



MIDDLEMARCH: CHARACTERIZATION / MORAL VISION / PSYCHOLOGY / A NOVEL FOR THE MATURE READERS / FIRST MODERN NOVEL

From Fulke Greville to Wordsworth there had always been poets to present poetically new notions of man and the world. The novelists were less well educated. George Eliot was the first English ^{novelist} to move in the vanguard of the thought and learning of her day, and in doing so added a new scope and dignity to the English novel. Like Jane Austen, she was a realist who presented social manners and interaction of characters in society with a moral hold on life. George Eliot's presentation of men and women in "Middlemarch" is remarkable for her profound study of the individual. In her profound study are combined her psychological insight with her moral vision. Henry James has pointed out that she moves from the abstract to the concrete. A close scrutiny of the text reveals contrary truth. She is concerned with men and women in the concrete. This enables them to grow as they like. She analyses their psychological and moral conflicts as their idealism



is wrecked in a stubborn society. Arnold Kettle refers to her 'mechanistic' and deterministic view of society' which distinguishes her from later Victorians like Butler, Meredith and Hardy. But this view enabled George Eliot to present the humiliation of Dorothea and Lydgate, the Aeschylean moral conflict of Bulstrode and the vision of the Garth family as the ideal. It is undeniably true that George Eliot abandons her early puritanism, but she believes that virtue leads to happiness while vice leads to misery. This belief makes her an advocate of moral virtues. Besides the profound analysis of people in different professions makes "Middlemarch" a novel for mature readers. Virginia Woolf would give that distinction to that novel alone among the nineteenth century novels. On this ground, the novel may also be considered to be the first modern novel.

The art of characterisation is enriched by psychological appeal. The novel begins with an analytical portrait of Mr Brooke. He is an elderly politician of miscellaneous opinions and uncertain vote, mind and unpredictable nature. Obviously he is a flat character. His nieces Dorothea and Celia are a study



in contrast because the former is prettier than and morally superior to the latter. The scene in which Dorothea likens her jewels to 'fragments of heaven' shows the superiority of Dorothea's feeling to that of Celia who is vain enough to wear jewels. The superiority of Celia manifests itself in due course. While Dorothea is ignorant of Sir James Chettam's love for her and thinks that he cares for Celia, her sister knows the truth. It is Celia who opens her sister's eyes. Inspired by her idealism to help a man of genius, Dorothea marries old Casaubon of Lowick Manor whom Sir Chettam calls a mummy. Then Celia marries Sir Chettam and feels superior to Dorothea for her ignorance and sexual innocence. When Casaubon visits Rome with his wife, his second cousin Ladislaw, who is a painter, points out ~~that~~ ^{the} uselessness of Casaubon's work on mythology. Thus Dorothea's ambition to help a genius is shattered. She learns from Dr Lydgate that she can never have a child by Casaubon. Thus Dorothea realises her predicament. Then Casaubon dies leaving behind his property to Dorothea on the condition that she will not marry.



Ladislav. After her husband's death, she devotes herself to social work, but when Ladislav surrenders himself to her, she decides to leave her property and marry him. After marriage Ladislav becomes an M.P. and goes with his wife to London. Thus her humiliation is complete and she accepts life as it is.