

THE STRUGGLE OF THE OTHER: MAGGIE TULLIVER IN GEORGE ELIOT'S *THE MILL ON THE FLOSS*

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Abstract

*Patriarchal society believes in binary opposition of men as “subject” and women as “other” whose existence is determined by men. Gender or the differentiation of roles between men and women is a social construct that both men and women must conform to in order to be socially accepted. Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot’s novel *Mill on the Floss* is positioned as “the other” especially in her relation with her brother Tom. All through her life, Maggie struggles against social rules that regard her as “the other” because she is a woman and even “doubly other” for she is different from other female characters in general. Maggie’s struggle in a male dominated world ends when she finally dies at young age.*

Key Words: *subject, the other, gender, social construct*

Abstrak

Masyarakat patriarki mempercayai oposisi biner laki-laki sebagai *Subject* dan perempuan sebagai *the Other* atau ‘yang lain’ yang keberadaannya ditentukan oleh laki-laki. Gender atau perbedaan peran laki-laki dan perempuan merupakan konstruksi sosial yang harus ditaati oleh laki-laki dan perempuan agar diterima dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat. Tokoh Maggie Tulliver dalam novel *The Mill on the Floss* karya George Eliot selalu diposisikan sebagai ‘the other’ terutama dalam hubungannya dengan kakak laki-lakinya, Tom. Sepanjang hidupnya, Maggie berjuang melawan aturan masyarakat yang memosisikannya sebagai *the Other* karena ia seorang perempuan dan bahkan *doubly other* karena ia berbeda dari tokoh perempuan lain pada umumnya. Perjuangan Maggie untuk mendapatkan tempat di dunia yang dikuasai oleh laki-laki berakhir ketika dia meninggal dalam usia yang masih belia.

Kata Kunci: *subject, the other, gender, konstruksi sosial*

1. Introduction

Many of the stereotypes about gender – the roles of men and women – derive from 19th century England. Therefore, many English literary works produced in Victorian period represent the Victorian images of woman and the notion of gender. One of them is *The Mill on the Floss*, a novel written by George Eliot, a pen name of Mary Ann Evans. Telling a story about a girl named

Maggie Tulliver, the novel shows how roles of men and women are prescribed by a given society, and Maggie, the main female character in the novel, has to struggle against the society when she can not entirely conform to the rules.

2. Theoretical Framework

In her famous book, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir proposes the binary of “Self/Subject” and “Other” in which man is the “Subject” while woman is the “Other.” The notion of woman as the “other” suggests that she is both female and feminized, occupying a secondary place and having the characteristics of immanence, passivity and voicelessness (1953: xvi). *The Second Sex* is integrated around the question, “What is woman?” The initial answer to this question is that woman is defined as not man: “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other” (1953: xix). The notion of woman as the “Other” is the main argument of this book. Man sets himself up as the standard, the One, which immediately puts the woman as the Other. Beauvoir says: “Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all human creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other” (1953: xxxiii). That woman is consistently defined as the other by man who takes on the role of the Self constitutes the main thesis of *The Second Sex*: woman is patriarchally forced into an oppressed position and unequal relationship with man through her relegation to being man’s Other.

Beauvoir further proposes the formulation which distinguishes sex from gender: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (1953: 301). It suggests that woman gradually acquires her gender, an aspect of her identity, through a socially constructed experience. Living in man dominated world, woman is forced to accept man’s imposition upon her. She rejects the notion that women are born “feminine.” Women are constructed to be feminine through social indoctrination. Women are forced to give up their claims to transcendence and authentic subjectivity. They are severely made to accept their “passive” and “alienated” role to man’s “active” and “subjective” demands.

In line with Beauvoir, Kate Millet argues that “a female is born and a woman is created”. What is determined at birth is one’s sex, whether it is male or female. Gender is a social construct: prescribed sex roles imposed by society that both men and women must conform to (Bressler, 1999: 183). The social prescribed sex roles demand men to be aggressive, self-assertive, and dominant, while women must be passive, submissive, and humble. Those who do not conform to the prescribed sex roles will have problem with their society. Judith Butler even claims that gender is not derived from an inherent set of predetermined characteristics but is a social construction. Furthermore she asserts that gender is not only constructed but is also performed. Gender is a set of stylized, repeated acts that we perform. Therefore, one is always in the process of becoming a gender rather than actually being a gender (1998: 519-20).

3. Discussion

This notions of gender as a social construct and woman as the “other” can be clearly seen in George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* in which Maggie Tulliver is the central female character who is presented together with her brother, Tom. Being a woman, not only is Maggie the “other” as she is denied the privileges that a man has, but she is also “doubly other” because of the

characteristics and desires that set her apart from other women in her social circle.

Tom's domination and assumed superiority over Maggie are apparent from their childhood. Maggie always attempts to get Tom's approval. Acknowledging that, Tom exercises his superiority by punishing Maggie whenever he thinks that she deserves it, of course by using his standard. He punishes Maggie for neglecting his rabbits, causing them to die, and for pushing Lucy into the mud. He punishes her not only when she makes mistakes but also when she fails to please him, such as when she unintentionally does not share her half piece of cake with him. Although Tom loves his sister, his love is always conditional as suggested in various other parts of the novel. Tom loves her only when she does what Tom thinks good for her. What Maggie thinks or feels does not count; as a child, he imagines their future: "He was very fond of his sister, and meant always to take care of her, make her his housekeeper, and punish her when she did wrong" (35). As long as Maggie follows his rules, Tom will love her. This continues to be Tom's attitude as he matures to a man. Tom's insistence on Maggie following his rules suggests that Tom sets himself as the standard, the Subject while Maggie is the object, the Other.

As a child, Maggie, who loves Tom with all her heart, is determined to do whatever Tom wishes her to. Even though the reader can see that Maggie is smarter than Tom, her superiority in intelligence does not help much because Tom defines her kind of intelligence as useless, and she accepts his definition. Maggie has always been clever and loved reading. When Luke, the head miller, refuses to read book that she offers him, Maggie remarks that Tom also does not like reading. However, in her version of the future, she puts Tom in a higher position than herself: "When he grows up, I shall keep his house, and we shall always live together. I can tell him everything he doesn't know" (27). Despite the fact that she is more intelligent, Maggie thinks of herself in the future only as Tom's housekeeper.

The young Maggie believes that her intelligence will be useful to help her brother. When Tom expresses his bitterness after Uncle Dean implies that his education does nothing for him, Maggie says:

"If he had taught me book-keeping by double entry and after the Italian method, as he did Lucy Bertram, I could teach you Tom."

"*You* teach! Yes, I daresay. That's always the tone you take," said Tom (193).

Although she means to help, Tom perceives Maggie's statement as pretentious. Tom is good in practical knowledge, while Maggie is better in learning book knowledge. However, Tom always denies the fact that Maggie is better than he is in book knowledge. He harshly criticizes Maggie: "You're always setting yourself above me and everyone else....You should leave it to me to take care of my mother and you, and not put yourself forward" (193). Tom draws a definite line between a man and a woman. Men are always superior to women, and women should just follow men's lead, whatever woman's individual talents might be. In believing this, Tom represents St. Ogg's social norms which define gender roles in very specific ways that its people consider natural. For instance, it is fine for Mrs. Glegg to dabble in investment but not for Maggie to have classical educations. For Maggie and Tom, St. Ogg is the norm according to which gender is constructed, defining what is expected, allowed and valued of each gender.

Butler's notion of gender as set of stylized, repeated acts that people perform also finds its application in St. Ogg's society. Everybody performs acts which signify their genders according to local norms. There are characteristics deemed to be appropriate to certain genders, and a person of that gender should repeatedly perform certain acts associated with those characteristics. That assumed gender role is what Maggie struggles with throughout her life.

Maggie's characteristics and manners do not suit the gender role expected of her. Maggie

knows that she is clever, but a girl, in St. Ogg's society is not supposed to be clever, as Mr Tulliver says: "a woman's no business wi' being so clever; it'll turn to be trouble, I doubt. But, bless you! she'll read the books and understand 'em better nor half the folks are growed up" (16). Although Mr Tulliver is proud of her intelligence, he recognizes that it is not the quality that will help Maggie in her life. Therefore, it is Tom who is sent to have a better education, even though Tom is "slow with his tongue, you see, and he reads but poorly, and can't abide the books and spells all wrong, they tell me, an' as shy as can be wi' strangers, an' you never hear him say cute things like the little wench" (18). Here Maggie is compared to Tom, and Maggie clearly has more intelligence than Tom and is more likely to be successful if she is sent to school. However, it is Tom who is sent away for a better education because he is a boy. Mr. Tulliver is right when he says that Maggie's intelligence will only bring her trouble. Maggie is indeed always in trouble whenever she forwards her intelligence simply because people in her social circle cannot accept it.

Challenging Tom by saying that she could learn everything if only she were the one who were taught, Maggie gets a negative response from both Tom and his teacher, Mr Stelling,

"No, you couldn't," said Tom, indignantly. "Girls can't do Euclid: can they, sir?"

"They can pick up a little of everything, I daresay," said Mr Stelling. "They've a great deal of superficial cleverness; but they couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow" (126).

Tom's response is a denial because he suspects that Maggie is capable of learning anything. However, if he agrees with her, he will have to contradict his belief that men are superior to women. Mr Stelling answers the question immediately without thinking because he also has presuppositions about what women are capable of doing. The only person who acknowledges little Maggie's intelligence is Mr Tulliver: "It's a pity but what she'd been the lad – she had been a match for the lawyers, *she* would." (18). Yet, Mr. Tulliver does not even think of the possibility of Maggie's further education because it is simply not the norm for girls in their class to have a classical education. He wishes that it were Tom who had Maggie's qualities. If Tom had Maggie's intelligence and proper education, he would be able to help his father in his legal matters. However, it is Tom who has the privilege of further education, although later on it is proven to be not the right education that he needs. Maggie, on the other hand, is forced to live the norms that discriminate against women. Thus, they both suffer from the roles they are forced to perform.

As a child, Maggie thinks that her cleverness will make people love her. Unfortunately, most people do not share the same thought. When she says that she will be a clever woman, she expects it to be favorable, but Tom disagrees: "O, I daresay, and a nasty conceited thing. Everybody'll hate you" (122). Tom associates a clever woman with bad qualities undesirable to everyone. Tom's quick remark is a harsh blow for Maggie because she always wants to be loved, especially by Tom. Although later on Philip and Stephen do love her for her intelligence, she ultimately declines their love for the love that she hopes to get from her brother.

Not only is Maggie denied the opportunities that a man has, she also struggles because she is different from other girls as well. Maggie is forced into a role assigned to women by her society. She is confronted by people around her because she does not perform the expected acts of her gender. Maggie is "doubly othered" by her society that considers her not having "normal" woman's characteristics and behaving like what a woman is supposed to be. Ideal women for St Ogg society are those who are "dull-witted" and passive, such as Mrs Tulliver, who is "healthy, fair, plump, and dull-witted; in short, the flower of her family for beauty and amiability." Mr.

Tulliver chose her to be his wife because: “she wasn’t o’er cute – bein’ a good looking woman too, and come of a rare family for managing” (18). It is ironic that dull-wittedness is considered to be the height of womanliness along with being beautiful and able to manage a household. Lucy Deane, Maggie’s cousin, is a perfect choice for a wife, according to Stephen Guest, because she is “pretty, but not to a maddening extent ... gentle, affectionate, and not stupid” (299). Lucy is certainly not dull-witted, but still she is not considered clever by Stephen. Being “too ‘cute for a woman,” and having a desire to have as many books as Mr Stelling, Maggie is considered as perverse.

Maggie is an impulsive and imaginative girl who gets emotionally overwhelmed by music. Her characteristics make her unable to stay still. Unfortunately, her characteristics and attitude often cause her trouble, such as when she is in Aunt Pullet’s house. Having listened to music from Uncle Pullet’s box, Maggie jumps up, runs toward Tom, and puts her arms around his neck asking Tom to confirm that the music is beautiful. Maggie unintentionally spills Tom’s drink. Not only does it make Tom angry, but it also invites Maggie resentment from the adults toward her,

“Why don’t you sit still, Maggie?” her mother said peevishly.

“Little gells musnt’s come to see me if they behave in that way,” said aunt Pullett.

“Why, you’re too rough, little miss,” said uncle Pullett (79).

Maggie is constantly seen as an unruly girl until years later. During the family council to discuss the Tullivers’ misfortune, Maggie angrily questions why her uncle and aunts interfere if they do not mean to help. Her outburst is taken by her aunts as a mark of her unruly behavior,

“You haven’t seen the end o’ your trouble with that child, Bessy,” said Mrs Pullett; “She’s beyond everything for boldness and unthankfulness. It’s dreadful. I might ha’ let alone paying for her schooling, for she’s worse nor ever.”

“It’s no more than what I’ve allays say,” followed Mrs Glegg. ...that child’ull come to no good: there isn’t a bit of our family in her.’ And as for her having so much schooling, I never thought well o’ that” (178-9).

Although Maggie is telling the truth, the Dodsons think of it as a “mad outbreak.” With regard to education, Maggie’s is considered by the Dodson sisters as making her worse. However, they value Tom’s education by saying: “When land is gone and money’s spent, Then learning is most excellent” (175). Tom’s education is expected to do him good in helping the family’s situation, while Maggie’s schooling is considered as doing her no good. Despite her intelligence and education, Maggie is defined as other because she is only a girl.

Mrs Tulliver and Maggie’s aunts are always concerned with Maggie’s physical characteristics: her black eyes, unruly hair, and brown skin. Mrs Tulliver complains that “her hair won’t curl” and compares it with Maggie’s cousin, Lucy who “got a row o’ curls round her head, an’ not a hair out o’ place” (12). Curly hair is apparently preferable. Maggie herself does not really care about her hair. She wants people to think of her as a clever girl. Unfortunately people do not see her that way. They always try to find fault with her and spot what they think as her weaknesses. Compared to Lucy, Maggie is always at a disadvantage. Lucy is considered to be a good girl by the Dodsons, and the goodness consists mainly of being quiet and dull: “Lucy Deane is such a good child – you may set her on a stool, and there she’ll sit for an hour together, and never offer to get off” (37). Lucy is good because she always does what she is desired to do, while

Maggie always follows her own impulse. Unlike Maggie, Lucy is always pretty and neat. The contrast between Maggie and Lucy is like “between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten” (52). Since other people always see that she is different, Maggie starts to feel that she is indeed different. Maggie knows that she is different from Lucy, and she always looks at Lucy with delight. She admires Lucy’s form and her ability in building card-houses. Maggie’s sense of her being different is strengthened when Tom asks Lucy instead of her to walk to the pond. Maggie gets so jealous that she pushes Lucy into the mud.

Maggie’s complexion is one of the features that does not comply with the image of a nice girl. Maggie has brown skin, while her cousin is “pretty little pink-and-white Lucy.” Her aunt makes a remark on that: “She’s more like gypsy nor ever,” said aunt Pullet, in a pitying tone; “it’s very bad luck, sister, as the gell should be so brown – the boy’s fair enough. I doubt it’ll stand in her way i’ life to be so brown” (58). By doing so, aunt Pullet is “othering” Maggie from other girls, especially by comparing her to a gypsy, the wandering nomad.

Acknowledging the Gypsy presence in the British text, Nord explores how the Gypsy was both feared and desired: “Gypsies functioned in British cultural symbolism as a perennial other, a recurrent and apparently necessary marker of difference that, like the biblical Hagar and Ishmael, represented an alternative and rejected lineage” (3). Knowing that she is often associated with the gypsy, Maggie one day runs away to live with the gypsies. She is delighted that the gypsies think of her as “a nice, pretty, clever little lady” and she offers herself to be their queen. Maggie, who recognizes that her intelligence is not respected by people around her, thinks that she can at least teach the gypsies. Although at first she wants to live with the gypsies, Maggie soon finds out that she objects to their being dirty, their food, and their taking her silver timple. That the gypsies, unknown to Maggie, take things from her pocket and return everything but the silver timple reminds her of the notion of the gypsies as thieves. Associating thieves with wicked people, Maggie starts to get frightened. She also finds out that the gypsies judge her in the same way that her own society does. They judge her appearance and are not interested in her knowledge. They also make fun of her. She finally realizes that: “it was impossible she should ever be queen of these people, or even communicate to them amusing and useful knowledge” (94). Maggie gives up her hope to be the queen of the gypsies. The gypsies do not consider her as a part of them, and they are not interested in her knowledge either. It is a disappointment because the gypsies are the only people with whom she thought she would be respected. However, it also makes her see that she is not as “other” as she thought she was, even though she still experiences being “doubly othered” for years to come.

When she comes home from school at the age of thirteen, Maggie is no longer an unruly child. She now conforms to her gender role and performs acts that represent her gender such as sewing. She lets her mother set her hair so that she has “a queenly head above her old frocks” (240). However, she refuses to look at herself in the mirror, which shows that she still has resistance to her part. However, Maggie is now a different person, and that puzzles her mother: “Her mother felt the change in her with a sort of puzzled wonder that Maggie should be ‘growing so good;’ it was amazing that this once ‘contrairy’ child was become so submissive, so backward to assert her own will” (240). Constant disapproval from people around her has made Maggie gradually learn to adjust her desire to other people’s expectations of her.

Maggie grows up to be a beautiful woman in spite of her brown skin, and she starts to attract people’s attention: “The culmination of Maggie’s career as an admired member of society in St. Ogg’s was certainly the day of the bazaar, with her simple, noble beauty, clad in a white muslin of some soft-floating kind” (348). Maggie is attractive precisely because she is different

from other women. She also starts to get appreciation for being clever. The appreciation comes from Philip Wakem and Stephen Guest. Slightly above Maggie's social status, Philip and Stephen are more appreciative in recognizing the value of Maggie's intelligence. At the St. Ogg's bazaar and party, Maggie draws admiration from men and envy from the women. However, she still thinks that Lucy is a better woman than she is: "As if I, with my old gowns and want of all accomplishments, could be a rival of dear little Lucy, who knows and does all sort of charming things, and is ten times prettier than I am – even if I were odious and base enough to be her rival" (271). Maggie at this point has already internalized her society's norms of what is considered favorable for a woman. Therefore, she thinks that she has less value because she does not comply with the norms. Having been living a hard life after the family misfortune and having been made to believe that she is not physically attractive, Maggie comes to believe that: "the light-complexion girl would win away all the love" and "the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness" (270). Maggie has read the images of these light complexion, blond-haired women in the novels she has read. Even what she reads defines her as "doubly other" because she is a brown, black-haired woman.

Because she is the "other" by virtue of being a woman and "doubly othered" by being different from other women, Maggie cannot find a space where she is appreciated. Thus she has to try to learn to adjust herself to other people's expectations of her. Analyzing Maggie's desires, Deidre David states: "Her strength is in her intellect and in her aggressiveness, and her weakness is in her sex and gender. If she had been a man, if, indeed, she were Tom rather than Maggie, the intelligence would have found a place and function in the community" (603). Because her desires conflict with what is expected of her, Maggie is always confronted by people around her. Therefore, she struggles hard to repress her desires,

Maggie in her brown frock, ... was a creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad; thirsty of all knowledge; ... with a blind unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life, and give her soul a sense of home in it (194).

The young Maggie never finds a "home" for her soul. She painfully realizes that the world is harsh. People do not treat her as she expects them to do (not until she meets Philip and Stephen that she finds people who can treat her appropriately). She can only find the "agreeable, tender and delighted" people in books. However, she has to give up even her books because reading the books makes her want to have more from life than she can.

Having always been constantly opposed by her family and her social circle for her desires, Maggie learns to distrust herself and adjust herself to the standard imposed on her by the external authority. Her need for approval and love prevents Maggie from exercising her internal resources. Maggie is denied the opportunity of making her own choice and judgment. She gradually learns to accept other people's definition about her. She learns to undermine herself. Her family's bankruptcy causes Maggie to lose most of her books, and later on she decides to give up books in a fit of religious fanaticism,

The old books, Virgil, Euclid, and Aldrich – that wrinkled fruit of tree of knowledge – had been all laid by for Maggie had turned her back on the vain ambition to share the thoughts of the wise....She read so eagerly and constantly in her three books, the Bible, Thomas-à-Kempis, and the "Christian Year" (239).

Maggie reads all the books that are left from the family misfortune, but the knowledge that she gets from the books does not help her much in real life. She wants people to recognize her good qualities and sympathize with her emotion. She wants it mostly from Tom, but both Tom and

other people fail her hope. Therefore, she turns to religious books to repress her desires. In Thomas-a-Kempis she finds “insight, and strength, and conquest, to be won by means entirely within her own soul” (237). Unable to get recognition and sympathy from the world, Maggie tries to look inward to self-sufficiently fulfill her needs. Maggie turns to self-renunciation. Maggie knows that people consider her different, and she accepts their conception. Since it is mainly her desires that set her apart from other girls, she is determined to repress them. However willing she is in her renunciation, she is still yearning for love, understanding and recognition which the world cannot give her.

No matter how hard Maggie tries to repress her desires, they always seem to erupt. One day Philip Wakem, the son of the lawyer whom Mr Tulliver considers as an enemy, shows her Walter Scott’s *The Pirate*. Maggie is excited to read the book, but she rejects Philip’s offer to own the book: “It would make me in love with this world again, as I used to be – it would make me long for a full life” (249). Maggie knows that she is not made happy by repressing her desires, but she also knows that it is the only way for her to survive, to get acceptance and love. Instead of growing strong out of her own principles, Maggie grows weak. Philip is the one who, as Ermath puts it, “perceives that the fatal weakness Maggie is cultivating is a form of suicide” (595). It is indeed a form of suicide when Maggie always represses her own desires. Philip tries to convince Maggie not to deny herself and “seek safety in negation”. He offers to support Maggie in her struggle, supplying her with books and becoming her brother and teacher. He says: “It is less wrong that you should see me than you should be committing this long suicide” (268). Denying herself, in Philip’s opinion, means taking away life from herself. Maggie is willing to accept Philip’s offer. She even admits that she loves Philip. Yet, Maggie is again forced to deny her desire because Tom does not approve her relationship with Philip.

Philip understands Maggie’s desires and loves her the way she is. His recollection of childhood memory shows that they both have things in common: intelligence and sensitivity. Philip sees Maggie as the “other” but in a more positive sense. Maggie’s intelligence and sensitivity, that cause her trouble when she was a child, are the qualities that make her differ from other women, yet make Philip love her. Philip, however, fails to convince Maggie to set up her own standard and follow her desires. Maggie says: “I begin to think there can never come much happiness to me from loving. I have always had so much pain mingled with it. I wish I could make myself a world outside it, as men do” (334). This statement represents Maggie’s bitter experience with Tom. Maggie struggles all her life to get Tom’s love, and she feels a lot of pain because of Tom’s conditional love. Therefore, she feels the need of a world outside affection although she knows there is no such world for her because she is a woman. Philip tries to make her see that her statement shows that what she is doing is renunciation, a way to escape from pain. Maggie, however, has made herself believe that she has to submit herself and adopt the inferior position.

Being a young adult, Maggie still seeks Tom’s love and approval. In her relationship with her brother, Maggie is always the “other.” Maggie is the one who always has to follow what Tom wants, not only because she is younger but mostly also because she is female. Their relationship is never equal. Maggie chooses to succumb to whatever Tom wishes her to do, even when it means denying her own desires, even though it is not without resistance. Tom forbids Maggie to see Philip because he thinks that by seeing Philip, Maggie disobeys and disgraces her father. Realizing that disagreeing with Tom is useless, Maggie agrees saying: “Because you are a man, Tom, and have power, and can do something in the world” (282). Tom’s reply emphasizes what he believes about what man can do and woman cannot. He says that if Maggie knows that she

cannot do anything in the world, she should submit to those who “have power and can do something in the world.” In his effort to force Maggie to give up Phillip, Tom arrogantly tells her, “You might have sense enough to see that a brother, who goes out into the world and mixes with men, necessarily knows better what is right and respectable to his sister than she can know herself. You think I am not kind; but my kindness can only be directed by what I believe to be good for you” (318).

Tom’s statement confirms the binary of Self/Subject and Other. His remark: “a brother, who goes out into the world and mixes with men, necessarily knows better” signifies the notion of men occupying the public sphere and women the domestic sphere. It also suggests that even though both Tom and Maggie have their own experience in the world, Tom privileges the kind of world that he experiences over the world that Maggie experiences. Tom sets up the standard and denigrates the kind of knowledge that she has. In other words, his version of the world counts, and her version of the world does not. He is the active and knowing subject. Therefore, he self-importantly insists that his sister always follow his will. As a man, Tom sets himself up as the standard. Maggie, on the other hand, also realizes the privileges that men have over women.

St. Ogg’s society does not see women for what they are capable of doing. When Philip tries to get his father’s consent to marry Maggie, Philip says that Maggie was never involved in their families’ dispute. Mr Wakem replies: “We don’t ask what a woman does – we ask whom she belongs to” (345). It is indeed what society thinks of woman’s worth. It applies strictly to Maggie in her case with Stephen Guest, the son of the owner of Guest & Co., who is attracted to Maggie for being clever and intelligent. Maggie goes out for a rowing with Stephen, but their boat is carried further away so that they are unable to go back in time. Acknowledging their mutual feeling of love, Stephen proposes to marry Maggie. Maggie refuses the proposal because she feels that it is wrong to hurt Lucy and Philip. Confronting herself in a conflict of duty and desire, Maggie chooses to give up her desire, although she is tempted to accept Stephen’s proposal. Stephen has warned Maggie of the consequence if she goes home unwed, but Maggie insists. When Stephen says that she does not know “what will be said” and that she sees “nothing as it really is,” Maggie still believes that since she is innocent, people will believe her. Poor Maggie is wrong. When Maggie comes home alone after few days, she is rejected by Tom,

“I loathe your character and conduct. You struggled with your feelings, you say. Yes! *I* have had feelings to struggle with; but I conquered them. I had a harder life than you have had; but I have found *my* comfort in doing my duty. But I will sanction no such character as yours: the world shall know that *I* feel the difference between right and wrong” (393).

Again, Tom sets himself up as the standard. He values what he does and denigrates Maggie’s feeling and conduct. He does not try to understand Maggie and cannot forgive her because he thinks Maggie does not follow what he asks her to do. He strongly believes that he has done his duty, while Maggie only disgraces the family. Although Maggie is as innocent as before, society considers her as a fallen woman. If she comes home married, people will forgive that she runs away with Stephen. What she does is less important than whom she belongs to. Because she comes home unmarried, she does not belong to anyone, thus she is made an outcast. She is being “othered” yet again by St. Ogg society as a whole.

Refusing Stephen’s proposal but giving into her desire for him, Maggie let herself be “doubly-othered” because she is now seen as a “fallen woman.” Although Stephen writes a letter explaining that Maggie is innocent, nothing can help Maggie’s position once she is taken as a fallen woman. Dr Kenn, the clergyman, says,

“That letter, as I said, ought to suffice to prevent false impressions concerning you. But I am bound to tell you, Miss Tulliver, that not only the experience of my whole life, but my observation within the last three days, makes me fear that there is hardly any evidence which will save you from the painful effect of false imputations” (401).

Dr Kenn is right in his judgment of the rigid society which will not spare Maggie. He suggests that Maggie leave the town, but Maggie insists on staying. Maggie still struggles, even when Dr Kenn, the only respectable person in the society who lends her a hand, gives up. He releases Maggie from the position of a governess because he cannot take the talk of the society that accuses him of an intention to marry Maggie. Although Maggie is innocent, she plays the role of a fallen woman inadvertently and then is forced into repeating it. She refuses Stephen's final proposal: “I will bear it, and bear it till death” (417). Accepting Stephen's proposal will save Maggie from being a fallen woman, but Maggie chooses not to accept it. Performing acts as a fallen woman, Maggie in essence becomes one until death comes to her.

4. Conclusion

Maggie's struggle ends with her final reconciliation with Tom through the flood. The resolution in the death of Maggie and Tom, according to David is: “an emblem of irresolvable contention between the Victorian containment of woman to an undeveloped intellectual life and the elevation of one woman intellectual to iconic sagehood” (609). Maggie's death, in my opinion, strengthens the notion that woman is always in struggle to find her place in the male dominated world. Being both other and doubly other, not only in the eyes of men but also of women who hold up patriarchal norms, Maggie struggles until the end of her life.

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