

# **Masculinity in *Silas Marner***

Pete Makkonen  
University of Tampere  
School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies  
English Philology  
Master of Arts Thesis  
Spring 2012

Tampereen yliopisto  
Englantilainen filologia  
Kieli-, käännös- ja kirjallisuustieteiden yksikkö  
Makkonen, Pete: Masculinity in *Silas Marner*  
Pro gradu -tutkielma, 64 sivua  
Kevät 2012

---

Pro Gradu-tutkielmani tutkii mieskuvaa George Eliotin romaanissa *Silas Marner*. Tutkielmani keskittyy analysoimaan kirjan kahta päähenkilöä: Silas Marneria ja Godfrey Cassia ja tutkimukseni lähtökohtana on ollut oletus, että 1800-luvulla laajalti julkaistut miehille suunnatut elämäntapaneuvot ja niihin liittyvä kirjallisuus ovat osaltaan luoneet oman aikansa yhteiskuntaan miehuuden ihanteen, hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden, ja romaanin päähenkilöiden teot ja valinnat ovat ymmärrettävissä arvioimalla heidän suhdettansa tähän hegemonisen maskuliinisuuden ihanteeseen. Laajemmalla tasolla olen pyrkinyt arvioimaan voidaanko kirjan hahmojen kautta rakentuva mieskuva nähdä osana laajempaa kirjallisuuden kautta ilmentynyttä sosiaalista kritiikkiä, jonka kohteena olivat oman aikansa yhteiskunnan arvomaailma.

Ensimmäisessä ja toisessa luvussa luon johdannon aiheeseen ja aiempiin tutkimuksiin, sekä yleiskatsauksen 1800-luvun mieskuvaan. Kolmannessa luvussa esittelen tutkielman teoreettisen viitekehyksen, joka perustuu New Historicism-kritiikkiin. Tutkielmani pyrkii lukemaan *Silas Marneria* rinnan 1800-luvun elämäntapakirjallisuuden kanssa, peilaten kirjan mieskuvaa elämäntapakirjallisuuden ilmentämiin hegemonisiin ihanteisiin. Kolmannen luvun ensimmäisessä alaluvussa esittelen representaation käsitteen ja sen merkityksen miestutkimukselle Toisessa, kolmannessa ja neljännessä alaluvussa luon katsauksen miestutkimukseen historiaan, sekä tarkastelen rationaalisuuden ja elämäntapakirjallisuuden yleistä merkitystä mieskuvalle.

Tutkielmani neljännessä ja viidennessä luvussa suoritan kirjan hahmojen analyysin, joissa keskityn mm. hahmojen ulkonäköön, kirjan aikana tapahtuviin moraalisiin valintoihin, peilaten jatkuvasti hahmojen valintoja aikansa elämäntapaneuvokirjallisuudessa ilmenneeseen miesihanteeseen. Tutkielman lopuksi suoritan yhteenvedon, jossa tarkastelen kirjan mieskuvaa ja sen suhdetta oman aikansa yleiseen yhteiskunta- ja sukupuolikritiikkiin.

Avainsanat: George Eliot, mieskuva, miestutkimus, maskuliinisuus, sukupuoliroolit.

## Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
3. Theoretical framework.....	4
3.1 Representation .....	6
3.2 Study of Masculinity.....	9
3.3 Reason, rationality and masculinity.....	11
3.4 Manliness and advice literature .....	12
4. The Analysis of Godfrey Cass .....	16
4.1 Marriage, masculinity and social expectations.....	19
4.2 Family and masculinity.....	27
5. The Analysis of Silas Marner.....	33
5.1 Work and masculinity.....	35
5.2 Social isolation, masculine rationality and self-control.....	36
5.3 Marriage.....	40
5.4 Fatherhood .....	41
6. Conclusion .....	57
Works cited .....	62

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to consider how masculinity is constructed and represented in George Eliot's novel *Silas Marner* (1861). There are two rather distinct, yet highly connected plots in the novel; the plot that concerns the protagonist Silas Marner and the plot that revolves around Godfrey Cass. The main focus of this thesis will be on the two aforementioned characters, because the other male characters appear rather marginalized in terms of Men's studies, meaning that there is not enough textual information in the novel to allow a balanced analysis of other male characters. However, less prominent characters will be utilized during the analysis for the purpose of constructing a necessary contrast.

*Silas Marner* tells the story of a linen weaver, Silas Marner, who at the beginning of the novel is cruelly betrayed in the small religious community of Lantern Yard. The events that take place lead him to become disillusioned with his previous religious beliefs, and Silas Marner relocates to the rural village of Raveloe, where he isolates himself from the society, living only for the pleasure of earning money from his work, which causes him to be considered an alien by the Raveloe community. However, once Silas Marner becomes the adoptive father of Eppie, the secret daughter of Godfrey Cass, Silas Marner gradually re-connects with the surrounding community and to a certain extent rehabilitates himself socially, shifting away from his status as an isolated alien and becoming an ordinary member of the community. Some of the major themes in *Silas Marner* include: adoption, fatherhood, nineteenth century domesticity, and social relations in general.

There are various views concerning the genre of *Silas Marner*. According to Joseph Wiesenfarth (1970, 228): "[t]he novel is certainly a comedy – albeit a sometimes somber one....", whereas Fred C. Thompson in his article "The Theme of Alienation in *Silas Marner*" (1965) has seen elements of tragedy in the works of Eliot, including *Middlemarch* and *Silas Marner*. Richard Conway (1978), John R. Reed and Jerry Herron (1985) and Larry Shillock (2005) have all identified elements related to the fairy-tale genre, while Susan S. Stewart (2003) has viewed *Silas Marner* as relating to the folk-tale genre.

As is evident from the above brief and selective survey, *Silas Marner* has been widely studied, however, to my knowledge, no studies have been conducted which are directly related to the study of masculinity. Previous criticism related to *Silas Marner* has viewed the story of Godfrey Cass as criticism of egoism (see e.g., Kate Brown 1999, 231), Larry Shillock (2005, 45) has considered *Silas Marner* a “critique of women's innate domesticity” and Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth (1985, 33), for example, has argued that the stories of Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner both describe “tension between a man and his community”. Nevertheless, less effort has been made toward understanding the possible motivations for the aforementioned egoistic behaviour and the sources of societal tension. The lack of Men’s studies related research on *Silas Marner* allows me to provide a different outlook on the novel and to a certain extent, I will be able to explain the motivations of the male characters in terms of the construction of masculinity.

Firstly, I aim to establish that the nineteenth century ideal of masculinity, promoted in prescriptive advice manuals of various types, has established a social ideal of manhood/manliness, a hegemonic masculinity, and the choices made especially by Godfrey Cass can be considered to be partially motivated by his constant efforts to measure up to the hegemonic masculine ideals of society. Furthermore, I will analyze Silas Marner in a similar manner, considering the way his character is constructed in relationship with the very same masculine ideals. Secondly, through my analysis of Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner, I will reveal the construction of masculinity in the novel by assessing the actions of both Silas Marner and Godfrey Cass in the light of nineteenth century social standards. Thirdly, I will consider whether the representations of Silas Marner and Godfrey Cass can be considered criticism of the hegemonic ideals of nineteenth century masculinity, or as Eliot’s criticism of masculine ideals in her society?

The reason why this thesis prefers to use the phrase ‘nineteenth century masculinity’ is the fact that although George Eliot was a Victorian author, *Silas Marner* is set in the era of King George III or George IV. The descriptive passage that opens the novel describes an era most likely before nineteenth century industrialization had completely ended weaving as a cottage industry, or

alternatively, a community that has not yet been exposed to the dawning of this new period. There is a rather vague reference to a historical period at the beginning of the novel: “[i]n the early years of this century” (6) and the novel occasionally establishes reference to King George (34, 89). The King George in the novel is either King George III (reigned 1760-1820) or King George IV (1820-1830). Moreover, at one point the narrator of the novel refers to “... tankards older than King George” (34), and when considering that King George III lived to the age of 82 and reigned for 59 years, whereas King George IV only lived to be 68 and reigned only for 10 years, it is relatively safe to conclude that the novel is most likely set during the reign of King George III. However, the novel is definitely set in the nineteenth century, and definitely before the Victorian era itself. George Eliot, nevertheless, published her works in the Victorian era and her writing was influenced by the historical period of her time and its social values. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that the social ideals of her contemporary period were present in her text. The historian John Tosh (1999, 29) has noted that nineteenth century ideals such as domesticity have been so firmly attributed to the Victorians, that most people have ignored the roots of these ideals, which derive from the preceding Georgian era. Furthermore, Tosh stresses the continuity between the Georgian and Victorian era and suggests that many essential elements of Victorianism began under George III (1999, 29). Therefore, an outlook on masculinity that comprises the entire nineteenth century will help take into consideration both the fictional era of the novel, and the actual historical era of the author.

### 3. Theoretical framework

In order to introduce the theoretical framework, firstly I will discuss my approach to the analysis. Secondly, I will introduce the concept of representation. The definition of representation combines aspects taken from Cultural Studies and Men's studies. Finally, I will introduce the basic concepts concerning the study of masculinity which are necessary for the aims of this thesis.

The character analysis will involve a parallel reading of the primary literary text, *Silas Marner*, with non-literary co-texts related to the historical context of the text. For this purpose, I will present relevant quotations from nineteenth century advice literature alongside my analysis. The advice literature written by William Andrus Alcott, Timothy Shay Arthur, Hugh Stowell Brown, Richie Davies, William Wallace Everts, John Angell James, William Landels, George Morris and H. C. O'Donnoghue will be used as the co-texts. The co-texts are from Britain and the United States. The availability of nineteenth century advice literature has been an issue, and therefore, I have selected the co-texts based on their availability and year of publication. Thus, I have not used any advice literature that was published after the 1860s. In addition to advice literature, the historical research of John Tosh, Claudia Nelson and Elizabeth Foyster will be used for providing additional knowledge on relevant historical circumstances related to nineteenth century masculinity.

The method I intend to utilize is a basic form of New Historicist criticism. The term 'New Historicism' was coined by Stephen Greenblatt in the early 1980s. In its most basic form, New Historicist criticism aims at performing parallel readings of literary and non-literary texts (Barry 2009, 168). The non-literary texts are most often from the same time period as the literary text. The aim of New Historicism is to attend to the historical and cultural conditions of the literary text (Barry 2009, 168). However, New Historicism has been subject to debate for its use of fictional sources alongside actual historical sources. According to Julia Reid (2009, 162), novels have been thought to "preserve historical evidence which would otherwise have been obliterated", an argument, which seems to favour the use of fictional texts as sources for historical research.

Moreover, Carla Hesse (2004, 206) commends New Historicism for abolishing the previous division between history (foreground) and culture (background), and for attempting to provide an equal footing for texts and co-texts. However, Dominick LaCapra (1985, 117) has pointed out that among historians, novels are often considered “questionable literary evidence”, as historians prefer a more scientific (almost positivist) approach to research. This problem has been recognized and addressed long before the advent of New Historicism and according to William Aydelotte (1948, 43), novels should not be considered as actual historical evidence, for even if novels may present factual historical information about social conditions, this information has always been altered to a certain extent to suit the author's artistic purposes. Aydelotte discourages the use of novels as evidence on historical issues of social history, labeling the use of novels as "a kind of dilettantism which the historian would do well to avoid" (Aydelotte 1948, 43). However, novels may provide useful information concerning the attitudes and opinions of the authors. Therefore, novels may not present actual social conditions, but merely opinions and attitudes toward social conditions. Fiction is therefore considered history of opinion, not history of facts (Aydelotte 1948, 43).

The opposition towards using fictional sources alongside historical sources appears to stem mainly from historians, whereas from the point of view of literature, the use of fiction alongside non-fiction may be less problematic. We may acknowledge the various arguments for and against the parallel use of fiction and non-fiction, however, the aim of this thesis is not to attempt and present *Silas Marner* as a historical novel of high realism. The aim of this thesis has more in common with the aforementioned approach of William Aydelotte. Whereas *Silas Marner*, the novel, will present to us knowledge about the attitudes toward nineteenth century social conditions, the non-fictional advice literature will attempt to fulfill the role of providing factual knowledge. Nevertheless, as straightforward as it appears, the factuality of advice literature may be a question of debate in its own right. For how may we deem advice literature factual in itself? Considering that the aim of advice literature was to construct ideal social behaviour (prescription), instead of

providing an actual reflection of social behaviour (description). Therefore, one might argue that both *Silas Marner*, and the advice literature, are fiction in their own right, at least to a certain extent.

However, when considering the aims of this thesis, a parallel reading of a literary and a non-literary text will be particularly useful in order to establish what type of expectations were directed towards men in the nineteenth century, because the prescriptive co-texts reveal genuine attitudes of the social era. Moreover, the ideals presented in advice literature will help form a contrast with the characteristics of both *Silas Marner* and *Godfrey Cass*, and through this contrast, representations will be constructed.

### 3.1 Representation

Stuart Hall (1997, 15) provides a straightforward definition of representation:

“[r]epresentation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people.” There are, however, several closely related definitions of representation.

The most basic conception concerning literature and representation is, that literature is the representation of life (Jokinen 2000, 116). However, W. J. T Mitchell (1990, 11), for example, does not consider literature as the direct representation of life, labelling this notion as the most common and naive intuition about literature. Furthermore, Arto Jokinen (2000, 120-121), in a similar way as W. J. T. Mitchell, points out that the representations of characters in books are not directly comparable to reality; Representations are, nevertheless, always to some extent, related to reality. According to Jokinen (2000, 116-117), a book can be considered to function as a ‘window’; and through this ‘window’ we may form a representation of a particular event or a historical period. Therefore, a work of an author can be considered to symbolize a certain historical event or a period of time. The idea of a book functioning as a ‘window’ bears great similarity to the aforementioned views of New Historicist criticism. Representation does not provide us with a direct reflection of something or someone, a representation literally re-presents the theme or subject of a representation

in a particular manner (Jokinen 2000, 117). The form of representation is dependent on political, ideological and cultural motivations (Jokinen 2000, 117) Furthermore, according to Jokinen (2000, 124) representations of masculinity produce ideals, which shape the various conceptions and expectations related to men. While representations may tell us what we think, representations have an influence over 'how' we think, representations not only re-present masculinity, representations also have an influence over the way in which masculinity is produced in reality (Jokinen 2000, 124). Furthermore, from a perspective of Men's studies, Jokinen (2000, 17) considers it important that we analyze what type of masculinities are produced through representations; and what the relationship of these masculinities is with reality. How are these representations constructed and made 'real'?

Mitchell (1990, 15), points out that fictional representations are never completely separated from political and ideological questions. According to Mitchell (1990, 15), it is plausible to assume that if we consider literature to function as a representation of life, then representation is the realm where questions of ideology and politics are introduced into works of literature.

The idea of representation forming an entry point for ideology and politics to enter into literature is highly similar to the constructionist view of representation used in Cultural Studies. From a constructionist point of view, representations do not reflect reality; they are seen as cultural constructions (Barker 2008, 177). Representation always involves a process of selection and organization and through selection, the author for example, may choose to enable some type of knowledge to exist while marginalizing, and excluding other viewpoints (Barker 2008, 177). Therefore, according to a constructionist view, through representation, an author is given significant power over our conception of certain themes and events. The constructionist view of representation also includes the notion of representations being connected to the concept of difference. From a constructionist perspective, meanings are relational and never permanently fixed; meanings are always subject to change between different cultural and historical contexts (Hall 1997, 31). According to Hall (1997, 31) the way difference is marked in language is essential for producing

meanings. Furthermore, there are no meanings without difference (contrast) and the most basic way of achieving contrast is through the use of binary oppositions, such as black/white (Hall 1997, 31-32). For example, according to de Saussure (quoted in Hall 1997, 235-236), we are able to know what black means, because we can contrast it with its polar opposite – white. Therefore, representations are given meanings through “a system of differential signs that generate significance through difference” (Barker 2008, 177). To summarize; considering the relationship between meaning and differences; we may acknowledge that in order to make representations meaningful, we must necessarily have a contrasting representation.

To recapitulate the concept of representation: Firstly, representations are not direct reflections of reality. Secondly, representations are cultural constructions, and through representations, an author may use his/her power to represent the target of representation in the manner of his/her choosing. Thirdly, through representations, a book may function as a window into a certain historical period. This view allows us to consider the representations of Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner in *Silas Marner* as cultural constructs of nineteenth century England, and *Silas Marner*, the novel, as a ‘window’ into nineteenth century England. However, if we read *Silas Marner* as a historical novel, we are faced with the situation of having two layers of representation or two ‘windows’, as George Eliot writes about an era she did not live in, and effectively brings ideas from her own historical period into her writing, and thus into her representation of masculinity. Nevertheless, through the ‘window’ or ‘windows’, provided to us in *Silas Marner*, we may observe and construct the representation of men in that particular time period, and formulate a better understanding about the social reality that may have motivated the creation of the characters. Finally, representations are made meaningful through difference. In this thesis, the necessary contrast for the representation is created through a comparison with other male characters, and furthermore by comparing Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner with the ideals presented in nineteenth century advice literature.

### 3.2 Study of Masculinity

Men's studies was born in the early 1970s in the United States. In Europe, Men's studies is usually known as the 'study of masculinity'. This thesis will use both terms interchangeably. The aim of Men's studies was to conduct studies of masculinity from different perspectives. The emergence of Men's studies has been considered a reaction to the growth and development of feminism in the late 1960s. There have been three notable orientations within Men's studies: the profeminists, who subscribe to feminist views and antisexism; the antifeminists, who are opposed to feminist views; and the pro-male group, which is concerned with creating a new masculinity between men only (Sipilä, 1994, 17). The most dominant orientation is profeminist Men's studies, and the majority of modern Men's studies advocate feminism and antisexism (Sipilä, 1994, 17). From this brief look into the history of men's studies, I will move towards forming a definition of masculinity.

According to Arto Jokinen there are several definitions of the concept of masculinity, three of which are introduced here. Firstly, masculinity is the ideal of masculine features and characteristics; men actively pursue the ideal form of masculinity, and the men who live up to this ideal enjoy a significant amount of social respect (Jokinen 2003, 10). Therefore, masculinity is not something a man is born into, a matter of biology; moreover, masculinity has to be earned (Jokinen 2003, 10). Secondly, masculinity covers all the historical and cultural practices which members of cultures have used for signifying and representing action, mannerisms, things and phenomenon as masculine (Jokinen 2003, 26-27). Finally, masculinity is not a fixed concept; masculinity is a social process that is linked to a particular time and place (Jokinen 2003, 14).

Based on the definition by Jokinen, we may conclude that the definition of masculinity is dependent on a variety of factors. Masculinity is always a cultural construct, dependent on a certain historical period, and thus bound to the social norms and standards of a particular historical era. Furthermore, masculinity is considered to be an ideal of 'true manliness' that has been considered dominant in a particular historical era.

The aforementioned definition of masculinity as a dominant ideal in a society is very similar to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Tim Carrigan, R.W. Connell and John Lee introduced the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' in 1985 in the article "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity" (Jokinen 2000 12). According to R.W. Connell (1995, 76), hegemonic masculinity is a term used for describing masculinity that holds a hegemonic position in society. Connell had borrowed the concept of hegemony from Antonio Gramsci, who used it to exemplify class relations (Connell 1987, 184). For Connell, hegemony means "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (1987, 184). According to Connell, hegemony is never based on force, and hegemony does not eradicate its alternatives, rather, hegemony dominates via subordination and the ascendancy of the hegemony over the other masculinities is achieved through the implementation of hegemonic ideals throughout social institutions (1987, 184). Furthermore, the reason why the non-hegemonic masculinities can co-exist with the hegemony is through an "ascendancy achieved within a balance of forces". The hegemony is established, and its alternatives are subordinated rather than eradicated, thus allowing the non-hegemonic alternatives to co-exists with the hegemony.

Hegemonic masculinity involves the idea of having a strict definition of the hegemonic ideal (Connell 1987, 186). This definition may be created or promoted, for example, through reinforcing hegemonic ideals through fiction and general media exposure. Moreover, in the nineteenth century hegemonic ideals were promoted, for example, through advice literature and magazines. The hegemonic position itself is not inalterable; it is subject to constant challenge from both inside and outside the hegemonic position (Connell 1995, 76). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity is the dominant masculine ideal of a society, its main function is to legitimize patriarchy and guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women and other marginalized forms of masculinity (Connell 1995, 77). Hegemonic masculinity is most often a compilation of ideals, and the ideals do not necessarily correspond to the personalities of actual

living men (Connell 1987, 184). Therefore, subscribing to the ideals of the hegemony involves normal men trying to live up to nearly fictitious figures of fantasy, which embody ideals that are nearly unobtainable for most men (Connell 1987, 184). Connell's ideas are similar to those of Judith Butler. For Butler, gender is a performance, and "the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated" (1990, 141). Both men and women perform established social norms and this repeated performance itself strengthens the societal position of such norms. Therefore, men who reenact hegemonic social norms are reinforcing the hegemonic ideal. However, Butler also emphasizes that gender is "a norm that can never be fully internalized" (Butler 1990, 141) and that "gender norms are finally phantasmatic, [and therefore] impossible to embody" (Butler 1990, 141).

### **3.3 Reason, rationality and masculinity**

The following theory, which links male rationality and anxiety, is based on the works of Victor J. Seidler, R. W. Connell and Beverley Skeggs. The theory will form background knowledge for the analysis of both Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner.

According to Victor J. Seidler, (1989, 14), one of the features inherently connected with masculinity is the concept of reason. Ever since Plato, Western philosophers have identified reason as a manly characteristic. During the Enlightenment, Rene Descartes refined the ideas of Plato and distinguished "the mind from the body, the male from the female" (Foyster 1999, 29). Therefore, Western tradition has a long history of linking reason with masculinity.

R.W.Connell (1995, 164) argues that the possession of reason is imperative for hegemonic masculinity to establish its dominance, because by claiming to possess reason, men have been able to make claims of acting for the good of the entire society. After having systematically established themselves as the sole proprietors of reason; men have gained control of the public world, while at the same time defining reason as a requisite of humanity, while marginalizing those who have been labeled as lacking reason: women, children and animals (Seidler 1989, 14).

However, this constant requirement of reason may have had several negative consequences

concerning the emotional lives of men. According to Seidler (1989, 20), the burden of reason has forced men to transform their emotional relationships and decisions into rigid exercises of rationality. The constant necessity of reasoning has transformed the quality of men's experience, and men have become detached from their emotions and feelings, which are out of place in the realm of rationality (Seidler 1989, 20). The requirement of reason has enabled men to maintain masculine self-control and further repress their emotional selves (Seidler, 1989, 20). The notion of self-control has been identified with masculinity since the Reformation (Seidler, 1989, 45). While the necessity of reason has successfully detached men from their emotional lives, it has allowed men to gain a greater level of self-control (Seidler 1989, 45).

One of the strongest motivations against showing emotions might be the fear of showing oneself as vulnerable and dependent. In terms of masculinity, such vulnerability results in the shattering of one's true masculinity. Moreover, a display of dependency would work against the ideal of masculine independence. Furthermore, Beverley Skeggs (1993, 22) points out that through the regulation of self, masculinity attempts to overcome the problems of emotional vulnerability which result in powerlessness.

Although the aforementioned theory by Victor J. Seidler comes from our contemporary period, the cultural importance of rationality and reason for the hegemonic ideal of masculinity was certainly not unfamiliar in nineteenth century England.

### **3.4 Manliness and advice literature**

In the nineteenth century, and especially during the Victorian era, a great deal of material was written about the subject of 'manliness', which John Tosh (2005, 31) labels as a "high profile ideology of masculinity". Tosh (2005, 2-3) also establishes a distinction between the modern term, masculinities, and the nineteenth century term, manliness. Masculinities, is of recent coinage (1970s) and it is also of a more inclusive, descriptive nature, compared with the prescriptive tones of manliness. Masculinity, according to Tosh, is more concerned with being yourself, rather than

living up to societal expectations, whereas manliness is “a social attainment”, which was gained through social recognition of one’s peers and consisted of “attributes which men were happy to own” (2005, 2-3). Manliness was overwhelmingly “a personal accomplishment” (Tosh 2005, 14), “an achieved status” and required constant proving to and affirmation from one’s peers for maintenance. Tosh uses the term “‘demonstrated’ because public affirmation was, and still is, absolutely central to masculine status” (Tosh 2005, 35). According to Tosh (2005, 2) there was only one standard of manliness in nineteenth century England. However, the standard was defined differently through different layers of society, nevertheless, each variant held a position of authority in society (Tosh 2005, 2).

The written material that promoted manliness and its requisites; moral courage and rationality, consisted of magazines and advice literature. Advice literature and advice manuals were a prominent form of media in the nineteenth century. Advice on various topics, including manliness, was published either as independent published works or as part of popular magazines (Nelson 2007, 26). The advice manuals written for women were mainly concerned with domestic duties, whereas the manuals targeted at middle-class men were concerned with personal matters and general self-improvement. Moreover, advice literature and magazines helped shape the ideals of the era (Nelson 2007, 27-28). According to Elizabeth Foyster, advice literature is prescriptive literature by nature, because it merely presents various ideals, or models, instead of reflecting any particular social reality (1999, 2). Despite merely presenting ideals, prescriptive advice literature had a major impact in shaping the ideals of femininity and masculinity, and men were still highly interested in trying to achieve prescriptive ideals (Foyster 1999, 4).

A vast majority of advice literature was mainly concerned with the middle classes, and to some extent the upper classes, there were also magazines directed toward working-class readers. For example, *Family Friend*, was a family magazine in the 1840s and 1850s, which gave skilled workingmen useful advice on such topics as: matrimony, choosing a job, and handling of finances.

*Family Friend* also promoted domesticity, calling for husbands to prioritize their homes over leisure and entertainment (Nelson 2007, 33).

For the purpose of this thesis it is important to consider how nineteenth century advice literature promoted masculine rationality. What type of qualities were considered important for the 'perfect' man? For instance, the aforementioned notion of masculine rationality has a prominent role in the Victorian advice manual, *Advice to Young Men on their Duties to Conduct Life* (1852), written by Timothy Shay Arthur. T.S Arthur establishes early on in the manual, that without the divine gift of rationality and freedom, a man would not be "a likeness and image of his Creator" (Arthur 1852, 11). Rationality, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*sv. rationality*) defines as "The quality or condition of possessing reason; the ability to exercise reason", is therefore assumed to be of divine origin, and the one single feature which makes a man into the perfect image of his Creator in contrast to women. The claimed divine origin of rationality may have in fact significantly increased the importance of rationality for men.

In addition to promoting rationality and reason, advice literature promoted the doctrine of separate spheres with its highly polarized notion of men and women being different in terms of sexual character. The ideology of separate spheres, also known as the 'cult-of-domesticity', was one of the most influential ideals of the Victorian era (Morgan 1, 2007). Although the ideal was not a uniquely Victorian phenomenon, the polarized division of life into the domestic (female) and public (male) spheres may have had a major impact on heightening the value of rationality as a masculine trait during the Victorian era. John Tosh (1999, 184) argues that the constant identification of emotions as a feminine characteristic, which was to be maintained within the domestic sphere, made it difficult for men to embrace their emotional selves in the masculine public sphere. The polarization of reason and emotions into two separate spheres caused men to suppress "the need to give or receive affection" (Tosh 1999, 184). Furthermore, this need for constant suppression of emotions made extreme self-control a sign of masculinity, whereas all display of (feminine) emotions were considered signs of un-manly weakness (Tosh 1999, 184).

To summarize the relationship between rationality and anxiety; reason (or rationality) has been a requisite of masculinity since the Enlightenment. During the nineteenth century, rationality and reason were promoted in advice literature as a manly feature of divine origin, which may have further increased the value of reason and rationality for masculinity. Moreover, the doctrine of separate spheres had further heightened the value of rationality for masculinity, whereas arguably the constant social pressure that was distributed through advice literature had required men to value rationality, thus detaching men from their emotional selves.

Having now established the relevant theoretical framework, I will move on to analyse Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner.

#### 4. The Analysis of Godfrey Cass

The analysis will first concentrate on the way in which George Eliot has described the appearance of Godfrey Cass, because descriptions of exterior physical characteristics are important for masculinity. According to Connell (1995, 51), the male body represents a form of natural or biologically determined masculinity. Furthermore, bodies and their descriptions matter for masculinity, because male bodies show signs of aging, illness, enjoyment, and are the visible exterior of a man towards the rest of the world (Connell 1995, 51). According to Beverley Skeggs (1993, 26) the male body is a “vehicle of capability... [which] has to continually measure up to the standards, performance and judgement of others”. Furthermore, Skeggs (1993, 26) points out that the male body can be used to exercise dominance over others, and this power is achieved with the use of bodily presence, stances and social space. In addition to the appearance of the body, it is important to mark the importance of bodily performance for masculinity. R.W. Connell (1995, 54) points out that the excessive characterization of masculinity through the capability of the male body to perform, leads to increased vulnerability. A man is made vulnerable when the male body, a measuring stick for manliness, fails to perform, in other words, to measure up (Connell 1995, 54). Therefore, for the purposes of a study on masculinity, we cannot overlook the importance of descriptions related to the physique of a character.

Furthermore, I will analyse the important points of narrative, attempting to explain the motivations and actions of Godfrey Cass in relation to the ideals of nineteenth century masculinity. When analysing his actions, I aim to concentrate on the relationship between rationality and anxiety, and its effects on the actions of Godfrey Cass, while presenting quotes from advice literature concerning the nineteenth century male ideal alongside the analysis.

Godfrey Cass is the eldest son of Squire Cass. As the eldest living son, he is the heir to the Cass estate. The father, Squire Cass, is described as “[t]he greatest man in Raveloe” (32). The meaning of the title Squire in this case most likely refers to “A country gentleman or landed proprietor, *esp.* one who is the principal landowner in a village or district” (Oxford English

Dictionary *sv. squire*). Furthermore, Squire Cass is described as "...one among several landed parishioners, but he alone was honoured with the title of Squire" (32), and unlike the other land owning family in Raveloe: the Osgoods, Squire Cass had "a tenant or two" (32). Early on, it is established that Godfrey is a member of the most influential family in Raveloe, although the reader is reminded from time to time that Raveloe is a small community, and that the upper crust of this society is not to be considered influential anywhere beyond their own locality.

The descriptions of Godfrey Cass, describe him as "a fine open-faced good-natured young man" (34), who is "tall" (199) and "blond" (36), with a "big muscular frame" (39). Therefore, his appearance may be considered highly masculine. The importance of physique for masculinity was mentioned by Hugh Stowell Brown in his lecture, "Manliness" (1858): the male ". . . physical frame is the most wonderful of all the organic beings within the compass of our observation". Brown also stressed the importance of being ". . . strong and healthy, and hearty, full of the energy, the almost boundless energy of physical life. . . ."

However, muscularity was not directly considered masculine by everyone, William Landels, for example, argued quite vehemently against the importance of muscularity:

No man . . . would seriously affirm that his physical parts constituted the glory of his manhood, or that the strength or development of these was the measure of his greatness....

Inferior and irrational beings possess these in common with himself; and in some respects theirs are superior to his. Of mere muscular power, he does not possess so much as, the lion or the elephant . . . [a]nd though in some respects he may be their superior even in physical qualities, the fact that they possess them in common with himself, destroys his title to greatness on that ground. (Landels 1861, 58)

Landels, absolutely undermines the importance of physical qualities for masculinity, although Landels does not directly argue against the benefit of being physically fit, Landels does establish rather clearly that muscularity alone does not give anyone a claim on manliness. Moreover, even Hugh Stowell Brown concluded that "[s]till more wonderful than man's physical organization, is his intellectual constitution, the powers of reason, imagination, memory, the perceptive and reflective faculties . . .", thus marking the importance of mental qualities over physicality.

In addition to physical characteristics, there are descriptions that address the mental qualities of Godfrey Cass. Godfrey Cass is described as “good-humoured” and “affectionate-hearted” (47). However, as a drawback, Godfrey Cass is also described as a man of “natural irresolution and moral cowardice” (40).

The descriptions of Godfrey Cass are immediately contrasted with the descriptions related to his younger brother, Dunstan Cass, who has a “taste for swopping and betting” and is further described as a “a spiteful, jeering fellow, who seemed to enjoy his drink the more when other people went dry” (34).

Later on, the appearance of Dunstan Cass is described as a “thick-set, heavy-looking young man” (36). Thus, Dunstan Cass is established as the less attractive, unpleasant counterpart of his brother. The character of Dunstan Cass, is certainly not far removed from the negative cautionary stereotypes of contemporary advice literature; as exemplified by the following passage from Timothy Shay Arthur: “The habit of spending money too freely in the gratification of a host of imaginary wants, is one into which young men of generous minds are too apt to fall” (Arthur 1852, 27), and “[a] common error into which very many fall at this period [of youth], is the belief that they may run into various excesses, and indulge themselves inordinately in sensual pleasures...” (Arthur 1852, 21).

The Cass family is also described as an embodiment of the idle upper class; Squire Cass has “kept all his sons at home in idleness” (34), and the “The Squire’s life was quite as idle as his sons” (100). Moreover, as the Cass family is described as members of the idle gentry class, it becomes relevant to consider whether idleness relates to nineteenth century ideals of manhood. Young male readers of advice literature were in fact warned against the dangers of idleness. For example, William Landels (1861, 151) warns men about the idleness caused by inheritance: “often the prospect of inheriting large or moderate wealth has led young men to indulge idle habits-so that powers naturally good have lain waste for want of cultivation”. Furthermore, Landels also directly addresses those men who do not have employment:

With the subject of which we treat, the idler, unless he be willing to renounce his idleness, has nothing to do. If he continue what he is, he may renounce the hope of being a *man*. We cannot believe in the manhood of any one who spends his time in doing nothing. His manly capabilities are not exercised, and cannot be developed, by such a life. His moral nature is obtuse or twisted when he so misapprehends or frustrates his Creator's design. (1861, 147-148)

Furthermore, George Morris, in his 1848 lecture: *Man's manhood*, condemns the wealthy men who choose to be idle, stating that: “[o]n the whole there are but few men who can afford to be rich; afford to be idle if they choose to be idle;-their manhood is the price they pay for it” (1848, 11). In the light of the aforementioned quotations, idleness, especially upper class idleness, was clearly seen as a negative trait and not in accordance with the hegemonic ideal of masculinity in the nineteenth century. Considering the writings of Landels and Morris, idleness appears to have been considered a very un-masculine feature. Therefore, in respect to the flaw of idleness, neither Godfrey Cass nor his family is measuring up to the ideals presented in advice literature.

#### **4.1 Marriage, masculinity and social expectations**

What is the significance of the contrast between Godfrey Cass and Dunstan Cass? Through the contrast between the appearance and nature of the two brothers, the societal expectations, which lie heavily on the shoulders of Godfrey Cass, are made more evident. As the heir to the estate, and with a no-good brother, Godfrey Cass is compelled to meet the expectations of society, and even more so, the expectations of his father. Squire Cass voices his concerns over his son not marrying Nancy Lammeter during Chapter XI. The Squire states to Godfrey that “it’s time you’d done with fooleries” (104), suggesting it was time for Godfrey to settle down, and further instructs Godfrey to ask Nancy Lammeter for her hand in marriage.

The issue of marriage was not only a parental expectation, but also very much an expectation originating from society. In fact, one might suggest that the first and the most important expectations directed towards young men in nineteenth century society, was the expectation of marriage. The value and importance of marriage is evident in the writing of Timothy

Shay Arthur (1852, 11), who described marriage as “...the most important event in a man's life”, whereas H. C. O’Donnoghue (1828, 4) considered that “[t]he marriage union is an important one; the most important of any we are capable of forming in this life...”, and defined marriage as “a civil contract, under religious sanctions and of divine appointment” (1928, 8).

Furthermore, Godfrey Cass was not idle when it came to pursuing the ideal of marriage. For example, Godfrey Cass had attempted to court Miss Nancy Lammeter, however, he had to reason with himself and restrain himself from going towards a full courtship. The main reason for such behaviour is the fact that Godfrey Cass was already married to a working-class woman, Molly Farren, who is characterized as a drunk and an opium addict.

Unfortunately for Godfrey Cass, his brother Dunstan Cass is aware of this disgraceful marriage, and Dustan Cass is using this knowledge to extort money from Godfrey Cass for his own idle leisurely needs. The relationship between the two brothers is marked by an air of hostility. Godfrey Cass makes an effort to work his way out of being a victim of extortion. Furthermore, Godfrey Cass even attempts to deny the requests of his brother Dunstan Cass, by claiming that he “...may as well tell the Squire everything [himself]” (39). However, Godfrey Cass is able to reason with himself and he quickly realizes that the truth would only result in him losing his chance of ever marrying Nancy Lammeter, and in addition, he would most likely end up disinherited. Therefore, Godfrey Cass continues to allow himself to be ridiculed by his brother Dunstan Cass, because his anxiety over the truth is unbearable. This anxiety is described as being a “sword hanging over him” (40). Based on this knowledge, we may draw some preliminary conclusions on Godfrey Cass and his characteristics. Godfrey Cass is described as a good person, who lacks moral character. However, Godfrey Cass has made decisions that have resulted in him being in a great deal of trouble. His secret marriage to Molly Farren is more emotion based, impulsive even, or lust driven rather than rational. Therefore, having previously failed as a rational man, Godfrey Cass appears to have one solution to his problems; that is to reason with himself and to remain rational. Considering that the problems of Godfrey Cass are a result of his inability to act truthfully and make the right

choices, it is worth considering what was written about the subject of moral qualities in nineteenth century advice literature.

The following quotations from Timothy Shay Arthur and George Morris provide an insight into what type of moral qualities were expected of men in the nineteenth century.

In the present state of the world, the courage to act right in common society is the virtue most needed, and this every young man should have. He should never flinch from speaking the truth where its utterance will counteract evil designs, or advance the knowledge and practice of good principles. (Arthur 1852, 134)

The cardinal virtue in society is a determination to do right because it is right, regardless of consequences. This is true courage. (Arthur 1852, 134)

Moral courage then will be a mark of Manhood; one of its most natural and admirable appearances... On the whole one must admire the man who can do a "bold thing (if it be a thing proper to be done.). (Morris 1848, 24)

Hugh Stowell Brown, in his 1858 lecture "Manliness" claimed that virtue and manliness were "equivalent terms". For Stowell Brown: "[v]irtue and manliness are identical: if we know what virtue is, we know what manliness is-whatever is virtuous is manly, whatever is not virtuous is not manly". Stowell Brown's first example of a virtue is truthfulness, and based on this logic truthfulness, for example, is manly.

In terms of addressing moral issues, the emphasis of advice manuals appears to lean towards moral courage, the ability to do what is right. However, it appears that the requirement of 'true courage' is conflicted with the requirement of 'divine rationality', which in the case of Godfrey Cass, successfully seems to prevent him from being truthful.

Moreover, through the constant pressure of rationality, Godfrey Cass has managed to cause himself a high level of anxiety, solely because he has managed to reason with himself that he cannot afford the cost of truth. In fact, his existence continues to be marked by anxiety over the truth concerning his past life. Furthermore, this anxiety, resulting from his rationality, slowly starts to take control over his mind; as Godfrey Cass, "instead of trying to still his fears... encouraged them" (93). Furthermore, even after having convinced himself through his inner dialogue to tell his

father the truth about his errors (95-97), Godfrey Cass, lacks the necessary courage and finally ends up giving into his anxieties and continues to feed the cycle between rationality and anxiety.

Instead of arguments for confession, he [Godfrey] could now feel the presence of nothing but its evil consequences: the old dread of disgrace came back — the old shrinking from the thought of raising a hopeless barrier between himself and Nancy... (97)

For Godfrey Cass, the relationship between rationality and anxiety reaches one of its peaks in anticipation of New Year's Eve celebrations. The relationship is made even more significant through Godfrey Cass actually engaging in a dialogue with his "importunate companion, anxiety" (128). Despite anticipating spending time with Miss Nancy Lammeter on New Year's Eve, Godfrey Cass cannot turn a deaf ear to his own anxiety. Godfrey Cass is reminded by his anxiety that "Dunsey will be coming home soon; there will be a great blow-up, and how will you bribe his spite to silence" (129), and furthermore, anxiety kept Godfrey company throughout Christmas, "refusing to be utterly quieted even by much drinking" (129).

Furthermore, for Godfrey Cass, the cyclical relationship between his rationality and anxiety is somewhat alleviated after the events that take place in chapter XII on New Year's Eve. The secret wife of Godfrey Cass, Molly Farren, is on her way to the large New Year's Eve celebrations at the Red House. The motivation of Molly Farren is to perform a "premeditated act of vengeance" (157) by revealing the truth about Godfrey Cass. However, her plans are cut short with the aid of a self-induced opium overdose, which leaves Molly Farren dead, and the child of Godfrey Cass and Molly Farren toddling her way to the house of Silas Marner.

Before learning the 'good' news concerning the death of Molly Farren, Godfrey Cass is re-introduced to his own daughter when Silas Marner arrives at the Red House with the child, reporting that there is a woman lying in the snow. At this stage, Godfrey Cass is overly rational, "trying to control himself, but conscious that, if any one noticed him, they must see that he was white-lipped and trembling" (168). For Godfrey Cass, the biggest fear at this moment is "that the woman [Molly Farren] might *not* be dead" (168). While in uncertainty over the fate of his wife, and

more importantly, his own fate, Godfrey Cass once again reasons with his options. Under the devastating weight of uncertainty, Godfrey Cass considers the possibility “that he ought to accept the consequences of his deeds, own the miserable wife, and fulfill the claims of the helpless child” (172). Nevertheless, once more, Godfrey Cass is established as a man who “had not moral courage enough to contemplate that active renunciation of Nancy as possible for him: he had only conscience and heart enough to make him forever uneasy under the weakness that forbade the renunciation” (172).

Again, rationality prevails over moral courage, and for Godfrey Cass, the possibility of marrying Nancy Lammeter is the choice of reason, as well as certainly to some extent a choice that is based on his emotions, however the choice is made at the expense of his peace of mind. This is evident in Godfrey’s shift of thought from responsibility, to the prospect of marrying Nancy Lammeter, as we learn that “his mind leaped away from all restraint toward the sudden prospect of deliverance from his long bondage” (172), this bondage, being his marriage to Molly Farren. This passage is followed by a strange self-assertion by Godfrey Cass, as if to redeem himself; Godfrey Cass promises himself that if he marries Nancy Lammeter, “then I shall be a good fellow in future, and have no secrets, and the child—shall be taken care of somehow.” (172). The dash in the previous sentence, indicates to the readers, that the character takes a brief pause to collect his thoughts, to consider his situation. This promise of redemption may stem from a belief that marriage and exposure to the domestic influence of a good woman had redeeming qualities over a husband, and at home, under the safeguard of domesticity, a man may have felt free from all his anxieties and vulnerabilities (Tosh 1999, 54). Later on, this redemptive power is presented through the joyous description of a nearly burden-free Godfrey Cass, who is soon to marry Nancy Lammeter: “He felt a reformed man, delivered from temptation; and the vision of his future life [with Nancy Lammeter] seemed to him as a promised land for which he had no cause to fight” (196).

The notion of a ‘promised land’ reveals that Godfrey Cass appears to consider the household of the Lammeter’s as a type of ‘domestic paradise’, as described in the following passage:

...the longing for some influence that would make the good he [Godfrey] preferred easy to pursue, caused the neatness, purity, and liberal orderliness of the Lammeter household, sunned by the smile of Nancy, to seem like those fresh bright hours of the morning... (45)

In part the origins of this feeling may reside in the fact that the mother of Godfrey Cass, “... had died long ago, and the Red House was without that presence of the wife and mother” (34).

Therefore, the continued lack of exposure to the domestic sphere in the Cass household may have resulted in Godfrey Cass becoming further disconnected from his emotional side, and the contrast offered by the Lammeter household, may have therefore appeared tempting for Godfrey Cass.

According to Tosh (1999, 110) companionate marriage could provide a chance for a man to reconnect with his emotional (feminine) side through his wife. More importantly, in the nineteenth century, marriage was imperative for establishing the status of full masculinity (Tosh 1999, 110). Therefore, marriage to Nancy Lammeter, a woman of equal social status, would allow Godfrey Cass to establish himself closer to being culturally fully masculine and at least partially live up to the expectations of his father and the surrounding society.

Based on what we have learned about the emotional life of Godfrey Cass, his secret marriage, and his child and his lack of moral courage; it appears that the negative influence of rationality overshadows the actions and choices made by Godfrey Cass. Rationality appears to prevail over emotions, even though we are led to believe that his affection for Nancy Lammeter is mainly based on emotions, not reason.

However, male affections were not considered to be based on emotions, they were always more or less based on reason, for male rationality, and self-control, dominated over male affections. This demand of rationality and self-control over affections is made more evident, as Timothy Shay Arthur establishes (1852, 167) that “[t]he affections of a man are, as a general thing, guided by his reasons; and the reasons of a woman, as a general thing, is guided by her affections”

and any deviation from this pattern, such as “masculine women” and “effeminate men” are “looked upon as social monsters” (Arthur 1852, 167). Furthermore, this view of men as rational beings, even in questions of affection, was a common view in the nineteenth century. Men and women are therefore considered to be the polar opposites of each other. The view of polar opposition of the sexes itself is not the main issue here; the main issue is the labeling of any deviation from this established pattern as “social monsters”. The message is worded in a very harsh, almost cautionary manner, as if it was to function as a message of warning. The cautionary message of Timothy Shay Arthur is highly related to Judith Butler’s idea of seeing gender as repeated performance. According to Butler “we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right” (1990, 140) and therefore, deviation from the socially accepted performance is not tolerated.

Furthermore, this labeling of deviant men and women as monsters, once again helps promote the masculinity of rationality. The use of proper reason is again established as the primary male characteristic, which must dominate over any other characteristics. Therefore, influenced by the ideal of male rationality, Godfrey Cass can allow his masculinity, in the form of over-rationalizing, to ignore something as sacred as his marriage to Molly Farren, and his secret daughter, in favour of keeping up appearances and social status. A secret marriage is certainly not an issue that would have been taken lightly, for “matrimony is a duty...It is a divine ordinance as old almost as the creation” (Alcott 1850, 271).

It appears that for Godfrey Cass, marriage can only have meaning and value if it is not in direct opposition with rationality, and thus conflicting with his social status. A marriage to a working-class woman of lesser qualities would essentially expose the irrationality of Godfrey Cass, thus depriving him of his self-maintained image of masculine rationality. Moreover, matrimony is not the only casualty in the way of rationality. The rationality of Godfrey Cass disables him from taking responsibility over his own flesh and blood. Responsibility, nevertheless, was also one of the more desirable qualities for the ideal man of the nineteenth century. For example, William Wallace Everts (1854, 14), stressed the importance of responsibility in *Manhood: its duties and*

*responsibilities*, labeling it as the “necessity of a dependant and rational being”. This view connects responsibility with rationality, however, for Godfrey Cass, responsibility appears to be another obstacle in the path of reason. Furthermore, Everts also discusses the importance of having a good conscience.

Preserve a good conscience. If you have progressed undiscovered along the course of speculation, fraud, and the violation of conscience, and earnestly thrive in it, it is too late to regain the standing point of virtue. (1854, 45)

From the point of view of Godfrey Cass, a good conscience may be a lost cause. His intention is to thrive, despite violating his conscience and his responsibility towards his wife and child. However, after Godfrey Cass has discovered he is free from the burden of marriage to Molly Farren, he displays slight concern over his daughter (later named by Silas Marner as ‘Eppie’). Before Godfrey Cass “hurried out of the cottage” (174) where Molly Farren had been pronounced dead, he gave Silas Marner a half-a-guinea to be used for purchasing clothes for his own biological daughter. There is remarkable symbolic value in this event, where Godfrey Cass, an upper class man, simply hands over some loose money from his pocket to Silas Marner, a mere stranger. Furthermore, the significance of this deed is not so much in *who* Godfrey gives the money to, but in *why* he gives the money. Godfrey Cass provides a stranger of distinctly lower economic class with a small amount of money, to make it possible for this stranger, instead of Godfrey Cass himself, to raise and father his child. The idea of an exchange is given more prominence by Godfrey’s decision to look after the child: “he would see that it was cared for: he would never forsake it; he would do everything but own it” (175). There is something paradoxical about the words “never forsake it”, “everything but own it”, which may be read as an intentional contradiction added to further the impact of the exchange between Silas Marner and Godfrey Cass. The price of shifting responsibility is set at half a guinea and the exchange of money symbolizes a trade between two men, over a child. Moreover, the underlying implication is that a wealthy man may sell off his responsibility and purchase himself a new clean conscience. Ralph Stewart (1998, 77) considers Godfrey Cass giving up his daughter; as an act of paying a price for his own freedom. Moreover, Ralph Stewart is correct to

point out that the price Godfrey Cass pays is in fact his own daughter, the chance of a life-long bond, and a relationship which he will never be able to recover. Furthermore, when Godfrey Cass is vowing to himself that he would be responsible for his secret daughter, perhaps this is a mere display of self-rhetoric to persuade himself to believe that through this distant, hidden responsibility for his offspring, he can still live up to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity in his society. Therefore, Godfrey Cass may only be interested in bearing responsibility over his daughter for the sake of himself and the necessity of living up to the ideals and demands of society, not so much for the sake of the child. Furthermore, as Godfrey Cass has established in his mind, the notion of him in a happy home with Nancy Lammeter playing with his children, he promises to himself that “he would see that *it* [Eppie] was well provided for” (196) and “[t]hat was a father’s duty” (196). Again, the actions and duties of Godfrey Cass are contradictions at best. The extent of his duty as a father appears very limited, in fact, his duty as a father does not contain the element of public acknowledgement and fulfilling the role of an active public caregiver for his own child. In addition, the narrator provides a brief comment concerning Godfrey Cass and his relationship with his secret daughter: “[w]as he very uneasy in the meantime at his inability to give his daughter her birthright? I cannot say that he was. The child was being taken care of...” (195).

Considering the previous description, we may conclude that Godfrey Cass was rather pleased with the way things had turned out, and not at all worried about his child. Furthermore, after the disappearance of Dunsey and the death of Molly Farren, no-one knew the child was his, and therefore the existence of Eppie no longer threatened his status of masculinity in society.

## **4.2 Family and masculinity**

Twelve years after abandoning his own child and shifting responsibility to Silas Marner, Godfrey Cass finds himself happily married to Nancy Lammeter, but without children of their own. Godfrey Cass, having established himself as masculine through marriage, lacks one defining quality of masculinity; he has no offspring, apart from his secret daughter. Children were considered

essential for the domestic ideology and a companionate marriage was considered incomplete without children (Tosh 1999, 27). Moreover, childlessness was also quite hazardous for the public image of an ideal family; husbands without children saw a deterioration in their level of manliness and lack of peer acceptance (Tosh 1999, 80). Furthermore, the ability to have offspring was considered a grand display of masculine virility and even more importantly, children, boys especially, were necessary for the future of the family name (Tosh 1999, 80).

Therefore, considering the importance of children for marriage, especially given their importance for the status of masculinity, it is not surprising that the childless Godfrey Cass would change his mind concerning his own daughter, and therefore wish to adopt Eppie. At this point, Godfrey Cass may have felt that his secret of being the biological father of Eppie is relatively safe; for he had "...ceased to see the shadow of Dunsey across his path" (195), therefore he may attempt to adopt his twelve-year old daughter without raising unnecessary suspicions. However, as pointed out, the motivation for this adoption may have more to do with the necessity of fulfilling the requirements of society. Godfrey Cass appears to be able to act, when the pressure of expectations from the surrounding society requires him to do so. Previously, Godfrey Cass had no interest in being responsible, for it was not the rational thing to do and his social status would have been jeopardised. However, when responsibility can be used to further his own masculinity and social status, without any risk and without appearing irrational, Godfrey Cass is willing to embrace responsibility. Unfortunately, the idea of adoption did not fit into the moral code of Nancy Lammeter, who had twice refused Godfrey's plans of adoption, therefore leaving the Cass household without offspring.

The fact that Nancy Lammeter rather easily refuses her husband's wishes allows us to consider the role of Godfrey Cass as a masculine head of the household. In fact, the following description of Godfrey Cass by Nancy Lammeter is quite revealing:

Many men would have been very angry with me for standing out against their wishes; and they might have thrown out that they'd had ill-luck in marrying me; but Godfrey has never been the man to say me an unkind word. (231)

Based on this aforementioned description by Nancy Lammeter, it appears as if Nancy Lammeter herself is surprised by the lack of reaction from Godfrey Cass. Moreover, Nancy Lammeter was quite right to have assumed that her disobedience would have resulted in severe negative consequences. According to John Tosh (1999, 60): “[h]ousehold authority had been a benchmark of adult masculinity for hundreds of years. In pre-industrial society to be head of a household... was essential to masculine status...” Moreover, a man who could not control his household was not considered a proper man in the eyes his fellow men (Tosh 1999, 60). The disobedience of a wife was considered a grave insult on the masculinity of a husband, and henpecked husbands were constantly made fun of (Tosh 1999, 61). Therefore, based on how important it was for married men to have control over their household in nineteenth century England, we may conclude that Godfrey Cass is certainly not advancing his masculinity by allowing his wife to act in a disobedient manner. However, considering that Godfrey Cass is described as a man of “natural irresolution” (40), his actions and lack of authority are hardly surprising. In fact, the pressure of measuring up to masculine ideals may be further increased by the fact that Godfrey Cass is essentially ridiculed by his own father for lacking a will of his own:

[Y]ou take after your poor mother. She never had a will of her own; a woman has no call for one, if she’s got a proper man for a husband. But your wife had need have one, for you hardly know your own mind enough to make both your legs walk one way. (105)

By claiming that Godfrey Cass takes after his mother and lacks a will of his own, the Squire is effeminizing his son. Furthermore, Squire Cass suggests that his son needs to be governed by a woman, which in terms of nineteenth century masculinity is certainly a very harsh undermining of one’s masculine status.

The question of childlessness and adoption had once again raised issues concerning the past of Godfrey Cass to the surface, issues which Godfrey Cass had worked hard to conceal from others. Considering Nancy’s refusal to adopt, “any retrieval of his error became more and more difficult” (232). Furthermore, “It seemed to him impossible that he should ever confess to her the truth about Eppie: she [Nancy Lammeter] would never recover from the repulsion the story of his

earlier marriage would create, told to her now, after that long concealment” (231). However, when his brother, Dunstan Cass is discovered to have been dead for the past fifteen years and Godfrey Cass, shocked by this revelation, finds himself unable to conceal the truth of his past life from his wife, Nancy Lammeter: “Everything comes to light, Nancy, sooner or later. When God Almighty wills it, our secrets are found out... Eppie’s mother — that wretched woman — was my wife: Eppie is my child” (237). The truth leads Godfrey Cass into an outpouring of hindsight and regret over his rational actions and choices: “I oughtn’t to have left the child unowned: I oughtn’t to have kept it from you. But I couldn’t bear to give you up, Nancy” (163). The anguish experienced by Godfrey Cass over his own actions, is furthered by Nancy Lammeter’s response to Godfrey’s revelation: “Godfrey, if you had but told me this six years ago, we could have done some of our duty by the child. Do you think I’d have refused to take her in, if I’d known she was yours?” (238). Furthermore, “at that moment Godfrey felt all the bitterness of an error that was not simply futile, but had defeated its own end” (238).

Perhaps at this point the gravest error for Godfrey Cass may have been to assume that his wife had a similar mind-set to his. Godfrey Cass may have assumed that the outcome of the revelation of the truth would be the very same cause of action that he would most likely have taken, if he had discovered something similarly sinful concerning his wife’s past. Furthermore, according to Joan Bennett, Godfrey Cass had every reason to think Nancy Lammeter would be unforgiving, for Nancy Lammeter was “a rigid naïve moralist” (1974, 136). However, the outcome is not what Godfrey Cass had expected, as he finds himself being morally supported by his wife, despite his flaws. The flawed practice of extreme male rationality by Godfrey Cass, is thus countered by the emotionality of a woman; Nancy Lammeter continues to provide Godfrey Cass with her unconditional love and support.

In the aftermath of the truth, Mr and Mrs Cass head toward their final confrontation with Silas Marner, united as a family, to reclaim property once lost, in hopes of having another exchange over Eppie, similar to the one Godfrey Cass had with Silas Marner years earlier. It is

significant and worth noting that in the end, Nancy Lammeter is unconditionally willing to support her husband in his attempt to reclaim his lost masculinity by taking Eppie as his daughter. However, the final confrontation is not what Godfrey Cass may have expected. He cannot reclaim his daughter Eppie, who chooses Silas Marner over him. The Cass family thus heads back to the Red House, where Godfrey and Nancy console each other as they admit bitter defeat: “That’s ended” (254). Godfrey Cass announces to his wife that “I wanted to pass for childless once, Nancy — I shall pass for childless now against my wish” (254). The melancholy words by Godfrey Cass appear to reflect his regret over his past actions and choices. Godfrey Cass has to concede, he is unlikely to achieve the status of full masculinity in nineteenth century society; for he will never have a child. Moreover, Godfrey Cass appears to accept his role as a distant breadwinner “father” surprisingly easily, promising to: “do what I can to make her happy in her own way” (255). Furthermore, Godfrey Cass displays his old rational self once more, when Nancy Lammeter asks: “You won’t make it known, then, about Eppie’s being your daughter?” (254), and thus we learn that Godfrey Cass does not intend to acknowledge his daughter after the final confrontation with Silas Marner: “No: where would be the good to anybody? — only harm” (254). Whereas before confronting Silas Marner and Eppie, Godfrey Cass was full of the moral courage he had lacked throughout the story, in the aftermath of the events, he has returned to the path of the very same rationality, which contributed to his string of personal errors. Therefore, for Godfrey Cass the rational course of action is to keep up appearances, and maintain the social face of the Cass and Lammeter families. In fact, Nancy Lammeter is quick to voice her concerns over her family: “I should be very thankful for father and Priscilla [Lammeter] never to be troubled with knowing what was done in the past” (255). Therefore, for the sake of appearances, and because it is the rational thing to do, Godfrey Cass is willing to make sure that the wrongdoings of his family are not to be revealed until his death: “I shall put it in my will — I think I shall put it in my will” (255).

The final part of the novel sees Godfrey Cass abandoning reason, and briefly discovering moral courage and willingness to be honest, only to discover that the societal ideals of

hegemonic masculinity were not to be obtained with qualities such as truth and moral courage. This strengthens the notion of the contradictory nature of a hegemonic ideal of masculinity, where parts of the ideal are contradicting each other, for it is not always rational to be honest, morally righteous or brave. Moreover, Godfrey Cass may have found enough relief from his anxieties from the fact that his wife was supportive, and would not leave him despite his errors. Evidently, the fear of losing Nancy Lammeter was the greatest fear for Godfrey Cass, and once this fear ceased to matter, the necessity of moral courage and taking public responsibility over Eppie became much less meaningful. In the end, both Mr. and Mrs Godfrey Cass returned to rationality, covering up the sins of the past for the sake of keeping up appearances, and thus continuing the cycle of anxiety while living a life based on duplicity.

## 5. The Analysis of Silas Marner

The first description of Silas Marner's appearance describes his eyes and gaze: "...large brown protuberant eyes in Silas Marner's pale face really saw nothing very distinctly that was not close to them..." (7). Later on, his eyes are further described as "prominent, short-sighted brown eyes", "unexampled" (9) and as "strange unearthly eyes" (79). The alien nature of Silas Marner's appearance is described, or even exaggerated by these descriptions of his eyes. Moreover, later on in the novel, the description of Silas Marner's eyes will form a deliberate contrast with the blue eyes of his adopted daughter Eppie. In addition to constant references to the eyes of Silas Marner, there are several references to his colourless complexion. For example, Silas Marner is described as: "a pallid young man", with a "pale face" (7) and a "pale thin figure" (79). According to the Oxford English Dictionary sv. *pallid* means: "Lacking depth or intensity of colour; faint or feeble in colour". The references to Silas Marner as a pallid colourless person appear to have a similar function as the description of his eyes; to establish Silas Marner as someone who has, from the point of view of the Raveloe villagers, the appearance of a strange alien, he is a superficial being, who lacks depth. The narrator even points out that Silas Marner's appearance "had nothing strange for people of average culture and experience" (7), thus making a point that the people of Raveloe are not of average culture or experience. Therefore, the description of appearance also defines Raveloe as a community. Moreover, the early physical descriptions of Silas Marner are a rather direct contrast to the muscular frame of Godfrey Cass. When Silas Marner becomes pre-occupied in his work, he is described as "spider" and a "spinning-insect" (24), thus establishing Silas Marner's physique as being closer to that of an insect than that of a man. This comparison to an insect may function as a way of almost dehumanizing Silas Marner, and to display the dangers of isolation from society. Further physical descriptions follow as Silas Marner's isolation and obsession with his work heightens:

Strangely Marner's face and figure shrank and bent themselves into a constant mechanical relation to the objects of his life, so that he produced the same sort of impression as a handle or a crooked tube, which has no meaning standing apart. The prominent eyes that used to look trusting and dreamy, now looked as if they had been made to see only one kind of thing that

was very small, like tiny grain, for which they hunted everywhere; and he was so withered and yellow, that, though he was not yet forty, the children always called him “Old Master Marner.” (29)

This quotation describes the physical deterioration of Silas Marner. The deterioration of Silas Marner’s physique is directly related to his masculinity, as his exterior starts to show signs of aging and illness, as exemplified by his old appearance. The most significant physical descriptions of the novel are found in chapter XVI, which begins sixteen years after Silas Marner had adopted Eppie. The chapter begins with a description of Godfrey Cass:

The tall blonde man of forty is not much changed in feature from the Godfrey Cass of six-and-twenty; he is only fuller in flesh, and has only lost the indefinable look of youth — a loss which is marked even when the eye is undulled and the wrinkles are not yet come (199)

Based on this description, Godfrey Cass has maintained his physical prowess, and shows very little signs of aging and deterioration. The direct male counterpoint for comparison is provided through the following description of Silas Marner, who has “... a frame much enfeebled by the lapse of the sixteen years....The weaver’s bent shoulders and white hair give him almost the look of advanced age, though he is not more than five-and-fifty...” (200-201).

When comparing physical descriptions, Silas Marner is constructed as the less-masculine counterpart of Godfrey Cass. However, the absence or presence of superficial characteristics of masculinity, the lack of muscularity in Silas Marner, and the abundance of muscularity in Godfrey Cass, was not actually considered a direct indicator of manliness by everyone in the nineteenth century, as already established in the analysis of Godfrey Cass. However, the physical contrast between Silas Marner and Godfrey Cass is strikingly obvious, as Silas Marner is described as the weak male, showing early signs of aging, whereas Godfrey Cass is muscular, and maintains a youthful look, even in middle age.

## 5.1 Work and masculinity

The differences between Silas Marner and Godfrey Cass do not end with physical attributes. Silas Marner, unlike the idle Godfrey Cass, is independent and more importantly, he has an occupation in weaving. According to E.P.Thompson (1964, 270), Silas Marner is a "custom weaver - one who has an independent status in a village or small town much like a master tailor, making up orders for customers". Susan Stewart (2003, 523) argues that much against George Eliot's own description of weaving at the beginning of the novel, Silas Marner is not a journeyman or itinerant weaver who travels from customer to customer to perform his job. Moreover, Stewart (2003, 521) notes that occupations such as spinning, weaving and tailoring have always been associated with social gender division, whereas spinning has more or less always been considered a female occupation, weaving on the other hand has been seen as a man's task.

There is one gender related mention of Silas Marner's occupation in the novel, as Dolly Winthrop tells Silas: "you're partly as handy as a woman, for weaving comes next to spinning" (192). Gillian Beer (1986, 23) commends George Eliot for not trying to portray weaving as a womanly occupation, and maintaining the historical accuracy of the gendered labour division between weaving and spinning. However, Beer (1986, 126) does see the choice of Silas Marner's occupation as a purposeful play on the stereotype of a woman weaving, although domestic home weaving had more or less disappeared after the industrial revolution in England.

If the choice of Silas Marner's occupation is not a way of feminizing the character, how does his occupation relate to masculinity in general? Perhaps we may draw the conclusion that whereas the occupation of Silas Marner is not something that defines his gender, or his masculinity to be exact, his choice of occupation bears no great significance over his status as a masculine male in society. However, when the occupation of Silas Marner is compared with that of Godfrey Cass, Godfrey's occupation, or lack of it, has far greater importance when it comes to defining his status as a male. Idleness, as established already, was considered highly un-masculine, and therefore we may realize that Silas Marner comes closer to the hegemonic ideal simply because he has an

occupation, whereas the idle Godfrey Cass is defined as less masculine in this sense through his lack of occupation.

According to John Tosh, in the nineteenth century “[t]he importance of dignified, independent work was endlessly proclaimed” (1999, 79). It is also relevant that the importance of work was also stressed in advice literature: “[e]ntering into business is, except marriage, the most important act of a young man's life” (Arthur 1852, 152). Moreover, William Wallace Everts (1854, 32), for example, considered working to be “a universal duty” and labour was considered honourable. Thus, the importance of working to support yourself was of great importance, and what is more striking is that it was considered to be almost equal to marriage. However, in the case of Silas Marner, his labour becomes overly important as his isolation from the Raveloe community heightens. Nevertheless, his labour is not the actual reason for his social isolation and in order to understand what may have led to his social isolation and how it relates to masculinity, we must acknowledge the importance of the pre-Raveloe Silas Marner of Lantern Yard.

## **5.2 Social isolation, masculine rationality and self-control**

The early part of the novel sets the background for Silas Marner's arrival to Raveloe and contains a brief insight into the emotional life of the pre-Raveloe Silas Marner. When Silas Marner is told that his engagement to Sarah has ended, he shows clear signs of maintaining an un-emotional masculine composure as “Silas received the message mutely, and then turned away from the messengers to work at his loom again” (20). The fact that there is no emotional reaction from Silas Marner may be a way of signalling that he may be, to a certain extent, conforming to the norms of nineteenth century masculinity through this particular display of emotional self-control. This display of self-control is followed by the departure of Silas Marner from Lantern Yard to Raveloe, where Silas Marner further turns into a miser and a hermit.

Perhaps there is a connection between his display of self-control in Lantern Yard, and his development into a hermit in Raveloe. Although this development into a hermit in Raveloe is

described to be a result of the suspicious and ill-spoken nature of the villagers and their attitudes towards the mysterious stranger who was able to cure Sally Oates (SM 27) the display of self-control when faced by hardships may be a way to foreshadow the forthcoming development of social isolation. In Lantern Yard, Silas Marner was engaged to be married, and lived a social life among his religious community. Silas Marner's "... life, before he came to Raveloe, had been filled with the movement, the mental activity, and... ..close fellowship..." (12) of his co-religionists.

In terms of rationality, the Silas Marner of Lantern Yard was perhaps closest to fulfilling the basic masculine ideals; he would be married and destined to establish a family. Perhaps this part of his life was also his most rational period of living, as the gold hoarding pre-Eppie Silas Marner, 'the weaving insect of Raveloe' could hardly be described as a character of rational manly composure, and therefore, lacked a defining quality of masculinity. Perhaps the disappointment and shock that Silas Marner experienced at Lantern Yard, the betrayal committed by William Dane and Sarah, and his inability to express his emotions over the issue, bore some similarity to the dilemma of Godfrey Cass, who suffered similarly with his own rationality preventing him from doing what is morally right. Silas Marner may have been repressing his emotions because of the very same masculine rationality.

In Raveloe, however, the hoarding hermit Silas Marner, had very little to do with masculine rationality of any kind. The descriptions of Silas Marner during his period of isolation, when he is fully concentrated on gathering money and admiring it, describe a man of irrational, almost emotionally unstable nature:

Gradually the guineas, the crowns and the half-crowns, grew to a heap, and Marner drew less and less for his own wants, trying to solve the problem of keeping himself strong enough to work sixteen hours a day on as small an outlay as possible. (27)

Although the extreme frugality of Silas Marner is highly related to a sense of extreme self-control, the attempt of Silas Marner to work sixteen hours while spending the least amount of money are more closely bordering on insanity, rather than masculine rationality. This image of his actions lacking rationality is further emphasized by the narrator stating that Silas Marner : "... worked

without any contemplation of an end toward which the functions tended” (27). Basically, Silas Marner gathered money so he could admire it, not spend it or save:

He spread them out in heaps and bathed his hands in them; he then counted them and set them up in regular piles, and felt their rounded outline between his thumb and fingers, and thought fondly of the guineas that were only half-earned by the work of the loom as if they had been unborn children. (31)

This aforementioned description of Silas Marner admiring and touching his money has been interpreted by Jeff Nunokawa (1993, 274) as resembling a description of “sexual deviance” and Nunokawa generally interprets the scene by drawing parallels between secretive hidden sexual pleasures and Silas Marner admiring his gold. Although the interpretation is backed by the notion that Silas Marner constantly admired his gold “at night” (28, 30), and behind closed doors and shutters (30), these descriptions do add to the sense of secrecy and air of forbidden pleasure related to the act of admiring money. However, if the admiration of gold was a way of expressing his sexuality in a situation where he could not do so otherwise due to his social isolation, then how did Silas Marner cope so well with the loss of his gold, if they were in fact a vehicle for his sexuality? Therefore, in general we may conclude that although Silas Marner’s collection of gold had replaced his social human connections, his act of admiration is best interpreted as general irrationality, rather than as a way of expressing his sexuality in a socially isolated situation. The irrationality-inducing influence of gold is further expressed later, as: [t]he gold had kept his thoughts in an ever-repeated circle, leading to nothing beyond itself. . . .“ (185). The evils of gold are thus expressed again, and the irrationality of Silas Marner is explained to be resulting from his hoarding of gold, which caused a condition which would be described as a ‘cycle of obsession’.

How does the hoarding of gold by Silas Marner relate to masculinity? As Silas Marner has preoccupied himself with “weaving and hoarding” (27), Silas Marner, the miser, has also strangely enough managed to come closer to one nineteenth century ideal of manliness; frugality. Timothy Shay Arthur (1852, 27-30) mentions that: “young men should resist the ....habit of spending money uselessly....” and Arthur suggests that men should always spend less than they

earn. According to Arthur, this would, however, require “a great deal of self-denial” a virtue which would somehow repay itself later. William Wallace Everts (1854, 34) commented on frugality that “[t]he acquisition of property ordinarily depends more upon what is saved, than upon what is earned”. However, frugality itself could not be compared with marriage and family as indicators of a man’s masculinity and status in society.

According to Joseph Wiesenfarth (1970, 230), Silas Marner “is reduced to loving his money”, which suggests that his frugality is merely a compensation for his loss of social company. Thus, the frugality of Silas Marner could be interpreted as a result of a temporary disorder of the mind, after all, he is certainly not being frugal in a healthy way, and becomes more isolated as a result of his frugality. Therefore, we may not draw too many conclusions over the impact that frugality had on the masculine status of Silas Marner. However, the fact that Silas Marner is frugal at one point of the novel, and the members of the Cass family, with their excessive lifestyle, are to be considered the opposite of frugal, provides the reader with an interesting contrast between the male characters.

The social isolation of Silas Marner, which is linked to his obsessive hoarding of money, is of significant importance in terms of masculinity. The development of Silas Marner into a hermit is not only to be considered a mere sign of a mental issue. His isolation is a way of emphasizing his lack of masculinity, his inability to live up to nineteenth century social norms that spoke against such voluntary solitude. Therefore, his social isolation is related to his masculinity as the issue of social isolation was addressed in advice literature by Timothy Shay Arthur, William Andrus Allcot and H. C. O’Donnoghue:

No man stands alone in society, or can be independent of others.  
Each forms a part of the great social body, and must faithfully and  
diligently do what he can for the common good. (Arthur 1854, 147)

The sum total of human happiness, no less than of human usefulness,  
would be greatly diminished if all mankind-whether of one sex or two-were to live  
hermits. Hence the necessity of the conjugal relation, whose office is  
twofold-to complete the education of the parties themselves, and to be the  
means of human progress and improvement through another generation. Hence it  
is that man shall leave father and mother and cleave to his wife, and that the bond

shall not only be as strong as life itself, but as permanent. (Alcott 1850, 263)

Men, by experience have found that is not good for them to live in a state of celibacy, and isolated selfishness. (O'Donnoghue 1828, 2)

Man is a social and rational being, deriving his chief of earthly happiness from the delights of society, and the interchange of thought. His habits and his nature alike proclaim, that it is not good for him to be alone. It is the interchange of the charities and sympathies of life which gives to human existence its real and only value (O'Donnoghue 1828, 11)

Man in a state of solitude, or even isolated luxury and affluence, would be the most pitiable and miserable of creatures. (O'Donnoghue 1828, 11)

Social isolation was considered un-masculine and not part of the nineteenth century ideal of manliness, as it effectively prevented men from achieving full masculine status through marriage and even more importantly, no families are established through social isolation. Therefore, anyone who willingly isolates themselves from other people is likely to be considered a suspicious character. It would not be too imaginative to claim that social isolation formed a threat to the existing social order of the nineteenth century, which was highly dependent on conjugal relations. After having arrived in Raveloe, Silas Marner has an almost hostile view of the locals, as “there was nothing that called out his love and fellowship toward the strangers he had come amongst . . .” (24), furthering the view that he willingly isolated himself from society.

### **5.3 Marriage**

Despite his early isolation in Raveloe, Silas Marner is gradually re-socialized into the community after the introduction of his stepdaughter Eppie, even though throughout the novel, Silas Marner remains a bachelor, and makes no effort to find himself a partner, or to find a mother for Eppie. As already established, the social behaviour of Silas Marner, the fact that he never marries, is far removed from the social ideals of the time, especially when compared with the efforts made by Godfrey Cass to marry Nancy Lammeter and establish a family. Furthermore, John Tosh (1999, 4) points out that: “[t]he domestic sphere is integral to masculinity. To establish a home, to protect it,

to provide for it, to control it, and to train its young aspirants to manhood, have usually been essential to a man's good standing with his peers.”

Although Silas Marner establishes a home, and takes care of his adoptive daughter, he does not properly attempt to connect with the domestic sphere through women, as he masters the sphere himself, despite occasionally relying on Dolly Winthrop for advice and company. To some extent, the occasional presence of Dolly Winthrop does provide occasional female domesticity for Silas Marner: however, this type of female influence bears no effect on his masculine status, as there is, after all, no conjugal relation between Dolly Winthrop and Silas Marner. In fact, Silas Marner appears to abandon the entire nineteenth century domestic ideal, by being uninterested in women after his disappointing experiences at Lantern Yard.

#### **5.4 Fatherhood**

If Godfrey Cass failed to establish himself a family, and take responsibility for his biological child, Silas Marner appears to be his direct binary opposition in this sense. How does Silas Marner's choice of becoming an adoptive father for Eppie fit with the issue of masculine rationality? When Silas Marner takes Eppie to the Red House, both Godfrey Cass and the wife of the village physician Mrs. Kimble, suggests that Silas Marner should give the child away (174). The descriptions related to Silas Marner's choice of keeping Eppie provide us with the understanding that Silas Marner has somewhat acted upon impulse, rather than rationality:

No — no — I can't part with it; I can't let it go,” said Silas abruptly. It's come to me — I've a right to keep it.” The proposition to take the child from him had come to Silas quite unexpectedly, and his speech, uttered under a strong sudden impulse, was almost like a revelation to himself: a minute before, he had no distinct intention about the child. (169)

“Till anybody shows they've a right to take her away from me,” said Marner. “The mother's dead, and I reckon it's got no father; it's a lone thing — and I'm a lone thing...” (174)

The passage hints that before it was suggested that he gives the child away, Silas Marner did not really have any “distinct intention about the child” (169), further adding to the impression that the

choice to keep Eppie was an impulsive reaction against the aforementioned suggestions of giving Eppie away. The decision to adopt Eppie could also be interpreted as a reaction of a man who had just lost his fortune and has deteriorated to an emotionally vulnerable condition and therefore not in his full level of rationality. In fact, Silas Marner appears to identify his own position with the child, he identifies with the child's vulnerability, which itself is highly unmasculine. Silas Marner, having just lost something dear to him, is not willing to lose whatever has been brought to him (Eppie) to replace the previous loss (money). In this sense, his choice to keep Eppie, could be seen as a continuation to his habitual hoarding of gold, and Eppie could merely have functioned as an extension for Silas Marner's need to obtain and possess something. However, if the choice to keep Eppie was based on irrationality, rather than rationality, the choice most certainly had more to do with the moral courage and responsibility, which were both qualifications for masculinity, and more importantly, both moral courage and responsibility were abandoned by Godfrey Cass.

The exchange between Godfrey Cass and Mr. Kimble appears to reveal some of the underlying social attitudes related to child rearing and the choice of Silas Marner to keep Eppie. Godfrey Cass comments to Mr. Kimble: "It's a pretty little child: the old fellow seems to want to keep it: that's strange for a miser like him" (174), adding that "the parish isn't likely to quarrel with him for the right to keep the child" (174). However, Mr. Kimble tells Godfrey Cass that "I've seen the time when I might have quarrelled with him for it myself. It's too late now, though. If the child ran into the fire, your aunt's too fat to overtake it: she could only sit and grunt like an alarmed sow" (174). Godfrey Cass, who himself has avoided responsibility, finds it strange that a lonely man would want to keep an orphan child. Mr. Kimble would not mind having the child, however, he considers his wife, Mrs. Kimble, to bear a close resemblance to a "sow", rather than a human being, and marks her obesity as a reason why she could no longer take care of children. Mr. Kimble, basically suggests that he would not, in other circumstances, mind having another child, but his wife would in her current condition be unable to take care of a child, for child rearing would naturally fall into the domestic sphere, mastered by Mrs. Kimble, not Mr. Kimble himself.

Whereas Godfrey Cass first does his best to conceal his connection to Eppie, and thus avoids responsibility, Silas Marner manages to establish himself as a model caregiver.

Notable mothers, who knew what it was to keep children "whole and sweet", lazy mothers, who knew what it was to be interrupted in folding their arms and scratching their elbows by the mischievous propensities of children just firm on their legs, were equally interested in conjecturing how a lone man would manage with a two-year-old child on his hands, and were equally ready with their suggestions: the notable chiefly telling him what he had better do, and the lazy ones being emphatic in telling him what he would never be able to do. (178)

Larry Shillock (2005, 39) sees this passage as mothers "... protecting the authority that derives from the social domain that they manage." It is as if the women in Raveloe are in disbelief over the choice of Silas Marner to keep Eppie. The need to protect maternal authority in issues of child rearing stems from Silas Marner's decision, which is almost comparable to a male invasion of the female controlled domestic sphere, the sphere of parenting and nurturing. Moreover, Shillock (2005, 40) points out that the narrator finishes with lazy mothers as a condescending manner, telling Silas Marner what he would never be able to achieve, which is a testament to the gendered view of nurturing stemming from the social reality of the historical era. Perhaps the "lazy mothers" are concerned that the unlikely success of Silas Marner will challenge their roles as mothers, even damage their reputation.

The female attitude towards men as child rearers is also presented through Dolly Winthrop, although she had "seen men as are wonderful handy wi' children", she still holds that "[t]he men are awk'ard and contrairy mostly. . . ." (180). Moreover, Dolly Winthrop does defend Silas Marner's decision to keep Eppie: "I think you're in the right on it to keep the little un, Master Marner, seeing as it's been sent to you, though there's folks as thinks different. You'll happen be a bit moithered with it while it's so little; but I'll come, and welcome, and see to it for you..." (179). Dolly Winthrop, while supporting Silas Marner's decision, admits that there are people who view the situation less positively, and Dolly Winthrop herself offers her help to Silas Marner, who surely

would have problems with the child, as according to her own words, most men are not comfortable with children.

According to Shillock (2005, 40), after having adopted Eppie, Silas Marner can be seen going through a shift from masculine to feminine as Silas Marner decorates his home to better suit Eppie's needs: "[t]he stone-hut was made a soft nest for her, lined with downy patience" (191). Shillock compares Silas Marner to a domestic mother who decorates her home for her offspring. The use of the word 'nest' emphasizes the feminine aspects of Silas Marner's behaviour. The cold, dark home of a lonely man, is thus transformed to accommodate the needs of a child. Moreover, the suggested feminisation of Silas Marner is furthered as Eppie suddenly disappears from Silas Marner (188-189). When Silas Marner finally finds Eppie, safe from harm, playing happily, Silas Marner is overcome by "... convulsive joy at finding his treasure again" and all he can do is give Eppie "half-sobbing kisses" (189), to express his feelings. This description of Silas Marner's emotional reaction, an open display of emotion, is far removed from the extreme self-control expected of a properly masculine man. Moreover, this emotional reaction is something the Silas Marner of Lantern Yard, despite all his hardships, was not capable of expressing.

However, after his emotional outburst of joy, it is as if Silas Marner tries to re-establish himself as a masculine head of the household, as he remembers the need to punish Eppie for running away. This act of attempted punishment is sourced to the advice Silas Marner had received from Dolly Winthrop earlier. At the age of three, Eppie had "developed a fine capacity for mischief. . ." (187) and this tested the patience of Silas Marner. Silas Marner was puzzled by the situation, and he sought the advice of Dolly Winthrop to solve the situation: "Dolly Winthrop told him punishment was good for Eppie, and that, as for rearing a child without making it tingle a little in soft and safe places now and then, it was not to be done" (187). Moreover, Dolly Winthrop also advised Silas Marner that he "might shut her [Eppie] up once i' the coal-hole" (187), adding that she used to do the same to her son Aaron, as she "could never bear to smack him". After Dolly Winthrop had advised Silas Marner about his alternatives, she adds that the choice of punishment is

up to his own conscience, "as there's one of 'em you must choose-ayther smacking or the coal-hole-else she'll get so masterfull, there'll be no holding her" (187). However, the softness of Silas Marner is emphasized, as "it was painful to him to hurt Eppie" and he was afraid "she should love him less for it" (187).

The advice by Dolly Winthrop appears to reflect the traditional notions of physical punishment and child rearing, which saw physical punishment as a necessary evil, in order to keep children subordinated to their parents. Then again, it is notable that Dolly Winthrop herself, despite her own advice to Silas Marner, chose the coal-hole as means of punishment for her son Aaron. Thus, although Dolly spoke in favour of physical punishment, she did not follow her own advice.

According to John Tosh (1999, 92), the early nineteenth century saw a change in the general attitudes towards corporal punishment. As Romantic notions of childhood gained ground in parenting, childhood was seen as a period of innocence, and the ideal home was founded on love and empathy, instead of harsh discipline (1999, 92). However, the traditional view considered the household head to have every right to discipline his wife, children and also hired staff members living under the same roof. Physical punishment was generally seen as a way for a father to reinforce his authority over all his subordinates (1999, 92). However, as paternal discipline began to be seen as harsh and often unnecessary, it was the domestic ruler, the mother, who was considered to be the best person to decide on issues such as physical punishment. Despite the improving position of children within the household, actual legislation against parental cruelty was passed as late as 1889.

Silas Marner's approach to physical punishment comes closer to the Romantic idealization of childhood; moreover, Silas Marner quite willingly abandons his expected role as a masculine head of the household by choosing not to punish Eppie. Through the description of Silas Marner attempting to deliver punishment on Eppie, the advice given by the "notable mother", Dolly Winthrop is further made to seem rather unnecessary and ineffective. The narrator points out that with the disobedient three year old Eppie, Silas had a clear "case of aberration in a christened

child which demanded severe treatment” (190). The remark by the narrator is intended to be somewhat ironic, considering the events that follow. Silas Marner shuts Eppie into the coal-hole. However, Eppie is unaffected by the punishment, and considers it play (190-191). Moreover, “[t]his total failure of the coal-hole discipline shook Silas’s belief in the efficacy of punishment“. “She’d take it all for fun,” he observed to Dolly, “if I didn’t hurt and that I can’t do, Mrs. Winthrop. If she makes me a bit o’ trouble, I can bear it. And she’s got no tricks but what she’ll grow out of” (190). Thus, Silas Marner raised Eppie “without punishment, the burden of her misdeeds being borne vicariously by father Silas” (190).

Not only does Silas Marner abandon any claim on full masculinity that is achievable through disciplining his subordinates, he also abandons the child-rearing advice of one of the notable mothers of Raveloe, Dolly Winthrop. Silas Marner effectively abandons the social conventions of the society where he sees fit. The child rearing approach of Silas Marner is highly idealized and leaning towards the aforementioned notions of innocence, love and empathy, the romanticized ideal of home. A fitting example of this domestic ideal is found in the writing of John Angell James:

Parents should seek the entire government of their temper: a habit of self-control; a meekness not to be disturbed by the greatest provocation; a patience not to be wearied by long continued opposition. I say to any father or mother, are you irritable, petulant? If so, begin this moment the work of subjugating your temper (James 1830, 86).

A passionate mother or father, is like a fury with a sceptre in one hand, and a fire-brand in the other: and when the king is a fury, the subjects are likely to be furies too; for nothing is more contagious than bad temper. (James 1830, 86)

Passion blinds the judgement, leads to undue severity, fosters partialities, in short, is the source of a thousand evils in the domestic government. An irritable person can never manage discipline with propriety, but is ever prone to correct, when correction should never be administered, -in a rage. Parents, I beseech you to control your temper, and acquire a calm, imperturbable disposition, for this only can fit you to rule your household in wisdom, justice and love. (James 1830, 86-87)

John Angell James stressed the importance of self-control in parenting, as parents should simply not have a short temper, no matter how hard they were provoked by their children. Corporal punishment, however, remained acceptable, and 32 years after the writings of John Angell James, a

highly different approach to physical discipline was presented by Richie Davies, who concluded that "... discipline should be of moral and physical character. And the very nature of the children requires such discipline" (1862, 90). Even Davies considered physical punishment as the last alternative, providing his readership with three steps to discipline:

As a first step in the discipline of children there should be kindly reproof and instruction, and should that fail to accomplish amendment, then another step of a more stringent character should be taken. (1862, 90)

What next? As a second step in moral discipline, we advise a temporary deprivation of their liberty and privileges. There is no greater moral punishment to children than to be kept from play and to be debarred the use of their toys. Usually this is a class of chastisement so humiliating and mortifying that very soon there are tendered promises of amendment. (1862, 90)

However, if the first two steps yielded no results, Davies' final step was corporal punishment:

The back sometimes must feel the rod. Cases have occurred in which kindly reproof was a waste of words, and deprivation of liberty and privileges a mere game, and as the last resource, stripes have had to discipline the rebellions child. To have spared the rod would have spoiled the child. (90-91)

According to Davies (1862, 91) "[I]t is not cruelty that a parent, deserving the name, would inflict upon even the most refractory child, but simply correction". Davies did, however, condemn those parents who constantly used physical punishment:

... a constant use of the rod is too severe discipline in any case. Shame to those parents whose common punishment for any offence is beating. Physical discipline should be the last resort of parental government, and then it should be as severe as the circumstances demand (91)

Whereas Dolly Winthrop suggests that Silas Marner punishes a toddler, Richie Davies considered it perfectly acceptable to punish small infants:

I state, that parents should begin to discipline their children as early as the necessity arises, and continue it during their non-accountability. When only a few months old, children know whether their parents are pleased or displeased. On their recognition of this we submit their discipline should commence. Many parents make great mistakes as to the capabilities of infants, and on the plea that they are so young, allow the buddings of wrong to go unnipped (91).

...Long before children can walk or talk, they should be chastened if necessary (91)

Davies, thus, considered it better that parents began to discipline their children as soon as possible, and he considered it a folly to think that children were too young to be punished. The general

attitude expressed by Richie Davies may somewhat help explain the nature of Dolly Winthrop's parenting advice. While the position of children was improving, many still considered children to require the utmost form of correction, and this is the very attitude that is presented through Dolly Winthrop.

Whereas the ability to discipline one's subordinates may have been seen as masculine, it is obvious that people were already questioning the role of corporal punishment. Although John Angell James does not directly make notions concerning manliness, we may draw a comparison between the requisite of masculine self-control, the importance of self-control, as stated by James and relate it to the issue of manliness. Silas Marner reaches his decision not to punish Eppie through rationality, as he deems the guided methods of discipline as being inefficient in practice. Therefore, his decision is based on reasoning, not on impulse, and although the choice of abstaining from the use of punishment disconnects Silas Marner from the prescriptive model of a masculine nineteenth-century household head, his use of reasoning is still arguably manly, if we are to consider reason as a solely masculine feature. Furthermore, if we consider his actions in terms of self-control, we may consider that his choice of refraining from punishment actually requires a higher degree of self-control, than the expected use of actual punishment.

The significance of Silas Marner being a success as a single-father can be understood by viewing the novel in its historical social context. The concept of family has always been subject to historical variation, and during the nineteenth century a biological bond was far more important, and considered of greater importance, even though a biological parent was not the actual caregiver of a child (Nelson 2007, 174). John Tosh (1999, 27) points out that "[d]omesticity... ..offers a moral view of the world" and "...places a high premium on the quality of relationships between family members – that is to say all family members related by blood or marriage". Biology, ties by blood, were of importance. For example, in upper class homes hired household nurses may have actually "raised" the children. However, these people bore no claim on the children over the rather absent biological parents (Nelson 2007, 174). Furthermore, according to Nelson, the contemporary

readership of George Eliot would have possibly taken Godfrey Cass's side on his demand for his biological daughter Eppie, even though Eliot may have ultimately written *Silas Marner* in order to make people who value biological ties over everything to reconsider their own attitudes (2007, 174). After all, George Eliot herself was a step-mother for her partner George Henry Lewes' sons, and would have therefore wanted to question the domestic ideal of valuing biological ties over ties born through actual nurture (Nelson 2007, 163). Furthermore, Marianne Novy presents similar views as Claudia Nelson, and considers *Silas Marner* a novel that "makes a strong argument for the naturalization of adoption" and functions as a "a critique of a '... community's valorization of heredity and its ideas of what is natural...'" (Novy 2004, 36-37).

The societal importance placed on biological ties is highlighted during the passages where Godfrey Cass makes his paternal claim over Eppie: "[s]he is my own child — her mother was my wife. I have a natural claim on her that must stand before every other" (247). Godfrey Cass, thus, makes his demand based on the aforementioned societal values, which valorize biological ties over others. Because he has a biological claim on Eppie, a claim of the highest value, this claim "must stand before every other". Moreover, the claim of Godfrey Cass is backed by his wife Nancy Lammeter, who "... allowed no question that a father by blood must have a claim above that of any foster-father" (249-250), adding to Eppie that "... there's a duty you owe to your lawful father" (252).

*Silas Marner*, however, rejects Godfrey's claim, responding that "God gave her to me because you turned your back upon her, and He looks upon her as mine: you've no right to her!" (247), basically stating that in the eyes of God, Eppie is his daughter, for he accepted the "blessing", while Godfrey Cass rejected it, thus responding to a biological claim with a claim of even higher caliber. Moreover, *Silas Marner*'s response is felt by Godfrey Cass, "who could not help feeling the edge of *Silas*'s words" (247). Furthermore, *Silas Marner* rejects the biological claim by stating: "[y]our coming now and saying 'I'm her father' doesn't alter the feelings inside us. It's me she's been

calling her father ever since she could say the word" (247), thus establishing his own claim, through actual hands-on child rearing over any biological claim valued by society.

Considering that the novel undermines the importance of motherhood for child rearing, and the significance of marriage, we may consider *Silas Marner* as criticism of the doctrine of separate spheres, as Silas Marner proves himself a success in the female controlled domestic sphere. Larry Shillock suggests that George Eliot tried to question the biological claim that women have on domesticity, motherhood especially (2005, 32). The views of Shillock are similar to Novy's (2004, 51), who considered *Silas Marner* to provide "implicit arguments against seeing nurturing as an instinctive capacity determined by women's biology alone" (Novy 2004, 51). In a highly similar vein, Shillock (2005, 42) sees *Silas Marner* as Eliot's "critique of women's innate domesticity", and because of a single father 'emerging' in their community, the women in Raveloe must now "at least allow the possibility that domesticity is not femininity embodied and enacted".

*Silas Marner* is not only a single father, but also highly removed from the stereotypes of paternal authority. John Tosh, in his analysis of Victorian stereotypes of fathers, has recognized one particular stereotype which could be associated with the descriptions of Silas Marner and his choices in child rearing. The stereotype of the 'intimate father', was concerned with "... tenderness and familiarity, both to himself and his children" and "[h]e observed the antics of his offspring for pleasure..." (Tosh 1999, 99) *Silas Marner* also fits the description of the 'nursing father', who Tosh describes as follows: "[t]he father who fed his babies by hand and tended them through illness..." Moreover, Tosh points out that the 'nursing father' was not an uncommon figure, despite the common tyrannical stereotype of the nineteenth century father (1999, 87, 2005, 129). Thus, *Silas Marner*, the nurturing and nursing father, essentially 'invades' the female controlled domestic sphere, simply because "nurturing aspects of parenting were deemed feminine" (Tosh 1999, 7)

Larry Shillock (2005, 36) points out that the absence of mothers is a recurrent theme in *Silas Marner*. Neither Silas Marner, Godfrey Cass, Nancy Lammeter nor Eppie have a living mother. Moreover, Shillock considers it noteworthy that the Lammeter family is not degenerate in

the same sense as the Cass family, despite both lacking a maternal figure, thus proving that “domestic success is achievable by other than conventional families”. The contrast between the Cass and Lammeter families is presented through the physical descriptions of the household heads, or in this case, through contrasting Mr. Lammeter with Squire Cass. Another significant contrast is also the fact that the degenerate Cass family has two sons, whereas the Lammeter family has two daughters.

[Mr. Lammeter’s] spare but healthy person, and high-featured firm face, that looked as if it had never been flushed by excess, was in strong contrast, not only with the Squire’s, but with the appearance of the Raveloe farmers generally. . . . (144)

Moreover, Mr. Lammeter is described as “... the soberest and best man in that country-side....” (131). Basically, with Mr. Lammeter we have a family with a household head that lacks the deteriorating signs of excess that are very much present in Squire Cass. Based on the positive description of Mr. Lammeter, and the rather deliberate contrast with Squire Cass, Larry Shillock (2005, 37) speculates that based on the positive descriptions of Mr. Lammeter, we may assume that Mr. Lammeter may have taken responsibility in raising his daughters. However, lack of textual evidence makes this argument less compelling, although it is highly possible that Mr. Lammeter, and Silas Marner are both single male characters who succeed in raising children, thus proving that “a mother was not necessary to child rearing” (Shillock 2005, 39). However, if we were to speculate further, we could always assume that Mr. Lammeter, as well Squire Cass, had plenty of hired female help at his disposal, and therefore a comparison between Mr. Lammeter, the Squire and Silas Marner is implausible, moreover, any comparison lacks direct textual evidence that would allow a proper comparison.

Shillock (2005, 36) also considers the possibility that the degeneration, or momentary lapses of both Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner are a result of their “insufficient domesticity”, referring to the notion that both men assumedly lacked a maternal figure while growing up, thus connecting their flaws with the absence of mothers in the novel. Childhood matters for masculinity, because men are psychologically shaped by their early domestic experience (Tosh 2005, 149).

However, if the lack of early domesticity, female domesticity, could be directly linked to the personality flaws of our protagonists, then this would no-longer question the importance of female maternity and the importance of such influence, but instead transform the implied lack of maternal influence into something which results in men who are more or less deviant. Moreover, based on textual evidence alone, we can only conclude for certainty that the mother of Silas Marner has died: however, we know nothing of when her death occurred. Therefore, anything we may say on the lack of domesticity experienced by Silas Marner as an infant, is purely speculative. However, in the case of Godfrey Cass, we already have established evidence of the Red House lacking a maternal figure, therefore Shillock's argument may be considered of importance, although it would border on misogyny to explain the flawed nature of Godfrey Cass through lack of a maternal figure. The argument for insufficient domesticity is also implausible, when considering the previously mentioned physical descriptions of both Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner. The childless Godfrey Cass, had not aged significantly, whereas the man who had been a mother and a father to a girl, looked much older and weary. This description and its contrast is probably intended as a way to highlight the demanding nature of child rearing, showing that taking care of children is proper work. Although Silas Marner is described as a man who manages to fill in for a missing maternal figure, parenting is considered a highly demanding activity, which takes its toll on a person.

If the role and importance of a mother is undermined in the novel, the very chance of being exposed to motherhood is also indirectly rejected by the major female character of the novel, Eppie. When Godfrey Cass is trying to make Eppie reconsider her decision to continue living with Silas Marner, Godfrey Cass attempts to use his wife Nancy Lammeter as a way of trying to make her change her mind: “[a]nd you’ll have the best of mothers in my wife—that’ll be a blessing you haven’t known since you were old enough to know it” (250). The underlying assumption of the statement appears to be that Eppie has been deprived of a mother, while being taken care of by Silas Marner. However, Eppie’s decision to choose her father Silas Marner over “the best of mothers” reveals that Eppie suffers from no sense of deprivation.

It is also noteworthy, that from a masculine perspective, Silas Marner does not actually gain any masculine peer recognition through his fatherhood, because his fatherhood is not a proof of virility, and he lacks a biological connection to Eppie, something the society valued highly. Therefore, despite being a father, Silas Marner does not come closer to qualifying for what Tosh (1999, 79) referred to as “full masculine status”, which was to be gained through fatherhood. Moreover, there is no proper way to contrast the impact of fatherhood on masculinity between Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner, for only Silas Marner qualifies as a father in this novel, although the case of fatherhood and which character qualifies as one during the novel, would have been a less clear-cut issue for the contemporary readership of George Eliot.

The most significant influence that fatherhood has on Silas Marner is his re-entry into social life, as he turns from a hermit into a target of the community’s admiration. Now Silas Marner “was regarded as an exceptional person, whose claims on neighborly help were not to be matched in Raveloe. Any superstition that remained concerning him had taken an entirely new colour” (206), whereas previously Silas Marner had been treated as “a useful gnome or brownie — a queer and unaccountable creature, who must necessarily be looked at with wondering curiosity and repulsion. . . .” (192). However, after adopting Eppie, Silas was “...met with open smiling faces and cheerful questioning, as a person whose satisfactions and difficulties could be understood. Everywhere he must sit a little and talk about the child, and words of interest were always ready for him...” (192). Thus, Eppie functioned as a way of allowing himself and others to bond socially with him, almost as if everyone now had a common topic of interest, which they could share views over. According to Tosh (1999, 86), men felt “morally reinvigorated by contact with the purity and innocence of children” and children were thought to have “redemptive power” over men. This was a highly idealistic view, based purely on the notion that men were alienated from domesticity through their work, and while off work, they could simply rest and enjoy life. However, Silas Marner does experience a certain form of redemption through Eppie, for many good things occur to him after coming in contact with children and domesticity in general. Silas Marner, the father, is no longer a

hermit, although he remains a bachelor. He is considered an equal member of the Raveloe society, which is very different from his previous position within the society. Therefore, we may consider the greatest influence that fatherhood has on Silas Marner to be social mobility. By providing an orphan child with a home, and proving a success at child rearing, he gains the respect of his peers, his fellow men and women. Moreover, social mobility and peer recognition, can directly be considered to have brought an improvement over his masculine status in society, although Silas Marner can hardly be considered a part of the hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, when considering the sudden choice of Godfrey Cass to make his claim over Eppie, one might consider the possibility that after having witnessed the improvement in the social position of Silas Marner, Godfrey Cass himself came to realize the redemptive possibilities of children.

When considering Silas Marner as social criticism, we cannot overlook the arguments of feminist literary critics, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979, 53-54), who argued that in the nineteenth century, patriarchal socialization resulted in disease among women, among the symptoms being anxiety about themselves as women. Patriarchal society limited the choices for women, as well as female writers, to the roles of an angel (domestic sphere) or a monster (public sphere) (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 53-54). The labeling of deviations from the gender distinction of the nineteenth century as “monsters” is highly similar to the “social monsters” mentioned by Timothy Shay Arthur (1852, 167).

In addition, Gilbert and Gubar (1979, 67-70) claim that female writers of the nineteenth century, such as George Eliot, were forced to use patriarchal conventions and literary tradition, which they could not fully identify with. In order to establish themselves as female writers, women like Mary Ann Evans were forced to adopt a nature of duplicity, write under male pseudonyms and use the literary conventions set by the male literary forefathers (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 71).

The necessity of duplicity led to female writers producing works that contained “deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning” (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 73), thus

female writers were able to establish literary authority while both reinforcing and subverting patriarchal literary standards (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 73).

Gilbert and Gubar claim that “men have always accused women of the duplicity” (1979, 73) concerning the literary strategies adopted by female writers. This constant tension of suspicion between men and women is attributed to the legitimate concerns of the dominant men, when it comes to any signs of disobedience from the dominated women (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979, 73).

While men, especially in the upper classes of society, certainly had privileges and liberties far greater than those of the women, this view of binary alternatives by Gilbert and Gubar insinuates a simple relationship of patriarchal male dominance over women, ignoring the men who did not measure up to the hegemonic ideal, and were themselves severely limited by society and similarly labeled as social monsters. Whereas the negative effects of patriarchal socialization on women have been discussed by critics such as Gilbert and Gubar, through the analysis of masculinity in *Silas Marner* we may reconsider the influence of the same patriarchal socialization over men.

Arguably, patriarchy appears to benefit men (and women) who are able to measure up to the fantasy-like standards set by hegemony. The men who do not manage to establish themselves in a relationship of equality with this dominant ideal are viewed as failures, social monsters in their own right. Furthermore, patriarchal socialization may also be considered to make men ill, very much in the same way as women. In *Silas Marner*, the negative effects of patriarchal socialization on men were displayed through Godfrey Cass in the anxieties caused by the social necessity of rationality. When faced with an ideal that demands behaviour and qualities, such as rationality and morality, which appear to contradict each other, men suppress their emotions in favour of self-control and reason, and become diseased with social anxiety, which can only be cured by the successful acts of measuring up to the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. Moreover, a society that promotes nearly unobtainable fantasy images of an “ideal man” both cures (through measuring up to ideals) and feeds (increasing and changing demands of the ideal) male anxiety, leaving men in a

cyclical relationship which may or may not be broken by the absolute abolition of patriarchal socialization.

Furthermore, when considering the aforementioned theory by Gilbert and Gubar concerning the duplicity of female writers, we may see *Silas Marner* by George Eliot in a new light. We may consider the way masculinity is represented through Godfrey Cass as criticism of patriarchy, for the representation of masculinity presented through Godfrey Cass displays the negative influence of patriarchal socialization through his struggle with his anxieties. Silas Marner, however, is not striving for the hegemonic ideal, and is thus somewhat removed from the influence of patriarchal socialization. The fact that Silas Marner is the more morally upright character in the novel, and willfully abandons the patriarchal social ideals, could be interpreted as further criticism of patriarchal socialization. Moreover, in *Silas Marner* the criticism of patriarchy is presented through male literary conventions. The form of *Silas Marner* is that of a comedy (Wiesenfarth 1970, 228), and the intertwining plots end in a marriage. The comedic ending does not really reinforce the patriarchal authority of Silas Marner or Aaron Winthrop over Eppie, for Eppie is allowed to choose to marry the man she loves, and Silas Marner allows her to decide for herself whether she wants to live with her biological father Godfrey Cass. The ending does, however, leave the social status of the Cass family untarnished, therefore the gentry characters, although presented in a questionable manner, are more or less left unharmed by their actions and such an ending itself does not actually challenge the existing social order.

## 6. Conclusion

This thesis analysed the representation of masculinity in *Silas Marner*, focusing its analysis on the two main protagonists, Silas Marner and Godfrey Cass. This thesis showed that there exists a distinct contrasting physical difference between Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner. The importance of physical qualities for masculinity was established through the importance of the male body as the visible exterior. The male body showed all visible signs of strength and weakness. However, it was also established that not all writers of prescriptive advice literature valued physical prowess as a sign of masculinity. Whereas Godfrey Cass was represented as a man who embodied the general bodily characteristics of ideal masculinity, Silas Marner was portrayed as a pale, tall, fragile man. Whereas the exterior of Godfrey Cass never showed any visible signs of aging or illness, and thus remained masculine throughout, Silas Marner showed signs of early aging, which could have been considered as a way to highlight the demanding nature of parenting, or a comment on the hardships faced by ordinary women as child rearers.

The importance of work and independence, and the negative influence of idleness on masculinity were established. Godfrey Cass was deemed a person who preferred idleness to work, whereas Silas Marner was an industrious, independent person who in this aspect came closer to the masculine ideals of an independent working man.

The social importance of marriage for masculinity was established, and Godfrey Cass actively pursued the ideal by courting Nancy Lammeter and marrying her. However, when considering his secret marriage to Molly Farren, and his unwillingness to take responsibility for his child, his own duplicity completely undermined his attempts to achieve the ideal of masculinity through marriage.

Silas Marner, however, was engaged to be married, but after the events at Lantern Yard, he remained unmarried throughout the novel, a decision which was considered unacceptable in nineteenth century England. Therefore, Silas Marner did not make an attempt to achieve the masculine ideal, which was highly regarded by society.

The significance of proper virtuous moral qualities were considered through advice literature. Godfrey Cass lacked moral qualities, such as moral courage, the ability to do right, and honesty, and he did his best to conceal his previous marriage, his biological connection to Eppie and in the end, decided not to admit his fatherhood to the society. Having realized that his wife supports him, Godfrey Cass settled for duplicity, instead of moral courage and truthfulness. Godfrey Cass was simply unable to take responsibility for his own actions, and such cowardly behaviour was definitely deemed unmasculine. Silas Marner was considered to be on a morally higher, righteous level when compared with Godfrey Cass. Silas Marner showed his moral courage and virtuous nature by adopting Eppie and taking responsibility, not for his own actions, but for the actions of another man. Whereas Godfrey Cass failed to establish himself as a masculine head of the household, and was unable to have children, who were considered of great importance for masculine status in society, Silas Marner managed to become a father, even though he lacked the important biological claim on Eppie, and thus the adoption itself had no significance for his masculinity.

The issues of fatherhood and marriage were both also connected to household authority, which was considered as a requisite of masculinity. The wife of Godfrey Cass, Nancy Lammeter, was able to refuse her husband's earlier attempts to adopt Eppie, and therefore she was able to openly disobey his husband and question his household authority. Silas Marner refused the role of a patriarchal household authority figure by refusing to punish Eppie physically for her disobedience. Moreover, the importance of physical punishment was not indubitable, and the role of physical punishment in child rearing was questioned by John Angell James, who considered it a virtue to refrain from physical punishment.

The importance of rationality and self-control for masculinity was established. Men were generally expected to act rationally and maintain a high level of self-control. Lack of self-control, such as an open display of emotions was considered feminine and un-masculine.

During parts of the novel, Godfrey Cass embodied the ideal of masculine rationality to near perfection, thus becoming alienated from his emotional side. However, his previous actions, his secret marriage to Molly Farren, had proven him incapable of living up to the standard of masculine rationality. This failure to measure up to the hegemonic standard was considered to have led Godfrey Cass to suffer from anxiety, as he was constantly torn by the requirement of self-control and rationality, which conflicted with virtuous qualities such as moral courage and honesty. Moreover, rationality also conflicted with natural human emotions, which were to be suppressed in the name of self-control. He was therefore required to balance himself between the hegemonic ideal and his own feelings. Through Godfrey Cass, the contradictory nature of the hegemonic ideal was established, as it was evident that certain qualities attributed to the very ideal (moral courage, honesty) were not always compatible with the requirement of rationality that was so strongly associated with the ideal.

The Silas Marner of Lantern Yard, showed significant self-control when his engagement was broken off and his best friend and fiancée had betrayed him, as there was no emotional outburst over the issue. In Raveloe, the extreme frugality of Silas Marner was considered to express a certain type of self-control. However, the work of Silas Marner served no proper purpose, but to hoard gold, which itself made his efforts at labour seem irrational and thus un-masculine. Therefore, his irrationality devalued his displays of self-control.

Silas Marner's decision to adopt Eppie was considered an impulsive decision and not a decision of high rationality. As a father, Silas Marner did openly display his emotions after having rediscovered the runaway Eppie. His open display of emotion was considered a sign of weakening self-control. Moreover, the decision of Silas Marner to refrain from punishing Eppie was based on empirical observations and rationale, the punishment was simply deemed ineffective and thus abandoned. Having decided not to punish Eppie, Silas Marner was forced to display more self-control, which again was considered masculine, even though this self-control was a result of abandoning one's position as a household authority.

Godfrey Cass embodied the ideal of masculine rationality to near perfection, thus becoming alienated from his emotional side. The influence of his rationality caused him to make choices that were in contradiction with the moral qualities required by the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. The actions taken by Godfrey Cass essentially revealed the contradictory nature of a hegemonic ideal masculinity, which could be interpreted as criticism of the ideals presented in nineteenth century advice manuals. Therefore, in conclusion, through the way in which nineteenth century masculinity was represented in *Silas Marner* we may consider that the story of Godfrey Cass may have functioned as criticism of patriarchy, showing that patriarchal socialization not only had a negative influence upon women, but also on men.

The demand for masculine rationality caused Godfrey Cass to make choices that were in contradiction with the moral qualities required by the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. The actions of Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner essentially revealed the contradictory nature of a hegemonic ideal masculinity, which could be interpreted as criticism of the ideals presented in nineteenth century advice manuals. The success of Silas Marner as a single father in the domestic sphere, and the absence of mothers in the story were considered social criticism aimed at the doctrine of separate spheres and biologically determined parenthood.

According to Gilbert and Gubar, women in the nineteenth century were made ill by patriarchal socialization, and this thesis argued that the same patriarchal socialization also had the ability to make those men ill who attempted to achieve the masculine ideal. The major symptom of patriarchal socialization was thought to be the requirement of rationality and self-control, which were requirements that had the ability to contradict other requirements of masculinity, like courage and truthfulness.

Based on historical co-texts, no definite hegemonic ideal of a nineteenth century male was established in this thesis. The ideal was merely considered a collection of fantasy-like ideals. However, the contradicting, almost paradoxical nature of these ideals was revealed through the cyclical relationship between reason and self-control. The ideal presented in prescriptive advice

literature, was quite uniform in terms of its valorisation of reason, rationality, frugality and labour. Silas Marner, was not generally concerned with achieving masculine ideals, whereas Godfrey Cass, to a certain extent, attempted to achieve the ideals of marriage, household mastery and parenthood (biological offspring). Silas Marner abandoned social ideals by choosing to live without a wife and challenged maternal advice on child rearing by not punishing Eppie. Moreover, Silas Marner experienced the positive influence of domesticity and enjoyed a degree of social mobility within the Raveloe community after adopting Eppie.

Why should the representations of masculinity matter and be of further interest?

Through a careful inspection of masculinity, readers should consider the possibly subversive qualities of notable female authors, not just by assessing what type of female characters they chose to represent in their novels, but also through their enactment of certain types of male characters. In the case of *Silas Marner*, the representations of men were considered an extension of reactive social criticism aimed at the hegemonic ideals of society, which was achieved through male literary conditions. The approach provided by Men's studies, may not only provide readers with new possibilities of interpreting classic novels, it may also challenge them to see the connection, and reconsider the gender ideals of our contemporary period in relation to the nineteenth century ideals.

## Works cited

- Alcott, William Andrus. 1850. *Familiar letters to young men on various subjects: Designed as a companion to The young man's guide*. Buffalo: Geo. H. Derby and Co.
- Arthur, Timothy Shay. 1852. *Advice to Young Men on their Duties and Conduct in Life*. Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co. 1852
- Aydelotte, William. 1948. "The England of Marx and Mill as Reflected in Fiction". *The Journal of Economic History* 8: 42-58.
- Barry, Peter. 2009. *Beginning Theory*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Manchester & New York: Manchester UP.
- Barker, Chris. 2008. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. 3rd ed. 2008. London: Sage.
- Bennett, Joan. 1974. *George Eliot: Her Mind and Her Art*. London: Cambridge UP.
- Beer, Gillian. 1986. *George Eliot*. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Brown, Hugh Stowell. 1858. *Manliness: a lecture*. Liverpool.
- Brown, Kate E. 1999. "Loss, Revelry, and the Temporal Measures of Silas Marner. Performance, Regret, Recollection." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 32,2: 222-249.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Connell, R. W. 1987. *Gender & Power: Society, Person and Sexual Politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Conway, Richard. 1978. "Silas Marner and Felix Holt from Fairy Tale to Feminism". *Studies in the Novel*. 10,3: 295-305.
- Davies, Richie. 1862. *The Primitive Methodist Magazine*. London: Richard Davies.
- Eliot, George. 1861. *Silas Marner*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- Ermarth, Elizabeth Deeds. "George Eliot's Conception of Sympathy." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 40,1: 23-42.
- Everts, William Wallace. 1854. *Manhood: Its Duties and Responsibilities*. Louisville: Hull and Brother.
- Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.
- Hesse, Carla. 2004. "The New Empiricism". *Cultural and Social History* 1: 201-207.
- Foyster, Elizabeth. 1999. *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage*. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd.

- Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. 1979. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. London: Yale UP.
- James, John Angell. 1828. *The Family Monitor or a Help to Domestic Happiness*. Birmingham.
- Jokinen, Arto. 2000. *Panssaroitu Maskuliinisuus: Mies, väkivalta ja kulttuuri*. Tampere: Tampere UP.
- Jokinen, Arto. 2003. *Yhdestä Puusta: Maskuliinisuuksien rakentuminen populaarikulttuurissa*. Tampere: Tampere UP.
- LaCapra, Dominick. 1985. *History and Criticism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Landels, William. 1861. *True Manhood: Its Nature, Foundation and Development - A Book For Young Men*. New York: Robert Carter and Brothers.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. 1990. "Representation" in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin. p 11-22. Chicago: Chicago UP.
- Morgan, Simon. 2007. *Victorian Woman's Place : Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century*. London: I.B.Tauris.
- Morris, George. 1848. *Man's manhood: a lecture*. Canterbury.
- Nelson, Claudia. 2007. *Family Ties in Victorian England*. Praeger: Westport.
- Novy, Marianne. 2004. "Adoption in *Silas Marner* and *Daniel Deronda*" in *Imagining Adoption: Essays on Literature and Culture*. ed. Marianne Novy. Ann Arbor: Michigan UP.
- Nunokawa, Jeff. 1993. "The Miser's Two Bodies: *Silas Marner* and the Sexual Possibilities of the Commodity". *Victorian Studies* 36.
- O'Donnoghue, H. C. 1828. *Marriage: the Source, Stability and Perfection of Social Happiness and Duty*. London.
- Oxford English Dictionary: The definitive record of the English language*. Available from <http://www.oed.com/>. [Accessed 19 Nov. 2010].
- Reid, Julia. 2009. "Novels" in *Reading Primary Sources - The Interpretation of Texts from 19th and 20th Century History. (The Routledge Guide to Using Historical Sources)* eds. Miriam Dobson and Benjamin Ziemann. London: Routledge.
- Reed, John R. and Jerry Herron. 1985. "George Eliot's Illegitimate Children". *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 40,2: 175-186.
- Seidler, Victor J. 1989. *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- Shillock, Larry. 2005. "Hoarding Motherhood in *Silas Marner*". *West Virginia University Philological Papers* 52: 33.

- Sipilä, Jorma. 1994. "Miestutkimus – Säröjä hegemonisessa maskuliinisuudessa" in Jorma Sipilä and Arto Tiihonen eds. *Miestä rakennetaan: maskuliinisuuksia puretaan*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Skeggs, Beverley. 1993. "Theorizing Masculinity" in *Mieheyden Tiellä: Maskuliinisuus ja Kulttuuri*. eds. Pirjo Ahokas, Martti Lahti and Jukka Sihvonen. p 13-35. Jyväskylä: Yliopistopaino.
- Stewart, Ralph. 1998. "Eliot's Silas Marner." *Explicator* 56, 2: 76-78.
- Stewart, Susan. 2003. "Genres of Work: The Folktale and *Silas Marner*". *New Literary History*, 34, 3: 513-533.
- Thompson, E.P. 1963. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Thompson, Fred C. 1965. "The Theme of Alienation in *Silas Marner*". *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 20,1: 69-84.
- Tosh, John. 1999. *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Tosh, John. 2005. *Manliness and masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain: essays on gender, family and empire*. Harlow: Longman.
- Wiesenfarth, Joseph. 1970. "Demythologizing *Silas Marner*." *ELH* 37, 2: 226-244.