



STRUCTURE OF MIDDLEMARCH

"Middlemarch" is George Eliot's masterpiece where the exploration of moral situation through the presentation of characters interacting on each other and belonging to intersecting social groups is achieved with a sustained brilliance. Despite her brilliance in moral discovery, this novel has certain weaknesses. David Daiches compares the pattern of the novel to a funnel. If we read the novel, we are guided as it were through a narrow channel into a wide space. The narrow channel is the affair of Dorothea and Casaubon. Though Sir James Chettam dotes on Dorothea, she dreams of inspiring a genius and marries the old Rector Casaubon, because he has been working on mythology. Sir James Chettam marries Celia with whom he has a happy domestic life. Dorothea pays heavily for her idealism. At Rome she meets Ladislaw, Casaubon's cousin and a young artist. He tells her that Casaubon is not a genius and his research is pointless. Back at Middlemarch, Dorothea learns from Dr Lydgate that her husband is impotent and may die any moment. Soon after this Casaubon dies, leaving a will to the effect that Dorothea will inherit his property if she

does not marry Ladislaw. All these events constitute the spine of the novel.

Chapter X is structurally important in the sense that a number of new characters are introduced at a dinner party and the focus of interest is smoothly shifted. The affairs of Lydgate now engross us. The Vincy family is introduced and Lydgate's marriage to Rosamond wants social prestige as the wife of a prominent doctor. Lydgate with his new found truth of the human body, works in the hospital owned by Bulstrode, the banker and the brother-in-law of Vincy. His new discovery of the human body makes people shy of him. As a result his practice dwindles. His wife becomes dissatisfied. To please his wife he sacrifices his idealism. He is even implicated in a murder case. He requests Dorothea to convince his wife of his innocence. When she goes to see her, she is shocked to find her in the arms of Ladislaw. She becomes conscious of her love for Ladislaw and marries him. This development is similar to the climax of "Emma" where we find Emma realising her own love for Mr. Knightley when Harriet thinks of marrying him. Later on Lydgate dies. Middlemarch does not offer any scope to idealists like Dorothea and Lydgate. Rosamond marries a



well to do but an elderly doctor in London and gets the social position she was craving for. Ladislaw goes into the parliament and lives with Dorothea in London. Dorothea has children and lives like a common wife.

Mr Bulstrode is well known for the charity and social service. But all his wealth actually belonged to his first wife and should now belong to his step-daughter, Raffles knows all this so he blackmails him. Once this man falls ill at Middlemarch, Bulstrode calls in Dr Lydgate who prescribes a small dose of morphine to be taken at regular intervals. The banker nurses the man himself but at night he deliberately leaves nursing to Mrs Abel for sometime during which the patient is given a heavy dose of morphine. Thus Raffles dies giving rise to a rumour in the town that Dr Lydgate was bribed to kill the man. Mr Bulstrode is repentant and miserable. George Eliot specializes in the presentation of Aeschylean conflict of conscience. As Middlemarch is no place for repentant sinners, Bulstrode leaves the place en famille.