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**An Analytical Study Of Feminism in “Middlemarch”**

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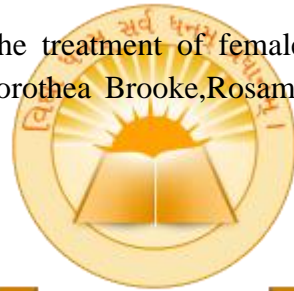
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### Abstract

Feminist theories have emerged until late in 1960s. In that time Gender issues and patriarchal ideology play a part in every aspect of human production, and masculinist ideology pervades those writings which have been traditionally considered great literature, and which until recently have been written mainly by men for men. Typically, the most highly regarded literary works focus on male protagonist Oedipus, Ulysses, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Faust, The Three Musketeers Leopold Bloom who embody masculine traits and ways of feeling and pursue masculine interests in masculine fields of action. To these males, the female characters, when they play a role, are marginal and subordinate to, or in opposition to, masculine desire and enterprises. In the eighteenth century female writer were facing many problems while publishing their works because of the male supreme power in the society and that's why Marry Ann Evans began her career as a writer under the male pseudonym George Eliot, under the male pseudonym, she avenges the patriarchal society by depicting the male characters in her novel as moral weaklings. Women in her work as a superior being. Though they have to submit to the patriarchal values, they triumph inwardly and psychological. They try to live and succeed within the shaping of men's character by women is a favorite topic, which is demonstrated in her masterpiece *Middlemarch*. Eliot wrote several works of fiction under her pen name and they are: *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Denial Deronda* (1876), *Adam Bede* (1859).

This research paper focuses on the treatment of female in the novels of George Eliot and also included that how female figures like Dorothea Brooke, Rosamond Vincy and others suffers a lot in the patriarchal society in the Victorian age

**Key words:** Analytical Study, Feminism



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### **Introduction:**

*Middlemarch* is a story of rural England during the period of great reforms in politics, religion, agriculture, manufacturing, medicine, and even transportation. Mostly though, it is the story of human beings, and what it means to be human. Eliot gives us a wonderful cast of characters in *Middlemarch*, and they cut across all class lines from the landed gentry, tradesmen and women, and the simple country rustics that work the land and work in the manor houses. Eliot herself compares one of her primary characters, Dorothea Brooke, to St. Theresa de Avila. She is a genuinely decent human being who very much cares for the welfare of all of those around her, including even the man she marries early in the novel Edward Casaubon. The one exception was Dorothea, as she always stayed above the fray and maintains her 'saintliness'. The Researcher supposes that some could say that maybe Dorothea's saintliness was laid on a bit thick, but the researcher think that the character of Dorothea and her actions are important in helping to bring home the novel's overall message and moral impact. Finally, the researcher has to again say that somehow he really think that George Eliot had to have been some sort of inspiration for, or influence upon, the later works of Thomas Hardy. The researcher has really does see a somewhat similar approach to realism and naturalism in the works of these two important authors; they both inject a big dose of reality in the day-to-day lives of their characters. Bad things do happen to good and bad people alike, just like Life. The beauty of *Middlemarch* is that it depicts the indomitable Human spirit at its finest (and, dare I say, at its



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worst at times too). Those who wish to do good can; and for those who don't, well they get caught out. In all reality, The Researcher think that he is at a point in his reading and comprehension these days that he was finally ready for what Virginia Woolf described as "one of the few English novels written for grown-up people." The researcher is forward to re-reading it again at some point and thinking about the messages and lessons of this rich novel that George Eliot has crafted and left us.

This research paper focuses on the treatment of female in the novels of George Eliot and also included that how female figures like Dorothea Brooke, Rosamond Vincy and others suffers a lot in the patriarchal society in the Victorian age.

### Treatment of women in the novels of George Eliot

Feminist theories have emerged until late in 1960s. In that time Gender issues and patriarchal ideology play a part in every aspect of human production, and masculinist ideology pervades those writings which have been traditionally considered great literature, and which until recently have been written mainly by men for men. Typically, the most highly regarded literary works focus on male protagonist Oedipus, Ulysses, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Faust, The Three Musketeers Leopold Bloom who embody masculine traits and ways of feeling and pursue masculine interests in masculine fields of action. To these males, the female characters, when they play a role, are marginal and subordinate to, or in opposition to, masculine desire and enterprises. In the eighteenth century female writer were facing many problems while publishing their works because of the male supreme power in the society and that's why Marry Ann Evans began her career as a writer under the male pseudonym George Eliot, under the male pseudonym, she avenges the patriarchal society by depicting the male characters in her novel as moral weaklings. Women in her work as a superior being. Though they have to submit to the patriarchal values, they triumph inwardly and psychological. They try to live and succeed within the shaping of men's character by women is a favorite topic, which is demonstrated in her masterpiece *Middlemarch*. Eliot wrote several works of fiction under her pen name and they are: *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Denial Deronda* (1876), *Adam Bede* (1859).

Outwardly, women did not have power in nineteenth-century society, or even much respect or recognition, and they play submissive role in the male dominated society. When we glance over the whole range of George Eliot's characters, we came to the conclusion that she was exceptional in the portrayal of female characters, and her female figures have feminine attitudes towards life. The subject is studied from the woman's full equality with man because she felt that the complete emancipation of her sex might coarsen the feminine nature. George Eliot's contradictory attitudes to the position of women are reflected in her writing, often marring the unity of her presentation of female characters. In the *The Mill on the Floss*, *middlemarch*, *Adambede*, *Deniel Deronda*, are the brilliant analysis of the effects of male supremacy.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie Tulliver is clearly struggling for some personal identity other than the strictly feminine on her brother Tom Tulliver insists on. However, by the end of the novel Maggie has apparently found fulfillment in passive submission to Tom's male superiority.

In *Adambede* the rendering of Hetty sorrel, is a beautiful, vain, dairymaid, who hopes to gain a higher place in society by using her beauty. Dinnah Morris is one person who penetrates through her surface beauty and realities that she is not equipped with necessary qualities to face the hardeals of life. In the novel,



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these are heavy ironical paragraphs describing the beauty of women like Hetty, and the havoc they caused in the lives of men. Hetty suffers because she yields to temptation. This is true not only of Hetty but also Maggie Tulliver, Mrs. Transome, and Gwendolen Harleth who suffers for their moral transgressions.

In *Felix Holt* the radical by measuring Mrs. Transome against Esther Lyon, the ambiguous treatment of the female personality does not arise in George Eliot's other novels because none of the women are ever lifted far enough above stereotype for there to be any question of a departure from realism.

Similarly in *Middlemarch*, Dorothea's quest for some greater meaning in her life than the cloistered position of a gentle woman usually allows for is answered first with an idealized marriage to Will Ladislaw, and second with vague references to her goodness like perfection. One of Eliot's greatest achievements as a novelist is her determination to take the bitch seriously with both Rosamond vincy and Gwendolen Harleth, she used the stereotype of the evil woman to show that these two are as much as victims of a repressive patriarchal society as are more attractive characters such as Dorothea and Maggie. All these novels are the brilliance to using the initial feminist perspective that is the recognition that much of what is called female character is in fact a response to patriarchal values which George Eliot takes in introducing her woman characters.

George Eliot aims to achieve some kind of stability and focus for her study of provincial life is to go back forty years to the time of first Reform Bill. *Middlemarch* is a historical novel, because to understand the novel as protagonist's point of view the writer takes the example of Saint Theresa, who had happened before 300 years ago. The prelude alludes to the life and work of Saint Theresa, a sixteenth – century Spanish mystic. She devoted her life to a combination of religious contemplation and practical works. The narrator states that,

“Theresa, passionate, ideal nature and demanded an epic life : some object which would reconcile self – despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self .....she ultimately found her epic in the reform of a religious order. There are later born Theresa, who had no epic life with a constant unfolding of far resonant action. They have had to work amid dim lights and tangled circumstances ....instead of centering on some long recognizable deed”. (Eliot, 3 )

When reading the novel as a whole, it is important to keep this in mind, that the real Theresa is a famous well known saint, setting out to seek martyrdom in the country of the moors, that's why it is obvious that the prelude positions Dorothea as an unsung Theresa. Saint Theresa was a lucky woman, for she could find self fulfillment in the field of religion. Her noble achievements raised her to the status of a saint. All of her good works are recorded in history but here, in the novel, Dorothea, however in an ordinary, unknown woman in a small, provincial community, a common middleclass lady who wants to reform the society, without any knowledge and without making any proper plans that how can it be successful and at last she became an failure, because Dorothea is a single natured woman who wants to bring the reform in the male dominated society, she is only one single improver has think about lots of others and she has to journey from one to the so – called society. The opportunity that she takes to reform the society is meanness for her because she doesn't aware about the condition in which she is jumped in, and at last becomes the failure and leaves to reforms the society. Saint Theresa got success because she is well-known saint and not coming



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from comma class or middle class people. The prelude characterizes such an unsung Theresa as a cygnet among ducklings. Eliot uses this metaphor to point out that even the most ordinary life can be extraordinary. Dorothea stands out in poor dress. Social convention requires woman to avoid too much learning and to dress with a touch of the coquette Celia is forever chiding her sister for being much too intellectual. Women are supposed to have weak opinions; moreover, social conventions require that women never act on these opinions. Dorothea clearly does have strong opinions. Her interests in politics and social reform sets her apart from other women, She feels she has a calling to be an intellectual Philanthropist, but because she is a woman, social conventions deny her access to politics and higher learning. Thus, the central theme of the book is hinted at in the prelude or introduction itself, it is about noble aspirations inhibited by an unfavorable environment. Dorothea is Theresa in her lofty aspirations, struggling under dim lights and entangled circumstances, to achieve her aspirations but she lives in a society in which there is no particular demand for Theresa. It is a repressive or submissive environment in the society which allows no scope for lofty ideals, especially for women, where such idealistic nature like Dorothea have in the novel, are frustrated, crushed to atoms, or compelled to compromise with their environment.

### An Analytical Study of Feminism in *Middlemarch*

Under the male pseudonym "George Eliot", women as a superior being is also one of the subversive tools the authors uses against the patriarchal society. The text is divided into four parts, the first about the heroine Dorothea, who, with her young ardent soul, is scared by the helplessness of the feminine role, and mistakenly believes that she could participate in the professional and even political fields, with the help of a husband who is above her in judgment. With the social limits on her and her lack of a formal education, her masculine ideal only blinds her to her own needs and achieves nothing. However, she uses her feminine love and sympathy to bring about changes to the men around her and they benefit a lot from her womanhood. The second part is about Mary Garth, a plain honest girl with knowledge and foresight. With her maternal love and untroubled and decisive integrity under difficulties, she has changed her childhood companion and lover Fred Vincy from a dandy to a famous down-to-earth farmer. The third part is about Mrs. Bulstrode. A commonplace woman, though imperfectly taught, with her dutiful and merciful loyalty, saves her husband Mr. Bulstrode from his dread and also their marriage from shipwreck. The fourth part is about Rosamond Lydgate. Apart from the positive effects women bring to men, women could bring destruction to the men around them, and last is the conclusion, to conclude, from the above interpretation, Middlemarch is seen as a home epic about women, and the whole text is studied through the woman's point of view.

### Dorothea Brooke

Dorothea Brooke is a Lady with noble aspirations. She wants to lead a higher life, to achieve something really noble. She is the extraordinary individual thrown upon a commonplace world. She seeks an outlet for her higher aspirations in doing humanitarian work. She longs to find some way to improve the world. 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. Dorothea has been referred to in the prelude as a later born Theresa. The most that she can do in the society of Middlemarch, is to make projects and plans for poor people, for that she says that,



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“I don’t feel sure about doing 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.....I will draw plenty of plans while I have time. (Eliot, 24)

To make her plan success, she thinks that she can not do this thing alone, she has to take help of one other person, who is wealthy and ready to help her to make plan success, and she thought that Edward Casaubon, is the person who helps her, but see the reality is different from Casaubon’s point of view, because his views is differ from Dorothea’s views. He marries Dorothea because he thinks that she is completely submissive and worshipful, she always follows his path, when her cherished dreams of being of help to a great man in his disillusionment comes as a early as their honeymoon in Rome, and many are the bitter tears she sheds, and wretched and lonely are the days and night she passes, and she realizes that the marriages with Casaubon, the older than her, is the biggest mistake in her life. Still as a loyal wife, she does her duty to her husband, after his death remains loyal to his memory, till she discovers that he has insulted her in her will. She was completely failure in her life because of her broken dream of lofty aspiration, she was shattered down, first because of her husband’s nature towards her and the other is that she wants to bring the change in the society, but she didn’t know, how it will happen means she is complete or the researcher can say that she fails to see the reality of the society in which she is living, and remains blind even to most obvious truth. She fails to understand the real character of Casaubon. She doesn’t know that the society in which she lives, there is no particular demand for Theresa. By this cultural process, the masculine in our cultural has come to be widely identified as active, dominating , rational, creative, the feminine, by systematic opposition to such traits, has come to be identified as passive , acquiescent, timid, emotional, and conventional. This we found in the novel that, Casaubon marries with Dorothea only because he thinks she is completely submissive and worshipful and she always obeyed her. Dorothea accepts Casaubon, as her life partner, his age and his physical unpleasantness because she thinks that he will help in her work, and her marriage fails because of her youth and of her disillusionments about marrying a much older man. Though she is not happy with Casaubon, who has treated her as a second role or second sex after him, than even she, as a loyal wife, she does her duty to husband, but after his death she discovers that he has insulted her in her will. At the end of the novel her marriage with Ladislav is a compromise with reality.

### Rosamond Vincy

Rosamond vincy, is the daughter of Walter and Lucy Vincy. She grows up accustomed to an expensive lifestyle. She has attended Miss Lemon’s finishing school and been raised with tastes above her class in the expectation that she will marry a wealthy man. Marrying up in this way is believed to be her only way of achieving financial security, and is conditional to use her physical beauty, her musical training to attract an appropriate suitor. She does not think beyond this system but she has not been encouraged to do so, and she has a face and figure she can market. Rosamond has been, the flower of Middlemarch but this, flower of Middlemarch is extremely self-centered, egoistical, and rustles in the pursuit of her aims. Their marriage is a monstrous – misalliance Lydgate, of course, is attracted to her to her because he considers a wife chiefly a decorative object, someone to whom he can come for relaxation and he considers Rosamond



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and ideal wife for these reasons. Rosamond and Lydgate both wants to marry each other, and so, we are told, Rosamond sets out to entrap Lydgate by putting on something of an air of a naïve provincial girl overwhelmed by his urban charms, and by showing off her petty accomplishments. Rosamond does not hesitate to use questionable means to gain her ends. She disobeys her husband, schemes and intrigues and acts secretly, in utter disregard to her wishes unimaginative and stupid, she has no idea of the greatness of her husband, of her nobility and generosity and the deep anguish she causes to her. The contrasting female Rosamond vincy who destroys everyone around her to further her own schemes when she goes against the wishes of her husband and writes a letter asking for money from his relative, her act of self – determination puts Lydgate in an unsavory and tense situation coupled with a refusal to help. Not only had she ruined her husband financially, but emotionally as well, by having no understanding or sympathy for him. He dies prematurely as a failure in his own eyes, for he had to work for money to support his family instead of doing pure research, he gets into dept, and at last at the age of fifty he dies.

### Conclusion

The ending of the book is quite happy, in general, for everyone- Dorothea and Will Ladislaw get married, Fred and Mary get married and the marriage of Lydgate and Rosamond survives and Lydgate becomes successful materially and professionally but then George Eliot doesn't want to leave the story at that. She adds a final brief sub-chapter, where she describes what happened to the main characters in the succeeding years. It turns out that Dorothea helps her husband by giving him support and by taking care of their home and their children. Lydgate shelves his grand dreams of doing research in the medical field, but turns out to be a successful medical practitioner and dies young. The researcher felt sad when he read this He wish Dorothea had been an equal partner to her husband rather than being just a normal life, because for most of the book, Dorothea comes out as a person who is in no way inferior to Will infect, she was probably the better person of the two and influences the lives of others in positive ways. The researcher also wishes that Lydgate had found a way of realizing his dream. It feels sad when someone's dies because one has to take care of the annoyances of life like making money and having a good lifestyle. The researcher couldn't help but feel sad for both of them, though Dorothea seems to have been content with her life. In short, the ending is ambiguous. We have followed two unhappy marriages to their conclusion. Lydgate's only escape from his unhappy marriage is an early death. After becoming a widow, Dorothea marries the man she loves. We are never sure if she is satisfied with the domestic sphere. The unhappy marriages have failed due to various personality differences, unrealistic ideals of the respective roles of husbands and wives, and the process of self-deception that seem to mark all human activity. They were married to other people before they could appreciate one another. It is difficult to tell whether Dorothea would have been able to exercise a public role in the hospital had she married Lydgate, but there is some indication that ache would have been a patient, equal, sensible partner. Dorothea would have been that woman. However, the vicissitudes of fate worked against their marriage.



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