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Melanie Maren Brunner

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In loving memory of

Theresia Sitter

who taught me the meaning of family ties in reality

so that I could explore it in fiction.

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1 Table of Contents

2 Introductory Observations

The words loyalty and duty resonate through the works of George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. For these two Victorian authors these concepts formed an intricate part of their work. Their attitudes are never as clear as when they apply them to the feelings their characters have towards their families. As Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* states, family ties are "the most sacred ties that can ever be formed on earth" (*The Mill on the Floss* 287). Both authors believed in this idea and thus thoroughly explored the bonds between family members. Families and their obligations and affections for each other form an intricate part of Gaskell's *North and South* and *Wives and Daughters* and Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*. The characters in these novels face the challenge of choosing between self-fulfillment and their responsibilities towards others, their family especially. "How to combine freedom and family, how to avoid choosing between them, is the problem" (Wolff 213). Victorian conceptions of marital, parental, filial, fraternal, and sororal duty are all juxtaposed in these novels and show how important family ideology in the 19th century was to individuals, families and society as a whole. Since the family and the home were defined as the core of Victorian society, both George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell used family dynamics to explore its ideology by focusing on this intricate microcosm.

To the Victorians the concept of family was laden with many ideological beliefs and expectations. "[They] regarded it as axiomatic that the home was the foundation and the family the cornerstone of their civilization and that within the family were first learned the moral, religious, ethical and social precepts of good citizenship" (Wohl 10). For this reason family ideology was crucial for society, it was its central component. Thus the dynamics within a family were defining for social ones as well. In addition "[t]he time spent in the home and the significance attached to activities there were premised on a belief in the supreme importance of domestic affection, or, to be more precise, familial affections" (Tosh 27). The Victorian home was believed to contain the characteristics of a haven, in which affection and companionship between husband and wife governed life. This male-female dichotomy, which came to define the Victorian home, also reverberated in the public sphere. For Victorians, family and home "depended on gendered distinctions between public

and private life and on elaborate constructions of masculinity and femininity" (de Bellaigue 151). As working and living conditions changed under the influence of the Industrial Revolution, so did the dynamics within the family (see Marten 23-24). "[T]he family structure that developed during the nineteenth century was more private, more democratic […], and characterized more by emotional attachments" (Marten 21). At the same time it was loaded with more expectations and ideals as life outside of a family became unimaginable. So the main protagonist of *Silas Marner* feels utterly lost, without a purpose in life. "Left groping in darkness […] Silas had inevitably a sense, though a dull and half-despairing one, that if any help came to him it must come from without; and there was a slight stirring of expectation at the sight of his fellow-men, a faint consciousness of dependence on their goodwill" (*Silas Marner* 69-70).The resolution of his isolation is a family; only family ties can stifle his emotional needs. With the rising importance of family relationships, identity was increasingly linked with one's role within a family. Duties of parents and children, which had become defining characteristics, changed under these new circumstances and gendered roles became more pronounced

The primacy of men in the public sphere and their vital role in the private one greatly influenced Victorian life. In contrast to her husband, a wife was expected to focus her energies solely on the private sphere of their home (see Purchase 73). Still she had to share this environment with her husband, who by his "status as husband, father, breadwinner and owner of all family 'property', including his wife, […] reigned supreme, to all intents and purposes, throughout Victorian society" (Purchase 73-74). The Victorians came to balance his authority over his family with his wife's moral superiority over him (see Tosh 37). Motherhood was not only seen as a woman's major calling, her perceived natural disposition predestined her to be her family's moral guide. Without motherhood a woman was seen as unfinished. Margaret Hale in *North and South* voices the difficulties of this ideology: "Only as I have neither husband nor child to give me natural duties, I must make myself some" (*North and South* 498). The options open to women outside this ideology were very limited. A woman's place was in her family, ideally as a mother. As their 'angel in the house' she was supposed to be its caring, emotional center. Still she was answerable to her husband, whose supposedly more rational and powerful nature was seen as a necessary warden

for her (see Dickerson xvii-xviii). These beliefs not only influenced the conduct between all family members, Victorian society was defined by this ideology as well. Its implications for Victorian life were immense and both George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell comment on its effects in their works. Since this ideology was "shot through with contradictions" (Tosh 47) and difficult to conform to, the tension it created are so interesting when considering how they affected family loyalty and duty.

3 Marital Duty

3.1 Victorian Conceptions of Marital Duty

Marriage formed the basis of the traditional Victorian family. "Family may have started at the biological core of parents and children but the social concept of marriage was its heart and this strengthened over the period" (Davidoff and Hall and Hall 321). The union between husband and wife was thus not only perceived as an emotional necessity, but as a social and economic one as well. It formed "the basis of a new family unit" (Davidoff and Hall 322). For this reason marriage and its duties and loyalties must be considered before turning to the other bonds within a family. The novels of George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell deal with these responsibilities and emotional ties in two ways. Their works reflect the way that they were lived and implemented in reality just as much as they confront the expectations and beliefs which dominated Victorian ideologies of marriage.

More than any other relationship between men and women in the Victorian era, marital relationships were governed by the concept of male authority and female submission to it. Life in the Victorian household was increasingly governed by the already mentioned concept of separate spheres. All household members had their own duties and obligations. Husband and wife shared the responsibility of running and maintaining their household. Their positions and duties were ideologically and practically divided according to their perceived natural dispositions.

A husband's duty was closely linked to his masculinity and his natural abilities. The Victorians' perception of these concepts was closely tied to religion. The husband was the natural head of the household and it was thus assumed that

he “should command and the wife, children and servants should obey” (Davidoff and Hall 108).

> [M]asters in their households must rule in God’s name; but at the same time he was enunciating the principles which should characterize Christian manhood in the early nineteenth century – piety, domesticity, a proper sense of responsibility about business – these were the attributes of the new man. (Davidoff and Hall 113)

A man’s ability to support his family was one of his main duties. His material support and the security he provided justified the subordination he demanded from his family (see Tosh 62-63). However, a husband’s duties to provide for his family were not only economical. He was also responsible for the enforcement of discipline in his home and his piety and sense of right should influence his whole family positively and his authority should ensure their compliance to his wishes. Failure in his duties was seen as proof that a husband was not worthy of the authority he embodied and that the respect and submission of his wife and family was not deserved (see Tosh 62).

While the husband was the head of the household, it was his wife who was expected to organize and manage it for him (see Tosh 62-63). Her duties to provide a home for her family revolved around her ability to manage and provide things like “a clean and well-ordered house, an inviting fireside, an appetizing table, and soothing attentions in the sick-room” (Tosh 56). This was seen as her God-given responsibility and natural disposition whereas religious notions defined femininity only in terms of a woman’s role as wife and mother (see Davidoff and Hall 114). While a man could realize his identity outside the home, a woman found her only outlet within it. Still men needed the ties of a family to be considered whole and successful, without a wife and children a man was not successful and lacked a proper place in society. “If a man’s ability to support and order his family and household lay at the heart of masculinity, then a woman’s femininity was best expressed in her dependence” (Davidoff and Hall 114). Still, her role was not seen as inferior. Even though she did not have a place in the sphere of work, her role in the domestic sphere was not seen as less important (see Davidoff and Hall 115). Her submission to her husband was seen as a necessity for a household to function. In terms of authority and submission her role was defined by her husband. He could treat her “as a trusted manager or as a closely supervised inferior” (Tosh 62).

Trusting in a wife's abilities was just as important as respecting a man's. Mutual respect and distribution of duties was immensely important when considering the power relationship between spouses.

Mutual guidance and support was a central aspect of every Victorian marriage. A husband's duty for financial and material support has already been mentioned. His work supported his family, while his character was seen as a model for his family (see Davidoff and Hall 111-112). A wife's support was defined primarily in terms of its moral and emotional character. Her positive moral influence on the men in her life was elevated and idealized. Her role as her husband's help-meet in terms of morality instead of economy grew as the century progressed (see Davidoff and Hall 323, Tosh 55). At the same time the image of the wife as a frail and helpless creature dependent on her husband's support and guidance became increasingly popular (see Davidoff and Hall 323). In reality "[w]ith the closing of respectable means of earning their own livelihood, some women felt forced into marriage by circumstances, unwilling to remain a burden on their family" (Davidoff and Hall 325). Mutual support within marriage was necessary, simply because society saw marriage and a family as the only acceptable standard of living. Domestic ideology was so popular that it governed married life and the expectations spouses had of each other.

The lack of a spouse to give this kind of guidance and support was seen as a severe problem in life. Few unmarried men or widowers could run their own households alone; they depended on female relatives or housekeepers to take the place of the absent wife. In addition, wives were generally responsible for socializing and childrearing, tasks which men did not have the time to perform because they had to work (see Gillis 248). A wife's duty to cultivate relationships was not only important for her husband but to the whole family; she had control over the family's reputation within their community (see Gillis 254). Unmarried women were usually dependent on their family for support. Without a husband and with the decreasing possibilities of female employment marriage was not only an economic necessity, but also the only choice a woman had to lead a truly respectable life.

The emotional support inherent in every marital relationship may have been primarily associated with the wife, however during the 19th century the ideal

husband was also expected to express emotion towards his family. Even though emotional outbursts were frowned upon, a husband and father was expected to adhere to Christian attributes like tenderness and caring love (see Davidoff and Hall 111, 113). However, while a woman was expected to be more emotionally attached to her home and family, in men this was seen as endangering their character. It could make them weak or overly dependent on others (see Davidoff and Hall 113). In addition, women had the reputation of being much more emotional than men; their feebleness and weakness made them prone to emotional outbursts. For this reason this behavior was not only accepted, but even expected of a woman. In marriage a wife was expected to provide the emotional support because she was perceived as having an inherent understanding for the emotions and needs of others. A man expected understanding from his wife. “Many a young man warned his fiancée […] to be prepared for unspecified faults and weaknesses in her beloved, requiring future sympathy and support” (Tosh 56). His wife’s ability to comfort and give emotional support was essential to their marital relationship. However, a wife could not expect the same understanding from a husband; her worries were perceived as too trivial for his attention (see Tosh 68). The husband’s material support was seen as his sufficient contribution to the relationship (see Tosh 54). He was responsible for providing his family with a home while his wife made sure life ran smoothly within it.

Despite these differing expectations, understanding and compatibility were relevant issues for a working marriage. “The blessings of companionate marriage were about intimacy and leisure” (Tosh 59). Spending time together and having similar interest were important issues for ensuring that a marriage worked. Many household routines during the 19th century not only revolved around making the husband comfortable, but also ensured that husband and wife could spend time together (see Tosh 59). “A satisfying companionate marriage was best served by the husband who regarded the home as the first call on his leisure but who spent his working hours elsewhere” (Tosh 60). This ideal meant that a man was expected to divide his time between his home and his workplace. His home was created as a haven from the outside world and as a representation of his success there. His emotional involvement and interaction with his wife ensured her respect and loyalty. This great interdependence of

spouses lead to an increased awareness of the necessity of their compatibility. When spending so much time together, different views, values and educational levels could become mayor issues (see Tosh 66). At the same time as compatibility was a major issue in courtship, marriages out of love and affection were accepted and expected by most young people (see Davidoff and Hall 323, Tosh 57-58). However, romantic and especially sexual attraction were publicly ignored (see Davidoff and Hall 323).

Marriages were of course not as harmonious as the previous paragraphs may have one believe. The Victorian era was full of contradictions and the relationship of spouses is no exception. Marital problems had to be contended with, especially in a time when divorce was not a possibility for the broad public. The ideology of the submissive wife and the authoritative husband could create pressures for both. Male authority over an acknowledged female domain was bound to lead to tensions. A woman was responsible for children and the home, yet in theory she had to follow her husband's directions even in these areas (see Tosh 64, 77). His lack of knowledge did not eradicate his authority in these areas. The same is true for any other decisions a husband made for his family. In theory his decisions, no matter how poor, had to be accepted. In reality the influence a wife had could be quite more significant than dominant ideology would credit her with (see Davidoff and Hall 117).

If a spouse did not meet the expectations of their partner, problems were sure to arise. On the one hand a husband who failed in his duty to provide for his family did not only lose the respect of his family and peers, but could endanger the family's whole existence. The dangers of poverty and destitution were realistic threats to many Victorian families; especially since the husband's income was so vital to the family's survival (see Gillis 246-247). On the other hand a wife who failed in her duty could disappoint her husband and even endanger the family's respectability. If a wife did not meet the moral expectations attached to her female nature and did not support her husband in the idealized way, she was seen as a failure and faced the criticism and disapproval of others (see Tosh 67).

Expectations of both parties were thus very high, failure to adhere to them created almost as much problems as not being married at all. The lives of

unmarried people, separated spouses, and widows and widowers were difficult. They could not escape the consequences of being single, which was seen as a serious deficiency within society. Remarriages, like marriages, were thus often motivated by the need of a spouse to fulfill the duties one could not fulfill oneself (see Davidoff and Hall 325). Social norms and the economy favored marriage as much as the law did (see Gillis 241-242). It thus comes as no surprise that marriages of convenience were just as common as marriages of affection or marriages motivated by other social obligations. Overall the pressure to marry was great and choosing the wrong partner could easily occur. If this was the case separation, abandonment, and abuse were only a few of the possible consequences.

The next chapters will illustrate how both George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell dealt with these ideologies and realities of marital duty. Each of their novels handles several of the mentioned responsibilities and expectations. The analysis will show how both authors cope with marriage as a theme and what their own views on a spouse's duties are. The way their attitudes toward marital duty differ is just as relevant as their individual arguments and approaches to the topic.

3.2 Marital Duty in *North and South*

North and South contains various marriages, all of which emphasize different values and perceptions of marriage. Interestingly, each marriage in the novel is broken up by death; thus the reader is often only the observer of the consequences of widowhood, rather than of the marriage itself. Only in the case of the Hales does Gaskell show a working marriage before breaking it up through illness and death. For this reason they will be one major focus of this chapter, while the consequences of the loss of a spouse will be shown by focusing on the Thorntons and Bouchers. The values these unions exhibit show what Gaskell saw as essential for a healthy and happy union between the main protagonists Margaret Hale and John Thornton.

In *North and South* the only working marriage between a mature, married couple is the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Hale. Their relationship is built up on mutual trust which is tested right at the outset of the novel. It is Mr. Hale's choice to leave the Church and move to Milton which disrupts not only the lives

of his family, but the relationship with his wife in particular. Even though the couple married for love and still feels deeply for each other, Mr. Hale is so troubled by the thought of telling his wife that he wishes he did not have to consider her in his decision. “Oh if I were not married – if I were but myself in the world, how easy it would be! As it is – Margaret, I dare not tell her!” (*North and South* 43). Mr. Hale’s decision is just as hurtful as his refusal to speak with his wife about it. He does not confide in her about his doubts about the Church, he does not consult her in his decision, and he even leaves the duty of telling her to his daughter Margaret: “[H]elp me to tell your mother. I think I could do anything but that: the idea of her distress turns me sick with dread. If I tell you all, perhaps you could break it to her to-morrow” (*North and South* 40). He uses his position as the household head to make this choice, yet he is too frail to act upon his decision once it is made. All his wife can do is submit to his will, she is not even given the chance to support him morally or emotionally. Mr. Hale does not allow her to assist him and fulfill her marital duty. On his decision to leave Helstone he tells Margaret: “No; we must go to Milton. That is settled. I can always decide better by myself, and not influenced by those whom I love […]. I cannot stand objections. They make me so undecided” (*North and South* 41). He will not allow his family to voice their opinions because he feels that it is better to make such decisions about their future alone. So he also fails in his reciprocal duty of actually asking his wife for her support.[1] However, Mrs. Hale’s fragile health and her subsequent weakness make his reluctance to share his troubles with her understandable.

Mr. Hale’s unspecified doubts and his subsequent decision to leave the Church reveal his character to be very problematic in a world which praised male objectivity and control.

> [H]e is the essence of feminine charm, subject to moods and whims he cannot fully rationalize. […] Hale is a man of feeling more than conviction, one who will cling fervidly to trifles while ignoring, or relinquishing with little thought, the larger problems of life. (Lansbury 42)

It thus comes as no surprise that he must rely so much on his daughter for support because he equals his wife in her frailty, sensitivity, and dependence on

[1] Rubenius interprets the situation differently, seeing Mrs. Hale as a “bad [wife] who make[s] no attempt to sympathize with their husband” (71). She sees Mrs. Hale’s lack of support as a choice. However, she did not have any other alternative because by the time she knew of his troubles, he had already come to terms with them and decided on a solution himself.

others. Interestingly, they do not rely on each other, but always on others, for support and understanding. Mr. Hale is afraid of aggravating his wife and tries to spare her from the troubles they face. So he would rather rely on Margaret when they need a new home in Milton because “Mrs. Hale, over powered by all the troubles and necessities for immediate household decisions that seemed to come upon her at once, became really ill [and] took to her bed” (*North and South* 54). Margaret assumes her mother’s duty of organizing their removal to Milton and assists her father in making the transition as easy as possible. With his permission “Margaret [can] work, and act, and plan in good earnest” (*North and South* 57). So his decision marks the point when the dynamics within his family change drastically and “[Gaskell] even suggests that happiness is inexorably forfeited when one must sacrifice the well-being of loved ones to the well-being of a clear conscience” (Ganz 84). Mr. Hale’s decision forces his family to change their whole lives because of his doubts, they must leave their home and live in a foreign environment because of him. More importantly, his wife and daughter have to follow him blindly; he never explains his doubts to them because “it is an effort beyond [him] to speak of what has caused [him] so much suffering” (*North and South* 36). The impact of his decision on his marriage becomes obvious when the Hales are settled in Milton.

Once in Milton, the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Hale continuously deteriorates. “It is Mrs Hale who is most troubled by the physical unpleasantnesses of Milton, who suffers from the cold and fog, who cannot come to terms with its new and alien [environment]” (Craig 118). Even though the love that unites them endures, their different interest and values divide them more and more. In this new environment Mrs. Hale has no way of continuing her social relationships, the only social ties the family makes are now through Mr. Hale and Margaret. It becomes obvious that “[she] has never quite reconciled herself to the practical circumstances of her love and marriage” (Wright, *No Angels* 102). They may have married for love, but now that they are older, expressing their feelings for each other has become more difficult. “[B]oth of them are vivified and united by their past youth and glamour, and rendered pitiful by it” (Craig 123). They hold on to their memories and their affection for each other, even when it is clear that Mr. Hale will soon lose her. “He [can]not forget the subject – could not pass from it to other things” (*North and South*

164). Their relationship is strained because Mrs. Hale tries to keep her illness from her husband, while Mr. Hale keeps his feelings form her once again. They still love each other, but their fear of losing each other overshadows all their communication. Instead of speaking with each other, they both confide in Margaret. Mr. Hale desperately tries to “stifle and strangle the hideous fear that was looming out of the dark places of his heart” (*North and South* 165), but he is not prepared for the reality of her illness when he sees that “[d]eath had signed her for his own, and it was clear that ere long he would return to take possession” (*North and South* 199). When she eventually dies, Mr. Hale is overcome by emotion. After her death he appears “as if in a dream - or rather with the unconscious motion of a sleep-walker, whose eyes and mind perceive other things than what are present” (*North and South* 299). His feelings overwhelm him, and in the private sphere of his home that is acceptable. However, he fears that he will lose his composure at her funeral, in the public sphere, and thus asks John to accompany him.

In contrast to Mr. Hale, Mrs. Thornton is personified control. She is a respectable matriarch, a widow who has made do with her lot successfully and has gained the respect of the people of Milton. Gaskell does not give us detailed insight into the relationship between Mrs. Thornton and her late husband. We know that he “died under very miserable circumstances” (*North and South* 97). Obviously his business failed and John also reveals that he was deeply in debt. He truly failed as a father, husband, and man, leaving his family to fend for themselves. Mrs. Thornton, however, fought and survived to raise a son who could in turn support her when he was old enough. Mrs. Thornton was able to regain the respectability she had lost through her husband. He may have failed in his economical duty towards his family, but she did not. Her high moral values and great adherence to propriety stand in stark contrast to his immoral behavior and false sense of duty. However, Mrs. Thornton was deeply affected by the hardships she had to face because of her husband’s failure. Since she knows that emotional outbursts will not help in a difficult situation, she generally refrains from letting her emotions show. So despite her inner turmoil when she thinks John is going to tell her about his engagement to Margaret, outwardly she is completely calm:

> Her quickened sense could interpret every sound of motion […]. Why did he pause? Let her know the worst. Yet her head was down over the book; she did not look up. He came close to the table, and stood still there, waiting till she should have finished the paragraph which apparently absorbed her. By an effort she looked up. (*North and South* 249)

The result of this attitude is that she is frequently cold and harsh to others, especially if she feels threatened or insulted. “[She] embodies the courage, the inaesthetic hardness, the strong sense of right, and proud self-respect of the Milton character” (Craig 118). These characteristics show themselves in her pride in her children and her own achievements. When Mrs. Thornton is thinking of what is dear to her “a series of visions [pass] before her, in all of which her son [is] the principal, the sole object – her son, her pride, her property” (*North and South* 248). Her purpose in life is being a mother and she is proud of her achievements as one. Through her, Gaskell can attack the image of the weak, impractical woman and show how even without a husband, a widow can survive. In contrast, Mrs. Hale is dependent on her husband her whole life. Despite his faults and weaknesses, she relies on him unquestioningly and never acts upon her own conscience. Their servant, Dixon, makes clear that she feels that Mr. Hale has never paid enough attention to his wife: “[H]e should ha’ made a deal more on her, and not been always reading, reading, thinking, thinking” (*North and South* 154). Mr. Hale is always the one with more control and power in the relationship, while his wife submits to his will and waits for him to have time for her. She does not have Mrs. Thornton’s resolute character and strength and waits for others to take action for her.

The situation between Mr. and Mrs. Boucher is very similar to the experience of Mrs. Thornton and her husband. But their past is the Bouchers present. The family is on the verge of destitution when the trade union strikes. Boucher loses everything and sees his only choice in suicide. Like Mr. Thornton he believes that the only solution to his situation is the escape from reality and thus he, too, abandons his wife and children to their fate. His wife is distraught when she finds herself alone with their children: “I've no chance o' being well, […] I'm left alone to manage these childer, and nought for to give 'em for to keep 'em quiet” (*North and South* 351-352). In this marriage, the wife has neither the strength nor the character to save herself and her family. In contrast to Mrs. Thornton,

Mrs. Boucher cannot carry the weight of parental obligations alone. She is overcome by her grief completely, leaving her children in the care of neighbors. Her death, which soon follows his, proves her weakness as much as her love for him. Despite her love for her husband, her lack of understanding for his turmoil indicates that he might have been able to survive if she had given him strength (see Rubenius 71). Mrs. Boucher's financial dependence on him was just as great as Mr. Boucher's emotional dependence on her. Both failed in their duty to provide their spouse with what they need.

It is particularly striking that the failure of the Bouchers gives both Margaret and John a chance to prove their worth. They are united in their desire to help the Boucher children. This is only possible by the development John and Margaret go through with each other's help. He becomes more aware of his social responsibilities, while Margaret can overcome her prejudices toward the people of Milton.

> Thus Thornton's early infatuation with Margaret Hale promotes his gradual conversion to her social views, while Margaret's progressive recognition of Thornton's ability as a manufacturer and her increasing sympathy with some of the aims and principles of industrialism help her to acknowledge her love for him. (Ganz 81)

They were able to do this only because of the role-models they had in their lives. John learned to appreciate self-reliance, independence, and morality through his mother, while Margaret realized the importance of affection, respect, and harmony through her parents. The faults their parents had equally affected them, and Gaskell shows this by making sure that the negative characteristics of the parents are not irrevocably present in their children. So, since a wife's submissive role and a man's undeserved authority permeate the relationships of the older generation of spouses, Margaret's independence and lack of a submissive stance towards John when she proposes, is so telling because it is a dismissal of the negative models of male authority throughout the novel.

3.3 Marital Duty in *Wives and Daughters*

Thanks to its multitude of characters, *Wives and Daughters* is Gaskell's most elaborate exploration of established marriages. The most interesting couples are the Hamleys and the Gibsons. Their choice of spouse and the implications Gaskell makes about marriage are definitely more developed and detailed here

than in her earlier novel, *North and South*. For this reason it is not surprising that "*Wives and Daughters* is the fullest as well as the final expression of Mrs. Gaskell's attitude to love in the narrower 'romantic' sense" (Wright, *Reassessment* 218). Both marriages are central to the plot and affect the main protagonists and their lives and relationships deeply. In comparison to *North and South,* the relationship between spouses has become more equal and mutually fulfilling (see Rubenius 62). "Although none of these marriages are perfect, all are workable" (Craig 240). Wives and husbands are aware of their duties, and fulfill them to the best of their abilities. In this novel Gaskell shows how individuals make their marriages work, either out of necessity or out of true love for each other. In contrast to *North and South,* the marriages in *Wives and Daughters* function because the spouses see a working marriage as a binding necessity.

To prove this, the marriages all contain some level of discord, which the partners have to work out. The marital problems the Hamleys face, for example, revolve around their differing interests and Mrs. Hamley's illness. She is too ill to actually still run her household and is obviously not fulfilled by her duties of a wife and mother fully. "Through Mrs. Hamley, Gaskell is calling attention to the limited range of options available to the middle-class woman. Gaskell also makes it clear that Mrs. Hamley is not idle: what she can do, she does" (Colby 99). She also sacrificed her interests for her husband. She lives the life he wants to live, denying herself the things she values: "She gave up her visits to London; she gave up her sociable pleasures in the company of her fellows in education and position" (*Wives and Daughters* 37). She loves her husband more than all these things and when she was faced with the choice between them she did not hesitate to choose her husband (see Miethling 79). Her ill-health can be seen as the result of this life, but despite this obvious criticism of a wife's submission to her husband, Gaskell does not criticize the Squire for the authority which he has over his wife's decisions (see Miethling 80). The Squire does everything in his power to please her and his love and respect for her guide his actions while she is still alive. "He loved his wife all the more dearly for her sacrifices for him" (*Wives and Daughters* 37). Even though he does not express his emotions openly, his many small attentions to her reveal his feelings clearly (see Craig 240). Since he knows how fond she is of reading and

writing, he makes sure she has “a small table by her side on which there were the newest works of poetry and fiction; a pencil and blotting-book, [and] a vase of flowers always of her husband’s gathering; winter and summer, she had a sweet fresh nosegay every day” (*Wives and Daughters* 38). These signs of his affection are greatly appreciated and valued by his wife. Indeed, this is what would be expected of an ideal husband: deep affection for his wife, realized in the attention he pays to her comfort, most obviously realized in his household behavior. Thus the Hamleys, united by their love for each other, can overcome their differences. This is only possible because Mrs. Hamley was selfless enough to sacrifice her own desires for her husband. So since she noticed that he does not approve of her trips to London and that “he showed so little sympathy with her when she came back full of what she had done on her visit that she ceased caring to go” (*Wives and Daughters* 37). In this novel Gaskell praises such selfless love above all others and Mrs. Hamley is one of the characters she uses to show its positive effects on a relationship (see Miethling 81). However, her husband does not have the same willingness to forgo his own needs; he expects her devotion and sees his attentions to her as ample reciprocation.

Their mutual traditional values and conception of an ideal marriage unite the Hales in an affectionate and loving relationship that has endured the test of time. The relationship of Squire Hamley and his wife is characterized mostly by their respect for each other and their mutual dependence on each other. Still, the people in their surroundings continue to see their union as “one of those perplexing marriages of which one cannot understand the reasons. Yet they were very happy” (*Wives and Daughters* 36). Despite the lack of understanding their love faces, their marriage is a successful and fulfilling one. In a strict male/female dichotomy the Squire relies on his intelligent, moral, and dutiful wife for her guidance in all things related to his family and his own emotional well-being. “He [i]s conscious of her pleasant influence over him, and [is] at peace with himself when in her presence” (*Wives and Daughters* 221). He depends on her to even govern his relationship to his sons beyond the economic or intellectual level. His bad temper and pride are matched by her constant cheer and humility. Mrs. Hamley equally depends on her husband. He controls not only where she lives, but also who she meets and what occupies

her time. These things go beyond the usual control a man has over his wife, but it is made clear that this control was only possible first through her willing and loving submission and then through her illness. Here the contrast to Lady Cumnor, the most independent wife in the novel, is most striking. Lady Cumnor can only see submission to a husband sarcastically and is full of mirth when she gives the following advice: “You must reverence your husband, and conform to his opinion in all things. Look up to him as your head, and do nothing without consulting him” (*Wives and Daughters* 543). Mrs. Hamley, on the other hand, does respect her husband’s authority over her. It is a vital part of their relationship, just as Mrs. Hamley’s role is crucial in her family.

Her husband and sons strongly depend on Mrs. Hamley’s emotional care. When she falls fatally ill the Squire is too confused and distressed to form a clear thought. “For the life of me, I can’t remember whether we’ve had dinner or not; these long nights, and all this sorrow and watching, quite bewilder me” (*Wives and Daughters* 184). They all depend on her guidance and feel that she is the person holding their whole family together. This becomes most obvious after her death when the Squire is truly bereft of his only moral and emotional support. “Quiet and passive as Mrs Hamley had always been in appearance, she was the ruling spirit of the house as long as she lived” (*Wives and Daughters* 220). As a consequence of her loss, his relationship with his eldest son Osborne deteriorates because he no longer has the support of his wife. She would have acted as an intermediary between the two, but without her both are too proud to make amends. After her death the Squire is lost and frequently loses his temper.

> The truth was, that [her death] occurred at a time when many things came to harass him, and some to bitterly disappoint him; and *she* was no longer there to whom he used to carry his sore heart for the gentle balm of her sweet words, if the sore heart ached and smarted intensely; and often, when he saw how violent conduct affected others, he could have cried out for their pity, instead of their anger and resentment: ‘Have mercy on me, for I am very miserable’. (*Wives and Daughters* 221)

Her emotional control over the men in her family was so great that without her they are unable to connect. Even though Squire Hamley is one of the people who are in favor of Dr. Gibson’s remarriage at the outset of the novel, he never considers it for himself. He feels that he and his wife “loved each other so dearly [he could] never [be as] happy with anyone else” (*Wives and Daughters* 50).

Dr. Gibson's desire to remarry is grounded in his insecurities about his parenting abilities. Still, he obviously also desires the companionship that comes from a marriage. He is convinced Hyacinth Kirkpatrick is the right woman to "manage [his] home, and so save [him] either from discomfort or wrong; […] she would be able to give [his] daughter that kind of tender supervision which [she] require[s]" (*Wives and Daughters* 90). His hasty wedding to her gives Gaskell a chance to explore a union, which is characterized not by mutual respect and affection, but by dependence and disdain. Most of their problems stem from their differing attitudes and values. Throughout their marriage "differences of opinion about trifles arose every day, and were perhaps more annoying than if they had related to things of more consequence" (*Wives and Daughters* 159). However, Gaskell manages to stress "the assets rather than the inadequacies of such a marriage" (Craig 241). Gibson's choice of wife has nothing to do with affection; it is made out of sheer necessity. He needs a wife, and more importantly a mother and guide for his daughter. Even his first marriage, though affectionate, was not one out of love. His motivations for remarriage are just as rash as his choice of a second wife is unwise.

> Unused to examining his feelings or to expecting much from women's intellect, he is impelled into marriage by his possessive alarm at a prospective suitor for Molly, by Hyacinth's conventional expressions of sentimental (and hypocritical) interest in his young daughter, and above all by the aesthetic surface appeal of the widow […]. (Hughes 101)

His pride does not allow him to acknowledge his thoughtless choice. Instead he acknowledges and follows his principles even though it becomes increasingly obvious that Mrs. Gibson is not the wife he should have chosen.

Since Mrs. Gibson outwardly represents everything a perfect Victorian wife should be Gibson is blinded by her superficial appeal. He is distracted by "the harmonious colours of her dress, and her slow and graceful movements" (*Wives and Daughters* 93). Her character, however, is nothing like the moral, meek, or even kind Victorian ideal (see Colby 95). This, however, does not stop her from pretending that it is. And indeed, Victorian principles and ideals force her to represent this image.

> Thus does Mrs. Gibson's blissful oblivion regarding moral values enable her to glide smoothly over the complexities of ethical dilemmas and to create an image of herself which satisfies her sense of what one owes to appearances. (Ganz 170)

Even though Gaskell deplores this behavior; it becomes obvious that without it, Mrs. Gibson would not have gained what she so desperately needed, a husband. “[This way] Gaskell uses her to attack the ruthless pursuit of marriage that women are reduced to in a culture that equates marriage with their success” (Colby 96). She has learned to seem to be what a man desires in a wife, and does not care how much she has to manipulate or deceive to survive. She sees marriage as a necessity and she does everything to ensure that she finds a new husband. Dr. Gibson’s proposal gives her “such a wonderful relief [because] she need not struggle any more for a livelihood” (*Wives and Daughters* 95). Mrs. Gibson only accepts him because she feels that being married will make her life easier. All she wants is a husband who will be “bound to support her without any exertion of her own” (*Wives and Daughters* 142). To the reader it is obvious that a marriage out of these motivations cannot be fulfilling for either partner.

And indeed their different interests and values further divide the Gibsons as their marriage progresses. While he values his profession and is deeply dedicated to his patients, his wife only sees the economic side of things. She values the patients for the money they bring into the household and the possible social profits she may gain through them (see D’Albertis 151). Dr. Gibson deplores this side of her just as much as he disapproves of her changes in their home. He hates the fact that he has no more practical power over his own household (see Miethling 75). Mrs. Gibson changes many of the things Dr. Gibson and his daughter Molly were used to and both do not approve of the changes that she makes. Mr. Gibson who only wants “peace and a decent quantity of cheerfulness when [he] come[s] home” (*Wives and Daughters* 157) so he does not interfere. He accepts her rule in his home because he sees it as her right and duty to run his household for him. His silence on the matter is typical for their relationship. “He […] regard[s] silence on his own part as a great preservative against long inconsequential arguments” (*Wives and Daughters* 199). He never directly voices his displeasure; he rather attacks her with sarcastic remarks, which she is often at a loss to understand. The only instance when he admonishes her is when she reveals her coldness by calculating on Osborne’s death. This instance makes him realize that “the wife he had chosen ha[s] a very different standard of conduct from that which he had upheld all his

life" (*Wives and Daughters* 346). They both chose their partner for superficial reasons and are now caught in a cage of their own making. Dr. Gibson submits to his wife's control over his home, while Mrs. Gibson must not only face his disapproval, but must also accept that his priorities lie with his profession. Ostensibly their marriage fulfills its purpose, but it is not what an ideal marriage should represent. Once again Gaskell lets the main protagonists learn from the mistakes of the older generation of spouses to gain fulfillment in their own marriage (see Wright, *Reassessment* 220).

The individual personalities of the Hamleys and the Gibsons and their conduct in marriage influence their children profoundly. Their values, strengths, and weaknesses show what they expect from a future spouse and what they themselves are willing to do for their partner. Like Mrs. Gibson, both Molly and Cynthia feel the pressures of society to marry, while both Osbourne and Roger realize that marriage requires uncompromising devotion. Of the four, Osbourne is the most obvious failure (see Wright, *Reassessment* 219). His secret marriage motivated by passion and romance shows that Gaskell disapproves of such incentives for a union. Roger's infatuation with Cynthia is equally not enough for a fulfilling marriage, just as Dr. Gibson's superficial choice of a wife. The influence Mrs. Gibson's unloving character had on Cynthia is equally mirrored in her daughter. Cynthia feels that she cannot love and thus chooses a husband who will support her and fulfill the same needs her mother felt as a widow. Only Roger and Molly have the potential to achieve Gaskell's ideal of a fulfilling marriage. Like Mrs. Hamley, Molly is willing to sacrifice her own wishes for love (see Miethling 89). This property alone makes her worthy of love and rewards her with a husband who will most probably not demand the sacrifices she is willing to make. Her selfless attachment, which Cynthia is incapable of, is rewarded by a truly balanced relationship (see Wright, *Reassessment* 119-120). Gaskell has her protagonists embody "the merging of landed and professional classes in a period of transition" (Wright, *Reassessment* 209). Like Margaret and John in *North and South*, they too slowly develop into the worthy partners their future spouses deserve and eventually realize and accept their mutual attraction. Their mutual appreciation and compatibility finds no parallel in the other couples of *Wives and Daughters*, who do not share Roger and Molly's selfless love.

3.4 Marital Duty in *The Mill on the Floss*

In *The Mill on the Floss* marital duty can be analyzed within the marriages of Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver and the marriages of their siblings, especially in the marriages of the Gleggs, the Pulletts and the Mrs. Deanes. The relationship between spouses is one of the main concerns of the book, second only to the relationship between siblings, which will be dealt with later on (see Beer 117). The Tulliver children, Maggie and Tom are both influenced by their parents' marriage and struggle to adhere to the principles their parents live by. They both struggle to adhere to their principles, and both ultimately fail to realize the expectations of their families and found families of their own. George Eliot shows how "[m]arriage is the closest and most sustained point of contract between self and other that her society had prepared" (Beer 117). However, instead of focusing on the fulfilling aspect of marriage she focuses on the destructive force inherent in marital relationships. Thus the Tullivers, who lead such a troubled marriage, cannot instill the values that their children need to form healthy and happy unions of their own.

Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver's marriage is characterized primarily by its unequal distribution of power and authority. In the society of St. Ogg's patriarchy is a well-established concept and the Tullivers' relationship is deeply influenced by it. Mr. Tulliver is the head of his household; his material responsibilities and its consequences for his wife and family are a central aspect of the novel and show Mrs. Tulliver's dependence on her husband both in its fatal and beneficial character. On the one hand, Mrs. Tulliver is presented as a feeble woman who needs her husband's guidance because she is too weak to make her own decisions. Her husband retains her respect even after his failure only because of her dependence on him. On the other hand, Mr. Tulliver is not capable of caring for his family as he should. He not only fails to support his family financially, he also does not show his wife the respect and consideration she deserves. Mr. Tulliver looked to find a wife who would not question his authority and who would submits to his will in all things because of her love for him (see Landa 75). So Mr. Tulliver chose his wife because she suited his ideal of a wife. He frequently shows "the pride of a man who has a buxom wife conspicuously his inferior in intellect" (*The Mill on the Floss* 15). He values her for her appearance and her submissive character, not her intellect. Mrs. Tulliver

acknowledges that she “let[s] him have his say in everything […] and […] never contradict[s] him” (*The Mill on the Floss* 126) and indeed this proves to be Mr. Tulliver’s general attitude towards his wife. He does not care for her opinions and does not bother himself with her troubles and interests. For example, he “scold[s] down her burst of grief on hearing that the lawsuit was lost, by angry assertion that there [is] nothing to grieve about” (*The Mill on the Floss* 158), even though he feels grief at the loss of the mill as well. He does not want to deal with her feelings. In addition, her opinion frequently goes unheeded and the one time she does take action goes horribly wrong. She interferes in her husband’s lawsuit because she believes that previously “she had been too passive in life” (*The Mill on the Floss* 198). However, her appeal to Mr. Wakem only brings more trouble for her family; her ignorance and stupidity do not allow her to see her mistake. So the one time she takes action, causes more misfortune than her characteristic passivity. Her interference is understandable, if not excusable. She cares for her husband and wants to help him.

Her husband is the center of Mrs. Tulliver’s world; all she cares about is providing a home for him. That is why the loss of her household goods is so devastating for her. She loses “her treasures which had made this world quite comprehensible to her […] and she remained bewildered in this empty life” (*The Mill on the Floss* 223). Without her household items, she has no purpose. Mr. Tulliver’s financial failure makes it impossible for her to fulfill her marital duties. Since her husband does not rely on her emotionally, his dependence on her to provide their family with homely comforts is all she has to hold on to. So it comes as no surprise that Mrs. Tulliver is crushed by the loss of her household goods. She is so devastated by her loss that she allows others to take over her responsibilities at home. The family’s maid takes over the management of the household, while Mrs. Tulliver “submissively [allows herself] to be ordered about by a servant” (*The Mill on the Floss* 207). Like his wife, Mr. Tulliver is preoccupied solely with their material loses. While Mr. Tulliver is anxious for his wife and children, his primary concern is always his mill. This continues even after he has lost the ownership of it to Wakem. He cannot overcome this hurt, and sacrifices his family’s well-being to regain the mill. Obviously, these values are not in accord with domestic ideology. A husband who puts his own needs within the public sphere above the needs of his family is not a strong patriarch.

Equally his wife's sole preoccupation with the loss of her household goods is reprehensible. It is one of the ways in which Eliot shows how hollow such material concerns forced women to be, and how limited their sphere was through this kind of thinking. Instead of focusing on the needs of each other; they are lost in their egocentric preoccupation with their property (see Adam, 132). Afterwards, they are both caught in a life of deprivation and illness in which there is no longer any room for affection or socializing. They rarely receive visitors because no one feels comfortable in their dreary presence. Visitors are actually "glad to get away from them" (*The Mill on the Floss* 226). They cut themselves off from society and commit themselves only to their imminent material needs. Mrs. Tulliver accepts her husband's ill choices; her weak character does not allow her any other possibility. Her behavior teaches her children that they must continue to respect and submit to their father's authority, even if he is undeserving of such deference.

The greatest contrast between Mr. Tulliver and his brother-in-laws is the fact that they all deserve their wives respect. Mrs. Tulliver's sisters, Mrs. Glegg, Mrs. Pullett, and Mrs. Deane, are all married to successful men at the opening of *The Mill on the Floss*. In contrast to their youngest sister, they all married ambitious men who are capable and successful. For example, both Mr. Glegg and Mr. Pullet come from "cautious families who have accumulated wealth slowly" (Thale 131). Mr. Deane, who does not come from a well-established family, is a man who works his way up successfully and is thus later not only Tom's role model, but also his supporter (see Lee 146, Thale 131). In contrast to Mr. Tulliver, they all have the ability to support their wives and can accumulate more wealth and respectability in the course of the novel. So, "[n]o man [is] thought more highly of in St. Ogg's than Mr Deane" (*The Mill on the Floss* 48), who proves to be a great success at Guest & Co., one of the town's most important companies. All three husbands succeed in their marital duty of providing financial and economic support and their wives appreciate and respect them for it. Actually they expect nothing less from their husbands. Mrs. Deane, especially, does not "let her husband stand still in the world for want of spurring" (*The Mill on the Floss* 48). In addition, their husbands' highly regarded positions allow these wives to lead respectable lives and to wield some influence within their community. Mrs. Tulliver is excluded from this circle of distinguished

women because of her husband's failure. While "their husbands buy [th]em everything" (*The Mill on the Floss* 31), she must deal with Mr. Tulliver's economic failure. The Dodson family characteristically consists of strong women, who assert their authority over their husbands clearly. In contrast to Mrs. Tulliver, her sisters believe that their husbands need their interference. Mrs. Glegg for instance states: "I know how it is with husbands – they're of putting everything off – they'll put the dinner off till after tea, if they've got wives as are weak enough to give in to such work" (*The Mill on the Floss* 41). She voices the attitude that in some instances husbands need to submit to their wives. Actually, Eliot rarely shows these husbands in complete control of their wives; the only exception is when these men are shown in their public positions. However, within the private sphere their wives exert their experience and power.

Interestingly, Mr. Glegg, Mr. Pullett, and Mr. Deane depend on their wives much more than Mr. Tulliver does on his. So, for example, the only social connections these husbands have are the connections to their wives' family. Mrs. Glegg, Mrs. Pullett, and Mrs. Deane not only govern the lives of their husband at home, they also dictate their husband's social ties. The men may have control over their business in the public sphere, but their image within society is controlled be their wives. So, when Tom comes to speak with Mr. Glegg about his business idea, Mrs. Glegg immediately interferes: "And if my nephey's come about business, it 'ud be more fitting if you'd bring him into the house, and let his aunt know about it" (*The Mill on the Floss* 255). She asserts the right to be included in her husband's affairs, even if it concerns a business venture. The fact that the idea is Tom's only strengthens her interest. In contrast to Mrs. Tulliver, none of these sisters are weak or overly emotional. "[They] have virtually starved feelings into submission" (Adam, 126). Their preoccupation with the material aspects of their marital duties leads to an omission of their emotional involvement with their spouses. The husbands have gained unquestionably moral wives, who run their homes with great conscientiousness and who support their social standing and business endeavors with clear insight into matters.

The Dodson sisters are all guided by their preoccupation with the respectability and honor of their family name. Their propriety is represented by family wealth

and the family household and its trifles (see Myers 45, Nestor 136). “[T]he gloomiest of all prospects for a Dodson [is] the threat of a posthumous loss of respectability” (Nestor 136). Thus their contempt for those who do not adhere to these values is swift and unrelenting. The one who feels this most acutely is Mrs. Tulliver, because economic failure is the most disgraceful thing imaginable for the Gleggs, Pulletts, and Deanes. Since it is also her husband who fails in his support of his family, the Dodson sisters see their sister’s marriage as a failure. Mrs. Glegg is sure to tell her what they all feel: “The disgrace is, for one o’ the family to ha’ married a man as has brought her to beggary. The disgrace is, as they’re to be sold up. We can’t hinder the country form knowing that” (*The Mill on the Floss* 171). Since Mrs. Tulliver’s older sisters are all very cold and unemotional they are also unfeeling and unsupportive towards the Tullivers when they find out about their difficulties. Maggie reprimands them when they will not relieve Mrs. Tulliver of her pain by replacing some of her lost household items: “[Y]ou don’t mean to do anything to help my poor mother – your own sister – if you’ve no feeling for her when she’s in trouble, and won’t part with anything, though you would never miss it, to save her from pain” (*The Mill on the Floss* 173). They are not only unwilling to help, they also turn away from the Tulliver’s after they lose the mill. Due to Mr. Tulliver’s economic difficulties the relationship between the couples increasingly deteriorates.

> Uncles and aunts paid only short visits now: of course they could not stay to meals, and the constraint caused by Mr Tulliver’s savage silence, which seemed to add to the hollow resonance of the bare uncarpeted room when the aunts were talking, heightened the unpleasantness of these family visits on all sides, and tended to make them rare. (*The Mill on the Floss* 226)

So, in addition to their worsened social position, Mr. Tulliver’s anger towards his wife’s family is another reason for the increased estrangement between them. Mrs. Tulliver’s family only relents after his death.

After Mr. Tulliver’s death, his wife’s life is in the hands of her relatives. Tom only slowly acquires the means to support her. So during Mrs. Deane’s illness and subsequent death, Mrs. Tulliver takes her place in the Deane household and “manages the house beautifully” (*The Mill on the Floss* 295). As a widow she feels the lack of a husband profoundly. Mr. Tulliver’s inadequacies do not matter in this context. With this poor example before them, both Maggie and Tom did

not gain the abilities necessary to find a proper spouse. Their parent's failure is reflected in their own. Any choice of a man Maggie could have made would have disrupted her family deeply. Her sense of duty to her family is, however, different from her mother's. Maggie chose her duty towards her family and their respect over the respect and love of a man. Her mother's bad choices are not repeated in her. Eliot makes clear that Tom too, does not succeed by adhering to the patriarchal values his parent's marriage represents. He cannot be a supportive and successful husband like his aunts' husbands, because his persistent views on male superiority make him an inadequate spouse. Similarly Maggie's independence and unresolved quest for self-fulfillment does not qualify her as a wife. The flood ends both their futures abruptly, proving how futile their hopes and worries about the future were in the light of fate.

3.5 Marital Duty in *Silas Marner*

The predominantly negative effects of marriage omnipresent in *The Mill on the Floss*, are continued and elaborated in George Eliot's next novel *Silas Marner*. The most detailed relationship between spouses in this novel is the marriage between Godfrey Cass and his second wife Nancy. The more vital union however, is his first clandestine marriage to Molly. The whole plot revolves around the consequences of this disastrous marriage. Both women suffer through their marriage to Godfrey; he simply cannot be a husband a woman can depend on and who will respect her. The reasons for this can be traced to his moral upbringing. His own father was "untouched by that Victorian hypocrisy that prompted the husband to profess a reverence for his wife and the mother of his children – especially after her death" (Paxton 103). Godfrey shared this view to a certain extent. His father sees "himself as his wife's intellectual and moral superior, he patently fails to convey to his son the necessary moral lessons which will lead him to a harmonious and happy marriage" (Paxton 104). Both of Godfrey's wives suffer because of this exhibition of patriarchal power. In fact, Godfrey's character and concept of marital duty is just as central to the developments of the book as the life and troubles of Silas Marner, the main protagonist. Both men have influence on the young heroine, Eppie, whose marriage concludes the tale.

Molly's suffering can be directly related to the fact that her marriage to Godfrey is never openly acknowledged. Godfrey sees his marriage as something "which [belongs to] the privacy of [his] bitter memory" (*Silas Marner* 26). After he has abandoned his wife and child, he sees them as a part of his past; they do not have a place in his present life. He knows that revealing his marriage would mean "turn[ing] his back on that hereditary ease and dignity which, after all, was a sort of reason for living" (*Silas Marner* 27). Godfrey fears losing his position in society and his inheritance, and so decides to keep his marriage a secret. He ignores his duties without facing any consequences. He is only answerable to his own conscience. In this situation Molly's subordinate and powerless position is of course painfully obvious. Being considered a mother of an illegitimate child destroys her. She has no male protector because she has no socially acknowledged hold over her husband (see Brady 114). However, the negative image her drug induced death and the subsequent abandonment of Eppie draw of her, makes the reader abhor her almost more than Godfrey. Molly hates Godfrey because he does not provide her with the financial support and economic and social stability she desires: "*He* was well off; and if she had her rights she would be well off too" (*Silas Marner* 93). In the end the consequences of the marriage are much more serious for Molly than for Godfrey. She pays for their marriage with her respectability and later on her life, while he only sees his marriage to her as a "burdensome consequence" (Brady 115), which he is able to hide for years.

Interestingly, the marriage apparently took place out of sheer passion, a thoughtless decision made out of recklessness on both their parts (see Brady 115). Godfrey sees their marriage as "an ugly story of low passion, delusion, and waking from delusion" (*Silas Marner* 27) which he is only too happy to leave behind him. Their marriage, based solely on Godfrey's base, sexual needs and Molly's desire for a rich husband, is doomed to fail. She was deluded by Godfrey by his presents of "pink ribbons and [his] jokes" (*Silas Marner* 93) and charm. Eliot not only criticizes Molly's foolishness in falling for his charm, but Godfrey's immoral motivation as well. "Godfrey's private indulgence of his sexual instincts precipitates his fall and places the green paradise he dreamed of out of his reach […]" (Paxton 106). It is only later that Godfrey realizes the reality of his situation and what duties he now has. Instead of accepting them,

he ignores the existence of the marriage completely. Molly's death frees Godfrey from his quandary and leads to the formation of the unconventional family unit made up of Silas and Eppie. Godfrey allows this to happen. He is glad that the "ties [,] which robbed him of all wholesome motives" (*Silas Marner* 27), are severed by Molly's death. He denies his parental duty towards Eppie just as he denied his marital duty towards Molly. He does this only to win the wife he desires, Nancy Lammeter.

Before their marriage Godfrey and Nancy are preoccupied with and guided by their idea of an ideal marriage. Godfrey is sure that Nancy is the woman who will "be his wife, and [will] make home lovely to him" (*Silas Marner* 27), while Nancy only accepts Godfrey because she believes him to be an honorable man. She knows that he is "the young man of quite the highest consequence in the parish" (*Silas Marner* 83) and sees him as the perfect match for her. More importantly, she loves him and is sure that her love for him will endure for the rest of her life. Even after their marriage, their relationship is deeply affected by their preconceived conceptions of each other. Nancy, especially, is affected by her husband's and society's idealization. She is seen as the personification of the ideal woman and is used to acting accordingly (see Brady 11).

> She [has] the essential attributes of a lady- high veracity, delicate honour in her dealings, deference to others, […] refined personal habits […] and as constant in her affection towards a baseless opinion as towards an erring lover. (*Silas Marner* 80)

Godfrey and the whole community see her only as a valuable possession, worthy only of the best available man (see Brady 111). Still Eliot manages to show that this ideal is hollow. Godfrey is idealizing her excessively and she herself sees no other purpose in her life than to be someone's wife. "The situation at the outset of the novel, in which Nancy is living in self-imposed isolation […] thus symbolizes a 'loss' of her true female identity" (Dawson 157). This shows that Nancy can only function if she has the prospect of a fulfilling future. Everyone in her surroundings can only think of her as the future Mrs. Cass and she shares their view. That is why she feels so uncomfortable in Godfrey's presence at his home when their marriage seems unlikely since they meet in a "parlour where *she* might one day have been mistress, with the consciousness that she was spoken of as 'Madam Cass,' the Squire's wife" (*Silas Marner* 83). Since the only future she sees for herself is in being a wife

she needs the reassurance of an imminent marriage to function normally in her environment. This way the ideology of both marriage partners is criticized and the unhappiness in their marriage is foreshowed even before their wedding (see Paxton 105-106).

Godfrey and Nancy's false ideals and expectations thus play an important role in their bond. Because of them their relationship is not truly harmonious relationship. Eliot shows that such a marriage cannot exist if the partners have wrong images of each other, or do not understand each other well enough. Still, after marriage they are one, and suffer for each other's faults as if they were their own. Their union is overshadowed by Godfrey's secret first marriage and his knowledge of Eppie. Even though Nancy feels that "nobody has any occasion to find fault with Godfrey" (*Silas Marner* 113), she is unhappy about his conduct towards her. She notices that he is unhappy about something, but she does not know the source of his sorrow because he does not share his feelings with her. Godfrey had hoped that Nancy would be his moral compass, that through her he, too, would be morally upright and righteous (see Carroll, *Oracles* 194). But his past haunts him and his coldness towards her affects her negatively. Whenever Nancy tries "to see everything as Godfrey saw it – there came a renewal of self-questioning" (*Silas Marner* 135). Since she does not know the truth, she feels that his unhappiness must have something to do with her. All she can do is accept her husband's moods (see Brady 112). Quiet acquiescence to a husband's faults also occurs in another marriage in *Silas Marner*, namely in the marriage of Dolly Winthrop and her alcoholic husband. "She [too] unquestioningly submits to this predicament as if it were determined by nature" (Brady 110).

By the time that Eppie has grown up, their marriage has deteriorated. Their childlessness is a constant reminder of their unfulfilled dreams. Fate will not allow Godfrey the joys of fatherhood which he denied once before. Sadly, Nancy suffers for his misdemeanor as well. Her great wish for a child remains unanswered, but she ignores her own pain in favor of her husband's: "It was very different – it was much worse for a man to be disappointed in that way: a woman could always be satisfied with devoting herself to her husband, but a man wanted something that would make him look forward more" (*Silas Marner* 135). She feels that she has him to care for while he does not have anyone to

focus his efforts on. She knows that she is his only emotional support while he has no one who will inherit the fruits of his economic endeavors. She believes that "[i]t's natural he should be disappointed at not having any children: every man likes to have somebody to work for and lay by for" (*Silas Marner* 133). Their contesting views on adoption as a solution to their problem will be discussed later in the chapter on parental duty, yet it should be mentioned that their barrenness, Godfrey's secrets, and Nancy's unwillingness to adopt Eppie are the main sources of their marital problems. Nancy may have expected them to be a mutually supportive couple but Godfrey does not live up to the ideal that she had created of him in her mind (see Dawson 153). Once again Godfrey is unable to give a wife the support she needs. Nancy believes that if something troubles her husband it should trouble her as well: "It's only what he cares for that ever makes me low. I'm contended with the blessings we have, if he could be contented" (*Silas Marner* 133). All his troubles affect her equally, while she must deal with her sorrows alone. Even though he is forced by society to support Nancy materially, no one can force him to be her moral or emotional support. While his wife is guided by her morality, Godfrey proves that his only guide is his stubborn belief in his own good luck (see Paxton 115). The only moral code they share is the belief in patriarchal authority. Nancy tolerates her husband's moods because she loves and respects him. She always excuses his behavior: "'A man must have so much on his mind,' is the belief by which [Nancy] often supports a cheerful face under rough answers and unfeeling words" (*Silas Marner* 135). She accepts that there are things that trouble her husband, which he does not share with her. Nancy proves her loyalty to her husband when she finds out the truth on Eppie's heritage. She is not only willing to forgive him, but would also raise his daughter for him. She would do this to maintain the image of respectability which she and her husband portray for the community.

Eppie's reaction to their wish to live with them and her loyalty to Silas show how hollow Godfrey's values and even Nancy's ideals are. Eppie grew up in a home which contests their domestic ideals. Since Silas does not have a wife, he must contend with his household, and later with his daughter, all by himself. He manages his household easily and only needs a woman's input when it comes to his daughter. However, the missing moral guidance and support that a wife,

or any woman, can give is shown as essential for all the male protagonists. Silas needs the help of Dolly Winthrop and later of Eppie. Instead of seeing herself only as a subordinate wife and daughter, Eppie has had the chance to develop into an independent woman, willing and capable to make the right decisions for herself and her loved ones. In contrast to Maggie and Tom in *The Mill on the Floss*, she grew up in an emotionally healthy environment in which she could develop her strengths and realize her full potential. She grew up free from the pressure of a patriarchal father who abuses his authority. Free form the bindings of idealized feminine behavior that governs Nancy's life; she could develop her own moral code and sense of right. Her moral integrity, so different form Godfrey, is rewarded with freedom of choice, and she chooses the man she loves without false ideals and expectations.

4 Parental Duty

4.1 Victorian Conceptions of Parental Duty

After marriage Victorians expected to eventually assume the duties of parents. As soon as children were born, the dynamics between a couple changed and their marital duties towards their spouse were elaborated by maternal and paternal responsibilities. In the 19th century ideals about mother- and fatherhood were formed not just by social convention, but by religious doctrine and legal principles as well. The duties and loyalties attributed to mothers and fathers are a frequent theme within the works of both George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. By focusing on these duties they not only expose preconceived assumptions about gender roles, but also contend with the necessity of authority and responsibility in society.

Even though this chapter will mainly concern the relationship of parents with their children, it must be noted that parental duty in the Victorian age was strongly defined along gender lines and thus the importance of the relationship between mothers and fathers must not be forgotten. Of course this relationship was defined primarily along the lines of their marital relationship and the duties a couple assumed when they became parents should be seen as an elaboration of their marital responsibilities.

Since the father, as previously mentioned, ruled as the natural head of the household, the mother was expected to submit to his will not just in their

relationship, but also in the relationship with their children. Still it was seen as a mother's vocation and duty to raise and supervise children. Her responsibilities included "providing for the heath, happiness, and peace of all family members" (Thaden 51). This ideology also included the idea that she herself had no such needs (see Thaden 51). In addition, Victorians were convinced that a woman's moral superiority over men predestined her to ingrain morality and goodness in her children. However, her subordination to her husband made this difficult.

> Victorian mothers were caught between, on the one hand, an ideology which made them responsible for their children's moral and spiritual education and claimed that their influence and responsibility were infinite, and on the other, legal and social customs and demands which […] undermined any authority that mothers might manage to create, and in general made it impossible for mothers to fulfill their new ideological role. (Thaden 141)

The dynamics between husband and wife thus influenced their roles as parents greatly. A man retained the right to infringe on any decisions his wife made within the home, even though ideologically it was seen as her proper sphere.

Despite the fact that the mother was seen as the primary caretaker of children, a father played a vital role in child rearing as well. "Authority, guidance and discipline [were] viewed as central to the father's role. Masculinity, after all, was essentially about being master of one's own house, about exercising authority over children as well as wife and servants" (Tosh 89). Thus discipline was just as much a father's concern, as was deciding on the education children were to receive (see Davidoff and Hall 331). The home was seen as a haven from the outside world and the father was the only person who also had a place in this public sphere. So it was his responsibility to protect his family from the threats this sphere could contain (see Tosh 85-86). "According to this construction, it was for the father to bear unpalatable truths unaided, maintaining his wife and children in carefree happiness" (Tosh 85). This ideology could cause great problems, especially when the family was threatened economically. This was especially dramatic if the father failed in his duty of protection and financial provision and his family did not discover this until they were faced with the harsh consequences his failure caused.

Resistance to parental authority, especially to paternal authority, was rare. Since children depended on their father economically, his influence only

diminished when they left home (see Davidoff and Hall 333). For sons this occurred when they established their own homes, which required not only an independent income, but usually also a wife. Daughters were expected to pass from the authority of their father directly to the authority of their husband. As a wife or daughter they "subordinated themselves totally to the wishes of the master of the household and by doing so won universal praise" (Roberts 63).

Victorian parents were faced with a rapidly changing social and economic situation in the 19th century. Their primary concern was to raise their children and to support them as they grew up. As conditions changed so did the demands on parents. Family ideology put great emphasis on the duties of parents to raise children fit to become a productive part of society. The primary concern here was of course providing children with the knowledge and education they would need in adult life.

A mother was seen as the ideal person to implement proper conduct and to provide emotional support (see Davidoff and Hall 335, 340). The perceived natural aptitude of a woman to deal with emotions predestined her for this maternal role (see Davidoff and Hall 335). Ideologies about femininity, however, caused some difficulties in reality. Female moral authority and passivity clashed with the need for respect and understanding. Practical support was just as vital as moral support and a mother was expected to provide both without turning towards anyone for support (see Davidoff and Hall 342). In reality, governesses, relatives, and servants shared the duties of childrearing as well (see Davidoff and Hall 335). The role of the father was just as pivotal.

Since working conditions changed in the course of the 19th century, so did a father's position within his home. His duties towards his children remained centered on his economic support and his function as a respectable, strong role model (see Davidoff and Hall 335). Children were seen not just as a man's "obligation but also a delight" (Davidoff and Hall 330). A father supported his children and could expect their love and loyalty in return. This marks a stark contrast to a mother, who was perceived as self-sufficient and who did not need this emotional compensation from her children. In this context one becomes aware of the discrepancy existent between ideology and reality. Equally unsatisfying is the definition of a father whose only duty is economic support. A

father could still instill moral and social values in his children just as much as a mother could provide sound practical knowledge about the world.

As already mentioned education was a critical point in childrearing. Since a father was meant to provide rational instruction, he generally had the right to choose what education his children received (see Tosh 91-92). He retained this prerogative not only because he paid for it, but also because he was the only one deemed capable of choosing the occupation for his sons and the one who had the greatest influence on the future of his daughters as well (see Davidoff and Hall 331). So during the 19th century it generally remained "the father's prerogative to choose the son's profession and very few rebelled. To do so would not be financially prudent" (Roberts 63). For daughters education was increasingly marked by women's call for education. Still, raising daughters to become respectable and marriageable women remained a primary concern for parents. "The child who was successfully raised to the point of a good marriage or a respectable occupation brought social reputation to the [parents]" (Tosh 101).

Emotional investments were vital in the relationship between Victorian parents and their children. Gender ideologies of course played a distinctive role in the perception of proper emotional involvement with children. Since a woman was seen as more emotional than a man, it followed that a mother was much more emotionally involved with her children than the father was. Motherhood was a vocation and maternal instincts were seen as ingrained into the nature of every woman (see Davidoff and Hall 335). However, the ideal Victorian mother was not just a moral role-model, she was also defined as a weak, passive and tender individual. In reality such a woman can hardly be strong enough to raise children to be independent individuals. Fathers in turn, did not limit their involvement with their children to mere economic and disciplinary support. In reality they, too, took "a loving interest in their children's lives" (Davidoff and Hall 329). The emotional involvement of a father generally matched the affections of a mother. Still one perceptible difference was the predominant ideal of how the treatment of sons and daughters should differ. This included how much affection towards sons and daughters was perceived as adequate and proper.

One predominant fear was that too much emotional involvement and indulgence could make sons too weak to develop into strong men. Similarly, daughters were expected to become sensitive to the emotional needs of others. For these reasons, affections towards daughters were to be expressed and their sensitivity to be nourished. Sons were to be raised to appreciate rationality and to only see emotional investment as an added bonus to be enjoyed from women: their mothers, sisters, and eventually wives and daughters. For this reason affections from mothers towards sons were acceptable while fathers were expected to restrain themselves. They could show their “tender, indulgent side to their daughters” (Tosh 115) and their rational authority towards their sons. This way they could act as proper role models for their children. A mother was expected to limit her emotional investments as her sons grew older, so that they could develop properly while daughters could learn from their mother’s self-less love and devotion to her husband and children.

Despite these ideological limitations, bonds between parents and their children were strong. Generally both sons and daughters remained within their parents’ homes until they formed their own families. This way it was easy for parents to become reliant on their children and the roles they played within the home. For this reason, parents frequently struggled with the prospect of having to let their children go. However, the opposite could be true as well. Parents might also feel threatened by the presence of their children as they grew up and developed. A son who might turn out to be more successful than his father was seen as a threat to the father’s dominance in his own home. In a similar fashion, a daughter might outshine her mother in her devotion and support of the men in the home. These struggles and fears could strongly affect the emotions parents felt for their children.

It is not surprising that the Victorian family was not free of discord and problems. One of the main reasons for this was the fact that the ideal of parental responsibility and love could not match reality. Limiting oneself to the gendered expectations and duties was hardly possible. Individual characteristics and traits could easily cause a father to encroach on a mother’s duty and vice versa. In addition, the authority given to a father and a mother respectively was riddled with ambiguity (see Tosh 79). A mother was supposed to manage the home, but any real power remained with her husband. “As the

general character […] of father and mother, became more polarized, there was less tolerance for paternal behaviour which appeared to encroach on the maternal role" (Tosh 87). Still, politically and socially she was powerless. Her subjection in reality stood in stark contrast to her supposed moral superiority.

The ideal Victorian family as a social institution was thus hard to maintain. The loss of a parent, childlessness, and other unexpected incongruities unsettled the picture of the ideal family. If a family lost a parent, the other parent was faced with the difficulty of either replacing their spouse with a new parent or having to fulfill the role of both mother and father. With the inflexible ideals about gender it is easy to understand that the Victorians could not imagine a parent to be able to fulfill both roles sufficiently. A new spouse was seen as the best solution. If a couple did not have children at all, their union was seen as incomplete. As already mentioned, the purpose of marriage was procuring children, so barrenness was seen as a failure. Women who did not have children were seen as not fulfilling their sole vocation in life, while men "without children suffered a loss of masculine status" (Tosh 80). Social expectations on couples were high and childlessness could mean social isolation as couples grew older.

Equally devastating was the fact that not all parents were able to support and manage their children. "Since expectations of [economic] support were the main strand in defining the good father, economic failure was often seen as personal failure entailing a loss of respect and thus manhood in a man's own as well as his children's eyes" (Davidoff and Hall 334). If a father failed, it could become the sons' responsibility to support the family. Similarly, a mother might not always be able to maintain the ideal image of the selfless devoted mother. She too, could suddenly depend on the support of her children.

The following chapters will demonstrate how George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell explored these difficulties and ambiguities within their novels. Their views on parental duty are made clear when they show the difficulties of Victorian parents who face these responsibilities and challenges. They both show how their protagonists deal with the duty of parenthood in a world which defined it as a natural vocation and strictly gendered experience. However, their responses differ according to their individual concerns and priorities.

4.2 Parental Duty in *North and South*

The parents in *North and South* are all deeply involved in the lives of their children. The most important parents have already been discussed in the chapter on marital duty. The Hales and Mrs. Thornton count among the most prominent characters in the novel. They are all parents who take their responsibilities seriously. Their duties toward their spouses are extended by their paternal duties, which come to define them much more than their marital duties could. In addition, it is important to note that Gaskell links parental duty directly to John Thornton's duty towards his workers. This link makes it possible for Gaskell to make inferences about social responsibility, by showing how the duties of parents, especially the duty of a father to guide and support his children, can be associated with an employer's duty towards his workers.

Within the Hale family, Mr. Hale's religious doubts and subsequent decisions cause not only the displacement of the family, but also mark the beginnings of the novel itself. His failure as a strong head of the family initiates his daughter's growth towards independence and is thus essential for her development. The moment he voices his decision to leave the Church, he also hands over the reins of the family to his daughter. While he attempted to shield his family from his worries, all revolving around his professional duties outside of the home, he still adheres to the expectations of male authority. It is his failure to deal with the consequences which marks him as too weak to hold authority within his family. Margaret has to act as his replacement (see Pike 89). At this moment Mr. Hale shows his greatest weakness and depends on Margaret for support and help. "Mr Hale also lets Margaret take action. And her actions are by no means confined to the private sphere. [S]he is the one to exert the masculine power her father is unable to demonstrate" (Drautzburg 48). His demands of her drain her considerably, but he has managed to raise a daughter strong enough to live up to the challenge.

Their situation calls for much practicality and management, not only on Mr. Hale's part, but especially on his wife's. However, she too cannot fulfill her daughter's expectations. Her weakness makes it impossible for her to meet her marital and maternal duties towards her family. Like her husband, she relies on her daughter's skills to take her place. Mrs. Hale is too weak to take action and

Margaret is glad to be of use. “Mrs. Hale overpowered by all the troubles and necessities for immediate household decisions that seemed to come upon her at once, became really ill, and Margaret almost felt it as a relief when her mother fairly took to her bed, and left the management of affairs to her” (*North and South* 54). Margaret must also remind her father of the necessity of making exact plans for their removal to Milton. He has no sense for the more practical details and leaves these to Margaret since his wife is unable to apply herself to them. Despite these handicaps, Mrs. Hale does give Margaret some support and guidance. When they are settled in Milton, she is the only one preoccupied with Margaret’s appearance for her first dinner party because she knows how important Margaret’s attire will be for the impression she makes on this society. Here it becomes obvious how limited Mrs. Hale’s sphere of influence is. Her preoccupation with dress and appearances is a typical female stereotype; however it is a way for the feeble mother to feel needed. Mrs. Hale may not be able to accompany her daughter, but it is important for her to feel like a part of her daughter’s life. She needs this time with Margaret, even if the help she provides is so minimal and Margaret’s attention to her advice more of an indulgence than anything else. “Her only pleasure now in decking herself out was in thinking that her mother would take delight in seeing her dressed” (*North and South* 188).

Despite this superficial interest in Margaret, Mrs. Hale generally lacks the emotional capacities to care for her children. On the one hand she is so preoccupied with her own worries and pains that she does not recognize Margaret’s needs. On the other hand she is blind to Frederick’s faults because she idealizes him (see Thaden 57). When Margaret asks her mother about the mutiny on board her brother’s ship, she makes it clear that she is convinced of his innocence. “[H]e did right Margaret. They may say what they like, but I have his own letters to show, and I’ll believe him, though he is my son, sooner than any court-martial on earth” (*North and South* 13-124). She makes a point to outwardly express her interest in her children, but Margaret is still left to wonder at the sincerity of her mother’s words. She doubts that her mother really cares for her because they spent many years apart while Margaret stayed with her relatives in London. After her return she craves any small sign of affection from her mother.

> It was a comfort to Margaret about this time, to find that her mother drew more tenderly and intimately towards her than she had ever done since the days of her childhood. She took her to heart like a confidential friend – the post Margaret had always longed to fill […]. Margaret took pains to respond to every call made upon her for sympathy […]. (*North and South* 122)

The estrangement this separation caused takes its toll on the parent-child relationship. Their relationship is strained and shows how Gaskell started to explore the effects of separation on mother and daughter, which would find a much fuller and more devastating realization in *Wives and Daughters*. Mrs. Hale is aware that she is not always the mother Margaret needs. However, the main reason for this feeling is her bad health and soon the knowledge of her fatal illness causes her to worry about Margaret's future and the threat of not having a mother to look out for her. For this reason she turns to Mrs. Thornton for help: "My child will be without a mother; - in a strange place – if I die – will you" (*North and South* 285). Weakened, she is not able to voice her request fully and Mrs. Thornton is free to define her own promise, which is solely to "be a true friend, if circumstances require it" (*North and South* 186).

In contrast to his wife, Mr. Hale seems unperturbed by the long separation from Margaret and feels no qualms about soon relying on her in his time of need. The distance between Mrs. Hale and Margaret is probably one of the reasons for the exceptionally close relationship between Margaret and her father. Mr. Hale adores his daughter and is proud of her strong will and intelligence. He knows that he has to rely on Margaret occasionally, but he still feels that he must act as her guide and advisor in some instances. He is the only one who points out Margaret's often snobbish ways, anticipating her reaction to John's past and even making sure she knows that she may have something in common with Mrs. Thornton. "I fancy Mrs. Thornton is as haughty and proud in her way as our little Margaret is in hers" (*North and South* 107). His daughter's reply seems to be an often repeated answer. "Take notice that it is not my kind of haughtiness, papa, if I have any at all; which I don't agree to, though you're always accusing me of it" (*North and South* 107). Margaret is obviously not insulted by her father's criticism, but rather relishes this old argument and the fact that her father knows her so well. Mr. Hale raised his children to respect his authority, but he raised them to be strong and independent as well (see

Bodenheimer 286-287). He believes that “a wise parent humours the desire for independent action, so as to become the friend and adviser when his absolute rule shall cease” (*North and South* 141). This way Margaret and Frederick can be his equals as adults and he can rely on their opinions and help when he needs it. Gaskell uses this analogy for the relationship between the workers and mill owners and thus makes a social statement when showing how this approach positively influences Margaret and eventually John’s workers. However, one fault remains within their relationship.

Again and again Mr. Hale is unable to comprehend Margaret’s emotions and needs. True to Victorian ideology, he is unable to read her emotions correctly because he is a man. He needs hints and clues from others to learn to understand his daughter. After hearing hints about Margaret and John’s affection for each other, he is surprised to have them confirmed by Margaret. After her confession he is still unprepared for Margaret’s deeply emotional reaction. “But, on stroking her cheek in a caressing way soon after, he was almost shocked to find her face wet with tears” (*North and South* 406). Despite the fact that he is not always able to comprehend his daughter’s emotions, which she often hides so well, he takes care of her, if he notices that she needs him. When she is distressed about Frederick and the lies she told to protect him, her father realizes that something is amiss and tries to console her. “[H]e was so uneasy about Margaret’s pallid looks. […] He made her lie down on the sofa, and went for a shawl to cover her with. His tenderness released her tears; and she cried bitterly” (*North and South* 340). He may not understand the reasons for her distress, but he tries to alleviate it nonetheless. Just as she is always his unhesitating aid, he too stands by her unquestioningly. Their relationship is marked by an unusual equality, an equality which Margaret later seeks in her relationship with men. Only a man like John Thornton, who respects her like her father did and who sees her as his equal, will do (see Drautzburg 49).

The other parents which need to be considered are Mr. and Mrs. Thornton. George Thornton’s economic failure and death have already been mentioned. With his death, he left all parental duty to his wife. Instead of marrying again, Mrs. Thornton takes this responsibility and raises John and Fanny alone. She is not a weak feeble woman unable to assume control of her life and has no

problems in the role as the head of the Thornton household. John does not question her authority within the home (see Mulvihill 346). “[H] never thought of interfering in any of the small domestic regulations that Mrs. Thornton observed, in habitual remembrance of her old economies” (*North and South* 168). Mrs. Thornton is a capable woman who is not only her children’s’ moral guide, but also their teacher in rationality and business. She is justly proud of her son and seems to thrive from his trust and reliance in her.

Mrs. Thornton sees no need to indulge her children endlessly. Even though “there is innate sympathy as well as deep affection” (Duthie 96) between her and her children, she is above all a realist. For this reason she recognizes and accepts Fanny’s weaknesses (see Drautzburg 46). She knows that Fanny is not independent like her and though she criticizes her, she also accepts her faults. Unlike Mrs. Hale, who only sees what she wants to see in her children, Mrs. Thornton remains realistic about their capabilities, although her pride occasionally mars her judgment. She appreciates John much more because he is more like her and she can understand him better than her daughter. She sees his success as her own. Gaskell shows how limited a woman’s chances in a world in which all a mother could do was live out her dreams of economic independence through her son (see Brown 354, Thaden 58). When John’s mill fails Mrs. Thornton is devastated and struck at how ill he looks in the face of his failure.

> Such a strange, pallid look of gloom was on it, that for a moment it struck her that this look was the forerunner of death; but, as the rigidity melted out of the countenance and the natural colour returned, and she saw that he was himself once again, all worldly mortification sank to nothing before the consciousness of the great blessing that he himself by his simple existence was to her. (*North and South* 508)

She can only console herself that it was not his success that made her happy, but his existence in her life. Her love for him is unwavering because for her “[m]other’s love is given by God […]. It holds fast and unwavering” (North and South 249). His economic success may have been what defined John as a man, but it is not what made him a good son. Still, as a role model Mrs. Thornton is not shown as sufficient for John’s development. Even though her influence is not diminished by it, Mr. Hale’s advice is important for John’s development as a successful mill owner.

Interestingly, Mrs. Thornton also acts as a maternal role-model for Margaret. Her resolve and steadiness, especially during the strike of the mill workers, show Margaret how a respectable woman in Milton is expected to behave (see Colby 58). As already mentioned, Mrs. Thornton promises Mrs. Hale to help Margaret, but only under her own conditions. She words her promise very carefully:

> I promise that in any difficulty in which Miss Hale […] comes to me for help, I will help her with every power I have, as if she were my own daughter. I also promise that if ever I see her doing what I think is wrong […] I will tell her of it, faithfully and plainly, as I should wish my own daughter to be told. (*North and South* 286).

Mrs. Thornton's reluctance is mixed with her delight at being able to criticize the woman who broke her son's heart. "She had a fierce pleasure in the idea of telling Margaret unwelcome truths, in the shape of performance of duty" (*North and South* 287). Despite the malice of her intentions, she voices issues which Margaret needs to consider, if she wants to keep her honor within the society she lives in. When Mrs. Thornton reprimands Margaret for being seen walking with a young man at night, Margaret realizes that the secret of Frederick's presence has caused the Thorntons and others to think she has a secret lover. Margaret is deeply insulted, but at the same time the idea had never come to her. Mrs. Thornton makes Margaret realize what John thought of her. She clearly states that she only interfered because Mrs. Hale asked her to, otherwise she would want nothing to do with Margaret. "For your mother's sake, I have thought it right to warn you against such improprieties; they must degrade you in the long run in the estimation of the world, even if in fact they do not lead you to positive harm" (*North and South* 376). Mrs. Thornton's animosity remains rooted in the fact that she fears John's attachment to Margaret. She is jealous and feels that Margaret is not worthy of her son. Mrs. Thornton's greatest fear is losing her position within her son's home and heart (see Lansbury 45). She relies on John's economic support and fears the consequences of his marriage. In the end she will surely realize that John's affection and respect for her are so great and unwavering that her fears were unfounded.

It is striking that both Margaret and John experience the loss of a parent and are none the poorer for it. While Mrs. Thornton makes sure that her son still has

every chance in life despite the failure of his father, Mrs. Hale herself tries everything to make up for her own weakness and eventual absence. It is the parent who remains alive and must face the challenge of raising children alone, who must become an anomaly within Victorian society. Assuming both the role of father and mother for one's offspring is a difficult task, made more difficult for Victorian parents who had to face the stringent assumptions about proper gendered behavior and spheres of capabilities and action. In Mrs. Thornton, Gaskell shows how strong and successful a woman can be, when faced with widowhood and with children to raise, while also revealing how the Hales, though lacking the ideal Victorian characteristics of mother and father, could raise willful children, who are willing to stand up for the things they believe in and the people they love.

4.3 Parental Duty in *Wives and Daughters*

In *Wives and Daughters* Gaskell provides her readers with profound studies of parent-child relationships. She not only shows the difficulties of biological parents, but also focuses on the effects of losing a spouse and remarriage on a parent's responsibilities. The parents of the two main families in the novel, the Hamleys and the Gibsons, are deeply aware of their parental duties and mostly strive to do the best for their children. Their affections and expectations are closely linked to their own perceived responsibilities towards their children. Gaskell shows how easily misjudgments can cause rifts within a family and how profoundly a parent's misguided conceptions of duty can influence his or her offspring. The parents' duty to provide a stable and safe environment for their children is emphasized and put to the test in each parent-child relationship within the novel. "[Gaskell] takes therefore, as her range, the various situations in which this sense of security is frail, may be endangered or is absent, and concentrates her attention on the ways in which the behaviour of her characters is affected by the upbringing they have received" (Wright, *Reassessment* 54). Every parent in the novel fails in their duty, but this failure does not necessarily mar their children or destroy the parent-child relationship. Through various examples, *Wives and Daughters* offers an insight into the endless possibilities of parental affection and responsibility and shows how diverse the bond between parents and children can be.

In contrast to *North and South* this novel's fathers, Squire Hamley and Dr. Gibson, are both strong and capable men, who deserve the respect their families give them. They are both aware of their duties towards their families, especially towards their children, and do not shy away from asserting their authority. They may have their personal weaknesses and may be misguided in some of their decisions, but they never exhibit the kind of weakness and dependence which characterized Mr. Hale. Squire Hamley is especially conscious of his social status and his representative role in society and his family. He firmly believes that "not a family in the shire is as old as we are, or settled on their ground so well" (*Wives and Daughters* 50). He values, above all, status and respectability, and thus expects his family's acquiescence to all his decisions. His sons and wife generally submit to his will, even though Osborne's secret marriage goes against anything his father would be able to accept.

Mrs. Hamley's special relationship with her husband has already been noted. She submits to her husband's will about their sons' education and future and is primarily concerned with her husband's wishes, rather than her sons' needs. Still, she is their moral guide and embodies the bond which holds the family together. When she is fatally ill and confined to her bed, Roger expresses his fears of her absence. "My mother would have brought us all right, if she's been what she once was" (*Wives and Daughters* 182). As the only woman in the family, she took all the emotional stress and turmoil upon herself and saw it as her duty to comfort, console, and mediate for the men in her family.

> Quiet and passive as Mrs Hamley had always been in appearance, she was the ruling spirit of the house as long as she lived. […] Her children always knew where to find her; and to find her, was to find love and sympathy. Her husband, who was often restless and angry from one cause or another, always came to her to be smoothed down and put right. (Wives and Daughters 220)

Mrs. Hamley may be the emotional and moral center of her family, but she is also partial in her affections (see Lansbury 113). She invests most of her maternal affections in Osborne and later even in Molly, but Roger always comes last to her mind. To Molly, Mrs. Hamley even remarks that "Roger was never to be compared with [Osborne]" (*Wives and Daughters* 58). Her lack of appreciation for the things he values, like nature and science, seems to limit her affections, just as she loves Osborne for his poetic talent because she can

appreciate it. Roger appears to be so reliable und self-sufficient that she feels she can project all her emotions on Osborne, who seems to be less stable and in need of more maternal care. She even admits that she would be of more use as a mother of a daughter because “a mother does not know boys” (*Wives and Daughters* 170). And indeed she is much more attuned to Molly’s needs than to Roger’s or even Osborne’s.

Her husband has made all decisions about his sons’ futures for them and must face the consequences of these choices in the course of the novel. Neither of his sons is suited for what his father had envisioned for them and the Squire can hardly come to terms with his disappointment. “Squire Hamley, who has an obsession about his family dignity, pins his hopes of the restoration of the Hamley prestige on his elder son Osborne, who is considered by all to be brilliant: the younger son Roger is regarded as only a steady plodder” (Wright, *Reassessment* 205). Osborne is favored by both his parents; their treatment of the two is defined by Osborne’s position as the firstborn heir. For instance “[Mrs. Hamley] would always have [Roger’s] rooms cleaned afresh before [he] came home. If it had been Mr Osborne, the whole house would have had to be done; but, to be sure, he was the eldest son so it was but likely” (*Wives and Daughters* 73). The whole household feels they must treat Osborne with more deference than Roger. While the Hamleys expect the best of Osborne, anything Roger does is seen as merely adequate. “He is a good, steady fellow, though, and gives us great satisfaction, but he is not likely to have such a brilliant career as Osborne” (*Wives and Daughters* 58). When Roger is successful and able to support himself financially and Osborne seems to be only waiting for his inheritance, Squire Hamley is deeply troubled. Neither of his sons fulfills his expectations.

After all, the Squire has, as the head of the household, control over the family’s income. This is a constant source of dispute between Osborne and his father. Money and family legacy, in the shape of Osborn’s choice of a wife, are constant issues between them. Their arguments show how dependent Osborne is on his father’s good favor and how powerless he really is in any of their disputes. On the issue of Osborne’s choice of a wife his father’s outburst is quite clear: “Go against me in what I’ve set my heart on, and you’ll find there’s the devil to pay, that’s all” (*Wives and Daughters* 387). The bitter irony of the

situation is that Osborne has secretly already gone against anything his father would have wanted. After Osborne's failure at Cambridge and his continued failures to establish a career for himself, their relationship is permanently damaged. The two are never reconciled and their mutual affections are buried under misunderstandings and hurt pride. "There's an unspoken estrangement between him and Osborne; one can see it in the silence and constraint of their manners; but outwardly they are friendly – civil at any rate" (*Wives and Daughters* 199). After Osborne's failure, it becomes obvious that Squire Hamley is unable to treat his sons equally. After always neglecting Roger in favor of Osborne, he now finds only praise for Roger and scorn for his older brother. Like his wife, he is unable to divide his emotions equally. Dr. Gibson's remonstrations that "we may praise one, without hitting at the other" (*Wives and Daughters* 329) go unheeded. In the end it seems that the Squire may love his sons, but he does not really know them. He must come to the realization that "[m]ore than half their life is unknown to [him]" (*Wives and Daughters* 349).

The parents in the Gibson household have the same problem. Neither Dr. Gibson nor his second wife, Hyacinth, really know or understand their daughters. The family dynamics are further complicated by the fact that both brought their almost fully grown daughters into their marriage. Before their union, both were single parents trying to raise their daughters alone. With their marriage, the relationship with their own biological daughter is shaken dramatically while they each also have a step-daughter to contend with. The rearrangement of the Gibson household is a central aspect of the novel, as the parents and children adjust to the new circumstances and attempt to arrange their responsibilities and positions within their new household.

Dr. Gibson finds himself in a precarious situation when Molly starts developing into a young woman. While she was still a little girl, he felt sure in his authority over her education and upbringing. The two share a strong bond and an "altogether confidential friendship" (*Wives and Daughters* 28). As is his paternal duty, he shelters her from the outside world and its threats (see Spencer 131). The formal education she receives is also regulated by her father. His instructions are clear: "Don't teach Molly too much; she must sew, and read, and write, and do her sums;[…] and if I find more learning desirable for her, I'll see about giving it to her myself" (*Wives and Daughters* 29). His conventional

Victorian views limit Molly's education and she has to struggle to be allowed to widen her horizon (see Colby 91). "Her father offers little or no encouragement to her scholarly pursuits, and only Roger discusses her studies with her" (D'Albertis 156-157). This way, it becomes obvious that Dr. Gibson has done both harm and good (see Colby 92-93). Molly receives some formal education, but her father does not encourage her to learn more. He succeeds in ensuring that his daughter is raised to the proper standards of conduct and education, but feels that as a man he cannot provide her with the necessary guidance as she develops into a young woman. Because of his occupation, he is "so much away that he could not guard her as he would have wished" (*Wives and Daughters* 49). Even though Molly never feels the lack of a mother, Dr. Gibson comes to see it as his duty to provide her with a mother to guide her. "*Wives and Daughters* shows that [this] imagined 'duty' to replace the mother must be undertaken with great care since the fact that there is nothing Molly can learn from her weak and unprincipled stepmother indicates that just any mother will not do" (Pike 136).

Hyacinth Gibson lacks any of the supposedly natural qualities of a mother. In fact, Martin is right in describing her as Gaskell's "most devastating picture of a Victorian mother" (301). She is as unaware of other people's emotional needs, as of her own faults. This affects her daughter especially since Gaskell makes it clear that "the key word of Cynthia's childhood is *neglec*t" (Berke and Berke 97). The emotional distance between them is presented as the result of "the perhaps necessary separation of mother and child [which] had lessened the amount of affection the former had to bestow" (*Wives and Daughters* 125). While Hyacinth only superficially voices emotional outbursts, Cynthia really regrets her inability to truly love and admits that she "never seems to care much for anyone" (*Wives and Daughters* 196). In contrast, Hyacinth is predominantly preoccupied with her own material needs and comfort. Her greatest interests lie in outward appearances and respectability. This explains why she hesitates when her mothering practices are questioned since she "was not quite sure to which 'sort' of mothers the greatest credit was to be attached" (*Wives and Daughters* 55). Obviously her main concern is how people will interpret her actions and words.

Mrs. Gibson also has no interest in morality or educational pursuits, which makes her former occupation as a governess and teacher only more

unfathomable. Her disdain for education is obvious when Molly observes that "[o]ne of the few books she had brought with her into Mr Gibson's house was bound in pink, and in it she studied, 'Menteith, Duke of, Adolphus George,' etc. ect." (*Wives and Daughters* 246). She is clearly more interested in aristocratic connections and gossip, than she is in literature and learning. Even though she allowed her daughter some formal education, it appears she only did so, to be rid of her. Her disdain for the girls' learning is obvious when she reprimands Molly: "But there's no need for you to set up to have an opinion at your age" (*Wives and Daughters* 263). In reality she scorns Molly's intellectual pursuits, as much as she envies Cynthia her youth and intellect. She has no comprehension of the former and only jealousy for the latter.

After Hyacinth and Cynthia join the Gibson household, nothing seems to go as Dr. Gibson planned. The new Mrs. Gibson is unable to fulfill her duty as a moral guide for Molly, just as she is unable to be the kind of wife her husband wants. However, Molly does profit from her influence to some extent. Only through Hyacinth's influence does Molly learn the value of outward appearances and proper conduct. Like Mrs. Hale in *North and South*, Mrs. Gibson is aware of the impact appearances can have. She soon "had already fidgeted Molly into a new amount of care about the manner in which she put on her clothes, arranged her hair, and was gloved and shod" (*Wives and Daughters* 161). She has the kind of superficial consciousness of society which Molly lacks and comes to learn from her. In addition, it is Mrs. Gibson who makes sure to establish Molly's social standing and worth.

> [To do this she puts] Squire Hamley in his place [, since] the squire is only too willing to appropriate Molly when he or his wife feels the need for some daughterly affection, but he repeatedly insults Dr. Gibson by insisting that his sons must look higher than the doctor's daughter when seeking wives. Mrs. Gibson helps claim a social importance for Molly that [even Squire Hamley must acknowledge]" (Langland 143).

Dr. Gibson's role in all this is merely quiet acceptance and financial backing. He does not intrude on his wife's prerogative to introduce the girls into society, even when he sees how unhappy Molly is with the situation. Mrs. Gibson is strongly aware that everyone expects her to treat her daughter and step-daughter equally, which is why she is resolved to invest the same time and money in each of them. Her reason is simply that she could not stand people's

reactions if she was caught “petting [her] own child, and neglecting [her] husband’s” (*Wives and Daughters* 164). She takes what she perceives as her responsibility seriously; however she sees her duty primarily as the obligation to help Molly and Cynthia find husbands. So her reaction to Cynthia’s unwillingness to immediately give in to Mr. Henderson’s suit is symptomatic: “Why, don’t you see we are doing all we can for you; dressing you well, and sending you to London; and when you might relieve us of the expense of all this, you don’t” (*Wives and Daughters* 532). For Mrs. Gibson, the primary maternal duty is to give a daughter a chance to find a suitable husband. She wants to have complete control over this endeavor. So “Cynthia and Molly [looking] their best, [is] all the duty Mrs Gibson absolutely required of them” (*Wives and Daughters* 238). Actually considering their feelings does not even cross her mind. Even though she is not truly emotionally involved with the two girls, she is at least equally reticent in her interest in them. The same cannot be said for Dr. Gibson, who never expresses the same amount of interest in Cynthia as he does in Molly. Interestingly, Gaskell does not seem to expect him to; Cynthia’s affection and respect for him are based solely on his economic support of her and not on any emotional investments on his part.

The most striking difference between Dr. Gibson and Mrs. Gibson is their concept of proper parental affection. While Dr. Gibson tries to hide his affection towards Molly behind his sarcasm, Mrs. Gibson only expresses interest in Cynthia because it is deemed necessary. The emotional and material investment of both parents have influenced their daughters’ upbringing considerably. Molly profited from her father’s upbringing in a secure and affectionate environment while Cynthia is deeply wounded by her upbringing in an environment “of pretense, of insecurity and the sense of being unwanted” (Wright, *Reassessment* 223). Despite the good influence Mr. Gibson and Molly have on Cynthia, she is permanently damaged by her mother’s treatment. For this reason, Molly can forgive her father for his bad choice in a wife while Cynthia is never able to forgive her mother (see Bonaparte 67). Similarly, Roger never resents that his parents favor Osborne. In the end Mrs. Gibson’s failure as a parent is the most prominent in the novel because she does not learn from her mistakes, like the Hamleys and Dr. Gibson. They are able to redeem themselves by accepting their children’s strengths as much as their

weaknesses and by recognizing that they themselves are not free of imperfections.

4.4 Parental Duty in *The Mill on the Floss*

The Mill on the Floss is primarily concerned with the childhood and adolescence of Maggie and Tom Tulliver. Thus it comes as no surprise that the parents of these two characters play a vital role in the novel. The other parents in the novel are treated only marginally and usually rather in their functions as siblings or adversaries of the adults of the Tulliver family. Most prominently, the elder Wakem is essentially Mr. Tulliver's adversary, but he is also a man whose actions are guided by his considerations for his son Philip. Together these parents provide deep insight into George Eliot's views on parental duties and responsibilities. In this novel the parents find themselves in difficult situations, in which their individual strengths and weaknesses determine the fate of their families. Eliot uses their failures as parents to show not only the deficiency of Victorian ideology concerning parents, but also how destructive and oppressive this ideology could be. Parents who are successful in raising their children and fulfilling their duty towards them are so rare in the novel because Eliot wants to emphasize the difficulties of parenting instead of its rewards. This marks a stark contrast to both *Silas Marner* and the two novels discussed by Elizabeth Gaskell. In these novels, parental duty is not only a difficulty but also closely linked to fulfillment and satisfaction.

During his life Mr. Tulliver enjoys the unquestioned control over his family. However, he proves to be undeserving of their deference and obedience. "[He] is far from a model of Christian forbearance, either in his attempts to retain control of the source of his livelihood or as a model of virtue for his children" (Kilroy 125). Furthermore, the loss of the mill and Mr. Tulliver's subsequent failure to support his family show not only his family's absolute dependence on him, but also his own weakness. "Mr. Tulliver's tragedy is that, in spite of so much generosity and commitment to life, he has so little control over himself that he cannot cope with life" (Thale 132). Even though he often lacks control over himself, he still retains all power over his family. He sees it as his right to upbraid Tom, even when his son is not at fault. Their savings to repay their debt are a constant source of argument. Mr. Tulliver is full of disdain for his son:

“Only a hundred and ninety-three pound […]. You’ve brought less o’ late – but young fellows like to have their own way with their money. Though I didn’t do as I liked before I was of age” (*The Mill on the Floss* 283-284). Tom ignores such comments and quietly works on repaying his father’s debts. By showing how his family continues to submit to his will and temper, Eliot not only challenges a father’s control over his household, but also men’s control over the world in general. The consequences of undeserved reverence are unappreciated self-denial and hardship. Tom and Maggie do not resist their father’s authority, yet Maggie does see how harsh her father’s demands are. Strikingly, Maggie and Tom react quite differently to their father’s demands for a family oath against Wakem. “Worse than [his obvious] weakness, Mr. Tulliver abuses his parental authority in forcing his son to swear revenge on those who have harmed him, an action that Maggie recognizes as improper and morally reprehensible” (Kilroy 125). Even though she recognizes that her father is demanding too much, she ceases to argue and acquiesces to his will. Her loyalty towards her family, especially her father, remains unbroken. Tom’s only comment is “I shall write it” (*The Mill on the Floss* 217). He remains detached and simply yields to his father’s authority with “gloomy submission” (*The Mill on the Floss* 216).

Even though Mr. Tulliver does everything in his power to prepare his children for the future, the choices he makes are guided by false assumptions and misconceptions about his children and their needs. “Mr. Tulliver is willing to give Tom a [good education,] but he takes no notice of Tom’s particular talents and imagines his son’s future entirely in egocentric terms” (Paxton 73). His greatest fear is that Tom will take his place at the mill and will thus rob him of any purpose in life. His choices for Tom’s education are guided by this fear and Tom is trained for something Mr. Tulliver has no understanding of. Mr. Tulliver sees it as his duty to provide Tom with some form of education which would allow him to survive outside of the family business. Tom must eventually turn to his uncle for professional guidance because his education has not prepared him adequately for the opportunities open to him. The loss of the mill changes his prospects because from then on he and his father must do everything to retake ownership of the mill. When Tom succeeds Mr. Tulliver shows greater affection towards him than ever before. “Tom never lived to taste another moment so delicious as that” (*The Mill on the Floss* 286) moment in which his father

showed his pride towards his son. Tom's success in business and his reacquisition of the mill are, however, attributed more to his own resoluteness than any preparation by Mr. Tulliver. Similarly Maggie only receives limited formal schooling which does not prepare her for her prospective adult life. "It is important that Tulliver does not look upon this as a deprivation of the girl, and he certainly does not act form any malevolence towards his daughter" (Spittles 88). He is indeed proud of his smart daughter and even enjoys showing off with her. Mr. Tulliver's restricted knowledge about the world, which he by no means acknowledges, does not allow him to prepare his children for the world, as would be his duty. He only prepares Maggie "for wifehood and middle-class leisure" (Paxton 78), even if their economic reality does not bode well for such an opportunity for her. Rather, he chooses to protect Maggie from anything which could harm her to an extent which makes her fully unprepared and vulnerable to outside influences.

Mrs. Tulliver's utter submission to her husband has already been noted. She acknowledges that her opinion does not count for much in her family: "No, I know you won't let your poor mother speak …. That's been the way all my life …. Your father never minded what I said …. It 'ud have been o' no use for me to beg and pray …. And it 'ud be no use now, not if I was to go down o' my hands and knees …." (*The Mill on the Floss* 211). Even if her husband lets her speak, he hardly ever considers her opinion when making a decision. She is the embodiment of a weak mother who relies on her husband's guidance in all things and who feels that she has only a subordinated role in the upbringing of her children. Tom and Maggie "must mature either without her […] help or in spite of her" (see Peck MacDonald 68). In fact, she is so preoccupied with her own woes that she is only too willing to overlook the hurts and needs of her children. In one instance Maggie cuts her hair in a willful act of anger as a child. Afterwards her father sees the humor of the situation while her mother is more concerned with her relatives' opinion. So it comes as no surprise that Maggie would rather turn to her father for comfort because he shows his affections for her without reprimand. "Maggie never forgot any of these moments when her father 'took her part;' she kept them in her heart and thought of them long years after, when every one else said that her father had done very ill by his children" (*The Mill on the Floss* 52). Her father may fail in his economic responsibility, but

he is always concerned about his children's' emotional needs. Their mother hardly ever finds the strength to do so. So she is only too happy to note Maggie's changed conduct when her daughter starts to live according to the teachings of Thomas à Kempis, but she does not question the reasons for it. "Her mother felt the change in her with a sort of puzzled wonder that Maggie should be 'growing up so good;' it was amazing that this once 'contrairy' child was become so submissive, so backward to assert her own will" (*The Mill on the Floss* 237). Since she is guided by the criticism she faces from her own sisters and the condescending behavior of her husband, she feels like a failure as a mother and as a wife. She is surprised by the change in Maggie because she knows that she herself has had no part in it. Her affections towards her children are in fact guided by how well her children fulfill the expectations she and others have of them. So she prefers the changed Maggie to the rebellious young girl Maggie was before.

> Eliot's most basic criticism of Mrs. Tulliver concerns her intellectual and moral failings as the mother of a domineering son and an unconventional daughter. Mrs. Tulliver assumes that Tom's preeminence over his sister and other women is natural, and her passive maternal affection for him prevents her from adequately disciplining his egotism. (Paxton 72-73)

Mrs. Tulliver focuses on Maggie's faults while she ignores those of Tom. She does everything for her son, just as she does everything she can for her husband. Still, even after Maggie has apparently lost her respectability and returns to her family "Mrs. Tulliver accepts her daughter for herself, without criticism or question, even though the worst possible fate for a Victorian woman has apparently befallen Maggie" (Martin 306). Her love for her daughter allows her to forgive, just as she forgave the mistakes of Maggie's childhood. "The only thing clear to her was the mother's instinct, that she would go with her unhappy child" (*The Mill on the Floss* 394). Her maternal instinct is awakened by her daughter's need, but the fact remains that her irresolute character did not make her a strong moral role model for her children. In fact, when Maggie finds herself in moral turmoil, her thoughts are for Tom and his reaction rather than for her mother. Mrs. Tulliver may be a very moral and upright mother, but she is too weak to see and act against any threats and problems her children face. She can only turn towards them in comfort afterwards (see Martin 310).

Similarly, her husband is too weak as a masculine role model to help and aid his children in the more material necessities of their lives.

Despite their faults, Mrs. and Mr. Tulliver are affectionate parents who are loving and want only the best for their children. This is just as true for the education Maggie and Tom are provided with, as for the time the parents devote to them. Still, Mr. Tulliver feels more affection for his daughter than for his son while his wife clearly prefers Tom. This becomes obvious when the family's fortune changes. After losing his lawsuit against Wakem, all Mr. Tulliver wants is Maggie. "There was a craving which he would not account for to himself, to have Maggie near him - without delay – she must come by the coach tomorrow" (*The Mill on the Floss* 158). After his accident he only recognizes his daughter and only craves her company. Similarly Mrs. Tulliver clearly favors her son. When she worries about the imminent bankruptcy and the subsequent loss of her household goods, this becomes obvious.

> Oh my boy, my boy! […] To think as I should live to see this day! We're ruined …. everything's going to be sold up […]. You'll never have one of [these knives], my boy […] and I meant 'em for you. I wanted you to have all o' this pattern. Maggie could ha' had the large check – it never shows so well when the dishes are on it. (*The Mill on the Floss* 163)

Here she makes clear that Tom's needs come first in her mind, Maggie must make do with what is not good enough for her brother.

Considering a child's needs and providing for its future are central aspects of parental duty in *The Mill on the Floss*. While the Tullivers, well-meaning but ineffective, fail in providing their children with the necessary upbringing, other parents appear to be more successful. Despite their success, however, they are not truly satisfied with their achievements. Wakem, the most prominent example, does everything to provide a sound education for his son Philip, although he knows that this education might well be in vain. Due to his deformity, Philip will never have the chances his siblings have. For this reason Wakem makes additional provisions for him by buying the Tullivers' mill. "[T]his purchase would, in a few years to come, furnish a highly suitable position for a certain favourite lad whom he meant to bring on in the world" (*The Mill on the Floss* 205). Interestingly, it is Philip's weakness which makes his father more concerned and affectionate while parents like the Tullivers criticize and even feel less affection because of their children's weaknesses. But even Wakem is

not free from the fault of favoring one child over the others. “[H]e was said to be more tender to his deformed son than most men were to their best-shapen offspring. […] [B]ut towards [his other sons] he held only a chiaroscuro parentage, and provided for them in a grade of life duly beneath his own” (*The Mill on the Floss* 205). In contrast to the Tullivers, Wakem’s affection and duty are not nurtured by his children’s unquestioned love and submission. Philip does not feel the kind of loyalty towards his father that the Tulliver children do. Tom and Maggie love and respect their parents and do not want to defy them while Philip feels that he has the right to judge for himself and so makes his own choices accordingly. For this reason he has no qualms about meeting Maggie against their parents’ wishes: “I would give up a great deal for my father; but I would not give up a friendship – or an attachment of any sort, in obedience to any with of his that I didn’t recognize as right” (*The Mill on the Floss* 243). If he has to openly defy his father to do what he feels is right, he is willing to accept the consequences.

When Philip confesses his feelings for Maggie and his wish to marry her to his father, their confrontation is characterized by Wakem’s anger and Philip’s calm and resolute demeanor. Philip argues that his father’s affection did not require him to sacrifice “all [his] chances of happiness to satisfy feelings of [his father’s], which [he] can never share” (*The Mill on the Floss* 344). Philip does acknowledge his father’s authority, but he refuses to bow to it. He cannot make decisions only based on his father’s feelings. When his father threatens to stop his financial support Phillip only replies “No: I can’t marry Miss Tulliver, even if she would have me – if I have only my own resources to maintain her with. I have been brought up to no profession. I can’t offer her poverty as well as deformity” (*The Mill on the Floss* 344). Philip’s education has been equally futile as Tom’s, however, Wakem raised a son who has his own mind and asserts his independence despite his dependence in reality. Thus Wakem’s influence on his son is diminished by his own accomplishments as a parent. In fact, Philip is able to convince his father to accept Maggie as a possible daughter-in-law and even has his father’s support in his suit. Philip is right to observe that his father “had an affectionate wish to give [him] as much happiness as [his] unfortunate lot would admit” (*The Mill on the Floss* 344). His father may be angry and insulted by Philip’s choice, but he cannot bear to stand in his son’s way.

Mr. Wakem succeeds in raising a capable son and knows that parental duty also involves sacrifice of one's own feelings for the well-being of one's child. The Tullivers, however, prove to be loving parents who fail in their duties and only slowly come to realize the worth of their children. Their own interests always come before those of their children, which is the reason why they cannot succeed as parents. They never question what truly motivates their children, both in their devotion to their parents or in their individual development. The Tullivers do not fail out of lack of affection or concern, but because of their deficient characters. Eliot uses these parents to show the social pressures on individuals who cannot meet the expectations of their dependents, who are the ones who really suffer the consequences of their elders' defects.

4.5 Parental Duty in *Silas Marner*

Eliot approaches failures and rewards of parenthood once again in *Silas Marner*. Here the skirting of parental duty is as relevant as the question of biological attachment and parental loyalty beyond the blood bond. The background and family upbringing of Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner has shaped their conceptions of parental duty, just as much as Nancy Cass's ideological commitments shape her conduct and ideas about parental duty and family loyalty. Their lives are linked through Eppie and the duties they owe her. Eliot uses Eppie's character and her decisions to reveal their failings and successes as individuals and as parents.

Interestingly, neither Godfrey nor Silas are presented as strong, authoritative father figures. Instead, it is Godfrey's father, the old Squire, who is the embodiment of all negative characteristics associated with the Victorian father. He has the "self-possession and authoritativeness of voice and carriage which belonged to a man who thought of superiors as remote existences" (*Silas Marner* 58). The old Squire is thus in complete control of all those around him and is outstandingly critical, spiteful and cruel towards them. His cold-heartedness and rigidity has poisoned his home and the characters of his sons Dunstan and Godfrey (see Auster 220). His criticism of his sons' weaknesses, though understandable, is underlined with malice. Eliot presents his negative influence as the source of Dunstan's and Godfrey's defects. He never showed any interest in their upbringing and left them to their own devices, which led to

idleness and wasteful living. Godfrey “always had a sense that his father’s indulgence had not been kindness, and had had a vague longing for some discipline that would have checked his own errant weakness, and helped his better will” (*Silas Marner* 61). Unfortunately, their father’s faults are amplified in his sons to an utter disregard of responsibility. The two are dependent on his good graces, resent him for it, and cheat him behind his back. While Dunstan gambles and does not even shrink from committing a crime, Godfrey is completely egoistical and relies solely on his good luck and chance. At the core of Eliot’s criticism of Godfrey lies the fact that he does not rise above his father’s faults, like Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, but succumbed to even less awareness of his duties.

Eliot presents the lack of a mother in the Cass household as an essential cause for the rift between the old Squire and his sons. Their home is “without the presence of the wife and mother which is the fountain of wholesome love and fear in parlour and kitchen” (*Silas Marner* 20). The lack of maternal influence is also presented as a reason for Godfrey’s lack of moral integrity (see Paxton 103). As already mentioned, the old Squire had no respect for his wife while she was still alive and he has instilled this disregard towards women in his sons. Her absence in the home has left a gap which none of the remaining family members acknowledge. Without her “[t]he Cass family […] is deficient in the ties of love and affection, and these ties are absolutely essential to strengthen the individual in his confrontation of reality” (Carroll, *Oracles* 193). Therefore Godfrey has no concept of what it means to be married or how to act as a responsible father. He feels no qualms about abandoning his first wife and daughter. Eliot shows that this lack of parental support has left Godfrey incapable of fulfilling his own responsibilities. The old Squire may have succeeded in raising a son fit to be his heir, but he has failed in instilling any moral principles in his sons. In *Silas Marner* Eliot sternly criticizes fathers whose only support of their children is economic. While *The Mill on the Floss* focuses on the consequences of economic failure, this novel shows how profoundly destructive nothing but economic involvement with children can be. However, Godfrey’s initial failure as a father goes much deeper than this.

After Molly Cass’s death, Godfrey is not only unwilling to provide for his daughter economically, but, more significantly, also unwilling to acknowledge

her as his legitimate offspring. He leaves her to Silas only too willingly. His only contribution to her is a small amount of money, “a sign that he estimates the meaning of paternity in economic terms” (Paxton 106). However this is merely to alleviate his conscience, not to ensure her survival. He convinces himself that he will “see that it was cared for: he would never forsake it; he would do everything but own it” (*Silas Marner* 103-104). Godfrey’s thoughts show that he is convinced that occasional monetary support will be enough to fulfill his parental duty. And indeed he helps to “build up the new end o’ the cottage, and give[s them] beds and things” (*Silas Marner* 121). He is only willing “to see that [Eppie] was well provided for. [For him t]hat was a father’s duty” (*Silas Marner* 115). His attitude only changes when he and his second wife Nancy remain childless. Since he is unwilling to admit that Eppie is his real daughter, he believes that adopting her would be the best solution. He does not reckon with his wife’s rigid beliefs and morality on the subject of their childlessness, however. “Godfrey seeks to repair [their childlessness] through the adoption of Eppie, but Nancy’s providentialism denies him this compensation. Their lack both unites and separates them” (Carroll, *Interpretations* 158). Nancy knows that Godfrey is disappointed with their childlessness because he makes it clear that “he always counted so on making a fuss with ‘em” (*Silas Marner* 133). For this reason “Nancy’s deepest wounds had all come from the perception that the absence of children from their hearth was dwelt on in her husband’s mind as a privation to which he could not reconcile himself” (*Silas Marner* 135). However, she, too, feels the lack of children keenly, but has come to deny herself the chance to feel “a longing for what was not given” (*Silas Marner* 135). While Godfrey sees their childlessness as a punishment for his refusal to acknowledge Eppie, Nancy sees it as God’s will. She feels that she has deeply injured her husband when she did not agree to adopting Eppie. Still, she would rather deny Godfrey than anger God. ”To adopt a child, because children of your own had been denied you, was to try and choose your lot in spite of Providence […]. When you saw a thing was not meant to be, said Nancy, it was a bounden duty to leave off so much as wishing for it” (*Silas Marner* 136).

Silas Marner, who comes to be Eppie’s adoptive father, lacks the family ties and loyalties that govern Godfrey and Nancy. His origins are obscure, even to him. This lack of any family ties marks him as an outsider in Raveloe because the

people feel that you cannot know "a man […] unless you at least knew somebody who knew his father and mother" (*Silas Marner* 3). The people of Raveloe mistrust and avoid him. So instead of seeking human contact, he focuses solely on the acquisition of money, and soon treasures his gold above everything else. When this money is taken from him by Dunstan, his sole purpose in life is taken from him. This loss brings him "face to face with the reality of the human situation" (Carroll, *Oracles* 201) and makes him realize his own emotional needs. Instead of leaving him devastated, fate brings him Eppie as a replacement. She takes the gold's place both in his heart and in his mind. "This instinctive affection is all that remains to Silas" (Carroll, *Oracles* 201); from then on, Eppie is the center of his affections and concerns. Interestingly, Silas takes her for his dead sister Hephzibah when he first sees her and later even names her after her. He immediately associates her not only with his lost money, but also with a loved one he has lost. She awakens in him "old quiverings of tenderness" (*Silas Marner* 96), which he had long suppressed and thought gone forever. His chance at happiness, however, is only possible because of the fatal failings of Eppie's mother, Molly Cass. Molly's failure is essential for Silas's future, just as it is for Godfrey's.

Molly Cass, abandoned by her husband and addicted to opium, loses all grasp on reality. Her nightly journey with Eppie to find Godfrey is both vain and dangerous. All she craves is the numbing effect of the drug and a desire to expose Godfrey. She has no conception of the danger that the cold night is to her and Eppie.

> She needed comfort, and she knew but one comforter – the familiar demon in her bosom; but she hesitated a moment […]. In that moment the mother's love pleaded for painful consciousness […] rather than to have the clinging arms benumbed so that they could not feel the dear burden. (*Silas Marner* 93)

Molly loses this struggle: the desire for the drug is stronger than any maternal instinct she might have. Soon afterwards she lies down in the snow and never rises again. Eppie then makes her way to Silas's home. Even while she was alive, Molly could not care for her child. This is made clear when little Eppie cries for her mammy during her first days with Silas "without expecting either tender sound or touch to follow" (*Silas Marner* 105). Still, as Eppie grows older, she will continue to think of her mother because she feels that "a mother must

be very precious" (*Silas Marner* 128). She never forgets her mother's fate. Here "Eliot insists on the psychological primacy of the mother, while […] she demonstrates how Eppie thrives in being raised apart from her biological mother and father" (Paxton 109). This quiet appreciation for a mother shows that a daughter's love can forgive the failings of a mother. Nevertheless, it also shows how easy it is to idealize something or someone who is no longer part of one's life.

It is striking that Eppie provides something for Silas which nothing else ever has. She gives him a purpose, which incorporates him into Raveloe society (see Carroll, *Oracles* 201) Even though he is still a mystery, he is also an accepted part of the community. With Eppie at his side "Silas met with open smiling faces and cheerful questioning, as a person whose satisfactions and difficulties could be understood" (*Silas Marner* 113). Interaction with him is no longer guided by fear and distrust. So, Mrs. Winthrop has no qualms about giving him clothes for Eppie and even comes to be her godmother. As such she helps Silas to raise Eppie and is a female influence for her. She teaches her all the little household chores that Silas has no knowledge of: "I could [teach] her to scour, and mend, and the knitting, and everything" (*Silas Marner* 107). Still it is Silas who assumes full parental responsibility for her. He just wants to ensure that Eppie has everything she requires.

This preoccupation with Eppie's needs and a willingness to learn is unique in the parents considered here. And indeed his approach to and concern with parenting succeeds. It is striking that Eliot chooses to show this interest in child rearing in a man and in someone who is not a biological parent. Silas seems to feel that his lack of a biological tie with Eppie is a hindrance, yet with the help of Mrs. Winthrop he learns all he needs to know to raise Eppie. Eliot makes clear that childrearing is neither a female vocation nor something solely dictated by biology. The ability to raise children is ingrained in all humans who are lovingly devoted to a child and willing to accept parental duty for it. The minute Eppie comes through Silas's door he sees her as his. He is immediately possessive of her and unwilling to share her: "[S]he'll be *my* little un. […] She'll be nobody else's" (*Silas Marner* 107). Silas's affection for Eppie may be possessive, but it is also unconditional. He adores his little girl and comes to respect and love the woman she grows into. Silas feels the need to care for her deeply: "I want to do

things for it myself, else it may get fond o' somebody else, and not fond o' me" (*Silas Marner* 106). He wants Eppie to come to care for him as much as he adores her. And indeed Eppie adores him for his affections simply because she knows that she has "a father very close to her, who loved her better than any real fathers in the village seemed to love their daughters" (*Silas Marner* 128). Eppie thrives under his education and upbringing, which Spittles describes as "true leaning [namely] of the immediate, not a theoretic, world; from genuine curiosity, rather than an enforced regimen; and with a teacher who is able to respond to specific questions, and has a personal delight in the process" (101). It is Silas's absolute devotion and love for Eppie which makes it possible for her to develop into a sensible woman.

Their affection for each other is tried when Godfrey is willing to accept his parental duty towards her. After Godfrey's confession, Nancy immediately remonstrates her husband for not telling her sooner: "Do you think I'd have refused to take her in, if I'd known she was yours? […] O, Godfrey – if we'd had only had her from the first, […] our life might have been more like what we used to think it 'ud be" (*Silas Marner* 142). So it is Nancy who insists on the necessity of fulfilling Godfrey's duty towards Eppie. She proves to be the one who not only persuades him to confess all, but also makes him accept responsibility in the end. Since Eppie is Godfrey's biological daughter, Nancy then sees it as God's will that Eppie should live with them. She is convinced that Eppie's place is in their home and under Godfrey's authority. When they go to the Marner home the confrontation between the two fathers and Eppie's choice between them shows how deeply affected Eppie is by both their conduct. Godfrey, with the support of Nancy, claims his parental right to take Eppie and immediately also demands that Eppie fulfill her filial duty towards him. He declares: "I have a claim on you, Eppie – the strongest of all claims. […] She is my child – her mother was my wife. I have a natural claim on her that must stand before every other" (*Silas Marner* 147). Nancy, too, firmly believes in the ties of family blood and so feels "that a father by blood must have a claim above that of any foster-father" (*Silas Marner* 149). She stands firmly by Godfrey in his claims on Eppie. These claims are solely legal; their motivation for wanting her is guided by their desire to have a child and to allay their conscience. Since their childlessness has been the only major conflict in their marriage, both feel that with Eppie they

can lead a harmonious and peaceful life. Yet they do not really understand that parental duty is more than economic support. Godfrey, once again, only sees Eppie as someone he must support financially and not as a child who needs love and understanding. He sees his relationship merely as an interchange of commodities: he provides her with a home while Eppie must devote herself to his wishes in return. Neither Nancy nor Godfrey can imagine that family ties are not forged by blood but by affection and they must learn this in the interchange with Silas and Eppie.

Godfrey realizes that his legal claims are powerless against Silas's claims of morality and affection (see Reed 185). Silas courageously declares: "God gave her to me because you turned your back on her, and He looks upon Eppie as mine: you've no right to her!" (*Silas Marner* 147). Until this outburst, Silas's reaction to the Cass's demands is very subdued, although Silas is, as already mentioned, very possessive of her and he "would rather part with his life than with Eppie" (*Silas Marner* 137). His arguments against Godfrey are guided by "appeals to a superior Divine Authority" (Paxton 111), and his affection for Eppie gives him the strength to stand up against Godfrey and make claims of his own. The great difference between Godfrey and Silas is, however, that Silas does not demand anything of Eppie. He leaves her to decide between him and Godfrey. He trusts that Eppie will make the choice which will make her happy. And that is all that matters to him.

Eppie's chooses the father that has loved and raised her without hesitation. Through her "[Nancy and Godfrey are] made to recognize the impotence of parental authority without nurturing love" (Beer 132). Her biological father, who has done nothing to gain her affection, must console himself with the fact that she acknowledges him as her father privately. However, she will not give in to any of his demands. Her decision to stay with Silas is a choice for family ties guided by affection and not legal responsibility. She can "think o' no happiness without him" (*Silas Marner* 149). Her filial loyalty lies with Silas because he has proven worthy of it. Godfrey and his wife must accept that they "can't alter her bringing up and what's come of it" (*Silas Marner* 151). He does all Eppie will accept by making her home more comfortable. This way she has allowed him the kind of provision he envisioned as his parental duty, but she has retained

her independence of him. His attempt to stake his parental authority has failed; her loyalty and affection remain with Silas.

In *Silas Marner*, parental duty is shown as a vocation that is both fulfilling and vital to a person's well-being. Silas's parenthood gives him a purpose and a place within Raveloe while Godfrey suffers for his denial of parental duty. Silas's positive influence on Eppie proves to be stronger than her biological parents' heritage. Both men have their faults, but accepting Eppie as a daughter and fulfilling their duties towards her are vital for their happiness. Eppie's resolute and loving character shows that one can surpass the faults of one's parents. Her deceitful father and her weak mother have not hindered her to become a strong woman because she found a suitable surrogate father. The biological and legal claims of family are refuted, especially if they are undeserved. Godfrey and Nancy must bow to Silas's hold of affection over Eppie. This way bonds between relatives are shown to be just as liable to corruption as any others. Only bonds of true affection and reciprocated love are shown as capable of enduring time. Eppie is never guided by false feelings of duty, but by affectionate loyalty towards a father who is deserving of her devotion.

5 Filial Duty

5.1 Victorian Conceptions of Filial Duty

No other role was as heavily invested with the necessity of submission as the role of children in the Victorian family. Filial duty is a responsibility closely linked to parental duty, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Children are naturally dependent on their parents for survival, thus it comes as no surprise that their duty towards their parents should be invested with heavy expectations. For this reason filial duty makes a very rich topic which George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell explore elaborately in their works. Here they can link filial duty to the duty of the individual not only towards his parents, but towards society as a whole. Self-fulfillment is a vital factor here because the protagonists of these works must all assert their worth along with their right to define their responsibilities for themselves. These responsibilities start with their duties towards their parents, who are the first humans they owe loyalty to. At the same time the bonds to one's parents are also the first ties that must be severed to develop into a strong, independent human being.

The first lesson every Victorian child learned was that parents' will is law and that submission to it is a child's primary duty. The primacy of the father as the household head was just as relevant for children as the mother's nurturing and moral duty towards them. As long as children were young, the authority of parents over their upbringing and education was an accepted fact. Even as adults, especially unmarried adults, children, who still lived with their parents, were expected to follow their wishes. The influence of fathers and mothers in their children's lives was immense. As already mentioned, a father had the right to choose a son's profession for him while a daughter was dependent on her parents until she married. Rebellion was rare, simply because it was hardly prudent to cast oneself from the security of the family home (see Davidoff and Hall 346, Tosh 121). "Fathers controlled the purse strings, and hence were able to determine their [children's] disposable income, their access to education and training, and their place of residence" (Tosh 121). Submission to the head of the household was thus a necessity; disputes with parents could lead to great aggravations for children. Still, at some point almost every child was expected to leave the family home and assert his or her independence from their parents.

Independence is of course a relative term here because it does not apply equally to sons and daughters. In Victorian society, a daughter was of course expected to move from the authority of the father to the authority of her husband. For this reason, parents thought to prepare their daughters for courtship and marriage, only later did daughters also receive the kind of education their brothers enjoyed. A daughter's duty was to take what was given to her with gratitude and meekness. Her mother was expected to be her role model in emotional self-sufficiency and moral conduct. At home she provided her mother with support in her homely duties, just as she let her father enjoy her company and accomplishment. Her duties towards them prepared her to eventually run her own home and care for her own husband and children. However it was just as common for an unmarried daughter to remain at home and care for her parents indefinitely (see Davidoff and Hall 342, 346). Moreover, if parents needed the care of a child, a daughter was expected to give up her own chance of a family and care for her parents and possibly her siblings instead. In contrast to a daughter, a son was expected to become independent and self-reliant at some point (see Tosh 112-113). For this reason parents

wanted a son to take proper advantage of the education his father provided, just as he was expected to show appreciation for his mother's moral guidance. The advice and guidance of parents was not to be taken lightly and was to be shown the proper respect. Loyalty plays a vital role in the conception of filial duty. Children were expected to be faithful to their parents and consider their wishes and well-being in the decision they made. Here the issue of self-denial for the good of others is just as relevant as the question of how far authority may go.

But in parent-child relationships the exerted control is often misguided and must thus be questioned. If a parent is too weak for his or her duties, children must make do somehow. One solution was of course that one parent makes up for the weakness of the other. Another, which will be relevant here, is that a child must take his parents' place. Here gender played a key role. While "[s]ons were expected to be ready to take over as head of the family if necessary" (Davidoff and Hall 345), daughters would take over their mother's duty when she could not. "A father would sometimes prepare a motherless daughter to run his home for him as soon as she was old enough, often in her middle teens" (Davidoff and Hall 347). This way the family continued to run smoothly without the otherwise necessary intrusion of a replacement. The change in family dynamics which can result from such power relocation can either destroy families or tie them closer together.

While children could expect to receive both financial and emotional support and guidance from their parents, they were also expected to reciprocate these investments (see Davidoff and Hall 345). Interestingly, the failure of parents to provide the proper guidance or support for their children was by no means a reason to ignore one's filial responsibilities. Rather, sons and daughters were expected to make do with these faults and even try to compensate for them. Generally, a daughter was expected to learn by her mother's example and be a moral and emotional supporter for the men of the household. More than her brother, she was expected to devote herself to her parents' wishes and their well-being (see Davidoff and Hall 246). If her mother could not fulfill these duties, her daughter was expected to. She was given the feeling that she, too, could be a moral role-model and soothing influence. A son was seen as a source of pride for his parents. His contribution to the family was often seen in similar economic terms as his father's. As soon as he earned money, he was

expected to contribute to the family income, just as he would have to care for his family financially when his father might not be able to. A son was raised to the awareness that he, too, would someday be responsible for a household and if his father was unable, he was expected to take over his responsibility. Children's loyalty towards their parents and their continued support of them was seen as a repayment for the cares and investments of their parents. How willing children were to fulfill these duties was of course strongly influenced by how much they felt they owed their parents and how much affection they felt towards them.

Bonds between parents and children were of course strong when children lived under their parents' roof right until they founded families of their own. An unmarried daughter might well stay at home until her parents' death, and even an unmarried son would stay at home if he did not have the professional need to move away. Since setting up a home was closely tied to marriage, an unmarried son who left his parent's home without pressing reasons was the exception rather than the rule. Living together for so long of course affected the emotional ties between children and their parents. Children were expected to prove their affections toward their parents with obedience and reciprocal signs of affection. As children are wont to do, Victorian children strove to please their parents and generally they were not only "dutiful but loving towards their […] parents" (Davidoff and Hall 345). Respect for one's elders was just as important as indulgence when considering their needs. However, discord within a family could, of course, mar this image of the perfect Victorian family. Affectionate ties were by no means always the rule, though they were the aspired ideal. The bonds children formed with their parents lasted a life time and were expected to hold against any threats or differences that might arise. If they did not, emotional estrangement was the result. Separation could cause emotional deprivation and misunderstandings. The often too high expectations of parents or their unawareness of their children's needs, could further damage the parent-child relationship and the child's feelings of affection and loyalty.

Since gender roles also affected every aspect of Victorian life, the relationship children had with their parents was also infused with gender expectations. In addition to the already mentioned differences between sons and daughters, the divergent affections between parents and their male and female offspring

should also be considered. Interestingly, special bonds seem to have been expected to form between a son and his mother while a daughter was seen as more closely connected to her father. These special bonds could of course occur in reality; in literature they were idealized frequently or described as the result of the loss of the other parent. When looking at the relationship between a son and his father, the predominant emotions seem to have been pride in accomplishments and disappointment at failures. These reflect the expected involvement of a father with his son, who had to be prepared to succeed in a world outside of the private sphere. A daughter's relationship with her mother is equally invested with difficulty. Shifting moral values and expectations from life could easily cause rifts between mothers and daughters, who found that their family obligations revolved more around the men in their family than around each other.

Discord and resentment could easily arise because of lacking affinity or neglect. If parents did not fulfill their duty towards their children, children may not have felt inclined to fulfill their filial responsibilities either. Still, it was, as already mentioned expected of them nonetheless. This could cause resentment, often hidden, but of course some children voiced their disappointment openly as well. Parental weakness could have detrimental effects and frequently parents would have to depend on their children for support, which could disrupt the parent-child relationship considerably. But misuse of parental authority could have devastating effects. It could lead to utter submission or rebellion, both of which had damaging effects on children. This becomes most obvious when considering the necessity of self-sacrifice, which may have been acceptable, if it was for the greater good or a worthy reason, but questionable, when it was because of an undeserving cause or person. Moreover, the need for self-fulfillment, which could clash with the demands of parents, was the strongest test for filial loyalty. Equally important here was the extent of parental affection and how much parents were willing to demand of their children.

In the novels by George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell filial duty is shown to be a compelling responsibility, which each author deals with differently. Its close ties with parental duty are of course extremely relevant. Where one is insufficiently realized, the other must adapt accordingly. The necessity of sacrifice for the sake of family obligations is central to filial duty simply because parents stand

for the first authority any human encounters. Questioning the authority of parents who are undeserving of their children's devotion makes it possible to examine the justification of submission to any power one might feel indebted to. The complex intricacies of human affiliations are made obvious in these relationships because each one of them is unique yet still is indicative of Eliot's and Gaskell's conceptions of filial duty. Both use filial duty to show the complexities of human ties, which may or may not survive the trials and tribulations they face.

5.2 Filial Duty in *North and South*

The children of the Hale and Thornton families in *North and South* are lucky to have parents who are conscious of their parental duty. For this reason Margaret and Frederick Hale and John and Fanny Thornton take their filial duty towards their parents very seriously. They all feel that their parents deserve their respect and loyalty. Through these children, Gaskell shows how filial duty can be extended to the duty these individuals feel towards people outside of their family and society as a whole. The support of their parents, which has already been elaborated on, has helped them to find a place in the world in which they have a fulfilling purpose and bright future. With the exception of Fanny, their filial duty has shaped their characters since it is their primary motivation. Their parents' expectations and well-being are the guiding forces behind their choices and actions. In *North and South* Gaskell focuses on the positive influence these parental expectation can have, although even here the protagonists need to free themselves of their parents' influence at some point.

The pressure Margaret Hale is under, as soon as her father decides to leave the Church and remove the whole family to Milton, has already been mentioned. After her long absence from home, Margaret is suddenly faced with duties she has no experience with. "Within the patriarchal family, Margaret has been sheltered and protected from difficult decisions; the rearrangement of the family power structure is necessary before Margaret can begin to see her vocation in life" (Colby 49). Before this crisis, Margaret's stay in London only prepared her for a life of leisure, but in this time of crisis she finds the strength and resoluteness her father and mother lack. "[She] must manage the move from Helstone to Milton, convey to her mother her father's decision to leave the

family home, and provide emotional support for both parents left paralyzed by the prospects of this economic, social, and psychological disruption in their lives" (Brown 347). Faced with parents who are no longer able to stay in control, it is Margaret's filial duty to assume some of their authority and accept "the task of making decisions, as well as carrying them out" (Colby 50). It is relevant here that she by no means assumes complete authority over her parents and does not remain in this position for the rest of her parents' lives. Instead Margaret makes decisions as is required and always comes to her parents for approval of her plans and decisions. She acts with the knowledge that her parents are standing behind her with support and appreciation, even if they are too weak to take action themselves[2]. This is necessary because it shows that she lacks the confidence and ambition to take complete control. Her decisions and actions are always guided in the light of their approval, which she values above anything else. In the end, this trial proves that Margaret is able to fulfill both her father's and her mother's duties. Right at the outset of the novel, she exhibits the strengths and skills that will continue to grow throughout the following years.

In Milton, Margaret settles into a routine revolving around the needs and interest of her parents. Since she craves her mother's approval and affection, she is particularly eager to fulfill her duty towards her (see Bonaparte 169). Margaret feels the estrangement between her mother and herself keenly and hopes to remedy it through indulgence and sympathy for her mother's needs. Instead of having a role-model to look up to, Margaret has to assume the role of caretaker and housekeeper for her mother. She does all this gladly, in the hope of her mother's appreciation and attention. Because of Mrs. Hale's weakness, Margaret receives, as mentioned in the section on her parental duty, only limited attention. Still, Margaret craves these moments and is glad to be of assistance. The strain on Margaret increases when her mother is fatally ill. In this situation Margaret is her willing nurse. She has to meekly accept that all her mother really craves is Frederick. It is "the thought of him [which] upset[s] all her composure […] Wild passionate cry succeeded to cry – 'Frederick! Frederick! Come to me I am dying. Little first-born child, come to me once again! (*North and South* 152). Margaret endures this outburst and accepts that she is not the

[2] Pike rather sees Margaret as an orphan even before her parents' deaths because "she cannot count on any reasonable guidance and support from her parents (88).

person her mother wants at her side. She has no knowledge of her mother's preoccupation with her needs and her appeal to Mrs. Thornton on her behalf until her mother has already passed away.

Throughout her life, Margaret has a much closer bond to her father than to her mother. She is so attuned to his needs that she even reacts to them unconsciously. After her mother's death and the misunderstanding with Thornton, her life seems hollow and unrewarding. "[H]er life seemed still bleak and dreary. The only thing she did well, was what she did out of unconscious piety, the silent comforting and consoling of her father. Not a mood of his but found a ready sympathizer in Margaret; not a wish of his that she did not strive to forecast, and to fulfill" (*North and South* 409). Only later does she realize how exhausted she is from this task. Margaret feels guilty that her father's trip to Oxford and his resulting absence "set her up afresh, with new strength and brighter hope" (*North and South* 414). Despite her own woes she never loses sight of her father's needs. In turn, Margaret requires his approval and knows that her duty towards him is rewarded by affection and indulgence on his part. His weakness as a head of their family does not weaken her affection for him. John Thornton is touched by their seemingly unconscious signs of affection when Mr. Hale "took her little finger and thumb in his masculine hand, and made them serve as sugar-tongs. Mr. Thornton saw her beautiful eyes lifted to her father, full of light, half-laughter, and half-love, as this bit of pantomime went on between the two" (*North and South* 91). This scene not only shows how close Mr. Hale and his daughter are, but also how willing Margaret is to please him. She is always willing to comply with her parents' wishes and is willing to submit to their judgment.

Interestingly she also sees it as her duty to hide her own troubles and pain from them. After being injured during the strike of the mill workers, Margaret still considers her father's needs above her own.

> Mr. Hale […] wanted, as Margaret saw, to be amused and interested by something that she was to tell him. With sweet patience did she bear her pain, without a word of complaint; and rummaged up numberless small subjects for conversation – all except the riot, and that she never named once. (*North and South* 227)

Only after he leaves the room does "[s]he let her colour go – the false smile fade away – the eyes grow dull with heavy pain" (*North and South* 227). This

behavior is typical of her; she does not want her parents to have to worry and care for her. Instead, she repeatedly chooses to “keep her secrets and bear the burden alone” (*North and South* 340). This is especially true when she risks so much to have Frederick with them when their mother is about to die. She is rewarded for her trouble with her parent’s joy and an “exquisite sensation of relief which she felt in Frederick’s presence” (*North and South* 293).

Before his arrival Frederick seems to be an errant son, who does not deserve his parent’s appreciation. Even though his family idealizes him, the reader always doubts their high regard of him. “[The] references to Fred’s temper and impatience lead the reader to question the extent to which Captain Reid’s rule was actually tyrannical” (Pike 79). Frederick’s role in the mutiny remains ambiguous and his family forgives him because his actions were so deeply influenced by his high moral standards. Any ill judgment of his character thus seems unfair. Even though others have condemned him, his family never does (see Pike 78) Most importantly, his mutinous behavior has no parallel in his conduct towards his family. He is a dutiful and loyal son, who is deeply pained by the woes he has brought upon his parents through his erroneous ways. When Frederick returns, it is to a home filled with sorrow, and soon after, mourning. His very emotional reaction shows that he, like Margaret, has a very strong emotional tie with his parents, which has not suffered through their long separation.

> He understood his father and mother – their characters and their weaknesses, and went along with a careless freedom, which was yet most delicately careful not to hurt or wound any of their feelings. He seemed to know instinctively when a little of the natural brilliancy of his manner and conversation would not jar on the deep depression of his father, or might relieve his mother’s pain.” (*North and South* 293)

Like his sister he has an unconscious understanding of the emotional needs of his parents. He may have failed to become an honorable member of society, but has remained a loving son. He shares Margaret’s duty in caring for their parents and even feels no qualms about taking over the responsibilities of nursing and cooking, which is quite unconventional for a Victorian man (see Colby 57). This emphasizes his loving nature and devotion to his family. He shares these traits with the other son in the novel, John Thornton.

John Thornton has had a more difficult childhood than the Hale children. His father's failure and death left him and his sister Fanny without the protection of a male role-model. Despite his father's failure, John, like Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, sees it as his duty to repay his father's debts as soon as he is able to do so. "Long after the creditors had given up hope of any payment of old Mr. Thornton's debts […], this young man returned to Milton, and went quietly round to each creditor […] until all was paid at last" (*North and South* 100-101). Mrs. Thornton took their father's place in John and Fanny's upbringing valiantly, and they owe her the life they are able to lead. Through her guidance and support and John's own resilience he rose above their dire circumstances. John knows how much his mother had to fight to keep their family alive, and he is always careful to show her the appreciation and respect that he feels are her due. He has accepted her authority within the home as an adult and has gladly assumed his father's duty to care for his family's well-being. So for example, John insists on making his mother's journey to the Hale's more comfortable than her last journey in a cab. Even though she never complained John only replies: "No! My mother is not given to complaints […]. But so much the more I have to watch over you" (*North and South* 109). John is aware of the hardships his mother has overcome and now wants to repay her with as much kindness and extravagance as she will accept. Despite her inner strength, Mrs. Thornton is an example of one of the many Victorian widows who comes to rely solely on her son's economic support (see Jalland 243). His mother is aware of the gratitude she owes him and thus also insists that Fanny should not argue with him, but show him proper respect: "Fanny don't speak so of your brother. He has good reasons of some kind or other" (*North and South* 111). She does not question him and submits to his will whenever she sees that something is important to him. He, in turn, respects his mother's opinions and considers her as one of his main sources of advice and guidance. Unlike Margaret, John shares his worries and feelings with his mother. When Margaret rejects his proposal he is devastated and turns to her for comfort: "No one loves me – no one cares for me, but you, mother" (*North and South* 249). John knows that his mother loves him above everything else and he needs her comfort when he feels he has lost his only chance of happiness. Despite their formal conduct in public, privately he feels free to share his emotions and fears with her. "Their

voices and tones were calm and cold; a stranger might have gone away and thought that he had never seen such frigid indifference of demeanour between such near relations" (*North and South* 251). In truth, however, John and his mother are united by a strong sense of affinity and respect; they do not need emotional outburst to prove this to each other. They are each other's main source of support and love. Fanny, by her shallowness, is excluded from this intimacy. She appreciates her mother's efforts, but sees them mostly in terms of the pleasures she gains from them. Fanny may respect her mother, but she has no concept of the pains her mother and brother went through. Her mother and brother did everything they could to shelter her from the hardships their family had to face and they succeeded. However, as a consequence Fanny has developed into a spoiled, idle woman, whose life revolves around her own accomplishments and interest. Her main concern is keeping her standard of living after her own marriage.

John's loyalty towards his mother is only tested once. When he realizes that he loves Margaret and wants her as his wife, his mother strongly disapproves: "Don't be foolish, John. Such a creature!" (*North and South* 224). While she feels that Margaret is not worthy of John, her son insists that she accepts his choice. His mother's open disdain for Margaret only makes him exclaim: "Then, mother, you make me love her more" (*North and South* 250). He cannot give up something he loves for his mother's sake. Despite the fact that Mrs. Thornton continues to criticize his choice, John pursues Margaret. He asserts his independence and allows his own judgments to guide him. He will not allow his mother to shake his convictions. His asserts his right to his own life, proving his worth and capabilities in the process.

Margaret, similarly, reaches a point in her life, where she can make decisions for herself alone. However, this is only possible after her parents and her godfather, Mr. Bell, have passed away. Through the trials she faces in Milton she comes to a point in which she has "enough […] requisite strengths to take control of her life (Brown 347). However, her parents' increasing dependence on her, especially through their illnesses, and her feelings of duty towards them, have always hindered her to consider her own needs first. It is important that Margaret is hesitant to take this last step towards utter independence; her family in London actually keeps her from asserting herself and gaining any control

over her affairs (see Brown 348-349). Although she feels that she must do something productive with her life, she feels incomplete without people who really need her. Before, her parents gave her strength and a purpose, without them, she feels that the burden of responsibility is too heavy: “I am weary of this continual call upon me for strength. I could bear up for papa; because that is a natural, pious duty” (*North and South* 284). She has always defined herself by the duties she fulfilled towards others, and with the lack of her primary duty as a daughter, she feels lost and useless. Her family and her duty towards them were the sole sources of stability in her life. After losing them she must find a new source of fulfillment, which comes in the form of her inheritance and John Thornton. As his wife, she has the chance to gain a new family and new responsibilities she can devote herself to.

Both Margaret and John learn to extend their instinctive filial duty of deference and support to people outside of their family. This concern with the needs of others seems to spring from the necessity to be a respected and purposeful member of society. They are able to compensate for their parents’ weaknesses and even profit from them in the end. Margaret and John are united in their unwavering devotion to their parents and their loyalty and love towards them. Even Frederick and Fanny share their respect towards parents who take their parental duty seriously. All these children reward their parents with their unwavering gratitude and appreciation.

5.3 Filial Duty in *Wives and Daughters*

In *Wives and Daughters* misunderstandings and other difficulties test filial loyalty and duty. The children of the Gibson and Hamley household all face situations and challenges which pose threats to the relationship with their parents. Their feelings of filial duty are contested not only by their feelings for others, but also by their own priorities and interests. Each offspring of these families faces the choice between self-fulfillment and sacrifice and each chooses an individual path. Their choices all relate to their individual relationships with their parents, most prominently the expectations and plans their parents have for them. The pressure to fulfill their filial duty is a vital factor for the decisions Molly, Cynthia, Osborne and Roger make. In *Wives and Daughters* Elizabeth Gaskell not only shows how diversely filial duty can be

interpreted and realized, but also how family loyalty can be tested under the most varied circumstances.

In *Wives and Daughters* Roger Hamley is the person most aware of his filial duty towards his parents, even though he is also the child who faces the least expectations from them. Since his parents have always favored his brother Osborne, Roger grew up virtually free from their attention. He is right when he tells his father that “you don’t know what a fine fellow you’ve got for a son!” (*Wives and Daughters* 313). It takes his father a long time to see his worth. Still, Roger has an ingrained sense of duty, which guides his choices in life. He is aware of his family’s needs and especially eager to care for them. Even Molly notices that they “are his first thought: he may not speak about it, but any one may see it” (*Wives and Daughters* 172). He seeks his parents’ approval and he finds a way to prove his worth to them by finding a way to support them. His scientific achievements, the article he writes, and the expedition he goes on, give him the means to maintain his family’s estate and to find his place in the world. In addition, his professional achievements give him the reputation and respect in society which even his father has to acknowledge and appreciate. Soon whenever he is reminded of his disappointments in Osborne he turns to “read those pieces out of the review which speak about [Roger]” (*Wives and Daughters* 313). The positive views of Roger’s colleagues influence his father’s attitude towards him and allow Squire Hamley to forget his troubles with his other son. In the course of the novel “this younger son, originally the least promising of the two, proves to be the most reliable, the most loving, and the most gifted” (Ganz 164). His desire to prove his worth to his parents is successful and his father is thankful for his help when he offers to take care of the estate’s business: “The Squire looked at him, and his face brightened as a child’s does at the promise of a pleasure made to him by someone on whom he can rely” (*Wives and Daughters* 312). He is the support his father needs because he recognizes his father’s weaknesses and compensates for them. This is true both for his father’s inability to control his temper and for his pride. When Squire Hamley almost loses his temper in an argument with Mr. Preston, it is Roger who intervenes and deals with the situation. He recognizes “all the […] signs of passion present” (*Wives and Daughters* 304) in his father and manages to not only calm him, but to also put Mr. Preston in his place.

Roger's reliability and loyalty are strongly linked to his willingness to give up his own happiness for his family. He believes that "[o]ne has always to try to think more of others than of oneself" (*Wives and Daughters* 105). This is the advice he gives Molly, when she despairs about her father's remarriage:

> She did not care to analyse the sources of her tears and sobs – her father was going to be married again – her father was angry with her; she had done very wrong […] she had lost his love; he was going to be married – away from her […] So she thought in a tumultuous kind of way, sobbing till she was wearied out. (*Wives and Daughters* 101)

Roger's advice when he finds her in this state is also the code by which he himself lives. He wants her to try to think "of her father's happiness before she thought of her own" (*Wives and Daughters* 104). For Roger this altruistic behavior is rewarded while Molly's refusal to accept this code is shown as a vital part of her development. Molly faces the greatest challenge to her filial loyalty when her father marries Hyacinth Kirkpatrick and she is expected to accept her as her new mother. Molly struggles to comply with her father's wishes, but she denies the absolute self-sacrifice which Roger propagates. "Thinking more of others' happiness than of her own was very fine; but did it not mean giving up her very individuality, quenching all the warm love, the true desires, that made her herself? Yet in this deadness lay her only comfort; or so it seemed" (*Wives and Daughters* 120). This way she comes close to giving up all her own wishes for the needs of her family (see Bonaparte 63, Spencer 133). But Molly never attempts to give up her own needs completely, like Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* does. She sees that this self-sacrifice would be like death when living "only in trying to do, and to be, as other people like" (*Wives and Daughters* 121). Molly only tries to do what is best for others, without losing sight of herself (see Spencer 134).

Molly's loyalty and her love for her father, though sometimes strained by misunderstandings and silence, are strong and unwavering. She is always concerned for his well-being and willing to comply with his wishes. For Molly, separation from him is painful, so much that she wishes that she could tie herself to him: "Papa, I should like to get a chain […] and then I could fasten us two to each end of it, […] and we could never lose each other" (*Wives and Daughters* 23). She greatly values the time she spends with her father and is immensely dependent upon his good opinion of her. Near the end of the novel,

when Molly and her father feel that they have been increasingly separated by Mrs. Gibson and their new family circumstances, she is relieved when “he [does] not see the look of sadness which returned to her face after he had left her” (*Wives and Daughters* 258). They are both content with silently enjoying the little time they have together, and avoid speaking about their troubled relationship. They believe that “[it is] better for them both that they should not speak out more fully” (*Wives and Daughters* 358). In addition, Molly does not question his judgments and is thankful for everything he provides for her. This is true for the, admittedly limited, education she receives, just as it is for the time he is willing to spend with her. As soon as Molly’s reputation is questioned when she lies for Cynthia, Dr. Gibson proves his trust in her and later relies on her abilities to deal with the problems of the Hamley family. His thoughts then are full of appreciation: “He felt as if he should not know what to do without Molly; he had never known her value, he thought, till now” (*Wives and Daughters* 520). His distrust in her judgment at the beginning of the novel is turned to absolute faith in her capabilities at its close. She has proven a loyal daughter and is rewarded with her father’s appreciation.

Although Molly remains loyal to her father, she only slowly comes to feel any respect for her step-mother. Molly’s initial preparations for her arrival turn out to be in vain and only mark the beginning of Molly’s disappointments with her new stepmother. “She had meant her cares as an offering of goodwill to her stepmother” (*Wives and Daughters* 155), but Mrs. Gibson never even sees Molly’s careful preparations and even unconsciously destroys them through her demands. Molly comes to see Mrs. Gibson as unworthy of her deference and feels jealous of the place she now has in Dr. Gibson’s life (see Lansbury 112). Still, Molly attempts to respect her father’s new wife because she feels it is part of her duty towards him. She only agrees to call her mamma because it is his wish: “Why shouldn’t you call her ‘mamma’? […] We all make mistakes, […] but at any rate let us start with a family bond between us” (*Wives and Daughter* 156). For Dr. Gibson this outward sign of loyalty and bonding is more important than Molly’s feelings on the matter. She complies, but is unable to see how she profits from Mrs. Gibson’s influence. As previously discussed, Mrs. Gibson is no emotional support, but she does establish Molly’s social worth for her. Without her help, Molly could not have developed the appeal she has for Roger upon his

return. Molly comes to appreciate Mrs. Gibson's efforts only when she realizes that her stepmother has her problems and difficulties, too. Even though she never comes to feel a daughter's love for her, she gives her what she needs and expects, namely outward signs of filial respect (see Pike 151). She realizes that Mrs. Gibson does all she can for her and is not aware of the effects of her negligence. Molly comes to appreciate her for what she is, not to condemn her for what she is not. That is Cynthia's prerogative.

Of the four children discussed here, Cynthia has the most troubled relationship with her parents. After having lost her father at an early age and faced with a mother who shows no interest in her, Cynthia has grown up devoid of emotional support. She sorrowfully confides in Molly:

> [Y]ou must see she isn't one to help a girl with much good advice or good – Oh, Molly, you don't know how I was neglected just at a time when I wanted friends most. Mamma does not know it; it is not in her to know what I might have been if I had only fallen into wise, good hands. (*Wives and Daughters* 392)

Since she feels that her mother abandoned her to her own devices, she does not see any reason to show her any appreciation. She believes that "[a] child should be brought up with its parents, if it is to think them infallible when it grows up" *(Wives and Daughters* 200). She did not grow up with her mother so she "cannot forgive her for her neglect" (*Wives and Daughters* 200) and cannot develop any affection towards her. She does not think that "love for one's mother quite comes by nature" (*Wives and Daughters* 196). On the surface she may be a devoted daughter, but Cynthia blames her mother harshly for her own inability to love. She wonders if she were a better person if she had had Molly's upbringing: "[I]f I had been brought up like you, whether I should have been as good" (*Wives and Daughters* 294). Mrs. Gibson's unawareness of her daughter's despair only makes it more tragic. Although Cynthia complies to her mother's every wish, she never received any appreciation for it. The only thing Mrs. Gibson cares about is her daughter's marriage and Cynthia eventually complies and marries as her mother expects. Only then does her mother show some pride and interest in her daughter. Cynthia has learned to never expect more from her.

In contrast, Cynthia's relationship with Dr. Gibson is dominated by her wish for his approval. "When he was present she was more careful in speaking, and

showed more deference to her mother. Her evident respect for him, and desire to win his good opinion, made her curb herself before him" (*Wives and Daughters* 205). Cynthia fears losing Dr. Gibson's good opinion and is thus devastated when he voices his disapproval of her behavior towards Roger Hamley and towards Molly in the affair with Mr. Preston. She reacts very emotionally when he criticizes her: "No! You have prejudged me; you have spoken to me as you had no right to speak. I refuse to give you my confidence or accept your help" (*Wives and Daughters* 487). Since Cynthia feels the need to be appreciated by him, she fears losing his respect if he knew the truth. She never expects Dr. Gibson to love her like he loves Molly, but she does want him to respect her as he does his daughter. Dr. Gibson's declaration that he loves "her almost as if she were [his] own child" (*Wives and Daughters* 487) is never confirmed through actions. Cynthia continues to fear that she is an unwanted burden in his house. She is willing to leave to work as a governess simply because she knows that "it's hard being driven out" (*Wives and Daughters* 394). This fear, more than her mother's expectations, leads her to her hasty decision to marry. Her lack of emotional involvement with others leads her to seek rational rather than emotional ties. Similarly, she sees her duty towards her parents as easily fulfilled through outwards signs of respect, rather than true affection and loyalty.

Osborne Hamley shares this superficial view of filial duty. He feels that as long as he outwardly fulfills the image of the loyal son, all is well. Although his secret marriage is a burden to him, he paid no heed to its consequences when he took a wife that he knew his family, especially his father, would never approve of. Osborne seems to feel that his choice of a wife was the only choice he was free to make about his own life. When he falls in love, he does not hesitate. However, since he is dependent on his father's financial support, he cannot admit to having defied him. His marriage remains unknown to his parents until his death. Still, it is his marriage that causes the rift between Osborne and his family. In addition, Osborne seems to feel suffocated by his parents' attention and expectations. So he would rather keep away when his father actually needs his attention. "Osborne [is] too self-indulgent or 'sensitive,' as he termed it, to bear well with the Squire's gloomy fits or too frequent querulousness" (*Wives*

and Daughters 268). Instead he leaves the duty of dealing with his father's needs to Roger.

As a consequence of his lifestyle and his secret marriage, Osborne's interest in the family's money further strains his relationship with his father. He cannot tell Squire Hamley why his allowance is not enough and he cannot demand more money without admitting that he has a family to support. Squire Hamley is willing to support his sons financially, but only as long as they fulfill his expectations. And his main concern is that Osborne succeeds at Cambridge.

> [H]is father had been rather proud […] when he looked forward to a brilliant career at Cambridge for his son […]. But now that Osborne had barely obtained his degree; that all the boastings of his father had proved vain; that the fastidiousness had led to unexpected expenses […] the poor young man […] became a subject of irritation to his father. (*Wives and Daughters* 223)

From then on his relationship to his father is tested severely. When he is at home, he cannot help leaving to go see his wife and child. Since he cannot explain his absences, the Squire is left to believe that Osborne is not only unappreciative of his money, but also wasteful with it. Osborne, in turn, cannot find a way to appease his father. His poems remain unacknowledged by the public and his illness, which he also keeps a secret, further incapacitates him in his father's eyes. He bitterly tells his father: "I am only a cause of irritation to you, and home is no longer home to me, but a place in which I am to be controlled in trifles, and scolded about trifles as if I were a child" (*Wives and Daughters* 227). Their relationship is obviously so damaged that neither can see past their pride to change it. Their "mutual pride [keeps] them asunder" (*Wives and Daughters* 184). Squire Hamley can only interpret Osborne's illness as idleness because of Osborne's secrecy. Their unwillingness to speak truthfully to each other mars their relationship permanently. In the Squire's eyes, Osborne fails to be the strong, independent son he wants and only finds in Roger.

As these four examples show, filial duty in *Wives and Daughters* is a duty which is reciprocally linked to parental duty. Parents may or may not deserve their children's reverence, however, all these children feel the need for parental attention and want to give back some of what their parents have given them. Cynthia stands out in this respect because she is the only one who is guided by

resentment and not thankfulness. She sees her filial duty merely as a convention she must superficially conform to and does not feel the affectionate devotion which governs the Hamleys' sons and Molly. While dealing with the expectations of their parents and trying to fulfill them, these children all face trials which come to define not only their filial duty, but their position within their whole family. Roger and Molly come to be the glue which holds their individual families together while Osborne, though a disappointment, manages to continue the family line through a clandestine marriage. Cynthia finds a way to appease her mother and free herself from her at the same time by marrying and starting her own family. Unlike Margaret Hale in *North and South*, *Wives and Daughters* does not provide Molly or Cynthia with an independence of their family; both must consider them in all the choices they make. The same is true for Osborne and Roger. In this novel, family duty and especially filial duty is the guiding force behind the choices these characters make.

5.4 Filial Duty in *The Mill on the Floss*

In *The Mill on the Floss*, filial duty is not only closely linked to paternal duty, but also intrinsically tied to fraternal and sororal duty as well since the main protagonists Maggie and Tom Tulliver always perceive their filial duty in relation to their whole family. Both feel that their duty towards each other is an extension of their filial duty because their parents expect them to be loyal to each other before anyone else. Their unquestioned affection and loyalty towards their parents guides them throughout their lives, just as they put their parents' needs before their own. The sacrifices they make for them define their characters deeply and show how strongly they need their approval. This is their main difference to Philip Wakem, who is the only one of the three who can assert his own will despite the expectations of his father. Even though all three of these characters need their parents' support, they feel the pressures of their parents' expectations differently and react very individually to their demands.

For Tom Tulliver filial obedience is intrinsically linked to family loyalty. Throughout his life he always has his family's honor in mind and cannot even imagine defying his father's wishes. Since patriarchal authority and male superiority are guiding forces in his conception of duty, he never questions his father's authority and expects his mother and sister to later on respect his. His

father's loss of the mill disrupts Tom's image of him considerably. He can no longer rely on his father as an impeccable role model. "[Tom] continues to equate masculinity with mastery and to judge his father with severity because the world has been 'too many' for him. Tom's resolute dutifulness is compounded of little piety, reverence, or sympathy" (Paxton 74-75). Tom is aware of the respect he owes his father, but he still disapproves of his father's weakness. "[H]e was bent on being an irreproachable son; but his growing experience caused him to pass much silent criticism on the rashness and imprudence of his father" (*The Mill on the Floss* 250). For Tom, his father's failure means that he must compensate for his father's weakness. He takes his father's following request very seriously: "You'll have to take care of 'em both, if I die, you know, Tom. You'll be badly off, I doubt. But you must see and pay everybody" (*The Mill on the Floss* 179). Before the lost lawsuit "[a]nxiety about the future had never entered Tom's mind. […] Tom had never dreamed that his father would 'fail;' that was a form of misfortune which he had always heard spoken of as a deep disgrace, and disgrace was an idea that he could not associate with any of his […] father" (*The Mill on the Floss* 153). Not only does Tom's opinion of his father change through their misfortune, but his whole life changes in previously unexpected ways. By finding a job despite his educational limitations, he proves his resilience and determination to prove his worth. "Tom's strong will bound together his integrity, his pride, his family regrets, and his personal ambition, and made them one force, concentrating his efforts and surmounting discouragements" (*The Mill on the Floss* 249). He is motivated by the fact that his parents require his support desperately. Their need gives him a purpose.

Tom works hard to compensate for his father's loss and always has his final goal, namely their revenge on Wakem, to work for. He strives to make his father proud and hopes that his oath of revenge, which has already been discussed, was not in vain. Tom's filial loyalty does not allow him to deny his father the satisfaction of swearing to "never forgive him […] if you mean to be my son" (*The Mill on the Floss* 216). Tom swears, but he is also aware of how much he is sacrificing by allowing his father's revenge to govern his life. When he does succeed, he is rewarded by his father's gratitude and pride, but the price he has

to pay is high. He "[finds his] comfort in doing [his] duty" (*The Mill on the Floss* 393) and has no other source of satisfaction.

Tom's morality and feelings of filial duty guide his choices in life. He thoroughly believes that obedience and deference towards parents is a child's duty.

> Tom never disobeyed his father, for Mr Tulliver was a peremptory man […]. He was particularly clear and positive on one point – namely, that he would punish everybody who deserved it: why, he wouldn't have minded being punished himself, if he deserved it; but then, he never did deserve it. (*The Mill on the Floss* 27)

Tom strictly believes in respecting authority and obedience and his severity forces him to apply this standard not only to himself, but to others as well. This is particularly true for Maggie. Even before their father's death, Tom feels responsible for Maggie and feels that he must protect and discipline her, when her father cannot. "[His] severity towards others is […] the basis upon which he can build a narrow but, in the circumstances, effective and even laudable immediate purpose in life. And so we realize that with his severity towards others goes an ability to be severe with himself" (Lee 144). He is willing to sacrifice his own plans for his family, yet he always reminds himself that his renunciation will only last until he has fulfilled his father's wishes. He knows that "the means to such achievements could only lie for him in present abstinence and self-denial: there were certain milestones to be passed, and one of the first was the payment of his father's debts" (*The Mill on the Floss* 250). Tom is so harsh towards Maggie because he feels she does not do the same. The chapter on fraternal and sororal duty will show how Maggie is never as affected by her parents' criticism as she is by Tom's. Tom knows this and sees it as a duty towards their parents that he cares for Maggie in this way.

Tom's affection towards his mother is especially prominent throughout the novel. He often sides with her and is frequently preoccupied with her needs. Her dependence on him is obvious when she turns to him in her despair when Mr. Tulliver is ill: "She put out one arm towards Tom, looking up at him piteously with her helpless, childish blue eyes. The poor lad went to her and kissed her, and she clung to him" (*The Mill on the Floss* 164). Since Mrs. Tulliver is not a strong emotional support, it is Tom who must be one for her. Her preoccupation with his future and needs over Maggie's has already been mentioned. Tom thrives under her pampering and rewards her for it by supporting her as soon as

he can afford to, hoping to give her the chance to live out her life in their beloved mill. His own private needs, like marriage, remain unfulfilled. Tom is never able to extend his duties beyond his own family. He remains a son and brother and even though he asserts his independence of his father, he never gets the chance to establish his own family. Since he put the needs of his family continuously above his own, he never has a chance to think of himself.

Maggie Tulliver shares her brother's desire to satisfy the desires of her parents. However, Maggie feels the strains of filial duty quite differently. She often feels like a failure and is used to disappointing her parents, especially her mother. Tom never undergoes such emotions. His rigid sense of loyalty does not allow him to even consider rebellion. Maggie, on the other hand, frequently feels the need to rebel against her mother's expectations. These struggles are focused on her desire to free herself form the constraints her mother wants to put on her behavior and appearance. This is especially true for Maggie's hair, which is so often a source of argument between the two. After an argument Maggie simply dunks "her head in a basin of water […] in the vindictive determination that there should be no more chance of curls that day" (*The Mill on the Floss* 18). She knows that such a small act will upset her mother more than anything else because Maggie's appearance is so important to her. In contrast, as an adult, Maggie's complies with her mother's wishes by submitting to her mother's ideas about her appearance. However, she does this because she is "glad of anything that would soothe her mother, and cheer their long day together [and so consents] to the vain decoration, and [shows] a queenly head above her old frocks […]. (*The Mill on the Floss* 238) Maggie indulges her mother in her care for her because she knows that it has a soothing effect on her.

Mr. Tulliver never really exerts his authority over Maggie's conduct as her mother does. He may be the unquestioned head of their household, but for Maggie he is more her ally against her mother, rather than a demanding father. "Her father had always defended and excused her, and her loving remembrance of his tenderness was a force within her that would enable her to do or bear anything for his sake" (*The Mill on the Floss* 165). Maggie feels that her father deserves her respect and support simply because he loves her so much. So it comes as a surprise that Maggie does not hesitate to stop her father's attack on Wakem in his fit of anger. "Wakem felt, something had

arrested Mr Tulliver's arm; for the flogging ceased, and the grasp on his own arm was relaxed" (*The Mill on the Floss* 289). Still, instead of calmly dissolving her father's anger, like Roger Hamley manages to do in *Wives and Daughters,* Maggie must physically intervene. She would never oppose her father openly, yet in this critical situation she is willing to face her father's anger. She does not feel the kind of demands from him that Tom does. All Mr. Tulliver wants from his daughter is her affection and attention and Maggie is happy to comply. Her conduct towards him is much freer and without the hint of sacrifice which dominates her relationship to the other members of her family. Her father's failure does not mar her affection for him, even though it does have recuperations for her.

The loss of the mill changes Maggie's life just as much as it does Tom's. Even though she does not face any economic responsibilities like her brother, she also feels the need to sacrifice something for her family. Her position as a daughter, who still lives in the home of her parents without the ability to contribute to their well-being, leads her to seek comfort and guidance in a book by Tomas à Kempis who teaches to "[k]now that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than anything in the world …. If thou sleekest this or that, and wouldst be here or there to enjoy thy own will and pleasure, thou shalt never be quiet nor free from care" (*The Mill on the Floss* 233). She feels the need to renounce the things that give her joy, just as Tom gives up his own plans for their father.

> While Maggie's life-struggles had lain almost entirely within her own soul, one shadowy army fighting another, and the slain shadows for ever [sic] rising again, Tom was engaged in a dustier, noisier warfare, grappling with more substantial obstacles, and gaining more definite conquests. (*The Mill on the Floss* 249)

Her self-sacrifice takes on a much more abstract and dangerous form because she renounces all self-fulfillment and need. "Maggie thinks that giving up one's own will means rejecting everything that is easy and pleasant" (Thale 137). Through the teachings of Thomas à Kempis she is convinced that "whatever is enjoyable must be wrong, that man's desires are essentially evil" (Thale 137). Tom is able to gain satisfaction from his sacrifice because he wants the mill back and seeks the approval of his father. Maggie has no such outlook for a reward; her renunciation is purely for the sake of sacrificing what she loves. "It

is like death" (*The Mill on the Floss* 243). The uselessness of her sacrifice is only pointed out by Philip, whom she tells about it: "[I]t is not right to sacrifice everything to other people's unreasonable feelings" (*The Mill on the Floss* 243). The futility of her actions is also made obvious by the fact that her family only superficially takes any notice and no one profits from her self-denial. She is not sacrificing her well-being for others, but out of a need to do something in her powerless situation.

Interestingly, Maggie is only too willing to rebel even against her own self-prescribed renunciation. The men in her life, Philip Wakem and later Stephen Guest, both demand Maggie to forgo her filial and sororal duty for them. Since Maggie takes Tom's judgment of her much more seriously than her parent's criticism, it is always his opinion which counts most for her. All she wants is for her parent's to appreciate her. Deceiving them so that they are not unhappy is thus not an unsolvable problem for her. Meeting Philip secretly does not hurt her father, as long as he does not find out, so the qualms she feels about it are abated by her desire to see Philip. Her uneasiness does not dissolve completely, however. When Tom intervenes, she is only too happy for him to resolve her dilemma for her. For her parents, she remains the loyal daughter, only her brother's opinion of her is marred by her actions. The situation is much more serious when she runs off with Stephen. She realizes that her rash decision to run off with him is "[a]n irrevocable wrong that must blot her life" (*The Mill on the Floss* 383). By deciding to go with him

> she had brought sorrow into the lives of others – into the lives that were knit up with hers by trust and love. The feeling of a few short weeks had hurried her into the sins her nature had most recoiled from – breach of faith and cruel selfishness; she had rent the ties that had given meaning to duty. (*The Mill on the Floss* 382)

Here she realizes that her own desires are not worth the pain she brings to her family. Her mother stands by her when she returns in disgrace and Maggie is finally rewarded for a sacrifice she has made. "[T]he poor frightened mother's love leaped out [then], stronger than all dread" (*The Mill on the Floss* 393). Her mother's unquestioned affection and loyalty is given freely without the previous pressures of appearance and proper conduct which previously dominated their relationship.

Philip Wakem is the only one of the three characters discussed here who is unwilling to see sacrifice as a part of his filial duty. Instead, he feels that mutual respect and honesty should govern his relationship with his father. When he confesses his meetings with Maggie to his father and his love for her, he does not expect his father's support. He is willing to deal with the consequences of his father's disapproval, something neither Tom nor Maggie can even imagine. Philip knows that he owes everything he has to his father; he never forgets that he is dependent on his good will. Still he does not feel that he has to return his father's attentions as if they demanded "a debt [to be paid] by sacrificing all [his] chances of happiness to satisfy [his father's] feelings" (*The Mill on the Floss* 344). For this reason he asserts his right to speak up for his own wishes. He may not "have been brought up to [any] profession" (*The Mill on the Floss* 344), but Philip feels that his father has raised him to be independent and he owes him proof of his own success at raising him. His deformity may never enable him to be a strong independent member of society, but he is able to be a strong-willed individual. While the Tulliver children owe their father respect out of love and affection, Philip owes his father loyalty through his dependence on him. This filial loyalty does not mean complete submission, however. Philip does not see any need to keep his criticism and desires to himself, like Tom does. Philip knows that his father may be angry, but his affection for him is unwavering. Tom feels that his father's affection is only based on his expectations of his success, not on the kind of love Mrs. Tulliver feels for him. Equally, Maggie, though so sure of her father's love, remains unsure of her mother's until she realizes that it, too, is not solely tied to expectations. So while the Tulliver children are continuously aware of the interplay of parental affection and expectations, Philip is free from this insecurity. Since his father expects so little of him because of his deformity, he knows that his achievements in life will be more than anything his father hoped for.

The Mill on the Floss clearly shows how parental expectations can create tensions between the call of love and the sense of duty children feel. Self-sacrifice is just as relevant as the assertion of one's own will (see Thale 136). Tom and Maggie Tulliver show how deeply children can feel the pressures of filial duty while Philip Wakem proves that filial loyalty can stand the strain of disagreements. Philip, the only child of the three to survive the flood, is also the

only one who has an honest relationship to his parent. He is, however, also the only one who never feels the consequences of parental failure. Tom and Maggie must both compensate for weak parents, who somehow fail in their duty towards them. They both fulfill their filial duty to recompense and deal with these failures and manage to still satisfy the demands of their parents. All three are rewarded in the end by their parent's appreciation and acceptance.

5.5 Filial Duty in *Silas Marner*

In *Silas Marner*, George Eliot explores how filial loyalty is affected by how parents fulfill their parental duty. She does this by showing not only how children feel about their own duty towards their parents because of their parents' conception of duty, but also how these children later conceive their own duty as parents. The most prominent character in this context is of course Eppie, who faces the choice between her biological father, Godfrey Cass and her adoptive father, Silas Marner. In addition, the relationships within the Cass family and Lammeter family are also very telling because they reflect how both Nancy and Godfrey come to conceive their sense of family loyalty and duty. For this reason their own relationship and their siblings' relationship with their respective fathers will also be explored, before focusing on Eppie's choice and her relationship to the adults who stake claims to her filial duty. This way Eliot's attention to filial duty and its demands becomes obvious because each character has his or her own demands and needs, which have an individualized effect on their conceptions of duty and how they choose to fulfill it.

The strongest and most impressive examples of filial loyalty in *Silas Marner* can be found within the Lammeter household. Both Priscilla and Nancy Lammeter feel an unwavering loyalty towards their father. Their ingrained devotion to him is linked not only to their dependence on his good-will and support, but also on their belief in the necessity of their obedience towards him. While Priscilla never leaves his household, Nancy marries and leaves her family's home behind. For this reason their conceptions of duty towards him vary as adults. Priscilla feels that being pleasing to men is "a folly no woman need be guilty of, if she's got a good father and a good home" (*Silas Marner* 81). Her obedience is only for her father. She is sure that the life of a single woman is what "God A'mighty meant [her] for" (*Silas Marner* 82). Even though Nancy too, does not "mean ever to be

married" (*Silas Marner* 82), her physical appeal predestines her for matrimony. Her sister reminds her that "[o]ne old maid's enough out o' two sisters" (*Silas Marner* 82).

So it is Priscilla who remains at home and thus focuses all her energy on her elderly father and his needs. She comes to have a position in which "[s]he manages [him] and the farm too" (*Silas Marner* 132). Her position in his home allows her to not only run the household business, but to extend her duties beyond it (see Brady 113). She enjoys much more freedom than any wife in Raveloe, since "the women of her generation [were usually not engaged in] outdoor management" (*Silas Marner* 134). However, her position strongly depends on her father's indulgence. "[M]oreover, [it] is not altogether secure: the unspoken agenda in her repeated references to her father's potential longevity is that her own income and access to the world of men is dependent on his survival" (Brady 114). In the case of his death, she would have to find another way to support herself. Her primary responsibility in life, her filial duty, is also all that gives her security and a purpose. Her loyalty and obedience towards her father are a necessity to her survival simply because she never married. She owes him her privileged position in life and must accept that the fulfillment of her duty towards him is the price she must pay. Since she has the luck of having a father who does not interfere excessively with her life, she is free to live a life independent of demands she is unwilling to fulfill. She has the life of a daughter who has successfully taken her mother's place in her father's home and can gain "responsibility, respect and affection without a break from familiar surroundings and the necessity to cope with a new, sexual relationship" (Davidoff and Hall 347). Nancy is the daughter who must do this and exchange her filial duty for new marital duties.

Nancy Lammeter, the more beautiful of the Lammeter daughters, is the one who has always been expected to leave the family home and marry. Her family and society expect nothing less from her. She has come to order "all the duties and proprieties of life, from filial behaviour to the arrangement of the evening toilette [by an] unalterable little code" (*Silas Marner* 136). She lives by this strict code, which includes "the habit of filial reverence" (*Silas Marner* 131) and thus never even thinks of questioning her father. When she is married, Nancy moves from the authority of her father to the authority of her husband. Her sphere from

then on is Godfrey's "house and garden" (*Silas Marner* 134). After discovering that Eppie is Godfrey's biological daughter, she not only immediately thinks of his duty towards her, but also of Eppie's filial duty towards him. She applies the same principles of duty and loyalty she has leaned at home to Eppie. "[T]here's a duty you owe to your lawful father. There's perhaps something to be given up on more sides than one. When your father opens his home to you, I think it's right you shouldn't turn your back on it" (*Silas Marner* 150). She has no understanding of the influence of affection on filial duty since her own loyalty towards her father is guided by an ingrained sense of responsibility towards an authority she has always been dependent on. However, she must acknowledge, that Eppie does not share her sense of legal duty, because her filial duty has always been directed at someone she is not related to. Only through Eppie does Nancy learn that loyalty is also tied to affection and not only to bonds of blood.

The Cass family shares the Lammeters' rigid beliefs in parental authority. However, the character of the old Squire destroys his sons' loyalty and feelings of filial duty. Both Godfrey and Dunstan are discontented and only feel a superficial need to accept their father's authority. They are both disobedient, but they remain careful to keep this fact form their father since they depend on him financially. The Squire is angry at their misbehavior because he feels that they are nothing but "good-for-nothing fellows [who] hang on [him] like horse-leeches" (*Silas Marner* 61). Since the old Squire has no need of affection and only desires submission, they both have no qualms about deceiving him. They may profess their loyalty and obedience, yet in truth they are nothing but a disappointment to him. The old Squire knows of their faults and reprimands them for them. However, they are too callous to care, as long as he does not disown them. That is indeed his favorite threat and their greatest fear. "The disinherited son of a small squire, equally disinclined to dig and beg, was almost as helpless as an uprooted tree, which, by the favour of earth and sky, has grown to a handsome bulk on the spot where it firs shot upward" (*Silas Marner* 24). They know how dependent they are on his good graces, so they have perfected their skills of deception. Both are unworthy sons and Eliot punishes them for it: Dunstan dies during a crime while Godfrey's life remains unfulfilled.

Godfrey is the only one of the two who comes to expect filial loyalty to be extended towards him. However, like his father, he does not fulfill his parental duty in return. His failure as a father is punished by Eppie's disloyalty towards him. All her life she hardly ever thinks about "that black featureless shadow which had held the ring and placed it on her mother's finger" (*Silas Marner* 148). When he comes into her life, she does not accept the validity of his claims. Godfrey, who only sees his paternal duty in terms of an economic responsibility, must realize that Eppie has been raised with different standards, which he cannot fulfill. Only when he is a father, does Geoffrey realize the inadequacies of his concepts of proper filial duty. He may have felt that his filial duty towards his father was sufficiently fulfilled, but through Eppie he must lean that his principles are inadequate. Eppie feels that Godfrey has abandoned any right to her when he left her to Silas as a baby. For this reason she sees no need to respect or obey him. His claims on her only increase her "repulsion towards the offered lot and the newly-revealed father" (*Silas Marner* 148). He may be able to offer her a lavish home, but life with him and Nancy would be devoid of the affection and devotion she is used to. Godfrey cannot compensate for his failure because he, unlike Silas, has not taken "care of [Eppie] and loved [her] from the first" (*Silas Marner* 149). Eppie has learned that filial loyalty is the reward for a parent's affection and devotion. Silas is the parent she owes this to, so "nobody shall ever come between him and [her]" (*Silas Marner* 149).

Interestingly, Eppie does not apply this standard to her mother. Even though her mother failed her as well, Eppie does not blame her. She treasures her memory and often thinks of "how she came to die in that forlornness" (*Silas Marner* 128). Molly Cass haunts Eppie's mind as someone she has lost and who could not help abandoning her. For this reason Eppie continues to love her mother while she cannot forgive her father, who made the conscious choice of leaving her to her fate. Here her memory plays an important role. Eppie has no recollection of her mother, but she does remember that Godfrey was always near her and still did not acknowledge her as his daughter. She cannot forgive him for this and so she does not want him to acknowledge her when she is an adult. The only man she accepts as her father is Silas Marner, because he is the only parent who cared for her without demands.

Eppie is raised in a loving environment and enjoys the upbringing by a man who is especially conscious of his duty to support and raise her. Since Silas is the only father in the novel who is willing to accept the help and guidance of someone else when it comes to his daughter, he is also the only one who is rewarded with love and affection. While Mr. Lammeter enjoys the respect of his daughters and the old Squire revels in his sons' dependence on him, Silas is secure in his daughter's unwavering loyalty and love. He knows that Godfrey's claims do not "alter the feelings inside [them]" (*Silas Marner* 147). Her affection is the reward for his efforts. "[Eppie's] choice to stand loyally by him is not a blind act of filial obedience but rather an expression of her capacity to 'judge' and speak for herself" (Paxton 112). Silas did not raise his daughter to blindly follow his lead and fulfill his demands, but he brought her up to be an independent woman, who is sure enough to choose what is best for herself and the people she cares for. She is able to deal with the Cass's demands and can assert her own will. She declines their offer with the following words: "I can't leave my father, nor own anybody nearer than him. […] I couldn't give up the folks I've been used to" (*Silas Marner* 146). Her choice is guided by the knowledge that she deserves to live with people who have always valued her and who do not want her for selfish reasons. She is willing to fulfill her filial duty only towards someone who deserves it and that someone is Silas Marner.

In *Silas Marner* George Eliot shows that filial duty can be both a stifling and a freeing duty. While Priscilla enjoys the freedom which her filial duty has granted her, Nancy primarily feels that her duty towards her father is defined by submission. Godfrey and Dunstan Cass both feel only a marginal sense of duty towards their whole family, and so their duty towards their own father is seen as a burden they must contend with. Their attitudes are shown in stark contrast to Silas Marner, who has instilled respect and affection in his daughter because he himself feels it towards her. Eppie's choice of his standard of duty proves its validity and shows how hollow the professions of loyalty in the Lammeter and Cass family really are. Her decision is rewarded not only with the continuous affection from her father, but also the chance at a happy future with the people she loves.

6 Fraternal and Sororal Duty

6.1 Victorian Conceptions of Fraternal and Sororal Duty

Fraternal and sororal obligations and the ties between siblings were just as heavily invested with Victorian ideology as the other family relationships which have already been discussed. The expectations and responsibilities connected with sibling bonds were so important because Victorians realized that the longest lasting ties within a family were those between siblings. Thus it comes as no surprise that the relationship between siblings was a popular topic in Victorian literature. Both George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell explored the myriad of bonds that could form between siblings. In the works considered here fraternal and sororal obligations and loyalty form an intricate part of their characters' personal development. Showing how this life-long bond reacts to change and trials gave both authors a chance to juxtapose personal desires and duty towards one's family. Since it was frequently the siblings who knew each other's most intimate secrets, they were also the only ones who were capable of truly judging each other. Generally "sibling relationship[s had] periods of quiescence and periods of intense activity, depending upon where individuals are in the life cycle" (Bank and Kahn 16). While Victorian children may have lived together until one of them married, schooling and other circumstances could cause separation. As adults their own families were supposed to be their main priority and their fraternal and sororal duties had to make way for new responsibilities. Still ties to siblings were expected to survive even the most difficult circumstances.

The duties children assumed in relation to their siblings were influenced by their parents and also by how children saw their own position within the family. Strikingly, the role assumed by one child deeply influenced the roles open to his or her siblings. "[I]t appears that in most families there is only one person who can occupy a certain psychological space in a family at any one time" (Bank and Kahn 23). This implies that in Victorian families only one sibling could be the reliable one, the naughty one or even the submissive one. Even though such roles were not rigidly fixed and frequently changed, they had great influence on children's positions within the family and especially on the

relationship with their siblings, who acted as their counterparts (see Bank and Kahn 23-24).

Since “[b]rothers and sisters neatly parallel the other pairs of husband and wife and parent and child” (Sanders 12), their relationship was defined along similar lines of authority and submission. Since a brother generally had a more privileged position within the home than his sister, he also had some power over her. Her submission to his will was just as socially accepted as her obligation to obey her parents. A brother deserved this respect because the Victorians saw this early relationship as a way for them to prepare themselves for their future relationship with their spouse (see Davidoff and Hall 348). A sister’s deference towards her brother was seen as a necessity and was cultivated just as his responsibilities as her protector were nurtured from early childhood. “[T]he relationship was supposed to have only the most elevating and purifying effects on both siblings” (Sanders 6). While the brother could act as a protector and rational guide for his sister, she could exercise moral influence and be his emotional support (see Davidoff and Hall 349). This was especially true if siblings lost one or both parents, in which case they were expected to fulfill those duties that their gender endowed them for. Frequently a brother was obliged to take the place of a father while a sister was seen as the perfect replacement of a lost mother. In this case their new responsibilities would not only change the dynamics between them, but also within the whole family. However, it is important to note that “[a sibling] can rarely, if ever, match the sophistication, maturity, or capacity for nurturance or leadership of an adult. A child cannot impart values in the manner of a mature parent. His or her intolerance for the emotional ups-and-downs and needs of other children is a handicap form the outset” (Bank and Kahn 141). For this reason following this ideology and assuming the role of a parent could disrupt the relationship between siblings deeply.

The relationship between siblings of the same sex was of course not defined along the lines of gender and the power relationship which Victorian ideology attributed to any relationship between a man and a woman. These siblings shared different bonds and loyalties, simply because the expectations they had of each other were different. Since sisters or brothers generally shared the same upbringing and treatment from parents, their relationships were expected

to be closer because they existed as equals (see Bank and Kahn 125, Sanders 31). However, these bonds could be more difficult, as individual characteristics and interests could be strained under the similar possibilities and expectations. While sisters could expect to live together until marriage, brothers were separated by different economic possibilities and the plans parents had for them (see Davidoff and Hall 351). In addition, individual strengths and weaknesses could cause dependence among siblings, which could deeply influence the power distribution within their relationship.

Siblings were expected to support each other all their lives. Victorians parents hoped that their children would come to be “close, affectionate, and mutually responsive and may even remain life-long friends” (Bank and Kahn 26). Since siblings generally provided each other with the first available companionship, the affections between them had their roots in early childhood. The Victorians valued these early ties and developed an idealized picture of “loyalty and devotion surrounding siblings” (Sanders 4). However, sibling relationships were never clearly definable. Diversity abounded and one sibling relationship rarely matched another. While some siblings felt immensely close, others stayed “forever at odds with one another; [although] they [remained] enmeshed and deeply dependent” (Bank and Kahn 20). Ironically, deep loyalty between siblings involved “a basic weakness, absence, or failure of parents and the relative unavailability of parent surrogates” (Bank and Kahn 123). Even though it was not a necessity, the lack of parental attention did give fraternal and sororal ties room to flourish (see Bank and Kahn 124). Despite this fact, siblings needed role-models to learn how to develop any feelings of loyalty towards each other and have the chance to “imitate nurturing and interpersonal sensitivity” (Bank and Kahn 124). Parents who fulfilled these duties towards their own siblings were just as vital here as the way they raised their own children.

Mutual respect and reliance formed an intricate part of fraternal and sororal duties. Just like her mother, a sister was expected to provide her brother with moral guidance and was seen as being capable of “refining his very being” (Sanders 6). “[I]n Victorian culture, sisters [were] assigned the passive stay-at-home role of the spiritual mentor, while brothers [were] permitted degrees of freedom and inconsiderateness which their sisters simply [had] to bear”

(Sanders 16). A woman's moral superiority also applied to a sister, yet she had to accept that this power was still subordinate to her brother's male authority. Her influence over him was seen as an unobtrusive force which would passively guide her brother (see Tosh 113). On a more practical level it was generally accepted that a sister would act as housekeeper for her bachelor brother or provide him with other household services that he may require (see Davidoff and Hall 350). A brother was expected to repay his sister with his protection and support if she needed it (see Davidoff and Hall 349). Caring for one's sibling was a social necessity since a sibling was considered a natural ally in life, someone to confide in and rely on if necessary. Even though no other family tie was seen as enduring as the relationship between siblings, it is also the bond which is most vulnerable and easily severed.

The relationship between siblings was not only expected to provide friendship and company, it also allowed children to test their own strengths and compete for power at an early age. However, this competitiveness could develop into lasting hostility if the bond between siblings was infused with misunderstandings and discontent. One cause of this could be that one sibling "expected love and object constancy from an older brother or sister, who, unlike a parent, may be uncooperative, demanding, and thoroughly self-centered" (Bank and Kahn 28). If these expectations could not be fulfilled, such tensions could last until siblings were adults. "At this extreme, to spend time with a sibling is to enter enemy territory, emotionally charged with murderous tension. At another extreme lie conflicts that are neither humiliating nor crippling but instead become part of a creative and interesting dialectic that strengthens the relationship" (Bank and Kahn 198). Obviously the emotions involved in sibling relationships were frequently hard to understand, even by the siblings themselves.

Despite the idealized nature of sibling loyalty and devotion, it has already been made obvious that discord between siblings was not unheard of. In childhood it was not uncommon for children to compete for things like their parent's attention and interest. However, they could also vie for a more abstract victory when their conflict revolved around an "internal […] satisfaction or the fulfillment of a deeper emotional need" (Bank and Kahn 197). Even though competitiveness does not necessarily speak of a troubled bond between siblings, it could turn into livelong hostility and rivalry. So, the relationship

between siblings could be characterized by jealousy and discontent just as much as by affection; either way these childhood ties could last a lifetime (see Davidoff and Hall 351). While the bond between sisters was idealized as especially close and fulfilling, brothers were often seen more as competitors than as lifelong companions. Even for a sister, a brother could be seen as a "rival [who was] privileged by birth by virtue of his sex" (Sanders 107). Their childhood companionship was often replaced by inevitable estrangement as adults, yet ideologically their bond to each other was expected to withstand this test. Even with varying interests and priorities, siblings were expected to care for each and possibly their elderly parents when the need arose (see Bank and Kahn 16).

Just as sibling "aggression and rivalry ha[d] neither simple forms nor simple causes" (Bank and Kahn 197), sibling bonds were not easily explained or understood. Nonetheless the relationship between siblings was a popular topic with author like George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell because it offered such variety and so many different possibilities. Their interest, especially in brothers and brother-substitutes will become obvious in the following explications. Seeing a would-be suitor as a person as close as a sibling was a popular theme and was often used to explore where a woman's ideas and expectations about a husband came from (see Sanders 8, 99). For this reason fraternal and sororal loyalty and affection had a deep impact on the choices a person made when considering someone as a spouse. However, it will also be shown how siblings' expectations and influence are used by George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell to guide their characters' other decisions and development.

6.2 Fraternal and Sororal Duty in *North and South*

In *North and South* fraternal and sororal duty is a defining power in the lives of the main protagonists Margaret Hale and John Thornton. Their duty towards their siblings Frederick Hale and Fanny Thornton influences their decisions and their relationship to each other. Both are deeply aware of their siblings' needs and are careful to consider them. Frederick and Fanny have a more detached relationship to their families and thus also to their siblings. While Frederick is geographically separated from his family, Fanny is alienated from hers by her attitudes and priorities. These characters' parents deeply influence how their

children treat each other and what expectations they have. Even though they all share a deep appreciation for their respective sibling, their values and conceptions of duty vary considerably. They must all come to the realization that their intentions and actions might not be as successful as they might hope.

The bond between Margaret and Frederick Hale is defined more by memory and past affections, than by the reality of their separation. Since Frederick left England while Margaret was still young, they only share childhood memories, their time together as adolescence or adults is limited to the short time Frederick visits his family. They must make due with limited contact through letters and must rely on their childhood bond to sustain their adult relationship. Despite these complications, the bond between them is strong. Gaskell emphasizes their mutual affection and appreciation to show that their separation has not destroyed their feelings for each other. Even though Margaret fears that their different paths have changed them, she realizes that “in their absence they had grown nearer to each other in age, as well as in many other things” (*North and South* 294). When they see each other again, they appraise each other silently and are immediately amused and comforted by their similar reactions to each other. “But, though the brother and sister had an instant of sympathy in their reciprocal glances, they did not exchange a word” (*North and South* 289), and in fact they do not need to. What is most interesting about their relationship is that they seem to have an almost telepathic understanding of each other’s thoughts and feelings. “So much was put into eyes that could not be put into words” (*North and South* 304). They are so much alike that their unfathomable connection to each other seems natural and constant. Frederick is the only person in Margaret’s life who seems to understand her inner turmoil. He is also the only one whom she shows her feelings to without worrying that he may be overwhelmed by them. Despite her frequently mentioned stoic and unreadable demeanor, Frederick can see in “her face […] more care and trouble than she would betray by words” (*North and South* 312). Margaret returns this understanding with a strong and self-sacrificing feeling of loyalty and love. She idealizes her brother just as much as her parents do and accepts that he is her mother’s favorite (see Bonaparte 177-178). Yet Frederick is not undeserving of her devotion because he, too, loves his sister deeply and does what he can to support her.

The mutiny Frederick was involved in and his family's reaction to it have already been discussed. Only as an adult does Margaret come to understand what happened and she resolves to help her brother clear his name. When he returns to England, Margaret hopes to clear his name so that he can return home to his family permanently and openly. Matters are complicated when Frederick takes his leave because the two of them are not only seen by John Thornton, but they are also accosted by Leonards, a man who knows Frederick and his role in the mutiny, who dies shortly after their encounter. In the following inquest Margaret lies to conceal her brother's and her own involvement. Afterwards, all she is aware of are "two facts – that Frederick had been in danger of being pursued and detected in London, as not only guilty of manslaughter, but as the more unpardonable leader of the mutiny, and that she had lied to save him" (*North and South* 329). To protect him she would do anything, even if it went against her own moral code. Since John Thornton is part of the investigation, he not only finds out that Margaret lied, but also that she is apparently lying to protect another man. His distrust and disappointment in Margaret take their course from there. Margaret, in turn, compares her feelings about John knowing about her lie and how Frederick would react.

> The thought of [Frederick] knowing what she had done, even in [sic] his own behalf, was the most painful for the brother and sister were in the first flush of their mutual regard and love; but even any fall in Frederick's opinion was as nothing to the shame, the shrinking shame she felt at the thought of meeting Mr. Thornton again. (*North and South* 359)

Margaret only becomes aware of the personal effects this has when she realizes that she has lost John's respect because he knows her to be lying. When she exclaims: "Oh Frederick […] what have I not sacrificed for you! (*North and South* 336), she realizes that her loyalty towards her brother has cost her her own happiness. Still Margaret is willing to sacrifice her reputation in the Thorntons' eyes, as long as her brother is safe.

Interestingly, Frederick's guilt or innocence makes no difference to Margaret. She and her family believe that his actions were righteous because his morality dictated his conduct. In fact, his misdemeanors have no influence on her loyalty towards him. As his sister, she sees it as her duty to stand by him and believe in the correctness of his actions. She wants him to clear his name:

> Fred, you surely will try and clear yourself of the exaggerated charges brought against you, even if the charge of mutiny itself be true. If there were to be a court-martial, and you could find your witnesses, you might, at any rate, show how your disobedience to authority was because that authority was unworthily exercised. (*North and South* 206)

As already mentioned, both Margaret and Frederick have inherited their father's belief in justice and the belief that unjust authority must be questioned. Margaret's sororal obligation and moral convictions also give her the strength to lie to the police. Margaret sees is as her duty to protect her brother from being arrested and despite her conscience she is resolved to do what is necessary. "[S]he would tell that lie again; though how the words would come out, after all this terrible pause for reflection and self-reproach, without betraying her falsehood, she did not know, she could not tell. But her repetition of it would gain time – time for Frederick" (*North and South* 329). Her main priority is Frederick's escape; her own feelings are of no consequence to her. She may regret her decision, yet the shame she feels towards the Thorntons is nothing compared to the grief she would have felt if her brother had not escaped. Even though her effort to clear his name are in vain, it is only because of her actions that Frederick can go back to Spain and continue to build his life there.

Margaret's efforts to vindicate Frederick may not be successful, but her brother appreciates her efforts nonetheless. Despite their separation he feels deeply for his sister and is grateful for everything she does for him. Their grief at their mother's illness and death unites the two siblings anew and they are each other's support and comfort in this difficult time. Margaret realizes "how much responsibility she ha[s] had to bear, from the exquisite sensation of relief which she felt in Frederick's presence" (*North and South* 293). Together they are able to care for their parents and each other. Interestingly, Frederick and Margaret seem to balance each other perfectly. When one breaks down, the other is strong and vice versa. After their mother's death Frederick is the first to be "battered down by emotion" (*North and South* 310) while Margaret takes control. Only when he calms down does Margaret allow her tears and grief to show. Then "she cried a good deal; and her manner, even when speaking of indifferent things, had a mournful tenderness about it" (*North and South* 310). For the short time of Frederick's presence, Margaret does not have to carry the burden of her filial duty alone. It is their subconscious connection which allows

them to support each other and fulfill their filial duties at the same time. Even though Frederick wants her to come to Cadiz with their father, she is unwilling to do so even after their father's death. Her desire to visit him is great, yet she has reservations about actually living with him permanently. Even when she says "he is lost to me, and I am so lonely" (*North and South* 457), she is sure that she would rather stay in familiar surroundings. Margaret would not only have to leave her home and the people she loves behind, she would also impose on her brother's new life. She apparently feels that she cannot expect her brother to support her when she has other options open to her. She would rather depend on the support of her mother's family; her Aunt Shaw is only too willing to care for her sister's daughter. And indeed Margaret does find her own way without depending on his support; she manages to start her own family under unpredictable new circumstances, just as Frederick did before her. Both siblings build lives independent of each other, even though their separation does not lead to estrangement and loss of affection.

John and Fanny Thornton also come to live lives completely independent of each other. Their relationship, however, seems to have predestined them for a life that does not include the other. Their personalities differ greatly and they do not understand each other's needs and priorities. John, who has always had to work hard to support his family, seems to begrudge Fanny's dependence on others and abhor her attitude to life, which seems to him very passive and shallow. Her brother's attitude towards her is made clear when he states: "I never knew Fanny have weighty [sic] reasons for anything. Other people must guard her" (*North and South* 371). John sees it as his duty to protect and guide his sister until she is the responsibility of another man. And indeed it seems that since John has always been the reliable and supportive one, Mrs. Thornton has unconsciously never expected anything similar from Fanny. Fanny seems to occupy herself only with the stereotypical interests of a middle-class Victorian woman (see Brown 352). John often criticizes her shallow character and her idleness, which she hides under the pretense of some ailment or another. He may be only too willing to support Fanny, but his love for her does not mean that he also approves of her character. They do not share the kind of relationship that the Hale children have. John would rather confide in his mother than in his sister; Fanny is always the odd one out in her family.

> The very daringness with which mother and son spoke out unpalatable truths, the one to the other, showed a reliance on the firm centre of each other's souls; which the uneasy tenderness of Mrs. Thornton's manner to her daughter, the shame with which she thought to hide the poverty of her child in all the grand qualities which she herself possessed unconsciously […], betrayed the want of a secure resting-place for her affection. (*North and South* 109)

John shares his mother's feelings about his sister and is always conscious of his duty to gloss over Fanny's defects. She complains about his criticism because she does not see its justification: "John always speaks as if I fancied I was ill, and I am sure I never do fancy any such thing" (*North and South* 111). While Fanny never comes to seriously consider John's opinion, John never expects her to. He accepts her weaknesses just as their mother does. Fanny's preoccupation with society and manners also explains her disregard for Margaret. She is adamant when stating that she does not "want to form any friendship with Miss Hale" (*North and South* 114). Since Margaret does not share Fanny's interests, they have no common ground and Fanny sees no need to further their acquaintance. She does so only to appease her brother. Fanny makes clear that she is "doing [her] duty by talking to her, and trying to amuse her" (*North and South* 114). She submits to John's will in this matter because it is what her family expects from her and what she feels she owes him. They may not be "made of the same stuff" (*North and South* 109), but do have one important thing in common and that is their desire to have a successful future. For John this means being a success in business and to have a family, while Fanny seeks to secure her future by marrying a prosperous man. So even though they are so different in character, they share an acute awareness of their goals and a great resoluteness to achieve them.

When they both finally find a suitable spouse, their choices show more about their relationship than one might expect at first glance. While John is initially attracted to Margaret because she is so unlike his sister, Fanny marries a man who is a respectable business man, very much like her brother. Watson is a successful mill owner, much older than Fanny, and their union is considered "a very good marriage" (*North and South* 413). She not only gains everything she ever desired through her marriage, she also marries at the right time. She chooses to marry when John's financial situation is dire; after her marriage he no longer has to worry about her. John shows his approval of the match in a

way Fanny can appreciate by making sure that her wedding is everything she hopes for. “[P]eople thought that Mr. Thornton had made too grand a wedding of it, considering he had lost a deal by the strike, and had had to pay so much for the failure of his contracts” (*North and South* 480). John wants to make sure that his sister is happy, even if that means spending more than he can really afford. With their marriages John and Fanny find their own paths in life, which are much more independent of each other than those of Margaret and Frederick because their interest in each other is so minimal in comparison. Mrs. Thornton is a strong and very involved mother who has managed to raise independent children. This independence apparently also includes a freedom from dependence on siblings in favor of filial ties and self-determination.

In these two pairs of siblings Gaskell shows not only how strong a bond between siblings is under strain, but also how unfathomable it can be. While John and Fanny’s dedication to one another remains questionable, Margaret and Frederick’s feelings for each other seem to be almost otherworldly and overtly idealized. This only shows that sibling bonds are very complicated and generally inexplicable to outsiders or even to the siblings themselves. In *North and South* the siblings care for each other’s well-being and are not afraid of pointing out each other’s weaknesses. They support each other unquestioningly, even if their motivation stems from an ineffable feeling of loyalty. Despite their differences these siblings are deeply aware of their duties toward each other and feel that even if their lives separate them, they are still united by a bond that will last their whole lives. Gaskell uses these characters to show that the loyalty they feel for a family member has nothing to do with how well they understand that person or how much these siblings have in common. They are united by a devotion which has been with them since childhood and which cannot be destroyed by physical or emotional distance.

6.3 Fraternal and Sororal Duty in *Wives and Daughters*

In *Wives and Daughters* Elizabeth Gaskell once again focuses on fraternal and sororal ties and obligations, showing how these can become guiding forces in the lives of the main protagonists and how such feelings can even develop between unrelated individuals. While the fraternal bond between Roger and Osborne Hamley proves to be a lasting power in their lives, Molly Gibson and

Cynthia Kirkpatrick only slowly develop a sororal relationship. Despite this difference both relationships are steeped with expectations and obligations on both sides. The expectations connected to the fraternal and sororal bonds are so strong that they are intimately linked to the expectations these characters generally have of others. They come to see people they are especially close to as siblings and only slowly come to realize the difference between love between siblings and romantic love. In addition, the dedication and loyalty of these siblings is tested throughout the novel and each one of these characters must try to prove their worth after disappointing their sibling in some way. Interestingly, failure to do so may mar the relationship, but never breaks the ties that exist between them. In this novel Elizabeth Gaskell explicates how disappointments, separation and even death can be overcome by fraternal and sororal loyalty and love.

Roger and Osborne Hamley come from a loving home. They can depend on their supportive parents, despite the fact that their parents treat them quite differently. The difficult relationship they have to their parents has already been elaborated. They acknowledge the fact that their parents do not treat them equally, but do not allow this to mar their bond with each other. Each son accepts his assigned role within the family without resentment towards the other. Initially Osborne is clearly the favored heir, while Roger acceptingly exists in his shadow (see Lansbury 115). “Roger in his boyhood had loved Osborne too well to be jealous of the praise and love which the eldest son […] had received to the disparagement of his own plain awkwardness and slowness, so [as an adult] Osborne strove against any feeling of envy or jealousy with all his might” (*Wives and Daughters* 331). When their circumstances change after Osborne’s failure at Cambridge and Roger’s success, their bond remains intact even though their parents’ treatment of them is a challenge to their relationship. “[I]f the brotherly affection had not been so true between Osborne and Roger, they too might have become alienated, in consequence of the Squire’s exaggerated and injudicious comparison of their characters and deeds” (*Wives and Daughters* 131). The relationship between Osborne and his father may be destroyed beyond repair, yet Roger remains a loyal brother and son. As already mentioned he may not be able to reunite them, but he can support both whenever he can.

While Roger does everything in his power to keep the family estate running for his father, he also contends with Osborne's secret marriage. Osborne only confides in Roger about Aimée, their marriage, and their son. Roger's loyalty and love for his brother allow him to not only keep everything from his parents, but also allow him to ensure that both Aimée and young Roger receive the support they need and deserve after Osborne's death. Roger lives the advice he once gives to Molly and considers the happiness of others before his own. His own interests do not matter in the face of the needs and rights of his family. This is especially true for his nephew. After Osborne's death, Roger sees it as his duty to care for the boy in his brother's stead. He does everything to "put his brother's child at once into his rightful and legal place" (*Wives and Daughters* 528). He extends his fraternal duty to those who were important to his brother. Even though his fraternal obligation leads him to lie to his parents, he stays true to his brother even beyond death.

Even though Roger keeps Osborne's secret as long as necessary, he never approves of Osborne's conduct. Roger acknowledges that Osborne's love for him does not mean Osborne will follow his advice: "[M]uch as he loves me, I've but little influence over him, or else he would tell my father all" (*Wives and Daughters* 182). So even though his advice falls on deaf ears, he always wants Osborne to tell his parents the truth. Roger may not condone his brother's behavior, but this never mars his affections for him. He accepts that Osborne will not resolve matters with their father. Roger even supports Osborne financially since Osborne cannot ask his father for money to support his family. "[Some] of his income was Osborne's; given and accepted in the spirit which made the bond between these two brothers so rarely perfect" (*Wives and Daughters* 311). Osborne returns this devotion with equal affection; they are united by "true confidence and love" (*Wives and Daughters* 151). However, Osborne never sees his loyalty towards Roger tested. Only when he is confronted with his father's changed attitude towards him, does he have to deal with the fact that Roger is now the favorite son. Even though Osborne feels some jealousy, he accepts this as a natural development. He seems glad that his brother is finally appreciated by their father and hides his own pain about the situation. Osborne's feelings are obvious whenever he speaks about Roger since "every word, every inflection of the voice breathed out affection and

respect – nay, even admiration!" (*Wives and Daughters* 210). The relationship between Roger and Osborne may be strained by Osborne's conduct, yet their fraternal affection is shown as an unshakable power. Their loyalty and regard for each other's needs is shown as an ideal which both Cynthia and Molly come to seek in each other.

Both Molly Gibson and Cynthia Kirkpatrick have great expectations about their future relationship when their parents marry. Despite the fact that they both have reservations about their new step-parent, they feel that their new sister will enrich their lives. Even though Cynthia says that they are "all in a very awkward position" (*Wives and Daughters* 193), neither girl realizes that their new sororal relationship will be part of these difficulties. While Molly has very idealized hopes about her new sister, Cynthia is taken aback by her immediate affection for Molly. She soon ensures Molly of her affection: "I do believe I love you, little Molly, whom I have only known for ten days, better than anyone" (*Wives and Daughters* 196). They both gain a companion and friend, yet their bond is far from perfect. Even after months Molly still resents Roger for calling Cynthia her sister: "Molly's love for Cynthia was fast and unwavering, but if anything tried it, it was the habit Roger had fallen into of always calling Cynthia Molly's sister in speaking to the latter" (*Wives and Daughters* 280). Their feelings for each other, though loving, are not grounded in childhood loyalty and affection. Their bond is not sustained by blood relation or lifelong companionship. Since they have found to each other through such unusual circumstances, they are much more inclined to doubt their feelings for each other than the other isblings considered here. For this reason their bond is easily shaken by misunderstandings and only their desire to have a sister and someone to confide in gives them the power to stand by each other.

Even though both girls idealize the idea of having a sister they are not completely disillusioned by reality. They come to realize that a sibling does not have to be perfect to be loved. They may be disappointed in each other occasionally, but through this they learn that disputes and misunderstandings can be overcome if they stand by each other. Molly and Cynthia come to realize that the price of sororal loyalty is easy to pay if the reward is a caring sister. Both girls must adjust their idealized image of sororal companionship to match the reality of their differing characters and dispositions. Even if they often do not

understand each other, they come to realize that mutual understanding is not a prerequisite for affection. Interestingly, Molly is shown as being worthy of this affection from the beginning, while “Cynthia has to earn Molly’s affection and respect” (Pike 152). Whether she ever really manages this, is open to dispute. While Lansbury argues that Cynthia is not even capable of being a friend, let alone a sister (115), Bonaparte sees their relationship as “one of the very best accounts of friendship between adolescent girls” (Bonaparte 64). Cynthia and Molly’s bond is by no means easy to understand, even for them. They are tied to each other not by their parent’s marriage, but by their need for love and support. Even if Cynthia wishes that she “could love people as […] Molly [does]” (*Wives and Daughters* 196), she is able to appreciate and care for Molly. In return Molly protects and supports Cynthia when she needs her help.

Both Molly and Cynthia find their loyalty and affection for each other tested in the course of the novel. Their greatest challenge is Mr. Preston and his involvement with Cynthia. When trying to get the incriminating letters back from him, Molly endangers her own reputation and must face the consequences of Cynthia’s misconduct. Cynthia is aware of how much Molly risked for her by her “prompt decision and willing action, where action was especially disagreeable, on her behalf” (*Wives and Daughters* 451). Additionally, like Roger, Molly must keep her sibling’s secret from her parents and cannot convince Cynthia that “telling papa, and getting him to help” (*Wives and Daughters* 417) is the right course of action. Cynthia may value Molly’s opinion, but she does not bow to Molly’s moral authority. She has a mind of her own and will only be guided by her own values. Molly must accept this and hope that Cynthia will find the strength to do what is right. She is not disappointed. Cynthia comes to accept that her silence will cost her too much and so relieves Molly of her burden. For Molly’s sake she admits everything to Dr. Gibson and her mother, thereby saving her relationship to Molly. Cynthia is deeply hurt by the whole incident and only finds comfort in solitude. She cannot “help turning from one who knew things to her discredit” (*Wives and Daughters* 451). And indeed Cynthia frequently withdraws from Molly whenever she feels unsure or guilty about something. Then she “[withholds] from her more than thoughts and feelings – […] she [withholds] facts” (*Wives and Daughters* 401). Despite the fact that Molly is hurt by Cynthia’s behavior, she gives Cynthia the time she needs. She

realizes that Cynthia's silence is not personal, but a way for Cynthia to deal with her problems. By this time they have slowly come to be conscious of each other's needs and are willing to deal with them. They may not be able to understand each other instinctively, but they are no longer guided by unrealistic expectations. Molly admits to Cynthia: "You […] have been a new delight to me – a sister; and I never knew how charming such a relationship could be" (*Wives and Daughters* 391). The bond between Cynthia and Molly may be imperfect, but it proves to be enduring.

In each other Molly and Cynthia find the female companionship which they have always sought. They gain a person to confide in, however, they also realize that their environment constantly has them compete with each other. Hyacinth and the society of Hollingford see them as rivals, especially when it comes to their appearance and their relationship to men. Molly may not think "of comparing the amount of admiration and love which they each [receive]" (*Wives and Daughters* 205), yet even the Hamleys treat Molly differently as soon as Cynthia is introduced to them. So it comes as no surprise that Roger and Osborne are the main source of rivalry between the two girls (see Bonaparte 65). Osborne seems like the ideal suitor until Molly realizes that he has a wife. Her relationship with him after she discovers his secret remains one of mutual friendship. Cynthia's relationship to Osborne is characterized by superficial flirtation on both sides. Both girls develop quite different feelings for Roger. Cynthia may not love him, but she feels that he will be an ideal husband for her. She only slowly comes to realize that her lack of feelings for him demands that she break off her engagement to him. Molly is crucial for this realization and only profits from it. Since Gaskell is so careful to present Molly as completely ignorant of her feelings for Roger, Molly and Cynthia are only superficially rivals for Roger's affection. Molly continues to tell herself that she is "his sister [and] that old bond [between them] is not done away with, though he is too much absorbed by Cynthia to speak about it just now" (*Wives and Daughters* 318). Only when Molly feels that Roger is lost to her, does she slowly come to acknowledge her feelings for him. So when Roger does come to love her, Molly is ready to accept his suit. Gaskell shows how their relationship develops from a deep friendship to love, suggesting that this is the way that lasting affection should grow. Cynthia and Roger never have a chance because their interest in

each other was too hastily established. Roger and Molly, who see each other as siblings before they fall in love, manage to deepen their relationship by giving it time to develop.

Roger and Molly have a meaningful relationship based on friendship and love. Their union brings their families together and is an example of "[t]he ideal marriage in the Victorian novel [that] adopts into the family someone who is almost a member of the family already" (Sanders 104). Their bond is characterized by the same affection and unquestioned loyalty that Roger shares with Osborne and thus has the potential to last a lifetime. They are not blinded by ideals and illusions as Roger was with Cynthia and so Gaskell can show how fraternal and sororal ties and affections can positively influence the choices one makes about a future partner. They have to learn that even if expectations are not met, loyalty and love between spouses should be as forgiving and long-lasting as the loyalty and love between siblings.

6.4 Fraternal and Sororal Duty in *The Mill on the Floss*

The relationship between Tom and Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* is the most complex fraternal relationship to be discussed here. These two siblings are united by a deep bond, which is more intense than all other relationships these two have. It remains the guiding force in their lives and despite their differences, their loyalty remains unbroken. The values and attitudes these two learn and adapt from their parents can be directly traced to their parents' relationships to their respective siblings. Tom and Maggie learn not only the importance of their affection, but also inherit intolerance for a sibling's weaknesses. They see it as their duty to point out each other's faults, but they also know that their loyalty to each other remains unbroken by their criticism of each other. The discord between them is obvious not only in their childhood arguments, but also in their estrangement as adults. Their anger and resentment form an intricate part of their relationship, just as their care for each other does. This combination of affection and anger makes their bond so unique and intense.

The most striking characteristic of Tom and Maggie's relationship is the authority Tom asserts over his sister. As has already been discussed, Tom feels that it is his filial and fraternal duty to protect and punish Maggie. Even when

they are children their parents depend on Tom to calm Maggie down, and it is Tom's judgment that Maggie fears most. Even if she "never [means] to be naughty to him" (*The Mill on the Floss* 26), she cannot help it and is often left to hope that he will "forgive her because he love[s] her" (*The Mill on the Floss* 26). And indeed his forgiveness and attention are all she wants after he chastises her. Tom accepts the role of "Maggie's vindictive prosecuting angel" (Auerbach 153) and never relents when it comes to her wellbeing. Since his father does not criticize Maggie for her behavior, Tom does. Like his mother, he sees Maggie as a rebellious and unreliable child. The following promise to her makes obvious that he expects her submission and unconditional obedience: "I shall always take care of you. But you must mind what I say" (*The Mill on the Floss* 190). Tellingly, he is the only one in the family who always expects the worst from her. "[F]rom beginning to end of the novel rebukes Maggie for what he sees as her irresponsible impulsiveness and indeed [he] represents that voice of duty which compels guilt" (Adam, 126). Again and again Maggie fails to live up to Tom's expectations and is the cause of his disappointment and anger. While Tom feels that Maggie needs more "prudence and restraint [he] ought to see in Maggie […] not just irresponsibility but also [unconditional] love" (Thale 135). Even though Maggie wants to please Tom and "be a comfort to [him]" (*The Mill on the Floss* 318-319), she cannot submit to his authority without feeling the need to rebel against it. Once when Tom reprimands her she characteristically reacts "with conflicting resentment and affection and a certain awe as well as admiration of Tom's firmer and more effective character" (*The Mill on the Floss* 189). She refuses to give in to his frequent harshness and indeed "if Maggie submitted to be modified by Tom she would lose his attention" (Barrett 56). Tom, who has had to carry more responsibility over his sister than he can meet at an early age, struggles with his duty towards her all his life. He has bowed to his father's authority in accepting responsibility for his sister and strives to "do the duty of a son and a brother" (*The Mill on the Floss* 279). This act of filial submission costs him and Maggie the kind of equal relationship which most of the other siblings considered here can share.

One of the greatest sources of discord between Maggie and Tom is Philip Wakem. When Tom finds out about Maggie's secret meetings with him, their bond is strained considerably, but the situation is also very telling about their

feelings of duty towards each other. Tom, who is characteristically unsurprised about Maggie's transgression, immediately assumes authority over his sister's conduct. In contrast to Roger Hamley in *Wives and Daughters*, Tom cannot silently accept his sibling's digressions. He must step in and resolve the matter immediately because she is "disobeying her father's strongest feelings and her brother's express commands" (*The Mill on the Floss* 276). He does not allow Maggie to deal with Philip herself, and strikingly Maggie is glad of this. In this situation she feels that it is "vain to attempt anything but submission" (*The Mill on the Floss* 279). There are two important reasons for her behavior.

> The first, as several critics have noted, is that she wants to be severed from Philip, having become more involved than she ever intended, but her sympathy makes it impossible for her to do this herself. […] The second reason of Maggie's passivity again underlines the primacy of Tom in her affections. (Barrett 59)

Maggie has come to see that she does not share Philip's feelings and that their meetings are leading to something she is not ready to face. She tells Philip: "[I]t seemed to me that I was not bound to give up anything – and I have gone on thinking till it has seemed to me that I could think away all my duty. But no good has ever come of that – it was an evil state of mind" (*The Mill on the Floss* 243). Maggie realizes that her affection for Tom and her loyalty towards him is much greater than her interest in Philip. She is willing to accept that she must submit to Tom's authority in this situation (see Miethling 103-104). Maggie allows Tom to take control because she trusts him and knows that he will do what he feels is best for her. Still she resents that Tom "always enjoyed punishing [her]" (*The Mill on the Floss* 281) and so promises to refuse his authority over her if he is being unreasonable. She may revel in the fact that Tom stands by her but she will not blindly follow him. Still, by angering him she has not only gained his attention but also proof of his affection (see Barrett 59, 65).

It is this craving for affection which influences Maggie and Tom's behavior towards each other all their lives. While Maggie has always craved Tom's love, Tom is reticent about showing his affection towards his sister, so much that Philip accuses him of being no more than "a coarse and narrow-minded brother, that she has always lavished her affection on" (*The Mill on the Floss* 281). However, it is arguable that as a young boy, Tom is overwhelmed by Maggie's demands for his attention and affection. He is unable to allow his own emotions

to surface and reacts violently whenever Maggie wants something he is unwilling or unable to give. One of their earliest conflicts, occurring when Tom returns from school, revolves around the rabbits which Tom wanted Maggie to take care of. While Tom is angry that Maggie let them die, Maggie feels guilty and sad because she has disappointed her brother. After all, she "dread[s] Tom's anger of all things" (*The Mill on the Floss* 25). Tom punishes her by saying "I don't love you" (*The Mill on the Floss* 25) and then leaving her alone. His action serves two purposes: he can punish Maggie effectively and gain time to order his own feelings at the same time. Even though she reacts only with tears and sadness, as she grows older Tom's chastisements also evoke resentment in her. Then she struggles with her feelings towards him and "her penitence and submission were constantly obstructed by resentment that would present itself to her no otherwise than as a just indignation" (*The Mill on the Floss* 282). Her need to feel loved by Tom is so great that she reacts with aggression when he refuses to forgive her immediately (see Johnstone 123). In fact "the need of being loved [is] is the strongest need in poor Maggie's nature" (*The Mill on the Floss* 26). Tom, who is driven by his own feelings of resentment and sadness, retreats because he is overwhelmed by the complexity of Maggie's needs. Only as an adult does Tom admit: "I wish to be as good a brother to you as you will let me" (*The Mill on the Floss* 128).

When he is older Tom is now mature enough to face Maggie's feelings and deal with his own. Despite this development he stresses that his "kindness can only be directed by what [he believes] to be good for [Maggie]" (*The Mill on the Floss* 317). His morality and pride are guiding factors in his life, not his emotions or love for his sister. So Maggie always appears to be the one to be more emotionally involved because she voices her need for support while Tom cannot allow himself to be equally dependent on her (see Sanders 101). Their expectations of each other cause difficulties in their relationship. While Maggie is "by no means made up of unalloyed devotedness [and can] put forth large claims for herself" (*The Mill on the Floss* 164), Tom wants Maggie to show the same restraint and willingness to sacrifice her desires for their family that he does. In his eyes there "is no consistency in [her]" (*The Mill on the Floss* 278). Despite the fact that both try to fulfill their sibling's wishes, neither succeeds; he cannot fulfill her expectations and she cannot meet his standards. Tom's pride

stands in his way when he should show compassion towards Maggie, just as Maggie's conduct towards Philip and later Stephen disappoints and hurts Tom. They react to their disappointments with anger and aggression.

Maggie and Tom may have their differences as children, yet they both believe that they will spend their whole lives together. Their childhood quarrels never endanger their relationship with each other. They may be hurt by misunderstanding and unfulfilled demands, but they are still united by deep affection and loyalty, so much that Maggie wants nothing more than to "keep his house, and always live together" (*The Mill on the Floss* 21) in the future. Tom similarly "mean[s] always to take care of her, make her his housekeeper, and punish her when she did wrong" (*The Mill on the Floss* 29). And indeed this vision of the future is by no means unrealistic. If neither of them married, Victorian siblings frequently spent their whole lives living together (see Davidoff and Hall 350). Despite their wishes, their adult relationship is steeped with tension, which increases as they get older and their problems become more serious (see Milner 29). Maggie admits that she can no longer imagine living with her brother: "I can't live in dependence – I can't live with my brother – though he is very good to me. He would like to provide for me; but that would be intolerable to me" (*The Mill on the Floss* 334). While their family's situation is especially dire Maggie reacts with "fits of anger […] towards Tom, who checked her and met her thought or feeling always by some thwarting difference" (*The Mill on the Floss* 232). Their relationship is strained by their family's misfortune. So while Tom can still interfere and help Maggie in her problems with Philip, he later cannot stand by her when she loses her reputation because of her involvement with Stephen Guest. Even before he knows all the details "Tom's mind was set to the expectation of the worst that could happen – not death, but disgrace" (*The Mill on the Floss* 391). Tom's worst fears for Maggie seem to have come true and he cannot overcome his hurt feelings and pride when she needs his support.

> There had arisen in Tom a repulsion towards Maggie that derived its very intensity from their early childish love in the time when they had clasped tiny fingers together, and their later sense of nearness in a common duty and a common sorrow: the sight of her, as he had told her, was hateful to him. (*The Mill on the Floss* 405)

Their long-lasting bond only makes his reproach of Maggie greater. He feels that he cannot forgive her because she has hurt him too much. All he feels is a need to punish her and so he punishes her in the most effective way by not allowing her the comfort of his presence. She is no longer welcome in his home: “If you are in want I will provide for you – let my mother know. But you shall not come under my roof” (*The Mill on the Floss* 393). He may be willing to support her financially and even accepts that their mother goes with Maggie, but since he feels that Maggie must be punished, he does. Despite Maggie’s attempts to do the right thing, she cannot help causing pain to those she loves.

As has become obvious, Maggie and Tom’s relationship is destabilized when they are adults. They are separated not only by their different characters, but also by their varying conceptions of duty and loyalty. Maggie once reminds Tom: “[Y]ou can’t quite judge for me – our natures are very different” (*The Mill on the Floss* 317). After the incident with Philip, Tom tells Maggie: “[Y]ou need say no more to show me what a wide distance there is between us. Let us remember that in future, and be silent” (*The Mill on the Floss* 282). From then on their estrangement only increases. Still Maggie is strongly influenced by her feelings of sororal duty. She makes sure Philip knows that she will not break with her brother for anything. “I desire no future that will break the ties of the past. But the tie to my brother is one of the strongest. I can do nothing willingly that will divide me always from him” (*The Mill on the Floss* 360). When Maggie runs off with Stephen and returns in disgrace, their relationship faces its greatest challenge. Tom is guided by such strong family pride and a rigid belief in morality that he cannot forgive her, while his sister is torn up by self-doubt and social pressures (see Wolff 207). Tom makes his feelings very clear: “I can’t believe in you any more,” […] I will sanction no such character as yours” (*The Mill on the Floss* 392-393). Maggie chooses her sororal duty over her feelings for Stephen, yet her choice is by no means the least painful to her family or the least destructive (see Auerbach 167). Tom may not have approved of her elopement with Stephen, but her return to St. Ogg’s in disgrace is much worse for him. By returning in disgrace, she once again finds a way to give up her own desires in favor of self-sacrifice, yet she still causes pain to all those involved. “The irrevocable wrong that must blot her life had been committed: she had brought sorrow into the lives of others – into the lives that were knit up

with hers by trust and love" (*The Mill on the Floss* 383). Additionally, her choice also means that she has destroyed her chances of being married. Like her brother, her feelings of duty towards her family have cost her the chance of having her own family. The only place for Tom and Maggie is with their sibling and it takes a volatile force to bring them back together (see Wolff 206).

By the end of the novel, both seem to be locked in a state of expectant inactivity, waiting for something to initiate their future paths in life, now that their vision of a future together seems impossible. When the flood comes to St. Ogg's, it is as a messenger of fate; it carries Maggie "away from the life she had been dreading" *(The Mill on the Floss* 419). It gives the siblings a chance to reunite with the one person they care for most in the world. Maggie asserts her right to act upon her own will when she decides to row out to the mill. She goes to Tom and offers her affection and for the first time in their lives, Tom does not push her away. "They sat mutely gazing at each other: Maggie with eyes of intense life looking out form a weary, beaten face – Tom pale with a certain awe and humiliation. […] But at last a mist gathered over the blue-grey eyes, and the lips found a word they could utter: the old childish – 'Magsie!'" (*The Mill on the Floss* 422). Tom allows his feelings to show because for once Maggie does not demand or expect something he cannot give her. When he asks Maggie to give him the oars she is able to submit to Tom's authority without the previous feelings of resentment and anger on both sides. There is simply no time to. Their death allows them to free themselves both from the "life of self-sacrifice that [they have] embraced and to resolve the anger between [them]" (Christ 136). The differences between Tom and Maggie that have forced them apart and made any reconciliation between them impossible, are forgotten in the face of the flood (see Christ 136).

> Along with the sense of danger and possible rescue for those long-remembered beings at the old home, there was an undefined sense of reconcilement with her brother: what quarrel, what harshness, what unbelief in each other can subsist in the presence of a great calamity, when all the artificial vesture of our life is gone, and we are all one with each other in primitive mortal needs? Vaguely, Maggie felt this; - in the strongest resurgent love towards her brother that swept away all the later impressions of hard ,cruel offence and misunderstanding, and left only the deep, underlying, unshakable memories of early union. (*The Mill on the Floss* 420-421)

The flood allows them to reunite and focus on the most relevant aspect of their relationship, namely their love for each other, just before they die.

Tom and Maggie Tulliver are thus guided by their loyalty towards each other until their death. They both struggle with their responsibilities, yet find the strength to stand by each other, even at the cost of their own happiness. Even though their bond is just as frequently characterized by resentment as by affection, their conduct towards one another is always guided by the best of intentions. They may not appreciate each other as much as the other siblings discussed here, but they certainly share the deepest and most emotional bond. For this reason their emotions, anger and love alike, are so strong. Their feelings of loyalty and affection are so intense that their expectations towards each other are equally high. For this reason their relationship is also the most strained. The emotions and feelings of duty are so consuming that the pressure they create must somehow be vented. Their final reunion and embrace in death shows that their relationship is what defined them and what mattered most in their lives.

6.5 Fraternal and Sororal Duty in *Silas Marner*

In *Silas Marner* George Eliot uses the Lammeter and Cass children to contrast the negative and positive forces within sibling relationships. Godfrey and Dunstan, two of the sons in the Cass family, both feel great disdain and contempt for each other while Nancy and Priscilla Lammeter are tied to each other by unwavering devotion. Each pair of siblings has a very unique bond and has quite different conceptions of their duty towards each other. Since the mistrust between the Cass brothers stands in stark contrast to the deep trust between the Lammeter sisters, their different relationships give deep insights into the necessity of mutual confidence and respect within fraternal and sororal bonds. These siblings all live lives relatively independent of their siblings, yet their influence never quite ceases. Their lives are all intimately tied to each other and not even death can alter their dependence on each other.

Nancy and Priscilla Lammeter share a very deep bond. It seems to require no proclamations of affections and devotion. They are each other's main source of support. So it is not surprising that Nancy would wish that "Priscilla had come [to the Cass' home] at the same time" (*Silas Marner* 76) as she did. She feels

uncomfortable when she has to face Godfrey without her sister's support. Despite the strength of their connection, they do feel the need to stress their sororal bond in front of others. So "Nancy insists, for example, that her sister Priscilla dress identically to her, despite the unsuitability of the clothes Nancy chooses for them both, because she believes the family tie should be evident and acknowledge at all times" (Nestor 81). Priscilla submits to her sister's wishes because she knows how much it means to her. She may not be happy about it, but she accepts the fact that Nancy feels the need to publicly stand by her. They rely on each other's support and by dressing alike, Nancy and Priscilla gain a feeling of unity. They may differ in character and appearance, but that does not matter to them.

Both sisters are aware of their differences and attempt to balance each other out accordingly. Even though "Nancy's sense of propriety, conventionalism, and exactitude is complemented by Priscilla's rough, plain-speaking independence" (Carroll, *Interpretations* 158), Priscilla allows Nancy to take control over her frequently. In fact, Nancy is the only person Priscilla gladly submits to. There is no resentment in her when she states: "[Y]ou do as you like with me – you always did, from the first you began to walk" (*Silas Marner* 82). She may have to answer to her father, but his age makes him more dependent on her than she is on him. Interestingly, Nancy, who has so much control over her sister, is the one who submits in all her other family relationships. She does not agree with Priscilla's statement that "Mr Have-your-own-way is the best husband, and the only one [she]'d ever promise to obey" (*Silas Marner* 81). Priscilla will never submit to a husband, but she sees her acquiescence to her sister's will more as an indulgence than as a real duty. It is the way things have always been between them and neither has any inclination to change them.

Both Nancy and Priscilla are aware of what their father expects of them and both fulfill their roles in the family to match his and society's expectations. The fact that Nancy marries Godfrey and Priscilla stays at home to care for their father has already been discussed. Their choices in life may have put them on quite different paths, but that does not mean that their bond is weakened by this separation. Priscilla remains Nancy's main confidant and they both make sure that they spend enough time together. So Nancy tries to convince her family to stay longer during their visit so that she and Priscilla can "go round the garden"

(*Silas Marner* 132) and talk, while Priscilla reminds Godfrey to "bring Nancy to the Warren's before the week's out" (*Silas Marner* 133) so that they can see each other again soon. In each other the Lammeter sisters have a life-long companion who supports and loves them without passing judgment over them. Their support for one another seems to be guided by their feelings of propriety just as much as by their affection for each other. Nancy, especially, is guided by her sense of duty and morality. She lives by her own code and her loyalty towards her sister is also rooted in these "decided judgments within her" (*Silas Marner* 136). Even though the fact that she believes that "it [is] right for sisters to dress alike" (*Silas Marner* 136) seems trivial, for Nancy this is a way to put her code into action. Nancy is very clear about her allegiances and duties in life and her duty towards her sister is just as important to her as her marital and filial duty. For Priscilla, sororal duty takes on a more significant role because it will eventually be her only family obligation in life. After their father's death Priscilla's only family will be Nancy. For this reason she is even more aware of the necessity of keeping their bond strong. She will have no one else to depend on and so her respect and loyalty towards Nancy is deeply influenced by her social position. Nancy will always continue to have the more powerful role within their relationship, and this authority will only grow if Priscilla becomes economically dependent on her and her husband after their father's death.

Nancy and Priscilla share a bond based on mutual respect and trust. They know each other's strengths and weakness and balance each other consciously. There are no secrets between them and they are the only siblings discussed here who have no secrets or misunderstandings which stand between them. This marks a stark contrast to the other siblings in this novel, Godfrey and Dunstan Cass. These two brothers are at odds throughout the whole novel and are only united by their mutual contempt and mistrust of each other. They never seek to support each other and are only interested in taking advantage of each other's weaknesses and secrets. In this fraternal relationship rivalry is the guiding force and Eliot shows how destructive its effects can be on the lives of siblings.

The coldness and the lack of affection within the Cass household have already been mentioned. The Squire has raised sons who have "turned out rather ill" (*Silas Marner* 20) and his behavior not only has detrimental effects on the

relationship with his sons, but also negatively influences their relationship with each other. The novel only introduces the reader to two of the Squire's sons even though their conversations reveal that there are other siblings, who have already left Raveloe. Godfrey and Dunstan, the only two who are still living with their father, both resent their father's influence on their lives and the other's presence at home. So it is not surprising that "at the sight of [Dunstan] Godfrey's face [takes on an] expression of hatred" (*Silas Marner* 21). Indeed, they are very jealous of each other and constantly argue. Instead of supporting each other, they see the other as a burden and as a nuisance. While Godfrey believes that Dunstan is "made to hurt other people" (*Silas Marner* 55), Dunstan revels in the thought that "he could worry Godfrey into anything (*Silas Marner* 31) because he can so easily influence him. Since their father "allows evil to grow under favour of his own heedlessness, till they pressed upon him with exasperating force" (*Silas Marner* 57), he has not interfered because he has never been really bothered about their behavior. So they have always been rivals and their arguments have only gained in severity as they got older. "His two sons have responded in contrasting ways and have become […] dangerously separated" (Carroll, *Interpretations* 155).They are full of disdain for each other and their secrets from their father are their main source of competition and rivalry.

Both Godfrey and Dunstan have something to hide and do not hesitate to extort and take advantage of the other's secret, while trying to keep their own. Since almost all their intercourse is made up of arguments about Godfrey's secret marriage and Dunstan's dubious affairs, their relationship is strained considerably by mistrust (see Paxton 104). Dunstan has no qualms about using Godfrey's secret against him and sees in the "marriage the means of gratifying at once his jealous hate and his cupidity" (*Silas Marner* 26). The one who has the upper hand is Dunstan, simply because Godfrey has more to lose. Dunstan makes sure to remind him of his precarious situation:

> I might tell the Squire how his handsome son was married to that nice young woman, Molly Farren, and was very unhappy because he couldn't live with his drunken wife, and I should slip into your place as comfortable as could be. But, you see, I don't do it – I'm so easy and good natured. You'll take any trouble for me. You'll get the hundred pounds for me – I know you will. (*Silas Marner* 22)

Dunstan can blackmail his brother because Godfrey could lose his position as heir. Godfrey fears and resents this hold that Dunstan has over him. He is lucky that Dunstan's greed is his undoing. In fact Dunstan's death "effectually ends a deep and seemingly permanent alienation between [them and at the same time it] satisfies the survivor's aggressive feelings while it removes him or her from the situation that had inspired hostility" (Christ 130). When Dunstan disappears, Godfrey feels no sorrow and is only relieved that his secret is safe. Godfrey knows that "[i]f Dunstan [does] not come back […] everything might blow over" (*Silas Marner* 58). Even though Dunstan is gone, his influence over Godfrey remains strong. Years later, the draining of the fields uncovers Dunstan's body and Godfrey is moved to reveal his secret to his wife. While Dunstan's disappearance freed Godfrey of his responsibility to acknowledge Molly just as much as her death did, the discovery of Dunstan's corpse seems to change something inside Godfrey. When he tells Nancy, he does so "with trembling hands, […] a pale face and a strange unanswering glance" (*Silas Marner* 149). He comes to realize that only a confession will resolve his inner turmoil and allow him to come to terms with his past. Even though the negative force behind their fraternal bond is so strong, it has an immense influence on both their characters. Through Dunstan's influence Godfrey is in danger of "becoming a bitter man, visited by cruel wishes, that seemed to enter, and depart, and enter again, like demons who had found in him a ready-garnished home" (*Silas Marner* 28). They brought out the worst in each other and only a final separation could sever Godfrey from Dunstan's negative influence.

Godfrey and Dunstan's contemptuous relationship stands in stark contrast to the bond between Nancy and Priscilla. While the affection between Nancy and Priscilla will surely last a lifetime, similarly to the bond between Silas and his dead sister Hephzibah, Godfrey is liberated by Dunstan's death. Dunstan stands for a past and a part of himself which Godfrey must leave behind. Eliot uses these relationships to show how much power, positive as well as negative, is immanent within fraternal and sororal bonds. She makes apparent how complex and unique these relationships can be. So while the loyalty between siblings can be unwavering despite differences, it can also be poisoned by rivalry and hate. Still the power these bonds have in the lives of these characters is strong and their siblings' influence reverberates in all their lives.

7 Concluding Summary

George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell both explored the tensions and rewards inherent in family relationships. Their conceptions of duty and loyalty in families show how relevant these concepts were to Victorians and how influential ideologies, especially those about gender, were in the 19th century. Both authors recognized that "duty, […] is a complex idea. It is not a stern, extrinsic law to be obeyed in spite of everything, but is itself bound up with love – love of the past, of roots, of family, of friends" (Ashton 62). Their works show how affection and expectations come to form family relationships and the characters of each family member. While Gaskell allows families like the Hamleys and Hales, who are "deeply rooted in mutual love" (Duthie 94) to function despite their adherence to patriarchal authority, Eliot is more critical in her observations. Her "discomfort over the patriarchal authority with which the very ideal of family had been imprinted" (Wolff 212) does not allow her to deal with family dynamics as positively as Gaskell. Still both authors are aware of the "dangers of pushing the ideal of the family too far" (Pike 153), and so they both focus on the consequences of unfulfilled expectations and ideals. None of the families they created is free from some form of tension, yet it is the way they overcome these tensions which shows how they define their loyalty and duty towards each other. In these novels "the authority of the past is inseparable from the affections that grow out of personal experience" (Pinney 50). None of these characters can undo the ties to their families. So both authors dealt with the idea that a person's loyalty must be primarily with his or her family and both try to answer a question voiced by Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*: "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie?" (*The Mill on the Floss* 287). Their treatment of this question in *North and South*, *Wives and Daughters*, *Silas Marner*, and *The Mill on the Floss* reveals that family loyalty and duty must necessarily remain guiding forces in the lives of all their characters.

7.1 Summary of Marital Duty in George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell

In *North and South* and *Wives and Daughters* Elizabeth Gaskell focuses on marital duties to show how essential these were to the everyday lives of Victorian families. Her main concern is frequently the dynamics between spouses and their struggle for a working relationship. Both George Eliot and

Elizabeth Gaskell recognize that the husband's authority in his home and his wife's submission to it are essential here. Gaskell's ideal of loving submission and equal division of duties is realized rarely. Only few couples, like the Hamleys in *Wives and Daughters,* lead such a relationship in which the husband deserves his wife's devotion. Other husbands, who fail in their marital and parental duties, like Mr. Hale in *North and South*, may still retain their wives' affection, but must also deal with their discontent. Like in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, economic failure can cause rifts in relationships, dividing couples like the Hales despite their love for each other. While personal weaknesses and false ideals could still be overcome in *North and South,* they can cause the couples in *Wives and Daughters* to drift apart permanently. Still, a wife's submission to her husband's guidance is seen as desirable and self-less love is praised endlessly in her works. A marriage for Gaskell functions either out of love or out of necessity; spouses all feel the duty to make their union work. Even though Gaskell frequently focuses on the dependence of wives, she also shows that each spouse can have a function within the family that the other members of that family respect. In contrast to Eliot, whose husbands ridicule their wives for their weaknesses, like Mr. Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, Gaskell's husbands respect and love their wives despite their weaknesses. Generally, depending on a spouse's support is difficult for all these couples. While some must find the strength to act independently, like Mrs. Thornton, others, like Dr. Gibson, are sure they cannot. All of these marital relationships must deal with a certain amount of discord and almost all of them deteriorate over time. While Gaskell allows different values and interests to cause estrangement despite continuous affection in *North and South*, in *Wives and Daughters* such distancing is not possible if couples are in love. So while Mrs. Hale's is discontented with her life in Milton, Mrs. Hamley never regrets her sacrifices. In contrast, the sacrifices George Eliot's wives make can mar the relationship to their husbands severely, especially if their husbands are undeserving of them.

In general George Eliot focuses much more on the unfulfilling and even negative aspects of marriages in *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner* than Elizabeth Gaskell does in her two works (see Craig 241). So she underlines the necessity of mutual support and understanding by showing the consequences of their absence. Eliot emphasizes that marriages can only work if both partners

fulfill their duties to the best of their abilities, but the disapproval of a spouse's weaknesses can make even these attempts inefficient. While Gaskell's spouses must learn acceptance, Eliot rather focuses on their discontent. Another important difference is the fact that Eliot stresses the powerlessness of wives to the extent that they even go unheard in their own homes, like Mrs. Tulliver. This way she focuses not only on the limited sphere of women, but also on their dependence. Gaskell's wives, like Mrs. Thornton and Mrs. Gibson, can retain and establish very strong positions within their homes. In general, a wife's excessive dependence on her husband can be just as detrimental to their relationship as misunderstandings and lack of support. The consequences of failure and ill-judgment are most obvious in *The Mill on the Floss*, while the marriage between Godfrey and Nancy Cass proves that even faults and unfulfilled expectations can be overcome. The awareness of marital duties and the desire to fulfill them is not as strong in Eliot's characters as it is in Gaskell's; her characters are much more liable to act selfishly. So Godfrey Cass and even Mr. Tulliver have no qualms about considering their own needs above those of their wives, while Gaskell allows such behavior only in Mrs. Gibson, whom she excuses because of her weakness. Thus only one of Eliot's characters is hard-hearted enough to abandon his wife Molly and be happy about her death, while Osborne in *North and South* could never think of leaving his wife, even though their marriage is also a secret. Losing a spouse is a dramatic experience, which many of these characters must go through. While some of them seek substitutes, like Mr. and Mrs. Gibson, others remain single and concentrate solely on their parental duty.

7.2 Summary of Parental Duty in George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell

In *North and South* and *Wives and Daughters* Elizabeth Gaskell used the obligations of parents and their feelings towards their children to examine what consequences these have on the development of her main protagonists. Since most of these parents define themselves primarily as parents and not as spouses, Gaskell emphasizes that their parental duties are a serious obligation in their lives. The exceptions, Mrs. Hamley and Mrs. Gibson, are significant as well. While Mrs. Hamley is an example of a woman whose dependence on her husband defines her, Mrs. Gibson is so self-centered that her own interests always come before those of her family. Despite their strengths Gaskell's

parents also exhibit a striking unawareness of their children's needs and interests, even though they love and care for them. They share this fault with parents that Eliot describes in *The Mill on the Floss* and *Silas Marner*. Even though most of these parents are well-meaning, they are frequently so preoccupied with their own problems that they do not notice the needs of their children. Mrs. Thornton, who shares the most intimate and understanding bond with her son, is the only mother who does not ignore the faults of her children. She, like most of the other parents, clearly favors one child over the other, which deeply influences the dynamics within the whole family. More importantly, however, she, like Mr. Hale and the fathers in *Wives and Daughters*, knows the strengths and weaknesses of her children and supports them accordingly. In contrast, the other mothers and even some of the fathers tend to idealize the characters of their children and so ignore their faults. In fact, Gaskell uses this to give deep insights into the parent-child relationships. While some parents, like Mrs. Thornton, accept their children's weaknesses, others, like Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Hamley, ignore them completely. Only few, like Mr. Hale and Squire Hamley, actually scold their children if they are at fault. Eliot widens the possibilities of reactions by adding the possibility of punishment. Her parents, especially Silas Marner, are concerned with how to react properly to their children's transgressions with more than words. Another aspect which Gaskell uses to explicate the bond between parents and their children is how parents react if their children do not meet their expectations. So while the unwavering affection in the Hale family is made obvious by their unshakable loyalty towards Frederick despite his faults, the disappointments in the Hamley family have the power to destroy the bond between father and son. While Gaskell does not allow the economic failure of Mr. Hale and even the mismanagement of the estate of Squire Hamley to destroy the family, Eliot's families, like the Tullivers and the family of old Squire Cass, can be torn apart emotionally by their preoccupation with their economic and financial situation. Gaskell and Eliot share the view that if a parent is as self-indulgent and negligent as Mrs. Gibson or Godfrey Cass, the emotional estrangement that follows is permanent. The detrimental effects of such neglect cannot be compensated for. Still the frequent separation of parent and child at the outset of their novels is less harmful if the

bond between them is characterized by reciprocal loyalty, honesty, and affection, like the relationship between the Hales and their children.

George Eliot's parents share many of the characteristics that Gaskell gives to hers. However, there are striking differences as well. One of these is the fact that the majority of Eliot's parents only come to consider there parental duties after their marital obligations. The only parents who do not do this are the unmarried ones, like Mr. Wakem and Silas Marner. Only these two fathers define themselves primarily as parents, Silas especially, since parenting is their main purpose in life. Like in Gaskell, the loss of a parent is a dramatic incident in a child's life; however, its effects on a family are much severer in Eliot's novels. So the loss of the mother in the Cass household is seen as the cause of all the problems they have. The resulting estrangement within the family can characteristically not be overcome. Only one of Eliot's parents manages to redeem herself in the eyes of her daughter, and that is Mrs. Tulliver. She, like the other parents in Eliot's novels, is preoccupied either with her own problems or with the problems of her favorite child. Interestingly, only the old Squire and Mr. Lammeter in *Silas Marner* treat their children as equals; all other siblings must come to terms with unequal treatment and favoritism. It is striking that the only parent in Eliot who always puts his child's interests first is Silas Marner, who has made the conscious choice of being a parent for a child he is not related to. His dedication also makes him the only parent in Eliot's two novels who deserves his child's loyalty. The others are too often guided by unfair expectations and demands. These parents all have faults which are ignored or accepted by their children because their authority gives them the right to expect their children's obedience and respect. Indeed their major error is often that they are unforgiving of their children's weaknesses. Instead of forgiveness and support parents like old Squire Cass and the Tullivers react with coldness, remonstrations and accusations when they are disappointed by their children.

7.3 Summary of Filial Duty in George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell

Just as parents find themselves torn between their marital and parental duties, the children in these novels by George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell are frequently confronted with the choice between fulfilling their filial duty or their obligations towards their siblings. For both authors a character's filial ties form

their defining duty. All of Elizabeth Gaskell's children consider their parent's needs and expectations before they think of their own. While the children in *North and South* find that even their parent's unvoiced needs must come first, the children in *Wives and Daughters* experience their parent's expectations as their primary motivation. All of these children feel that their parents deserve their loyalty and their respect. In contrast to Eliot's character, their parents' weaknesses never change this. For this reason, none of Gaskell's children resent their parents for their faults; characters like Roger Hamley and Margaret Hale willingly compensate for them. They do this out of a need for affection and attention which also helps them to accept that their parents do not always treat them fairly or equally, like in the case of Roger and Osborne Hamley or Fanny and John Thornton. Eliot also uses this craving for affection in *The Mill on the Floss*; Maggie Tulliver is full of the same desire for her parent's love that Margaret Hale and Molly Hamley feel. Interestingly, Gaskell never allows her characters to voice any resentment about their parents' treatment while Eliot's characters do come to feel discontent and jealousy, but only Philip Wakem is actually willing to anger his father. All the others, especially Osborne Hamley, would rather face misunderstandings and estrangement than let their parents be hurt and disappointed by them.

Most of the children in Gaskell and Eliot fear estrangement from their parents or have to involuntarily live apart from them. While some of Gaskell's characters, like Frederick Hale and his parents, seem to get through separation unscathed, the rift it causes between others is permanent. So Cynthia Kirkpatrick can never forgive her mother for her neglect, just like Eliot's Eppie cannot forgive Godfrey Cass for abandoning her. Eliot uses Eppie and Godfrey and Dunstan Cass to show that filial loyalty must be earned, while characters like Tom and Maggie Tulliver obey despite their feelings of discontent. Eliot's children are capable of seeing their parent's weaknesses and failures and sometimes they even come to react with resentment towards them. However, their dependence, both emotional and financial, keeps them from turning form their parents. Generally a child's financial dependence is a frequent theme in all the novels discussed here, though it is much more obvious in Eliot's works. Only Margaret Hale in *North and South* is characterized by the same dependency on her parents that Eliot's children feel. Even though most of these children seek an independent

life and their own path, only Gaskell's children are able to establish their own independent families. Eppie, who does manage to marry, does not establish her own home, because she feels no need to assert her independence from Silas because of his dependence on her. For Eliot marriage and the move from filial duty to marital duty is a central development which only Eppie and Nancy and Godfrey Cass achieve. The rest are arrested in their initial obligations and are unable to extend their duties outward. Their self-sacrifice in the name of filial duty is tied closely to the fear of disappointment these characters feel. Frequently characters, like Margaret Hale, feel that they must hide their inner struggles instead of voicing their feelings towards their parents. Only their siblings are privy to their inner struggles and secrets.

7.4 Summary of Fraternal and Sororal Duty in George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell

In Elizabeth Gaskell's two novels the bond between siblings is explored and proves to be one of the guiding forces in the lives of Gaskell's characters. Gaskell frequently draws an idealized picture of the relationship between siblings: characters such as Margaret and Frederick Hale and Osborne and Roger Hamley share a strong bond, which is immune to all destabilizing forces. Their unwavering devotion, love, and loyalty define their relationship to their siblings and guide their conduct. Even relationships between siblings, who do not share the same characteristics, such as John and Fanny Thornton, are shown as being particularly strong. Mutual acceptance is a key factor for the bond which holds these siblings together. The strains the weaknesses and faults of a sibling can put on a relationship are enhanced when the feelings and needs of others are involved. Frequently Gaskell's siblings must face the choice between loyalty towards their sibling, towards their parents, or towards their own conscience. Interestingly, characters like Roger Hamley and Margaret Hale do not hesitate to choose their sibling's interests over their own. Like Eliot's Tom Tulliver, they would rather deal with their sibling's problems themselves, instead of upsetting their parents. Even though secrets and misunderstandings may endanger a relationship, they never do so permanently. In contrast to George Eliot, who does focus on unbridgeable differences between siblings, especially in *Silas Marner*, Gaskell focuses on the positive influence siblings can have on each other. For her, the bond between siblings may be so close

that it takes on an ethereal quality. Characters like Margaret and Frederick Hale share such a bond while others, like Molly Gibson and Cynthia Kirkpatrick, desire to have such a close connection. All of Gaskell's siblings share a desire to support each other and they all manage to balance out each other's strengths and weaknesses. Still, these characters also feel a need to develop independently of each other. None of them are as dependent as Eliot's Tom and Maggie Tulliver or Nancy Cass and Priscilla Lammeter.

For many of George Eliot's siblings, their obligations towards each other are a major force within their lives. She shows how it can be the primary duty in the lives of siblings in *The Mill on the Floss* and also explores how excessive emotions, hate and love alike, can influence the bond between siblings. So grievances and rivalry, such as in the relationship between Dunstan and Godfrey Cass, can turn the bond between siblings into hate and resentment. Still these bonds remain strong and siblings continue to be influenced by each other all their lives. They may depend on each other's continuous support, like Nancy and Priscilla Lammeter, or they contend with each other's expectations and differing characters, like Tom and Maggie Tulliver. The affections between Eliot's siblings are steeped with difficulties and are frequently very extreme. So the hate between Dunstan and Godfrey is just as inexplicably loaded as Maggie and Tom's feelings for each other. The expectations Eliot's characters have of each other are rarely met, only Priscilla and Nancy share a bond of affection despite their differences. In addition, while Gaskell only focuses on the positive aspects of a brother's authority over his sister in *North and South*, Eliot is much more critical of such a constellation in *The Mill on the Floss*. In Tom and Maggie's very unique relationship there is hardly any understanding for each other's needs, they may support each other, but they do not accept or understand their differences. While Gaskell's Fanny Thornton and Eliot's Priscilla accepts their siblings' authority, Maggie never can. Her resentment for Tom's treatment of her is too essential and defining for their relationship. Like the bond between the other siblings discussed here, their link remains the most reliable bond in their lives. Only the connection between Molly Gibson and Cynthia Kirkpatrick is unstable and viable to change, not because they are not related by blood, but because their bond does not have its roots in childhood.

This exploration of family ties in the works of George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell shows that both authors recognized the social significance of this subject. They used the loyalties and duties between family members to examine how an individual deals with the expectations and needs of others. Despite the various families described in their novels, both authors found that a family consisting of parents with two children was the most prolific constellation. This family arrangement allowed them to describe the pressures of marital, parental, filial, and sororal and fraternal duties within one family. Still, both authors also recognized the value of portraying uncommon family groups, because they allowed them to consider other relevant issues, such as remarriage, abandonment, and clandestine marriages. Frequently, Eliot and Gaskell used the bonds within such unusual families to reveal how family ties can grow between people who are not related by blood, but who still feel a deep loyalty towards each other. Again and again, both authors demonstrated how their protagonists must reconcile their desire for self-determination and their families' needs and expectations. Even though Eliot and Gaskell shared an interest in such family dynamics, their attitudes towards families and the pressures within them have proven to be quite different. Eliot was clearly the more critical of the two; Gaskell was less hesitant to allow her characters, especially her female characters, to feel fulfilled with their duties towards their families. Still, both authors were aware of the pressures Victorian society put on women to define themselves solely in relation to their family duties. By showing that these considerations affect their female as well as their male characters, they both managed to reveal that self-fulfillment is a human need, shared by both men and women alike.

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9 Index

10 Appendix

10.1 Summary in German

In ihren Werken haben George Eliot und Elizabeth Gaskell familiäre Beziehungen und deren positive und negative Kräfte untersucht. Ihre Vorstellungen von familiären Verpflichtungen und Loyalität zeigen, wie relevant diese Konzepte im 19. Jahrhundert waren und wie einflussreich Ideologien, besonders über Geschlechterrollen, in dieser Zeit waren. Ihre Romane verdeutlichen, wie Liebe und Erwartungen dazu beitragen familiäre Beziehungen aufzubauen und die Persönlichkeiten der einzelnen Familienmitglieder zu entwickeln. Ihre Figuren definieren sich entscheidend über ihre Verpflichtungen als Eheleute, Eltern, Kinder, und Geschwister. Beide Autorinnen beschäftigten sich mit der Idee, dass die Loyalität einer Person vor allem bei deren Familie liegen muss und beide versuchen zu ergründen woher dieses Bedürfnis kommt. In Gaskells *North and South* und *Wives and Daughters* und in Eliots *Silas Marner* und *The Mill on the Floss* ist dies ein wichtiges Thema In diesen Romanen betonen beide Autorinnen wie stark der Einfluss von familiäre Verpflichtungen und Loyalität auf das Leben ihrer Figuren ist. Keine der von ihnen kreierten Figuren kann die Bindung zu ihren Familien brechen, wodurch die Autorinnen die Relevanz von familiären Bindungen im Leben eines Menschen hervorheben. Da keine der Familien in diesen Werken frei von Anspannungen ist, können Eliot und Gaskell zeigen, wie der Umgang mit Problemen, Rückschlüsse über die individuellen Figuren und deren Definition von Loyalität und Verpflichtung zulassen.

In *North and South* und *Wives and Daughters* beschäftigt sich Elizabeth Gaskell tiefgründig mit den Verpflichtungen von Eheleuten und zeigt wie wichtig diese für das alltägliche Leben im 19. Jahrhundert waren. Ihr größtes Interesse lag hierbei in der Dynamik zwischen Eheleuten und deren Bemühen um eine funktionierende Partnerschaft. Sowohl George Eliot als auch Elizabeth Gaskell erkannten, dass die Autorität des Ehemannes in seinem Heim und die geforderte Unterwerfung der Ehefrau hier von großer Bedeutung waren. Gaskells Ideal, von liebevollem Verzicht und gleichrangiger Aufteilung von Pflichten, wird jedoch selten realisiert. Nur wenige ihrer Paare führen eine Beziehung wie Squire Hamley und seine Frau in *Wives and Daughters*, in der

der Ehemann die Unterwerfung seiner Frau auch verdient. Andere Ehemänner, die in ihren ehelichen Pflichten scheitern, wie Mr. Hale in *North and South*, können den Respekt ihrer Frauen behalten, müssen aber mit deren Unzufriedenheit und Kritik zurechtkommen. Wie in Eliots *The Mill on the Floss,* kann wirtschaftliches Versagen eine Beziehung zerstören und Paare, trotz ihrer Liebe zueinander, entzweien. Während persönliche Schwäche und falsche Vorstellungen in *North and South* noch überwunden werden können, können sie in *Wives and Daughters* permanente Entfremdung verursachen. Wie in Eliots Romanen können Opfer, die eine Frau für ihren Mann macht, die Beziehung belasten, wenn der Ehemann diese nicht zu schätzen weiß. Trotzdem betont Gaskell den Wert der selbstlose Liebe, und sieht deshalb auch die Ergebenheit der Ehefrau als einen wertvollen Teil der Ehe. Für Gaskell funktioniert eine Ehe entweder aus Liebe oder aus Notwendigkeit; all ihre Eheleute wollen, dass ihre Ehen funktionieren. Im Gegensatz zu Eliot, deren Ehemänner, wie Mr. Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss,* ihre Frauen oft für ihre Schwächen verspotten, respektieren Gaskells Ehemänner ihre Frauen trotz ihrer Fehler. Trotzdem sind auch Gaskells Ehen nie perfekt, all ihre Eheleute müssen Probleme überwinden und damit umgehen, dass ihre Beziehungen sich mit der Zeit verschlechtern.

Im Vergleich zu Gaskell, beschäftigt sich George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss* und *Silas Marner* mehr mit den negativen Aspekten der Ehe. Sie unterstreicht die Notwendigkeit der Unterstützung und des gegenseitigen Verständnisses, indem sie die Konsequenzen ihres Fehlens beschreibt. Eliot betont, dass Ehen nur funktionieren, wenn beide Partner sich bemühen ihre Pflichten zu erfüllen. Während Gaskells Eheleute Akzeptanz lernen müssen, empfinden Eliots Paare nur Unzufriedenheit. Oft sind Eliots Ehefrauen so schwach und unterdrückt, dass sie, wie Mrs. Tulliver, in ihrem eigenen Heim keinen Einfluss haben. Allerdings können Gaskells Ehefrauen, wie Mrs. Thornton in *North and South* und Mrs. Gibson in *Wives and Daughters,* starke Positionen in ihrem Heim innehaben. Die Konsequenzen von Versagen sind in *The Mill on the Floss* am offensichtlichsten, während die Ehe von Godfrey und Nancy Cass in *Silas Marner* beweist, dass auch Fehler und unerfüllte Erwartungen überwunden werden können. Obwohl Eliots Figuren sich ihrer ehelichen Verpflichtungen genauso bewusst sind wie Gaskells, neigen ihre Figuren eher dazu, egoistisch

zu handeln. So haben Godfrey Cass und Mr. Tulliver keine Bedenken ihre eigenen Interessen über die ihrer Familien zu stellen, während Gaskell dieses Benehmen nur Mrs. Gibson erlaubt, die aber wegen ihrer Schwäche nicht dafür verurteilt wird. So kann auch nur eine von Eliots Figuren, nämlich Godfrey Cass, hartherzig genug sein, um seine Frau zu verlassen und sich über ihren Tod zu freuen, während Gaskells Osborne Hamley seine Frau unterstützt, obwohl auch diese Ehe ein Geheimnis ist.

In Gaskells Romanen nutzt sie elterliche Pflichten und Gefühle um zu zeigen, welche Konsequenzen diese auf die Entwicklung ihrer Figuren hat. Da die meisten Elter sich in erster Linie als Eltern, und nicht als Eheleute definieren, kann Gaskell betonen, dass elterliche Pflichten sehr ernst zu nehmen sind. Die Ausnahmen, Mrs. Hamely und Mrs. Gibson, sind hier relevant. Während Mrs. Hamley eine Frau ist, deren Abhängigkeit von ihrem Mann sie völlig einnimmt, ist Mrs. Gibson so egoistisch, dass ihre eigenen Interessen immer vor denen ihrer Familie kommen. Trotz ihrer Stärken, haben Gaskells Eltern oft Schwierigkeiten die Bedürfnisse ihrer Kinder zu erkennen. Obwohl sie sich bemühen ihren Kindern gerecht zu werden, sind sie oft von ihren eigenen Problemen übermannt, und können sich nicht auf ihre Kinder konzentrieren. Gaskells Eltern, wie Mrs. Thornton, Mr. Hale und Dr. Gibson, erkennen die Schwächen ihrer Kinder und unterstützen sie auch angemessen. Viele ihrer anderen Eltern tendieren eher dazu, die Fehler ihrer Kinder zu ignorieren und ihr Verhalten und ihre Persönlichkeiten zu idealisieren. So kann Gaskell tiefe Einblicke in die Beziehung von Eltern und Kinder geben und zeigen, wie auch große Zuneigung, Missverständnisse nicht ausschließt. Ein weiterer wichtiger Aspekt, den Gaskell hier berücksichtigt, ist wie Eltern mit Enttäuschungen umgehen. So beweist die Hale Familie ihre unerschütterliche Liebe und Loyalität zu einander, wenn sie Frederick unterstützen, während die Beziehung zwischen Squire Hamley und Osborne durch Osbornes Versagen zerstört wird. Gaskell und Eliot teilen die Ansicht, dass Egoismus und Vernachlässigung zu emotionalen Entfremdung führen kann, während nur Eliot auch wirtschaftliche Schwierigkeiten die Kraft gibt, Familien zu zerrütten.

Obwohl sich George Eliots Eltern viele ihrer Merkmale mit Gaskells teilen, gibt es auch wichtige Unterschiede. Der wichtigste ist, dass Eliots Eltern ihre elterlichen Pflichten erst nach ihren ehelichen berücksichtigen. Nur

unverheiratete Eltern, wie Mr. Wakem in *The Mill on the Floss* und Silas Marner in *Silas Marner*, konzentrieren sich in erster Linie auf die Bedürfnisse ihrer Kinder. Wie auch in Gaskell, ist der Verlust eines Elternteils ein dramatisches Ereignis im Leben eines Kindes, die Konsequenzen für Kinder sind aber bei Eliot viel schwerwiegender. So ist der frühe Tod der Mutter für die Familie Cass die Ursache all ihrer unüberwindbaren Schwierigkeiten. Auch viele von Eliots Eltern sind primär mit ihren eigenen Problemen beschäftigt, nur Silas Marner sieht die Bedürfnisse seiner Tochter als vorrangig. Er ist aber auch das einzige Elternteil das sich bewusst für die elterlichen Verpflichtungen und für ein Kind, mit dem er nicht einmal verwandt ist, entscheidet. Im Gegensatz zu Silas Marner sind Eliots andere Eltern oft von unfairen Erwartungen geleitet. Ihre Schwächen werden von ihren Kindern ignoriert oder hingenommen, weil ihre Autorität ihnen das Recht gibt von ihren Kindern uneingeschränkten Respekt und Gehorsam zu fordern. Auf die Schwächen ihrer Kinder reagieren Eltern wie die Tullivers nicht mit Vergebung und Unterstützung, sondern mit Kälte und Anschuldigungen.

So wie die Eltern in diesen Roman sich oft zwischen ihren ehelichen und elterlichen Verpflichtungen hin und her gezogen fühlen, müssen sich die Kinder in den Werken von George Eliot und Elizabeth Gaskell oft zwischen ihren Verpflichtungen zu ihren Eltern und ihren Geschwistern entscheiden. Für beide Autorinnen ist die Bindung zu den Eltern ein wichtiger Bestandteil ihrer Figuren. Alle Kinder in Elizabeth Gaskell berücksichtigen die Bedürfnisse und Erwartungen ihrer Eltern bevor sie an ihre eigenen denken. All diese Kinder glauben, dass ihre Eltern ihre Loyalität und ihren Respekt verdienen. Anders als bei Eliot, ändern die Schwächen der Eltern daran nichts. Kinder wie Roger Hamley und Margaret Hale sind bereit, die Schwächen ihrer Eltern zu kompensieren da sie, wie alle Kinder in Gaskell, ein großes Bedürfnis nach elterlicher Anerkennung verspüren. Während Gaskells Kinder aber ihre Verbitterung stets verbergen, erlaubt Eliot ihren Kindern, ihren Eltern ihren Missmut und ihre Eifersucht mitzuteilen. Jedoch nur Eliots Philip Wakem wagt es, seinen Zorn gegen seinen Vater zu offenbaren. Alle anderen, besonders Osborne Hamley, würden eher Missverständnisse und Entfremdung in Kauf nehmen, als ihre Eltern zu verletzten oder zu enttäuschen.

Die meisten Kinder in Gaskell und Eliot haben Angst vor Entfremdung und viele von ihnen müssen eine unfreiwilligen Trennung von ihren Eltern bewältigen. Während manche von Gaskells Figuren, wie Frederick Hale und seine Eltern, solche Trennungen überstehen, werden die Beziehungen von anderen permanent geschädigt. So kann Cynthia Kirkpatrick in *Wives and Daughters* die Vernachlässigung ihrer Mutter niemals vergessen, während Eliots Eppie ihrem leiblichen Vater Godfrey Cass niemals vergeben kann. Eliot zeigt durch Figuren wie Eppie und Godfrey und Dunstan Cass, dass die Loyalität von Kindern verdient sein muss, während Kinder wie Tom und Maggie Tulliver trotz ihrer Unzufriedenheit gehorchen. Eliots Kinder sehen die Schwächen ihrer Eltern, und manchmal reagieren sie auch mit Missfallen auf deren Fehler. Trotzdem hält sie ihre Abhängigkeit davon ab, sich von ihren Eltern abzuwenden. Obwohl die meisten Kinder Unabhängigkeit von ihren Eltern anstreben, können nur Gaskells Kinder auch eigene Familien gründen. Eliots Eppie gründet zwar kein eigenes Heim mit ihrem Mann, bleibt aber nur bei Silas weil seine Abhängigkeit von ihr größer ist, als ihr Bedürfnis nach Unabhängigkeit. Die anderen Kinder in Eliot können ihre ursprünglichen Verpflichtungen zu ihren Familien nicht erweitern, zu groß ist ihre Angst ihre Familien zu verletzen oder zu enttäuschen. Oft glauben sie, dass sie, wie Margaret Hale, ihre Gefühle und Ängste vor ihren Eltern verbergen zu müssen. Nur ihre Geschwister wissen von ihre Geheimnisse und inneren Konflikten.

Elizabeth Gaskell zeigt in ihren zwei Romanen, dass die Verbindung zwischen Geschwister einen prägenden Einfluss auf das Leben ihrer Figuren hat. Gaskells Geschwister haben oft eine sehr idealisierte Beziehung: Figuren wie Frederick und Margaret Hale und Osborne und Roger Hamley haben eine so starke Verbindung, dass sie nichts entzweien kann. Ihre standhafte Ergebenheit, Liebe, und Loyalität definieren ihre Beziehung zu ihren Geschwistern und leiten ihr Verhalten. Sogar die Beziehungen zwischen Geschwistern, die nichts gemeinsam haben, wie John und Fanny Thornton, sind sehr stark. Gegenseitige Akzeptanz ist für diese Geschwister besonders wichtig, und hilft ihnen zusammenzuhalten. Oft müssen sich Gaskells Geschwister zwischen ihrer Loyalität zu ihren Geschwister, ihren Eltern, und ihrem eigenen Gewissen entscheiden. Figuren wie Roger Hamley und Margaret Hale zögern nicht, die Bedürfnisse ihrer Geschwister über ihre eigenen zu

stellen. Wie Eliots Tom Tulliver versuchen sie, die Probleme ihrer Geschwister zu bewältigen um ihre Eltern nicht aufzuregen. Obwohl Geheimnisse und Missverständnisse die Beziehung zwischen Geschwistern gefährden kann, können sie diese nicht zerstören. Im Gegensatz zu George Eliot, die auch unüberbrückbare Differenzen zwischen Geschwistern thematisiert, konzentriert sich Gaskell auf den positiven Einfluss von Geschwistern aufeinander. Für sie ist die Verbindung zwischen Geschwistern oft so eng, dass sie sogar einen übernatürlichen Charakter annimmt. Figuren wie Margaret und Frederick Hale haben eine solche Verbindung, während sich Molly Gibson und Cynthia Kirkpatrick solch eine wünschen. Alle Geschwister von Gaskell teilen den Wunsch, einander zu unterstützen, und alle schaffen es ihre Schwächen und Stärken gegenseitig auszubalancieren. Trotzdem wollen ihre Geschwister sich auch unabhängig weiterentwickeln. Sie sind nicht voneinander abhängig, so wie Eliots Tom und Maggie Tulliver und Nancy und Priscilla Lammeter.

Für viele von George Eliots Geschwister haben ihre Verpflichtungen für einander enormen Einfluss auf ihre Entwicklung. Sie zeigt, wie es zur höchsten Priorität im Leben von Geschwistern wie Tom und Maggie Tulliver werden kann, und wie exzessive Gefühle, Hass und Liebe gleichermaßen, die Bindung zwischen Geschwistern beeinflussen können. So können Beleidigungen und Rivalität, wie zwischen Dunstan und Godfrey Cass, die Beziehung zwischen Geschwistern zu Hass und Verbitterung werden lassen. Trotzdem bleibt die Verbindung zwischen Geschwistern stark und kann das Leben nachhaltig beeinflussen. Während manche auf einander angewiesen sind, wie Nancy und Priscilla Lammeter, sind andere, wie Tom und Maggie Tulliver, durch ihre Unterschieden fortwährend voneinander isoliert. Die Zuneigung zwischen Eliots Geschwister ist voller Schwierigkeiten, so ist die Situation zwischen Godfrey und Dunstan Cass genauso unerklärlich geladen, wie Maggie und Toms Gefühle für einander. Die Erwartungen die Eliots Figuren voneinander haben werden nur selten erfüllt, nur Priscilla und Nancy haben trotz ihrer Unterschiede eine innige Beziehung. In Tom und Maggies einzigartigen Beziehung gibt es kaum Verständnis für die Bedürfnisse des anderen, sie unterstützen einander, aber sie akzeptieren die Fehler des anderen nicht. Während Gaskells Fanny Thornton und Eliots Priscilla die Autorität ihrer Geschwister akzeptieren, kann Maggie dies niemals tun. Ihre Verbitterung wegen Toms Behandlung ist zu

entscheidend für ihre Beziehung. Wie auch bei Gaskell, bleibt bei Eliot die Beziehung zwischen Geschwistern die verlässlichste Verbindung im Leben. Im Vergleich ist nur die Beziehung zwischen Molly Gibson und Cynthia Kirkpatrick instabil, nicht weil die beiden Stiefschwester sind, sondern weil ihre Beziehung ihren Ursprung nicht in der Kindheit hat.

Die Untersuchung von familiären Banden in den Romanen von George Eliot und Elizabeth Gaskell zeigt, dass beide Autorinnen sich der sozialen Relevanz dieses Themas bewusst waren. Sie nutzen die Loyalitäten und Verpflichtungen der einzelnen Familienmitglieder um zu ergründen, wie Individuen mit den Wünschen von anderen umgehen. Beide Autorinnen zeigen, wie ihre Figuren ihr Bedürfnis nach Selbstbestimmung mit den Forderungen und Erwartungen ihrer Familie vereinbaren müssen. Obwohl Eliot und Gaskell beide ein Interesse an diesem Thema hatten, hat es sich gezeigt, dass ihre Einstellungen zu Familien und den Spannungen in familiären Beziehungen sehr unterschiedlich sind. Eliot war eindeutig kritischer, Gaskell ist weniger zurückhaltend ihren Figuren, vor allem weibliche Figuren, zu erlauben sich in ihrer familiären Rollen erfüllt zu fühlen. Trotzdem waren sich beide Autorinnen gleichermaßen bewusst, welchen Druck Frauen des 19. Jahrhunderts spürten, sich nur über ihre familiären Rollen zu definieren. Indem sie es zulassen, dass sowohl ihre weiblichen als auch ihre männlichen Figuren von ihren Familien beeinflusst werden, zeigen sie, dass Selbstbestimmung ein menschliches Bedürfnis ist das Männer und Frauen gleichermaßen verspüren.

10.2 Curriculum Vitae in German

Melanie Maren Brunner

Geburtsdatum:	5. September 1984
Geburtsort:	Knittelfeld
Staatsbürgerschaft:	Österreich
E-Mail:	melanie.brunner.09@aberdeen.ac.uk

Ausbildung:

2009	Auslandssemester an der University of Aberdeen
seit 2005	Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik an der Universität Wien
2004-2005	Diplomstudium Internationalen Betriebswirtschaft an der Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien
Juni 2004	Matura, HLW Fohnsdorf (mit Auszeichnung bestanden)
1999-2004	HLW Fohnsdorf
1999	Lindenalleehauptschule 2, Knittelfeld
1995-1999	C. E. McCall Middle School, Montoursville
1991-1995	Volksschule Graz-Andritz, Graz

Sprachkenntnisse:

Deutsch

Englisch

Italienisch