

**George Eliot's *Middlemarch*  
The Gap Between Idealism and Reality**

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**ABSTRACT**

In English literature, the Victorian age is characterized by the dominance of the novel. Many great novelists , represent different literary schools appeared in this age including women novelists like the Bronte sisters ( Emily 1818-1848 and Charlotte 1816-1855 ), Jane Austen (1775- 1817 ) and George Eliot (1819- 1880) . George Eliot occupies a notable position among them. She represents the realistic trend in the English novel and her masterpiece *Middlemarch* ( 1872 ) is considered by many critics as one of the great novels in English literature. Through many characters and different related episodes *Middlemarch* depicts the conflict between idealism and reality in society. The major characters, especially Dorothea Brook, the intelligent wealthy young woman. and the young Ladislaw are of high ambitions and great huge aims but they face failure and disillusionment because of their being idealistic and out of touch with real life .

**Introduction**

Literary historians agree that the novel in the Victorian era ( 1837 – 1901) became the dominant literary genre. It is well known that the nineteenth century, as a whole, is the age of novel. Various trends and literary schools are well represented in the huge number of published novels of the age. Social ( or problem novel ) is one of the most important trends mainly attributed to Charles Dickens ( 1812-1870 ). It "arose out of the social and political upheavals which followed the Reform Act of 1832 and as a reaction of the rapid industrialization." Literary historians also notice the important fact that is the number of women novelists who are highly notable even though they often use masculine pseudonyms. With the Bronte sisters, Jane Austen and George Eliot it is said that " the novel of the nineteenth century was female."<sup>2</sup>

It is well agreed upon that the first period of the English novel which begins with Henry Fielding ends with Anthony Trollope; the second – the period of Henry James and Wells – begins with George Eliot. " Not that she was a revolutionary genius like Emily Bronte. Hers was a cautious, scholarly, painstaking talent" the critic David Cecil remarks in his book *Early Victorian Novelists*, "she was something very unlike the typical Victorian novelists.... her mind was always active." To conclude, "she is the first modern novelist."<sup>3</sup> Like the modern novel, hers is a medium for the discussions of the serious problems and preoccupations of mature life. And her generalizing

brain forbade her to confine herself merely to describe and observe, for she must draw conclusions, construct a scale of values, and evolve an attitude of mind. Her wider intellectual interests lead her to portray human life in deeper and more general aspects that are "omitted from the novels of Dickens and Thackeray ." <sup>4</sup>

George Eliot is one of the leading novelists of the Victorian age. Her works are important examples of Literary Realism. She represents the rationalism of the old Victorian age. She has the Victorian eye for the social structure. In her fiction there is a great deal of wisdom, chiefly about women. Some critics placed her among "the greatest western writers of all time."<sup>5</sup> Her real name is Mary Anne but she used a male pen name. Her first novel, *Adam Bede* appeared in 1859 and was an instant success. After the popularity of the novel, she continues to write popular novels for the next fifteen years. From *Adam Bede* to *The Mill on the floss* ( 1860 ) and *Silas Marner* ( 1861) Eliot presented the cases of social outsiders and small-town persecution, *Felix Holt, The Radical*( 1866) and *Daniel Deronda* ( 1876) were overtly political. Political crisis is also apparent in *Middlemarch* ( 1872) in which she presents the stories of a number of denizens of a small English town on the eve of the *Reform Bill* of 1832.<sup>6</sup> The novel is notable for its deep psychological insight and sophisticated character portraits. In particular, Eliot's novels were particularly praised by readers in the Victorian age for her depictions of rural society, for which she drew on her own early experiences to the degree that critics remarked that she ,in her prose, shared "the belief that there were much interest and importance in the mundane details of ordinary country lives."<sup>7</sup>

## I

The twentieth century novelist Virginia Woolf called *Middlemarch* as "one of the few English novels written for grown-up people." In addition, Virginia Woolf wrote:"No Victorian novel approaches *Middlemarch* in its width of reference, its intellectual power, or the imperturbable spaciousness of its narrative." It has become the "fashion" to mention the Russian novelist Tolstoy and his masterpiece *War and Peace* when this " great novel" is mentioned .<sup>8</sup> The reference to Tolstoy's great novel indicates the large scale of *Middlemarch* in which she creates a provincial society of larger scope than any which she had tried in her other novels and which would be her most comprehensive and successful novel .

Subtitled "A Study of Provincial Life", the novel is set in the fictitious ( Midlands ) town of Middlemarch, thought to be based on Coventry, during the period 1830-1832. It has multiple plots with a large number of characters and it holds a number of underlying themes including the status of women, nature of marriage, idealism and self interest, religion and hypocrisy, political reform, education and some comical characters. *Middlemarch* is a work of realism. So, through the opinions and voices of different characters we are informed of various issues of England at that time like the Reform Bill, the beginning of the railways, the death of King George IV and the succession of his brother King William IV .

The plot of *Middlemarch* consists of a major and some minor, related episodes. Two of the plots, those dealing with Dorothea and Lydgate are more important than the others. Of these two Dorothea's takes the first place because she is the largest character. The *Prelude* to the novel creates the impression that she is the heroine, but she is not so . She is, no doubt, one of the most important characters in the novel which deals with the frustration of her aspirations. Still, she is not the heroine, for *Middlemarch* is the story of Middlemarch society .

Dorothea Brook is a wealthy woman ,young and fascinating. She lives with her sister Celia at Tipton Grange near Middlemarch, the home of Mr. Arthur Brook, their uncle and guardian. Her physical beauty and fascinating personality have been stressed at the very beginning of the novel :

Miss Brook had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress .Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which The Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters, and her profile, as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible – or from one of our elder poets – in a paragraph of today's newspaper .<sup>9</sup>

Dorothea is a lady of noble aspirations. She wants to lead a higher life, to achieve something really noble She seeks an outlet of her aspirations in doing humanitarian work. Thus she makes plans and projects to improve the living conditions of the tenants on the estate of

the Baronet, Sir Chettam. She is different from other young ladies of her age, and this difference is stressed by contrasting her with her sister Celia. Celia is an ordinary girl, with a girlish fondness of jewelry and fine clothes while Dorothea looks down on such feminine interests. She has what has been called, the Theresa – complex " a yearning to do good in the world which is so intense that it must answer to some emotional need in the Theresa herself." <sup>10</sup> Theresa was a Christian saint who had such a yearning. She is Theresa in her " lofty aspirations, struggling under dim lights and entangled circumstances" ( p. 66). But she lives in a society in which there is no demand for a saint. It is a repressive environment which does not allow scope for idealism, so that Dorothea is seen as St. Theresa born in the wrong place. She struggles for an ideal life armed with her pride and self-righteousness. Her passion for the ideal transfigures Mr. Edward Casaubon and she marries him .

Casaubon is a prosperous country squire in addition to his being a clergyman. At the time of the opening of the novel, he is fifty years old . He owns Lowick Manor, his residence and the estate round it. In personal appearance , he is far from handsome. He is rather ugly, and his physical unpleasantness is stressed - too - from the very beginning when Celia points to his shallow complexion, sunken eyes and " two white moles with hair on them ." She comments: "How very ugly Mr. Casaubon is" ( p.99). But Dorothea prefers him to the young and handsome Mr. Chettam, and it soon becomes obvious that the marriage is a mistake. She adores him for she believes him to be a great scholar and she hopes that through devotion to this great man she would be able to realize her noble aspiration. He is engaged in a great work *The Key to All Mythologies*. In sharing her husband's intellectual life, she wishes to find fulfillment, but during their honeymoon in Rome, she discovered his coldness toward her big ambitions. It is an obvious irony in her life that the truth about the scholar Casaubon is discovered not by her but by a shallow characters like Sir James Chettam and Mrs. Cadwallader who are people of no great ambitions and insights. Casaubon's scholarship proves to be futile and he himself is concerned with saving himself from recognizing the fact. In a highly remarkable style, George Eliot describes the comic side of Casaubon's character:

.... the hindrance which courtship occasioned to the progress of his great work –The key to all Mythologies – naturally made him look forward the more eagerly to

the happy termination of courtship. He had made his mind that it was now time for him to adorn his life with the graces of female companionship, to irradiate the gloom which fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of his studious labour with the play of female fancy, and to secure in this, his culminating age, the solace of female tendency for his declining years.

p. 114

It is obvious that the aged scholar does not seek a real life – mate to share with him the rest of his age in a peaceful marital life. When he had seen Dorothea he believed that he had found even more than he demanded. George Eliot continues her sarcastic mood to its highest level in depicting his true impulses:

A wife, a modest young lady, with the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex, is sure to think her husband's mind powerful....Society never made the preposterous demand that a man should think as much about his own qualifications for making a charming girl happy as he thinks of hers for making himself happy. As if a man could choose not only his wife but his wife's husband Or as if he were bound to provide charms for his posterity in his own person ! When Dorothea accepts him with effusion, that was only natural; and Mr. Casaubon believed that his happiness was going to begin .

p. 121

But for all the tone that had been sampled, Mr. Casaubon's " torment of isolation and self distrust having, with an irony, been turned by his marriage into a peculiarly torturing form, solitary confinement. " <sup>11</sup> The reader can also feel this torture:

We are angered even by the full acceptance of our humiliating confession – how much more by hearing in hard distinct syllables from the lips of a near observer, those confused murmurs which we try to call morbid, and strive against as if they were the oncoming of numbness! And this cruel outward accuser in the shape

of a wife- nay, of a young bride, who, instead of observing his abundant pen – scratches and amplitude of paper with the uncritical awe of an elegant - minded canary- bird, seemed to present herself as a aspy watching everything with a malign power of inference.... He had formerly observed her capacity for worshipping the right object, he now foresaw with sudden terror that this capacity might be replaced by presentation this worship by the most exasperating of all criticism – that which sees vaguely a great many fine ends, and has not the least notion what it costs to reach them .

( p.301)

On the other hand, Edward Casaubon is not a scholar in the real sense, but a pedant and a lifeless book-worm. He lacks understanding of common people or writers whose ideas are completely different from his own. The best scholar is the man with the widest understanding and sympathy. Casaubon has nothing of this. But, in the course of narration we are made to feel that he is not a bad man, a hard - hearted schemer who delights in causing pain on others, rather, a misguided man tortured with doubts and jealousies:

Casaubon's real trouble is that he has come to feel that he is no good as a scholar. He has scarified everything for one great achievement, and he is already half - aware that it is out of his reach. This is the key to much of what follows , especially to his feelings about Ladislav, and his very special form of mental jealous....When they leave Rome, Dorothea says " I hope you are thoroughly satisfied with our stay – I mean with the results so far as your studies are concerned, " trying to keep her mind fixed on what most affected her husband. 'Yes' said Mr. Casaubon, with that peculiar pitch of voice which makes the word half a negative .

( p. 309)

Slowly and gradually Dorothea realizes that Mr. Casaubon's great project results in a failure and her feelings toward him have changed to coldness and disillusionment. She forms a close friendship with his young cousin Will Ladislav but her husband's antipathy towards him is clear believing that the young cousin is trying to seduce

Dorothea in order to gain her husband's fortune, so that Ladislav is prevented to visit the house. With his poor health, Casaubon tries to extract a promise from Dorothea that, if he die she will "avoid doing what I should deprecate and apply yourself to do what I desire " ( p.360). Before Dorothea gives any reply, her husband dies and she then learns that he has added a condition to his will that if she marries Ladislav she will lose the inheritance .

Meanwhile, another idealistic character, the young doctor , Tertius Lydgate, has arrived in Middlemarch, with advanced ideas for medical reform. It seems that Dorothea's character is balanced by Lydgate's with his smaller conception and calmer figure .George Eliot notes that " in the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them much in the same way as the tie of their cravats, there is always a good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little" ( p.391 ). The young doctor Lydgate is one of this number of men. He is ambitious and because of his ambitions he has settled in Middlemarch. He went to study in Paris with the determination that when he came home again he would settle in some provincial town as general practitioner and resist the severance between medical and surgical knowledge in the interest of his own scientific motives. He would keep away from London and its society seeking the independent value of his work. His voluntary work brings him into contact with the richest man in the town, the banker Bulstrode ( the representative of capitalism and social and economic power ). By gaining the support of Bulstrode, who is building a new hospital, Lydgate seems to be in a plain way to achieve his ambitions. Bulstrode's niece is Rosamond Vincy, the mayor's daughter and the town's recognized beautiful young lady. Rosamond is attracted to the new comer and wins him but the contrast between her selfishness and his idealism proves that their marriage is not happy. Bad management leads Lydgate to debt and to ask help from Bulstrode. In addition to bad management, Lydgate is defeated by the very provincial environment he chooses to settle in .He has what George Eliot calls "spots of commonness" ( p.401 ). These spots of weakness lead him to marry Rosamond whose character completely contrasts his. The frustration of Lydgate's ambitions is not due to these 'spots of commonness ' only, the critic Walter Allen remarks, " it arises quite as much from the life of Middlemarch itself, with its professional jealousy and intrigues, its political oppositions, and,

above all perhaps, from his association with Bulstrode. It arises, in other words, partly from the nature of things . "12

At the same time we had been acquainted with Rosamond's brother, Fred. He is university –educated, restless and irresponsible . Fred is reluctantly distained to the church. He is in love with his childhood mate , Mary Garth, a sensible, forthright young woman, who will not accept him for marriage till he leaves the church ( because she knows he has no interest in it ) and joins another suitable business .The wealthy , aged irascible Mr. Featherstone , on his death – bed begs Mary to destroy his later will in which he left nothing to her Fred but Mary , unaware of what is in the will refuses to do so causing Fred's loss of a considerable fortune . Fred, in a horse -dealing trouble is forced to borrow from Mary's father. The humiliation shocks Fred and causes him to re- establish his life and he resolves to train as a land agent .

These interrelated episodes, with other side-plots are the basis of the novel until the final phase. A new thread emerges with the appearance of John Raffles, who knows about Bulstrode's past and decided to exploit this knowledge. Bulstrode's fear of public scandal leads him to hasten the death of the sick Raffles by giving him access to forbidden alcohol and amounts of opium. But he is too late, for Raffles had already spread the secret before his death. Bulstrode's disgrace greatly affected the unlucky Lydgate. The Financier's loan to the doctor becomes well known in the town, and he is thought to be complicit with Bulstrode. Dorothea and very few others maintain faith in Lydgate, but the doctor and his wife Rosamond, threatened by the general scorn decided to leave Middlemarch and Bulstrode faces exile .

The final thread in this complex plot is that of Ladislav who has kept his love for Dorothea to himself. He has remained in Middlemarch working for Mr. Brook. After the failure of Brook's election campaign, there is nothing to keep Ladislav and he visits Dorothea for farewell. But Dorothea who is still the prisoner of her dead husband's will, sees Ladislav as the means of her escape to a new life. Mentioning her dependence and her dead husband's fortune, she shocks her family by announcing that she will marry Ladislav. At the same time, Fred who has proved to be a good student in the profession finally wins Mary's approval to be his wife .

It is worth mentioning that Ladislav is not a mere minor character. Rather, he is meant to stand for the free spirit and where



Dorothea is concerned, he is the voice of common sense. It is a significant moment in the novel when he tells Dorothea that "It is of no use to try and take care of all the world; that is you feel delight in taking care of men as if in art or in anything else. Would you turn all the youth of the world into a tragic chorus, wailing and moralizing over misery" (p.441) .

It is obvious that Ladislaw is speaking for George Eliot herself by passing her own judgment on her central, idealistic female character. But , as a lover and husband for Dorothea he appears inadequate." He is almost obtrusively a favorite with his creator ( the narrator ), " writes the critic Leslie Stephen "we are to understand him as so charming that Dorothea's ability to keep him at a distance gives the most striking proof of her strong sense of her wifely duty." He is best seen as one of the young men " who grew up under the shadow of Lord Byron and Shelley," thus he has all the conventional romantic marks, Leslie Stephen, continues: " He is quixotic about money , careless of his career, uncertain in what direction to turn his talent. " Ladislaw's character, concludes the critic Stephen " has been over- idealized so as to felt to be unreal, not fully realized." <sup>13</sup> He is allowed to marry Dorothea in the end and also to keep his independence. He does not become rich by marrying Dorothea , and the proposal comes from her, not from him. In Judging him by the highest moral standers, he might be a failure, but certainly he cannot be regarded as superfluous .

Besides the main stories we become aware of enormous social and economic issues through different scenes. These scenes act as the background of the main story which, as in real life, are left suspended. In the " Finale " we are told that Dorothea lives in London where she could lead a life full of beneficent activity ( still she is remembered in Middlemarch as a lady who has unwisely married a clergyman twice her age, who had then- a year after his death- given up his estate to marry his poverty- stricken cousin ). The other idealistic character, Lydgate, lives in London, too, leading a successful profession but frustrated in his marital life. All his noble aspirations are frustrated by his unimaginative, attractive wife. When he dies of diphtheria at the age of fifty, she marries an elderly and wealthy physician. In a circle movement of narration the book ends as it begun, with the central character, Dorothea: "Her full nature, as a river, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of world is partly dependant on unhistorical acts " ( p. 921 ) .

## II

One of the major motifs in *Middlemarch* ( which is also recurrent in late Victorian poetry and fiction ) is that most of the central characters of the novel have the habit of building castles in the air and then attempting to live in them. Because they are idealistic or out of touch with reality, they make serious mistakes. These mistakes cause them great illusions and unhappiness. Some characters learn a lot from this process and others do not. Those who learn not to build castles in the air generally end up happy while those who do not learn remain miserable .

From the beginning of the narrative, the reader knows that Dorothea is not an ordinary female character. She is an intelligent and wealthy young woman. Unlike other women of her age, she does not show signs of wealth in the form of jewels or fancy clothes. She wants nothing more in life than to be good, and rejects a young man who would be a suitable mate for her in order to marry the aged scholar Mr. Casaubon ( many decades her senior ). She does so because she likes the idea of being an assistant to him and helping him with his great intellectual ambitions and serious research. But, being so much in love and admiration with her image of Mr. Casaubon, she fails to notice that he is not actually writing anything. He is supposed to work on a great work that will link together and explain all world mythologies. He is so fond of the idea of creating a perfect work of scholarship and afraid, at the same time of criticism from his peers that he never publishes anything. He is not interested in contributing to knowledge for its own sake, rather he uses scholarship to enhance his ego and to improve his image in society. Dorothea, in her youth and enthusiasm, does not recognize this. Later in her life, when she meets genuine people who love knowledge for its own sake,( like Ladislav and Lydgate), she cannot help but notice the great contrast between what she wanted in her early life and what she actually chose. Yet, this contrast does not keep her from marrying a second time, to Ladislav ( Mr. Casaubon's young cousin, who has no prosperity. He is a man of great contrast in his character: Idealist and talented but has not a fixed profession ) whom she hardly knows. Her attraction to him is based on a few days of acquaintance during the honeymoon and some occasional conversations. But she does not have a full opportunity to know him well and their mutual love is developed separately and they marry despite the will that disinherits them. However, George Eliot does not allow Dorothea for a happy end ensuring the great gap , in her life ,

between idealism and reality and Dorothea fails to reach her potential and sacrifices her dreams to support her husband in his political career .

Lydgate is an idealistic character too .He is a proud , passionate and talented young doctor of good birth but small financial means . He hopes to do great advancements in medicine through his research and the charity hospital in Middlemarch. But through out the narrative we discovered that he is naïve too, for his choice of Rosamond as a wife is largely based on physical attraction rather than on knowledge of her character. She is the very odd of him: materialistic and self -absorbed. She marries him because she believes that he will raise her social status and keep her comfortable and carefree. When her husband encounters financial difficulties, she cannot bear or only imagine the idea of losing her status in Middlemarch society. Soon after marriage, they found that they hardly suit one another. He cannot free himself from Rosamond yet he needs her upper class pretensions to buy the resources to continue his medical research. He ignores the basic financial reality in Middlemarch; helping poor patients and filling his proper role in society as a doctor. His honesty, pride and his attempts to show that he is above all suspicions end up in the contrary and he eventually leaves the town following his wife's desire turning to the kind of doctor he never really wanted to be. His researches abandoned, but he became wealthy the thing that pleases his wife. His love for her quickly faded and he concludes to sacrifice all of his high ideals in order to satisfy Rosamond. After his death, Rosamond marries someone better suited to her taste " a fat wallet" ( p. 642 ) who can match her materialism and who never contrast her .

Following the destinies of the major characters in the novel shows that a major aim the novel is to "illustrate the impotence of modern ( Victorian ) life."<sup>14</sup> High and noble action is hindered and balked by the social conditions in the midst of which Man lives. And those who want to live grandly and purely, and in supreme unselfishness devote themselves to others, find that their efforts are useless. Dorothea has longings after a life of love and service. She would live for high purposes and give herself for others' good. Her hopes end in a disaster and she is cramped and bulked on every side. Lydgate would devote himself to science and research for the sake of alleviating human misery and disease. His social environment cripples him, and his life comes to nothing compared with what he had aimed at and what he was capable of achieving . Dorothea is presenting initially as capable of becoming a saint , being of an ardent , heroic

nature of a woman. She was "enamored of intensity and greatness and likely to seek martyrdom." <sup>15</sup> The difficulties which beset such a nature are presented at the beginning of the first chapter, where these saint-like tendencies are considered as obstacles to her making a happy marriage

A young lady of some birth and fortune, who knelt suddenly down on a brick floor by the side of a sick laborer and prayed fervidly, as if she thought her-self living in a time of the Apostles – who had strange whim of fasting like a Papist, and of sitting up at night to read old theological books! Such a wife might awaken you some fine morning with a new scheme for the application of her income which would interfere with political economy, and the keeping of saddle – horses; a man would naturally think twice before he risked himself in such fellowship.

( p. 17)

The modern ( Victorian ) – social life had no room for such a woman knew not what to make of her yearnings and her charity. The new world which spurns the heroic, has no place for tender feelings of existence, can make nothing of yearnings and longings for high heroism. Her life was wasted in an unhappy marriage because the social order into which she was born could not use her gifts and because the vision of life in her soul was higher than that which society had marked out for a woman like her. She bows in reverence to a man of high learning, dreams great things of tender service to him;" but this proves not to be the place to which she belongs." <sup>16</sup>In the last pages of the book, George Eliot gives her own account of Dorothea's failure to reach the good she wished:

Sir James never ceased to regard Dorothea's second marriage as a mistake; and indeed this remained the tradition concerning it in Middlemarch, where she was spoken of to a younger generation as a fine girl who married a sickly clergyman, old enough to be her father, and in little more than a year after his death gave up her estate to marry his cousin -young enough to have been his son, with no property and not well- born. Those who had not seen any- thing of Dorothea usually

observed that she could not have been " a nice woman, " else she would not have married either the one or the other .  
( p.902 )

Sure those serious acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling under prosaic conditions. But society still looks unjust for her position :

Among the many remarks passed on her mistakes, it was never said in the neighborhood of Middlemarch that such mistakes could not have happened if the society into which she was born had not smiled on propositions of marriage from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age – on modes of education which make a woman's knowledge another name for motley ignorance – on rules of conduct which are in flat contradiction with its own loudly asserted beliefs. While this is the social air in which mortals begin to breathe, there will be collisions such as those in Dorothea's life, where great feelings take the aspect of error, and great fate the aspect of illusion.... But we insignificant people with our daily words and acts, are preparing the lives of Many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know .

(p. 909)

The influence of social environment is an essential and apparent theme in the realistic novel of the Victorian age .It had been looked at as a chief determining agent in the lives of individuals .However high the aims and noble the purposes of the individual, he must surrender to those social influences which are more powerful than him, the novelist sadly and poetically condoles the lives of those people as martyrs:

Her finely touched spirit had still its fine issues ,though they were not widely visible .Her full nature, like that river of which Alexander broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive; for the growing good of the world

is partly dependent on unhistorical acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life ,and rest in unvisited tombs .

( p. 913 )

The end of the novel is soberly realistic rather than anticlimactic, there was a current in Dorothea's mind into which all thought and feeling "were apt sooner or later to flow – the reaching forward of the whole consciousness toward the fullest truth " (p. 916 ). Ladislaw became " an ardent man" and member of parliament. He was inspired by Dorothea who took "vicarious pleasure" in his work." No life would have been possible " for her, " which was not filled with emotion " and she had now " a life filled also with beneficent activity." Looking this side , the critic Pinion believes that the novel also ends in the belief that" idealism is not lost." <sup>17</sup> In an imperfect social state, great feelings often take " the aspect of error " and great faith " the aspect of illusion. " ( p.921 ) .

## Conclusion

*Middlemarch* is an impressive as well as a massive novel . George Eliot's masterpiece has a bigger subject , rather the biggest subject of any English classical novel. *Middlemarch* deliberately refuses to behave like a typical novel. The novel expresses a complete experience of life in the widest form imaginative and intellectual as well. There is a collection of relationships between several characters in the narration, but no single one person occupies the center of the action. No one person can represent provincial life. It is necessary to include multiple people. George Eliot's novel is "fairly experimental for its time in form and content, particularly because she was a woman writer." <sup>18</sup> She details at great length the consequences of confining women to the domestic sphere alone. Not only a husband, a woman should involve in choosing an occupation by which she lives. Dorothea's passionate ambition for social reform is never realized. She ends with a happy marriage, but there is some sense that her end as merely a wife and mother is a waste. The shrewd Rosamond is also restless within the domestic sphere, and her stifled ambitions only result in unhappiness for herself and her husband. George Eliot's

characters are portraits of the inner man, portraits designed to exhibit the principles of "man's conduct and his presiding virtue ." <sup>19</sup>

Eliot's refusal to conform to happy endings demonstrates the fact that *Middlemarch* is not meant to be for entertainment. Although it is Victorian, it has many characteristics of modern novel. As a realistic novelist, Eliot wants to deal with true – life matters. not the fantasy world to which women writers – her predecessors and her contemporaries alike – were often confined. In the Victorian age, women writers were generally confined to certain stereotypical fantasies of the conventional romance fiction. <sup>20</sup> Her ambition was to create a portrait of the complexity of ordinary human life with all its tragedies, triumphs, character failing and dignity .

The sub- title of the novel is " A Study of Provincial Life, " so the complexity of Eliot's depiction of provincial society is reflected in the complexity of individual characters, her clear- sighted vision of the essentials of character gives her certain advantages over the other Victorian novelists. The "intensity and thoroughness " of her characters' analysis, the critic Walter Allen concludes, " is something new in English fiction, which later novelists, such as Henry James, Conrad and Lawrence were to take up. It is indeed precisely here that her essential modernity lies." <sup>21</sup> Moreover, George Eliot's concentration on the moral side of human nature is the chief source of her peculiar glory, " <sup>22</sup> the kernel of her precious unique contribution to English literature. Her achievement is a considerable one, more considerable than many other writers and her novel arouses far and deeper emotions and sets the mind more serious .

#### Notes

1. Wikipedia . org / English\_ novel
2. G. K. Chesterton. *The Victorian Age in Literature* (London .1913) e. book p.135
3. David Cecil *Early Victorian Novelists* ( London: Penguin Books 1948 ), p.214
4. Ibid , p.216.
5. G. K. Chesteron, p.136.
6. The Reform Bill, also known as The Reform Act of 1832 : was an act of parliament that introduced wide- ranging changes to the electoral system of England as a result of along struggle both in the streets and in parliament .
7. G. K. Chesteron ,p.137.

8. Quoted in Walter Allen *The English Novel* ( London : Penguin Books , 1984), p p .230,231 .
9. George Eliot *Middlemarch A Study of Provincial life* ( New York and Boston : H.M. Caldwell Company Publishers 1912 ) e book 2012, p. 36. Subsequent references will be taken from this edition and will be referred to by page number only .
10. Raghukul Tilak, *Middlemarch* ( New Delhi : Rama Brothers 2009) , p..87.
11. F.R .Leavis *The Great Tradition* ( London :Penguin Books. 197) ,. p.80 .
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## رواية جورج اليوت : ميدل مارش

### الفجوة بين المثالية و الواقع

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#### خلاصة البحث

يتميز العصر الفكتوري في الأدب الإنكليزي بهيمنة الرواية على الأجناس الأدبية الأخرى . فقد ظهر في هذا العصر العديد من الروائيين الكبار الذين يمثلون شتى المدارس الأدبية و يضمّنهم عدد من الروائيات مثل الأختين برونتي ( شارلوت 1816- 1855 و أميلي 1818-1846 ) وجين أوستن ( 1775-1817 ) و جورج اليوت ( 1819- 1880 ) التي تحتل مكانة متميزة بينهن . تنتمي جورج اليوت الى التيار الواقعي في الرواية الإنكليزية . كتبت جورج اليوت عددا من الروايات لكن ( ميدل مارش ) التي نشرت عام 1872 هي الأكثر شهرة . يل أن بعض النقاد يرون أنها واحدة من أعظم الروايات في تاريخ الأدب الإنكليزي . تصور ( ميدل مارش ) - من خلال الشخصيات المتعددة و الحبات المتداخلة - الصراع بين المثالية والواقع في المجتمع . وتتصف شخصيات الرواية الرئيسية ( وخصوصا الفتاة الثرية دوروثيا بروك والشاب ليدسلو ) بقدر عال من المثالية و الطموحات الكبيرة لكنهم يتعرضون للفشل و خيبة الأمل نتيجة مثاليّتهم وعجزهم عن فهم قيم الحياة الحقيقية في المجتمع من حولهم .