

**“MIDDLEMARCH,” THE MASTERPIECE OF
GEORGE ELIOT**



Literature

Keywords: Women, rights, feminism, education, society, Victorian society.

Suzana Ibraimi Memeti

State University of Tetova, Faculty of Philology
Department of English Language and Literature, North Macedonia

Abstract

In the constellation of outstanding novelists of the Victorian period, George Eliot stands out with distinctive intellectualism and bold handling of the feminist theme. She stands out with the courage to defend the dignity of women and their rightful place in Victorian society, defying the prejudice of time. Philosophical ideas that play an important role in the literary creativity of George Eliot do not belong to any authentic philosophical system, but are a kind of eclectic synthesis without permanent principles in the spirit of utilitarian materialism. In 1872 George Eliot published her masterpiece novel "Middlemarch," which Virginia Woolf called it "a magnificent book." The fictional title of the novel "Middlemarch" is quite struck because it includes the panorama of provincial life that connects several parallel events of the subject as a whole. In this novel, the events of several novels are woven and interwoven by the characters. The events of the novel take place on the threshold of the parliamentary reform of the year 1832. The events of this work speak about the situation and mood of different social layers during the electoral campaign. All the characters have a certain attitude towards the political and social events. All the characters in the book have certain positions in society, while men also have their professions.

Introduction

This novel by George Eliot was first published in eight volumes during 1871-72. The events of the novel take place in the fictional Midlands, in the provincial town of Middlemarch, during the years 1829-32. The novel has a subject with rich events and a wide range of different characters. The main themes of the novel are: the status of women, the character of marriages, idealism, religion, ambition, hypocrisy, gender equality and inequality, political reform, education and schooling. Although it contains some comic elements, "Middlemarch" is a work of realism that also deals with historical events such as the Reform Act in 1832, opening of the first railways, and the death of King William 4th. In addition, some values are also included in this work and concepts of medical science and the examination of prejudices and conservative views in the context of a community that expected change and a better perspective.

It is worth mentioning that Eliot's work "Middlemarch" is composed of two unfinished works, which the author wrote during the years 1869 and 1870. The novel "Middlemarch" has in its epicenter the main character Lydgate and the long story of Miss Brooke, where the main role is played by the heroine of the work Dorothea. Although there are no known dates, the process of joining these two unfinished works continued until 1871. The publisher of this novel, John Blackwood decided to publish this novel in eight parts or chapters within two months, imitating Victor Hugo's method in the novel "Les Miserables". Charles Dickens did the same, who published his masterpiece "David Copperfield" in several volumes (Pollard, 185-197).

¹ This paper was presented on the 5th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference (IMSC-2022) held by The Association-Institute for English Language and American Studies, Tetovo, North Macedonia.

Content

This work is a third-person narrative prose, which centers on the lives of the residents of Middlemarch from 1829 to 1832. It seems clear that the structure of the novel consists of three or four different subjects: The life of Dorothea Brooke; Lydgate's career; the fortune of Fred Vincy and the misfortune of Bulstrode. Dorothea Brooke liked the comfortable and leisurely life of the wife of the neighbor, the landowner Sir James Chettam. But unfortunately for her, her sister, Celia marries Reverend Edward Casaubon. Hoping that she will be satisfied and help her husband in his intellectual activity, Dorothea realizes and regrets that her ambitions did not materialize at the beginning of their honeymoon in Rome. Realizing that her husband's "great project" had failed, she changed her kindness towards him. Meanwhile, Dorothea formed a warm friendship with Casaubon's new cousin, Ladislaw, but her husband hated the new cousin and forbade him from visiting. Although ill, Casaubon tried to persuade Dorothea to promise that if he died, she would not do what her husband hated. He died before she could answer him. Then she finds out that in her husband's will it was written that if she married Ladislaw then she would lose her right to inheritance.

Meanwhile, in Middlemarch comes the new doctor Tertius Lydgate. Through his volunteer work at the hospital, Lydgate gets to know the city's main financier, Mr. Bulstrode and through him he also meets Bulstrode's niece, Rosamond Vincy, the beautiful daughter of the mayor. Rosamond likes Lydgate, especially because he was connected to the aristocracy. They marry and Lydgate does his best to please Rosamond. But he soon realized that she was heavily in debt, so he was forced to seek Bulstrode's help. In this case, his friend Camden Farebrother also helps him.

Meanwhile, Rosamond's brother, Fred, was assigned against his wishes to work in the church. He had fallen in love with his girlfriend of his early youth, Mary Garth. But Mary did not want to marry him unless he gave up his work at the church and pursued a more practical career. Fred had once inherited a pretty large fortune from Featherstone, but Featherstone broke the will. However, Featherstone before he died asked Mary to revoke the second will. But Mary refused to do so. She begged Featherstone to wait until morning when she could withdraw the new will.

But he died before he could keep his promise. Deep in debt, Fred was forced to take out a loan with Mary's father, Caleb Garth, as guarantor. And then, when Fred was unable to repay the debt, Garth's fortune was compromised. This humiliation greatly shocked Fred, who decided to change the course of his life and become the entrepreneur of Garth's properties.

Next, John Bulstrode, who knew of Bulstrode's dubious past, comes to Middlemarch in order to blackmail him. In his early youth, the religious Bulstrode had entered into some financial speculation, so that his fortune rested on his marriage to an older and wealthier widow. Bulstrode's great fear of being publicly exposed as a hypocrite prompted him to hasten the death of Bulstrode, who was in agony, even though word of Bulstrode's past had already spread. Bulstrode's

misfortune puts Lydgate in a difficult position. The debt that the financier gave the doctor came to light, so it was assumed that he had collaborated with Bulstrode. Only Dorothea and Farebrother remained loyal to him. Lydgate and Rosamond were forced to flee Middlemarch. The disgraced and defiled Bulstrode's only consolation was that his wife should remain with him because he would be forced into exile.

The peculiar nature of Casaubon's will, raised the suspicion that Ladislaw and Dorothea were lovers, thus creating an honorable situation between them. The truth is, Ladislaw had secretly fallen in love with Dorothea, but he had not told anyone about it, because he did not want to embroil her in any scandal or become the cause of losing her right to inheritance. He remained in Middlemarch working as an editor for Mr. Brooke. But when he lost in the electoral campaign, he decided to leave the city. He went to Dorothea to break up with her. However, Dorothea had also fallen in love with Ladislaw, whom she had previously considered only as her husband's unfortunate cousin.

However, Casaubon's eccentric nature would prompt Dorothea to see him in a new light. Rejecting Casaubon's fortune, she shocked her family again when she told them she was going to marry Ladislaw. At the same time Fred, who had achieved success in his career, marries Mary. The final details of the fate of the main characters are as follows: Fred and Mary get married and live happily with their three children. Lydgate does his duty outside of Middlemarch, but never manages to find a purpose in life and dies at the age of fifty. After his death, Rosamond marries a rich doctor. Ladislaw commits to implementing public reform, while Dorothea is content as a wife and mother; their son inherits Arthur Brooke's fortune.

Conclusion

Although George Eliot's style is not so elegant, it is solemn, serious and resilient. Thanks to such a style she is able to ironize without deep feelings and without mannerism. At the same time, she does not lack a sense of humor and often prefers to give her comments as the author of the novel. Pleasant surprises are the dialogues of the characters in her novels. In this case, obviously, the characters use their own words, which coincide not only with their social position and character, but also with their current mood. The characters are formed not only through the dramatic procedure but also through the narrative procedure, which accompany the analytical passages. In her style, she also uses symbolic descriptions related to the development of an event, in order to strengthen the effect of the motif.

References

- Adams, J. Eli. *A History of Victorian Literature*, Clichester West Cambridge, 2012.
- Albert, E. A. *History of English Literature*, Hong Kong, 1985.
- Anger, Suzy, Ed. *Knowing the Past: Victorian Literature and Culture*. London: Cornell UP, 2001.
- Caine, Barbara. *English Feminism, 1780-1980*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Eliot, George. "*Middlemarch*"
- Emsley, Clive. *Crime and Society in England 1750- 1900*, New York, Longman, 1987.
- Ewbank, Inga-Stina. (1966). *Their Proper Sphere: A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early Victorian Female Novelists*. The Camelot Press Ltd., London and Southampton.
- Foster, Shirley. *Victorian Women's Fiction: marriage, Freedom and the Individual*, London, 1985.
- Long, William. *English Literature*, Ginn and Company, London, 1972.
- Lyall, Edna. "Mrs. Gaskell." *Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign: A Book of Appreciation*. Ed. Margaret Oliphant. 1897. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. 117-145.
- Morris, Virginia. *Double Jeopardy Woman Who Kill in Victorian Fiction?*, Lexington UP of Kentucky, 1990.
- Mulock, Dinak. *John Halifax, Gentlemen in 1857* in Pollard's *Victorians*, 1993.
- Nead, L. 1988. *Myths of Sexuality: representation of women in Victorian Britain*. Oxford: Blackell.
- Pollard, Arthur. *The Victorians*, The Penguin Books, London, 1993.
- Watt, George. *The Fallen Women in the Nineteenth Century English Women*, London, 1984.