The Art of Perception: An Analysis of How a Desired Public Image Affects One’s Actions

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Background

- *Adam Bede* by George Eliot
- First novel written in 1859
- Many thought the characters were based on figures in her life.
- Takes place in Hayslope
Characters

Primary Focus
- Adam Bede
- Hetty Sorrel

Other Characters of Importance
- Arthur Donnithorne
- Dinah Morris
- Seth Bede
Narrator’s Description

- Why is the narrator’s view important?
- Adam
  - Takes pride in his work
  - Allows rank to cloud his judgment
  - Honest, dedicated, strong, loving
  - Evolves from condemning to accepting
- Hetty
  - Childish
  - Falsely innocent
  - Vain
What can we learn from how Adam and Hetty interact and are perceived by others?

**Adam**
- Admired
- Susceptible to beauty
- Wise
- Kind-hearted

**Hetty**
- “feather-headed” (Eliot 42)
- Childlike in her inability to comprehend
- Rejected by children
How Image is Maintained

Both Adam and Hetty attempt to maintain or create a public image.

Adam
- Hard working and wants others to be also
  - Works harder to repair damage to family reputation
- Dedicated to family
- Lives life to make loved ones happy

Hetty
- Wants to improve station in life
- Actions are highly influenced by Arthur Donnithorne
- Manipulates Adam
- Conceals pregnancy
Hetty’s Fate

Unable to overcome her need to maintain image
- Fantasy world is shattered.
- Child prohibits her upward mobility.
- Infanticide
- Unable to accept fault and demonstrate regret
Adam’s Fate

- Overcomes feelings of obligation to societal expectations
  - Laments loss of father
  - Hetty’s betrayal
    - Acceptance of her crimes
  - Content with life
  - Finds love
Bibliography


