

**“What Did You Cut It Off For, Then?”:
Self-Harming Heroines in *Villette*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles***

By [Meg Dobbins](#), Northern Arizona University

<1> In a memorable scene at the beginning of George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Maggie Tulliver marches into her mother’s bedroom, seizes a pair of scissors, and cuts off her hair. Maggie’s brother Tom looks on and eventually lends a hand. The Tulliver children delight in altering Maggie’s appearance: “One delicious grinding snip, and then another and another. The hinder locks fell heavily on the floor, and soon Maggie stood cropped in a jagged, uneven manner” (69). Yet, while Maggie delights in crafting a new image for herself, Tom enjoys witnessing his sister’s self-ruination: “What a queer thing you look!” he exclaims, commanding Maggie to look in the mirror. Seeing herself on Tom’s terms, Maggie feels the sudden, “unexpected pang” of shame:

Now, when Tom began to laugh at her, the affair had quite a new aspect. She looked in the glass, and still Tom laughed and clapped his hands, while Maggie’s flushed cheeks began to pale and her lips to tremble a little.

“Don’t laugh at me, Tom,” said Maggie, with an outburst of angry tears, stamping, and giving him a push.

“Now, then, spitfire!” said Tom. “What did you cut it off for, then?” (69-70)

In this early childhood crisis, Eliot lays the groundwork for what will become many of the novel’s central concerns: Maggie’s feminine aberrance; her sadomasochistic relationship with her brother, and her willingness to take drastic measures to attain approval. Like Tom, however, we may find ourselves taken aback or even disturbed by Maggie’s rash and ultimately self-destructive decision to mar her own appearance: what *does* Maggie “cut it off for”?

<2> In this article, I examine novels by Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and Thomas Hardy in which self-harm or “cutting it off” become desperate, yet viable, solutions in the lives of Victorian women. In nineteenth-century fiction, the obedient and docile heroine is often constituted by acts of emotional and sexual repression. Yet the angry “spitfire” who takes scissors to herself shatters conventional notions of feminine identity, exposing the irrational and counterintuitive ways self-abuse operates in the lives of nineteenth-century women.⁽¹⁾ For Maggie and impetuous women like her, acts of self-violence do not exclusively or even primarily indicate feelings of self-loathing; rather, self-harm functions as a perverse mode of self-care, a violent yet minor gesture of self-destruction through which the heroine articulates the social construction of her feminine identity and begins to feel her connection to other women. As the passage above reveals, Maggie’s messy “mane” of hair is both the flaw in her femininity as well as the means to express that identity differently; Maggie’s feminine self operates simultaneously as the object and subject of her rebellion because the problem she contends with lies in her social construction as a Woman—how she is seen from the outside and how she feels on the inside.

<3> Self-harming heroines like Maggie are commonplace in the pages of nineteenth-century novels, yet the interpretive dilemmas they pose have never been fully resolved. During the 1970s and the 1980s, feminist critics vehemently debated the prevalence and significance of women's suffering in Eliot's novels. While some faulted Eliot for failing to envision more liberated lives for her heroines, others defended her novels as a realistic depiction of women's oppression in the era.⁽²⁾ For good reason, feminist readers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have often been eager to discredit literary depictions of women as self-abnegating or submissive to the will of others. Virginia Woolf, most famously, parodies the self-abnegating Victorian "angel in the house," as a sentimental fabrication of the age: "if there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others" (275). Yet even for Woolf, the self-harming Victorian woman proves a difficult and contradictory spirit to exorcise. Woolf finally declares it a necessary "part of the occupation of a woman writer" to "kill the Angel in the House" in a violent act of self-defense (275).

<4> Since Michel Foucault's famous formulation of the "repressive hypothesis," modern readers have been less inclined to dismiss Victorian women as repressed, passionless caricatures like the one Woolf draws. John Kucich and others have recovered the "libidinal subtext" in many Victorian novels which undo any "simplistic" opposition between "society and repression on the one side, and creative, passionate individuals on the other" (7; 17). For many readers, however, the problem with masochistic women ultimately lies less in the harm they inflict on themselves, than the harm their suffering inflicts on others. Thus, even as Kucich complicates our understanding of repression in the Victorian novel, he concludes that the Victorian novel "domesticates the potential for collective experience" by fastening its attention too narrowly on the psychological turmoil of individuals.⁽³⁾ In her study of women's masochism and the novel, Michelle Massé similarly argues that the novel perpetuates a pervasive Gothic logic in which women are abused and inevitably become abusive to other women. In Massé's view, only "when no beaten woman embraces her pain as proof of existing through her dominator's 'loving' gaze" can "the Gothic finally come to an end" (274).

<5> As these last comments reflect, women's self-harm has often been interpreted as a Freudian expression of "penis envy" or the internalization of the inequality between the sexes. Laura Emery, for example, reads Maggie's haircut as a scene of castration in which Eliot's heroine "expresses rejection of her sex" and a desire to merge with her brother (17-18). Yet, while Freud originally associated masochism with a woman's natural desire to submit to and envy the phallus, feminists like Patricia Caplan have pointed out that "virtually everything that has been called woman's masochism has, in reality, been a manifestation of women's abilities to delay gratification, to put other people's needs ahead of their own, and to try to earn happiness through effort; the scarcity (real or feared) or better alternatives, or their effort to *avoid pain*" (220; original emphasis).

<6> A third and more recent body of feminist and queer scholarship cautions against equating masochistic survival strategies and masochistic pleasures. Rita Felski, for example, points out that while male masochism has a long history of being interpreted as "artful choice," protesting institutional, political, social, and cultural values, we have been far less likely to understand women's self-abuse in these terms (128, 136). In the context of queer theory, Leo Bersani has written extensively on the radical potential of masochism. In his essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?" (1997), Bersani contends that "phallogentrism" is "not primarily the denial of power to women...but above all the denial of the *value* of powerlessness in both men and women" (217; original emphasis). In Bersani's analysis, masochism is not a subordinate position for the masculine subject to overcome, but a valuable "disintegration and humiliation" of the very self (217).⁽⁴⁾ In this revision of Freud's original thesis, powerlessness is indeed

linked to the feminine, yet it is validated as a subversive position within a phallographic (and implicitly heteronormative) society.

<7> In this article, I revisit the controversial topic of women's masochism to uncover a fictional pattern of women's self-abuse in the Victorian novel that illuminates not only the subversive potential of women's masochism but the role self-harm played in helping nineteenth-century women negotiate painful aspects of feminine identity and develop sympathetic bonds with other women. Extending and complicating previous scholarship on women's masochism, I place the self-harming Victorian heroine in the context of the "affective turn" and new scholarship at the intersection of gender and the emotions.⁽⁵⁾ As scholars such as Rachel Ablow, Ann Cvetkovich, and Tamara Ketabgian have shown, the emotions were an essential facet of nineteenth-century literature and culture, a "central epistemological tool" in matters of psychology, politics, and human nature (Ablow).⁽⁶⁾ Considering the affective drives and consequences of Victorian women's self-abuse allows us to untangle and reassess some of the prevailing assumptions about women's agency and desire that have tended to determine critical discussions of masochism, and to better understand the myriad forms of anger, envy, and sorrow that led so many Victorian heroines to "cut it off."

<8> In an early feminist essay on women and anger, Marilyn Frye credits nineteenth-century political reformations—namely, the fight for abolition, prohibition, and suffrage—for "extending the range and tolerance of women's anger" in public (91). Yet we are equally indebted to fiction for helping name, expound, and publicize the emotional experiences of the "second sex" in the Victorian era. To grasp these less public and less visible facets of proto-feminist affect, Raymond Williams's concept of "structures of feeling" proves particularly helpful. As Williams originally explains them, structures of feeling refer to "social experiences in solution, as distinct from other social semantic formations which have been precipitated and are more evidently and more immediately available" (133-4). Distinguishable from "known relationships, institutions, formations, [and] positions," structures of feeling refer to "forming and formative processes" which trouble the division between subjective and social experiences (128). Williams originally honed the term to analyze social experiences as they occur outside "more formal concepts of 'world-view' or 'ideology,'" yet he is careful to clarify that structures of feeling are not silences or absences in cultural records but rather "characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone...affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought" (132). The concept helps make sense of the rash and seemingly irrational desires that compel Victorian girls like Maggie to chop off their hair or women like Hardy's Sue Bridehead to leap out of their windows to avoid sexual contact with their husbands (226).⁽⁷⁾ In such instances, masochism is not a fully-fledged identity or subject position, but merely the sudden feeling that the feminine body has become an untenable and painful problem which demands an urgent solution. If the ultimately self-harming actions Maggie and Sue take do not liberate women from their oppressive lives, nor do these masochistic actions simply signal resignation or complicity in their suffering.

<9> To understand women's self-harm in the Victorian novel as inchoate "structures of feeling" rather than part of a masochistic identity that rebellious women must either throw off or embrace underscores two key points. First, it allows us to see how acts of self-harm intersect with and relieve other types and degrees of emotional, psychological, and sexual violence. To appropriate a phrase from Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), the self-harming heroine throws into relief the "varieties of pain" that comprise the everyday lives of Victorian women (216). Second, viewing self-harm as impulsive and semi-conscious "feeling as thought" in the Victorian novel allows us to posit women's masochism as an overlooked affective stage in the emergence of a modern feminist awareness. After all, the same Jane Eyre who distressingly

declares as a young girl that to gain affection from those she loves she would “willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest” later looks out from the attic in Thornfield Hall and realizes that “millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are silent in revolt against their lot” (82; 129). More than private strategies of survival, self-harm in the nineteenth-century novel records the process by which the “self” becomes a nagging site of resentment or sorrow to the Victorian woman. In this process, critical or even hateful feelings towards one’s self disclose the patterns of injustice which make women’s lives and identities so tormenting. As Cvetkovich argues, “we have yet to attend to the past adequately and that one measure of that neglect arises at the affective level” (465).⁽⁸⁾ In recovering the affective context of the self-harming heroine, my goal is not to justify or redeem the complex feelings of women in patriarchal nineteenth-century society, but to limn with more precision the social dimension and sympathetic domain of women’s self-harming feelings in that era.⁽⁹⁾

<10> In what follows, I will consider three representative stories of women’s suffering and self-harm in Brontë’s *Villette* (1853), Eliot’s *Mill on the Floss*, and Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891). Not incidentally, these three novels are texts themselves variably described by critics as aesthetically marred, flawed, and “cut up.”⁽¹⁰⁾ Part of what I show, then, is how women who inflict violence against themselves transform, or rather deform the social scripts reflected in the Victorian novel. Self-harming heroines embody the destructive potential E.M. Forster attributes to characters in the novel to “kick the book to pieces” when they are given “complete freedom” or else to “revenge themselves by dying and destroy [the novel] by intestinal decay” when they are “kept too sternly in check” (66-7). At times cutting *into* and in other instances cutting herself off *from* the plot in which she finds herself, the self-harming heroine cries out against the insufficiency of the Victorian Woman—her identity, her story, and the privacy of her anguish.

I. Lucy Snowe’s “Two Lives”

<11> *Villette* is a painful novel to read. Narrated from the perspective of a single, unattractive young woman with few financial or romantic prospects and seemingly ruthless bad luck, *Villette* offers readers a first-hand look into the daily grind of one, unremarkable and isolated English woman. Gilbert and Gubar declare the novel Brontë’s “most overtly and despairingly feminist novel” (399). Similarly, Beverly Forsyth describes *Villette* as an exploration of “human motivation in its bleakest and most frightening form” and the novel’s heroine, Lucy Snowe, as the “embodi[ment] [of] pain in the form of woman” (17).

<12> For many readers, the enduring enigma of *Villette* lies in the contrast between Lucy’s stoic, self-abnegating exterior and her fiery inner life. When she first names herself, she declares “I, Lucy Snowe, plead guiltless of that curse, an overheated and discursive imagination,” and disclaimers of her emotional state persist throughout the novel (86):

I, Lucy Snowe, was calm. (19)

Of an artistic temperament, I deny that I am. (55)

My mind... made for itself some imperious rules, prohibiting under deadly penalties all weak retrospect of happiness past. (221)

I expressed myself composed. (237)

These professions of calm exemplify the “cover story” Gilbert and Gubar associate with much women’s writing of the era in which a “rebellious” or “unladylike” message remains hidden behind the cover of an “explicitly decorous form” (153). As Lucy herself explains, “I seemed to hold two lives—the life of

thought, and that of reality; and, provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter" (86).

<13> As *Villette* unfolds, Lucy's "two lives" adumbrate a distinctly masochistic logic in which the heroine's "necromantic" fantasies of violence and self-destruction provide sustenance for enduring the more unbearable, if mundane, privations of everyday life. Repeatedly, for example, where Lucy cannot avoid or overcome pain, she can only economize her suffering through acts of psychological repression, substitution, and deferral. On one night, for example, Lucy awakens to a violent thunderstorm. While the other inhabitants of the pensionnat take shelter indoors, Lucy pursues the storm in all of its intensity: "I got up and dressed myself, and creeping outside the casement close by my bed, sat on its ledge, with my feet on the roof of a lower adjoining building. It was wet, it was wild, it was pitch-dark" (124). Lucy delights in the violent "spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white and blinding bolts" (124). After a few minutes, however, she stifles her desire and returns to bed, insisting that "this longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock on the head, which I did, figuratively, in the manner of Jael to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples" (124-125). As this description suggests, Lucy's repression of one desire gives way to a different, thrilling mortification. Adapting the Biblical story of Jael and Sisera for her own satisfaction, Lucy splits herself into two figures, both the inflictor and the recipient of a physical punishment that compensates for losing the exhilaration of the actual storm.(11)

<14> Elsewhere, Lucy minimizes pain by substituting one emotional investment for another, most evidently in her relationship with her childhood acquaintance and first love interest, Graham. When Lucy first receives a letter from Dr. John, she rejoices in the material object, hailing it as "a morsel of real solid joy...the wild, savoury mess of the hunter, nourishing and salubrious meat...fresh, healthful, and life-sustaining" (277). Lucy sequesters herself in the attic garret to consume this choice piece of meat in privacy, yet her reading is soon interrupted by the appearance of the nun. In the aftermath that follows Lucy's first sighting of this Gothic specter, Lucy realizes that Dr. John has been downstairs all along, by coincidence visiting with Madame Beck. Suddenly, Lucy finds the written words of the romantic love object juxtaposed against his physical self. Lucy describes Graham's "warm hand" taking her "cold fingers"...and "lead[ing] [her] down to a room where there was a fire" (277). Yet, Lucy's heightened, visceral description of the letter itself renders it unclear which interaction—with the letter or with the man—Lucy here relishes as most "real" and "solid." Initially, Lucy's squeamishness in the face of "real" love at first seems a pitiable sign of her sexual repression, yet when Graham later turns his attentions to Polly, we realize that by redirecting her romantic investments in what seemed a warm encounter with a potential suitor, Lucy has anticipated and mitigated the pain of a future loss by amplifying her enjoyment of a smaller, present pleasure in its place.

<15> On numerous occasions, investing in material objects rather than people enables Lucy to preserve rather than repress unrequited or unconsummated desire. When Graham's interest in Lucy first begins to dwindle, Lucy describes being struck by "one of those queer fantastic thoughts that will sometimes strike solitary people" to inter their valuables (343). By burying Graham's letters under the pear tree, Lucy symbolically cuts off her romantic yearnings from her everyday life, an act of self-preserving self-violence which indeed prefigures the final "paradox" of happiness with which her narrative will conclude. After confessing his love to Lucy and helping her attain a position of financial independence, Paul Emanuel almost immediately vanishes from the text, departing for the West Indies (571). As Lucy confesses, "M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life. Do you scout the paradox?" (570). Here again, Lucy finds "real" happiness in the absence rather than the presence of her lover; by cherishing the three years she spends writing to Paul Emanuel, Lucy creates an

affective suspension in her narrative to preserve feelings of desire upon which she will never have the opportunity to act.

<16> Lucy's masochistic strategies make forbidden and unrequited experiences of love and excitement manageable, even pleasurable. Yet, the underlying antisocial or what some have called "sadistic" effects of Lucy's narrative have often proved troubling to readers. As Mary Jacobus point out, Lucy is not only a reticent, but at times even hostile narrator whose "deliberate ruses, omissions and falsifications break the unwritten contract of first-person narrative (the confidence between reader and 'I') and unsettle our faith in the reliability of the text" (42). Terry Eagleton contends that Lucy's aggressive sadomasochism functions in service of the novel's "avoidance of confrontation" and "general swaddling of social conflict" by focusing the reader's attention too exclusively on the psychological turmoil of the private individual (95).⁽¹²⁾ Yet to assume that masochism and social isolation work hand-in-hand in *Villette* has led readers to overlook the ways that Lucy's "two lives" also function as a means of measuring and critiquing the connection between the Victorian heroine and her society, or what we might describe as the feminine *part* and the social *whole* in *Villette*.

<17> On a number of occasions throughout the narrative, Lucy finds herself meditating on the connection between her individual story and that of other women. When she first leaves Bretton, for example, she writes:

It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass... A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?

Far from "permit[ting]" us, in these words, Lucy actively encourages us to picture her "idle, basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft" before abruptly reminding us of her difference from the "many women and girls" who live such happy lives (37). In passages like these, an affective rubric begins to take shape in *Villette*, one which records the disparity between Lucy's life and the happy lives of other women.

<18> One such happy life, that of Paulina Mary, takes center stage in the novel. As many readers have noted, the "sensitive" Polly serves as a double for Lucy's repressed emotional states throughout the narrative.⁽¹³⁾ Lucy uncharacteristically admits that she "likes" Polly, and Polly likewise expresses an "odd content" in Lucy's companionship (431; 433). Later in the novel, when Polly confesses that she writes multiple responses to Graham, "chastening and subduing" her language at "every rescript" just as Lucy does, the friendship between these childhood friends culminates in an uncanny anagnorisis about the nature of repressed desire and women's writing in *Villette*: Lucy, we learn, is not the only one who must live "two lives" (436). Yet, while both Lucy and Polly curb the expression of their desire, what proves wise precaution in Lucy's case has been unnecessary anxiety for Polly. As Polly gains wealth, status, and eventually a husband, the distance in happiness between the two women grows until their lives entirely diverge. When Polly and Graham are finally engaged, Polly rises to the rank of the "great many girls and women" gently rocked and warmed in "halcyon weather" :

Is there, indeed, such happiness on earth? I asked as I watched the father, the daughter, the future husband, now united—all blessed and blessing.

Yes; it is so. Without any colouring of romance, or any exaggeration of fancy, it is so. Some real lives do—for some certain days or years—actually anticipate the happiness of Heaven... (506)

Lucy's remarks on the happy occasion reflect Sianne Ngai's theorization of envy as an "ugly emotion," that lacks cultural recognition as a valid or appropriate feeling despite the fact that envy is "the *only* agonistic emotion defined as having a perceived inequality as its object" (128; original emphasis). As Lucy watches the courtship develop between Graham and Polly, she resentfully notes the "infatuation" of lovers who "will have a witness of their happiness cost that witness what it may" (408). Affectively, Lucy is indeed forced into the role of the Gothic nun, on one occasion described by Lucy as an envious ghost "near" yet deeply covetous of a happiness in which she cannot partake.

<19> Brontë's goal in *Villette* is not to resolve or redeem the feelings of envy and resentment that are sowed between Lucy and Polly, but rather to develop the imaginative, affective spaces wherein women come to recognize and reflect on their connections to others. If, as I have argued, the similarity between Lucy and Polly is made poignantly clear by a shared act of women's writing (writing and destroying multiple letters to the same lover), Brontë registers the arbitrary differences that spring up between Lucy and Polly in an equally compelling description of women's reading. As Polly explains to Lucy on one occasion, she has read "biographies" in which

the wayfarer seemed to journey on from suffering to suffering; where Hope flew before him fast, ever alighting so near, or lingering so long, as to give his hand a chance of one realizing grasp. I have read of those who sowed in tears, and whose harvest, so far from being reaped in joy, perished by untimely blight, or was borne off by sudden whirlwind; and, alas! some of these met the winter with empty garner, and died of utter want in the darkest and coldest of the year. (435)

These stories trouble Polly because they remind her of the arbitrariness of her good luck in the face of others' struggles. As she anxiously confides in Lucy, "I am not endeavouring, not actively good, yet God has caused me to grow in sun, due moisture, and safe protection, sheltered, fostered, taught" (435).

<20> Like the stories Polly reads, what is remarkable about a "despairingly feminist" novel like *Villette* is how unflinchingly Brontë records the agonies of an unlucky heroine who can find no permanent reprieve from a tormenting existence. In insisting on Lucy's suffering and validating the masochistic solutions Lucy finds to her pain, *Villette* effectively reverses the affective conventions of the courtship plot, securing a witness not to the happy couple, but to the blighted wayfarer. When, at the end of the novel, Lucy hints that M. Paul Emanuel has died at sea, her "amiable conjectures" level their final blow: "Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again out of great terror...Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life" (573). In writing this ending, Lucy well knows that we will not be able to picture her happiness; her final jibe forces us to inhabit the painful feelings that remain when a "happy succeeding life" fails and the heroine on whom we have pinned hopes of healing insists on hurting. This, *Villette* tells us, is where it hurts.

II. Maggie Tulliver's "Pattern of Sorrow"

<21> Like all the heroines in Eliot's fiction, Maggie Tulliver struggles to reconcile her passionate intellectual and romantic longings with the stifling expectations of her traditional society. As Walter Allen remarks, Maggie "can be satisfied with no moral code that does not express to the full [her]

deepest aspirations and [her] sense of the potentialities within [her]" (92). Yet, in St. Ogg's, as Elizabeth Ermarth observes, Maggie is taught only that women are "inferior creatures" whose lives will always be "adjunct to the more significant activities of men." Ermarth argues that Maggie is "strong enough to be suffocated by her narrow life, but not strong enough to escape it" (589). As many readers have noted, however, if Maggie ultimately succumbs to a narrow life, she does not surrender quietly. Throughout the novel, Maggie is torn by conflicting desires to submit to and defy others, most notably in her tumultuous relationship with her brother, Tom. She is, as Bernard Paris summarizes, a heroine "full of rage," possessing "powerful cravings to get revenge—to thwart, hurt, and humiliate her tormentors" (168).⁽¹⁴⁾

<22> From the very beginning, what it means to help and to harm oneself in the punishing world of St. Ogg's is troublingly unclear. When Tom asks Maggie to look after his pet rabbits, for example, Maggie forgets to feed them and they die. However, the fatal result of Maggie's negligence is undercut by the head miller Luke's observation that the lop-eared rabbits would have died anyway since they are "Things out o' natur," and unnatural things "niver thrive" (35). Earlier, Eliot has described Maggie similarly as a "small mistake of nature," an evolutionary anomaly of her time (16). By implicitly likening her heroine to the "unnatural" rabbits Maggie then kills, Eliot foreshadows the natural disaster in which Maggie herself will eventually drown, yet questions the viability of nurturing oneself in a world where, for some, "thriving" will simply not be possible. Thus, as Ermarth aptly notes on the novel's ending, "drowning is merely physical corroboration" of Maggie's "deprivation of mental, imaginative, and emotional life" throughout the text (601).

<23> Maggie's self-destructive impulses arise from her inconsistent feelings about herself in relation to an unattainable Victorian feminine ideal. Like Lucy Snowe, Maggie is an envious heroine; yet, whereas Lucy's anger is ultimately targeted outward at the reader in *Villette*, in *The Mill*, Maggie alternates between inflicting violence inward towards herself and outward towards other characters. Whether Maggie takes scissors to her own hair or pushes her tidy-haired blonde cousin Lucy Deane into the mud, the target of her aggression remains the same: the ideal image of Victorian femininity Maggie at once desires and despises. As a child, the "Fetish" doll Maggie keeps and "punish[s] for all her misfortunes" reflects her conflicting desires to inflict, receive, and relieve pain in the novel (31). Once again, the story of Jael and Sisera appears in the Victorian novel as fodder for a woman's sadomasochistic fantasy; the fetish is "entirely defaced by a long career of vicarious suffering. Three nails driven into the head commemorated as many crises in Maggie's nine years of earthly struggle; that luxury of vengeance having been suggested to her by the picture of Jael destroying Sisera in the old Bible" (31). On some days, Maggie harms the Fetish to punish herself for bad behavior, while on others, she imagines the doll as someone else. On one occasion, after pretending the doll is her aunt Mrs. Glegg, Maggie regrets her decision and nurses the doll back to health because "even aunt Glegg would be pitiable when she had been hurt very much, and thoroughly humiliated" (31).

<24> When Maggie tortures her Fetish in the attic, "alternately grinding and beating" it against the floor, her body is racked by agony, so overwhelmed that her "passion...expel[s] every other form of consciousness" (32). When conscious thought is thus suspended, Maggie acts on feelings she cannot express in language. Thus, as we see in the scene of haircutting I have already discussed, when Tom first asks Maggie what she is doing with their mother's scissors, Maggie "cuts" Tom off, "answer[ing] by seizing her front locks and cutting them straight across the middle of her forehead" (69). Yet here too lies the problem, for the only answer Maggie can provide to the question of why she cuts it off is to make a further cut. Initially, Maggie cuts her hair with the intention to attain "deliverance from her teasing hair and teasing remarks about it...she didn't want her hair to look pretty,—that that that was

out of the question,—she only wanted people to think her a clever little girl, and not to find fault with her” (69-70). Almost immediately, however, Tom’s gaze, disparaging words and derisive laughter reinscribe Maggie in the very mutilated image she seeks to escape. Maggie is left with “that bitter sense of the irrevocable... now the thing was done... she should have to hear and think more about her hair than ever” (70).

<25> The sadomasochistic relationship between Maggie and Tom has troubled many readers. As Dianne Sadoff observes, “Maggie’s endearments to and caresses of Tom... repeatedly facilitate not fulfillment of her desire but punishment for what she herself considers her naughtiness” (84). As in the famous jam puff scene “carefully orchestrated by Tom so that his sister is at fault whether she gives him more or less puff” Tom is sadistically invested in encouraging and punishing his sister for the “mistakes” she makes (Fraiman 140).⁽¹⁵⁾ In many ways, the childhood relationship between Maggie and Tom comes to determine the cyclical pattern of women’s self-abuse in *The Mill*. Repeatedly, Maggie alters herself, faces condemnation for her actions, experiences shame, and engages in further acts of self-alteration in an attempt to rectify her initial self-harm. Three such cycles of mutilation constitute the plot of the novel: in the first, Maggie renounces worldly pleasures after finding a “pattern of sorrow” and “self-humiliation” in the writing of Thomas à Kempis (303). Maggie fervidly commits herself to her project of self-denial, finding pleasure in the spiritual philosophy that “renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly” (303). In the second cycle of mutilation, Maggie forgoes her religious aesthetic of self-denial when she becomes friends with Philip Wakem, the son of her father’s sworn enemy. While Philip nurtures Maggie’s intellectual and artistic desires, she cannot maintain an intimacy with Philip without betraying her father and Tom, so she eventually gives up this relationship. In the final cycle of mutilation in the novel, Maggie’s erotic desire leads her to betray all ties of friendship and family when she ruins her reputation by staying overnight on a boat with Stephen Guest, Lucy’s fiancé.

<26>With increasing severity after the death of Mr. Tulliver, Tom plays the part of the punishing father. Yet Tom is far from the only voice of masculine disapproval in the novel. While Tom criticizes Maggie for her passionate wildness, Philip and Stephen later censure Maggie for repressing these same desires. As Philip tells Maggie, “You want to find out a mode of renunciation that will be an escape from pain...there is no such escape possible except by perverting or mutilating one’s nature” (430). Throughout the novel, Philip accuses Maggie of practicing “narrow asceticism” (318), “self-delusive fanaticism” (340), “self-torture” (342), and “monomania” (348). Stephen similarly implores Maggie to break her engagement with Philip because, “It is unnatural—it is horrible” (467). Although Tom, Philip, and Stephen criticize Maggie for different reasons, all three share the belief that for Maggie to alter or repress aspects of herself is for her to become a self-mutilator. The central tragedy of *The Mill* ultimately is not that Maggie must alter herself, but that every change the Victorian woman makes—every haircut she tries out, so to speak—is denounced as self-injurious.

<27> In the flood that concludes *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie embarks on a final journey of self-sacrifice, rescuing Tom before both siblings perish in the waters on her way to find Lucy. As many readers have noted, the ending of the novel affirms the bond between brother and sister, who die, as Eliot writes, “in an embrace never to be parted” (542). Yet, it is also an ending which stresses the importance of reconciliation between Maggie and her sole female friend, kinswoman, and longtime rival, Lucy. In a scene preceding her fatal reunion with Tom, Maggie secretly meets with her cousin to ask for her forgiveness:

Speech was very difficult. Each felt that there would be something scorching in the words that would recall the irretrievable wrong. But soon, as Maggie looked, every distinct thought began

to be overflowed by a wave of loving penitence, and words burst forth with a sob. [...] The sobs came thick on each other after that. (526)

The overflowing feelings Maggie and Lucy have for each other wash over them much like the feelings of agony that suspend Maggie's consciousness when she abuses the fetish. In St. Ogg's, men exchange jokes and the "occasional shrug of the shoulders at the mutual hatred of women" (526). Yet, in this quiet and semi-conscious reconciliation between Maggie and Lucy, Eliot's novel corrects the public stories that circulate about women as inherently and inevitably abusive to one another.[\(16\)](#)

<28> In the end, there is no act of self-sacrifice that can liberate Eliot's heroine from the constraints of her feminine identity. Maggie never attains a unified, faithful, or consistent vision, but rather darts from one failed project of self-alteration to another. Yet for this reason it is perhaps especially significant that *The Mill* concludes with Maggie's failed effort to save from drowning the same tidy-haired cousin she enviously pushed into the mud as a child. In seizing her mother's scissors, Maggie first attempts to take her identity into her own hands—to destroy the image of her aberrant self by replacing it with a new one of her own making. In the fleeting moment before the "pang" of shame returns the self-mutilating Victorian woman to the deviancy of her image, however, we see Maggie act on an impulse neither to be nor to destroy the Victorian feminine ideal, but to create a new woman entirely, one finally capable of nurturing herself and others. In this failed gesture of self-love, Maggie's "pattern" of sorrow retraces the "two lives" that underlie *Villette*, while drawing the self-harming heroine further outward and closer towards a feminist sympathy.

III. Tess Durbeyfield's "Felicitous Thoughts"

<29> In the ending of *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot implicitly likens Maggie to St. Ogg, the "patron saint" of the town who forges a tumultuous, flooding river for the sake of a woman who turns out to be the Virgin Mary in disguise (124). As in many of Eliot's novels, the legend provides a context in which to recognize Maggie's struggle as a local repetition of a universal, human story. Yet it is precisely such historical patterns of sorrow which make modern life so unendurable in Thomas Hardy's late-century novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. As the "pure" but beleaguered Tess Durbeyfield laments on one occasion, "What's the use of learning that I am one of a long row... just like thousands' and thousands'"? (126). In the much-debated passage when Tess is violated by Alec d'Urberville in the Chase, Hardy's narrator suggests that the cruel fate of his heroine is as arbitrary as it is inevitable:[\(17\)](#)

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive; why so often the coarse appropriates the finer thus, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order. (74)

Previous readers of Hardy's novel have disagreed about the amount of agency the texts affords Tess in the role of tragic heroine. Some argue that Tess's struggle to survive against increasingly difficult odds commends her as a proto-feminist, while others claim Hardy's narrator exploits and objectifies her throughout the text.[\(18\)](#) For this reason, the "ache of modernism" explored in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* provides a final, affective context for considering women's acts of self-harm in relation to the "coarse pattern" so often traced on "feminine tissue" in Victorian fiction (124).

<30> Like Maggie, Tess is always looking to make a fresh start: at the D'Urberville estate in Trantridge, at Talbothays Dairy, with Angel Clare, then without him. Yet Tess is never permitted to "cut off" of earlier phases of her life; every time she seems to find a secure romantic or economic foothold, her past catches up with her, and "The Woman Pays" (as Hardy titles Phase the Fifth). To navigate the harsh realities of her life as a "fallen woman" in a hypocritical society clinging to outmoded sexual mores, Tess resorts to increasingly desperate acts of violence against herself and others which eventually culminate in her murder of Alec and her subsequent execution. Yet, Tess's self-destructive tragedy unfolds, as I will show, against a backdrop of muted feminine community, one which attempts to wrest the "long row" of sufferers from the oppressive trappings of arbitrariness and inevitability to create a new consciousness or pattern in women's pain.

<31> From the first description of Tess and the other women at the May dance to Angel's marriage to Tess's sister 'Liza-Lu after Tess's death, the novel emphasizes the interchangeability of women. In one noteworthy passage, Hardy describes the dairy maids Tess works with at Talbothays "writ[ing] feverishly" under "cruel Nature's law" in their shared desire for Angel: "four hearts gave a big throb simultaneously" (143). Here, the distress of women seems naturalized; Tess and her companions are "abstracted by [their] passion," into "one organism called sex" (147). Towards the end of this description, however, Hardy goes on to note that the experience of hopeless desire the women share gives rise to an unspoken, semi-conscious form of non-rivalrous community among them. As Hardy puts it, "There was so much frankness and so little jealousy because there was no hope" (147). As we see later in the novel, Izz's feeling of connection with other women leads her to defend Tess when she has an opportunity to replace her. After Angel learns of Tess's history with Alec, he embarks for Brazil and considers taking Izz along with him as a mistress. Though Izz wants to go, she ultimately chastises Angel for his treatment of his wife by pointing out that Tess is no different from her or other women: "Nobody could love 'ee more than Tess did! She would have laid down her life for 'ee. I could do no more!" (270).

<32> The shared sorrows of this hopeless yet supportive feminine community come to the foreground in the novel's key scenes of violent action. Shortly after Angel abandons Tess, she accidentally stumbles upon a field of birds that have been wounded and left for dead by a group of passing hunters:

The birds had been driven down into this corner the day before by some shooting-party; and while those that had dropped dead under the shot, or had died before nightfall, had been searched for and carried off, many badly wounded birds had escaped and hidden themselves away, or risen among the thick boughs, where they had maintained their position till they grew weaker with loss of blood in the night-time, when they had fallen one by one. (278)

Significantly, Tess comes to the aid of the birds by completing the hunters' partial acts of violence. Hardy describes how "with the impulse of a soul who could feel for kindred sufferers as much as for herself," Tess "put[s]... the still living birds out of their torture" by breaking their necks: "'Poor darlings—to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the sight o' such misery as yours!' she exclaimed, her tears running down as she killed the birds tenderly" (279).

<33> At first, the wounded pheasants seem merely to externalize Tess's own psychological turmoil. The birds are feminized, losing blood in a way reminiscent of the menstruating or birthing female body. However, Hardy ultimately depicts the birds as more than the mere projection of the trauma Tess has endured. As the passage continues, it becomes clear that Tess has encountered such patterns of violence before: "She had occasionally caught glimpses of these men in girlhood, looking over hedges, or peeping through bushes, and pointing their guns, strangely accoutered a bloodthirsty light in their eyes"

(278-279). In the scene of carnage Tess accidentally stumbles upon, the novel begins to situate Tess's agony within a larger community of feminine pain and implies that it is through an intimate participation in others' suffering that Tess first feels the connection between her own agony and the violence "bloodthirsty" hunters inflict on other feminized prey.

<34> When Tess leaves the forest and continues down the highway to Chalk-Newton "several young men [are] troublesomely complimentary to her good looks" (280). Here, for the first time, we see Tess take direct action against the male harassment she has suffered throughout the novel:

As soon as she got out of the village she entered a thicket and took from her basket one of the oldest field-gowns, which she had never put on even at the dairy—never since she had worked among the stubble at Marlott. She also, by a felicitous thought, took a handkerchief from her bundle and tied it round her face under her bonnet, covering her chin and half her cheeks and temples, as if she were suffering from toothache. Then with her little scissors, by the aid of a pocket looking-glass, she mercilessly nipped her eyebrows off, and thus insured against aggressive admiration, she went on her uneven way. (280)

Although readers have generally interpreted Tess's self-disfigurement in this scene as an indication of her internalization of the violence she faces, there is, in fact, little in the passage to suggest Tess's feelings of self-hatred.⁽¹⁹⁾ Tess's decision is directly informed by her encounter with the "poor darlings" in the forest, and once again, we see an act of self-harm complicate the distinction between self-help and self-abuse. If only for the hope that she may someday reconcile with Angel, Tess decides, in this moment, that she is a beautiful woman and "bound to take care of herself" at any cost (280).

<35> Tess's self-abusive act of self-care also marks a pivotal point in the novel when we first become aware of the connection between the violence Tess is willing to turn against herself and the violence she will eventually turn against others. Hardy's description of Tess as "uneven" when she leaves Chalk-Newton is an especially suggestive detail, indicating that Tess has registered on her external flesh the profound inequities that have determined her exploitation as an uneducated, working woman. This self-inflicted unevenness foreshadows the "justice" exacted at the end of the novel when Tess is executed for murdering Alec. As Linda Shires points out, while "some readers blame Tess for killing Alec and some exonerate her," Hardy reaches beyond the question of "individual right and wrong" to indict a social system which has entrapped [Tess] into such grotesque choices" to begin with (154). In *Tess*, Hardy suggests that the fallen woman can only belatedly revenge herself against the man who violates her—and that she must pay with her life for this final act of violent resistance.

<36> As Tess's life reaches its tragic apex, she no longer looks for ways to save herself, but only to mitigate sorrow, as she does with the pheasants, by making her suffering meaningful to the life of another "poor darling": her younger sister, 'Liza-Lu, whom, she impresses to Angel, possesses "all the best of me without the bad of me" (394). Just as Maggie dies in a final effort to repair relations with her brother and her cousin, Tess hopes that if Angel marries 'Liza-Lu, "it would almost seem as if death had not divided us" (394). Almost, but not quite. In the final passages of the novel, we indeed see Angel and 'Liza-Lu united, watching Tess's execution from a distance. When the black flag announcing her death is raised, the couple bend "down to the earth, as if in prayer" before departing with joined hands (398). In this enigmatic closing, we experience the same pain of the "amiable conjectures" we felt in *Villette*. Hardy suggests that 'Liza-Lu has simply become the next woman in the "long row" of sufferers, at the same time that he leaves open the sympathetic possibility that 'Liza Lu will attain the happiness Tess wishes for her younger sister.

<37> Like Maggie and Lucy, Tess harms herself with the “felicitous thought” that her self-sacrifice can repair the damaging injustices of her life. Yet, if there is one fantasy that the self-harming woman’s story consistently dispels in the Victorian novels I have examined in this essay, it is the dream that the broken self can be made whole or entire again. Nonetheless, in the different, creative, and increasingly social ways that self-harming women critically inhabit their suffering, their experiences disclose compelling patterns of masochism or affective “structures of feeling.” Desperate or perverse as these counterintuitive forms of self-care may seem in the lives of Victorian women, it would be a still greater tragedy to mistake, as Tom Tulliver does, the masochistic impulse to “cut it off” as complicity in her own abuse or the abuse of others. Rather, as I have argued, self-harm offers women individual solutions to experiences of pain while assisting in the development of a sympathetic consciousness capable of intuiting experiences beyond that suffering. In depicting the distressing scenes of women’s self-harm, Victorian novels narrate the everyday, compromised pains which neither rally women together nor rip them asunder. And if these novels so often leave their readers feeling sore, stung, and disappointed along with their heroines, it is perhaps only because they so faithfully capture the fluctuant state of women’s feelings between happiness and sorrow, resignation and rebellion.

Endnotes

(1)As Sally Shuttleworth points out, women in the nineteenth century were considered incapable of ruling their passions, yet condemned as institutionally insane when they failed to maintain their decorum (70; 97). On the repression of women’s desires, see also Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. For more specific discussions on women and the emotion of anger, see Marilyn Frye and Elizabeth V. Spelman.^(^)

(2)In her reading of *The Mill*, Elizabeth Ermarth argues that Maggie commits what amounts to a “long suicide” over the course of the novel after “years of...denial teach Maggie to repress herself so effectively that she cannot mobilize the inner resources that might have saved her” (587). Walter Allen asserts that “George Eliot...sacrifices Maggie to her own doctrine of the virtue of self-sacrifice for its own sake (115). For two examples of the opposite view, see George Levine’s defense of Eliot’s female characters in his review essay “Repression and Vocation in George Eliot” and Zelda Austen’s aptly titled “Why feminist Critics are Angry at George Eliot.”^(^)

(3)For a well-known argument on the opposition of sexual and political desire in the novel, see Nancy Armstrong. On sadomasochism and political quietude, see Bette London.^(^)

(4)Most recently, in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), J.J. Halberstam has examined the place of masochism within the broader queer aesthetic of failure. In an attempt to “dismantle... the logics of success and failure,” Halberstam shows how failure makes available “spaces and modes of unknowing, failing, and forgetting as part of an alternative feminist project, a shadow feminism which has nestled in more positivist accounts and unraveled their logics from within” (124).^(^)

(5)For a general introduction to affect theory and more on this phrase, see anthologies by Patricia Clough and Jean Halley and Paul Hoggett and Simon Thompson. See also Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod.^(^)

(6) Scholarship on the emotions in the nineteenth century is now extensive. See Rachel Ablow's introduction to the special issue on the topic in *Victorian Studies* and Tamara Ketabgian's Oxford Bibliography for an overview. For more on epistemology and the emotions, see Adela Pinch and Eve Sedgwick. For influential studies on affect theory and literature in the period, see studies by Ann Cvetkovich, Kristie Blair, and Isobel Armstrong. (▲)

(7) Many scholars have noted Sue's inconsistencies as a character. In his "Study of Thomas Hardy," D.H. Lawrence claimed that the "duality of [Sue's] nature made her extremely liable to self-destruction." See related essays on Sue by Robert Heilman and Elizabeth Langland. (▲)

(8) Queer studies scholars have been especially interested in the historiography of feelings and desires. In the premodern context, see in particular Carolyn Dinshaw and Heather Love. (▲)

(9) Here, I am indebted to recent work by scholars who work to depathologize private emotions while paying attention to the antisocial, "unvirtuous," or "ugly" aspects of feelings. See especially Ann Cvetkovitch and Sianne Ngai. See also Elizabeth V. Spelman. For more on the social transmission of emotions, see Teresa Brennan. (▲)

(10) In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf famously describes Brontë's novels as "deformed and twisted" by her anger and outrage (69). Mary Jacobus observes that *Villette* is "a text formally fissured by its own repressions" and "distortions and mutilations" (41). Walter Allen argues that Eliot "spoils" *The Mill on the Floss* with a "quite arbitrary 'tragic' ending" (264). Laura Emery sees the same ending as an "explosive expression of conflicting needs," yet agrees that it "mars" the text (6). Bernard Paris faults Eliot's overidentification with her heroine for the "artistically weak" ending of the novel ("The Inner Conflicts of Maggie Tulliver, 186). Elsewhere, Paris argues that in *Tess* Hardy's identification with Tess leads him to "glorify unhealthy attitudes and self-destructive solutions" ("A Confusion of Many Standards," 79). More bluntly, Lawrence asserts that *Tess* is "botched and bungled" (488). (▲)

(11) For more on the place of religion in Lucy's masochistic fantasies, see Mary Wilson Carpenter. Among other things, Carpenter shows how Lucy combines and appropriates medical and biblical discourses to "exceed authorized meanings of female bodies" (85). (▲)

(12) In his Marxist analysis of the Brontës, Eagleton argues that the sisters' novels create "myths of power" whereby a heroine's internalized conflict contains and distracts from class conflict in the nineteenth century. For a more recent study of antisocial desire in the text, see Christopher Lane. (▲)

(13) See, for example, John Hughes. On the question of desire between Lucy and Polly, see Sharon Marcus. (▲)

(14) Nina Auerbach reads Maggie as a demonic figure linked to other legendary figures of female destruction such as Medusa and Milton's Eve. Susan Fraiman observes that although Maggie is excluded from the conventional *bildung* available to boys like Tom, her longing for her brother's plot decenters, fragments, and ultimately destroys her brother's narrative. See also Sally Shuttleworth's recent reading of Maggie as "passionate" child in *The Mind of the Child* (2013). (▲)

(15) In Sadoff's reading, Tom is the "figurative father" and patriarchal "lawgiver" in the novel" (84-5). For a slightly different reading of Maggie's submission to Tom, see Joseph Boone and Deborah Nord. More

recently, Paul Yeoh has interpreted the antagonism between Maggie and Tom within the “martyrological drama” of hagiography.^(^)

(16)Here, I build on Helena Michie’s excellent argument about female friendship in *Sororophobia* (1992).^(^)

(17)For a summary of the debate surrounding the ambiguity of the scene in the Chase, see Kristen Brady. In her interpretation of the novel, Linda Shires claims Hardy intentionally obscures Tess’s violation as part of his “fundamentally-anti-realistic” aesthetic.^(^)

(18)Rosemarie Morgan makes an emphatic case for Hardy’s proto-feminism, arguing that his fiction reflects a “complete commitment to active, assertive, self-determined women.” Others, such as Margaret Higonnet and Dianne Sadoff have questioned Tess’s self-determination in the novel, calling attention to how Tess’s feminine voice and image are mediated through Hardy’s male narrator. Kaja Silverman strikes a persuasive middle ground between interpretations that perceive Tess as either an active or passive subject in the novel, arguing that “Tess’s body serves as a canvas for historical, erotic, and artistic inscription,” yet, “the very density of this representational activity attests to difficulties of containment—to a certain slippage of Tess out of the paradigms that structure her” (21).^(^)

(19)Lawrence, for example, sees Tess as “despising herself in the flesh, despising the deep female she was.” Jules Law similarly asserts, “The political implications of Tess’s self-mutilation are sadly obvious...the act follows logically from Tess’s internalization of the nature/culture bind at the conclusion of the previous chapter” (262).^(^)

Works Cited

Ablow, Rachel. “Introduction.” *Victorian Emotions*. Vol. 50, No. 3 (2008): 375-377.

Allen, Walter. *George Eliot*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964.
---. *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. Dutton: New York, 1954

Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Armstrong, Isobel. “Misrepresentation: Codes of Affect and Politics in Nineteenth-Century” in *Women’s Poetry, Late Romantic to Late Victorian: Gender and Genre, 1830-1900*.

Auerbach, Nina. *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1982.

Austen, Zelda. “Why Feminists are Angry at George Eliot.” *College English*. 37. 6. (1976).
Bersani, Leo. “Is the Rectum a Grave?,” *The MIT Press*. 43. (1987).

Blair, Kristie. *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart*. Oxford: University Press: Oxford, 2006

Boone, Joseph and Deborah Nord. “Brother and Sister: The Seductions of Siblinghood in Dickens, Eliot, and Brontë.” *Western Humanities Review*. 46.2 (1992): 164-188.

- Brady, Kristen, "Tess and Alec: Rape or Seduction?" *Thomas Hardy Annual* No. 4. Ed. Norman Page. London: Macmillan, 1986.
- Brennan, Teresa. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Brontë, Charlotte *Jane Eyre*. New York: Penguin, 2006.
- . *Shirley* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 216.
- . *Villette*. Random House: New York, 2001.
- Caplan, Patricia. *The Myth of Women's Masochism*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1985.
- Carpenter, Mary Wilson. *Imperial Bibles, Domestic Bodies: Women, Sexuality, and Religion in the Victorian Market*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003.
- Clough, Patricia Ticento and Jean Halley. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Duke University Press, 2007.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Duke University Press, 2012
- . *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992
- Dinshaw, Carolyn. *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*. Duke University Press, 1999
- Eagleton, Terry. *Myths of Power: a Marxist Study of the Brontës*. New York: Palgrave, 2005.
- Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss*. New York: Penguin, 1999.
- Emery, Laura. *George Eliot's Creative Conflict: the Other Side of Silence*. University of California Press: Berkley. 1976
- Ermath Elizabeth, "Maggie Tulliver's Long Suicide." *Studies in English Literature* 14.4 (1974): 587-601.
- Felski, Rita, "Redescriptions of Female Masochism." *Minnesota Review*. 63/64. (2005),
- Fraiman, Susan. "The Mill on the Floss, the Critics, and the *Bildungsroman*." *PMLA*, 108.1 (1993), 147.
- Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1927.
- Forsythe, Beverly "'The Two Faces of Lucy Snowe': A Study in Deviant Behavior." *Studies in the Novel*. 29. (1997): 18.
- Frye, Marilyn. A Note on Anger. *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. Trumansburg, New York 1983.

- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Yale University Press, 1979.
- Halberstam, J.J., *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. Penguin: New York, 1998.
- . *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Penguin: New York, 2003.
- Heilman, Robert. "Hardy's Sue Bridehead." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 20. 4 (1966): 307-323
- Higonnet, Margaret. "Tess and the Problem of Voice" in *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspective on Hardy*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
- Hoggett, Paul and Simon Thompson, *Politics and the Emotions: The Affective Turn in Contemporary Political Studies*. Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Hughes, John. "The Affective World of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*." *Studies in English Literature*. 40. 4 (2000): 711-726
- Jacobus, Mary. *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Columbia University Press: New York, 1986.
- Ketabgian, Tamara. Affect." Oxford Bibliographies in "Victorian Studies." Ed. Juliet John. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Kucich, John. *Repression in Victorian Fiction*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1987
- Langland, Elizabeth. "A Perspective of One's Own: Thomas Hardy and the Elusive Sue Bridehead." *Studies in the Novel*. 12.1 (1980): 12-28
- de Laura, David. "'The Ache of Modernism' in Hardy's Later Novels," *ELH* 34 (1967): 380-99.
- Law, Jules. "'A Passing Corporeal Blight': Political Bodies in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." *Victorian Studies*. 40.2 (1997): 262.
- Lawrence, D.H. "Study of Thomas Hardy." *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*. Ed. Edward D. McDonald. London: William Heinemann, 1936.
- Levine, George "Repression and Vocation in George Eliot." *Women and Literature* 7 (1979): 3-13.
- London, Bette. "The Pleasures of Submission: Jane Eyre and the Production of the Text" *ELH*. 58/1 (1991): 195-213
- Love, Heather. *Feeling Backwards: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Lutz, Catherine A. and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Language and the Politics of Emotion*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Massé, Michelle. *In the Name of Love: Women, Self-Abuse, and The Gothic*. Cornell University Press, 1992.

Michie, Helena. *Sororophobia: Differences Among Women in Literature and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

Morgan, Rosemarie. *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy*. New York: Routledge, 1988.

Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Harvard University Press, 2007.

Paris, Bernard "A Confusion of Many Standards': Conflicting Value Systems in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. 24. 1 (1969): 79

---. "The Inner Conflicts of Maggie Tulliver." *A Psychological Approach to Fiction: Studies in Thackeray, Stendhal, George Eliot, Dostoevsky, and Conrad*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1974.

Pinch, Adela. *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*. Stanford University Press, 1997

Sadoff, Dianne. *Monsters and Affection*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: NC: Duke University Press, 2003

Shires, Linda. "The Radical Aesthetic of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*. Ed. Dale Kramer. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 145-163.

Shuttleworth, Sally. *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

---. *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840-1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Silverman, Kaja. "History, Figuration, and Female Subjectivity in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*." *NOVEL: a Forum on Fiction*. 18.1 (1984): 21

Spelman, V. Elizabeth, "Anger and Insubordination." in *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*. Eds. Marilyn Pearsall and Ann Garry. Boston, 1989.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Harcourt: Orlando, 1989

---. "Professions for Women." *A Bloomsbury Group Reader*. Ed. S.P. Rosenbaum. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993

Yeoh, Paul. "Saint's Everlasting Rest: The Martyrdom of Maggie Tulliver." *Studies in the Novel* 41.1 (2009)