

***MIDDLEMARCH: THE STORY ABOUT THE REFORMATION OF FEMALE
IDENTITY IN THE 19TH CENTURY CAPITALIST PARADIGM***

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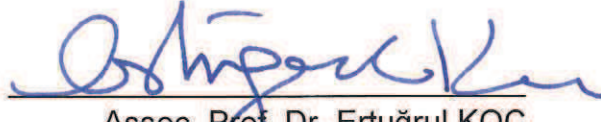
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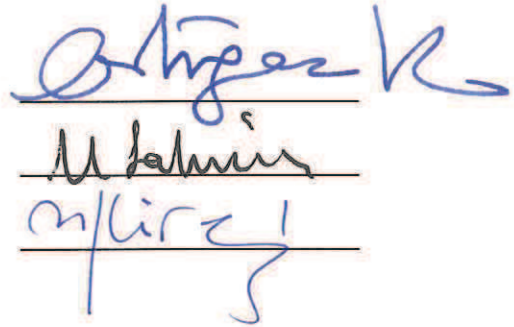
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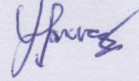
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STATEMENT OF NON-PLAGIARISM

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ABSTRACT

MIDDLEMARCH: THE STORY ABOUT THE REFORMATION OF FEMALE IDENTITY IN THE 19TH CENTURY CAPITALIST PARADIGM

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George Eliot lived in the early Victorian age which witnessed a transformation in the social structure because of the Industrial Revolution. In *Middlemarch*, she analyzes the emergence of the capitalist paradigm, and the impact of the new system on individuals and institutions. To demonstrate the interaction among history, culture, industry, defined gender roles and the position of woman in the newly formed social strata, she creates a set of characters from all the layers of the society and weaves their stories in a web of relations. The stories of three women, Dorothea, Rosamond, and Mary from the main classes of the society (aristocracy, middle class, and working class), are rendered along with the expectations of the specific classes in society, with social and political changes, and with the institution of marriage and the moral values pertaining to each class. Eliot indicates that the classes, the products of the capitalist economy, shape the personality of the

characters. In the male dominated socio-economic model, women are left outside the production mechanisms, and their efforts for self-development are hindered by the norms of patriarchal society. Appreciating the individual efforts of women who try to go beyond the limits, but seeing also that women suffer from the insufficiency of opportunities, Eliot attempts in her work to depict an ideal heroine. Hence, *Middlemarch* is the story revealing the evolution of the female identity in capitalist patriarchal order.

Keywords: *Middlemarch*, Woman Question, Woman's Education, Marriage, Class Structure, Morality.

ÖZ

**MIDDLEMARCH: 19. YÜZYIL KAPİTALİST PARADİGMASINDA KADIN
KİMLİĞİNİN REFORMASYON HİKAYESİ**

Sönmez Demir, Yağmur

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George Eliot, Endüstri Devrimi'nden dolayı sosyal yapıda değişime tanıklık etmiş Viktoria Çağı'nın ilk döneminde yaşamıştır. *Middlemarch* romanında, kapitalist paradigmanın ortaya çıkışını ve yeni sistemin, bireylere ve kurumlara etkilerini analiz eder. Tarih, kültür, sanayi, belirlenmiş cinsiyet rolleri ve kadının toplum içindeki yerinin, şekillenmeye başlayan yeni sosyal yapıyla ilişkisini göstermek için toplumun her tabakasından bir dizi karakter oluşturur ve hikâyelerini, bu karakter ve kurumlar arasındaki ilişkiler ağıyla anlatır. Toplumun ana sosyal sınıflarından (aristokrat, orta sınıf, ve çalışan sınıf) üç kadının -Dorothea, Rosamond, ve Mary'nin- hikâyeleri toplumdaki belirli sınıfların beklentileri, sosyal ve politik değişimler, evlilik kurumu ve her sınıfın ahlaki değerleri ile birlikte anlatılır. Eliot, kapitalist ekonominin ürünü olan sınıfların insanların kişiliğini şekillendirdiğini belirtir. Erkek egemen

sosyal modelde, kadınlar üretim mekanizmasının dışında tutulmuş ve kişisel gelişim için çabaları ataerkil toplumun normlarından dolayı engellenmiştir. Sınırların ötesine geçmeye çalışan kadınların bireysel çabalarını takdir eden; fakat kadınların olanaklardan yoksun olduğunu da gören Eliot, eserinde ideal kadın kahramanını betimler. Bu sebeple *Middlemarch*, kapitalist ataerkil düzende kadın kimliğinin gelişimini gösteren bir hikâyedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Middlemarch*, kadın sorunu, kadınların eğitimi, evlilik, sınıf yapısı, ahlâk.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: GENERAL PANAROMA OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Eliot, born as Mary Ann Evans, in 1819, was the third child of Robert and Christiana Evans. Robert Evans was the manager of an estate in Warwickshire, and Mary Anne was born on the estate at South Farm. At the age of 5, Mary Ann went to Miss Lathom's school. The Elms school of Mrs. Wallington was the next school she attended in 1828 where the principal governess Miss Maria Lewis had influence on her religious beliefs. At the Elms, she learned French, drawing, and playing the piano. At the age of 13, she was sent to Misses Franklin's school in Coventry. Miss Rebecca trained Mary in terms of speaking, and she acquired a nice accent. Mary Ann left school in 1835, and the next year her mother died. She ran the house after her mother's death. She learned German, Italian, Greek, and Latin with the help of the teachers from Coventry. In 1839, the Evans family moved to Coventry where Mary Ann met Charles Bray, who had unconventional views on Christianity. The people whom the young woman met at the Brays' house included Robert Owen, Herbert Spencer, Harriet Martineau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Through this intellectual circle, Mary Ann was introduced to more liberal theologies, and to writers such as David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach.

In 1844, Mary was offered the translation of Stratuss's *Das Leben Jesu*. After her father's death in 1849, she went on a tour with the Brays. She stayed in Genova, at a boarding house having a coffee shop which was the meeting place of literary figures. She met the owner of the literary journal John Chapman, who wanted Mary to be the editor of the *Westminster Review*. In 1852, she was introduced to George Henry Lewes with whom she had a long-lasting relationship. Although he was married,

Mary started living with him. In 1857, she wrote a letter to her brother Isaac, telling that she changed her name and she had an extramarital relationship with Lewes. Isaac broke his relationship with Mary. In 1858, her first literary work *Amos Barton* was published by the Blackwood Magazine under the pen name of "George Eliot." For female authors had difficulty in being taken seriously at that time, Mary Ann Evans used this pseudonym. She did not want to be accepted as a female novelist writing in accordance with the expectations of the male dominated society. She criticized the typical characters and plots created by women writers in her article entitled "*Silly Novels by Lady Novelists.*" She used her knowledge on science and philosophy in her novels. In a way, she proved that not only men but also women could have information on serious issues.

The publication of *Adam Bede* was in 1859, and it was a success. Although Mary Ann was unaccepted by the society because of her illegal relationship with Lewes, her novels were being widely read, and she made money much more than authors made at that time. *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, *Romola*, and *Felix Holt* were published respectively. In 1869 she began writing *Middlemarch*. However, in 1870, she laid it aside to begin a new story called 'Miss Brooke.' She, then, decided that 'Miss Brooke' should be a part of *Middlemarch*. After the novel's publication in 1871, it was accepted as a masterpiece: "*Middlemarch* bids more than fair to be one of the great books of the world" (as cited in Laski, 1987, p. 93). With her success, fame, and money, Eliot gained respect. In 1876, her last novel *Daniel Deronda* was published. Two years later, in 1878, George Henry Lewes died. She married Johnny Cross in 1880 and passed away in the same year because of kidney infection.

Authors make use of their experiences while writing consciously or unconsciously; their lives influence their works. Moreover, the era in which an author lives, the intellectual surroundings, together with their experiences have impact on their works. Hence, the historical background

of the writer's life and times, the period in which the work was produced, needs to be analyzed, and socio- historical background¹ of the period in which the book was written and settled should be examined to appreciate the work because

studies of the social background of an author's work, and of the influence of that background on that work, are of necessity of some length, for they involve first the description of that background and then the investigation of individual works with that description in mind. (Watson & Ducharme, 1990, p. 284)

In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot presents the reader with a three dimensional panorama of the English society with the individuals and their social classes. She creates a number of characters, and each individual is analysed in his/her class. By analysing the socioeconomic conditions of the period through individuals, she illustrates how the social panorama of her time came into being and how the dominant ideology forced people to change their life styles. She explains the social strata in detail and highlights the main classes in English society.

To understand Eliot, the class structure of the time and the resultant ideology should be analysed, for she narrates the three main classes- in Marxist terms, the products of the society's base. As Marx argues, the relations among people are shaped in accordance with their material life and the means of production.

Relations of production form what Marx calls 'the economic structure of society,' or what is more commonly known by Marxism as the economic 'base' or 'infrastructure.' From this economic base, in every period, emerges a 'superstructure'- certain forms of law and politics, a certain kind of state whose essential function is to legitimate the power of the social

¹ For Hegel, history is "the course of events transform[ing] human consciousness and human consciousness informs the contributions made to ongoing course of events. . . . What we are is determined by what we do. . . . Our history generates the possibilities we envision for that which we might become" (Dudley, 2009, p. 1); hence, the behaviour of the individuals are shaped by their histories.

class which owns the means of economic production. (Eagleton, 1976, p. 5)

With the help of the novel, Eliot invokes the social panorama of the 19th century through which the base of Victorian society is revealed. She demonstrates the class stratification of the age in *Middlemarch* and shows the interaction between the forming of the culture and the economic base. Therefore, Marx's concept of class ideology should be taken into consideration to appreciate Eliot's work. In the novel, relations among people are demonstrated in detail with reference to the social classes, for individuals are unable to choose their classes, and they are obliged to be in a certain rank because of their mode of economic production. Through analysing the total social process, "the social mentality of an age . . . [and] that age's social relations" (as cited in Eagleton, 1976, p. 6) can be understood. Since the ideology of an age is always the product of social classes in power and "a new class is always a source of emergent culture" (Williams, 1977, p. 124), through historical and Marxist approaches to *Middlemarch*, the Victorian capitalist bourgeois ideology concerning class structure, religion, marriage, the place of women in the society, science, and the institution of law can be discussed in a more revealing way.

Class is defined as a system of ordering society whereby people are divided into sets based on perceived social or economic status. Apart from economic terms, class conflict is also the elaboration of the entire way of life. "The concept of a class is a 'classification' of a social ensemble according to various criteria" (Andrew, 1975, p. 456). According to Marx, classes are not formed on the basis of biological differences such as race or sex, and classes are not nationalities, cultural groups, or religious sects. Rather, classes are groups of men and women with a similar position in a social division of labour, with a common relation to the means of production. Class, then, is a "complex mediation between economic and social orders, which depends on recognition across a wide social spectrum" (Adams, 2005, p. 49).

In 19th century Britain, there were three main classes: aristocracy, middle class, and working class. Before the Industrial Revolution, class structure in Britain consisted of the nobility, the clergy, and the commoners. Nobility meant owning the land, and these landlords had their tenants who were referred to as Yeomen. They cultivated the land for the nobility. With the increase in population, the land lost its sufficiency for big families. The money earned in the land could not suffice, and the commoners needed other means to survive. The cottage industry spread with the usage of some devices run with hand power such as the spinning wheel. These home based industry developed in time, and the tenants bought the houses of their landlords, or they built big houses to turn them later into small factories. Thus, they needed more workforce, and started to employ the people from peasantry in their houses. For the first time in history, there emerged the working class phenomenon. The employers who controlled the production hired workers for their factories, and

the development of new modes of productive organisation [was] based on a changed set of social relations- between the capitalist class who own[ed] those means of production and the proletarian class whose labour-power the capitalist [bought] for profit. (Eagleton, 1976, p. 5)

The class system changed with the Industrial Revolution. Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and technological innovation altered the level of welfare. The newly moneyed class prospered more, and the widening gap between poor and rich generated a new class called “middle class” which gradually came to control the means of production, meanwhile establishing the competitive capitalist system, in the country. Middle class people, the owners of the factories, dominated the working class people they employed, and started to gain strength, for they had the control of the production and the money in the country. “The middle-class element gained in status because wealth became more important than title” (Kocka, 2004, p. 28). As aristocracy could not cope with the production methods of middle

class entrepreneurs, they lost pace and the socio-political control of the country.

Aristocrats had the control of lands, and gained their wealth by the rents from their lands. With the Industrial Revolution, the lands lost their importance causing aristocracy to be in economic decline. Some of the members of aristocracy wanted to hold on to the old system which was based on owning lands and their income. However, they could not tackle with the rising middle class and became extinct. Only a small number of aristocrats, however, invested in industrial areas in order to keep up with the middle class industrialists.

There [was] a very extensive category of organic intellectuals . . . old land-owning class [was] assimilated as “traditional intellectuals” and as directive group by the new group in power. The old landowning aristocracy [was] joined to the industrialists. (as cited in Eagleton, 2006, p. 103)

Their cooperation with middle class people continued in politics as well: “aristocracy came to think that a coalition, rather than opposition with middle classes is the best policy” (Koç, 2010, p. 10). The ones sharing political and economic power with the middle class people managed to survive in the capitalist world order.

In the 19th century paradigm, the roles of men and women were fixed: middle class men strenuously worked to earn money, whereas the middle class wives did nothing but consume the earnings of their husbands. Men were the head of their families; women were bound to them in every sense: they were to sit at home and raise their children. Except for dealing with children and household, the women did not have much to do. However, life standards of families changed along with the changes in the socio-economic structure. The general changes in social order such as “the economic factors, and the rise of the middle classes which radically altered the means of production, the politics, the customs, and culture and

literature of a nation” (Koç, 2010, p.10), brought about the specific changes in the family structure.

After establishing their own standards, the middle class family life emerged. Men were supposed to work and earn money. Unlike men, the middle class women had no relation to the working life, and they were not paid much attention in terms of education, law, and politics. England was still a male-dominated society in the 19th century, and the place of women in society had been taken for granted; being wives, mothers, and helpmates were their master statuses. In the 19th century, the duties of women were as follows:

women were expected to center their lives on home and family; they were expected to conduct themselves, in modesty and propriety; they were expected to find the commands of duty and the delights of service insufficient, in fact ennobling, boundaries of their lives. (Schor, 2002, p. 173)

A middle class woman was considered “the angel in the house,” and she had to direct the servants dealing with the chores, while taking care of her husband and children. However, middle class women spent limited time with their children who were taken care by a nursemaid or a governess. They spent their time with other middle class women: “Much of a middle-class woman’s day was spent in the company of other women from similar households. An elaborate set of social customs involving ‘calls’ and ‘at homes’ was established in European middle-class society” (Burns, 1984, p. 746). Their houses were generally decorated heavily because of their efforts to imitate the houses of aristocracy. They tried to increase their social respectability by showing off. The rooms of middle class houses “were certain to be crowded with furniture, art objects, carpets, and wall hangings” (Burns, 1894, p. 749). They thought their belongings would show them as if they were from the aristocracy.

When compared to middle class females, working class women and children suffered more. At home, they did all the household work on their own: cooking for the family, cleaning the house, washing the clothes, and shopping for food. These women had to keep the house running with little amount of money. They went to the markets to buy the cheapest food since most of them did not have gardens for growing their own food. Many women working in the 19th century belonged to the working class. Unlike aristocratic and the middle class women, they had to work. They worked in factories, mines, in the houses of middle class families. Lower standards of living and shortage of money were the reasons of why they needed work. “Working class included the men, women and children who together worked in mines and quarries . . . cleaning women and the like” (Burns, 1894, p. 750). Unmarried working class women generally worked in the houses of middle class families as domestic servants. Middle class people looked upon working class women as “lesser breeds” of woman.

Women, as well as men, found themselves in an age of chaotic transition from the old way of life to a new, unpredictable one since the new age promised both positive and negative advances. The lives, norms, and values of both men and women were subject to change. The doubt and the uncertainty in public could only be overcome by setting boundaries to the women such as confining them to houses with the notion of separate spheres, and depriving them of legal rights such as the right to divorce, the right to inherit, the right to own property, and the right to vote. In fact, it was not until 1857 that women could submit a petition for divorce. Women were allowed to be the legal owners of the money they earned and to inherit property with The Married Women’s Property Act² in 1870. Women’s right to vote were not acknowledged till the 20th century: “Petitions to Parliament

² The Married Women’s Act of 1870, passed in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, preceded the one passed in 1882. It provided that wages and property which a wife earned through her own work would be regarded as her separate property and, in 1882, this principle was extended to all property, regardless of its source or the time of its acquisition.

advocating women's suffrage were introduced as early as the 1840s but they did not become law until 1918" (Abrams, 1986, p. 931).

The Victorians tended to classify everything. "The obsessive nature of the Victorian needs to categorise and contain as many aspects of their lives as possible is nowhere more clear, and nowhere more unsatisfactory, than its application to the sexual" (Reynolds & Humble, 1993, p. 6). The 19th century was the strictest period about the gender roles compared to the other centuries. The notion of separate spheres - woman in the private sphere of the home and hearth, man in the public sphere of business, politics, and sociability - came to influence the choices and experiences of all women, at home, at work, in the streets. The best place for women was home; however, men needed a career to justify his social role. "Man was the 'architect;' and woman, 'the soul of the house'" (Basch, 1974, p. 5). As such, having a defined role, woman could only justify her presence on earth by dedicating herself to others, and the highest ambition for a girl of any social class was being a professional wife. Women's expectations were formed by the masculine culture of the society.

George Eliot, the author who dealt with the problem of gender, initially published *Middlemarch, Study of Provincial Life* in eight instalments between 1871 and 1872. The book sold 10.000 copies by the end of 1874 when it was published as one-volume edition. The reading public, especially women readers, bought and read the book with enthusiasm. As the incidents were taken from the class-bound English lifestyle and expressed in the middle class art form, they attracted the middle-class readers who appreciated the novel form. The women readers were more interested in the novel as it addressed their problems. With the popularity of the novel, George Eliot's reputation and prestige as a novelist reached its zenith.

Eliot's style accounts for her success. She does not write about her time, for she chooses the pre-industrial world as the setting of her novels.

Her novels are usually about the agricultural rural life where individual relations were closer and more sincere. Although she is a Victorian novelist, she writes about the society of four or five decades earlier. She recreates the social panorama of those times, and inexorably forces the reader to make a comparison between past and present lives. The middle classes usually find their evolution story told in the novels of Eliot, and come to understand the transformation in their lives.

Though *Middlemarch* was published in 1871, the events in the novel take place around 1830s, nearly forty years before the period in which it was written. These dates coincide with the passing of first Reform Bill in 1832 and the second Reform Bill in 1867. The first Reform Bill changed the electoral system in England, and “satisfied the demands of middle classes [that were] gradually taking over control of England’s economy” (Abrams, 1986, p. 920). While the reform “weakened the prestige of king, peers, and gentry . . . [it] strengthened the position of the new custodians of commercial and industrial wealth” (Arnstein, 2001, p. 17). With new regulations the landowners’ monopoly of power was broken up, and middle class strengthened its economic, as well as political position, and formed its own culture. The political conversion of the English society covers nearly forty years, the period, being unexplored, attracted Eliot’s attention, and with the idea that one should know at least the recent past in order to understand present, she depicts the pre-conditions of her day. Her contemporaries such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, and William Thackeray write about their current time, and current social problems. Eliot, however, goes back to the root of the problems, and analyses the origins of the transformation process. In this respect, *Middlemarch* is “a work of experimental science: examining the history of man” (Shuttleworth, 1987, p.107), and the novelist provides her reader with a detailed explanation of the evolution of social classes, science, institutions, industry, education, economy, and politics. Hence, the reader is able to see the transition through the depictions of Eliot.

The period between 1829 and 1832 was the time Eliot and her audience had the memories of. She, therefore, narrates about this period in history and shows the evolution of individuals and institutions, which shaped Eliot's contemporary world. In fact, "*Middlemarch* is a historical novel in form with little substantive historical content. The Reform Bill, the railways, cholera, machine-breaking: these 'real' historical forces do no more than impinge on the novel's margins" (Eagleton, 2006, p. 120), and *Middlemarch* "does have, a concern for the proper representation of the past as an end in itself" (Mason, 1971, p. 417). The gap between the novel's composition and publication, and the time it covers let Eliot make an extensive observation of the effects of reformation and change on individuals and society. Through the novel, Eliot keeps the record of societal transition, and depicts the notable events taking place till her current time such as the passing of the Reform Bill, the death of George IV, the cholera of 1832, the changes in the Parliament, and the coming of railways. Hence, *Middlemarch* covers the ideological, political, and social spectra of the 19th century England.

Eliot's motive of writing *Middlemarch* is to "seek a starting point, the origins of the strong currents that had modified her social, political and cultural environment" (as cited in Billington, 2008, p.12), and "to provide an 'explanation' of the critical period of the late sixties" (Mason, 1971, p. 418). The audience of her time was able to see the evolution of medicine, politics, education, and gender roles in the individual lives and institutions. Eliot herself was the observer of all the developments occurring in the course of those forty years, for she kept journals and took detailed notes, and she used her knowledge and experience to write novels. By this way, she reflected the history and the outcomes of the events to the readers, making them able to comprehend the underlying reasons of their current paradigm. Eliot's views on the way men live out their roles in their classes, values, and ideas as well as the ideology of the epoch concerning gender, class, and relations are included in the novel.

The Industrial Revolution brought about drastic changes to the English society. The size and distribution of the population, the social structure and organization, and the political structure went through alterations. Born in the early 19th century, Eliot emphasised the difference between the days of her childhood before railways, reform, and other innovations, and the days of her maturity. The changes between before and after, and the process of the evolution are the major issues discussed in her novels.

Eliot, aware of the social and political issues of her period, focuses on women's evolution through time. She criticises the inadequacy of female education, the ignorant marriages, the exclusion of women from science and new forms of knowledge, and legal restraints. With the characters she creates, she shows the other way in which women can succeed. For Eliot, the transformation of a heroine is "a form of evolutionary change, a world-historical moment in itself" (Schor, 2002, p.182). Evolutionary acts for the social improvement are either initiated or supported by women in her novels. In the male dominated society, women had very little opportunity to prove themselves and to speak out. The women characters of her novels, however, have the potentiality to help and achieve the betterment of the society and Eliot questions whether there is a place for women of different classes in the base of masculine oriented society or not.

In addition to her authorship, Eliot was a literary journalist, the editor of the Westminster Review, and translator. Her translation works include D. F. Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu Kritisch Bearbeitet*, Ludwig Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentum*, and Spinoza's *Ethics*. Eliot's philosophy has been shaped under the effect of these philosophers and their works. Her views concerning the class structure of England outline a theory of the sensibility, based on emotion and intellect, which went beyond the scientific issues of the day.

Regarding Eliot's attitude to the classes, she feels respect for aristocracy, whereas she disdains middle class on account of their "rising" values. She appreciates the efforts of working class people. Both capitalist patriarchal male characters and oppressed submissive female characters are found in her novels. Eliot addresses both men's oppression on women and the existence of woman problem. She herself tried hard to take part in the masculine social order; hence, she talked about gender issues in her novels. She believed that

women by virtue of their sex [could] play an important role in the progress of the human race, since they [were] by nature endowed with a larger capacity for feeling, which [had] been discovered to be intellectually and morally valuable. (Fernando, 1977, p.31)

Eliot attracts the attention of her audience to the woman question. For Eliot, the evolution of women influence the development of the human race, and women should be given more opportunities in the capitalist system. Thus, she focuses more on women characters in her novels; particularly in *Middlemarch*, the major characters are daughters, wives, and mothers. Male characters, on the other hand, are occupying minor roles, and they are mentioned only when they are in relation to the women characters. Male figures also serve as the foils of the females, and women characters' dialogues outnumber men's speeches in the work. Eliot

indulges more neutrality of feeling in relation to men than she does in relation to women. She does not regard them as beings whose duty it is to be very much in earnest, and who are almost contemptible or wicked if they are otherwise³. (1876, para. 2)

Her novels are usually concerned with women. Rather than heroes, Eliot's novels have heroines, and women's stories are rendered. For example, her heroines Maggie in *The Mill on the Floss*, Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, and Gwendolen in *Daniel Deronda* do not have the opportunities for education

³ Retrieved from http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Littell's_Living_Age/Volume_128/Issue_1658/George_Eliot's_Heroines

and employment; however, they strive for the realization of their potential. They all need to make crucial moral choices when they face up challenges.

Eliot supported the idea that “Women ought to have the same store of truth placed within their reach as men have . . . the same store of fundamental knowledge” (as cited in Billington, 2008, p. 14). Her heroines are strong characters, and they try strenuously to get out of the borders defined for women. Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, Dinah in *Adam Bede*, Romola in *Romola*, and Maggie in *The Mill on the Floss* all have dedication to life, and they have strong will and altruistic motives. “Her heroines are not merely lovers of men or objects of their adoration, as in the previous novelists [such as Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson]; they are women of intellect and feeling, capable of taking their share in the progress of society” (Wasti, 1961, p. 11). For Defoe, woman is a commodity; a cargo of goods including women arrives at the island in *Robinson Crusoe*. For Richardson, woman is a virtue rewarded as described in *Pamela*; for Fielding woman is a help-mate, source of inspiration and enthusiasm for men.

Eliot’s idea on woman question is stated in *Middlemarch* on the issues of “what women should do and what they can do . . . the possibilities for the individual to act on and change society” (Ashton, 1983, p. 69). There are a number of women characters in the town of Middlemarch: Dorothea, Celia, Rosamond, Mary, Mrs. Cadwallader, Mrs. Bulstrode, Mrs. Garth, characters who belong to the main classes of the society, and the minor stereotypical characters such as Miss Noble, Mrs. Plymdale, Mrs. Renfrew, Miss Winifred, Miss Morgan, and Mrs. Waule who represent the social norms of Middlemarch society. Among them, Dorothea has the initiative spirit, and she strives for acquiring education and learning. Despite the limitations, she helps the townspeople, takes part in the education of children; she does whatever is good for her society. In “Prelude” and “Finale” of the novel, Eliot seems to insist upon “the design of illustrating the necessary disappointment of a woman’s nobler aspirations in a society not

made to second noble aspirations in a woman” (Neale, 1989, p.153). Dorothea encounters obstacles caused by the situation pertaining to women at that time. She is unusual in her aspirations; however, her experiences exemplify the life of a usual upper class woman who lived in the 19th century England.

The elements of societal classification of gender roles are highlighted by Eliot in her novels. *Middlemarch* is her comprehensive study in terms of characterization, showing the interrelationships among individuals and institutions, and placing emphasis on the woman question, compared to her other novels. Knowing that individuals in a society affect each other one way or the other, she creates a web of relations, and tells the story by

unraveling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe. (Eliot, 2000 p.117)

She focuses on the representative individuals of different social strata, and she analyzes their lives and relationships within the classes they belong to. Yet, she is in favour of the society rather than the individual. She seeks to have organic unity in her novels. For her, the union of society and individual is essential; hence, she makes a criticism of the separate spheres of the men and women in the English society. Although “The female novelists before George Eliot rarely step beyond the intimate circle of domestic and social relationships” (Wasti, 1961, p. 13), she goes beyond the predefined limits by denouncing the notion of separate spheres because for her, “women are to find in novel-writing a literary field peculiarly adapted to their capacities, and that the novel should be a true portraiture of life” (Cooke, 2004, p.127). Wives, sisters, and daughters take the initiative, and support the society, whereas fathers, husbands, and other male characters have faults and imperfections. Women characters are morally superior to men in *Middlemarch*. Since they are able to change in the course of the novel, they

are round characters, yet male figures remain flat. Her protagonist and antagonist in the work are also female.

Life experiences of an author affect his/her works, and Eliot's mind and experience find place in her novels. In order to appreciate a literary work better, the historical background of the writer's life and times, the period in which the characters live, the social conventions of that time are to be known. For this reason, history is indispensable in the interpretation of a work, and "Literature does not exist in a vacuum. History provides an invaluable repository of informative facts for the benefit of literary study and no critical study of literature would be quite complete without that enlightenment" (Watson & Ducharme, 1990, p.111). In addition to the historical background of the age, in *Middlemarch*, Eliot draws her readers' attention to the social strata and to gender inequality, which can be explained by Marxist and feminist theories.

The dissertation will analyze *Middlemarch* with the help of historical, feminist, and Marxist approaches, and Eliot's views concerning the formation of ideal woman identity will be demonstrated. In the introductory chapter, the transition from the rural to the industrial life is analysed, and the social, historical, ethical, educational, and political consequences of this transition is discussed with reference to the characters and the classes they belong to. The woman question and Eliot's contribution to this issue is also reviewed.

In the chapter entitled "Eliot's 19th Century Woman Trilogy," the main women characters, Dorothea Brooke, Rosamond Vincy, and Mary Garth will be analysed as the representative figures of their classes: aristocracy, middle class, and working class respectively. Through them, Eliot demonstrates the relationship between cultural environment and character. They occupy different social roles as the products of their classes. The chapter will reveal that the culture of a specific social class determines the characters' aims, life style, and moral values.

In the chapter entitled “Women’s Vain Pursuit of Education in the 19th Century,” the women’s education issue in the 19th century England will be discussed. The educational opportunities of the main women characters will be analysed with reference to the expectations of their classes from females. Dorothea, even as an aristocratic woman, cannot have the sort of education she aspires: a philosophical type of education to gain wisdom. Eliot gives detailed information on the educational institutions and the type of education offered to middle class girls in the 19th century, which consisted of dancing, singing songs, playing the piano, and writing letters through Rosamond. Working class Mary does not have any chance of getting proper education: she does not go to school regularly but is educated at home by her mother. Regardless of their class, women are deprived of education, and they are not given any opportunity to develop themselves. The chapter will suggest that the capitalist, patriarchal social order dominates all classes and insufficiency of opportunity for woman’s education is the result of this order.

In the chapter entitled “Eliot’s Interpretation of Patrimonial Marriages,” the marriages of three couples, Dorothea and Casaubon, Rosamond and Lydgate, and Mary and Fred, will be analysed to reveal the dominant patriarchal ideology and the understanding of this ideology by different social classes. All the main women characters end up with marriage; however, their motives are different. Dorothea marries to be educated in philosophical thought system; Rosamond marries to ascend in the social ladder; Mary marries to be together with the man she loves. The chapter will demonstrate that women are left with no choice but marriage, and the norms of social classes affect the institution of marriage.

In the chapter entitled “Eliot’s Definition of Morality Independent of Class Structure,” the characters’ ethics will be studied along with the classes they belong to. In this sense, Dorothea, Rosamond, and Mary represent their classes. These women are compared and contrasted with

one another and with the male characters. The chapter will suggest that women are morally stronger than men, and if the women characters are given the chance, they will have developed their already existing moral sense more, pioneering meanwhile a new understanding of morality independent of class culture.

Finally, in the conclusion part, the dissertation will reveal that however hard women try, the emergence of ideal woman was hindered by the capitalist patriarchal English society in the 19th century. The efforts of women to formulate new identities for themselves and occupying a decent position in the society have been inhibited by the male dominated world order. However, Eliot suggests that there is a hope to elevate in the future women's place in society.

CHAPTER II

ELIOT'S 19TH CENTURY WOMAN TRILOGY

Middlemarch is a small fictitious rural town located in England. Sharing the same name with the town, the novel includes characters ranging from the landed gentry, clergy, the manufacturers, professional men, the shopkeepers, publicans, to the farmers and labourers. All the people in the town are interrelated one way or the other. Communication among these people is constructed as multi-faceted to re-evaluate the social evolution in the 19th century English society. Most of the Middlemarchers are “narrow-minded,” and they resist reform and innovation. There are three main families in Middlemarch: Brookes from aristocracy, Vincys from the middle class, and Garths from the working class. Eliot bases her story on three women from these families: Dorothea Brooke, Rosamond Vincy, and Mary Garth. These characters are created on purpose. Through the classes Dorothea, Rosamond, and Mary belong, and through their backgrounds, marriages, moral values, educations, attitudes, relationships with other people, Eliot depicts the capitalist transformation in the 19th century England where the conformist and non-conformist women characters form identities for themselves.

Dorothea and Celia Brooke are the two aristocratic sisters of marriageable age in Middlemarch. They stay with their bachelor uncle Mr. Brooke. Dorothea decides to marry Reverend Casaubon, a dried-up old scholar. She chooses him because he is educated, and she wants to learn from him. Celia, “more sensible,” chooses Sir James Chettam, a local nobleman who initially wanted to marry her sister. Dorothea and Casaubon get married; Casaubon hopes for someone to comfort and serve him as a secretary, and Dorothea wants to be of use in his work and learn whatever

she can. They go to Rome for honeymoon, and there they meet Casaubon's young cousin Will Ladislaw. Dorothea and Will become friends immediately; they enjoy talking to each other. Casaubon starts to be jealous of this relationship. The honeymoon turns out to be a disaster for Dorothea. She feels alone and unwanted, as her husband devotes all his time to his studies.

The Vincy family represents the middle class. Mr. and Mrs. Vincy have a daughter named Rosamond, and a son named Fred. Rosamond waits for Mr. Right to come and marry him. Her only desire is to marry a wealthy man having rank. Fred Vincy is an irresponsible young man. He was unable to finish college because he had no aptitude for it, and he has gambling debt. He cannot pay the debt because he has not got a proper job. Fred receives money from his wealthy uncle Mr. Featherstone to pay the debt. However, he wastes the money. Caleb Garth, who has co-signed for Fred's debt, has to pay it. Meanwhile, Mr. Lydgate, a young doctor, moves to town and Rosamond marries him. Rosamond soon begins spending more than Lydgate actually has saved, and causes his husband to go bankrupt.

The working class is represented through the Garth family. Caleb Garth is an honest, hardworking man dealing with the estates of the wealthy. His wife is a former teacher. Their eldest child Mary also works as a housekeeper to support the budget of the family. The Garth family is the moral centre of the novel. They forgive Fred, and he starts working for Mr. Garth. Mary accepts marrying him, and they become very happy at the end.

Casaubon dies of heart attack, leaving a codicil about Dorothea's marriage after his death. If Dorothea marries Will, she will lose her property. Learning the news, Dorothea gets angry, and she deals with other things trying to forget the codicil. She helps Lydgate get rid of his debt. When Lydgate is in debt, Rosamond does not support him at all, and spends time with Will. Dorothea sees him with Rosamond, and she is disappointed. Sir

James wants him out of the neighbourhood again, thinking that he is no good, and he needs to protect his sister-in-law. Dorothea gives up all of Casaubon's money and property to marry Will; Celia and Sir James are surprised with her decision. Sir James continues to think badly of the marriage; but Will and Dorothea go to London. Will is elected to Parliament, and they become very happy, and the novel is concluded with Dorothea and Will having a child.

“Eliot's novels deal with intellectual characters, with pros and cons of life's situations, and presuppose on the part of the readers an intellectual interest in life's problems and a capacity for abstract thought” (Wasti, 1961, p. 84). Characterization is the key feature of her novels, and she takes the characters out of English society, most purely English because of its provincial seclusion. What is true of the class is also true of the individuals. They are quite ordinary characters, fair specimens of their class, representing the level of intellectual attainment and moral culture of the average Englishman. She makes an analysis of the English society. The readers are presented with fragments of lives within the familiar characters and circumstances. Her characterisation aims to give something of the complexity of the mental organisation. Both the inner and the outer aspects of the living personalities are provided to the reader.

An individual is formed in combination of a number of qualities. Intellectual and moral qualities are depicted in certain proportions of energy or intensity. The environment of the people is what shapes their personalities. According to Marx,

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social

consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. (as cited in Eagleton and Milne, 1996, p. 31)

Similarly, for Eliot, a character “divorced from its surroundings is an abstraction” (Sully, 1881, p. 382). The surrounding of the characters is specially designed to reveal their identities. Each of the events in the novels is introduced in cause and effect relationship. The history of the character is also given for the purpose of interpreting their behaviours.

The theme of Eliot's stories is centred on human experience. In accordance with this theme, she creates sub-themes such as marriage, education, relationships among people with respect to reform. All these appeal to the readers. She does not depict only the surface play of life and the outside show of social intercourse; the deep underlying issues are rendered in detail. She holds the mirror up to nature in such a way as to view and disclose the threads which bind together the inner and the outer lives, the early and the late experiences, the individual and the common lot. Eliot does not directly give the message to the reader. Generally, she narrates the events in a neutral way. She leaves interpreting the text to the reader. She also teaches moral truth much more implicitly than explicitly.

Along with characterization and theme, Eliot creates the form. George Eliot's idea of form consisting of “the most varied group of relations bound together in a wholeness which again has the most varied relations with all other phenomena” (as cited in Mansell, 1965, p. 660) causes her to emphasise the multiplicity of relations within the novel. For Eliot, the more relations there are, the higher the form becomes. She relates all the characters and the events to one another in her web of relations.

Through the interactions of individuals in her work, Eliot lays the soul's innermost secrets open to the readers. The cause effect relationships of the characters' actions, help the readers understand the anatomy of the

characters' souls. She devotes more space to the inner life and character of her personalities than to her narratives and conversations. She traces some of her characters development through a long process, and shows how they are affected by the experiences they acquire in life. Her analysis of the human soul "unfolds the conflict of motives and desires in the minds of her characters" (Wasti, 1961, p. 73) who grow up under her pen, and develop under the influence of thought or sorrow.

In *Middlemarch*, the stock women characters are not rendered in detail. Eliot deals with three main women figures from the three main classes: Dorothea Brooke, Rosamond Vincy, and Mary Garth. These women occupy different societal roles. Dorothea, for instance,

was regarded as an heiress; for not only had the sisters seven hundred a-year each from their parents, but if Dorothea married and had a son, that son would inherit Mr. Brooke's estate, presumably worth about three thousand a-year--a rental which seemed wealth to provincial families. (Eliot, 2000, p.7)

She is from aristocracy whose male members were educated and occupied high positions in the society such as the rector of a town, doctor, and lawyer. The women, however, were not given much chance to develop themselves intellectually. They could only arrange meetings, dinners, receptions and visits which kept them busy. George Eliot lets her readers observe the aristocracy with her characters, especially with Dorothea Brooke.

Dorothea's refined taste, moral values and enthusiasm for learning set her apart from the other women in *Middlemarch*. Dorothea is a "genuine creation and a most remarkable one when we consider the delicate material in which she is wrought" (James, 1953, p. 162). She is the first character introduced in the novel. She has a pure beauty supported by her plain dressing and garments. She is resembled to "the Blessed Virgin" (Eliot, 2000, p. 5), and her impressiveness to "a fine quotation from the Bible" (Eliot, 2000, p. 5). She is seen as "remarkably clever" (Eliot, 2000, p. 5) by

the townspeople, and she knows the passages of Pascal and Jeremy Taylor. Despite her “narrow and promiscuous” education “first in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family at Lausanne” (Eliot, 2000, p. 6), her education is inadequate as it was not systematically programmed. Dorothea “seeks to know more than her meagre education has so far allowed her, and thereby to do more than her society designates as appropriate to her” (Beer, 1986, p.173). She has high aspirations for self improvement through which she can help the betterment of the society. Her theoretic mind is

after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. (Eliot, 2000, p. 6)

At the very beginning of the novel, Dorothea’s willingness to achieve something great for the world is stated. She is not a girl of mediocre expectations and tries to get rid of the bondages of being a woman despite “the meanness of opportunity” (Eliot, 2000, p. 4) in the world of Middlemarch. Though Dorothea develops plans, she has ambivalence about what to do because of her lack of certainty on the necessary actions for upheaval in the society, which could be provided with a proper education. She is trying to find a great cause for the sake of which she could make necessary self-sacrifices, but she does not know what that cause would be and how she should act. She craves to accomplish something but she does not know what and how to do it, which reflects the common problem of women at that time: aimlessness. They did not know what to expect and what to do because of the lack of opportunities and the societal oppression for women. Likewise, the social environment of Dorothea does not support her intellectual development because “women [are] expected to have weak opinions . . . that opinions [are] not acted on” (Eliot, 2000, p. 7). The common belief in the society is not in favour of

women, and women's ideas are not seen as valuable. "Open and ardent" young Dorothea's ideas clash with the society's notions. The rural opinion inferred from Dorothea's eyes is that she is unusual and striking.

Rosamond Vincy, on the other hand, is the representative of the middle-class women. She is the daughter of Mr. Walter Vincy, the mayor of Middlemarch, and a middle-class manufacturer. She is held up as the best example of her class by her school teacher because she has developed herself in terms of social graces and manner. She gives importance to furniture, clothes, jewellery, trinkets and the other ornaments, for she desires to live in a "romantic" world. She is after rising in the class ladder, hence she waits for the right man to come and marry her. She marries Dr. Tertius Lydgate as he is an outsider, and he has good family connections. Even after marriage, she needs constant attention of male suitors, and she enjoys being flattered. She is the product of Victorian bourgeois society; through her the reader traces how a society affects an individual. As Marx and Engels state,

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour . . . we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at corporeal man, rather we proceed from the real, active man . . . Consciousness does not determine life: life determines consciousness. (as cited in Eagleton, 1976, p. 4)

In the town of Middlemarch, people are classified in accordance with their material lives, which in turn affect their spiritual lives. Hence, like the other characters, Rosamond's mercenariness is moulded by her environment, and she is the product of her class.

Mary Garth is the oldest daughter of the Garth family from working class. Her personality traits, especially her being fair, are mentioned frequently in the novel. She is twenty two years old, and single. She has an ordinary appearance, with "a broad face and square brow, well-marked

eyebrows and curly dark hair, a certain expression of amusement in her glance which her mouth keeps the secret of". When angry "she would not raise her voice, but would probably say one of the bitterest things you have ever tasted the flavor of," and when she encounters a kindness "she would never forget it" (Eliot, 2000, p. 332). With these examples, her personality traits are revealed. She is not as ambitious as Rosamond; rather, she is a plain girl of humble expectations. She works to support her family financially. Mary and her family have the moral virtues that the middle class people lack. They are honest, fair, and hardworking.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN'S VAIN PURSUIT OF EDUCATION IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Eliot emphasises the importance of education as it is “one of the key factors that greatly determines the characters and George Eliot takes as her central topic the unfit preparation of women for life’s opportunities” (Beer, 1987, p. 159). She directs the attention of the readers to the issue of women’s education because “Girls at all levels of society were educationally deprived, as compared with boys of their own class” (Perkin, 1993, p. 27). The inequality in the educational opportunities between the sexes and among the classes is reflected through Dorothea, Rosamond, and Mary.

Except education, Dorothea has almost everything that a girl of her own age was considered to need or at least desire: class, wealth, and a lot of free time in an aristocratic milieu. She is full of ardour to do great deeds for the good of humanity. She seeks a way to fulfil her plans, yet does not know what to do because she “[was] oppressed by the indefiniteness which hung in her mind, like thick summer haze, over all her desire to make her life greatly affective” (Eliot, 2000, p. 20). The uncertainty of Dorothea arises from the society’s view of women regardless of their class, and her lack of education. In order to get beyond the limits the society has imposed on women, she draws cottage plans and tries to persuade men to build them. In a way, she gets the men to accept her as an individual. She shows her drawings to Sir James Chettam in order to be approved by a male. Sir Chettam is already ubiquitous to spend time with Dorothea, for he is courting her.

With this scene, Eliot shows the efforts of a noble woman in search of knowledge trying to be accepted by the male culture. Although Dorothea is from the highest rank in the social strata, she still needs the approval of a male, for the norms of the patriarchal social order lead women to forming such perception. They feel the need to be approved by the male members of the society. Not only Dorothea, but also Rosamond and Mary are bound to the men in *Middlemarch*, which testifies that the male dominated norms have already penetrated into the all sub-cultures.

Dorothea refuses to be satisfied with fashion embroidery which keeps other women busy. For example, when her sister Celia wants to divide their deceased mother's jewels, Dorothea does not care much and says: "they are all yours, dear. We need discuss them no longer. There-take away your property." (Eliot, 2000, p. 10). Moreover, she peremptorily tells her sister, who urges her to wear a pearl cross, that she cannot wear a cross as an ornament.

Although apparently prudish, this tendency also illustrates Dorothea's individualistic unwillingness to conform to established gender codes, which correlate[s] femininity and external appearances. Her mode of sub- version is subtle enough not to shock society but obvious and often explicit enough to be registered by it. (Moscovici, 1995, p. 520)

Rather than wasting time with jewellery and other ornaments, she longs for a life apart from what the society offers to women. "Dorothea is no less a victim of the patriarchal order for refusing to conform to its conventional expectations in respect of the role and behaviour of women" (Billington, 2008, p. 76). She insists on doing something more useful than what other women do, she "despise[s] women a little for not shaping their lives more and doing better things" (Eliot, 2000, p. 447). She blames other women who do not endeavour for the betterment of their circumstances.

She has an education "comparable to the nibbling and judgements of a discursive mouse" (Eliot, 2000, p. 23). Dorothea is in search of knowledge because she "strives for a form of personal fulfilment which

would transcend egoism and integrate individual desire with social demands” (Shuttleworth, 1992, p.106). When Sir James Chettam, a wealthy baronet, and the scholarly clergyman Edward Casaubon have dinner at Brookes, Chettam mentions his new plans of farming, and asks Dorothea whether she approves his ideas or not. She answers:

It is better to spend money in finding out how men can make the most of the land which supports them all, than in keeping dogs and horses only to gallop over it. It is not a sin to make yourself poor in performing experiments for the good of all. (Eliot, 2000, p.13)

She is ready to dedicate herself to the betterment of the society as she believes that everybody is responsible for everybody. She tries to enhance the welfare of Middlemarch society by helping the people around. She puts effort into public assistance; she spends her time for “the infant school which she had set going in the village,” and draws “plans for some buildings” (Eliot, 2000, p. 8). She delights in dealing with these activities because she wants to develop her town. The society, however, provides women with fewer opportunities compared to men. “Women are especially vulnerable because society offers them so little to do, expects less, and never imagines that they need work as much as men do” (Blake, 1976, p. 289). Women were to sit in their homes waiting for their husbands and handling the chores.

The member of middle class, Rosamond Vincy, however, is ready to conform to the norms of the society as a conventional type. She takes advantage of the opportunities provided by the society for women such as ornaments, furniture, clothes, an education, and a social circle. Her qualities are different and specific to her class, and she is portrayed as Dorothea’s foil. Eliot’s motive in creating a character like Rosamond is to compare and contrast the two women to highlight the qualities of Dorothea by criticising Victorian middle class women.

Rosamond lives for all that which Dorothea considers superficial: decorum, luxury, romantic flirtation, and the other materialistic things. Rosamond

as a maiden apparently beguiled by attractive merchandise, was the reverse of Miss Brooke, and in this respect perhaps bore more resemblance to Rosamond Vincy, who had excellent taste in costume, with that nymph-like figure and pure blindness which give the largest range to choice in the flow and color of drapery. (Eliot, 2000, p. 79)

Unlike Dorothea, Rosamond does not expect much in terms of education from the society, and she is content with her educational background, for “the first thing of importance is to be content to be inferior to men, inferior in mental power in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength” (Perkin, 1993, p. 31). Having digested this preliminary information, Rosamond “displays no feminist rejection of a woman’s scope of action, though, throwing all her will, energy into achieving the daintiest wardrobe and the highest-ranking, best-providing husband possible” (Blake, 1976, p 301). She does not have high aspirations like achieving deeds for the good of all, rather she has egotistic objectives. For instance, she desires to better her social milieu by marrying a man from a higher rank because she is the product of capitalist order which has imposed on girls the notion of finding a husband from the upper social strata. For this purpose, she acquires the education offered for women at that time. She attended the chief school in the country, Mrs Lemon’s school where “the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female” (Eliot, 2000, p. 79). She was the brightest student among her peers, and Mrs. Lemon held up Miss Vincy as an example.

Rosamond never showed an unbecoming knowledge, and was always that combination of correct sentiments, music, dancing, drawing, elegant note writing, private album for extracted verse, and perfect blond loveliness which made the irresistible woman for the doomed man of that date. (Eliot, 2000, p. 222)

The education given to middle class daughters in the 18th and 19th centuries was based on the masculine expectations of society. The courses included dancing, playing musical instruments, writing letters, singing songs so that an “educated” girl could keep her husband happy. “Girls learn something of music, drawing, and geography, but they do not know enough to engage their attention, and render it an employment of the mind” (Wollstonecraft, 1787, p. 25). They were not thought to ponder and reason. The aim for a girl was set just after she was born: to marry. The primary concern of a Victorian father was to find a suitable bridegroom. After taking the sort of education, a middle class girl waited for a good match. The sole aim of the middle class girls was to be perfect wives and mothers. A woman’s first duty in life is to “cultivate her feminine talents in the emotional realm so as to maximize their usefulness within the domestic orbit” (Rowbotham, 1989, p. 21). Rosamond’s education, by developing her feminine talents such as playing the piano and dancing, prepares her for marriage because

the wife's entire dependence on the husband, every privilege or pleasure she has being either his gift, or depending entirely on his will . . . social ambition, can in general be sought or obtained by her only through him, it would be a miracle if the object of being attractive to men had not become the polar star of feminine education and formation of character. (Mill, 2008, p. 19)

For Eliot, the ideal woman should not sit at home and wait for an appropriate match but have higher aspirations such as striving for self-development, and working for the betterment of the society. Rosamond, however, “with her equivocal name- mystical rose of the world and worldly rose- is a tragic satire on the ideal woman as described in much Victorian writings” (Beer, 1986, p. 153). Through Rosamond, Eliot points out the contrasting characteristics of her “ideal woman.” Her disapproval of the Victorian ideal woman is also depicted through Rosamond, as she is a carefully formed Victorian woman from that society. She is the foil of Dorothea. She is also the means of criticizing the type of education given to the girls in the 19th century.

As a member of the working class, Mary Garth does not have the chance of getting a proper education. She has to work and earn money to support the family financially as working class women did in the 19th century. For a short period of time, she attends Mrs. Lemon's school but as an apprentice to learn how to teach and use this skill later to earn money. However, her basic education has been provided by her mother at home. She learns through her experiences in life and draws on them when necessary. Her virtues such as "truth-telling fairness" and "honesty" (Eliot, 200, p. 93) are the results of her education. Her mother is a former teacher, and her father deals with the estates of the other people in town. She is influenced and educated by the virtues of her parents.

Mary might have become cynical if she had not had parents whom she honoured, and a well of affectionate gratitude within her, which was all the fuller because she had learned to make no unreasonable claims. (Eliot, 2000, p. 261)

She learns the necessities of life through experience, and she is realistic rather than romantic. She does not want to be taken for granted because she has self-confidence. For instance, she says "I do like to be spoken to as if I had common-sense. I really often feel as if I could understand a little more than I ever hear even from young gentlemen who have been to college" (Eliot, 2000, p.113). As she learns by experience, she thinks she is more knowledgeable than the men attending schools. Unlike Rosamond, she is not after dreams. "She neither trie[s] to create illusions, nor indulge[s] in them for her own behoof, and when she [is] in a good mood, she [has] humour enough in her to laugh at herself" (Eliot, 2000, p. 93). She has the awareness which Rosamond lacks. She is realistic rather than being idealistic, she knows her capabilities and limits as a woman.

Besides criticizing the lack of educational opportunities for women in the 19th century England, Eliot also indicates that the education provided to men is of poor quality. She makes a criticism of education of men via Mary's knowledge and her sensibility. For example, she gives advice to

Fred, who has received proper education. She guides her in his vocational issues, and she even writes a book consisting stories for her children. Mary also knows literary works of Shakespeare, Goldsmith, and Sir Walter Scott. While discussing love with Fred, she says that

There is Juliet--she seems an example of what you say. But then Ophelia had probably known Hamlet a long while; and Brenda Troil--she had known Mordant Merton ever since they were children; but then he seems to have been an estimable young man; and Minna was still more deeply in love with Cleveland, who was a stranger. Waverley was new to Flora MacIvor; but then she did not fall in love with him. And there are Olivia and Sophia Primrose, and Corinne--they may be said to have fallen in love with new men. (Eliot, 2000, p. 114)

Actually, neither women nor men were endowed with proper educational opportunities. In the 19th century, the types of education offered to individuals were designed in accordance with the “needs” of the age. The main principle of education was utilitarianism⁴. Girls, for instance, were educated to be more useful, and being useful meant finding suitable husbands and begetting children. They were not given the sort of education planned for the males. They were taught to write letters, sing songs, dance, play the piano, and choose dresses and ornaments for different occasions. Boys, on the other hand, took the education in a field their fathers determined either to continue their fathers’ professions or to set up new businesses with the financial support of the fathers.

Women’s lack of opportunity of education is connected to and results from the beliefs of men. In the 19th century, women were believed to be “a bundle of weak and flabby sentiments, combined with a wholly undeveloped brain” (as cited in Thomas, 1994, pp. 30-31). As they were

⁴ On the utilitarian view one ought to maximize the overall good, that is, consider the good of others as well as one's own good. The proponent of the movement Jeremy Bentham argued that "every action should be judged right or wrong according to how far it tends to promote or damage the happiness of the community" (Dimwiddy, 1989, p.29). Bentham and his disciples aimed “to test all institutions in the light of human reason in order to determine whether such institutions were useful- that is whether they contributed to the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers” (Abrams, 1986, p.923). The idea of utilitarianism penetrated all the social institutions and became the dominant belief in the 19th century capitalist society.

considered inferior beings compared to men, they were not provided with the opportunities offered to men. The male characters in *Middlemarch* have dismissive attitude and prejudices against women. At the beginning of the novel, the notion is stated “women were expected to have weak opinions” (Eliot, 2000, p. 7). In line with this idea, the male characters of *Middlemarch* state their opinions on women. When Dorothea comments on Sir James’s plan, her uncle Mr. Brooke interferes by saying “young ladies don't understand political economy,” (Eliot, 2000, p.13) a comment which offends Dorothea. Casaubon is in support of using Dorothea as a secretary; Mr. Brooke responds “I cannot let young ladies meddle with my documents. Young ladies are too flighty” (Eliot, 2000, pp. 15-16). His attitude is the same towards other women; he tells Mrs. Cadwallader about politics “that is what you ladies never understand . . . your sex are not thinkers” (p. 44). He also shares his views with Casaubon “. . . such deep studies, classics, mathematics, that kind of thing, are too taxing for a woman” and furthers his discussion:

...there is a lightness about the feminine mind-a touch and go-music, the fine arts, that kind of thing-they should study those up to a certain point, women should; but in a light way, you know. A woman should be able to sit down and play you or sing you a good old English tune. This is what I like. (Eliot, 2000, p. 53)

The society’s oppressive influence on women’s education is explained through the ideas of men. The male characters are affected by the society and men consider women as unintelligent beings. Sir James Chettam also sees women as inferior to men, when he compares himself with Dorothea he thinks that “A man’s mind . . . has always the advantage of being masculine – as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm – and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality” (Eliot, 2000, p. 17). Although he likes Dorothea’s cleverness, he has doubts on how to overcome the predominance of her if they marry. Mr. Farebrother’s belief strengthens the position of women as a supporting partner “a good wife-a

good unworldly woman-may really help a man, and keep him more independent” (p. 145). Caleb Garth also believes that “a woman, let her be as good as she may, has got to put up with the life her husband makes for her” (Eliot, 2000, p. 213). Similarly, Mr. Trumbull’s idea of a marriage is as follows “a man whose life is of any value should think of his wife as a nurse: that is what I should do, if I married” (Eliot, 2000, p. 260). The men in *Middlemarch* see women as helpers, wives, mothers, and they do not take them as equals to men in intelligence.

Eliot makes the male characters speak in this way so as to demonstrate the masculine ideas in the society. Women’s inferiority is inevitable in such a society where the members of the dominant gender have these concepts in their minds. Women have had few opportunities to develop themselves and they have been hindered by male values. For 19th century men considered women as secretaries, wives, mothers, helpmates, and nurses, they were not respected and valued much. Women did not have educational chances because of the existing masculine doctrines. Through her characters’ attitudes, thoughts, and feelings, Eliot reveals the masculine ideology of the age concerning the situation of women.

CHAPTER IV

ELIOT'S INTERPRETATION OF PATRIMONIAL MARRIAGES

Regardless of their class, women had very little opportunity to have a proper education in the 19th century. They were “deprived of education because of their sex, not because of their class” (Showalter, 1892, p. 41). Instead of being educated, they were led to marriage. If they happened to receive any kind of education, it prepared them to married life. In *Middlemarch*, three different types of marriage are illustrated with the marriages of Dorothea and Casaubon, Rosamond and Lydgate, and Mary and Fred.

Aware of the social norms and her inadequacies, Dorothea finds a way to attain education: marrying a man “of profound learning” (Eliot, 2000, p. 8). Even though she has had other options, she chooses to marry the Reverend Edward Casaubon who was

understood for many years to be engaged on a great work concerning religious history; also as a man of wealth enough to give lustre to his piety, and having views of his own which were to be more clearly ascertained on the publication of his book. (Eliot, 2000, p. 8)

Dorothea's views on his manners and personality concur with the opinion of Middlemarchers. She finds him very dignified by resembling him to Locke; she says to Celia that he is “one of the most distinguished-looking men [she] ever saw” (p.16). When Dorothea first learns about his great project of reconstructing an old world, she thinks “what a work to be in any way present at, to assist in, though only as a lamp-holder” (Eliot, 2000, p. 14). She is so hungry for knowledge that she wants to be a part of his study even as a lamp holder. She sees Casaubon as a source of knowledge and she fantasizes about him:

Here was a man who could understand the higher inward life, and with whom there could be some spiritual communion; nay, who could illuminate principle with the widest knowledge a man whose learning almost amounted to a proof of whatever he believed! (Eliot, 2000, p. 18)

From the moment Dorothea starts to know Casaubon, she associates him with learning, and wants to make use of his vast knowledge as she has no other choice to get education. She sees marrying such a man as a means of education. Even if she is from aristocracy, she has very restricted opportunities to be more educated because girls could only be transformed into “professional Household Fairies or Home Goddesses via a rigorous that by no means concentrated on formal academic lessons” (Rowbotham, 1989, p. 99). As she does not have any other option, she seeks education under the wings of a male, a father figure who is told to be talented and intellectual. She marries “the most interesting man she had ever seen” (Eliot, 2000, p.14). Dorothea is excited about learning more and more from Casaubon through whom she can get the opportunity to serve humanity.

Dorothea's reasons to marry Casaubon are not conventional. Her marriage is not her sole intention as she is not after finding a suitable husband through whom she can access comfort and luxury. She searches for a kind of fulfilment of the educational inadequacies in her life:

with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage. She felt sure that she would have accepted the judicious Hooker. . . or any of the other great men whose odd habits it would have been glorious piety to endure . . . delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it. (Eliot, 2000, p. 8)

Marriage is a vehicle for Dorothea to reach the unlimited knowledge. She compares her knowledge with Mr. Casaubon's with water imagery: “what a lake compared with my little pool” (Eliot, 2000, p. 20). She sees him highly sophisticated and dreams of being his wife. For Dorothea, marriage is a school where she can get vast knowledge, and Casaubon is the source of knowledge to become a different Dorothea. Through her communion with

him, she aims at developing herself, and attaining self-fulfilment. Her willingness to help other people around is another reason for choosing Casaubon. She is not sure how to help them, as she has limited knowledge. Once she marries him, she thinks that

I should learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it by. And then I should know what to do . . . I don't feel sure about doing good in any way now: everything seems like going on a mission to a people whose language I don't know;--unless it were building good cottages--there can be no doubt about that. Oh, I hope I should be able to get the people well housed in Lowick! I will draw plenty of plans while I have time. (Eliot, 2000, p. 23)

Casaubon, on the other hand, has other reasons to marry her. In a walk, he chats with Dorothea about the disadvantage of loneliness and the need of cheerful companionship. He decides to marry Dorothea so as to

adorn his life with the graces of female companionship, to irradiate the gloom which fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of studious labor with the play of female fancy, and to secure in this, his culminating age, the solace of female tendance for his declining years. (Eliot, 2000, p. 51)

Dorothea is the most suitable match for Casaubon because she has the qualities which he requires a lady to possess: beauty, respect, kindness, submissiveness, intelligence, and an aristocratic background.

Casaubon wants a highly educated dog, whose "devotedness" would serve him well in his project to enlighten the world. Such a servant must have certain qualities that fit his specifications and although he has not seen many examples of young women like this, Dorothea appears to fit the bill. (Marks, 2000, p. 31)

Whereas Dorothea has public-spirited aims, Casaubon has egotistic expectations from marriage like finding a servant and secretary to save his eyes, not to be alone, and to be cared and served. He is "the centre of his own world" (Eliot, 2000, p. 69). He is focused on his great work "the Key to All Mythologies," and does not deal with other issues like the aspirations of his wife, or educating her.

The main reason of women's accepting marriage is the patriarchal society which "attempt to force women into marriage by closing all other doors against them" (Mill, 2008, p.33). As they do not have any other alternative, they marry to a man. The world of Middlemarch leads Dorothea to such a marriage because the society offers very little opportunity of education to a woman like her, who is the member of the highest class in the society. In fact, "Middlemarch delivers Dorothea into the arms of Casaubon" (Blake, 1976, p. 290). She does not have any other option to be more knowledgeable than marrying an "intellectual" like Casaubon. The education that Dorothea gets does not satisfy her because it is

a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency. (Eliot, 2000, p. 23)

The education she has received does not suffice to actualize her dreams and aspirations. She sees Casaubon as the sole source of information, and she thinks of him:

Here was something beyond the shallows of ladies' school literature: here was a living Bossuet, whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety; here was a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint. (Eliot, 2000, p. 20)

When she receives the marriage proposal, she thinks "fuller life was opening before her" (Eliot, 2000, p. 36). Before marrying Casaubon, she wants him to teach her the subjects in his own track and in his great study. She says:

I am very ignorant-you will quite wonder at my ignorance, I have so many thoughts that may be quite mistaken; and now I shall be able to tell them all to you, and ask you about them . . . I will not trouble you too much; only when you are inclined to listen to me. You must often be weary with the pursuit of subjects in your own track. I shall gain enough if you will take me with you there. (Eliot, 2000, p. 41)

She craves for learning, and she is ready to serve Casaubon in his great work. Dorothea's eagerness to be an assistant to Casaubon's work discloses "the predominant social values that annexed and subordinated women to men" (Moscovici, 1995, p. 523). She has to act her predetermined role in the society.

From her initial family upbringing throughout her subsequent development, the social role assigned to the woman is that of serving an image, authoritative and central, of man: a woman is first and foremost a daughter/ a mother/ a wife. (Felman, 1975, p.2)

Dorothea does not have much chance rather than marrying and performing the role of a wife or mother. In both cases, women are bound to men, and abide by the rules of masculine order. However, for a woman at that time, she has high aspirations such as self-development, and working for the good of all. Though she tries hard to get beyond the limits of being a woman in a male dominated society, she hardly manages to do so.

Soon after making her decision to marry Casaubon, she inquires him asking "Could I not be preparing myself now to be more useful. . . could I not learn to read Latin and Greek aloud to you, as Milton's daughters did to their father, without understanding what they read?" (Eliot, 2000, p. 52). She expresses her enthusiasm to learn, even before marriage. Casaubon finds such a desire in a woman "wearisome." She wishes to learn Greek and Latin as "those provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing-ground from which all truth could be seen more truly" (Eliot, 2000, p. 52). She does what an intelligent girl living in a patriarchal society could do.

The classical education was the intellectual dividing line between men and women; intelligent women aspired to study Greek and Latin with a touching faith that such knowledge would open the world of male power and wisdom to them. (Showalter, 1892, 42)

As a woman willing education, she discovers the way of reaching the information: men, which is the primary reason of her marriage.

Casaubon has the criteria for the ideal wife such as being young and submissive, having religious values, and being a member of the aristocratic class. As a patriarchal 19th century man, he thinks 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. (Eliot, 2000, pp. 230-231)

Dorothea turns out to be more than what he demands: “a helpmate to him” just like “a hired secretary.” She also ends his loneliness, and is submissive at first as expected by the society.

Although Casaubon and Dorothea decide to marry with solid reasons, there are objections to their marriage. From the very beginning, Celia is against Dorothea’s marriage to Casaubon for she finds him “ugly.” The other Middlemarchers also have doubts stemming from the age gap between the two. For example, Mrs. Cadwallader comments that “marriage to Casaubon is as good as going to nunnery” (Eliot, 2000, p. 48), hinting that Dorothea will not get sexual satisfaction. She also has a prophecy for she says “Mark my words: in a year from this time that girl will hate him” (Eliot, 2000, p. 75). Similarly, Sir James Chettam, who has been courting Dorothea, disapproves the marriage by saying that she should not marry “the shadow of a man” (Eliot, 2000, p. 56). Despite being warned, Dorothea is determined to marry him as she considers his age as the leading factor in his “wisdom.”

Dorothea’s “youthful illusion” (Eliot, 2000, p.69) is shattered soon after their marriage. On their honeymoon in Rome, Dorothea is alone in her room “sobbing bitterly” (Eliot, 2000, p.160). She cannot blame anyone for this marriage but herself. She is in “an alien world” and “vast wreck of

ambitious ideals” agitates her like an “electric shock” (Eliot, 2000, p. 161). Casaubon is preoccupied with his great work and leaves Dorothea alone. Due to his lack of interest in her, Dorothea’s views of Casaubon “was gradually changing with the secret motion of a watch-hand from what it had been in her maiden dream” (Eliot, 2000, p. 162). She “felt with a stifling depression, that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither” (Eliot, 2000, p.163). As the time goes by, Dorothea understands that she was disillusioned. She begins “to see that she had been under a wild illusion in expecting a response to her feeling from Mr. Casaubon” (Eliot, 2000, p. 177). After their honeymoon, Dorothea’s notion of marriage changes, she thinks that

Marriage, which was to bring guidance into worthy and imperative occupation, had not yet freed her from the gentlewoman's 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. (Eliot, 2000, p. 227)

She is awakened to the truth that Casaubon is not the man of her dreams, and marriage is not as she thought of. Her expectations are not satisfied by the husband, for he lacks interest in Dorothea’s education. As a self-centred man, Casaubon spends his time in libraries, or studies on his “great work.”

Eliot aims to unveil the masculine understanding of marriage in the 19th century in which woman is bound to her husband’s wishes. Wives could only be puppets, obeying the rules of their husbands. As a conventional man, Casaubon embodies the traditional husband figure who considers that the women’s place should be where her husband demands. Woman should fulfil the duties of being a wife. Hence, he expects Dorothea to be an obedient, proper wife not meddling with his work. Dorothea,

however, is not such a woman. Through her, Eliot illustrates the type of woman who sees the need for change and tries to go beyond the defined role for a woman.

Egotism is the main reason of Casaubon's indifference to Dorothea. "He cannot abandon his own egoism and recognize the individuality of the person he has married" (Neale, 1989, p. 101). His selfishness is combined with jealousy when his cousin Will Ladislaw befriends Dorothea in Rome. Will thinks that Casaubon is not suitable for Dorothea; to him "it was too intolerable that Dorothea should be worshipping this husband: such weakness in a woman is pleasant to no man but the husband in question" (Eliot, 2000, p. 172). When Casaubon learns that Dorothea has received Will in his absence, he gets angry but he does not express his feelings.

Despite her husband's uneasiness, Dorothea is content with Ladislaw's being around because "it was a source of greater freedom to her that Will was there; his young equality was agreeable, and also perhaps his openness to conviction" (Eliot, 2000, p. 174). As Casaubon does not spend time with her, she keeps the company of Will. He helps Dorothea realize her situation better and she comes to evaluate her life as looking "much uglier and more bungling than the pictures" (Eliot, 2000, p. 183). Will agrees with Dorothea by saying "you will be shut up in that stone prison at Lowick: you will be buried alive" (Eliot, 2000, p. 183). Her friendship with Will makes her aware of her disillusionment. She starts comparing her husband with Will. He is only two or three years older than Dorothea, which eases his empathy with her. He can understand her better than Casaubon, for he is concerned about her. They share opinions, information, and feelings with each other. Will is like a soul mate for Dorothea.

Eliot depicts Will Ladislaw as a "dream" man for women of the *Middlemarch*, for he has qualities not pertaining to the age he lives in. He is romantic, handsome, kind, emotional, and carefree. His physical

appearance attracts the attention of women at first glance. In addition to his “light brown curls and slim figure” (Eliot, 2000, p. 63), he has

a pair of gray eyes rather near together, a delicate irregular nose with a little ripple in it, and hair falling backward; but there was a mouth and chin of a more prominent, threatening aspect. (Eliot, 2000, p. 65)

When Dorothea asks him about his religion, he replies: “To love what is good and beautiful when I see it, . . . I am a rebel: I don't feel bound, as you do, to submit to what I don't like” (Eliot, 2000, p. 323). Will defines himself as a romantic, and in fact the way of life he claims to have is no different from the life of the Byronic hero, for the “hero is an outlaw and an outsider who defines his own moral code, often defying oppressive institutional authority” (Stein, 2004, p. 8). Mr. Brooke's first impression about Will is that “he may turn out a Byron, a Chatterton⁵” (Eliot, 2000, p. 67). After some time he says that “[Will] seems to [him] a kind of Shelley” (Eliot, 2000, p. 296); he associates Will with the romantic poets saying “he has the same sort of enthusiasm for liberty, freedom, emancipation” (Eliot, 2000, p. 296). Mrs Cadwallader, too, comments on his personality saying that “he's a dangerous young sprig, that Mr. Ladislaw. . . with his opera songs and his ready tongue. A sort of Byronic hero- an amorous conspirator” (Eliot, 2000, p. 131).

Considering his love for Dorothea, he may be labelled as a Byronic hero, for “His feelings for Dorothea, and their forbidden love, are coloured by Byronic undertones” (Wootton, 2008, p. 28). Will is drawn as a romantic character. When he is first introduced in the novel, he is an artist sketching natural objects. At the end of the novel, however, he is portrayed as being integrated into the capitalist society, for he becomes a politician. In a letter to Mrs Charles Bray in 1869, Eliot expressed her feelings for Byron and his poetry as “[having] become more and more repugnant to me of late years” (as cited in Wootton, 2008, p. 28). As the novelist of the Victorian age, she was aware of the decreasing influence of romanticism in the 19th century.

⁵ Thomas Chatterton is regarded as one of the first Romantic poets.

Through the initial “dilettante” personality of Will, and through his transformation from a romantic young man to a realistic politician, she shows that Romantic period is over and cannot be called back. Neo-Romanticism is out of question in the new capitalist world order.

Will’s sensibility, understanding, knowledge in fine arts, and his unspoiled soul gain the admiration of women. Rosamond, as Mrs. Lydgate, for example, enjoys spending time with Will. He knows how to entertain and court women. He would be an ideal husband, for he is the foil of Casaubon. “The married Dorothea’s growing relationship with Will Ladislaw serves as a foil to countermand the deficiencies of her relationship with Casaubon” (Marks, 2000, p. 33). Befriending Will provides Dorothea with criteria to understand her husband’s character. She realizes that Casaubon is a selfish man, dealing only with his “great” work, and he has no interest in Dorothea’s self- development.

Through the male figures’ behaviours and attitudes towards women, male dominated ideology and its effects on the female characters are illustrated. In such a social structure, gender roles and the social rank of an individual shapes her/his personality. Mary’s attitude to Fred is the same from the beginning to the end. She maintains her ethical stance throughout the novel. On the other hand, Rosamond, though married to Lydgate, is flirtatious, enjoying the admiration of men around her. However, Dorothea, as an aristocratic woman, conceals her emotions. She marries Casaubon not because she is in love with him, but because she is after being educated by him. Moreover, in her developing relationship with Will, neither the readers nor the characters in the novel know for sure Dorothea’s real feelings for him. In fact, she shows her devotion to duty, she fulfils all her responsibilities as a wife and as a high ranking member of the society. She hardly ever behaves in accordance with her feelings. Eliot indicates, through Dorothea and the others, the class the character belongs to determines the personality traits of that character. Dorothea’s cold,

reserved manners can be associated with the reticent culture of aristocracy. In this sense, she represents the aristocratic alienation from the other social classes.

As a responsible wife, Dorothea tries to attract Casaubon's attention despite his indifference. When they are still in Rome for their honeymoon, to show her interest in his study Dorothea asks Casaubon "will you not make up your mind what part of them you will use, and begin to write the book which will make your vast knowledge useful to the world?" she adds that she is ready to help him: "I will write to your dictation, or I will copy and extract what you tell me: I can be of no other use" (Eliot, 2000, p.166). Unfortunately, her question infuriates Casaubon, and he thinks of her as "a spy watching everything with a malign power of inference" (Eliot, 2000, p. 167). Casaubon's views on Dorothea also start to change soon after their marriage.

Eliot depicts Casaubon as a limiting character, with prejudices about people. He suppresses them due to their background, social role, gender, and education. He limits Will in terms of money as he supports him financially. He limits Dorothea's self development, for he thinks that she is his wife and has to be bound to his lifestyle. Acting within the boundaries of class structure, Casaubon suppresses the people around him, and Eliot demonstrates that he is neither physically nor psychologically healthy. Wearing the mask of a scholar and hiding behind his "knowledge," he disdains the others. He has already attributed a social role to himself and does not want to go out of the limits he has already set for himself. He is a self- deceptive pseudo- intellectual acting hypocritically. He seems to be a great scholar, but in reality, he feels that he is not worth the value given to him by the society, for he has "been trying not to admit even to himself the inward sores of self-doubt and jealousy" (Eliot, 2000, p. 311). After all, he cannot finish his work; he just keeps himself busy with the already discovered knowledge. Casaubon's irritation by the presence of Will shows

that he lacks self-confidence, which made him develop a “deeper fixity of self delusion” (Eliot, 2000, p. 69).

With Casaubon, Eliot presents a case of dramatic irony, which gives hints about the situation of the aristocratic male members in the 19th century. He regards himself as a great scholar, though the readers know that he makes effort for nothing. His work is associated with the ruins in Rome in the novel, and “the ruins are literal, concrete version of a train of association that suggest the moribund uselessness of Casaubon’s work” (Billington, 2008, p. 36). In the 19th century England, similar to Casaubon, members of aristocracy put effort into useless works, and they were not aware of the situation.

As an aristocratic member of the male-dominated society, Casaubon depresses Dorothea, and as argued by Simone de Beauvoir “The oppression is to be explained by the tendency of the existent to flee from himself by means of identification with the other, whom he oppresses,” and

Man is concerned with the effort to appear male, important, superior; he pretends so as to get a pretence in return; he, too, is aggressive, uneasy; he feels hostility for women because he is afraid of the personage, the image with which he identifies himself. (1962, p. 452)

Grown up with patriarchal doctrines, Casaubon needs to demonstrate his masculine power over Dorothea and his social inferiors and show off with his knowledge. His marriage with Dorothea reveals his personality traits. He is egotistic, irresponsible, and an opportunist. With Casaubon, Eliot criticizes the unhealthy elite Victorian male identity, and expression of this identity through oppressing women.

Middle class’s representative Rosamond Vincy’s reasons for marriage differ from Dorothea’s. She aspires to marry a wealthy aristocratic man to elevate her place in the social structure. She has a remarkable physical beauty and knows how to use it. She is resembled to a nymph with her slim figure. She is a blonde girl having the “hair of infantine fairness,

neither flaxen nor yellow,” and she has heavenly eyes “deep enough to hold the most exquisite meanings an ingenious beholder could put into them, and deep enough to hide the meanings of the owner if these should happen to be less exquisite” (Eliot, 2000, p. 92). She is referred to as a “rare compound of beauty, cleverness, and amiability” (Eliot, 2000, p. 222). Her physical features reflect her characteristics.

By a simple transference, Rosamond’s blondness comes to have this suggestion too; her blond hair (and her gesture of patting it), her long neck, her ‘silverly neutral’ voice, all become, as the novel proceeds, aspects of her character as well as of her physical qualities. (Daiches, 1973, p. 27)

She is, however, egotistic as she only cares for herself and the only thing she considers is her own good. She is also neutral like her voice in the subjects that are not related to her. For instance, she does not contemplate on financial issues. Money is something provided to her by others. When her husband gets into debt, she does not care at all although her extravagance is the reason of his situation. She does not support him at all and says: “This is all the jewellery you ever gave me. You can return what you like of it, and of the plate also. You will not, of course, expect me to stay at home tomorrow. I shall go to papa’s” (Eliot, 2000, p. 491). When they have to return the jewellery and the plate having materialistic value, Rosamond does not want to stay with her husband, but she prefers to go to his father’s comfortable house. Rosamond’s attitude reveals that her character is affected by the capitalist culture. Money means a lot to her, without it she feels helpless and decides to go her affluent father’s home. Through her, the dominant ideology in the middle classes is presented.

“Rosamond Vincy, the prize pupil of Mrs. Lemon’s finishing school, is offered as an epitome of what nineteenth century society seeks in its women” (Chase, 1991, p. 12). She is the personification of “ideal woman” for the people in the town. The men of *Middlemarch* believe that she is the “best girl in the world,” and some call her an “angel” (Eliot, 2000, p. 92). Middle class women were considered “the angel in the house” in the 19th

century; Rosamond depicted as the epitome of the middle class women. The male characters also prefer Rosamond over the other women in *Middlemarch*. For example, Mr. Chichely says he likes women “with a certain gait, and a swan neck . . . the mayor's daughter is more to my taste than Miss Brooke or Miss Celia either” (Eliot, 2000, p. 73). She is given value because of her beauty and outer appearance by the men in town; therefore, “it is not futile for her to attach so much importance as she does to silk or nylon stockings, to gloves, to a hat because it is an imperative obligation for her to keep up her position” (Beauvoir, 1962, pp. 267-268). Rosamond is the product of the patriarchal society's expectations and norms.

Rosamond is aware of her beauty, and her “every nerve and muscle [is] adjusted to the consciousness that she [is] being looked at” (Eliot, 2000, p. 96). With the help of her beauty, she is prepared to take her place as a commodity in the marriage market. Taking that “education,” Rosamond is filled with the desire to ascend in the social ladder. That is why she marries Lydgate, the nephew of a baronet. She is only after money, furniture, and clothes. She gives importance to her outfit and beauty. “The interior of this lovely skull is a perfect rag-and-bottle shop of lace collars, china, gossip, status-hunger, spite, envy, unsatisfied desire, and vanity controlled by an adamant and unyielding self-will” (Austen, 1976, p. 559). The gap between Rosamond's outward grace and her thirst for rank, luxury, and her extravagance is described through her behaviour.

Being prepared for marriage, Rosamond's drive is apparent as she longs for climbing the ladder of class, and having a comfortable life. Doctor Lydgate is a suitable match for Rosamond because

. . . a stranger was absolutely necessary for Rosamond's social romance, which had always turned on a lover and a bridegroom who was not a Middlemarcher, and who had no connections at all like her own: of late indeed the construction seemed to demand that he should somehow be related to a baronet. (Eliot, 2000, p. 97)

And marrying Lydgate presents Rosamond with

a prospect of rising in rank and getting a little nearer to that celestial condition on earth in which she would have nothing to do with vulgar people, and perhaps at last associate with relatives quite equal to the county people who looked down on Middlemarchers. (Eliot, 2000, p. 133)

She thinks that once she marries him, she will reach or be close to the aristocracy as her suitor comes from an aristocratic background. Lydgate considers her “to have the true melodic charm” (Eliot, 2000, p. 77), and is attracted by the beauty of Rosamond. He thinks that her “small feet and perfectly turned shoulders aid the impression of refined manners, and the right thing said seems quite astonishingly right when it is accompanied with exquisite curves of lip and eyelid” (Eliot, 2000, p. 131). For Lydgate, a woman should have “a feminine radiance” which he relates to the “distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous, being moulded only for pure and delicate joys” (Eliot, 2000, p. 136).

Eliot depicts Lydgate as the representative of the Middlemarchers. Like them, he evaluates women in term of physical appearance. He admires Rosamond because she has a remarkable beauty. Masculine frame of mind moulds women-men relationship on the beauty of women, making them commodities in patriarchal capitalist society. Grown up with the patriarchal doctrines, men try to obtain the best commodity in the market.

Although Rosamond’s physical beauty is the first thing attracting his attention, Lydgate also thinks that she is clever “with that sort of cleverness which catches every tone except the humorous” (Eliot, 2000, p. 131) and she has “the kind of intelligence one would desire in a woman- polished, refined, docile” (Eliot, 2000, p.133). Rosamond is good at attracting men. For example, while conversing with Lydgate she pretends to be naive by saying “I assure you my mind is raw” (Eliot, 2000, p. 132). He admires her

“modesty,” and after hearing Rosamond playing the piano, he “[has been] taken possession of, and [begins] to believe in her as something exceptional” (Eliot, 2000, p. 133). Lydgate’s attraction to her “results mostly from his assumption that her absolute conventionality assures a socially prescribed feminine subservience to him and his profession” (Moscovici, 1995, p. 525). Lydgate’s expectations from marriage have also been shaped by the gender roles of women and men at that time.

Lydgate, you perceive, had talked fervidly to Rosamond of his hopes as to the highest uses of his life, and had found it delightful to be listened to by a creature who would bring him the sweet furtherance of satisfying affection--beauty--repose--such help as our thoughts get from the summer sky and the flower-fringed meadows. (Eliot, 2000, p. 293)

At the beginning of their affair, Rosamond and Lydgate view each other as mirrors that reflect flattering versions of stereotyped gender expectations.

He seemed to her almost perfect: if he had known his notes so that his enchantment under her music had been less like an emotional elephant's, and if he had been able to discriminate better the refinements of her taste in dress, she could hardly have mentioned a deficiency in him. (Eliot, 2000, p. 221)

Lydgate’s past also shapes his ideal wife figure. He was orphaned when he finished public school. His father was a military man, he had two siblings. Lydgate wanted to have a medical education. At the age of ten, he realised that “books were stuff, and that life was stupid” (Eliot, 2000, p. 119). He easily mastered knowledge, and he was mature in a short time. He went to Paris to study medicine “with the determination that when he came home again he would settle in some provincial town as a general practitioner” (Eliot, 2000, p. 121). After his education, he wanted to work on anatomy and “make a link at the chain of discovery” (Eliot, 2000, p. 121). When he came to Middlemarch, his plan was “to do small work for Middlemarch, and great work for the world” (Eliot, 2000, p. 124). Despite his noble aspirations, his “spots of commonness lay in the complexion of his prejudices” (Eliot, 2000, p. 124). Before coming to Middlemarch, he was in

love with an actress, Madame Laure. She had dark eyes “a Greek profile, and rounded majestic form, having that sort of beauty which carries a sweet matronliness even in youth, and her voice was a soft cooing” (Eliot, 2000, p. 125). She was married, and her husband played the role of unfortunate lover stabbed by her. One day, she stabbed him on purpose on the stage, giving the impression of an accident. She went to another city, but Lydgate found her, expressed his admiration, and wanted her to marry him. She confessed her planned murder and added “I do not like husbands. I will never have another” (Eliot, 2000, p. 127). He was deeply in love with Laure and was disappointed for hearing the truth. Till he encounters Rosamond, he has not thought of falling in love or marriage. Lydgate compares them in his mind “Rosamond [is] her very opposite” (Eliot, 2000, p. 132). Although these two women are different from each other, Rosamond reminds Lydgate of Laure. In the early phases of their acquaintanceship, Rosamond behaves as if she was an actress. “She was by nature an actress of parts that entered into her physique: she even acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own” (Eliot, 2000, p. 97). She has been trained to find the most suitable husband, and she “always had an audience in her consciousness” (Eliot, 2000, p. 139) to act accordingly. Lydgate was seeking another image of Laure, and he found her in Rosamond. She had time to read “the best novels, and even the second best,” so she “had registered every look and word, and estimated them as the opening incidents of a preconceived romance” (Eliot, 2000, p. 139). She has accumulated the characteristics of a lady in her mind with the help of the books she read and the expectations of society, which makes her play the role effectively. Although she does not kill her husband like Laure, she has destructive impact on Lydgate. She causes him to go bankrupt. Once Lydgate compares them and asks himself “Would she kill me because I wearied her?” (Eliot, 2000, p. 487), in a way he feels that Rosamond will harm him.

It is through Rosamond that Eliot highlights the qualities of Dorothea such as selflessness, having moral values and high aspirations. While Rosamond deals with materialistic part of the life such as rank, money, finding a husband, and buying furniture, clothes, Dorothea gives importance to knowledge, education, and spirituality. She desires to be someone useful through accomplishing deeds to increase the welfare of the society. Eliot criticizes the Victorian ideal of womanhood because Rosamond's

accomplishments and refinement are achieved at expense of trivializing her intellect and coarsening her feelings, while her exquisite manner and charm conceal an egoism and social ambition which are the antithesis of the docility she appears to represent. (Billington, 2008, p. 76)

Eliot shows her readers the middle class women prototype with Rosamond. Through her, the audience in the 19th century were able to see their own reflections. Middle class is the consumer of not only the products but also the values in the society. However, they not only consume the values but also produce new "values" in the capitalist order. As Marx points out "superstructure is reared of various and peculiarly shaped feelings, illusions, habit of thought and conceptions of life. The whole class produces and shapes these out of its material foundation and out of the corresponding social conditions" (as cited in Williams, 1977, p. 75). As the middle classes came to control the economy in the 19th century England, they were able to assert their own materialistic worldview based on money. The members of Vincy family are all materialist people. As middle class parents, Mr. and Mrs. Vincy lead their children to worldliness, and they do not care much when Rosamond and Fred are in trouble. Fred gets out of that money and status circle with the help of Mary Garth. Rosamond, however, is fond of trinkets, furniture, china, and rich ornaments like middle class women are expected to be. She assumes that having such things shows her as if she were from aristocracy. "If the toilette has so much importance for many women, it is because in illusion it enables them to remould the outer world and their inner selves simultaneously" (Beauvoir,

1962, p. 267). Rosamond craves for occupying a higher position than her current position in the society. She places value on people according to their ranks. For example, to Rosamond, Dorothea is “one of the county divinities not mixing with Middlemarch mortality” (Eliot, 2000, p. 356), hence she gets very excited when Dorothea pays a visit to their house for seeing Lydgate in order to get advice about her husband’s health. Eliot depicts Rosamond to denounce middle class lifestyle and expectations, and the place of women in the developing world. For Eliot, Rosamond, the representative figure of middle class, should have other values than status and money, and middle classes should develop other appreciations such as honesty, hard work, and utilitarianism.

In line with the aristocracy and middle class, working class’s concept of marriage is presented with Mary Garth. She has neither Rosamond’s physical beauty nor Dorothea’s nobility. She is a plain girl having a strong character. Her physical features are compared with those of Rosamond. Mary “ha[s] the aspect of an ordinary sinner: she [is] brown; her curly dark hair [is] rough and stubborn; her stature [is] low; and it would not be true to declare, in satisfactory antithesis, that she [ha s] all the virtues” (Eliot, 2000, p. 93). When she sees Rosamond’s and her reflections in the mirror she says “What a brown patch I am by the side of you, Rosy! You are the most unbecoming companion,” and Rosamond responds “Oh no! No one thinks of your appearance, you are so sensible and useful” (Eliot, 2000, p. 93). Nevertheless, Rosamond has never thought that “she [is] a girl to fall in love with” (Eliot, 2000, p. 99). Rosamond believes that Mary is not the type of girl to be loved because she does not possess the qualities required by men. A slim figure, fair complexion, musical charm, and feminine radiance are not inherent in her. Fred does not agree with his sister, he thinks that “She is the best girl [he] knows” (Eliot, 2000, p. 99). Fred has been in love with Mary since his childhood. Mary does not reciprocate to his love until he fulfils her requirement of being a decent man. Compared to Rosamond, she seems more reasonable about marriage, for Mary’s ultimate aim is not

marrying a wealthy man. She has other concerns such as supporting and helping her family. Mary does not submit to Fred's love and his wish to get married as soon as possible, she has conditions for marriage. Despite being proposed, she does not promise to marry Fred, and shows that her family ties are strong by saying "My father would think it a disgrace to me if I accepted a man who got into debt, and would not work" (Eliot, 2000, p. 116). Her family has doubts on her marriage to Fred. To relieve her parents, she says

Don't fear for me, father . . . Fred has always been very good to me; he is kind hearted and affectionate, and not false, I think, with all his self-indulgence. But I will never engage myself to one who has no manly independence, and who never goes on loitering away his time on the chance that others will provide for him. You and my mother have taught me too much pride for that. (Eliot, 2000, p. 214)

Mary's criteria for marriage differ from Rosamond's and Dorothea's totally. She wants to marry a man whom she loves. She is not after rank; she refuses to marry Mr. Farebrother, who is from middle class. She wants Fred, her lover, to be a proper man with a decent job. She does not accept his proposal till he has a profession. In the Victorian period, an equal or superior match was sought for both the daughters and the sons. Marrying a social inferior was the cause of social scorn. Although Fred is from middle class, he insists on marrying Mary. This shows that his love for Mary is genuine and has a moral meaning, for it is "an assertion of genuine affection in the face of class prejudice and of apparent self interest" (Daiches, 1973, p. 54). Consequently, they reach "a solid mutual happiness" (Eliot, 2000, p. 683) and have three sons. The marriage of Fred and Mary proves that being after money, rank, and furniture is not good, for such marriages have already failed.

Mary gives birth to three boys and they live happily. Although Mary is the one picking up the pieces, Fred is put ahead of her by the Middlemarchers:

when Mary wrote a little book for her boys, called "Stories of Great Men, taken from Plutarch," and had it printed and published by Gripp & Co., Middlemarch, everyone in the town was willing to give the credit of this work to Fred, observing that he had been to the University, "where the ancients were studied," and might have been a clergyman if he had chosen. (Eliot, 2000, p. 683)

This demonstrates the townspeople's disbelief in women. They have underestimated women such long years that they could not regard Mary's writing a book as possible. The masculine culture suppresses women's efforts for development.

Eliot renders Dorothea, Rosamond, and Mary as having totally different expectations from marriage, although they live in the same age and the same town. Dorothea marries Casaubon to reach knowledge that was not available to women in her time. The patriarchal society does not supply this kind of demands of women. Rosamond, consistent with the norms of her class, is after rank and money. With the desire of ascending in the social ladder, she marries a promising doctor having aristocratic background. Mary, however, wishes to have a happy life with the man she loves. The objectives of these women have been formed by their backgrounds and the classes they occupy.

CHAPTER V

ELIOT'S DEFINITION OF MORALITY INDEPENDENT OF CLASS STRUCTURE

The interaction among the individuals and classes are rendered in detail in *Middlemarch*. In fact, Eliot's view of life affects the development of the individual characters in the novel. For Eliot, "morality is resolved into sympathy" (p. 9), and "there is no isolation of human lots. No life but is bound by numberless ties to every other, none so paltry and remote that it has not its share in the common history and its genuine interest to all sympathetic souls" (Robertson, 1972, p. 7). Her ideology is compatible with the idea that

Nothing . . . exists in isolation including our social life. Everything must be understood to exist in dynamic historical process. . . Everything is interrelated and exists in dynamic relationship with a variety of social forces. (Bressler, 2007, p. 202)

Hence, she is not relentless towards her characters. She evaluates the events in cause- effect relationship by giving the background information, so that the readers come to sympathize with the characters despite their shortcomings. When a character commits a mistake, the readers know why he/she behaves in that way, and understand the underlying reasons of his/her attitude. In other words, the readers of Eliot make their decision about the characters based on these characters' experiences in a society.

Eliot lived in the Victorian age, and "the Victorian age lacked that supreme moral consciousness in which greatest ages of human history express themselves. Honesty was best only as a policy. Vulgarized by

expanding prosperity, the age judged everything by quantitative standards” (Wasti, 1961, p.16). Thus, she felt the necessity of implying what is true and what is not through her novels. Either implicit or explicit, the audience find the moral teaching of Eliot. Similar to her other novels, *Middlemarch* also includes moral lessons, for she wrote her stories “to impress moral conclusions derivable from them upon the minds of readers” (Wasti, 1961, p. 40). Although there are messages which can be received through the novel, they are hidden in between the lines because Eliot is neutral towards her characters and the situations they are in. She does not take side with her characters, and “She neither praises nor condemns them for their moral or immoral behaviours” (Koç, 2010, p. 137). The classes the people belong to are the determinant factors in their attitude, behaviour, and viewpoints.

The women had hardly any legal rights at the time the novel depicts which is the early 19th century. In this sense, Dorothea exemplifies the aristocratic morality. In an age when money has the highest value, Dorothea ignores it. Though she is wealthy, she does not have the sole control of her belongings because any property or money women owned when single became the possession of their husbands on marriage. Dorothea and Casaubon’s case exemplifies the situation: “As Mrs. Casaubon, she is bent to her husband’s wishes and prejudices; as his widow she is amusingly but firmly hectored by her brother-in-law, Sir James. She has no property on her property” (Neale, 1989, p. 152). When Casaubon dies, the codicil in his testimony comes up saying that whatever she has is all to go away from Dorothea if she marries Will. Even after his death, Casaubon tries to control Dorothea. She is offended by the insulting codicil about her relationship with Will; however, she does not act with the fear of losing money left from her husband. Money is of no significance for her; nevertheless, Casaubon tries to punish her through money.

In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea is the trusted and honest figure; she stands by the ones needing help as an unprejudiced supporter. For

instance, she supports Lydgate's cover-up when he is engulfed in a scandal. Mr. Bulstrode, a wealthy banker, has secrets related to his past relationships and the illegal means of acquiring his wealth. When an old friend of him, Mr. Raffle, comes to Middlemarch, and blackmails him, and Bulstrode seeks ways to get rid of him. Mr. Raffle falls ill, and Bulstrode requires Lydgate's help. Lydgate has financial problems at that time, and he borrows money from Bulstrode. Meanwhile, Mr. Raffles dies under the care of Lydgate. When the townspeople hear this, they think that Lydgate has taken bribe from Mr. Bulstrode. Although the men of *Middlemarch* rely on the rumours, Dorothea believes in Lydgate's innocence, and she fights against the male dominated society's hypocrisy and immorality. She wants to find out the truth due to her indignation for injustice. She asks Mr. Farebrother, who seems to believe in the suspicion, "What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult to each other?" (Eliot, 2000, pp. 603-604) and adds "I cannot be indifferent to the troubles of a man who advised me in my trouble, and attended me in my illness" (p. 604). In a way, she invites him to support Lydgate in such a situation. Most of the men in *Middlemarch* are morally weaker than Dorothea, and

Eliot portrays the main male characters of *Middlemarch* as moral weaklings and repeatedly manipulates her plot to exact vengeance on them, while at the same time portraying her female characters as victims of a male dominated system who somehow triumph inwardly even as they practice submission and renunciation in their limited society. (Lundberg, 1986, p. 272)

Mr. Bulstode's illegal ways of gaining money, Mr. Featherstone's illegitimate child, Mr. Vincy's indifference to his children, Mr. Casaubon's efforts to disinherit and limit Dorothea, Fred's bad habits such as gambling, Mr. Tyke's taking the position of chaplain though Mr. Farebrother deserves the position, are the examples of male competitive behaviour, demonstrating meanwhile that capitalist social structure and ideology have already permeated to the norms of all classes.

Mrs. Bulstrode is depicted as a morally strong character compared to her husband who is one of the embodiments of the male dominated society's corruption. Nicholas Bulstrode seeks power through money, and gains it by immoral means. His past is not known by Middlemarchers, for he is "a man not born in the town, and altogether of dimly known origin" (Eliot, 2000, p. 79). He is respected by Middlemarchers, because he has not done anything wrong in the town. Nonetheless, he causes the death of his blackmailer John Raffles, who threatens him to reveal his unpleasant past and destroy his reputation. Although Harriet is devastated upon learning the reality, she does not desert her husband like Dorothea.

Although Dorothea realizes that Casaubon is not the man she has dreamed of, and his study "the Key to All Mythologies" is "labour all in vain" (p. 185), she still has sympathy towards her husband. At that time duty meant morality, and Dorothea has a strong sense of duty, which does not let her leave Casaubon. Her performing duties as a wife to Casaubon is the proof of her morality. She is rather empathetic towards his behaviours.

She was no longer struggling against the perception of facts, but adjusting herself to their clearest perception; and now when she looked steadily at her husband's failure, still more at his possible consciousness of failure, she seemed to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness. (Eliot, 2000, p. 301)

This devotion and tenderness results from her morality, for "Dorothea's moral sense compels her to obey moral law, which is absolute within the limits set by experience" (Collins, 2002, p. 482). After the honeymoon, she realizes that she has been disillusioned. She also comes to know and understand her husband better. However,

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. (Eliot, 2000, p. 227)

Although Casaubon sets limits to Dorothea, such as not seeing Will, she tries to fulfil her duties as a wife. When she learns that he suffers from health problems, she seeks the advice of Lydgate to comfort her husband.

Eliot depicts Dorothea as bound to the moral code of her time. However, her being staunchly ethical in her marriage does not prevent her from being disillusioned. She lives in a dream world she herself created in her mind, for she marries Casaubon with the hope of being more “educated.” She faces up to reality in their honeymoon, but continues to be Casaubon’s wife. Dorothea, however, marries after his death and gives birth to a child. Her noble aspirations come to a standstill point, which testimonies that she has not been able to realize her dreams. Her final position is contrasted with her situation stated at the beginning, in the “Prelude” part of the novel:

Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centring in some long-recognizable deed. (Eliot, 2000, p. 3)

Eliot tells the story of Dorothea, as well as the stories of other women, and ends the novel again with a finalizing comment in her and other women “some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know” (Eliot, 2000, p. 688). She stresses that there are other women suffering more than Dorothea. As Dorothea could not try hard enough to actualize her dreams, from Eliot’s viewpoint, she does not deserve to achieve her goals. Dorothea was not able to attain her goals, for the “insignificant people with [their] daily words and acts are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas” (Eliot, 2000, p. 688). In masculine societies women like Dorothea have very few opportunities, which hinders the other way around for women. They have the capability; however, the patriarchal order does not let them build up personalities for themselves.

The representative of the middle class, the Vincys attach importance to worldly pleasures. Mrs. Vincy deals with furniture, clothes, and plate. When their son Fred refuses to continue his clergyman education, Mr. Vincy gets angry because he has spent so much money on Fred's education. He does not ask what Fred wants, he just sends Fred to a school he himself likes. He does not support his son and daughter when they are in debt. Raised in such a family, Rosamond thinks "if she had known how Lydgate would behave, she would never have married him" (Eliot, 2000, p. 490) when her husband is burdened with debt. Instead of asking Lydgate about the matter and helping him, Rosamond thinks: "she had innocently married this man with the belief that he and his family were glory to her!" (Eliot, 2000, p. 622). She does not feel sympathy for her husband who needs support; she just feels pity for herself, for she is an egoist. When the Lydgate couple are at bad terms, Dorothea helps them. She goes to visit Rosamond and asks her "How can we live and think that any one has trouble--piercing trouble--and we could help them, and never try?" (Eliot, 2000, p. 653) to persuade her to be more supportive to her husband in his hard times. Rosamond has limited moral values compared to Dorothea. That is why Dorothea goes to their house and gives advice to her.

Eliot compares Rosamond's values with Dorothea's, for the reader to spot the differences between these characters with an attribution to their classes. Their classes determine their values and behaviour. Although both Dorothea and Rosamond get disillusioned, the way they behave is not identical. Rosamond thinks of a separation right away; however, Dorothea stays with her husband in his hard times. By so doing, Rosamond reveals her moral cowardice, whereas Dorothea has the moral courage to resist the masculine doctrines.

Mary Garth is the virtuous daughter of the working class Garth family presented as the heart of the novel in terms of morality. Mary "rather than Dorothea, is closest to the moral centre of the novel" (Daiches, 1973, p.

29). She does not interfere in the affairs of others. For instance, she refuses old Featherstone's attempt to involve her in altering his will because "honesty, truth-telling fairness, was Mary's reigning virtue" (Eliot, 2000, p. 93). When he insists, she answers "I cannot touch your iron chest or your will. I must refuse to do anything that may lay me open to suspicion" (Eliot, 2000, p. 262). Featherstone offers a sum of money to her for changing his testimony, which will make her rich and her lover Fred inherit his money. Yet, Mary declines the offer because money is not as valuable as morality. This scene is a "testimony of the ultimate impotence of cash over those who have a higher standard within" (Dentith, 1986, p. 87). Having moral values supersedes money in the case of the Garth family.

Mary's strong sense of morality is also illustrated in her selection of vocation. Though she and her family need money, she does not want to earn money through a job that she cannot perform properly. While conversing with Fred she says that

I have tried being a teacher, and I am not fit for that: my mind is too fond of wandering on its own way. I think any hardship is better than pretending to do what one is paid for, and never really doing it. (Eliot, 2000, p. 113)

She wishes to earn money honestly, and in a decent way. Similarly, her mother also refuses to be "a useless doll" (Eliot, 2000, p. 201) like the middle class women of *Middlemarch*. Mrs. Garth is a modest woman "while her grammar and accent [a]re above the town standard, she [wears] a plain cap, cook[s] the family dinner and darn[s] all the stockings" (Eliot, 2000, p. 201), though she has been educated. The father is also admirable, for he is "one of those precious men within his own district whom everybody would choose to work for them" (Eliot, 2000, p. 208) because he does his job well. Caleb Garth is such an honest man that when he learns the truth about Mr. Bulstode's past, he quits working for him although he needs money.

The Garths are poor, but "they [do] not mind it" (Eliot, 2000, p. 208); they have other virtues than money. When they lose the sum of money they

saved because of Fred, none of them gets unhappy, for they do not base their expectations on money. In the early 19th century, the working class people were exploited by the middle class people in every sense; thus, incurring losses was normal for them. Likewise, for Garth family, money does not matter, and life goes on without it; they do not make any changes in their lives just because they have lost the money. Nor their attitude to Fred changes, Mrs. Garth has “a motherly feeling, and ha[s] always been disposed to excuse his errors” (Eliot, 2000, p. 201). They even do what his father does not do for him: they support him and help him establish a job and lead a settled life.

The Garth family represents a strong positive version of the working class values such as self-respect, hard work, thrift, modest worldly success, and this family “establishes the criteria to which most other actions are referred” (Daiches, 1973, p. 57). Either they are poor or rich; they do not change, for they possess moral virtues that are deficient in middle class people. The readers have the chance of making comparison between the middle class people and working class people, and comprehend the differences in terms of morality with the help of *Middlemarch*. For instance, when Lydgate gets into debt, Rosamond leaves him; whereas Mary and her family accept Fred in any case.

Mary never experiences the disillusionment Rosamond and Dorothea undergo, for she is a realist. She is aware of her strengths and weaknesses, and she tries to achieve her aims with her limited opportunities. She is not after showing off her beauty or knowledge; she makes great effort to realize her objectives. She survives with her labour in the world of men. She is reasonable from the beginning to the end; however, Dorothea comes to reason after some certain events and Rosamond lacks the reasoning abilities even after her experiences. Hence, the class consciousness, classical education, or the class do not play a role in being reasonable.

The characters are faced with a moral dilemma in the works of Eliot. Their choices shape their lives. Through their mistakes in life, they reach the better frame of mind. Their altered worldview is associated with “a perspective on life that widens as the heroine escapes what the novelist depicts as the ultimate imprisonment” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 517). Dorothea, for instance, awakens from moral stupidity, and the growth of her consciousness is observed throughout the novel. Dorothea commits a mistake by marrying Casaubon. When she realizes that he does not satisfy her lofty aspirations, she learns from her mistake. Eliot comments on her situation: “We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves” (2000, p. 175). Fortunately, Dorothea begins to emerge from that chaos in the early phases of her married life. Another aspect of Dorothea’s moral development is her willingness to achieve something great for the good of all. “Successful moral development is presented as self-subordination, the replacement of self concern with a concern for others” (Garret, 1980, p. 178), hence Dorothea’s character is morally strong as she has concern for others.

Unlike Dorothea, Mary is depicted as a flawless character, who has never done anything wrong. She has positive characteristics such as being faithful, reliable, frank, forgiving, honourable, and kind-hearted. She also considers the well being of other people more than herself. Mary’s existence in the novel provides the readers with criteria to compare and contrast her with the other characters. She is the one to be taken as exemplary figure: through her, the idealized image of woman in terms of morality is emphasised.

Mary has a strong sense of responsibility; she does her best in the duties she has overtaken, which results in maturity. She is the most mature woman of all the main women figures in the novel. Both Dorothea and Rosamond are associated with the image of “child,” for they are not mature enough and Rosamond is selfish like a child. Dorothea slowly matures in

the course of her marriage; nevertheless, Rosamond does not change as she does not widen her perspective on life.

Mary is supportive in hard times, whereas Rosamond prefers to avoid being with losers in life. In such cases, she reveals her actual self: an egoistic woman. "The most important form of error, the distortion which not only the narrative conventions but the structure of the novel works to correct, is the imposition of a single center" (Garret, 1980, p.152), characters such as Rosamond, Casaubon, and Bulstrode are the victims of their egos. Their perceptions are flawed because of egocentrism.

Eliot gives the reader a chance to compare and contrast the values of three different women from the main classes of the society. As an aristocratic woman, Dorothea is moderate; the middle class woman Rosamond represents the material values of her class, and working class woman Mary is perfectly moral in her behaviour. However, all these women have been shaped by the cultures of their classes, and

Certainly those determining acts of [their lives] were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of a young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it . . . the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is forever gone (Eliot, 2000, p.688).

Dorothea, like the women in the past or present has been prevented from accomplishing her plans. Rosamond's plans were set, and she was not taught to question those. Mary did not have any chance to have plans, as she had to work and help her family. Women, regardless of the classes they belong, have had to lead oppressed lives. Although they do their best, their decisions are doomed to be read as "error" and "illusion" because the vision of the society is narrow, and women are living in patriarchal societies bred by the capitalist order.

Engels suggests that “the first antagonism” arises from “the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male” (as cited in Draper, 1970, p. 223). Before the formulation of class stratification, there began the discrimination between genders. Women were seen as inferior to men, sometimes they were even referred to as “lesser breeds.” Having such a background, females are taken for granted in the class system. They are left outside the production mechanisms, and regarded less valuable than men. Hence, women usually have subsidiary roles such as daughters, wives, and mothers in the patriarchal capitalist social order.

Through Dorothea’s situation, Eliot blames the society for oppression acting on women. She has tried to be educated, and beneficial for the society; however, in the end she complains to Celia saying “I never could do anything that I liked. I have never carried out any plan yet” (Eliot, 2000, p. 674). She has desired to build up her own personality different from what the society urges. As a victim of patriarchal society, she could not be successful in accomplishing her aims as “There was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better” (Eliot, 2000, p. 686), for she did not have the opportunity to develop herself, she was not able to do “something better.” She was criticized for marrying Will, yet “no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done” (Eliot, 2000, p. 686). “It is clear that for a woman to be healthy she must ‘adjust’ to and accept the behavioural norms for her sex even though these kinds of behaviour are generally regarded as less socially desirable” (as cited in Felman, 1975, p. 2). The society designated “motherhood” as the major role of women, and they could not get out of that specified identity.

Eliot draws these different female characters to demonstrate the desperate situation of women having to live in the patriarchal society of 19th century England. She goes forty years back- to the roots of the woman problem- to illustrate the reasons for the situation in her day. The capitalist

patriarchal order does not allow women to take part in the society, and oppresses them. Eliot, however, never expresses disbelief in women; rather she stresses the meanness of opportunity provided for women. Contrary to the 19th century idea that woman's ultimate aim is to marry and only preoccupations are her house, husband and children, Eliot indicates that "Marriage, which has been the bourne of so many narratives, is still a great beginning" (2000, p. 683). Unlike the other Victorian novels, marriage is not the end of the story for Eliot; rather *Middlemarch* begins with the marriage of Dorothea.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

As a realistic novelist and as an individual living in the 19th century England, Eliot had the opportunity to make critical observations about the social and individual developments affecting her age. In her novels, she refers to the notable historical events in her lifetime. In *Middlemarch*, she depicts a society in transition from the urban life-style to the industrial model. She deals with the Industrial Revolution, and sees this phenomenon as forming new social strata. She refers to the Reform Bill, and to the changing natures of the institutions which reshaped the individuals and their expectations. In this frame, she creates a fictitious town and locates it in around 1830s, including a variety of people from all professions and classes. Along with the minor characters' lives, she focuses on the stories of three women: Dorothea from aristocracy, Rosamond from the middle class, and Mary from working class respectively, and uses male characters as the representatives of the patriarchal order, and as the foils to her women characters.

Emerging as a result of the changing economic order in the country, middle classes came to power in the 19th century and imposed their materialist culture on society. As every class generates its own culture, middle class produced new values which penetrated into the cultures of all classes. It was the decaying of aristocracy that gave way to the "rising" values of bourgeoisie. Only one class (working class) tried to resist against this middle class culture, and in the work this resistance is demonstrated by Mary, the daughter of working class family.

Eliot, to make the story more reliable, maintains her neutral stance towards all the characters and the classes throughout the novel. Her realist

portrayal causes her characters to have both bad and good qualities. Her characters find themselves in situations where they are obliged to make moral choices. They change along with the alterations in the circumstances and in the society. She provides the reader with a three dimensional panorama of the 19th century England with characters from different classes. The interrelation of the characters is emphasised, and the cause-effect relationship is maintained from beginning to the end.

Eliot questions whether there is a place for women in the capitalist order-throughout the novel. For men controlled money and the social institutions, women, unable to assume any role in this male dominated order, were seen as inferior beings in Eliot's age. This patriarchal organisation in the society provided women with few opportunities, and they did not have the chance for self-improvement. Women, who were limited financially, educationally, and legally, saw marriage as the only way to secure themselves.

In the novel, Dorothea tries hard to get out of the limits enforced on women. She seeks ways of self-development through education, as she plans to be useful for her society. 19th century idea of social unity and usefulness is presented with Dorothea. However, she ends up with marrying a pseudo-intellectual man in order to be educated. Her marriage does not satisfy her aspirations. The desire to construct an identity for herself in the patriarchal order is hindered by the male dominated society. Although she is from aristocracy and has the potential to develop herself, she fails in realizing her plans.

Rosamond is the product of middle class culture: she is educated for finding the most suitable husband who is preferably from the aristocracy. She is depicted as an opportunist, for she seeks a victim to whom she can perform her skills such as dancing, singing songs, playing the piano, writing letters, and all the other feminine traits. She marries Dr. Lydgate. However,

her husband goes into bankrupt because of her excessive spending and aristocratic pretensions. She acts in accordance with the expectations of her class and she accepts the dominance of her husband as long as the husband is able to satisfy her materialistic desires.

When compared to Rosamond and Dorothea, Mary has hardly any opportunities. For she is from the working class, she works to support her family financially. She does not plan marriage with a social superior; rather she looks for ways to relieve her parents. Instead of being under romantic illusions, she is realistic and uses her productive labour to survive in the capitalist order. At the end of the novel, she gets what she deserves: she marries the man she loves, bears three sons, and writes stories for them. She does not succumb to the domination and wishes of a man; rather she takes a stand and leads her lover to have a proper job and decent life.

The characters' relation to the economic production determines the classes. The class of an individual formulate her/his personality. Dorothea's refined manners, Rosamond's extravagancy and indulgence in worldliness, and Mary's honesty, fairness and diligence are all the results of their classes. However, the oppression acting on women is the same in all the classes. Mary in a way manages to reduce the effect of this male dominance with her labour, Dorothea and Rosamond are defeated by the patriarchal norms.

Throughout the novel, Dorothea's noble aspirations, Rosamond's beauty, and Mary's honesty are emphasised. Through the classes Dorothea, Rosamond, and Mary belong to, and through their backgrounds, marriages, moral values, educational backgrounds, attitudes, and relationships, Eliot depicts the "ideal woman" outside the norms of capitalist culture. The ideal woman has noble aspirations like Dorothea Brooke, and strives for the betterment of the society. She is beautiful and well-cared like Rosamond Vincy. She is, above all, virtuous, honest, and hardworking like

Mary Garth. Forming one woman with the mixture of three women, Eliot's final message is that the ideal woman figure should try hard and get out of the predetermined limits of the patriarchal society.

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APPENDIX

CURRICULUM VITAE

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WORK EXPERIENCE

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2010- Present	Çankaya University, Office of Basic and Elective Courses	English Instructor

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Turkish (mother tongue), English (advanced), German (fair).