuating association of men—and their metal instruments—with death

and dismemberment was severed. However, the rapid usurpation of the female midwife by the male *accoucheur* did not happen without a great deal of rhetorical and ideological struggle throughout the course of the eighteenth century. Much of this opposition, which came both from female midwives concerned for their livelihoods as well as commentators concerned with the “social role” of the man-midwife, centered around two major issues: the violation of female modesty by male obstetricians, and the continued public distrust of interventionist instruments in the birthing chamber.⁴³ This second question is the most important for my purposes, for it demonstrates the strength of the association between masculine medical practice and the invasion of women’s bodies.

Much of the anti-obstetric (meaning male midwifery) discourse of the eighteenth century focused on the male practitioners’ use of instruments to effect delivery. To a certain extent, this is a rhetorical strategy: by subtly reminding the public that a female midwife’s noninterventionist, natural methods traditionally result in a safe delivery, and simultaneously exploiting the ancient association between surgical instruments and dismemberment and death, a writer such as Elizabeth Nihell hoped to persuade her readers to stick with the old practices:

The keen instrumentarians bring an argument they imagine capable of banishing or exterminating all the midwives. The men, they say, enjoy alone the glorious privilege of using instruments, in order, as they pretend, to assist nature. But let them, I intreat of them, answer, whether if the question could be decided by votes, where is the kingdom, where is the nation, where is the town, where, in short, is the person that would prefer iron and steel to a hand of flesh, tender, soft, duly supple, dextrous, and trusting to its own feelings for what it is about?

In fact, even though the midwifery forceps was used throughout the eighteenth century primarily as a means to save the life of both child and mother, and thus was at least in theory to be distinguished from the crotchet, Nihell persists in characterizing all obstetric instruments as invasive and murderous; the men, she claims, have “introduced themselves by force and violence, as one may say, sword in hand, with those murderous instruments,” and “behind all the tender alluring words, of superior skill and safety in the employing of them, conceal the ideas with which they are full, of cutting, hacking, plucking out piece-meal, or tearing limb from limb.”⁴⁴ According to

Nihell, the male practitioner is not merely a murderous interventionist and poacher on a traditionally female preserve, he is also a deceiver—and above all a concealer. Full of the “tender alluring words” of feminine sympathy, he yet conceals an iron instrument: a strictly masculine violence and murderous urge to dismember. In fact, one of the most successful man-midwives of the eighteenth century invented a forceps whose blades were covered with leather in order to disguise their metallic nature, which he acknowledged was “terrible to women.”⁴⁵

His supposedly bloodthirsty intention is not the only thing the man-midwife conceals. One of the most effective weapons in the rhetorical arsenal of the anti-obstetric commentators was the ancient association of midwifery with women. Any man who would want to practice this womanly art, the argument ran, must be either a seducer or an unnatural creature. As Ludmilla Jordanova puts it, “the issue of midwifery touched masculinity and femininity so deeply that the man-midwife could be portrayed at the end of the eighteenth century as a bizarre monster.”⁴⁶ The image she has in mind is the famous cartoon which served as the frontispiece to a 1793 tract entitled *Man-Midwifery Dissected*: the drawing shows a creature half man, half woman, split neatly down the middle. On the man side of the drawing we can see in the background an array of fearsome-looking obstetric instruments. The association of male *accoucheurs* with concealment, secrecy, and murderous intent is intimately bound up with a deep distrust of their appropriate gender identification.

Despite the vociferousness of anti-obstetric rhetoric, the man-midwife (soon restyled the *accoucheur* and then, finally, the obstetrician) ultimately won the battle for supremacy—as measured by cultural capital, remuneration, and public confidence. During the early decades of the nineteenth century, the battles around the new profession of obstetrics shifted first to questions of accreditation, and finally to newer invasive procedures such as examination by speculum and ovariectomy.⁴⁷ However, this does not mean that the public had completely accepted the new creature in their midst, or that the battles over the disturbing figure of the man-midwife were completely won—or forgotten. As late as 1857, one commentator warns that women are “invaded by the presence, and violated by the actual contact of the man-midwife.” According to his depiction, husbands who allow their wives to be treated by male *accoucheurs* are permitting “unspeakable and hideous mysteries . . . under the hypocritical guise of scientific discovery.”⁴⁸ The male obstetrician

continues to be figured as a concealer and an androgyne well into the nineteenth century.

V. CONCLUSION

It is with the startling images of dismemberment from *Nihell*, and in the persistent crisis of androgyny that runs throughout the obstetric wars of the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, that we can begin to see the outlines of the particular horror that an infanticide like Hetty's must have presented to contemporary readers. For, as I suggested earlier, Hetty is not merely androgynous, unnatural, and therefore unsettling—she is also a concealer. She manages somehow to hide her pregnancy for nearly eight months, when she flees Hayslope in her doomed attempt to find Arthur. But it is not just her pregnancy she conceals: she has, of course, concealed the whole affair (as has Arthur), and the particular method of infanticide she chooses is to hide the baby in a nest of leaves and cover it—basically to bury it alive—but in her decision to leave it some room to breathe betrays the fact that it is concealment, and not necessarily murder, that is her chief motive.⁴⁹ The text itself, at the level of plot, enacts this concern with concealment in the odd non-narration of Hetty's childbirth and murder. The narrator leaves Hetty abruptly in her wanderings, before she has given birth, to return to Hayslope and the panic engendered by her flight. The reader learns of Hetty's imprisonment from a letter that Mr. Irwine reads to Adam, and we only learn the details of the birth and murder many chapters later, through the testimony of witnesses at the trial. The strong suggestion in this brief childbirth narration is that it is a natural, easy birth, attended only by another woman, and thus aligned with the practices of all-female midwifery that were rapidly passing out of vogue at the time of the novel's action. In fact, the woman who assists Hetty in the birth is named Sarah Stone—the same name as one of the most prominent publishing midwives of the eighteenth century.

However, the birth episode in the novel suggests a different set of complications. Because of the way the narration is structured, so that we hear the account of the midwife figure and the man who discovers the infant's body (which Hetty does not in fact hide until many hours or days later) back to back during the course of the trial testimony, these two episodes—the birth and the concealment/murder—are presented as a single event. Furthermore, the way that the "concealment" is described by the eyewitness strongly suggests that Hetty has

dismembered the body of her child. As the laborer who discovers the baby testifies:

Just as I was stooping and laying down the stakes, I saw something odd and round and whitish lying on the ground under a nut-bush by the side of me. And I stooped down on hands and knees to pick it up. And I saw it was a little baby's hand. . . . There was a lot of timber-choppings put together just where the ground went hollow, like, under the bush, and the hand came out from among them. But there was a hole left in one place, and I could see down it, and see the child's head. (A, 434)

We later learn that the body of the infant is intact, but the reader's (and trialgoer's) first impression of the discovery of Hetty's dead baby is that the limbs and head were found in separate places, and that the infanticide was a much more decisive and violent act than the tentative concealment of a live infant in a nest of leaves. The processes of pregnancy, childbirth, and (perhaps) dismemberment—all under the rubric of concealment—are thus seamlessly integrated in the account of Hetty's crime.

And here we can see another way in which Hetty is figured as androgynous and problematic. The birth of her child is simultaneously natural and noninterventionist—the domain of the traditional female midwife—and murderous, interventionist, and ending in a horrifying act of dismemberment—the domain of the male practitioner. Furthermore, Hetty, or strictly speaking, Hetty's sexual attractiveness, is consistently associated with dismemberment throughout the novel. When Adam contemplates Arthur's behavior toward Hetty, he envisions his friend's only options to have been seduction or self-mutilation: “all for a bit o' pleasure, as, if he'd had a man's heart in him, he'd ha' cut his hand off sooner than he'd ha' taken it. What if he didn't foresee what's happened? He foresaw enough” (A, 423). Arthur's usual failure to foresee the consequences of his actions may have saved him a limb and rescued the plot, but it cost Hetty her virginal integrity and ultimately her life. This is not the only time Adam associates the danger of Hetty's charms with the danger of dismemberment. After he has seen Hetty and Arthur embracing in the Grove, but still thinks they are engaging in a harmless flirtation, he is mistakenly grateful that his discovery has stopped things from going too far: “it 'ud ha' gone near to spoil my work for me, if I'd seen her brought to sorrow and shame, and through the man as I've always been proud to think on. Since I've been spared that, I've no right to

grumble. When a man's got his limbs whole, he can bear a smart cut or two" (A, 325). Little does he know that this particular "limb" is about to be amputated with the discovery of Hetty's infanticide. Later, after the trial and Hetty's transportation, Adam wonders if he will ever recover from his love of her: "now there was . . . no moment in the distance when duty would take off her iron glove and breast-plate and clasp him gently into rest. . . . Love, he thought, could never be anything to him but a living memory—a limb lopped off, but not gone from consciousness" (A, 488). The hand of duty, encased in its iron glove, has severed the phantom limb of Adam's delusional attraction.

Hetty's own bodily integrity is also called into question through this persistent focus on extremities. We hear quite a bit about the charms of Hetty's limbs throughout the novel, but perhaps the most striking example is when she contemplates drowning herself after the first onset of her "hidden dread": "She clasps her hands round her knees, and leans forward, and looks earnestly at [the pool], as if trying to guess what sort of bed it would make for her young round limbs" (A, 365). Later, after she again decides against suicide in front of another pool, she is delirious with joy and relief: "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" (A, 387). Of course, this passionate, life-affirming love of her own limbs presages her later finding a "sort of bed" for the "young round limbs" of her newborn child.

In each example I have noted, the threat of dismemberment is forestalled: Arthur prefers seduction to self-mutilation; Hetty does not drown herself; her infant is not dismembered but concealed. Even the limbs of Adam's optimism and capacity for romantic love are not ultimately lost but recovered through his more mature and appropriate love of Dinah; at the very end of the novel, these various thematic threads are neatly tied together when Adam reports having seen Arthur upon the latter's return to England:

It was very cutting when we first saw one another. He'd never heard about poor Hetty till Mr. Irwine met him in London, for the letters missed him on his journey. The first thing he said to me, when we'd got hold o' one another's hands was, "I could never do anything for her, Adam—she lived long enough for all the suffering—and I'd thought so of the time when I might do something for her. But you told me the truth when you said to me once, 'There's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for.'" (A, 540)

It may have been “cutting” to see each other, but not quite to the point of dismemberment; the two men can still get “hold o’ one another’s hands” and affirm the great moral lesson of the novel, that “[t]here’s a sort of wrong that can never be made up for.”

Hetty’s sacrifice has enabled the men’s ultimate moral wholeness; the great threat of castrating dismemberment she posed, combining feminine charms and masculine murderousness, has been defused by the narrative parenthesis of her death. Hetty embodies Eliot’s nightmare possibility of female authorship: both the strategy of concealment and the practice of intervention threaten to mark her as a bad reader, and thus author. The hidden dread of a secret birth becomes a botched and bifurcated “text,” a baby whose body has perhaps even been dismembered by its mother. This dismembered body can be seen as the emblem of Eliot’s own disjointed text: the narrative strategy of intervention bifurcates the seamless fabric of the ideal realist text; it stands in an analogous relationship to the hiding strategies of the novel’s heroine (and its pseudonymous writer). Both threaten to destabilize the closed system of the novel and present possibilities for the loss of control over the sympathetic realism of the narrative. Eliot’s removal of Hetty from the utopian vision of moral and bodily integrity at the end of the novel also expunges the threat (authorial, narratorial, personal) she had posed. Hetty Sorrel, with her obsessive concealment, her unwanted birth, and her disjointed “text,” is both the figure for an imagined escape from the world of consequence and the dark side of Eliot’s assumption of authority: an authority that takes the form of an ironclad instrumentality, a predilection for intervention and dismemberment. It is through the figure of Hetty—metaphorical female author, mother, midwife, and obstetrician—that Eliot is able to rehearse and ultimately resolve, through her character’s banishment and death, the tensions inherent in her androgynous incognito and narratorial style.

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NOTES

I would like to thank Scott R. MacKenzie and Elizabeth Meese for their invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

¹ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, ed. J. I. M. Stewart (New York: Penguin, 1968), 93.

² I follow Barbara Hardy in characterizing the narrator of *Adam Bede* as male: “It is the voice of the pseudonym, and its tone and reference are often elaborate and pointed reminders of the author’s assumed masculinity” (*The Novels of George Eliot*:

A Study In Form [London: Athlone Press, 1959], 155). The rest of this essay will attempt to complicate this assumption.

³ Here is a sampling of contemporary reviews of *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Middlemarch*, and *Daniel Deronda* respectively: "There is . . . some fault to be found with the manner in which the author intrudes himself in the book" (review of *Adam Bede*, in *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* [1859; reprint, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971], 76); there abound "passages of laboured irony and didactic commonplace, which read like bits of private note-books foisted into their present places" (review of *The Mill on the Floss* (1861), in Carroll, 152); "The writer's preoccupation with the reflections which her story is to suggest injures her actual delineation of even those persons whom she intends to make prominent" ([A. V. Dicey], review of *Middlemarch* (1873), in Carroll, 350); Eliot has a "tendency . . . to talk about personages instead of allowing them to develop themselves, [and] a somewhat lavish profusion of sententious utterance" (George Saintsbury, review of *Daniel Deronda* (1876), in Carroll, 371).

⁴ For discussions of the history of the association between literary creativity and childbirth, see Susan Stanford Friedman, "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse," *Feminist Studies* 13 (1987): 49–82; and Patricia Yaeger, "The Poetics of Birth," *Discourses of Sexuality from Aristotle to AIDS*, ed. Donna C. Stanton (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1992), 262–96.

⁵ George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955–1978), 2:505. Hereafter abbreviated *L* and cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

⁶ Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ed. Valentine Cunningham (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 362. Hereafter abbreviated *A* and cited parenthetically by page number.

⁷ See Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," *PMLA* 96 (1981): 36–48; and Robyn R. Warhol, *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1989).

⁸ As we shall see shortly, there is a persistent slippage for Eliot between sympathetic understanding and the descriptive accuracy that is her goal in literary representation.

⁹ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Barbara Hardy (New York: Penguin, 1967), 412–13. Hereafter abbreviated *D* and cited parenthetically by page number.

¹⁰ For readings of Latimer's "curse" as a commentary on narrative omniscience, see Richard Menke, "Fiction as Vivisection: G. H. Lewes and George Eliot," *ELH* 67 (2000): 617–53; and Millie M. Kidd, "In Defense of Latimer: A Study of Narrative Technique in George Eliot's 'The Lifted Veil,'" *Victorian Newsletter* 79 (1991): 37–41.

¹¹ Eliot, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," in *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Thomas Pinney (1856; reprint, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), 317. Hereafter abbreviated "S" and cited parenthetically by page number.

¹² We can also see this sympathy-femininity association in Eliot's narrative techniques. As Warhol notes in her discussion of *Adam Bede*, the narrator practices primarily what the novel's readers would have recognized as "feminine" rhetorical strategies: Eliot's narratorial interventions are attempts "to elicit [sympathy] from her actual readers" through direct address and flattering appeals to their understanding and emotions (Warhol, 117). Of course, as Warhol acknowledges, a major exception to this feminine, sympathetic type of intervention in *Adam Bede* is the

chapter "In Which the Story Pauses a Little," which I will discuss at greater length below.

¹³ In *Adam Bede*, Eliot associates Adam's heroic masculinity with iron continuously throughout the novel: he has as "iron grasp" (7), an "iron will, as well as an iron arm" (167), and is "as stubborn as th' iron bar" (494).

¹⁴ In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, John Ruskin traces the negative connotations of iron back to Herodotus. See Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), 8: n.68–69, and the editors' note on 69–70. The association of iron with intrusion and corruption reaches its greatest elaboration in the nineteenth century, when many commentators decried the despoiling of the countryside by the "iron veins" (Ruskin, 8:246) of the railroad. We see these objections on both sides of the Atlantic; Henry David Thoreau, for example, refers to the "devilish Iron Horse ... [who] has mudded the Boiling Spring with his foot" (*Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971], 92). Its most influential modern usage is perhaps Max Weber's description of capitalist bureaucracy as an "iron cage" at the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 181–83. See also Peter Baehr's "The 'Iron Cage' and the 'Shell as Hard as Steel': Parsons, Weber, and the Stahlhartes Gehäuse Metaphor in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*," *History and Theory* 40 (2001): 153–69, for a discussion of this metaphor.

¹⁵ Menke, 629. George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), 252–74.

¹⁶ See Sally Shuttleworth's introduction to her *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), xii.

¹⁷ Hugh Wittemeyer, "Landscape and the Beholder," in *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), 130.

¹⁸ For a good discussion of the aristocratic nature of the discourse of the picturesque, see Daniel Cottom, *The Civilized Imagination: A Study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1958), 1–32.

¹⁹ John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730–1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), 5, 2.

²⁰ Raymond Williams discusses the ideological work of the "traveller" figure in Eliot's *Felix Holt*, in his study *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), 178–80.

²¹ Perhaps the silent sympathy of Gyp here underscores Adam's own capacity for sympathetic identification? See James Eli Adams's intriguing argument in "Gyp's Tale: On Sympathy, Silence, and Realism in *Adam Bede*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 20 (1991): 227–42.

²² Barrell, 59.

²³ For the vocabulary of picturesque appreciation, see, for example, William Gilpin's *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; And On Sketching Landscape: With a Poem, On Landscape Painting* (1792; reprint, London: Cadell and Davies, 1808); and Uvedale Price's *On the Picturesque: With an Essay on the Origin of Taste: And Much More Original Matter* (1794; reprint, Edinburgh: Caldwell, Lloyd and Co., 1842).

²⁴ See Wittemeyer, esp. 142–51.

²⁵ Witemeyer, 143.

²⁶ While a full discussion of Eliot's treatment of the picturesque is beyond the scope of this paper, I would note that she seems generally interested, in this novel, in interrogating the usual terms of picturesque discourse. In the introductory description of the Hall Farm, for example, she invites her readers to consume the image of the long grass, rusty gate, lichen-covered brick, and limestone ornaments of the outside of the house ("imagination is a licensed trespasser" [A, 71]), only to thwart the expectations raised by this description by informing us that the house is in fact part of a busy and prosperous farm, where life has "changed its focus" from the parlor to the "kitchen and farmyard" (A, 72). She is teasing us here, and engaging in a subtle critique of the picturesque by exposing to us our usual, unstated expectations of the relationship between "artistic" ramshackleness and poverty.

²⁷ For a modern discussion of the ideological issues involved in the discourse of the picturesque (and critics thereof), see Kim Ian Michasiw's very interesting article, "Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque," *Representations* 38 (Spring 1992): 76–100.

²⁸ Ruskin, *Works*, 6:19.

²⁹ Williams suggests that Eliot herself participates in the class privilege of these observers by depicting her rustic country characters "as a landscape" (168).

³⁰ I say "narrator" in quotation marks because there is a decided slippage between author and narrator in this chapter. It is our author who lays claim to a project of narrative realism, yet our narrator who describes a conversation he had with Adam in the latter's old age; Eliot refers to the two—as "I"—interchangeably.

³¹ Warhol also notes this paradox (109, 129 and so on).

³² "In the majority of women's books you see that kind of facility which springs from the absence of any high standard; that fertility in imbecile combination or feeble imitation which a little self-criticism would check and reduce to barrenness; just as with a total want of musical ear people will sing out of tune, while a degree more melodic sensibility would suffice to render them silent" (Eliot, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," 323).

³³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985), 159.

³⁴ Jill L. Matus, *Unstable Bodies: Victorian Representations of Sexuality and Maternity* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1995), 171.

³⁵ Dr. William Burke Ryan, *Infanticide: Its Law, Prevalence, Prevention, and History* (London: J. Churchill, 1862), 45–46.

³⁶ Lionel Rose, *The Massacre of the Innocents: Infanticide in Britain 1800–1939* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1986), 5 and following.

³⁷ My summary of the history of the "man-midwifery" problem is drawn primarily from studies by Adrian Wilson, Ornella Moscucci, William Arney, and Jean Donnison. See Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England, 1660–1700* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995); Moscucci, *The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England 1800–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990); Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of the Struggle for the Control of Childbirth* (London: Historical Publications, 1988).

³⁸ Wilson, 15–19. I imagine this statistic would surprise most twenty-first-century observers, who tend to think of childbirth before the mid-twentieth century as an inordinately dangerous affair.

³⁹ Wilson, 50.

⁴⁰ Hugh Chamberlen, quoted in William Ray Arney, *Power and the Profession of Obstetrics* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), 33.

⁴¹ Of course not all historians agree that the introduction of the midwifery forceps was the most important factor in this “revolution.” See, for example, Wilson, whose central thesis is that the introduction of the forceps was not decisive in this regard. My point here is that the forceps was such a definitive technological innovation that interpreters of the period, whether they agree that it was the most important factor or not, must frame their studies in terms of the publication of the “secret instrument.”

⁴² Wilson, 53–57.

⁴³ Wilson, 166.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Nihell, quoted in Andrea Henderson, “Doll-Machines and Butcher-Shop Meat: Models of Childbirth in the Early Stages of Industrial Capitalism,” *Genders* 12 (1991): 104, 113. Henderson’s article is an extremely interesting discussion of models of childbirth in early modern England.

⁴⁵ William Smellie, quoted in Wilson, 129.

⁴⁶ Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 33.

⁴⁷ Continuing the popular association between male medical practice and invasive instruments: the speculum comes to occupy the same place in the collective imagination as the forceps had 50 to 100 years earlier. See Moscucci, 111–27. Interestingly, the association of male obstetric practice and gender dysphoria also continues: much of the public debate of the middle decades of the nineteenth century focuses on the potential “unsexing” of women who undergo (by modern standards, largely unnecessary) ovariectomy procedures. See Moscucci, 134–64. Mary Poovey also sees a continuation of the rhetoric of the man-midwifery debate in the nineteenth-century controversy over anesthesia in childbirth. See *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 24–50.

⁴⁸ George Morant, quoted in Moscucci, 118.

⁴⁹ Under the 1624 statute that would still have been in force at the time of Hetty’s crime, an unmarried woman who concealed the *death* (not necessarily the body) of her infant would have been presumed guilty of murder and thus not tried under common-law rules of evidence. See Mark Jackson’s extremely helpful discussion (*New-Born Child Murder: Women, Illegitimacy and the Courts in Eighteenth-Century England* [Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1996], 32–34, 142–45). According to Jackson, a woman who enlisted help in her delivery was almost always tried under common law (to her advantage), since this was considered proof that she had not intended to conceal the infant’s death. Since there is some ambiguity in Hetty’s intent with regard to the baby, and no partial verdict of manslaughter was available in infanticide cases, most juries would have tended to acquit in a case such as Hetty’s (Jackson, *New-Born*, 144). There is a suggestion here that Eliot has dealt much more harshly with Hetty than historical precedent suggests was likely. While, as Jackson argues, the situation is extremely complex, it remains true that “convictions under the statute were rare in the last half of the 18th century . . . [and i]n this sense, her conviction was unusual” (Jackson’s response to an email on 22 March 2001).