

PERSONAL INTEGRITY IN A CHANGING WORLD:
DOROTHEA AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN 19TH
CENTURY BRITAIN

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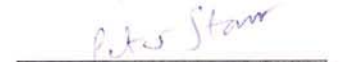
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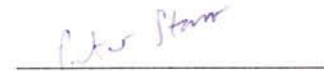
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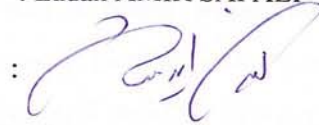


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ABSTRACT

PERSONAL INTEGRITY IN A CHANGING WORLD: DOROTHEA AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN 19TH CENTURY BRITAIN

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This thesis analyzes George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, sets it firmly within the social structures of early 19th century Britain. Socially-imposed identity, strict moral and conventional expectations, the class system, and social and political changes are all factors which shape Dorothea's story. At the same time, the wider context of the novel is the concerns of reformers in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. This study shows that in many ways, the errors of Dorothea, and the traps into which she falls, are the result of her strong desire to serve a society which lets her down. The ways Dorothea responds to this challenge, and tries to become an integrating element in the town while maintaining her integrity are closely related to George Eliot's own social and political views. In brief, in the novel and particularly in the character of Dorothea, Eliot demonstrates the balance that exists between powerful collective forces and individual choice in the context of a changing Britain and the efforts of the 19th century social reformers.

Keywords: *Middlemarch*, George Eliot, Dorothea, Social and Political Changes

ÖZ

DEĞİŞEN DÜNYADAKİ KİŞİSEL İÇBÜTÜNLÜK: DOROTHEA VE 19. YÜZYIL BRİTANYA’SINDA OLUŞAN TOPLUMSAL GELİŞMELER

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Bu tez, George Eliot’ın 19. yüzyıl başlarında Britanya’daki sosyal yapı çerçevesinde yazılmış olan *Middlemarch* kitabını incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada, toplumsal çerçevede empoze edilen kimlik, katı ahlak kuralları, sınıf sistemi ve toplumsal ve siyasi değişimlerin Dorothea’nın hikayesini oluşturan faktörler olduğu savunulmuştur. Aynı zamanda, bu roman daha geniş kapsamda değişim savunucularının Sanayi Devrimi arifesindeki endişelerini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, Dorothea’nın hataları ve içine düştüğü tuzakların çoğu, onu dikkate almayan toplumun iyiliği için elinden gelen herşeyi yapma arzusundan kaynaklandığını göstermektedir. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda, Dorothea’nın bu mücadelelerdeki tutumunun ve bütünleştiricilik rolünün George Eliot’ın kendi toplumsal ve siyasi görüşleri ile ilgili olduğu kanaatine varılmıştır. Özet olarak, roman ve özellikle Dorothea karakterinde, Eliot, değişen Britanya’da ve 19. yüzyıl toplumsal reformcuların çabalarında, etkili kolektif güçler ve kişisel seçimler arasında bir dengenin mevcut olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Middlemarch*, George Eliot, Dorothea, Toplumsal ve Siyasi Değişimler

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INTRODUCTION

Mary Anne Evans was above all an intellectual woman with advanced views who dared to broach issues formerly the preserve of men's circles during the Victorian period, and she was sufficiently successful to be taken seriously by many intellectuals of the time. The name Mary Anne Evans, later changed to Marian, may not be recognized by many people because Mary Anne Evans was known as George Eliot by her readers. This secrecy in using a pseudonym was because of the fact that the conventional society of the Victorian period was so closed to the development of women that even outstanding women like Mary Anne Evans had to use a male name in her writings to be taken seriously without prejudice.

The issue of using a pseudonym was the least unusual fact about George Eliot. At a very young age, having grown up under strict evangelical rules and beliefs, she bravely refused all those beliefs and ideologies after meeting Charles Bray, who played the role of a guiding star in her life both personally and professionally. The friendship with Bray can be defined as a milestone in Eliot's life. With him she learned new approaches to religious belief, he was the man who introduced her to the intellectuals of the time; her meeting with George Lewes was also due to Bray's connections with Lewes, and it was Bray who gave Eliot a chance to develop her ideology, philosophy, and thinking ability as a result of the debates that were regularly held at his house, Rosehill (Laski, 1994, pp. 24-28).

Another issue that distinguishes Eliot from the women of her time was her ability to think analytically and critically that let her focus on the social issues that the public were suffering from. She became one of the most respected women of the Victorian period, who pioneered the education of women together with other women's rights. Although she had a close friendship with some of the leaders of female suffrage movement like Bodichon and Martineau, she did not become a feminist like them since her purpose in supporting women was mostly aimed at increasing the level of women's education and providing them with the individual and social rights that only

men had during that period. She believed that it was not harsh conflicts that could make women achieve what they wanted, but the competence, education, and ability to defend themselves with their logical and convincing arguments. This would make women individuals who would be respected and listened to by others, including men. She stressed the fact that if women were educated as well as men, they would be able to become rational individuals, whose sense of social duty could be strengthened. This was what Eliot meant by individual identity that could result in the welfare of society.

Eliot was a woman who was aware of the conditions of the time, and she had no intention of over-reaching herself in achieving her goals. She was well aware of the problems of women of that era, yet she only focused on the importance of education for women and the role they should actually have in society. That was why, in her novels, she mostly provided her leading characters with the idealistic activities that she personally was engaged with, and wished that society too could recognize them as positive. In her fiction, Eliot engaged with “the issues of women’s identities, the options available to them, and the choices that they exercise[d]” (Kindersley, 2008, p. 606).

Eliot was also different from the feminists of her time because she believed in the secondary (in the sense of supportive but not less vital) role of women, and she envisaged a mediating role to balance the social expectations and values given to men with the subordinate role assigned to women. Eliot’s mediating role became a matter of controversy when her unconventional life-style was considered. Hornback claims that “To a modern reader this mediation entails a glaring contradiction between women’s rich intellectual potential and their confinement to the domestic sphere and annexation to masculine needs and accomplishments” (2000, p. 666). To Eliot, a woman’s role was more domestic than external; she should be a complementary person for her partner to make him able to reach the ideal. Eliot did not mean that the woman was inferior, it was an indicator to show how supportive, self-sacrificing, and sublime – the woman could be when achieving the purpose was concerned. The goal not the role mattered for Eliot. For sure the goal was the improvement of individuals in all aspects to enhance the welfare of society.

The other unusual aspect in George Eliot’s life was her cohabitation with George Lewes (Laski, 1994, p. 43), who was married at that time. In English society in the 19th century, it was not a usual decision for a woman to live with a bachelor outside marriage. The extreme strangeness is the fact that George Lewes was not a single

man; he was married with three children, one of whom did not biologically belong to him. It might have been a matter that would not be criticized by society that a man has a relationship with women and even married women. However, when the party that chose to live with someone married was a woman, it would be a matter of widespread gossip, especially in the Victorian period. This was why Eliot was criticized harshly by the public, and it was the reason for the thirty-three year estrangement from her brother Isaac (Laski, 1994, p. 114).

On the other hand, she was one of the lucky women of the time whose family provided her with the best education that even most men of that era could hardly benefit from. This encouraged her to develop herself by following the daily matters in the society and getting involved with the problems of the people around sometimes on micro and sometimes on macro levels. Therefore, in her fiction one can easily follow the agenda of the time, namely the sociological, political, philosophical, and literary matters that created debate among the intellectuals of the period. Because of her strong background, she was able to analyze different views of the notable people in the Victorian period, and come to a rational and realist conclusion which would be in favor of society. She was a utopian when in *Middlemarch* she discussed “the growing good” of the society (Eliot, 1994, p. 838)¹, she was a radical when she defended the rights of the poor against abusive landowners, she was a moderate when the matter of women suffrage was debated, and finally she was an idealist when the reforms were taken into consideration.

Eliot’s view on the role of women and their education was a controversial matter. It is hard to conceive the idea that a radical woman like Eliot, who took all personal and external risks to live with a married man, could be at the same time a conservative woman when the issue of feminism and role of women in the society were in question. The thing one should do above all is to stop focusing on the surface interpretations about her life and go deep into Eliot’s philosophy and ideology.

The rise of sociology as a science, at the hands of contemporaries like Herbert Spencer, enabled the Victorians to see their country’s internal problems as the result of economic and social forces, and gave rise to the Victorian social consciousness. In her

¹ From this citation on, the abbreviation *MM* will be used for citing this edition of the primary source, George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* that was published in 1994 by Penguin Books.

awareness of the wider implications of change, and her concern for structural reform, George Eliot was typical of left-wing thinkers of her time.

When analyzing *Middlemarch*, one can easily observe out that Eliot's view is a sociological view. That is to say, her focus was on the conditions of the poor people, her concerns were about the development of education for women, attempts at improving the health issues, and ideas of political reform. These are all indicators to show that what she cared for in real life, as she revealed in her fiction, was the good of society, and her efforts were directed at matters by which the society could improve itself to a degree that all the members would benefit from nearly the same opportunities. As is clear from her social commitment to reforming the structures of society, George Eliot was well aware that the individual's situation is the product, largely, of social forces.

Eliot's meliorist ideas and this deep desire to help the people in need either economically or socially were the result of her sociological awareness. In her novels, many of Eliot's characters were portrayed in the same way, "her reformers, individuals like Felix and ... [Ladislaw, Lydgate, and Dorothea] are primarily guardians and transmitters of the nation's cultural heritage, not automatic opponents of venerable procedure" (Meckier, 1987, p. 39). In *Middlemarch*, she intentionally creates characters like the town's doctors as opposite to those true guardians of the society. Above all she shows that if an individual desire becomes selfish, as when the doctors protect their vested interests, this defeats the purpose of society. True individualism lies in fight for the good of the poor as well as the country, a meliorist act, which would favor the society.

The subtitle of *Middlemarch* is *A Study of Provincial Life*, and there are aspects of this novel which resemble a study. George Eliot published the work in serial form between 1871-1872. Although she sets it, as with many of her other works, in the early 1830s, the social issues the book addresses are above all those of Victorian Britain. With a large cast of characters from diverse backgrounds in the town, George Eliot gives her book a multi-faceted plot which allows the writer to explore such social issues as the role of women, marriage, political reform, the Industrial Revolution, the rise of the middle classes, and other themes.

The basis on which she founded the characters of her novels was her real life and experiences. She had recourse to the real acquaintances around her like her father,

brother, uncle, aunt, friends, relatives, and neighbors to create the characters in her novels (Laski, 1994, p. 55).

Middlemarch can be evaluated as a comprehensive work of fiction which includes all the concerns she had during that period. She organized a web in which Dorothea, the heroine, was the integrating power. With a very professional plan, Eliot designed the current society of Middlemarch to reveal the educational, social, political, and medical debates of the day together with her views through the words and actions she wrote for her characters. That is to say, the role that Dorothea played in *Middlemarch* was an integrating role that connected all the people who had positive attitude toward the progress of society. These few people are the ones like Sir James in cottage reform, Lydgate in medical reform, Ladislaw in political area and of course Dorothea, the Saint Theresa, who was the integrating character between all of them. Not only through the characters but also directly, George Eliot takes a stand as the omniscient narrator in *Middlemarch* from time to time, to criticize the society, the characters, their delusions, their flaws, their ignorance, their prejudices, and their narrow-mindedness.

The 19th century was a period of radical changes and the birth of reforms and innovations. Unlike many other writers or thinkers of her time, she did not like to be involved in popular movements. This aversion to mass movements, so different, for example, from her contemporary Karl Marx, can be related to the strong element of individualism which characterized her life and works. Her writings can be seen as reconciling these different approaches (Laski, 1994, p. 26). At this point it is useful to place Eliot's philosophy within the context of her intellectual circle, which was made up of thinkers like Bray, Spencer, Owen, Mill, Comte, and many other intellectuals of that period. It was in dialogue with such men that she tried to establish her rationalist and progressive goals, which were for the good of the society.

Gregory Maertz describes George Eliot's view on the love of humanity, he says, the Christ of the Christian Church orders that there is nothing more important than the love of Christ when compared to the love of mother and father. However, George Eliot believes in just the opposite. Her Christ orders that "A man is not worthy of me unless he love me less than father or mother" (2004, p. 698). Eliot believed that the only way one could find true happiness was through helping humans. In such adaptations from Christian ethics she shows the abiding influence of Ludwig Feuerbach, whose *Essence of Christianity* she translated (Laski, 1994, p. 39). Feuerbach systematically demonstrates in this book his belief that mankind has

reached a stage at which beliefs in the supernatural can be discarded, but the ethical foundations of Christian mythology can be reinterpreted, and the ethical truth at their core can be understood in its true, this-worldly sense.

This love for one's neighbor, Eliot believes, is not in vain, for each person has the ability to increase the amount of positive actions so that each human will improve as well as his or her society. The foundation of the meliorist philosophy of Eliot was based on "an impassioned protest against pessimism and that it presents human life and the human lot to us as worthy of all our piety- all our love and reverence" (Maertz, 2004, p. 700). Eliot's belief in the improvement of life centered on a belief that society could heal its wounds and develop organically, and she reflected her view in her characters in *Middlemarch* as well.

Toward the end of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century a number of philosophers and social reformers like Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Robert Owen focused on the principle idea that society is in great need of moral order since industrial capitalism had a destructive effect on people. This group was called the utopian socialists, who later exercised a strong influence on Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Indeed, Marx's purpose was to find a sound basis for utopian socialism which it lacked in the work of Positivists like August Comte. Unlike Comte, who believed in the idea that all events and arrangements were the result of evolution from one stage to the other, Marx and Engels argued that "the arrangements for producing material goods determined the social, political and spiritual currents of society" (Goodale & Godbey, 1988, p. 80).

Opposed to Marx, who believed in the necessity of class conflicts, utopian socialists focused on creating harmony between the rich and poor (Flynn, 2000, p. 140). Fourier's aim was to design a utopian society in which the workers would live and work in an ideal way. He was criticized for being a dreamer since in his utopia besides working the workers would benefit from entertainment and a relaxing atmosphere designed for their happiness (Bulliet, Crossley, Headrick, Hirsch, & Johnson, 2008, p. 564). This utopian community model was further developed by Robert Owen. Although it did not last for a long time, Owen tried to achieve his ideal in the community built around his factory in New Lanark.

The line that separates utopian socialism from positivism is science and the idea that it can solve all social as well as technological problems. Positivists, among whom were Henri de Saint-Simon and August Comte, believed that by the contributions of science

and the application of scientific methods, a continuous progress could be obtained (Bulliet et al, 2008, p. 564). This would certainly create a better and happier life for all the people, they claimed.

Robert Owen, one of the main contributors to socialist thought, had a quite clear ideology with which George Eliot became familiar through her meetings with Owen and others at Rosehill, the house of Charles Bray. Owen's revolutionary or more exactly evolutionary purpose was to create equal rights for all poor "trapped landless and uneducated in the burgeoning industrial revolution" (Kolmerten, 1998, p. 13). Owen asserted that every individual should have the right to decide on political and social issues that interested his life, and in this way economic inequality would be eliminated. He stressed that "they had the potential for equality if their environments were equal" (Kolmerten, 1998, p. 13). For Owen human social behavior was not fixed or absolute, and it was the society and the circumstances that made human beings organize and adapt themselves through their free will into any kind of society they wished.

Robert Owen and his supporters also believed that village life, with manor houses and cottages, was more disadvantageous for the society since it alienated people from each other and reinforced the individualistic tendencies in the society. The only way to improve society, he believed, was to eliminate private property and design a colony-like society in which all the members would benefit from equal rights which would be the best way to eliminate poverty and create a harmonious society (Mintz, 1978, p. 108), and to this end he designed a commune in New Lanark. There he cleaned up the places that the workers lived, rebuilt the places that needed to be renewed, inspected the kitchen from the point of view of sanitation, and decorated the walkways for the sake of beauty (Kolmerten, 1998, p. 14).

This system and ideology of Owen is very evident in George Eliot's writings and it was the support for the socialist utopian projects that she implied through the action of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*. The plans that Dorothea shared with Sir James for the cottages of the tenants were inspired by such plans as those Robert Owen tried to apply in New Lanark. Therefore, it would not be far from reality to say that Eliot was deeply affected by her friend Owen and his idea of social reform and class difference. A more profound influence was exercised by Auguste Comte, one of the followers of Henri de Saint-Simon. In the last years of his life Saint-Simon supported a kind of a religion that had no deity but was equipped with a moral background, that he called

'nouveau Christianisme'. Saint-Simon, together with his followers such as Robert Owen and Fourier, were also strict supporters of socialist utopia to whom an ideal society meant a rational society in which all the members would benefit from equal rights.

Saint-Simon's successors focused their efforts on improving the conditions of women in their marital state, and relieving the pressure on the working class. Auguste Comte opposed Saint-Simon by refusing his idea of constructing a new religion because of two issues: one was the idea that the society needed to focus on scientific developments and renew itself, and the other one was his belief in the historical development of thought (Semmel, 1994, p. 55). Comte defined positivism as "science of facts and laws and certainty" and he thought that only with the help of science could the facts be discovered (Tashakkori, Teddlie, 2008, p. 55). For Comte, "the value of the scientific method ... was in its ability to discover the truth by undertaking empirical research based on the principles of rationality and objectivity" (Aitchison, 2003, p. 13). Therefore, he emphasized the idea that if positivism and scientific methods could not solve something, there was no other solution for it.

Equally important was a man with whom Eliot had a close personal association. Herbert Spencer advocated a naturalism which had its base in deism, a philosophy that claimed that "man was innately and instinctively good, and ...they put increasingly emphasis on the worship of nature as God's only revelation" (Walcutt, 1956, p. 7). Spencer and Comte saw man as having gone through stages of development to arrive at the mature, scientific approach. Both men were associated with the foundation of sociology, the scientific study of human collective relations. In his work *Synthetic Philosophy*, Spencer tried to synthesize the positive ideas and philosophies of the time. That is to say, "he attempted to assemble all the special sciences into a whole whose unifying principle was evolution" (Walcutt, 1956, p. 8). He concluded through this synthesis that "pleasure and good are identified with adaptability. Evolution moves society toward the good life. Ethics are improved as society evolves. Perfection is the final outcome of change. Human nature improves with its improving environment" (Walcutt, 1956, p. 8). Spencer's ideas were in line with Comte's positivism in the area of science and the need for progress in scientific investigations and the desire for evolution.

Spencer too has a strong belief in the idea of individual will. He claimed that social evolution appeared as a result of the free will of the individuals. In this regard he

criticized the economic imbalance as the 'struggle for existence' which was defined by Marx as class warfare. Spencer therefore condemned the authorities' interference in the free will and natural instinct of individuals.

Like Spencer, John Stuart Mill was a proponent of "Comte's theories of the historical development of the social organism" (Shuttleworth, 1987, p. 9). He is well known as a philosopher whose primary orientation was individualistic, most famously in his work *On Liberty*.

Mill was a contemporary of Eliot, the founder of the *Westminster Review* which Chapman bought, and on which Eliot worked for long years (Laski, 1994, p. 38). Mill's radical empiricism- the belief in the dominant role of experience in acquiring knowledge- influenced Eliot greatly. A supporter of Comte, Mill believed that science could be developed by a generalization of the past experiences rather than by the intuition existing in human beings (Levine, 2001, p. 77). However, he dissented from the idea that the individual should act only for the goodness of the society, and he argued that the personal desires and satisfactions of the individuals are the main factors that should be thought of as influential facts, instead of the doctrine of complete self-surrender.

This self-surrender was the idea that George Eliot depicted in her novels. In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea is ready to sacrifice herself for her husband and the society in which she lived, yet it was Eliot who saved her heroine from being drown to this fate (Shuttleworth, 1987, p. 9). The other self-sacrificing woman in *Middlemarch* was Mrs. Bulstrode, who despite having a minor role in the novel, saves her husband from being drowned in his dark past at a key point in the plot. It was also evident from the novel that characters, usually the heroines, have a tendency toward self-sacrifice, and it was their men who put them in a situation that somehow obliged them to undergo such a self-sacrificing commitment.

The only male character who sacrifices his love for the sake of others is Farebrother, the clergyman. As is obvious from his name, he tries to apply fairness in the society and in his personal life. Although he loves Mary Garth, and he wants to marry her, when Fred asks Farebrother to help him to convince Mary Garth to wait for Fred, Farebrother thinks that he should hide his own feelings for Mary. When he finds out that Mary is fond of Fred, Farebrother plays an encouraging role to convince Mary to forgive Fred, and lets Fred reach his love. This idea of Farebrother indicates Eliot's more humanistic and meliorist views which differed from the radically individualistic

view of Mill, and she in no way accepted purely individualistic opinions in her characters. Eliot can be regarded as typically Victorian in the high value she puts on duty.

The importance of Charles Bray in Eliot's life has already been noted. It would not be wrong to describe him as the gate to her personal development and the person who eased her entrance into the intellectual circle of Rosehill and the leading luminaries of the day. Among the visitors of Rosehill were many intellectuals like George Combe, Robert Owen, Carlyle's friend George Dawson, Sir Walter Scott's friend, James Simpson, Charles Hennell, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, and George Lewes (Laski, 1987, p.28). George Eliot met Charles Bray in 1841 for the first time when she was 21. He was a liberal man of his time who was notorious for his progressive views. He was thirty "when he set up an infant's school in a poor neighborhood and promoted an unsectarian school for dissenters" (Laski, 1987, p. 23). Eliot's views on education can be related to those of Bray, the author of *The Education of the Feelings*, which was published many times between 1838 and 1872, and *The Philosophy of Necessity* in 1841, which outlined the principles of cooperative communities (Laski, 1987, p. 23).

These two works had a significant influence on George Eliot's view on the reform of the education system and the property rights of women as they discuss the necessity for an equal distribution of rights. Especially Bray in his work *The Philosophy of Necessity* "argues for casual determinism, the metaphysical doctrine that all events, including human choices, are necessitated by the conditions that precede them" (Levine, 2001, p. 77). Bray states that there is no way to escape from the consequences of your acts.

These two issues are widely discussed in *Middlemarch*, through the life of Dorothea. Mostly the individual dilemmas are in the form of questions that the characters ask themselves after an incident takes place. As a person who has devoted her life for the good of society, Dorothea faces a difficult situation when she learns about her husband's will after his death. Fred is also one of the characters who experiences this dilemma after he finds out that he has put Mr. Garth in a hard economic situation because of his gambling debt. Mr. Bulstrode too confronts the consequences of hiding his dark past. Finally, Lydgate is the other character in *Middlemarch*, who suffers both economically and socially because of his own choices in marriage and helping Mr. Bulstrode.

Although it was publicly believed that it was Bray who caused the change in Eliot's religious beliefs, Eliot personally "told a friend... that Sir Walter Scott had begun the change...[and] Charles Hennell's *Inquiry* and acquaintance with Bray crystallized her conversions" (Laski, 1987, p. 26). Charles Bray was also the man through whom George Eliot was commissioned to produce an English translation of Strauss's *Life of Christ* in 1843, which resulted in a deeper challenge to her previous Evangelical views.

The most important figure in Eliot's circle was George Henry Lewes, the man with whom she had a 'marriage of souls'. Lewes had a diverse range of interests in various ideologies such as socialism and positivism, and most effectively he was an enthusiastic practitioner of science. For Lewes, the importance of philosophy and science demanded comprehensibility, and that is why even his most specialized works were written with a view to reach a general readership. "His writings on science and philosophy were imbued with moral concerns and greatly exercised by the rival claims of empiricism and universality" (Tjoa, 1977, p. 84). However, his motive was to reconstruct a world-view which needed to be comprehended by all the members of the society, and in line with Comte's earlier Positivist ideas he thought that through reasoned realism, scientific methods could find an answer to all questions and problems. In fact, what Lewes was committed to was "a realist and objectivist account of knowledge" (Levine, 2001, p. 85). This means that, like Comte, Lewes believed in the power of science not only as a method but as a system of knowledge which proceeds from theology to metaphysics and ends up with positivism². Lewes's loyalty to early Positivism, which relies on true empiricism, is partly because of its being unattached to conventional religion, in spite of his social, intellectual, and moralistic earnestness (Tjoa, 1977, p. 116).

Both Lewes and Eliot were interested in biological science. During the year 1852, Lewes was involved in writing on the controversial issue of the development hypothesis. Lewes also wrote articles on physiology in the *Leader*, and he completed his *Sea-side Studies* in 1856-57, through which he proved himself as a practicing scientist (Levine, 2001, p. 107). Unlike Lewes, George Eliot was not a complete devotee of Comte's Positivism. She was more interested in objective knowledge though she considered the role emotions have. However, she, like Lewes, did not believe in the connection of the theory of knowledge with the theory of morality by

² See Comte's *Introduction to Positivist Philosophy*.

which Comte intended “to reconcile subjective and objective ways of knowing” (Levine, 2001, p. 86).

Lewes's ideas on the similarities between literature and science are also worth considering. He claimed that like literature, in scientific studies you may confront a problem that you should solve. In both areas there is a need to be a good observer and you should have an ability to analyze, criticize, and synthesize which are the determining factors for achieving your goals. Finally, “both the novelist and scientist delineate relationships, exploring ways in which those relationships alter when a ‘new qualifying agent’ is introduced” (Levine, 2001, p. 108).

Lewes' influence can be seen in different characters in Eliot's novels. One of the characters in *Middlemarch* who resembles Lewes is Ladislav. “They share an immature dilettantism, a love of poetry, art, and music, an unconventional bright vivacity, a foreign education, journalism and editing, [and] radical politics” (Hardy, 2006, p. 97). Hardy also provides examples of different passages in the novels in which Eliot is following Lewes's advice directly or indirectly such as “well-known suggestions for Adam's active involvement in *Adam Bede* and less happily for Arthur's right with Hetty's pardon, and the plan for *Romola*” (2006, p.100). There are many more references to Lewes or his articles, books, or even the clubs he was a member of.

One of the comparisons that can be made between the Eliot- Lewes and Dorothea-Casaubon relationships is the completion of the books they left incomplete after they die. Eliot completed the book, *Problems of Life and Mind*, that Lewes had started before his death. However, hers is exactly the opposite to Dorothea's case. *Key to All Mythologies*, the book that Casaubon gathered the sources to write, could not be completed. In other words, Eliot did not let Dorothea complete this book of her husband because she had ceased to admire her husband, as well as the fact that Casaubon had over-reached himself.

From this overview of Eliot's intellectual circle it is clear that she was not alone in seeing the need to establish the importance of the individual against the background of an increasingly scientific appraisal of society, and a strong awareness of the impersonal forces of social change. At the end of *Middlemarch*, Dorothea leaves all her ideals and goals to marry Ladislav whom she loved, and for whom she could be a wife, a life companion to support him in his ideals, and also the mother of their

children. Eliot showed that women's love enables them even to give up what they have planned for long and all their intentions and objectives in life.

Through her positive attitudes and ideas, Dorothea's main purpose is to integrate all well intentioned people and to create an earthly Utopia for the people in *Middlemarch*. She is in many ways George Eliot herself with the little difference that Dorothea "could achieve emotional fulfilment in marriage but not the satisfaction of an independent intellectual life" (Hornback, 2000, p. 605).

Just like Eliot's, "Dorothea's spiritual ambition is also practical, of course, but the way in which she pursues it in the world is more revolutionary than reformist" (Hornback, 2000, p. 606). What Hornback criticizes in Dorothea is the human factor and individualistic ideology which is implicit in Eliot and explicit in Dorothea. It brings about the fact that reform brings improvement while revolution does not necessarily result in progress. In this way, Hornback claims, Eliot's vision of positive improvement and progress of society is postponed as a result of individual choice of Dorothea.

Dorothea, the central force in *Middlemarch*, represents the ideas and activities of the reformers who were characteristic of this age. However, this may tend to give the impression that Dorothea is bound by the sense of her role in society. One should not forget, however, that the heroine acts individually and decisively at key stages of the plot. Eliot in *Middlemarch* does not allow Dorothea be trapped in her faith by sacrificing her life. That is, Eliot writes a new destiny for Dorothea in which she uses her individualistic desire, for example to marry for the second time, which was against the collective forces in conventional society of the Victorian age.

Indeed, it is in the "Finale" that the most radical act of Dorothea appears. She releases herself from the chains and traps the society as well as Casaubon's will planned for her, so that, in a radical or revolutionist way, she leaves all her inheritance and ambitions to start a new life with Ladislaw without considering what the conventional society would think about her. This is revolutionary because Dorothea again made a personal decision showing that Eliot saw individual acts as well as powerful social forces as important in the improvement of society.

In short, Eliot gives importance to personal choice within the world of powerful forces for change and social ties. In *Middlemarch*, all the ideas and acts of Dorothea are the ones that Eliot personally believed in and showed. Whatever Dorothea supported was

exactly what Eliot was supporting or positive about, and the aspects or cases to which Dorothea showed opposition or rejection were the ones that Eliot believed to be harmful for the improvement of society. As Sally Shuttleworth writes: “Within her novels she attempts to find some form of balance between her belief in the individual’s right to self-fulfillment and her firm commitment to the idea of social duty” (1987, p. 9). That is why Dorothea completely represents Eliot in *Middlemarch*.

CHAPTER I

MARRIAGE IN THE REGENCY PERIOD

Family and marriage were central to contemporary British social, political, and cultural concerns between 1700 and 1850 (Barker & Chalus, 2005, p. 57). The way George Eliot portrays women in *Middlemarch* reflects the norms of society in the Regency period and how they tried to suppress women as creatures to be under the control of men, namely their fathers, brothers, and husbands, in all aspects of their lives. Women were subordinate to their husbands and “played an important role in the household economy, household management and childcare which made them indispensable to their husbands” (Barker & Chalus, 2005, p. 63). The common idea of the time was that men were more effective in decision making issues while women “were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was that their opinions were not acted on” (*MM*, 1994, p. 9). That is to say, women’s opinions had no venue outside their homes. Therefore, the happiest women were the ones who accepted this dominance of men over them.

Women in the pre-Victorian age had nearly the same interests. To them “silks, patterns of underclothing, china-ware, and *clergymen*” (*MM*, 1994, p. 294) are the vital issues to talk about. They share the health and household management problems (*MM*, 1994, p.294) when they meet. They also try to show off their positions, belongings, and wealth to each other in those meeting since the family background, financial position and the class issues are important factors to be used for boasting.

To some extent Eliot wants to emphasize the fact that although the social norms did not let women have a say outside the house, nearly all the women characters in *Middlemarch* such as Dorothea, Mrs. Bulstrode, Mary Garth, and Rosamond Vincy are dominant women who try to direct their husbands, brothers, fathers, or even uncles. In *Middlemarch*, Eliot reflects many examples in which women show a hidden

power over the male characters. Dorothea, the heroine, shows a strong influence on her uncle on the issue of changing the living conditions of the cottagers, yet she is not as successful as she has planned. In contrast, her influence on Sir James is a major one since she manages to convince him to apply her cottage plans for his own cottagers. Eliot also portrayed Dorothea as one of the most respected women of community when she stands against the society to support Lydgate, who is accused of helping Mr. Bulstrode to kill the man who intended to reveal his dark past (*MM*, 1997, pp.729-730).

The other influential woman in *Middlemarch* was Mary Garth, whose influence on Fred Vincy is worth considering. Having grown up in a patriarchal family for whom class is of great importance, Fred hates his future as a vicar, so he is chasing after different tendencies like gambling. However, he is not mature enough to face the consequences of his wrong-doings personally, so he puts the people around him, namely the Garths, in a very hard economic situation. It is then that Mary Garth, with an effective direction, guides him to change his future by choosing another occupation that he would be happy doing (*MM*, 1994, pp. 464-467).

The next lady that Eliot depicted in her novel was Mrs. Bulstrode, whose far sightedness and self-sacrifice made her a great support for her husband at a critical moment in the novel. Her firm stand against the gossip of the women around and the blaming eyes of the surrounding people (*MM*, 1994, pp.742-744) show the stress Eliot puts on the idea that women have the power to stand against difficulties even when their husbands are not capable of doing so. Also, strong women, Eliot believed, were the ones who can forgive their husbands' faults even though their husbands might not be courageous enough to show the same bravery in similar cases. Eliot with her narrative voice clearly explains Mr. Bulstrode's loyal feelings and strength against the gossip and denigrating words of the neighbors about her husband as she says.

... this imperfectly taught woman, whose phrases and habits were an odd patchwork, had a loyal spirit within her. The man whose prosperity she had shared through nearly half a life, and who had unvaryingly cherished her – now that punishment had befallen him it was not possible to her in any sense to forsake him. (*MM*, 1994, p.749)

Eliot, furthermore, tried to reveal the difference between educated and uneducated women of the time by their actions. There is an obvious difference in what Dorothea or Mrs. Garth, the teacher, used to do compared with Mrs. Plymdale or Mrs Cadwallder's reactions and words. Eliot's purpose was obvious in her fiction. She put

Dorothea and Mrs. Garth on the one side to represent the idea of how education can change the perspectives of women and complete them in a way to compete in the same arena with men. She also had a tendency to show the power of educated women in society through these two characters. Eliot, taking into account her own experiences in ladies' schools during her teenage years, criticized the so called education for womanly manners when she portrayed Rosamond Vincy. She tried to emphasize that women should have the same right to be educated as men. She believed that just by providing wifely duties or religious education women would not have a chance to develop themselves, so they became toys in the hands of their men.

Mrs. Bulstrode is a simple woman with no education to speak of, yet her womanly feelings lead her to take one of the most positive actions of the novel. This character is the best way for Eliot to share her ideas regarding women with no academic education. Eliot's purpose was not to denigrate but to encourage the women who had a strong insight to evaluate the matters that were happening around them. In short, it can be concluded that Eliot respected strong women, who proved themselves in the strict Victorian society, either through their education or through their instinctive insight.

The concept of marriage and finding a spouse was also determined to a large extent by the norms of society. "Women's familial and marital identity was framed by a combination of legal, religious, medical, and popular ideas, all of which proclaimed that familial relations should be patriarchal, but companionate" (Barker & Chalus, 2005, p. 58). Furthermore, the economic situation and the annual income of the man to get married to were of major importance in choosing a husband. That was why Lydgate is pronounced to be an inappropriate husband for Rosamond. Although he is a very clever and intellectual man, according to the public idea his profession is not one that can provide a prosperous life for his family in future (*MM*, 1994, 296).

Eliot, with her wide knowledge of the scientific developments of her time, criticized the narrow-minded women of the Regency and Victorian period for not being interested in the scientific and intellectual developments (Ashton, 1992, p.ix). Most probably the effective factor in this way of thinking was the conventional society with its pressure on women to resist innovations and changes. In *Middlemarch*, Eliot showed her irony toward this resistance to intellectual views in the words of two female characters, Mrs. Bulstrode and Mrs. Plymdale, by saying "it is seldom a medical man has true religious views- there is too much pride of intellect" (*MM*, 1994, p. 296). Eliot depicted how these women dare to denigrate a doctor because of his

religious views in a period in which cholera and other epidemic diseases were widespread. She also emphasizes the fact that, for the people of the Regency period, not the profession of a doctor but his views on religious issues used to have more importance.

While criticizing Lydgate for his religious views and not finding him an appropriate husband for Rosamond, the same women praised the old but rich Casaubon for getting married to a girl twenty years younger than him. For Eliot, the age difference between the couples and the prejudice that people had toward both outsiders and innovators mattered. In the same way Middlemarch society does not accept Ladislaw as a good husband for Dorothea since he is both an outsider and a reformer. Eliot obviously showed how the network system of the time worked and how closed the society was to outsiders, innovators and reformers.

Sir James, a seemingly open minded man of that period, specifies his own criteria for the ideal wife he would prefer to marry. To Sir James, an ideal wife is the one who can share his plans, and who can be an intelligent woman to share her ideas freely (*MM*, 1994, p. 21). He also wants a womanly wife who is also pretty. Practicing to be a good horsewoman is another qualification for a good wife in Sir James' point of view. Also, he thinks that the superiority of a wife is in her intelligence and sensibility (*MM*, 1994, p. 23). He believes that all the qualities that he looks for a wife are gathered in Dorothea. Although according to the norms of society Dorothea could be an appropriate wife for Sir James, according to Dorothea's criteria he can only be a good husband to her little sister, Celia, who lives more like a typical woman of her time.

Casaubon has a different point of view in selecting a proper wife. He believes that,

... in taking a wife, a man of good position should expect and carefully choose a blooming young lady- the younger the better, because more educable and submissive- of a rank equal to his own, of religious principles, virtuous disposition, and good understanding. On such a young lady he would make handsome settlements, and he would neglect no arrangement for her happiness: in return, he should receive family pleasures and leave behind him that copy of himself which seemed so urgently required of a man- to the sonneteers of the sixteenth century. (*MM*, 1994, p.278)

He is just feeling that he is getting old, so he will need someone to end his loneliness on the one hand, and become his secretary, on the other hand, to assist him in his work to save his eyes. Dorothea is even more than what he demands. According to Casaubon, "A wife, a modest young lady, with the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex, is sure to think her husband's mind powerful" (*MM*, 1994, p. 279).

This attitude of Casaubon cannot be defined as an unusually selfish wish since Casaubon was a typical 19th century man with conventional ideas and strong patriarchal beliefs. According to these norms, women were no more than servants to their husbands; they even were defined as the properties that belonged to their fathers before marriage and to their husbands after marriage. Even a woman's identity and "legal personality was subsumed in that of her husband" (Shanley, 1993, p. 8). Also, the husband was the authority at home, and "legally the wife had no veto over or means of opposing her husband's decisions" (Shanley, 1993, p. 9). Therefore, Casaubon, who lives in accordance with these norms, is a man whose process of choosing a wife conforms to the norms of his day.

The concept of marriage for Dorothea, the main character in *Middlemarch*, is different. She is an intelligent, independent, and unique young lady who is obviously different from the conventional pre-Victorian woman stereotype. She takes pious figures as her ideal and makes a deliberate effort to follow them in behavior and belief; however, achieving such a role in what she sees as the godless society of the time is impossible, and George Eliot in a way tried to show that unrealistic goals that you have in your life would mislead you and could affect your life destructively.

Dorothea has her own concept of marriage. From her point of view, "the really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it" (*MM*, 1994, p. 11). Her desire for academia and language learning is one of the most effective factors in choosing Casaubon as her husband. Casaubon seems as an ideal husband to her since he is noted in public as a man of profound learning who is engaged with a scholarly work concerning religious history called *Key to All Mythologies*. The flashy and pompous language he uses while speaking is enough to lure Dorothea with the bright prospects of marriage. Dorothea's delusion in her choice in marriage is her being too much influenced by Casaubon's talking style, her belief in his wider knowledge in religion, historical background and innovative (reformist) notions and projects that she thinks will enable her to improve herself in those areas. Dorothea in her youth and enthusiasm only wishes to become his assistant to help him in his so called great work of mythology that after being finished would become a guide for all mythologies. She is so excited that when she is asked to marry a so-called scholar that she cannot recognize the fact that Casaubon is not a real academic. Her communication with the people of real academia, reform, and science wakes her up. She finds out that she has respected an image that she herself had created of Casaubon. She undergoes a change in her beliefs so that Casaubon's

instructive tone and superior attitude while speaking, that once were attractive for Dorothea, become a torture for her during their honeymoon and after they return home (*MM*, 1994, p. 361).

One more reason for choosing Casaubon as a husband is Dorothea's delusion in thinking that it is not the worldly matters like physical appeal that are important in marriage but that only spiritual goals should be considered while choosing a good husband. Dorothea's idea changed during her marriage. For the first time she suffers from Casaubon's lack of showing any physical attention toward the newly married bride during their honey moon. This suffering is increased when she notices the feelings of Ladislaw toward her and by seeing the role of physical interest in the couples around. Dorothea disregards the importance of being truly loved by a man and becoming a mother by choosing the old, fixed- minded Casaubon who she thought could provide her with greater education and world view. However, she is deceived in that idea as well because a typical man with patriarchal ideas like Casaubon in no way can be an innovative or reformist person in the matter of women's education. Also, he only believes in the secondary role of women in their conventional society. Therefore, Dorothea's expectation of what Casaubon could provide for her is in vain.

George Eliot reveals the delusion of Dorothea about the notion of marriage by stating that her enthusiasm “was lit chiefly by its own fire, and included neither the niceties of the trousseau, the pattern of plate, nor even the honors and sweet joys of the blooming matron” (*MM*, 1994, p. 28). Before her marriage, for Dorothea, Sir James's compliments and physical attractiveness seem not much interesting, and that is why she prefers a fifty-year-old man who seems to have a high academic competence to guide her through her life and to be her husband. Contrary to her strong character, Dorothea, in vain, tries to change herself to be the woman for whom her husband wishes because Casaubon does not believe that anybody else can have the capacity to be involved in the works he is carrying out, and Dorothea is no exception.

Dorothea's delusion in accepting Casaubon's proposal is mostly depicting Eliot's personal delusion in her relationship with John Chapman, who was the owner of the *Westminster Review*. Chapman was much older than Eliot, and he had a wife, Susanna, and a mistress, Elisabeth Tilley, who were deeply jealous of Eliot. Chapman invited Eliot to work as an unpaid assistant editor for the *Review* (Edwards, 2003, pp. 174-175). The similarities between the Eliot/ Chapman and Dorothea/ Casaubon relationship are obvious. Chapman's age, his life style, and the job he offered to Eliot

were the matters that can be seen in Dorothea's choice of Casaubon. Eliot might have considered Chapman as a father, or a knowledgeable person, who could teach her, and help her to develop her talent; also he could be a key factor in her career, and Eliot could be a secretary as Dorothea wanted to be for Casaubon.

Ladislaw's denunciation of the *Key to All Mythologies*, though harsh, helps Dorothea to see the truth about Casaubon's career and wishes. "She longed for work which would be directly beneficent, like sunshine and the rain, and now it appeared that she was to live more and more in a virtual tomb, where there was the apparatus of a ghastly labor producing what would never see the light" (MM, 1994, p. 475). The frustration she experiences is very deep, and unfortunately she has no "refuge from spiritual emptiness and discontent" (MM, 1994, p. 475). Not being aware of the nature of true marriage and what should be expected, she starts to drown in the life that she has knowingly and willingly chosen. For sure she is too young to know all the aspects of married life, but it is her self-deception in recognition of the power and degree of her spiritual belief that made her ignore the ordinary and common needs and wishes of a young woman while making the most vital decision of her life.

Dorothea is deluded partly by her extreme religious beliefs and ideals. She tries to keep herself far from the materialistic things around her, and she does not care for physical attraction in marriage. She betrays her ideals of service "because she shares responsibility for allowing her illusions to lead her into disastrous marriage" (Martin, 2000, p. 194). Therefore, it can be concluded that Dorothea's regret of her marriage is the result of her exaggerated self-deception. Eliot, as the omniscient narrator, pictures Dorothea's feelings and her delusion as follows:

Marriage, which was to bring guidance into worthy and imperative occupation, had not yet freed her from the gentlewoman's [women with nothing serious to do] oppressive liberty: it had not even filled her leisure with the ruminant joy of unchecked tenderness. Her blooming full-pulsed youth stood there in a moral imprisonment which made itself one with the chill, colorless, narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture, the never-read books, and the ghostly stag in a pale fantastic world that seemed to be vanishing from the daylight. (MM, 1994, p. 274)

Having made a mistake in her marriage choice, Dorothea takes a very strong stand to support the ideas that she believes in and tried to resist the social, economical, and political unfairness of her time when no male character had dared to do so.

Taking into consideration Eliot's life, one may think that she should be the last person to write about marriage and the moral values of her time since she did not enter to a

marriage according to the norms of society in the 19th century. However, her life with Lewes can be defined as the marriage of souls. She believed that there should be “the right to free love where marriage was not possible” (Laski, 1994, p. 26). She meant that it is not the norm of society that should decide whether you can cohabit with a married man or not, it is you and your true feelings that should decide what to do with your future. Following her personal decisions and individual reasons, after the death of Lewes, she married Henry Cross, a twenty-year-old younger man, which was also an unconventional marriage.

Eliot passed through a personal reform in her own life, and it was a change from theology to science (Laski, 1994, pp. 24-48). She also reflected this transformation in herself in the idea of marriage in *Middlemarch*. Dorothea and her acts in this novel represent Eliot as “her shift from a mythologist husband, preoccupied with worn-out creeds, to a reformer husband involved in the needs of the present is a progression that George Eliot herself made intellectually in her view on religion and morals” (Meckier, 1987, p. 228). It clearly shows that what Eliot is wrestling with is the concept of change. She believed that everyone and everything should undergo a positive developmental change, and this change can appear in all walks of life either socially, politically, or individualistically. In this specific case, Dorothea undergoes a progressive change in her idea about marriage which can be defined as an individualistic change.

It is not a surprise to notice that most of the main characters of Eliot in her fictions follow the same evolutionary order. In *Felix Holt*, the marriage of Esther with Felix is the consequence of this progressive evolution: “Esther’s maturation and her marriage to a social reformer as intelligent as Felix attest to the wonderful slow growing system of things” (Meckier, 1987, p. 17). It can be defined as slow but wondrous growth for individual lives which can result in the progress of society.

Eliot’s personal life is a mirror in evaluating the events, and by using her own life experiences, she depicted the characters in her novel. Although she denied all these claims, and stated that the characters, events, and the places in her fiction are all imaginary, it is quite evident that “She was Maggie [in *The Mill on the Floss*] - or rather, the young Maggie was the young Mary Ann. Isaac was Tom [in *The Mill on the Floss*]. Chrissey was Lucy. The Dobson sisters were the Pearson aunts... The garden, the pond, the Red Deeps, are all from memories of childhood at Griff” (Laski, 1987, p. 74). In *Middlemarch*, one can notice the similarities between Mr. Garth and Robert

Evans, Eliot's father very clearly. The most important similarity between Eliot and her female characters that interests this study is the identification between Dorothea and she herself that was explained by Laski as "Surely Dorothea is the very cream of lovely womanhood. She is more like her creator than anyone else, and more so than any other creation" (1987, p. 95).

The other similarities that can be seen in Eliot's novels are in the concept of sacrifice and sympathy of the heroines. In many of her novels, "she insists on the personal, ethical and social compromises women must make to marry" (Ablow, 2007, p. 88). Dinah gets married to Adam in *Adam Bede* and has to sacrifice her preaching. Dorothea's marriage to Ladislaw in *Middlemarch* is a kind of sacrificing of her ultimate goal in the betterment of society. In *Daniel Deronda*, Mirah is "so intuitively good and depsychologized that it is difficult to see how marriage could negatively affect her" (Ablow, 2007, p. 88). This suggests that Mirah is not aware of the negative effects that the marriage has left on her since she plays the role of an evacuated wife (Ablow, 2007, p. 88). In *Romola*, Romola does the same thing that Dorothea does in *Middlemarch*. She sacrifices her life to get married to a man who she thinks can be a good teacher to her. This might bewilder the readers of Eliot and make them think that Eliot was against the idea of marriage, and none of the heroines in Eliot's fictions had a successful marriage; however, this is not true. Eliot was a woman, who believed in the secondary role of women, and she clearly showed her stand in this regard by portraying her heroines in contexts which allowed them to support their husbands as strongly as they could, and keep their own purposes and goals in the secondary place.

Eliot sustains her narratorial presence all through the novels she wrote and this creates an absolute control and authority over the readers. One can easily notice Eliot's point of view in all the issues she defines in her novels. Especially the similarities between the characters and their acts and reactions in her novels are significant parts of her writing that implies and presents the experiences of her own life to the readers. In short, all Eliot focused on was to lead the characters, especially her heroines, to achieve the ultimate goal which was the improvement of the society with individual and positive acts.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN AND FEMINIST ISSUES

The role of women in the 19th century Victorian era is clearly stated in the works of literary fiction of the time. Hilary M. Schor in the article entitled “Gender Politics and Women’s Rights” briefly describes the duties that the mid-Victorian women had as “Women were expected to center their lives on home and family; they were expected to conduct themselves, indeed drape themselves, in modesty and propriety; they were expected to find the commands of duty and the delights of service sufficient, in fact ennobling, boundaries of their lives” (2002, p. 173). Therefore, it does not seem strange that Eliot portrays Casaubon within the same frame of mind. When he is proposing marriage to Dorothea, he explains how a suitable wife Dorothea can be to him by saying: “The great charm of your sex is its capability of an ardent self-sacrificing affection, and herein we see its fitness to round and complete the existence of our own” (*MM*, 1994, p. 50).

Eliot in her novels reflected the way her female characters integrate their consciousness with the social and political events of the time. Unlike the other women novelists of her time, who mostly portrayed the female characters in their novels involved in simple acts of morality or wifely duties, Eliot being aware of the social and political issues of the day focused on the pressure of society on women and the way they tried to overcome the resulting difficulties. She mostly focused on evolutionary and reformist acts that were made for the improvement of society. “For Eliot, the transformation of the heroine (her desire to move beyond her world) is a form of evolutionary change, a world-historical moment in itself” (Schor, 2002, p. 182). In *Middlemarch*, Eliot showed her readers the panoramic view of Britain during the period of the Reform Act, she turned “a harsh light on the inadequacy of female education, the ignorance in which men and women marry, the exclusion of women from science and new forms of knowledge, and ... the vulnerability of women to legal

forms of restraint” (Schor, 2002, p. 183). She took her part in debates about feminist movements; however, her view of feminism was quite different from what is generally defined as the feminist movement.

There are different views on when the feminist movement has started. While some scholars date it back to the writings of Sappho, the great Greek poetess, who discussed organized efforts to improve the living conditions of women, others look for the origins of feminism in the time of Pre-Renaissance period, when the Frenchwoman Christine de Pizan wrote in her book- *The Book of the City of Ladies*- in 1405, with its ironic appeal for women to establish a city where men could not attack and slander them. Later, in 1589, Jane Anger, an early feminist, published the oldest feminist manifesto which took its cue from women’s complaints and grievances about their men (Boles & Hoeveler, 2004, p. 1).

However, the feminist movement in the form known to Eliot had its origins in liberalism and the 18th century. It was in 1690 that the philosopher John Locke published a treaty entitled *Two Treatises of Government* in which he put forward his arguments on the right of freedom of life, liberty and possessions for all individuals. In the 1790s, in Britain it was argued that women should have a right to vote in the Parliamentary election. Although it was not welcomed widely, some political candidates used this request of women in their election rallies. The ideas of Locke were put in force by Mary Wollstonecraft, in 1772. Her attempts were in supporting the idea of educating women and in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she stressed that women were individuals who should not be defined by their sexuality, rather they should be evaluated as humans and individuals, so their individual rights should be given to them. She also believed that reasoning and rationality were the two important characteristics that women could gain through education which made them able to become equal with men. She also claimed that it was as a result of education that women could both become esteemed wives and responsible mothers for their children (Boles & Hoeveler, 2004, p. 1-3). These ideas of Wollstonecraft on education and the individual rights of women found some echo in the writings of Eliot.

The reason for the petitioning campaigns of women in the 1830s was their need to show a reaction against slavery as well as their request for gaining the right for voting. The first acceptance signal was given in 1848. Under this principle only single women and widows could own, lease, or rent a property. However, the same opportunity was

not given to the married women. They did not have the right to have a say on their properties, and the only person to decide on behalf of them on the properties that they might have inherited was their husbands or guardians (Hall, McClelland & Rendal, 2000, pp. 122-123). Therefore, not having the right to vote, married women could not claim anything either on their citizenship or their rights. This is the case that Dorothea suffered from. Before her marriage, her uncle as her guardian manages her properties, and after she gets married to Casaubon, he takes over this duty.

“The year 1854 was also a turning point in the debates on the woman question because it was the year that the representation of the fallen woman moved from the periphery to the center of mainstream literary and visual culture” (Dolin, 2005, p. 143). The form of femininity in female characters of fictions was “the sexless moralized angel and the aggressive, carnal Magdalen” (Dolin, 2005, p. 144). The only female character in Eliot’s fiction that represented the first form of femininity is Milly Barton in *Amos Barton*, who plays an excessive role of purity and goodness, and who lives to follow all moral and conventional requirements of her man and her time. However, in the fictional works of Eliot, female characters were portrayed more radical in terms of their morality, femininity, and ideology.

One of the influential men in supporting women’s rights was John Stuart Mill, a close friend of George Eliot. In 1869 he wrote *The Subjection of Women*, in which he condemned “the legal subordination of women to men”... [he believed in the equal power and privileges for both sexes, and condemned] the existing education system that produces women who are encouraged to cultivate artificial natures in order to ensnare men as means of financial support” (Boles & Hoeveler, 2004, p. 3).

By the end of 1840s, the women’s movement started to be heard widely and more radically. It was around 1860 that the suffrage movement led by Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon on the issues of urgent need of better education, better paid employment, and improving legal conditions for the women of the time started. The role the women could have in that era was nothing more than a genteel passivity even though they were educated. This movement of Mrs. Smith and her friends was a simple reaction against the male-dominated society. Bessie Parker, Harriet Martineau, who wrote *On Female Education* in 1823, and Barbara Bodichon were the British leaders in feminist equal rights movements, who were also the pioneers in reform of the divorce law and female suffrage. “Bodichon and Parker were instrumental in getting the Married Women’s Property Bill before Parliament in 1856, and they later founded the

Englishwoman's Journal and the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women” (Boles & Hoeveler, 2004, p. 3).

Eliot's significant female characters in *Middlemarch* are also of vital importance. The female characters that she depicted in her novel are in many ways strong. Taking Dorothea into consideration, there is no doubt to claim that she is not only educated but also is a kind of woman that Eliot herself desires to be. As Sumner J. Ferris states, Dorothea bears “all of the qualities one or more of which George Eliot usually attributes to women she wants the reader to sympathize with” (1967, p. 199). There is a strong similarity between Dorothea and Eliot's other heroines in her other novels. Dorothea is “like Dinah Morris, Romola, and Eppie in their dedication to a life of either piety, self-abnegation, or altruism; like Gwendolen Harleth, Maggie Tulliver, and Dinah in her strong will; and like Esther Lyon, Maggie and Romola in her goodness” (Ferris, 1967, p. 199). She has a strong character, she can resist unfair acts, she strongly supports the people who have been suspected of accepting a bribe to shelter a murderer, she is in favor of helping the poor, and she has no toleration for the actions that obstruct the improvement of society. Beside these, Dorothea is hungry to learn something and to help in educational areas as it was in the case of Casaubon, her husband, and she wants to dedicate her life to the betterment of social and political equality. All these characteristics are the ones that can easily be attributed to the characteristics in George Eliot herself.

Like Eliot, Dorothea had to adapt herself to the demands and conventions of the provincial society. Eliot, being aware of how it would be difficult to serve humanity without having male support, chooses to live with George Lewes whom she admires as an intellectual of her time. Dorothea experiences the same issues. She accepts the proposal of Casaubon through whom she believes she can get the opportunity to serve humanity. When she receives the proposal, she thinks “now she would be able to devote herself to large yet definite duties; now she would be allowed to live continually in the light of a mind that she could reverence” (*MM*, 1994, p. 45). However, the comparison of Casaubon and Lewes shows that they differ in reformist ideas. For one thing Lewes is a real intellectual while Casaubon only seems to be so. The other difference is between their behaviors toward their women. While Casaubon shows no desire to teach anything to Dorothea and he states his belief on the secondary role of women in society, Lewes makes Eliot her companion in his scholarly works, and although it is not welcomed by the society to see women in the intellectual circles of the time, Lewes introduces Eliot to the most respectful scholars

of the time with pride. Finally, Lewes differs from Casaubon in terms of ideology. Lewes is one of the reformists and forward minded people of the time for whom the positivist values and the improvement of the conditions in the society in all respects are of primary importance while Casaubon just cares about the past and the mythological ideas that belonged to many centuries ago. This makes Casaubon a person who even does not accept the fact that German methods have replaced the old methods that he is insisting on.

When analyzing the female characters in *Middlemarch*, Rosamond Vincy is one of the other characters through whom Eliot tried to indicate the shallowness in women. She is of great beauty, however, what she has continued her education on is just the womanly tactics to find a suitable husband who can afford her expenses, manage a house with expensive furniture, and bear her children who would belong to a higher rank family. In order to obtain all these she even dares to write a letter to her husband's family secretly (*MM*, 1994, p. 657), ignore her husband's career, and continue her own ambitious deeds secretly as in the case when she informs the Plymdales that they no more want to rent their house to them (*MM*, 1994, pp. 652-654). Her greedy attitude and thoughtlessness are the characteristics that Eliot wanted to criticize. In fact, she intends to stress the fact that a family life can be shaped positively or negatively through the actions of the women.

While creating the character of Rosamond, Eliot intentionally took her own past experience into consideration. Eliot started her education at Miss Latham's school, and later she was sent to The Elms that was governed by Miss Maria Lewis, a devoted Evangelical, whose influence on Eliot's life continued for many years (Laski, 1987, p. 15). The subjects that were taught in these schools were the ones that were believed to make the girls ready for becoming an accomplished women of the future as wives. They were taught to speak well in society, to play musical instruments- especially the piano- to sing songs, to draw, and to manage the house, the husband, and the children. Mrs. Lemon's school that Rosamond completes her education at is nearly the same as Miss. Latham's or The Elms that Eliot had attended. Therefore, it would not be fair to blame Rosamond for her behavior since "the narcissism that is so pronounced and unattractive in Rosamond is itself encouraged by the limits governing the female experience" (Chase, 1991, p. 62). Eliot portrayed Rosamond as the opposite female character to Dorothea. While Rosamond deals with materialistic issues such as finding a husband, buying furniture, and getting involved in the womanly matters of the time,

Dorothea is after more valuable and beneficial deeds to save the people, society, and the world.

Eliot's depiction of the role of women in society was very significant. She implicitly emphasized the radical role that women had in their family life. They were the determining factors in their family lives. Actually, not men but women were the decision making authority. Nevertheless, Eliot's depiction of strong women and their role in the family decisions was not an indicator of a feminist view. It was just a way to show how women could be effective in their destiny and their families' future.

This powerful role of women can be seen nearly in all women characters in *Middlemarch*. Mrs. Bulstrode, "a worthy common place woman as limited in her mental equipment as is her agreeable sister, Mrs. Vincy, has her moment of tragic grandeur in which she rises to the moral plane on which Dorothea habitually moves" (Bennett, 1948, pp. 171-172). She is again the woman who decides to stay with her husband who is accused of helping kill Raffles, the man who knows all the dark sides of Mr. Bulstrode's background (*MM*, 1994, p. 686).

The critical role that Mrs. Bulstrode plays in the most critical moment of her life puts Eliot's characterization and views under question because Mrs. Bulstrode is a lady who does not have an acceptable educational background, or any other higher qualification to make the readers consider her as a strong character, among the strong female characters in *Middlemarch*. However, taking into consideration Eliot's perspective in portraying characters, it would not be hard to guess that Eliot had intentionally written one of the most critical roles for Mrs. Bulstrode to show that the strength in people is not in the way they speak, criticize, or support someone. Eliot stressed Mrs. Bulstrode's feminine instincts as a protective wife for her husband, who loses all his self-confidence, respect, and wealth because of his youthful mistakes (*MM*, 1994, p.686), and to Eliot this is one of the most effective and vital roles to be assigned for a woman in this novel. Eliot showed that sometimes even the ones who seem strong may need help, and women like Mrs. Bulstrode should be esteemed highly for their bravery and powerful character not to leave a husband, who is *persona non grata* according to the norms of society.

Mrs. Garth, Caleb Garth's wife, is also one of the influential female characters in *Middlemarch*. The Garths belong to the working class. Caleb held the management of the estates around. Mrs. Garth is a teacher, whose only effort is to bring up her children in the best way. She is a strong woman who adores her husband's virtues

although she is aware of her husband's incapacity of organizing people. George Eliot appreciates her character's virtue of not sharing her personal issues with the neighbors by saying "she had been magnanimous enough to renounce all pride in teapots or children's frilling, and had never poured any pathetic confidences into the ears of her feminine neighbors concerning Mr. Garth's want of prudence and the sums he might have had if he had been like other men" (*MM*, 1994, p. 242). Therefore, she is not liked by the jealous women in the neighborhood and is criticized for being "either proud or eccentric and [they] sometimes spoke of her to their husbands as your fine Mrs. Garth" (*MM*, 1994, p. 243).

She is a supportive and subordinate wife for Mr. Garth, and she never stresses her own supervisory skills. Even when Mr. Garth announces that he wants to take Fred, who had put the Garth family in a very difficult situation because of his gambling debts (*MM*, 1994, p.247), as his assistant, she prefers not to say a word to warn her husband. Mrs. Garth is also a devoted mother for her children, who tries to save money to send her children to be educated in better schools (*MM*, 1994, p. 248).

Eliot portrays Mrs. Garth as a woman who becomes a housewife after her long years of working as a governess. Eliot, in fact, criticized the class, economic and education system of the time through this character. Even educated, Mrs. Garth is denigrated by the Vincy family since the Garths belonged to the working class, who had to work for their bread. Eliot criticized the low value given to education and she stresses the fact that "a prosperous innkeeper's daughter [Mrs. Vincy] enjoyed more esteem than an impoverished educated woman [Mrs. Garth]" (Langland, 1995, p. 206).

Eliot also defined Mrs. Garth as being "a trifle too emphatic in her resistance to what she held to be follies: the passage from governess into housewife had wrought itself a little too strongly into her consciousness, and she rarely forgot that while her grammar and accent were above the town standard, she wore a plain cap, cooked the family dinner, and darned all the stockings" (*MM*, 1994, p. 243). It is because of the hard economic conditions that Mrs. Garth has to take pupils to teach them at home. In this way Eliot showed that women in that time were idle, and an ideal woman was the one who was "hardworking, educated, and socially snubbed as a touchstone for the pettiness of Middlemarch society" (Langland, 1995, p. 202).

Eliot's criticism of the education system is once more revealed in her views when she states that Mrs. Garth "possesses 'education' and other good things ending in 'tion', and worthy to be pronounced emphatically, without being a useless doll" (*MM*, 1994,

p. 243). Therefore, Mrs. Garth represents an educated woman in that period who tries to avoid the daily womanish gossips of the neighbors and puts her energy to support her husband for the welfare of their children.

Although Eliot did not take part in women's suffrage movements directly, she showed her firm stand in espousing respect for women. In this regard, she had no toleration toward weak, uncertain, and repetitive female writers. In her essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" she directs her critical arrows toward those female writers harshly. Ashton defines these attacks as "witty, aggressive, and masculine" (Ashton, 1992, p. viii). Eliot blamed these women novelists of the time as ignorant of science and life. Eliot thought that "the limited education and experience of the lady novelist made her incapable of comprehending 'the knottiest moral and speculative questions' which presumably are more accessible to the narrator" (Easley, 2004, p. 118). This strict view of Eliot was the result of the women novelists' weakness in writing complete and analytic novels.

She said, one could "take these ladies' head, stuff it with a smattering of philosophy and literature chopped small, and with false notions of society baked hard, let it hang over a desk a few hours every day, and serve up hot in feeble English, when not required" (qtd in Ashton, 1992, p. ix). Eliot also found reading these novels harmful since they increased the already existing prejudice against the education of women. Instead of showing off their humanity and learning through their weak and insignificant writings, they should parade their knowledge in a more modest manner: "A really cultured woman like a really cultured man is all the simpler and the less obtrusive for her knowledge" (Ashton, 1992, p. 313). The way Eliot used her words was also effective since by using the two phrases of "cultured man" and "cultured woman" she was after the fact that gender is not what determined the capability in writing successfully, but it was the quality, culture, background, and intelligence in their writing that increased the value of the authors in the eyes of their readers.

One of the arguments that Eliot put forward about the women novelists was that the low quality of their works affected the readers negatively as they caused a corruption in the taste of the readers. She suggested these women novelists to provide sympathy instead of transferring pure information because it was the sympathy between the author and readers that increased the value of relations between the two sides. It also provided the author with multidimensional views to criticize and evaluate her weaknesses and to improve them in time she claimed (Easley, 2004, p. 119).

One of the other criticisms of Eliot about the women novelists was their lack of addressing the middle class people in their novels. She blamed those women novelists belonging to upper-class to be the writers of aristocratic lives. These women she claimed, “have evidently never talked to a tradesman except from a carriage window; they have no notion of the working classes except as ‘dependents’; they think five hundred pounds a year a miserable pittance; Belgravia and ‘baronial halls’ are their primary truths; and they have no idea of feeling interest in any man who is not at least a great landed proprietor, if not a prime minister” (Ashton, 1992, p. 298). Comparing the novels of the women novelists with the novels of Eliot especially *Middlemarch*, in which Eliot portrayed her heroine Dorothea in the heart of cottagers, and Dorothea’s efforts to improve the condition of the cottagers by using the upper-class people like Sir James, it is not hard to understand why she was that intolerant toward these women novelists.

Eliot was also worried about the effects of these women novelists on the ideas of men about educated women. She said, “The most mischievous form of feminine silliness is the literary form because it tends to confirm the popular prejudice against the more solid education of women” (Ashton, 1992, p. 311). According to Eliot, when reading the novels of these authors in which girls talk about their love affairs, dresses, and old ladies gossip about their neighbors, it becomes impossible to break the prejudice of men against the education of women. On the contrary, the literate female characters who are seeking progress, who dare to state their views in the society, and who play a supportive role for their families, can be good role models to convince men to educate the girls in their families.

George Eliot believed that to write good fiction, not only the knowledge of science and life but also genuine observation, humor and passion were the key factors (Ashton, 1992, p. ix). Compared to her contemporaries, she has all these skills. In this she also benefitted from the support of George Lewes. Without doubt, she can be called one of the most intellectual female writers of her era who has a strong pen in criticism as well. The basis of her criticism of other women writers was very clear and, having analyzed their books in detail, like a teacher she shows them how to write. Eliot, on the other hand, appreciates some women writers, whom she found successful. One of these effective women writers who was also active in the feminist movements of the time was Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon. She was one of the feminist campaigners and painter friends of Eliot whom she met at Chapman’s in 1852. Eliot’s friendship with Bodichon was one of her long lasting friendships although many of

their ideas were not in the same line (Laski, 1987, pp.88-89). There are several ideas that Bodichon defended about the position of women in the society. First of all, she discussed the unfair employment and wage difference between men and women. She refuted the opposing arguments such as women were not as skillful as men to be paid equally, by stating if women were not given the chance to practice how they could become skillful. She also stated that taking an active role in employment did not mean that they would not fulfill their domestic womanly duties. Secondly, Bodichon challenged the patriarchal ideology that women did not need to work because before marriage their fathers and after marriage their husbands would provide them with necessary economic support. However, she refuted this idea by asking about the cases when a woman was not married, and how she could survive after her father's death (Pujol, 1992, pp. 37-39).

Also, Bodichon together with Bessie Parkes were strong supporters of Married Women's Property Right. They opened their office in London, and they were called The Ladies of Langham Place. Their aim was to ease the passage of Women's Property Bill through the Parliament by the campaigns they had arranged, and also they thought that this right together with the divorce right for women was only possible to be obtained through the education and employment of the women of the time. By founding *The English Woman's Journal* in 1858, Langham Ladies also provided an employment opportunity for women during that period that was not welcomed by the patriarch society (Laski, 1987, p. 88). When the Married Women's Property Bill was passed in 1870, "married women secured the right to retain and own any property or earning they might bring to their marriages (Smith, 2004, p. 290).

Although Eliot was "among the 24,000 signers of the petition for the Married Women's Property Bill of 1870" (Laski, 1987, p. 88) that was led by Bodichon, most probably she refrained from having an active role in those movements because of her unconventional inhabitation with Lewes and her image in public that was identified with unconventional type of relation. The other matter that put Eliot at odds with her reformist and feminist friends was the difference in thought between ideas on the matter of franchising of women. Eliot did not believe that the political rights of women were as important as their educational rights. She was an advocate of equality of rights for individuals, and as Wollstonecraft had claimed previously, she thought that by educating women, they could think rationally and make decisions correctly, so the political matters may only play a provoking role in the society. Education was the best way to elevate the social as well as the individual enlightenment, she thought.

Because of this opinion of Eliot, she showed her sympathy toward the founding of Girton College, which was the first Cambridge College open to women that Bodichon and Emily Davies pioneered (Henry, 2008, p. 23). However, Eliot can be considered as a moderate benefactor of that college since the amount of money she donated was only £50 (Laski, 1987, p. 89). “Perhaps Eliot’s disaffection from movements to extend the franchise stemmed not only from what she called the conservative turn of her mind and her solidly middleclass status but also from her exclusion, as a woman from the political process” (Henry, 2008, p. 23).

In a letter she wrote to her friend Mrs. Taylor, she stressed the idea that if women get caught in the political movements and campaigns to obtain rights to be equal with men in their society, it may avert them from their habits and duties of being a woman. She believed that women had to show their influence morally not within political organizations as these movements may divert their real role in society. She also claimed that passion could be the most effective motive to carry out this role, and in her novels she showed how her female characters were passionate. She tried to show the womanly and unwomanly features of her characters like the two opposite sides as the light and dark versions of the women (Dolin, 2005, pp. 148-151). In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea and Rosamond represent this contrast, in *The Mill on the Floss* Maggie and Lucy, in *Adam Bede* Dinah and Hetty, and in *Daniel Deronda*, Gewendolen and Mirah. The uniting factor that Eliot is looking for is the compromise between the light and dark toward the end of her novels. She deliberately showed that the mutual understanding between the opposite poles brought happiness to women. That is why in *Middlemarch*, Rosamond helps Dorothea to find out Ladislav’s love toward her.

Another woman writer whom Eliot respected was Harriet Martineau. She was one of George Eliot’s contemporaries and friends, who was a journalist, a pioneer sociologist, a mesmerist, a political campaigner, and a feminist writer. She “was an outspoken critic of slavery, injustice and oppression. She advocated reform measures on the basis of consistently argued sociological principles” (Hill & Drysdale, 2002, p. 20). Martineau had contributed many articles to the *Westminster Review*, whose editor was Eliot, and some critics argued that her active role in the women’s movements caused her disappearance from the literary world. They believed that her fiction became more didactic than artistic after her activist role in the movements. (Easely, 2004, p. 179). “She was first, last, and always a writer, regardless of what she was writing about, and this is something George Eliot knew when she declared her to be a ‘trump—the only

Englishwoman that possesses thoroughly the art of writing” (qtd. in David, 2004, p.88).

In 1832, Martineau “published a hugely popular introduction to the new nineteenth century science of political economy, which gave her financial security and earned her the reputation of popular educator” (Weiner, 2000. P. 390). In part, Martineau’s achievement was criticized by the critics of the time, and she was blamed for being a popular writer. Like George Eliot, Martineau was one of the writers, who was known to have the sharpest and most effective pens of the time, and who was notorious for her antipathy toward women writers (David, 2004, p. 89).

The other similarity between Eliot and Martineau was their effort in translating the works of the most influential philosophers of the time. In 1853 Martineau translated August Comte’s *Positivism Philosophy*. “Hoecker- Drysdale argues that, however much Martineau admired Comte’s thought, she was eventually unable to accept his ‘vision of a highly centralized and controlled social system, a discourse of male authority, and a unitary public culture and opinion’”(qtd in David, 2004, p. 91).

One of the most famous works that Martineau wrote in 1839 was *Deerbrook*, in which she criticized the position of middle class people, the views on feminism, and the professionalization of medical practitioners through its hero-apothecary. The work “examines the function of clinical discourse... and complicates its promotion of clinical medicine” (Roberts, 2002, p. 52). This was nearly the same theme that Eliot employed in her novel, *Middlemarch*. It is clear that Martineau was interested in medical reform and the effects that it would have on society and its wellbeing.

What Martineau tried to focus on in her book was the ways practitioners could become successful in their practices. She defended the idea that in order to continue his achievements, Hope, the practitioner, had to marry since “by mid-century, a wife was considered almost a necessary part of a physician’s professional equipment both because she represented status and because women could be hesitant about receiving medical attention from a bachelor” (Roberts, 2002, p. 54). This matter could be the concern of Lydgate in *Middlemarch*, too. Not having any intention to get married, and having a full desire to focus on his professional practice, he finds himself out in the flow of consequences which make him choose Rosamond as his wife, who would be one of the strongest obstacles on his way to become successful in his profession. This marriage might also have taken place because Lydgate was an outsider in *Middlemarch*.

The other similarity between *Middlemarch* and *Deerbrook* is the issue of voting for the general election. In *Deerbrook*, Hope votes against the candidate who is supported by the town's local administration, which brings negative consequences in his practice since he is blamed by the public for defying the administrative will (Roberts, 2002, pp. 55-56). On the other hand, Lydgate, in *Middlemarch*, votes for the candidate of Bulstrode, Mr. Tyke, although he is not in favor of him. Nevertheless, this decision also affects his life and his practice negatively because he too is blamed by the public of helping Bulstrode in his attempt to get rid of Raffles because Lydgate had to show his gratitude to Bulstrode who furnished him with all the necessary power and equipment to continue his research in the medical arena.

Both Martineau and Eliot analyzed and criticized the agenda of the time in which poverty, class difference, the Reform Bill, bribery and intimidation during elections, corruption of the society, medical reform, Anatomy Act, and the education of medical men were mainly discussed. The similarities between the concepts and themes that were discussed by these two novelists may seem similar; however, according to some critics, the way they discussed those themes were quite different since Martineau's style was a popular one while Eliot used a descriptive and epistemological method.

In "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," Eliot described Harriet Martineau as one of the cavalier writers of the time whose pen was as strong as the influential male writers (Ashton, 1992, p. 319). She warned the critics to make a clear differentiation between these talented writers and other mass women writers. Eliot was very clear in stating her views on the female writers of that period, and she found Martineau as one of the intellectual, responsible, and aware female writers, whom she was proud of knowing personally.

Ashton defines Eliot's strengths in writing as "power of reasoning, knowledge of facts, European range, severity, tolerance, wit, and above all ... the power of analogy" (1992, p. ix). These qualifications were rare even in male writers of the time let alone the females. It was because of her higher order of thinking and philosophic perspective that she could not accept the other female writers as novelists. Most probably because of her style in writing and mature ideas she became the only woman who could take her place among the remarkable men of her time (Ashton, 1992, p. xvi).

It would be wrong to try to categorize George Eliot as a feminist or an anti-feminist. She had her own unique perspective about the position of women in society. For one

thing, she was very clearly in favor of educating women and increasing their level of culture and integration in the society.

The reason she was blamed for having contradictory views on feminism was that “she gave her opinions about women’s nature and role, the efficacy and value of franchise and law reform, educational reform, and the reform of the professions to admit women” (Dolin, 2005, p. 145). For her, the woman question could not be solved through harsh criticism and suffrage movements. Even she did not share the feminist circle’s idea that women should have the same power as men. Taking all these into account, she was obviously very clear in stating her position in her works of fiction. One can easily notice her stand concerning the issues of feminism and social reform in the role that she wrote for her heroine, Dorothea, in *Middlemarch*. To specify them, Dorothea cares about education, she is a supporter of reform in terms of political, social, and scientific changes, and as a woman she herself plays the strongest and most effective role in this work. She is stronger than many male characters of the novel since she backs up her claims with logic and farsightedness. This is how a woman should behave in a society, Eliot implies.

In her essay “Woman in France” that she wrote during her stay in France, she stressed Comte’s idea of softening the role of women in society. She emphasized the sensitive and emotional, and physically weak nature of women that make them distinctive from men. Moreover, from time to time she became more aggressive displaying a manly attitude toward women. As quoted from Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft, she believed in the manly notion of the time that an educated woman who is capable of having her own opinions can be nothing more than “an impracticable yoke-fellow [who always pulls her husband one way] when her husband wants to go the other... [and this] unreasoning animal is the most unmanageable of creatures” (Ashton, 1992, p. xxi). Eliot’s unreasoning animal in *Middlemarch* is Rosamond Vincy who has received her womanly education, who behaves against her husband’s decisions secretly, and who has a strong desire to change the social and business life of her husband.

When evaluating the women novelists’ works of the time, Eliot defined those novels as the ones in which the quality of silliness predominates in- “the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic” (Ashton, 1992, p. 296). She blamed these women novelists for being silly since they followed the same structure, pattern, plot, and ideas in their novels. She also pointed out that a cultivated woman writer should not only be

involved and interested in writing the information which is the raw material of culture, but she should transfer the feeling of sympathy, anger, anticipation and other feelings that are the subtlest essence in writing.

However, one should not ignore the fact that imitating the already existing structures or plots is one of the trends that writers of the time used to follow. Also, in some novels that Eliot has written herself, she also uses those cliché things that she has criticized in other women novelists.

Although Eliot herself, with a radical decision started to live with George Lewes, an action that was revolutionary in that time, she never attempted to write about feminism since she was more involved in the dilemma of feminism than the popular trend of writing feminist novels. Eliot's intellectual projects were

deeply rooted in a conservative social ideology, which... [were] essential to the originality of Eliot's insights and formal experimentations...She takes a conservative view of the woman question, but at the same time her fiction is passionately, angrily sympathetic with women's struggle against the forces of tradition and social conventions. (Dolin, 2005, p. 142)

Eliot can be defined as a conservative reformist. Her notion of feminism or acts in favor of women is just supporting the acts in which women could get proper education mostly at universities, and as the second issue she believed that the property rights of individuals should be protected strongly. These two cases are obviously revealed in *Middlemarch* as Eliot in the words of Dorothea tries to give back the properties belonging to Ladislaw's grandmother, and on the other hand she stresses the education of Dorothea, her heroine.

George Eliot despite her remarkable understanding in *Middlemarch* of the way a woman's intelligence and talent may be denied an adequate outlet, and despite the fact that she became a close friend and supporter of Barbara Leigh Smith, remarked in 1853 that woman does not yet deserve a better lot than man gives her. And she praised the way an exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness possible maternity may suffuse a woman's being with affectionateness. (Walters, 2005, p. 57)

In short, Eliot defines the woman question as a human question (Dolin, 2005, pp. 144-146). She also emphasized the fact that the solution to this problem can be found when it is not merely considered as the matter of inequality between men and women since these two issues are interconnected. She believed that unless the action and reaction between the individuals and institutions in terms of equality was solved, the debate

over the question of women would bring nothing more than harm to society, which includes women as well.

CHAPTER III

THE CLASS SYSTEM AND THE POLITICAL ISSUES

Before the industrial revolution the class system in Britain used to consist of the royalty, the church, the nobility, the landowners, and their tenants. By the beginning of industrialization and capitalism there appeared a change in the definition of this class categorization. As the gap between poor and rich started to widen, it generated a need for a new class that was called the middle-class. The middle-class was later divided into its subdivisions, such as upper-middle-class, and lower-middle-class based on the economic possessions of the people.

It was during the Regency period that the royalty and aristocracy (nobility), whose positions in the class structure were ascribed at birth, started to be threatened by the rise of the middle-classes. This noble class inherited a substantial wealth, land, title, and it was impossible to become a member of this upper class after birth. The members of this class played an active role as the members of the House of Lords. The next class that comes to be of great importance in the capitalist system was the middle-class. Considering the subdivision in the middle-class, the upper-middle class people were the ones whose members have inherited a good amount of wealth and who had a strong professional or business background as well as university education (Brown, 1991, p.387).

The next category was the middle-class groups who had the control of the means of production in the capitalist system after the rise of industrialization. This class had an extensive desire to dominate and exploit the classes under them. Members of the middle class owned a large amount of land and tenants who worked for them. Although the members of this stratum of society did not have any power, other than their political or social ranking, they were accepted and respected by the lower middle-classes as a result of the imposture that the hierarchical system had enforced

on them. The lower middle-class referred to the people within an average income who did not have a university education but were working in white-collar jobs. The only thing that they tried hard to achieve was climbing the ladders of class to become one of the members of higher classes in the society (Brown, 1991, pp. 386-87).

The last group in this classification was the working class on which much of the burden of society was loaded. The members of this segment worked in the area ranging from skilled work to semi-skilled and in some parts unskilled work. Working class people could hardly attain education. The skilled workers could take their part in supervisory, managerial, or technical works of the higher classes, while the semi-skilled or unskilled ones were the laborers who were responsible for the blue-collar work with minimum wages (Crossick, 1977, pp.60-64).

This social hierarchy is clearly taken into consideration by George Eliot in *Middlemarch*. The Brookes belong to an upper-class family although they are not so wealthy. Dorothea has an annual income of nearly seven hundred from her parents. Her uncle, Mr. Brooke, is an estate owner who has an annual rental income of three thousand “which seemed wealth to provincial families” (*MM*, 1994, p. 9).

The aristocratic members in *Middlemarch* are the Cadwalladers, Lydgate and his uncle Godwin. Sir Godwin is referred to as a baronet who in no way desires to keep in touch with the people of lower class. He also finds writing a response to a letter of Rosamond Vincy, who asks him to help them economically, very time consuming although he is aware of the urgency of her request. This is an indicator to show how a member of the aristocratic class would look down on ordinary people. The other case in which the class difference of aristocracy is mentioned is when Mrs. Vincy warns Lydgate to protect Rosamond against any denigrating reaction of the baronet’s family (*MM*, 1994, p. 255). She implies that since Sir Godwin belongs to the aristocrat class he might look down on Rosamond who belongs to a middle-class family. Mrs. Vincy also emphasizes the wealth of Sir Godwin by claiming that a wedding present of a hundred or two to be paid by Sir Godwin would be nothing to a baronet (*MM*, 1994, p. 255). For middle-class people the aristocrats’ wealth is a matter of talk in all cases.

Lydgate is a member of the aristocratic class who has rejected it since he wants to pursue his progress in the medical area which is considered as a step down from the aristocracy’s level. His strong inclination toward developments and reforms in medicine seems to be the only aim he desires to achieve, so that no rank or social class would hinder him in his way (*MM*, 1994, p.166). When he in an unplanned way is

stuck in a position that he has to get married to Rosamond, he tries to arrange all the necessary purchases of the marriage in line with the aristocratic traditions and styles, not with prudent considerations. Before marriage he buys a dinner-service that suits his class “since he hates ugly crockery” (*MM*, 1994, p. 353). He also buys “a few first-rate pocket handkerchiefs; but beyond the absolutely necessary half-dozen” (*MM*, 1994, p. 354) which would be the most necessary thing for a bride while visiting Lydgate’s aristocratic family. This fluctuation in class behavior is the start of Lydgate’s economic collapse and social degradation and loss.

The Plymdales belong to the middle-class group as well. They are involved in business and they have an ambitious desire and attempt climbing up the social ladder very fast. Ned Plymdale is to an extent successful in his efforts. He seems to be a good match for young girls like Rosamond since he is financially well off, and that is one of the determining factors of the time that could even overpass the men with professions like Lydgate. Ned thinks that with his economic power he can receive more attention and even become more appealing in his society- or class. Since he has no appropriate education, he tries to hide this flaw by following the daily publications and magazines about celebrities’ lives, which he thinks can be an indicator to show how up-to-date he is. George Eliot criticized people like Ned for being narrow-minded as they believed that to be the first person, who has the economic power to buy the “gorgeous ‘watered-silk’ publications which marked modern progress at the time” (*MM*, 1994, p. 269), would ease their rise among the members of their class. To Ned, dealing with this type of information or publication is a kind of attachment to literature and art (*MM*, 1994, p. 269). Eliot also focused on his physical appearance and clothing to depict how middle-class members wanted to be showy by stating the color of Ned’s satin stocks that are as bright as the color of his chins (*MM*, 1994, p. 269). George Eliot, furthermore, tried to compare the middle-class people by mentioning the redness of their hands because of physical labor with white-handed Lydgate, the man of profession, who has an aristocrat’s blood (*MM*, 1994, p. 270).

The Garth family represents the working class in Middlemarch. Like Eliot’s father, Robert Evans, Mr. Garth is a land agent or estate manager who deals with the construction work of the properties around Middlemarch. He is highly interested in improving the condition of the lands and the inhabitants of the cottages. He is devoted to his work and his advice to Fred regarding work is:

You must be sure of two things: you must love your work, and not be always looking over the edge of it, wanting your play to begin. And the other is, you

must not be ashamed of your work, and think it would be more honorable to you to be doing something else. You must have a pride in your own work and in learning to do it well... no matter what a man is- I wouldn't give two pence for him... whether he was the prime minister or the rick-thatcher, if he didn't do well what he undertook to do. (*MM*, 1994, p. 562)

His wife is a teacher who tries to educate both her own children and the children in the town. They are not rich, so they have to work excessively. Even their daughter Mary works to help the family. Although they are short of money, it is not reflected in their financial support to Fred, who is the son of the Vincy family, who belong to a higher rank, in order to compensate for his gambling debt. The Vincys “were in condescending terms with” (*MM*, 1994, p. 231) the Garths even in their prosperous days as a result of distinction in rank during that period. Mrs. Garth is looked down on by Mrs. Vincy as “a woman who had had to work for her bread” (*MM*, 1994, p. 231) and Mary's keeping Mr. Featherstone's house makes Mrs. Vincy more irritated when her son Fred expresses his desire to be with Mary who belongs to a lower class. Moreover, when Fred shares his decision to work with Mr. Garth instead of continuing his education to become a vicar, Mr. Vincy warns him and says “you have thrown away your education, and gone down a step in life, when I had given you the means of rising” (*MM*, 1994, p. 568). Mrs. Vincy even believes that as a result of this probable marriage between Fred and Mary, “her darling boy, with his beautiful face and stylish air... would be sure to get like that family in plainness of appearance and carelessness about his clothes” (*MM*, 1994, p. 569). She also stresses that their life would be spoiled by a perpetual infusion of Garths and their ways (*MM*, 1994, p.569). In no way does she believe that a marriage between two different classes would have a chance to survive, let alone be successful.

Since the society and political issues of the early 19th century were of interest to George Eliot, in *Middlemarch* she touched on the issues related to the Reform Bill, the behaviors and manipulations of politicians in applying it, and also the way the public showed its reaction toward the reform and rotten political policies.

The First Reform Bill of 1832 is an Act to stop abuse of voters in electing their own candidates to take part in the House of Commons in Parliament. Although the Lords or the aristocrats were against this Act since it would entitle more public members- the lower classes- with a right to vote and to state their claims in the Parliament, public pressure made the law pass in the Parliament. This Act started under the leadership of Lord Grey, the reform-minded Prime Minister of the time, who formed the pro-reform Whig faction and who believed that there was a necessity in the reform of the

Parliamentary system. The main objective of the Act was to provide a chance of equality in voting, so in this way, ordinary people too could freely choose whomever they thought would work to protect their rights in the Parliament; moreover, it would furnish the public with an idea of equal representation and freedom of choice against the pressure of the politicians during elections.

The radical and innovative views of Grey are of great importance since he refuted the current system of the Parliament very harshly by putting forward the claim that if the public pays its tax to the government, there is no power to block its right to have a say in the Parliament, and to use its vote in determining issues about the country and its welfare (Redlich, 2009, p. 81). He argued that the system of the government did not provide the same right to the people of different classes. As a result of this discrimination of class, some people could not use their rights in the society.

Lord Russell was offered the post of postmaster-general in the Whig government that Earl Grey had formed. He also took an active role in a government committee to deal with the need for Parliamentary reform and explain the government's proposals to change the electoral system to the House of Commons. The reform of local government was one of the other reforms that Russell actively carried on (Redlich, 2009, pp. 80-81). For many years many English towns were under the control of local self-elected councilors. The municipal corporations were also the privileged institutions that needed to be democratized. Since the oligarchy was afraid to provide a free voting opportunity to the lower class members, the reorganization of the local administrations were suspended for a long time, and there started a new reaction against the government that resulted in the urge of the second Reform Bill (Redlich, 2009, p. 174).

Although the efforts the reformists showed in favor of the Reform Bill were partly appreciated by the public, they had their own shortcomings as well. According to the observations of Linda Colley, although this reform made Britain considerably more democratic, “it still left four out of every five adult males, and all women without the vote... it also allowed landowners and employers to exert considerable pressure on those who did vote” (qtd in Rovee, 2006, p. 186). These restrictions or limitations in the Reform Act made the public more frustrated in electorate issues and raised their reaction against reforms. In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot put stress on these two issues as the disappointment of public in the 1832 Reform Bill, which failed in fulfilling its

purpose and many people's protesting reactions against any reformist ideas or actions of the period.

Eliot connected the people's distrust of the Reform Bill to the injustice taking place in boroughs. One of the matters mentioned in *Middlemarch* is the restriction of franchise by which men, who occupied homes with an annual value of £10 were not able to use their vote; furthermore, only the people who had exercised a borough vote before 1832 could have a chance to vote (Brown, 1991, p. 221). The amount of £10 is one of the items that Mr. Brooke disapproves of in the Reform Bill. He believes that there is too sharp a division in determining who can vote, and there should be more logical criteria for the Reform Bill (*MM*, 1994, p. 499). The other disturbing issue for the public was the increase in bribery and coercing practiced by the leading family or landowners to ensure the election of their representatives to Parliament. As a result, the Parliament was controlled by the landed gentry and seats were filled by representatives who wanted to please their patrons rather than their constituents. Ladislav, during a conversation with Lydgate, stresses the necessity of reform and the fact that it cannot happen by a hocus pocus. He supports the Reform Bill by touching on the issue of bribery: "the House had been tinkering long enough at small questions of bribery, inquiring whether this or that voter has had a guinea when everybody knows that the seats have been sold wholesale" (*MM*, 1994, p. 465). What Ladislav tries to reveal is the political system of the time, which could not be cured without reform, and he asserts that "if you wait for wisdom and conscience in public agents - fiddlestick! The only conscience we can trust to is the massive sense of wrong in class, and the best wisdom that will work is the wisdom of balancing claims" (*MM*, 1994, p. 465).

The political election system in *Middlemarch* is an issue to be explained in detail. There used to be an extreme distrust toward the politicians who were of no high ability and had no qualifications to become politicians. They used to purchase the votes either by paying the voters or using other bribery methods (*MM*, 1994, p. 465). There used to be several ways to overcome this distrust. The opponents used to slander the political candidates and the candidates used to prove their innocence against that calumny (*MM*, 1994, p. 384).

Will Ladislav is interested in this distrust. He tries to guide Mr. Brooke to be in favor of the Reform Bill. However, Mr. Brooke is one of the politicians of the time, who does not want to take a firm stand. His desire to take a role in the political arena is nothing different from earning more money and ascending in social rank. That is why,

when Ladislav stresses his use of the Reform Bill in his political speeches, he says “I want to keep myself independent about Reform, you know, I don’t want to go too far,” and he also shows his stand-less position by stating that neither does he believe that Grey will be successful in his efforts for the Reform Act, nor he has a desire to change the balance of the constitution (*MM*, 1994, p. 336). For the politicians like Brooke the public and their wishes to have a “House of Commons which is not weighted with nominees of the landed class, but with the representatives of the other interests” (*MM*, 1994, p. 336) were of minor importance.

The manipulation of uneducated people by the politicians is also discussed in *Middlemarch*. Even Mr. Brooke, who does not seem to be a strong candidate of the Parliament for whom radical changes make sense, criticizes the Tories, who bring the voters drunk to the polls (*MM*, 1994, p. 384). He also believes that the Middlemarch people are a little backward, so they can be manipulated easily. This is, in fact, the criticism of Eliot that when the number of illiterate people in the society is high, politicians can become powerful and determining factors in society.

What makes the 1832 Reform Bill significant both in terms of the image it brings to the other reformist acts as well as a political fact, is its being a means of innovation and progress in Britain. Eliot’s inserting this aspect of reform and the Reform Bill in *Middlemarch* is a sign of its being a turning point for England in 19th century (Caroll, 1998, p. xxxi).

The reform expressed in *Middlemarch* to some extent should be considered as the independence to the tenants since the harsh conditions of the time had made life miserable for the lower-class people. Mr. Dagley’s reaction and his manner against Mr. Brooke not only revealed the pressure on the tenants but also indicated the tenants’ courage to resist the injustice that was imposed on them by the landlords.

George Eliot, using the common language of the lower-class people such as working class and agriculture workers, revealed how an illiterate man can defend his own rights only by the information picked up here and there. Not even being able to pronounce the word ‘Reform’ correctly Dagley threatens Mr. Brooke by saying:

I meean as the King 'ull put a stop to't, for them say it as knows it, as there's to be a Rinform, and them landlords as never done the right thing by their tenants 'ull be treated i' that way as they'll hev to scuttle off. An' there's them i' Middlemarch knows what the Rinform is -- an' as knows who'll hev to scuttle. Says they, "I know who / your / landlord is." An' says I, "I hope you're the better for knowin' him, I arn't." Says they, "He's a close-fisted un." "Ay, ay,"

says I. "He's a man for the Rinform," says they. That's what they says. An' I made out what the Rinform were -- an' it were to send you an' your likes a-scuttlin'; an' wi' pretty strong-smellin' things too. An' you may do as you like now, for I'm none afeard on you. An' you'd better let my boy aloan, an' look to yoursen, afore the Rinform has got upo' your back. That's what I'n got to say," concluded Mr Dagley. (*MM*, 1994, pp. 396-397)

The printed media, especially the newspapers, were also used as a means of political propaganda during the period. Mr. Brooke, a liberal candidate, buys *Pioneer*, the newspaper, to use it as a means for his political propaganda. Since he does not have the capacity to think critically, and he is not well aware of the need of society through which he could address the public to choose him as their candidate, he employs Ladislaw, a young fellow with reformist ideas who could organize his articles and speech scripts during the elections. Ladislaw is defined by the people around as "a brilliant young fellow... [who can edit Brooke's works and] who can write the highest style of leading article, quite equal to leading articles in London papers. And he means to take very high ground on Reform" (*MM*, 1994, p. 358).

The opponents of Mr. Brooke owned a newspaper called *The Trumpet*, which published very severe articles against Mr. Brooke and his manners against his tenants. They accused Mr. Brooke to be a retrogressive man, who

would dub himself a reformer of ... constitution, while every interest for which he is immediately responsible is going to decay: a philanthropist who cannot bear one rogue to be hanged, but does not mind five honest tenants being half-starved: a man who shrieks at corruption, and keeps his farms at rack-rent: who roars himself red at rotten boroughs, and does not mind if every field on his farms has a rotten gate: a man very open-hearted to Leeds and Manchester, no doubt; he would give any number of representative who will pay for their seats out of their own pockets: what he objects to giving, is a little return on rent-days to help a tenant to buy stock, or an outlay on repairs to keep the weather out at a tenant's barn-door or make his house look a little less like an Irish cottier's. But we all know the wag's definition of a philanthropist: a man whose charity increases directly as the square of the distance. And so on. All the rest is to show what sort of legislator a philanthropist is likely to make. (*MM*, 1994, pp. 382-383)

The aim of writers of *The Trumpet* is to show the wrong acts and views of Mr. Brooke, and provoke the public against him. In this way, they can reflect his weakness and manipulate the poor people in town to vote for them and not Mr. Brooke.

George Eliot pictures the condition of the cottages as clearly as possible to show how disastrous the places that the tenants used to live in were. In a visit of Mr. Brooke to Dagley's, one of his tenants, Mr. Brooke confronts an unexpected condition of the home:

The old house had dormer-windows in the dark-red roof, two of the chimneys were choked with ivy, the large porch was blocked up with bundles of sticks, and half the windows were closed with grey worm-eaten shutters about which the jasmine- boughs grew in wild luxuriance; the moldering garden wall with hollyhocks peeping over it was a perfect study of highly- mingled subdued color, and there was an aged goat (kept doubtless on interesting superstitious grounds) lying against the open back-kitchen door. The mossy thatch of the cowshed, the broken grey barn-doors, the pauper laborers in ragged breeches who had nearly finished unloading a wagon of corn into the barn ready for early thrashing; the scanty dairy of cows being tethered for milking and leaving one half of the shed in brown emptiness; the very pigs and white ducks seeming to wander about the uneven neglected yard as if in low spirits from feeding on a too meager quality of rinsing -- all these objects under the quiet light of a sky marbled with high clouds would have made a sort of picture which we have all paused over as a "charming bit," touching other sensibilities than those which are stirred by the depression of the agricultural interest, with the sad lack of farming capital, as seen constantly in the newspapers of that time. (*MM*, 1994, p. 394)

Mr. Dagley's clothes are also the indicator of the hardship the tenants endure. The milking hat he was wearing during the visit of Mr. Brooke was a "very old beaver flattened in front. His coat and breeches were the best he had, and he would not have been wearing them on this week-day occasion if he had not been to market and returned later than usual, having given himself the rare treat of dining at the public table of the Blue Bull" (*MM*, 1994, p. 394). Mrs. Dagley's situation is not much different from her husband. She is an overworked woman who has lost all her energy and pleasure toward life and she has no "Sunday clothes which could give her satisfaction in preparing for church" (*MM*, 1994, p. 396).

By explaining all these details about the condition of cottages and cottagers, Eliot tried to criticize the discrimination between the classes. She stressed the fact that the priorities of people in terms of their class and rank form this discrimination. While on the one side the upper class and stingy landlord Brooke cares for his own political position and tries to show his intellectual interests; on the other hand, the tenants who live in extreme poverty are in need of bread. Dorothea, the integrating factor in this novel, is deeply influenced and hurt in this regard by the social and economical injustice in society among classes. She never keeps silent against these unfair conditions. She struggles to improve the conditions of the poor as much as she can. The only thing that she cares about the class issue is looking for ways to provide a fair and balanced condition for the lower class people.

There are also other people in *Middlemarch* who agree with Dorothea's view about the cottagers' condition. Caleb Garth's view about the reform of the tenants' condition

is also a revolutionary one compared to Brooke's idea. Garth thinks that new agreements should be made with tenants, he believes that Brooke should draw up a rotation of corps, and to get fine brick to reduce the repair prices a wager should be laid (*MM*, 1994, p. 403). Garth's agreement with Dorothea's idea is purposefully created by Eliot to strengthen the importance of class difference and the imbalanced economic position of people during that period.

Sir James is another reformist landowner. With the plans that Dorothea provided for him, he tries to keep his tenants in the most suitable way in terms of sheltering. Sir James is a far-sighted man who employs Garth to manage his estate in a professional way with the good patterns that were drawn for them. He also is one of the landlords who criticize the behavior of Brooke toward his tenants. He thinks that if Dorothea did not get married to Casaubon, she would in some ways convince her uncle to improve the condition of the cottagers with her reformist ideas (*MM*, 1994, p. 381). The rector and Mrs. Cadwallader as well as Sir James agree in the explanation of why Mr. Brooke does not spend money on his estates, and that is they believe "he will not like to feel his money [is] oozing out...(and) he has got that way of paring and clipping at expenses" (*MM*, 1994, pp. 381-382). They all blame him for being very stingy toward his tenants, and they think it is one of his characteristic features to abuse the rights of his tenants. To them, stinginess against the tenants is a totally unpleasant character trait that a good politician should eliminate from his characteristics.

What Dorothea as a member of the upper-class has planned to provide for the cottagers is totally different from her uncle's view in this matter. While speaking to Sir James about the way she thinks the cottages should be, she energetically says "I think we deserve to be beaten out of our beautiful houses with a scourge of small cords—all of us who let tenants live in such sites as we see round us. Life in cottages might be happier than ours, if they were real houses fit for human beings from whom we expect duties and affections" (*MM*, 1994, p. 20). Dorothea tries to use her uncle's political career as a strategy to convince him to improve the conditions of the cottagers. She describes the condition of the cottagers in a way to touch her uncle's heart by criticizing his intellectual interests:

Think of Kit Downes, uncle, who lives with his wife and seven children in a house with one sitting room and one bedroom hardly larger than this table! - and those poor Dagleys, in their tumble-down farmhouse, where they live in the back kitchen and leave the other rooms to the rats! That is one reason why I did not like the pictures here, dear uncle - which you think me stupid about. I used to come from the village with all that dirt and coarse ugliness like a pain

within me, and the simpering pictures in the drawing-room seemed to me like a wicked attempt to find delight in what is false, while we don't mind how hard the truth is for the neighbors outside our walls. I think we have no right to come forward and urge wider changes for good, until we have tried to alter the evils which lie under our own hands. (*MM*, 1994, p. 389)

Dorothea's criticism regarding the unjust policies of the time is not only to her uncle and his stinginess toward the cottagers. She also expresses her disagreement on the allocation of land to Casaubon, and dismissal of Ladislav's grandmother Julia, from her land right because of running away with a man of lower rank and class. George Eliot tried to depict the unjust superiority of sons in the matters of inheritance. Dorothea is in favor of the fair distribution of land and that is why she struggles to convince her husband to give the portion of the land and the income belonging to Ladislav's aunt back to Ladislav. Unfortunately, Dorothea's belief that inheritance is a matter of responsibility, not liking, is not welcomed by Mr. Casaubon. Although some of his property and income belongs to Ladislav's grandmother, both the law and Casaubon are in favor of the disinheritance of the girl who had made an unacceptable marriage. Dorothea is desperately looking for a just way to place things on a right footing. She thinks that with an alteration of Casaubon's will in which he had left all his property to her, she could provide Ladislav a rightful income that he has had already deserved. In this way in her own method of justice, she can relieve her uneasy conscience (*MM*, 1994, pp. 371- 372). However, all Dorothea's efforts are in vain in this regard.

The reformist ideas of George Eliot were strengthened by her meeting the reformists of her time, like Robert Owen. In fact, it is Charles Bray who introduced her to the intellectual reformist circles in Rosehill, where he lived (Laski, 1987, p. 28). Under the influence of the radical ideas of these intellectual circles, she developed her own philosophy and idealism. She was so influenced by Charles Bray's theological beliefs that she abandoned her evangelical vision. Later, when she met Robert Owen, she was influenced by his socialist and reformist ideas. Although Owen was an inspiring factor for her on the issue of establishing better living conditions for the poor people, she did not believe in the idea that the Reform Bill that was put forward in that period would be of any help to the betterment of the life of the poor. She knew that there was a strong need to improve the rights and laws in favor of the poor public, and the Reform Bill did not cover those rights as completely as it had to. One more thing to be mentioned about Eliot's hesitation in radical reforms is the idea that she thought any radical act would bring more harm than benefit to the public.

In a way it can be claimed that Eliot's view of change or in other words reform is a mild change that should be formed and completed over time. That is why it would not be a misleading claim to state that Ladislav in *Middlemarch* can be the best voice to interpret Eliot's stand in reform acts. Definitely Eliot was in favor of improving Britain both socially and politically, but she did not find the attempts to achieve it overnight feasible and genuine. Eliot believed that not only by representation of the landowners in the Parliament but also by letting all classes have representatives in the Parliament could a political justice be achieved. Therefore, "Ladislav is the expositor of England's politics of Parliaments and compromise and the Eliot's politics of national inheritance" (Semmel, 1994, p. 95). In short, it could be concluded that Ladislav and Dorothea are the characters used to reveal Eliot's reformist ideas on land reform and property rights.

The people in *Middlemarch* are very negative to railway construction as well. There is much speculation on this issue, and the provocateur landowners, who feel that the railway will in some way harm their land, divide their land, or decrease their income, successfully incite the illiterate people to protest against the construction of the railway.

This topic, together with other topics like the horror of cholera and the Reform Bill (*MM*, 1994, p. 553), were among the most widespread discussion issues of the time. Mostly landholders and poor people were involved in the discussion on this issue. The landholders' worries were mainly focused on the negative aspects that the railways would bring to their land and financial situation. The landowners unanimously believed that if they were going to sell their lands to such agencies which would endanger or even injure mankind by constructing such a hostile and evil innovation, the agencies had to pay an astronomic figure (*MM*, 1994, p. 553). Through these claims of landowners, George Eliot shows the greediness of the landholders quite clearly.

Mr. Solomon Featherstone is one of these greedy landowners who provokes the public about the railway and the people in charge of it. He mainly condemns the people, who want to measure the railway land as 'the spies,' and he claims that these people have a hidden agenda to cut the parish into two to divide the people and to bring "a lot of ruffians to trample" the crops (*MM*, 1994, p. 554). He is not satisfied with the speculative speeches he makes in this respect, he also tries to convince his sister Jane by saying "the more spokes we put in their wheel, the more they'll pay us to let'em go

on, if they must come whether or not” (*MM*, 1994, p. 554). Featherstone is perhaps a symbolic figure that Eliot used to show the greediness and inhumanity of capitalism.

There were also popular legends about the railway people as they were caught red-handed while spying and were thrown out by the public (*MM*, 1994, p. 556). Also, the railway people, according to the myths, intended to do harm to the land and poor people in the long run while pretending that they wanted to solve the transportation problem (*MM*, 1994, p. 555).

These myths were followed by the shallow ideas of the women at that time. Women were afraid of the dangers that a steam machine would leave on their children and life. Those women were so narrow-minded that they even could claim that “the cows will all cast their calves” (*MM*, 1994, p. 553) if the railway was constructed.

George Eliot, a far-sighted thinker of her time, who was open to innovations, criticized this refusal to adapt. She blamed the public for being against any unknown thing without having a precise idea of what it is. Also, she judged the poor for being pessimistic about their situation, even in cases where the reforms like railway construction would to some extent better their current situation and ease their life economically. “The men of Frick were ... less inclined to believe that they were peculiarly cared for by heaven, than to regard heaven itself as rather disposed to take them in” (*MM*, 1994, p. 555). They are easily manipulated by the surrounding speculations. There is no desire to go further or to develop the on-going conditions.

One more issue that should be put forward on railway reform is the penal law in that period. Being aware of the prejudice that the public had regarding innovations, the system takes its own precautions against any further disputes that might rise when the railway construction is started (*MM*, 1994, p.559). According to the law, no landowner had the right to say anything to the railroad men, let alone meddle with them. In such a situation, the people involved would “have to do with the constable and justice Blakesley, and with the handcuffs and Middlemarch jail” (*MM*, 1994, p. 559). Eliot implied that the only way for making the innovations come true was to threaten the public and use dictatorial rules.

While the resistance of men is continuing to stop the railway construction, the poor people who are partly influenced by Solomon Featherstone’s provocative speeches, start to break the railway materials into pieces. However, when Garth, a devoted worker who is wide open to reformist and developmental works of the time, tries to

convince those men not to meddle in this type of things, he confronts the criticism of George Eliot about the unbearable economic and political conditions of the day through the words of the wiry old laborer Timothy Cooper:

[The railway is] good for the big folks to make money out on'...I'n seen lots o' things turn up sin' I war a young un- the war an' the peace, and the canells, an' the oald King George, an' the Regen', an' the new King George, an' the new un as has got a new ne-ame – an' it's been all aloike to the poor mon.' What's the chanells been t' him? They'n brought him neyther me-at nor be-acon, nor wage to lay by, if he didn't save it wi' clemmin' his own inside. An' so it'll be wi' the railroads. They'll on'y leave the poor mon funder behind. (*MM*, 1994, p. 560)

Eliot voices her own views about the reformist actions of the time in the words of different people. This time Eliot's view on reform appears in the words of Caleb Garth. He tries to explain the situation for the group who attacked the railroad people. He states that there is no chance to hinder the railroad and that standing against this kind of innovation would bring harm to them. Also, Garth warns the attackers about the legal aspects of their resistance since the government has provided these agents with full authority. Therefore, any intervention in their work would put the attackers in jail (*MM*, 1994, p. 559).

The role that Garth plays in the subject of reform is a strange one because he seems to be a traditional conservative laborer without any modern views. However, Eliot assigns the supporting role for the construction of the railroad to him. In this case, the integrating role that Eliot has designed for her characters is transferred from Dorothea to Garth. She shows Garth precisely as a person who can see beyond the current situation taking place at the time. "For George Eliot it is precisely Caleb's archaism that allows him to see beyond the blinded present. The fact that he belongs to the social past liberates him from the fallen present and binds him to the emerging future" (Chase, 1991, p. 53). Garth in fact is Robert Evans, Eliot's father, who was a farseeing person in his life, and the man who cared for the good of society. He was the one who like Garth thought that only by working hard can the unjust conditions of the society be changed, and all the innovations would bring happiness and welfare to society. These efforts were of importance, not acts of political violence.

In *Middlemarch*, Eliot clearly defined the role that class played during the period, and she tried to illustrate that rank and class were factors that influenced the life of people intensively. It was the people belonging to the higher class that were privileged, so the low class people were condemned to suffer economically and socially. This also was

an effective point that created a competition between the middle class people to suppress the lower ones to make themselves closer to the higher class.

Furthermore, the distrust toward political issues and politicians as well as the indifference and prejudice of the public toward innovations led Eliot to share her positivist and progressive ideas regarding the Reform Bill, land reform, and railway construction in *Middlemarch*. To her, individuals and their ideas were influential factors when improvement of the conditions in society was concerned. She intentionally put individuals like Mr. Garth and Dorothea in charge of helping the poor and changing their negative beliefs toward innovation as she believed the collective forces can be changed through individual choices.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE REGENCY PERIOD

Education in the Regency period was mostly provided to the boys in the families. The education of girls was a rare phenomenon; the education that was preferred to be given to the girls was a kind of training for womanly behavior or religious education (Laski, 1987, pp. 15-18). Education of the males in the Regency period for one thing meant higher education in the church, to become a vicar that was considered one of the most valuable services during that period. In *Middlemarch* Eliot depicted the education of the males through Fred Vincy. Mr. Vincy provides the necessary requirements and financial support for his son, Fred, to complete his education. Although it is not what Fred desires to do, “he ... [was] sent to Oxford on the assumption that the education that he will gain there will make up for the social disadvantages which the slowly upwardly mobile Vincy family still retain” (Shelston, 1993, p. 22).

Another issue which casts a light on Eliot’s views on the education of males in that period was the ability to have legible handwriting. “At that time the opinion existed that it was beneath a gentleman to write legibly, or with a hand at least suitable to a clerk” (Maertz, 2004, p. 450). This adequacy of Fred was checked by Mr. Garth, and he was disappointed to see that Fred was “as gentlemanly as that of any viscount or bishop of the day” (Maertz, 2004, p. 450), in other words, a scrawl. This did not make any sense to Garth because his view of handwriting was that it should be interpreted easily. Neither illegible nor aesthetically pleasing writing were of crucial value for working class people like Mr. Garth. For him and by implication for Eliot, education must not lose its connection to practical usefulness.

As for the education of females, it was because of exactly the same principle, that is, the access that education would bring to social opportunity, that the Vincys sent their daughter, Rosamond, to Mrs. Lemon’s school. The education for females was nothing

more than learning the skills that could make them perfect women for their suitors and husbands-to-be (*MM*, 1994, p. 94). Eliot has depicted these skills in Rosamond as being active in sketching, practicing music, reading books, and knowing poetry by heart (*MM*, 1994, p.167). Moreover, in the case of Rosamond, it could be declared that she had a perfect talent to deploy these skills to impress the men around including Lydgate, Ladislaw, and Ned, and she was quite successful in doing that.

One more issue to be discussed regarding education is the importance that Eliot has given to the way her characters used language in their speech. Eliot showed how Rosamond looks down on her mother's use of slang in her conversations, and how Casaubon is affected by Dorothea's speech during their first meeting at the Brookes. To show lack of education, Eliot also used grammatically wrong sentences and misspelled words when the low class people like the workers and cottagers were talking. She went so far as to consult the dialect expert W. Skeat in order to ensure that she represented Derbyshire dialect accurately (Levine, 2001, p.207).

Mrs. Garth representing the educated woman of the time as a teacher attempts to teach her children to speak and write the language correctly and strongly wishes to send them to good schools to guarantee their future. She emphasizes the fact that using good grammar and accent are educational virtues. When teaching her children, she warns them about the importance of grammar, to speak and write correctly, which can be a differentiating factor between the uneducated people and the educated ones (*MM*, 1994, p.834). In this way she carries the torch of education to teach her own children as well as the other children, both to help her family financially and to increase the number of educated children in the town. This idea of Mrs. Garth shows Eliot's concern and position regarding education.

George Eliot uses her own life as a background for Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*. Eliot was lucky enough to be born in a family for whom this clichéd system of education seemed to be of no importance. Although the Evans family preferred their daughter to continue her religious training, they also provided her with the opportunity to continue her conventional education as well as learning English, French, arithmetic, drawing, music, and playing the piano (Laski, 1987, p. 15). Therefore, she sets up Dorothea's character while keeping in mind her own experiences in the past.

Dorothea has a good educational background with the talent to draw well. She also has strong religious beliefs that deeply disturb her in her later life. This is the same experience that George Eliot lived through in her personal life. For a long period of

time George Eliot was under the influence of Mrs. Maria Lewis, the governess of the Mrs. Wallington's Boarding School, who had imposed her deep evangelical beliefs on Eliot. Finding those beliefs too superficial, little by little and by the entrance of the Brays to her life, she changed her ideas about Christianity, and this brought a very large dispute among the family members, especially she experienced a harsh confrontation from her father's side (Laski, 1987, pp. 14-16).

In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea, who is under very strong influence of Christianity, shows the same reaction to her sister when it comes to the matter of sharing the jewelry belonging to their mother. According to Dorothea's religious beliefs, which are influenced by pietism, no unmarried woman can wear ornaments or dress like a married woman (*MM*, 1994, pp.11-12). George Eliot criticizes Christianity and the role of belief in Dorothea, who tries to justify her actions according to the religious role that the society has imposed on her, hence many of her reactions are artificial. Eliot shows the worldly desires of Dorothea that overshadow her holy beliefs when she picks up one of the best pieces of the jewelry, the emerald with diamonds. Moving back and forth and fighting with her beliefs that are against using ornaments, she shows an immediate reaction after she chooses the jewelry and then she tries to hide this deep desire by identifying those ornaments as the gems "used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of St John" (*MM*, 1994, p. 13). She is neither ready to ignore the beautiful jewelry nor can she keep herself away from her internal and human desires. This dilemma of Dorothea is one of the dilemmas that Eliot experienced in her own life, and led her to reject the narrow dogmatism of her teenage years. Later Eliot tried to hide from her father that she did not want to continue her weekly church visits though, just to satisfy her father's desire, she accompanied him to the church until he died (Laski, 1987, pp. 24-36).

The role of Eliot's family and their openness to educating their daughter can be seen when they let Mary Ann learn the English language with a high-class accent that was an indicator of social class that a person belonged to. During her education, George Eliot "lost her original speech pattern, and acquired a lasting habit of speaking in perfectly made sentences, and developed the beautiful deep voice" (Laski, 1987, p. 16). This was a skill that Eliot used when writing her works of fiction quite clearly and coherently. Besides the education that she received from several boarding schools that she attended, she continued reading freely. She even became a tutor for a while to teach the children of rich families. Her father, being proud of his daughter's eagerness

to develop herself, arranged for her to take lessons in different languages of the time such as Italian and German (Laski, 1987, pp. 24-26).

This was the time George Eliot became acquainted with the German language by which she later earned her living through translating several works of famous philosophers of the age. Her success in translating those works that belonged to radical Young Hegelians, was because she was passing through a stage in her life through which she started to change the strict evangelical beliefs imposed on her (Laski, 1987, p 26). The new ideas about Christianity that were mentioned in the books of Strauss (*Life of Jesus*) and Feuerbach (*The Essence of Christianity*) seemed to her like the heaven she was looking for. They were a brief expression of what she had believed in for long, but could not confess even to herself. Eliot was a reformist, who was open to all new ideas and she strongly took a stand against conventional rules and imposed beliefs of the time.

The dominance of the German language in all aspects of literary skills and philosophy in the Regency period is one of the facts that should be discussed. The social reform and modern philosophy in Europe grew up in the 18th century, after the struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie started. That is to say, with the rise of capitalism and the changes in social class differences in the society, the need for criticism started and that directed the way to philosophy and the matters of equal rights.

What made German philosophy one of the most valuable movements of the time was the developments it went through in the Enlightenment period. Since during this period France and Britain were highly involved in the matters of social discrimination, political revolution, and the struggles for Industrial Revolution, Germany, taking those experiences into account, tried to touch all different aspects of improvement in philosophy, science, art, and literature (Ashton, 1992, p.337).

This movement started with “Classical German Philosophy,” with philosophers such as Kant, Schiller, and Hegel. Hegelian ideology was in favor of “German Idealism,” and continued with the radical Young Hegelians, who were the students of Hegel that changed their view and began to work in their philosophy on the refutation of Hegelian ideology on the issue of Christianity. Among these Young Hegelians were David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach whose books were translated into English by George Eliot.

Eliot's interest in the German language and German philosophy is rooted in 1840 when she started to learn the language. During her adulthood, George Eliot was versed mostly in German literature and ideology. "Her knowledge of [German] literature included both past and contemporary authors- Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Wieland, Novalis Lessing, August Wilhelm, and Fredrick Schelegel, Jean Paul Richter, Fichte, Schelling, Herder, and Hegel" (Guth, 2003, p. 23). The influence of German philosophers on Eliot increased after her rejection of Evangelical Christianity. Then she undertook translating the controversial works of Strauss, Feuerbach, and Spinoza.

Eliot described the contributions that Germany has made to the improvement of Britain as follows: "If anyone in the present day can be called cultivated who dispenses with knowledge of German, it is because the two other greatest literatures of the world are now impregnated with the results of German labor and German genius" (qtd. in Ashton, 1992, p. 337). This influence of Germany did not disappear in her other works since after the translations, she gave place to German in her articles in *Westminster Review*, in her essays, and in her reviews many times. Her trips to Germany and her long stays in that country are also the indicator to show Eliot's interest in the German language and Germany.

Schiller, the most influential German writer in Eliot's life time, who was widely read in Britain, continued his effect on her ideas for many years, and she referred to him in many parts of her works. In many letters that she wrote to Sara Hennel or Cara Bray, and in her diaries she described Schiller as a multidimensional person, who had skills in poetry, play writing, philosophy, history, art, and music (Guth, 2003, pp. 25-28). In many works of Eliot, Schiller's influence can be seen; she also referred to his concepts in her fiction. One of the references to Schiller in *Middlemarch* is the artist, Naumann. He is one of Ladislaw's friends who portrays Dorothea's picture in Rome (*MM*, 1994, pp. 216-217). His interest in portraits and his desire to picture Dorothea is Eliot's reference to Schiller. This idea of using Naumann in *Middlemarch* might be a reason to show how Eliot was inspired by the portraits and busts of Schiller during her visits to Germany. In short, Schiller was the most impressive German figure in Eliot's literary works until she started to help Lewes on *The Life of Goethe*.

In the 1800s, nearly all leading philosophers and academicians were German or had travelled to Germany to be in direct contact with the well-known philosophers or academies of Germany. In *Middlemarch*, one can easily see the two sides of the coin in the reactions of Casaubon, who seemed to be a devotee of mythology and academia,

and who was one of the followers of the methodology for ancient Greek studies for whom not creating but gathering information was of great value. He strictly refuses to learn German, too, because he sees no value in the German language. On the other hand, Will Ladislaw, who is a modern thinker in favor of modern and radical philosophers such as Feuerbach and Strauss for whom German and Germany were the center of development and the source of innovative products, represents the other side of the coin.

George Eliot tried to demonstrate that how people as narrow-minded as Casaubon were praised by society as precious writers and academic figures of the time. Eliot's intellectual quality and her wide experience of cultural and scientific developments made her able to depict intellectual aspirations and defeats of her characters thoroughly. Not only *Middlemarch* but also her other scholarly works in journals and correspondences are evidence to show how she was aware of what she was writing. While reading *Middlemarch*, it can be "recognized that the cultivation of the mind- in more general terms 'education'- is at heart a matter of basics" (Shelston, 1993, p. 21). For Eliot, the important issue in all matters was to be updated and progressive. It is the same regarding the German language, which scholars needed to know, in order to follow the academic knowledge of the day.

Eliot's irony in this respect is seen when Ladislaw and Dorothea discuss the importance of the work Casaubon has long been working on, namely *Key to All Mythologies*. After meeting Dorothea and Casaubon in Rome during their honeymoon, Ladislaw finds an occasion to talk to Dorothea about the value that German scholars have added to art and all modern skills and academia. Here Ladislaw blames Casaubon for being out of date and he states that like all other English scholarship, all the work and efforts of Casaubon should be thrown away since they are nothing more than re-exploring the things that have already been found (*MM*, 1994, p. 208). He confirms his words by saying "the Germans have taken the lead in historical inquiries, and they laugh at results which are got by groping about in the woods with a pocket-compass while they have made good roads" (*MM*, 1994, p. 208). This is exactly what Eliot criticized about English scholars of her time. She went further in her criticism by saying such so called academicians even avoid reading "Latin treatise written by Germans" (*MM*, 1994, p. 208). In this way, she asserts the fact that the work that Casaubon spends many years of his life on while avoiding using the latest research in German is a work that will have no result.

Ladislaw's criticism of Casaubon takes place when he tries to convince Dorothea to see how useless her husband's efforts can be while researching mythologies, approaches to which have changed over the centuries, like developments in the sciences. He explains to Dorothea that "the subject Mr. Casaubon has chosen is as changing as chemistry: new discoveries are constantly making new points of view" (*MM*, 1994, pp. 221-222). He thinks that there is "no use... to be crawling a little way after men of the last century-men like Bryant- and correcting their mistakes" (*MM*, 1994, p. 222). This is why Eliot insisted on the idea that German scholars are so up to date and far-sighted that they should be followed by their British counterparts in many issues.

In one of the essays that George Eliot wrote on Germans entitled "A Word for the Germans" she criticized British scholars for their lack of understanding of German thinkers and writers. She stated, the British scholars argue that the works of Kant are "cloudy" and difficult to understand because of the terminology he uses. They also reject any idea that is generated by Germans just by saying that "they are German" (Ashton, 1992, p. 334). Eliot refuted all these counter arguments very strongly. She said that "it is one of the interesting weaknesses common to us men to suppose that clearness ends where our own vision fails" (Ashton, 1992, p. 334) by which she means since British scholars lack the ability to see far into those views of Germans, they blame their works for being unclear. She also asserted that:

The human race has not been educated on a plan of uniformity, and it is precisely that partition of mankind into races and nations, resulting in various national points of view or varieties of national genius, which has been the means of enriching and rendering more and more complete man's knowledge of the inner and outer world. (Ashton, 1992, pp. 334-335)

She tried hard to prove that variety brings various notions and views that may result in improvement. Just by discriminating against a race or nation, you would never develop yourself. You can only create a biased work in which objectivity and perspective would have no place.

Eliot defined the German mind as a mind that possesses two opposite tendencies: "largeness of theoretic conception, and thoroughness in the investigation of facts" (qtd. in Ashton, 1992, p. 335). This lies at the root of German realism in thinking and performing. That is to say, Eliot's admiration for German scholars was because she was sure that if a work is written by a German scholar, it traced back to wherever it was generated from in detail, and to reach this rational doctrine all historical, natural

and scientific researches and/or experiments have been thoroughly conducted by those scholars (Ashton, 1993, pp. 335-336).

Casaubon's rejecting German is an indicator to reveal how Eliot looked at the German scholars of the time. She precisely believed that the logical way to achieve progress in many areas is to follow and focus on the works and research of the progressive scholars of that era. By claiming this, she did not mean that a country and its scholars are better than the other one, yet she asserted that refusing to support and apply the ideas of the progressive country would be beneficial neither personally, nor for the benefit of the society. In this way your efforts would be out of date and no one would rely on them.

Eliot with her own talent and eagerness in learning, her family's support in her education, and her luck in being friend with the intellectuals of her time became one of the most known and successful writers and thinkers of the 19th century. That was why she had a strong desire to help the other people to be educated in order to improve themselves as well as their society. In this regard she believed that women as well as men should have the equal chance of education. Having suffered from the womanly education that was provided to women of that period, she showed a strong effort to depict in her works that the educated women like Dorothea can be as successful as men if they are given the opportunity in society.

She strongly asserted that by following the works of the prominent people of the time, a society can have a progress. As a result of this belief, she focused on the importance of German language and philosophers since Germany was the base for intellectuals during that period. Eliot, was aware of the fact that in order to reach the ideal and to improve the current condition of society, one should have the necessary information and background about the innovations and the improvements around; therefore, she put her ideas in her work to make all people conceive how it becomes possible to analyze and make use of the works of German intellectuals to improve the conditions in Britain.

CHAPTER V

MEDICAL REFORM

Medical reform was one of the most controversial issues in the Regency Period. The medical reform started at the same time with the other reforms, such as the reforms in cottage conditions, education, and politics. In fact, by the passage of the Reform Act in 1832, many reforms had started to take place. In the case of changes in public health, it should be said that, during that period there were many unknown and epidemic diseases that caused many people to die. One of the most notorious one of these diseases was cholera that was spreading in Europe and Britain (Furst, 1998, p.110).

George Eliot's concern about this issue, the problems regarding the medical profession, and the controversies related to the medical reform created the basis for Eliot to write about this matter in *Middlemarch*. Prior to writing the novel, she gathered information in this field that was published in *Quarry*, her notes, before the publication of *Middlemarch* (Furst, 2000, p. 107).

The limited number of professional and up-to-date medical men and medicine on the one hand, and the resistance of the illiterate public, together with old-fashioned professionals on the other, resulted in an opposition to medical improvement and the practice of new methods and medicines in *Middlemarch* (MM, 1994, p. 439). The reaction of the public against medical reforms was not much different from their reaction against reforms in the political and social areas. Illiteracy and lack of vision meant the public could be manipulated easily. They were open to believe in the myths that were circulating around. For them nothing new was practiced since on the one hand they believed strictly in destiny, in other words, they were skeptical about the possibility of improvement, and on the other hand the practitioners who had their practices during that period were respected very highly, so no new practitioners and no

new methods could convince them to change the age old methods and people in the health sector.

Eliot's criticism on the old-method treatments and keeping them as a secret among the people of Middlemarch is one of the interesting issues. In one case in *Middlemarch* she explained that there were medicines called "Widgeon's Purifying Pills, an esteemed Middlemarch medicine, which arrested every disease at the fountain by setting to work at once upon the blood" (*MM*, 1994, p. 449). This matter does not only demonstrate the ignorance of the people but also the medical men's approach to medicine and their resistance against innovations. What Eliot criticized was how there could exist a medicine that could cure all illnesses, and how could one believe in the idea that even though the symptoms did not disappear after using this medicine, it could have a curing effect on the illness. The more tragic issue about these purifying drugs "which kept you alive, if they did not move the yellowness, "was the confidentiality and protection of it from Lydgate. Although the people in Middlemarch did not rely on this drug, they tried to keep it secret from Lydgate, a reformist surgeon because he could ban the distribution of this co-operative measure. It can be considered as a common secret between the people in Middlemarch that the outsiders should not know anything about. Of course, these two tragicomic problems resulting from the entrenched position of medical men could not be ignored by a reformist like Eliot.

One of the most important medical developments that is explained in *Middlemarch* is the change in diagnostic practice. Before the 19th century, the diagnosis of patients was done only via the reports the patients used to provide to the doctors, so sometimes the doctors could treat their patients through correspondence (Caldwell, 2004, p. 143). It was how Fred Vincy was unsuccessfully treated by Dr. Wrench. The general practitioner Dr. Wrench stopped visiting Fred because he found out through the reports that Fred and her mother provided to him that the problem with Fred is just a simple fever and he prescribes a few medicines to heal him. However, at the beginning of the 19th century, with the start of the clinical era, this diagnosis system was changed. Little by little the doctors started to examine their patients by "measuring palpitation, auscultation (listening to body sounds), and measuring various bodily signs... [and] with the rise of clinical medicine, ... doctors began to try to elicit evidence of localized disease in the living patients" (Caldwell, 2004, p. 143). It means that not only what the patients used to tell the doctors but the medical examination and physical diagnosis became the determining factors for evaluating the nature of the

diseases. Therefore, through the evidence and medical data the practitioners had to use their interpretation in diagnosing the diseases correctly. This was the method that Lydgate uses to diagnose Fred's fever. In contrast to Mr. Wrench's diagnosis, Lydgate interprets Fred's fever as Typhoid fever which had nearly the same symptoms with the simple fever. He also succeeds in diagnosing Casaubon's degenerative heart disease (Furst, 1998, p. 110).

The most interesting achievement of Lydgate in medical diagnosis is the case with Nancy Nash. She is diagnosed by Dr. Minchin, one of the most experienced physicians in Middlemarch, as suffering from a tumor that has to be taken out by a surgical operation. However, Lydgate contradicts Dr. Minchin's idea by diagnosing Nancy's problem as an ordinary abdominal cramp, not a tumor. This is seen as an open insult to a physician's diagnosis by a surgeon, who was in a lower rank according to medical hierarchy (*MM*, 1994, p. 450). Although true, this intervention could not be accepted by the medical men. Therefore, the opposition toward innovation, which meant Lydgate and his treatment methods, became much severer than before.

A surgeon is now considered as a medical man who is higher in rank than general practitioners. However, medical rank in Pre-Victorian period was totally different. In *Middlemarch*, Lydgate's being called a surgeon should be taken as a sign of denigration. This is because the medical hierarchy in the 19th century had a different ranking system. Lillian R. Furst defines the structure of this ranking as follows:

The medical profession in Britain in the early nineteenth century was structured according to a definite hierarchy. Physicians, called 'Dr.' educated at Oxford or Cambridge, and considered 'gentlemen,' formed the top category; with their relatively high fees (and frequently pretensions) they were mostly patronized by the upper classes. While they received a fine education in the classics so that they could be polished conversationalists, they were given fairly scant training in medicine. At the other end of spectrum were apothecaries, who were regarded as mere tradesmen because their main function was to sell medication although they also gave advice, primarily to the lower classes. 'Surgeons' were rather precariously situated above apothecaries and below physicians; traditionally trained by apprenticeship they were supposed to treat only 'outward,' not internal diseases which were the physicians' prerogative and they also dispensed medications. Their more modest fees made them congenial to the emergent middle class. (2000, p.109)

Keeping this structure in mind, it is not difficult to guess why the practitioners, who were higher in rank, opposed work under a surgeon who was lower in rank to them. Although Lydgate is quite far above the other surgeons in town in terms of diagnosis

and treatment methods, and he has an extensive training in Paris and in London due to his aristocratic family, it is still not at all easy for the other practitioners to accept him as the leader in the new fever hospital. It was not only because of the difference in hierarchy but because of his being an outsider with innovations and new techniques that were now welcomed by the conservative practitioners in Middlemarch.

The establishment and management of the new hospital in the town was another controversial issue in *Middlemarch*. This new fever hospital in Middlemarch is founded by the banker, Mr. Bulstrode, who is himself an outsider in the town. He thinks that the money you spend for setting up such a hospital for the welfare of the community makes you become the ruler of that place as well. It is his management style that is mostly criticized by people. After establishing the new fever hospital, he assigns Lydgate, the young new doctor in Middlemarch, as the chief medical superintendent who will be responsible for ultimate decision making of the hospital and who will have the authority to “pursue all comparative investigations which his studies... in Paris had shown him the importance of” (*MM*, 1994, p. 453). George Eliot focused on the idea that Lydgate has performed his research in Paris since “Paris was then the site of the most advanced medical research, notably in pathological anatomy, which laid the foundations for the shift from the ancient humoral system to an understanding of disease specificity, ie. That afflictions can be localized through identifications [of] lesions in one or the other organ” (Furst, 2000, p. 109).

Lydgate is supposed to be one of the students who continued his studies on normal and pathological anatomy. He is “fascinated by the discoveries of anatomist Bichat” (Furst, 2000, p. 109). Lydgate’s aim is to continue these practices in the area of primary webs or tissues in Middlemarch. All these qualities make him the ideal person for the management of the hospital in the eyes of Bulstrode. However, this assignment is not acceptable to the public and the medical men in town since there are older people who seem to be more suitable for such a position according to public opinion (*MM*, 1994, pp. 681-685). Not only Bulstrode but also Lydgate is criticized harshly in this regard.

In spite of all these oppositions, by allocating this hard duty to Lydgate, Bulstrode shows his objectivity and trust toward employing a newcomer since he is an outsider himself, and he also demonstrates how open he is to innovations in the medical field, and how he trusts the new methods that Lydgate wishes to apply in Middlemarch to cure the patients. It was often people like Bulstrode, ‘free church’ men, who opened

the doors to social change since they believed in the power of reform and the fact that reforms can be done out of the power of the states. They were more willing to question authority and remove privilege. Eliot in this way emphasized the fact that outsiders were not welcomed by the public. In the case of Lydgate, it is not much different because in his occupation he can provoke the jealousy of his counterparts easily. Eliot was herself an outsider in the literary arena because of her gender. She asserted that if you are an outsider, and even if you are eager to do beneficial things for the society, you will hardly be accepted or welcomed by the public and your counterparts. However, in the case of Lydgate, his stubbornness and strong desire to contribute to public health makes him go on and continue practicing his profession despite his provoking counterparts or the people who are afraid of change in society. As the second stage in Bulstrode's management system, other medical visitors, that is, the other medical men in the town, could have "a consultative influence [in the decision making process of the hospital], but no power to contravene Lydgate's ultimate decisions" (*MM*, 1994, p. 453). This idea is refused by all medical men in Middlemarch since they do not want to accept just having a walk-on part in this new hospital. Additionally, they have practiced medicine for years, and they have lived in Middlemarch for a longer time, so if somebody has to take the management of the hospital, it has to be those so called experienced practitioners. This was the beginning of occupational jealousy of Lydgate for which Lydgate was not directly responsible.

Other cases that created clashes between Lydgate and other practitioners in Middlemarch were the methods of medical treatment. Lydgate is accused by the other medical men for having a good fortune in his innovative practices. They believe that all the doctors who have come to a new place somehow manage to cure the patients by chance, and this is the same case with Lydgate (*MM*, 1994, p. 453). They do not believe in his talent, and they do not even presume that the methods of diagnosing illnesses and applying true medication can be the reasons to bring him success.

The last management phase in the fever hospital was about the general management duties. According to Mr. Bulstrode's management plan, the general management of the hospital "was to be lodged exclusively in the hands of five directors associated with Mr. Bulstrode, who were to have votes in the ratio of their contributions, the Board itself filling up any vacancy in its numbers, and no mob of small contributors being admitted to a share of government" (*MM*, 1994, p. 453). Besides, he planned to ask other medical visitors to have a consultative role. Mr. Bulstrode tries to fix the position of Lydgate in the hospital to be the highest decision making authority. He

believes that the society needs Lydgate's innovative treatment methods, so he does whatever he can to support Lydgate in performing his duty. It may be thought that Mr. Bulstrode is a reformist, who is looking for progressive ways to better the conditions of society; however, there is a secondary aim in Mr. Bulstrode's desire to support Lydgate. Since he is the banker in *Middlemarch*, he has a say in all aspects of financial issues in town, yet he also wants to impose his religious beliefs on the management of the new hospital using Lydgate's vote by assigning him as the sole decision maker in the hospital.

Lydgate is the new surgeon in the town who has gone against his aristocratic family's wishes to stand on his own two feet and become a reputable man in the medical arena. He has worked hard to do research and find new treatments for the epidemic diseases of the time. He is an open-minded person for whom the progress in medicine is of great importance. He is ready to try all alternative ways in order to find a solution for the diseased people in town. To achieve this, he is ready even to underestimate the ethics in the medical area as well.

He comes to Middlemarch without any high expectation, and he finds himself in the flow of events that he has not planned. In a way these events lead him into positive issues to develop himself in line with his ambitions in his occupation, while on the other hand he becomes trapped in a wrong marriage and an accusation because of helping Mr. Bulstrode in an unwanted action that brings negative consequences to his life. As a result, Lydgate's potential contributions to mankind are impeded by unexpected circumstances.

Lydgate was a plain man who had no tendency toward extreme opinions. "He was not radical in relation to anything but medical reform and the prosecution of discovery" (*MM*, 1994, p. 348). Middlemarch is an extremely conventional town. "It had ordinary morality and a lively awareness of the religious tradition. Middlemarch provided surmountable and virtually insurmountable difficulties to him in his practice of medicine; it also provided support and training for him in his practice of the virtues" (Shaffer, 1987, p. 115). Lydgate's notion in his profession is that any better method of treatment, and any observation that may seem to have a lasting benefit to medical practice should be pursued without taking into consideration the other minor issues such as the salary to be received or other personal worries.

Lydgate believes that the new hospital should be allocated in isolation for the patients who suffer from fever, a reference to the cholera epidemic in Europe. This concern is not found realistic and of importance for many people in Middlemarch. The public believe that “diseases such as cholera are caused by ‘miasma,’ foul air rising from swamps and marshes, not spread by contagion” (Furst, 2000, p. 108). This notion of the public is also supported by the practitioners in Middlemarch, too. They find Lydgate a person with high ideals out of the norm and risky for the society’s well-being.

The medical treatment that Lydgate thinks is the most appropriate one, is the way through which the doctors diagnose the illness and use different methods in order to cure the patients. He refutes the idea of Mr. Mawmsey, an important grocer in Middlemarch, who claims that the doctors deserve to be paid if and only if they give drugs to their patients. Lydgate tries to convince him by saying “it must lower the character of practitioners, and be a constant injury to the public, if their only mode of getting paid for their work was by their making out long bills for draughts, boluses, and mixtures” (*MM*, 1994, p. 444). And, he claimed that “it is in that way that hard-working medical men may come to be almost as mischievous as quacks” (*MM*, 1994, p. 444).

Unfortunately, these explanations of Lydgate start a rumor in town that Lydgate does not dispense drugs. Mr. Mawmsey, a man who is proud of paying for drugs for himself and his family, and who thinks the more drugs the better the result; he does not have the capacity to understand what Lydgate means. Therefore, Mr. Mawmsey’s wrong reflections become a matter that is “offensive both to the physicians, whose exclusive distinction seemed infringed on, and to the surgeon-apothecaries with whom he ranged himself” (*MM*, 1994, p. 444). Eliot’s idea on the people like Mr. Mawmsey, who even do not have the least knowledge about drugs and the effectiveness of using them, was shown when Mrs. Mawmsey and her friends judge the medications that is prescribed to them by Dr. Minchin or Gambit with their colors as “what keeps me up is the pink mixture, not the brown” (*MM*, 1994, p. 446), and this conversation takes place around a large table on which there is “a large veal pie, a stuffed fillet, a round of beef, ham, tongue, et cetera et cetera” (*MM*, 1994, p. 446). Eliot’s aim was to stress the fact that although these women did not need these mixtures for strengthening themselves physically, they used them just because the doctors prescribed them, and they found no reason to object to the doctors’ advice even when the drugs were not effective.

Ahead of his time, Lydgate is aware of the fact that overmedication may be more harmful than being beneficial to the patients, and he desperately tries to convince the people that the overdose use of medication known as ‘purifying drugs’ can poison the patients. He also argues the fact that since the surgeons like him cannot treat the internal diseases, so they prescribe different mixtures effective or not to get paid for their service. It was what that was criticized by Eliot. The deficiencies and pitfalls in the system were exploited by the medical men of the time without taking into account the deadly results they could generate. What Lydgate offers is a realistic medication that is for the good of both the medical men and their patients. He brings up the matter of a counseling service as well as non-medicated treatments that on the one hand help the practitioners to provide service to their patients, and on the other hand ease the procedures to get paid for that treatment. However, since it is a radical change and reform in the long-lasting medical system, it is neither comprehended nor welcomed by the residents of Middlemarch.

Lydgate criticizes the medical men by saying “in this stupid world most people never consider that a thing is good to be done unless it is done by their own set” (*MM*, 1994, p. 439). Eliot also emphasized the shallow notions of the medical men through Lydgate by saying “If a fair number of the better educated men went to work with the belief that their observations might contribute to the reform of medical doctrine and practice, we should soon see a change for the better” (*MM*, 1994, p. 439). Eliot harshly criticized the medical people for being indifferent toward a beneficial work for the poor just because it is going to be financed by Bulstrode, who is a hated man in that society. She cannot accept the idea that such a great work can be ignored by the medical men in town since Mr. Bulstrode is in favor of a different religious tone, is involved in trade, and has a masterful approach toward others (*MM*, 1994, p. 439). Eliot depicted the tragedy by saying “the whole profession in Middlemarch have set themselves tooth and nail against the Hospital, and not only refuse to co-operate themselves, but try to blacken the whole affair and hinder subscription” (*MM*, 1994, p. 439).

To focus on the reason why medical men were against the hospital and health reform, the background of the matter should be analyzed. For one thing religion had a strong influence on the way medical reform had to take place. Mr. Bulstrode, the man who established the hospital, is a great reformer in health reform issues; however, the same farsightedness cannot be seen in his attitude while deciding on the management board of the hospital. There is a need for a chaplain in the hospital, and Mr. Bulstrode thinks

that since he has established the hospital, the chaplain should be the one whom he would prefer. That is to say, he wants to assign Mr. Tyke as the vicar of the hospital because he belongs to the same religious group as Mr. Bulstrode, and Mr. Bulstrode can be influential in his decision making in this way. On the other hand was Mr. Farebrother who has a kind of softer beliefs and religious practices than Mr. Tyke. George Eliot, in fact, was in favor of Mr. Farebrother because she believed that religion should not be an obstacle in front of progress and change. She was an unbeliever in religious doctrine, and Mr. Farebrother with his gambling habits, his hobby of making collections, the role of the mediator that he plays in the society, and the fact that he puts the welfare of the others over his own desires makes him the preferred type of religious man in the eyes of Eliot. That is why in *Middlemarch* Dorothea views Mr. Farebrother and his religious views sympathetically. Even after the shock of her disappointing marriage, Dorothea is interested in religion, not only in itself, but because of its rituals and the way religion keeps people together without imposing strict and harsh rules/beliefs on them. She does take a severe view of Mr. Farebrother's gambling. She is sure that Mr. Farebrother is someone who will always be at the service of the people. He never puts forward his personal problems or desires when there is an issue affecting others. He is so helpful that even though he is fond of Mary Garth and wishes to marry her, he accepts Fred's request to convince Mary to wait for him (*MM*, 1994, pp.514-515).

The other reason for this resistance was Lydgate's practical criticism, for example, as in refusing to dispense drugs. This attitude disturbs the medical men in Middlemarch and they accuse him of inattention to medical etiquette and breaching medical propriety. These practitioners in town do not see it feasible to change their long-lasting treatments because of this young fellow's youthful opinions. They have for long prescribed the same drugs to the illnesses that had similar symptoms, so it would be nonsense to try something new or even bother themselves to think about new medications or treatments. The easiest way to overcome Lydgate and his innovations is to complain about Lydgate bringing no real amelioration but just being in favor of ostentation in medical reform (*MM*, 1994, p. 444). Also, they try to convince the people of Middlemarch that Lydgate is no more than a charlatan engaged in "reckless innovation for the sake of noise" (*MM*, 1994, p. 444). One of the sharpest claims against Lydgate comes from Mr. Wrench as:

What I contend against is the way medical men are fouling their own nest, and setting up a cry about the country as if a general practitioner who dispenses drugs couldn't be a gentleman. I throw back the imputation with scorn. I say,

the most ungentlemanly trick a man can be guilty of is to come among the members of his profession with innovations which are a libel on their time-honored procedure. (*MM*, 1994, p. 448)

However, Dorothea is on the side of reform. She is very interested in the condition of poor people and their health problems. She believes that in the poor physical condition of the cottages that they live their health is very much affected negatively. She is zealous to help them to overcome the health problems they might face, when she talks to Lydgate on this issue. She emphasizes the fact that there is a great deal to be done in Middlemarch, and she asks Lydgate to guide her on how she can improve the miserable condition of the cottagers. After sharing her opinion about the new hospital with Lydgate, Dorothea decides to subscribe an amount of two-hundred a year to the hospital (*MM*, 1994, p. 440).

One of the reasons why Dorothea supports Lydgate and his ideas is his “ability to impart bad news with tact” (Furst, 1998, p. 111). Dorothea is wondering about Casaubon’s health problems, so she thinks that the best way to find out the reality is to consult with Lydgate. “He decides on his own volition and contrary to the then customary norms that Dorothea should be told of her husband’s very precarious state of health including the possibility of sudden death” (Furst, 1998, p. 111). Therefore, he answers all Dorothea’s questions in a gentle and emphatic manner without hesitation. This open attitude of Lydgate increases the trust of Dorothea in him. Also, in a society in which all medical men were in favor of hiding the realities from the patients and their kin, this behavior of Lydgate seems very radical and innovative to Dorothea, so she appreciates Lydgate for his openness.

Dorothea’s investments are in people. She trusts Lydgate since he is a man for whom the future and welfare of the country is important. Dorothea finds common motives in her and Lydgate’s ideas. Although the ideals of Dorothea seem to be more thorough than the ones belonging to Lydgate, she respects Lydgate because of his reformist stand. Lydgate tries to withstand all the prejudices, criticism, and negative consequences that his ideas may give rise in Middlemarch. Dorothea, knowing how closed the people of the town are toward the innovations, empathizes with Lydgate, and attempts to help him in his scientific research and diagnostic treatments. In this way Dorothea can move one step forward to achieve her own ideals as well.

Eliot’s vision of society is an organic society which means an organism that “has a complex relationship to the health and growth of the individual organisms who form part of its totality” (Gilbert, 2009, p. 147). Therefore, the individual lives in Eliot’s

fiction should not be read separately but in a larger social body. This social body is a part of social organism that she has always planned in her novels.

Eliot subscribes to the philosopher Herbert Spencer's notion that the development of society happens very slowly by means of evolution. It is nothing that can be brought about in a fortnight (Gilbert, 2009, p. 147). What Eliot emphasizes is the fact that not the legal reforms that are applied by the governments but the process of social, political, educational, and scientific advances are the factors that change the society, slowly yet completely. In *Middlemarch*, by connecting Dorothea to cottage reform, Lydgate to medical reform, and Ladislav to political reform, Eliot tries to show the flow of change in all aspects of social life. "By constraining them all to accept incremental rather than sweeping change; however, she insists on the primacy of slow, evolutionary melioration over revolution, scientific or otherwise" (Gilbert, 2009, p. 149).

Eliot uses Lydgate as the symbol of medical reform in society since he is young and ambitious in his career. Also, he is well-educated and strongly progressive in the field of medical changes during the Regency period. However, Lydgate fails because the society and science do not follow the same path as Lydgate does in its evolution and change.

There are different views on the issue why Lydgate could not become a hero. "Critics divide responsibility between Lydgate himself and the town of Middlemarch, the town regarded as culpable for its resistance to change, the man for his egotism as well as for his failure to apply his considerable analytic power to his own situation" (Deresiewicz, 1998, p. 724). Doubtless there must be several unknown layers beneath his egotism and his failure to think rationally in his personal life. However, for Lydgate heroism does not simply mean "the doing of great deeds, but as the shaping of historical change in the direction of enlightenment. His conception thus echoes those of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, two of the thinkers George Eliot most venerated" (Deresiewicz, 1998, p. 725). Eliot tries to put Lydgate among the great men, whom Carlyle and Emerson defined as the heroes of science, who would "fight for social advance by enunciating universal principles of nature" (Deresiewicz, 1998, p. 725). Therefore, it would not be far from the reality to define Lydgate as Eliot's idealized reformist intellectual in the scientific arena.

CONCLUSION

In *Middlemarch*, the efforts of Dorothea to rescue the poor cottagers from the wretched conditions in which they lived are exactly in line with the positive and self-sacrificing meliorist beliefs of George Eliot. Dorothea too is concerned to spread a social message, and wants to push her uncle to change and improve the physical conditions of the cottagers. Mintz describes Eliot's efforts to achieve a communal society in which all individuals desire to sacrifice their private needs for the welfare of the society as the fantasies that she tries to realize in Dorothea's life (109).

Dorothea continues her self-sacrificing actions in her marriage as well. In her marriage with Casaubon, Eliot portrayed her as a wife who has a deep desire to dedicate her life to helping her husband whom she thinks is one of the most successful and gifted academics of the time. She voluntarily accepts the role of a subjugated wife for whom nothing would compare to the guidance of an enlightened and intellectual husband. Her marriage with Ladislaw is also the result of her good will, and she seeks for a marriage through which she could continue her Positivist views. In this way she recognizes the difference between sacrifice with romantic purposes and "the actual experience of being sacrificed" (Mintz, 1978, p. 111).

Mrs. Bulstrode is one of the other women characters who shows a self-sacrifice in her marriage. When she notices her husband's dark background and his hidden aim of getting rid of Raffles, who threatens to reveal his wrong past actions, she forgives and supports Mr. Bulstrode instead of leaving him all alone although the people of the town would force her not to continue living with him. This is the melioristic idea of George Eliot in which she stresses the fact that helping a man who is in desperate need is the hardest way, but all people are in need of support, so putting aside individualistic and selfish motives can be useful for the improvement of the individuals as well as society.

Eliot portrays society as a group of organs that are internally and externally dependant on each other and share a common life. She defines this relation between the individuals or organisms as a delicate relation which should be treated with extreme

care (Mueller, 2005, p. 93). It can be concluded that for her the structure of society is so fragile that if the individuals do not support each other and are not firmly bound to each other, any external power can break them into pieces. The best way to survive is getting rid of individualistic egoism and coming together to support each other in a way in which every single organism can be happy.

What Eliot tries to demonstrate in her fiction is that the society should be considered to be a web or network. All the bodies are connected to each other for creating better conditions to live in. She agrees with what Comte suggests as the 'organicist' theories of historical development. She stresses the ideas of Comte and Burke as "what has grown up historically can only die out historically, by the gradual operation of necessary laws" (Shuttleworth, 1987, p. 4). Therefore, the society undergoes a process through which every organism evolves and completes its development, and it is history that contributes to this process and development. However, she tries to establish a balance between the strict social implications of Comte's theory of organic society: "Within her novels she attempts to find some form of balance between her belief in the individual's right to self-fulfillment and her firm commitment to the idea of social duty" (Shuttleworth, 1987, p. 9).

It is clear that Eliot is influenced by the individualistic theory of John Stuart Mill, who believed that it is impossible to accept the "social implication of the consensus: that the social whole cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts" (Shuttleworth, 1987, p. 9) and human in nature is individualistic. Even though Comte put forward the doctrine that by the help of science one can make a complete self-surrender for the welfare and sake of society, neither Eliot nor Mill could empathize with him. Eliot refutes this idea of Comte in *Middlemarch*, and she rescues Dorothea from being trapped in the hands of fate and sacrificing herself for the second time by giving her a second chance to get married which was against the rules of society and a totally individualistic desire.

Comte's Positivist philosophy was also of great interest to Eliot. However, she should not be considered as a devotee of Comte. She agrees with his arguments that objective knowledge about human behavior and the physical world can only be obtained through experience and process of evolution in history, but she rejects Comte's authoritarianism³. Her being known as a Positivist among the public in England is

³ See August Comte's *An Intellectual Biography*.

most probably the result of her friendship with the members of Positivist circles (Semmel, 1994, p. 10).

Eliot welcomes Comte's ideas on altruistic feelings. She completely confirms Comte's fundamental doctrine that the "heart preponderates over the head" (Semmel, 1994, p. 10), by stating that feelings are more important than thoughts. In *Middlemarch*, Mary Garth having in mind all the troubles that Fred had created for her and her family, loses her battle against her idealistic thoughts and gets married to Fred because her heart tells her to do so. The same ideology plays its role in Dorothea's life. Through the marriage of Dorothea and Casaubon, Eliot ironically shows how pure rational decisions without feelings can be destructive at the end. She tries to correct this wrong ideology by making Dorothea get married to Ladislaw. In the prelude Eliot tries to prove that it is true feelings together with a rational mind that can result in happiness.

Eliot also accepts the Comtean idea of the historical past and the role of nation-state; however, she shows no sympathy for Comte's sociology regarding transcended human uniformity. "Comte's cosmopolitan religion of humanity, she believed, could not compare with national feeling in creating the sympathetic bounds essential to social stability" (Semmel, 1994, p. 10). Eliot in *Middlemarch* focuses on the importance of the compromising line followed by Britain during the revolutionary period.

It is evident that Robert Owen and August Comte held two opposite views. While Owen strongly believed in the idea that the historical events pave the way for the improvement of the future, and a utopian socialism through which an egalitarian system for governing the country should be designed, Comte focused on the scientific socialism in which science and reform constituted the two aspects that were of vital value. Although both parties' concerns were summed upon the welfare of society, they conflicted with each other in details. Eliot took the positive side of different ideologies and philosophies and created her own truth. She also took the philosophy of Charles Bray in which he argued that "all events, including human choices, are necessitated by the conditions that precede them" (Levine, 2001, p. 77).

Eliot not only followed the ideas, implications, and tendencies of these intellectual men around her, "but she has so absorbed these theories into her mind, and so made them a part of its processes, that she has painted life thoroughly in accordance with their spirit" (Cooke, 2007, p. 168). In brief, Eliot's version of organicism "was adapted not only from Reihl's sociology and Comte's positivism but from sources as diverse as Wordsworth's poetry, Burke's political philosophy, Carlyle's history, Sir

Charles Lyell's geology, and closer to home, the evolutionary sociology of Herbert Spencer, and physiological psychology of Lewes" (Dolin, 2005, p. 201).

Eliot is a writer with an extraordinary insight, who could grasp even the hidden and undiscovered ideas of the intellectuals of her time and interpret them in detail, so as to make it easy for everyone to get the deeper meaning through the form of fiction. "She not only accepted the theory of hereditary transmission as science has ... developed it, and as it has been enlarged by positivism into a shaping influence of the past upon present, but she made this law vital with meaning as she developed its consequences in the lives of her characters" (Cooke, 2007, p. 168).

The social concern of Eliot was mainly on the matter of social inequality between the classes, a situation that needed serious improvement. However, Eliot's criticism had also a moral dimension as she blamed the Victorian society for not considering "the poor as the victims of social inequality or crushing market forces but as either morally deficient... or incapable in any case of self-reform" (Dolin, 2005, p. 53). She found this judgment biased because she thought that this inequality had appeared as a result of the wrong system of the government. Therefore, not the poor but the ruling class had to be blamed since the social reforms that were seemingly designed to improve the condition of working and lower classes turned out to be a force against them. In short, these reforms did not reach their goals as neither the harsh conditions of the poor were changed by reformist ideologies and regulations nor were the people in charge of these reforms satisfied with the results of them.

In case of women's rights, two factors interested Eliot, namely, the education of women and their legal rights. In case of education, Eliot was in favor of the ideology to provide women with the same education that men could benefit from. That was why she supported the petitions for the entrance of the women to the universities during that period although she kept herself away from the suffrage movement, which she found anarchic and unrealistic. Her idea on the legal rights of women was, in the first place, that women should gain an identity separate from their husband. She believed that women should have a right to vote, a right to own their properties, a right to work in paid employment, as well as a right to divorce. Especially in *Middlemarch*, Eliot did not consider the passing down of the estates through the male line a fair system. It was Eliot, in other words, Dorothea, who criticized Casaubon for not showing interest in returning the properties of Ladislav's grandmother whose fault was to make a love marriage and elope with her lover, a decision that left her out of the chance to inherit

any property. It might be seen as a moral punishment for Casaubon's aunt; however, morality was an excuse to cover up discrimination in redistributing the properties to women.

Another social problem that is discussed in *Middlemarch* is the issue of social stratification, which resulted in severe conflicts and tensions in society. In some cases Eliot showed how class differences made people behave individualistically and in a way selfish. People like the Vincys even dare to scorn the Garths; similarly, Lydgate belonging to an aristocrat family is looked down on when he prefers to continue his profession as a practitioner instead of running the family properties as an aristocrat. More than defining it as class difference, Eliot clarifies it as rank difference.

This is because it is being used less often to describe a social group and more often as a set of relatively unified ideologies and values assumed to be shared by members of that group, and given as the dominant ideologies and values of the society. Considered as virtues, these values may be summed up as pious respectability, earnestness, ambition, energy, optimism, and national pride. (Dolin, 2005, p. 63)

Although Eliot was one of the supporters of August Comte, she should be regarded as a mild positivist since she believed both in generalization of the details as well as experiencing and recognizing the details as specific cases, the latter of which was against Comtean positivist ideology. Therefore, she was someone who felt herself more comfortable moving back and forth between deductive and inductive mode of ideology or reasoning. She did not abide strictly by the methods of Comte.

The political view of Eliot was not individualistic but rationalistic, in which the improvement of human life would play an essential role. She believed in the organic structure of the society, in which the relationships that the individuals shared with the people around were of importance, not simply the economic, social, or political benefits that these relations would bring to them. In this way she was idealistic, and she clearly depicted this view in her fiction. She was in favor of slow but thorough change that would take place over the years. She believed that "The long evolution of society is as inexorable and unalterable as the biological evolution of species. The responsibility for improvement lies with the moral evolution of individuals in their day-to-day relations, not with the wholesale and piecemeal reform of social institutions" (Dolin, 2005, p. 112). This can be considered as a chain in social relations that a wrong action you do in the present can bring unwanted results in the future for society, and the welfare of the society depends on the social awareness of its individuals. As she states in the Prelude of *Middlemarch*, there is a need for "coherent

social faith and order” (*MM*, 1994, p. 3) that seems to be hard to achieve within the modern period.

In *Middlemarch*, “Eliot uses the narrator’s hindsight, foresight and insight to examine the mixture of external circumstances and personal choice that determines the success or failure of lives that are always solitary yet also always connected” (Henry, 2008, p. 90). The personal choices that resulted in failure were the ones belonging to Dorothea in her marriage to Casaubon; Lydgate’s deviating from his principle to achieve in his medical career, and Casaubon’s choice to follow the past instead of future progressive scholarly works. Only in case of Dorothea there was a chance to correct her wrong choice in marrying Casaubon, and it was with her insight and gradual development that she became able to reach the end she thought would be beneficial to her and therefore to her husband Ladislaw, and indirectly the people around like Fred and Mary Garth to whom she left a great amount of money and property. In brief, Eliot designed her work of art keeping in mind an organicist approach: “a shorthand for many different approaches to questions of the gradual development of social bodies and the nature of social interactions and interdependence” (Dolin, 2005, p. 201).

Middlemarch is written within a framework that reveals the society of early 19th century. Eliot organized the structure of the work in the format of a web or network in which all people, all events, and all consequences were interwoven and interrelated. In this way she revealed how the consequence of individualistic acts could bind the other members of the society with the passage of time. When Eliot stated in *Felix Holt, the Radical* that, “this history is chiefly concerned with the private lot of a few men and women; but there is no private life which has not been determined by the wider public life,” (Eliot, 1997, p. 45) she meant exactly the fact that history leaves its effect on the generations like reincarnation, and the wheel of history passes from generation to generation with all its good and bad.

The society of *Middlemarch* is a miniature sample of the whole picture of Britain that includes social, economical, political, scientific, or social-scientific elements. Eliot’s view on the issue of science is a kind of positivist view, which aims to understand and ease the progress of the society. The aim of progress for Eliot was an improvement in the condition of those in need, and a growth in the social values of compassion and understanding. Like her general stand in all social, political, and scientific matters, she was in favor of progress for the good of society as she states in the Finale of *Middlemarch* as everything should be for the sake of “the growing good of the world”

(*MM*, 1994, p. 838). Taking into account the period of time in which epidemic illnesses, fevers, typhoid, cholera, and etc. were widespread, it would not be hard to guess her view regarding scientific experiences. She was well aware of the economic condition of the poor, who could not afford to buy medicine, so even though she found out that in some cases there would not be a precise and clear evidence that the scientific and medical practices would have an immediate healing effect, she still supported them because she thought the trial of medical practices would be far better than simply waiting for death. Dorothea's encouraging and supportive views toward the practice of Lydgate shows Eliot's perspective on medical and scientific matters. Dorothea represents the views of Eliot herself, who firmly stands against the lot of men and women who sought to destroy Lydgate who unknowingly helped Bulstrode, the banker, to get rid of Raffles, the blackmailer. This support had its root in Lydgate's positive ideas to help the poor people without receiving any money for his medical services. Meliorist Eliot would in no way let anyone block the positive acts of Lydgate toward the people in need.

Dorothea plays the role of a savior and an integrator all throughout the novel. First of all, she tries to improve the condition of the cottagers, next she marries an old man to realize her ambitions in upgrading her knowledge with the help of the scholar Casaubon whom she thought would develop her cultivation, then she supports Lydgate financially for his medical studies and reform in scientific research, and later she rescues Lydgate from being condemned because of an unethical matter of Raffle's death. She also attempts to provide a fair distribution of the property belonging to Ladislav's grandmother to him. Lastly, she helps Fred Vincy and Mary Garth to live a prosperous life. Her view on the social change and political reforms are also an effective factor to improve the disastrous condition of the society.

Throughout the novel, many characters reveal their gratitude to and appreciation of Dorothea. In fact, it is Eliot who makes the other characters appreciate her heroine in *Middlemarch* since according to Eliot, Dorothea is a symbolic figure whose supportive reactions and social cares should be a sample for society. That is why she is identified as St. Teresa in the novel. In Rome Ladislav's artist friend, Naumann, pictures her as the perfect young Madonna or an Antigone (*MM*, 1994, p. 190). In Ladislav's eyes she is Laura Beatrice (*MM*, 1994, p. 361), Caleb Garth identifies her voice as strains of Handel's Messiah when she shares her plans in improving the condition of the tenants with him (*MM*, 1994, p. 552), and finally Lydgate shows his gratitude to her by saying that she has a heart as large as the Virgin Mary's (*MM*, 1994, p. 768).

Criticism may be leveled at Dorothea for not accomplishing the ideals and ambitions that she put forward at the beginning of the novel since she chooses to marry Ladislaw and lead a simple life, however, as Mintz states; it should be kept in mind that Eliot's idealization of Dorothea is a double layered assessment. Either an individual should be judged on the basis of his contributions to the society, culture, and history, or this judgment should take place in accordance with his contributions to the personal moral life of the closest people around him (1978, p.114). In Dorothea's case it is obvious that the second judgment is valid because she has a redemptive function in the life of the people around her although she could not succeed in applying her cottage plans, or learn Greek, which were part of the reason for her ideology.

In *Middlemarch* it is clear that whoever lends a hand, even in a small way, in favor of society and its improvement is taken under Dorothea's protection. The reason for her great support of Lydgate can be seen briefly in a sentence of Lydgate which showed her purpose as "to do good small work for Middlemarch, and great work for the world" (*MM*, 1994, p. 149). This was what Eliot really meant, and believed personally.

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APPENDIX

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