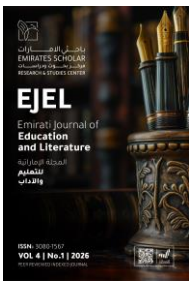

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Postmodernism and Derridian Reading of Middlemarch and Emma

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ABSTRACT

Middlemarch and Emma are masterpieces of English literature which have been studied from different perspectives and views. Applying Derrida's (1930-2004) critical theories of the literary masterpieces can be a new approach for deep understanding of post/modern literary works. He had a significant influence on the humanities and social sciences, including philosophy, literature, historiography, psychoanalysis, architecture, and political theory. His influence is most presently felt in literary studies due to his longstanding interest in language. Derrida's work is notoriously difficult and dense. This is due to the performative style of his writing. In seeking to reveal the instabilities of meaning Derrida frequently plays on double-meanings and textual ambiguities.
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Keywords: *Derrida, Austen, Elliot, Postmodernism, Middlemarch, Emma.*

Introduction:

The post/modern criticism is a kind of eclectical approaches that combine most of the elements of traditional and post/modern criticism that analyze most of the literary, philosophical, social and political elements that the writers un/consciously inserted in their texts. Derrida's deconstruction and postmodern elements of criticism cover most of the approaches and combine all them and gather together these elements for analyzing the heart of literary text for clarifying the hidden meanings and concepts. Although Elliot's and J. Austen's masterpieces are not chronologically postmodern, they have so many element, factors and traces that based on them the critics, literary readers, and students can consider them postmodern too.

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (has invited various interpretations which examine what is often perceived as a discrepancy between the delicately described historical environment and the novel's "a temporal" protagonist. Eliot was at pains to depict the setting of the novel as accurately as possible, paying attention to the smallest details in speech and clothing. She succeeded in creating a novel which, most critics agree, successfully captures the cultural climate of its period - fifteenth-century Florentine life abounds with talk on the visual arts; the rebirth of classical scholarship is a prominent issue; the religious and political conflicts of this time are paid full attention.

Derrida has a tendency to pun and proliferate portmanteau words as well as a penchant for rhetorical questions. All of this can make his work's twists and turns hard to follow. Despite its density, if reduced to some central concerns, the thrust of Derrida's philosophical project becomes much clearer. One such concern is what Derrida calls, following Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the 'metaphysics of presence'. This is a reference to the notion, inherent to the Western philosophicaltradition, that a meaning, concept or idea can be made present or immediate to thought.

Such a notion, Derrida's argument goes, merely disavows an excess or instability that will always undermine thought's mastery of its object. For Derrida this is reflective of a more fundamental philosophical tendency to banish what is external from the essence of meaning to posit a pure presence. Among the critical moves in 'Plato's Pharmacy', Derrida alludes to Socrates' own description of knowledge and memory as a direct and internal writing upon the soul. This is not merely a coincidental choice of words, the claim goes, for Plato appeals to textual metaphors whereby philosophy is organized around the conception of an original idea and its copies, and so requires truth to be repeated. At issue here is not just the superficial question of Socrates' choice of allegories for knowledge. Rather, the point is that any attempt to posit logos as purely ideal or fully present to thought fails, for such a conception of knowledge requires some externality - in this case writing - for its very constitution.

Deconstruction

Derrida has attempted to explain deconstruction to others, most notably the *Letter to a Japanese Friend,* it is possible to provide a basic explanation of what deconstruction is commonly understood to mean. Three key features emerge from Derrida's work as making deconstruction possible. These are, first, the inherent desire to have a center, or focal point, to structure understanding (logocentrism); second, the reduction of meaning to set definitions that are committed to writing (nothing beyond the text); and, finally, how the reduction of meaning to writing captures opposition within that concept itself (*différance)*. These three features found the possibility of deconstruction as an on-going process of questioning the accepted basis of meaning. While the concept initially arose in the

context of language, it is equally applicable to the **study** of law.**G. Elliot**

Mary Ann, Marian Evans (1819- 80), in her girlhood was close to her brother Isaac, from whom she was later estranged. V. Woolf defended her in an essay (1919) which declared *Middlemarch* to be 'one of the few English novels written for grown-up people', but critics like David Cecil and Oliver Elton continued to emphasize the division between her creative powers and supposedly damaging intellect. In the late 1940s a new generation of critics, led by Leavis (The Great Tradition, 1948), introduced a new respect for and understanding of her mature works; Leavis praises her 'traditional moral sensibility', her 'luminous intelligence', and concludes that she 'is not as transcendently great as Tolstoy, but she is great, and great in the same way'.

Middlemarch

G. Eliot published her novel in 1871-2. The scene is laid in the provincial town of *Middlemarch*, Loamshire, during the years of the agitation immediately preceding the first Reform Bill. It has a multiple plot, with several interlocking sets of characters. Dorothea Brooke, an ardent, intelligent, idealistic young woman, under the negligent though affable care of her eccentric uncle, marries the elderly pedant Mr. Casaubon, despite the doubts of her sister Celia, her neighbor and suitor Sir James Chettam (who later marries Celia), and Mrs Cadwallader, the rector's outspoken wife. The marriage proves intensely unhappy; Dorothea realizes during a disastrous honeymoon in Rome that Casaubon's scholarly plans to write a great work, a 'Key to all Mythologies', are doomed, as are her own aspirations to share and aid her husband's intellectual life, and her respect for him gradually turns to pity.

Middlemarch may be the first great English social novel, but it is also, as Joseph Allen Boone puts it, "one of the last great marriage novels to conform to the Shakespearean dictum that 'journeys end with lovers meeting.'" It is Woolf who makes clearest that the erotic is the ground of Dorothea's exclusion from insight when she writes of "Dorothea seeking wisdom and finding one scarcely knows what in marriage to Ladislaw." The comment suggests that if Dorothea can function as the narrative focal point of *Middlemarch*'s socio-historical understanding, she cannot be the bearer of that understanding—and more particularly that this inability is tied to her willingness to forsake her intellectual ambitions in return for a satisfied sexual desire.

J. Austen

Jane Austen (1775-1817), novelist, born in the rectory at Steventon, Hampshire. As a child and young woman she read widely, including, among novelists, Fielding, Richardson, and F. Burney; and among poets, Cowper, and her particular favorite, Crabbe. Her life is notable for its lack of events; she did not marry, although she had several suitors, one of whom she accepted one evening, only to withdraw her acceptance the following morning.

Emma Emma, a novel by J. Austen, begun 1814, published 1816. *Emma*, a clever, pretty, and self-satisfied young woman, is the daughter, and mistress of the house, of Mr Woodhouse, an amiable old valetudinarian. Her former governess and companion, Anne Taylor, beloved of both father and daughter, has just left them to marry a neighbor, Mr. Weston. Missing Miss Taylor's companionship, *Emma* takes under her wing Harriet Smith, parlor-boarder at the school in the neighbouring village of Highbury. Harriet, a pretty, pliant girl of 17, is the daughter of unknown parents. *Emma*'s active mind sets to work on schemes for Harriet's advancement, but her interfering and injudicious attempts lead in the end to considerable mortification. Emma is immensely likable, because she is so extraordinarily imaginative, dangerous and misguided as her imagination frequently

must appear to others and finally to herself. On the scale of being, Emma constitutes an answer to the immemorial questions of the sublime: More? Equal to? Or less than? Like Clarissa Harlowe before her and the strongest heroines of George Eliot and Henry James after her, Emma Woodhouse has a heroic will and, like them, she risks identifying her will with her imagination.Emma has long been considered Jane Austen's most perfectly executed novel (Bradley 380) and its heroine interpreted as being sympathetic in spite of herself, or, as Knightley puts it, "faultless in spite of all her faults" (Emma 298). Even those, such as Marvin Mudrick and John Hagan, who distrust the extent of Emma's moral regeneration, still find the character sympathetic though flawed. However, a close comparison of Emma with Austen's other heroines will reveal that Emma was not intended to be or to become a sympathetic character. While some critics have discussed the striking dissimilarities between Emma and other Austen heroines, few believe that Austen did not sympathize with Emma, and many refer to a famous comment by J. E. Austen Leigh: "She was very fond of Emma, but did not reckon her being a general favourite; for, when commencing that work, she said, 'I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like'" (204).

Postmodernism Though the term 'postmodern' is still an important one in a number of academic disciplines and remains essential in the literary-studies lexicon, the topic of postmodernism is no longer hotly debated in academic journals and research monographs. Linda Hutcheon, one of the major theorists of postmodern fiction, has suggested that postmodernism is now, in the twenty-first century, 'a thing of the past' because it has become 'fully institutionalized, it has its canonized texts, its anthologies, primers and readers, its dictionaries and its histories' (Hutcheon, 2002, 165). This is not quite true, since the conditions of 'postmodernity' seem to shape the contemporary world, and much aesthetic and cultural production (novels, film, TV, etc.) still clearly deploys strategies and generates effects which have been defined as postmodern. And while it is no longer the subject of cutting-edge academic debate, postmodernism is now more than ever a fixture on literature courses in universities around the world, and studying it remains one of the most valuable ways of making sense of contemporary writing. But there is an advantage to thinking of postmodern fiction as something effectively in the past, like modernism, something we can treat as a more or less 'complete' historical movement with its own set of core texts (though this 'teleological' idea is entirely against the spirit of postmodernism). Now, in other words, a welcome sense of retrospectively is possible in relation to the postmodernism debate.

Statement of problem G. Elliot's *Middlemarch* and J. Austen's *Emma* are among the best English novels that both of them have been translated to so many languages in the world. There are so many thesis and dissertation about both of them and from different angles and views but there is not any comparative and descriptive method of study which based on the Derridian deconstructive reading of the elements of postmodernism. The Derridian reading of these two female novelist, two classic story with special school and style of writings , can be an interesting subject and may be for the first time will be presented.

Significance of study Feminist style and school of writing have their own outstanding and important features and aspects and if this kind of studying mixed and come along with post/modern theories and views that time may be the critics, readers and students of English language and literature find new ideas from new and novel angles which can be opened by these studies. The dominance and influence of Derrida's ideas and theories on post/modern literature is not deniable and any new reading and analyzing of old and new

literary works and masterpiece of English and American literature in this field can shed a light on the dark parts of previous studies.

Objective of study

The aim of this paper, which has considered and selected two great classical female writers' masterpieces and Derrida's theories, is finding the similar elements of post/modern and deconstructive ones in these two novels. The paper will be based on deconstructive definitions and analysis which can be applied on these two masterpieces. The most outstanding and significant features of this paper are in this field and area that both of the writers are English, female and classics which can be studied from a new perspective. This paper tries to find the new post/modern elements and characteristics in these two female novelists' works based on Derridian reading.

Research Design

Deconstructive criticism does not present itself as a novel enterprise. There is more of a relentless focus on certain questions, and a new accuracy when it comes to the correction of close reading. To propose that meaning and language do not match, and to draw from that noncoincidence a peculiar 'strength, is only to restate what literature has always shown. It rejects to classify the force of literature with any concept of embodied meaning and shows how deeply such logocentric or incarnationist views have influenced the way we think about art. We assume that, by the miracle of art, the "presence of the word" is equal to the presence of meaning. But the opposite can be urged, that the word conveys with it a certain absence or indeterminacy of meaning. Literary language focusses language itself as something not reducible to meaning: it opens as well as closes the inequality between symbol and idea, between written sign and assigned meaning.

The selected novels and writers are considered as the great global writers and the masterpieces in postmodern literature, as result it adopts the main themes will be treated in deconstruction approach particularly by Derridian reading and theory, deconstructive literature elements that deal with identity, self-research, and quest for self-identity in order to treat the historical, social, and the individual collapse as well, caused by the anti-social destruction in one hand and the deconstructive desertion in other side the other hand.

Austen's humor, her mode of rhetorical irony, is not particularly Shakespearean, and yet her precision and accuracy of representation is. Like Shakespeare, she gives us figures, major and minor, utterly consistent each in her or his own mode of speech and being, and utterly different from one another.

Her heroines have firm selves, each molded with an individuality that continues to suggest Austen's reserve of power, her potential for creating an endless diversity. To recur to the metaphor of oddness, the highly deliberate limitation of social scale in Austen seems a paradoxical theater of mind in which so fecund a humanity could be fostered.

Postmodern theories and approaches somehow are new concepts which their elements, factors and definitions can be apply on different classical, modern and more modern literary texts. It has been said that J. Derrida's ideas about deconstruction and postmodernism have flourished this approach from different angles and aspects.

Catalogues of postmodernist features are typically organized in terms of oppositions with features of modernist poetics. Thus, for instance, David Lodge lists five strategies (contradiction, discontinuity, randomness, excess, short circuit) by which postmodernist writing seeks to avoid having to choose either of the poles of metaphoric (modernist) or

metonymic (antimodernist) writing. Ihab Hassan gives us seven modernist rubrics (urbanism, technologism, dehumanization, primitivism, eroticism, antinomianism, experimentalism), indicating how postmodernist aesthetics modifies or extends each of them.

Literary analysis and interpreting based on Derrida's literary theories and ideas will be applied on this novels to show which post/modern and deconstructive elements of literature can be found in this two novels. This paper is a descriptive, analytical, and comparative one that will be done based on finding of Derridian deconstructive reading of the elements of postmodernism in G.Elliot's (Marie Anne Evans) *Middlemarch* and J. Austen's *Emma*. This thesis will focus on finding and comparing of deconstructive elements of postmodernism in these two novels which were written by two great female novelists. Although these two classic novels may be somehow old and frequently studied ones, no critics and students studies them from these angles. Of course based on the deconstructive views these two selected great novels can be analyzed but this paper will be based on Derridian deconstructive reading of the elements of postmodernism.

Schematic Differences between Modernism and Postmodernism	
Modernism	**Postmodernism**
Romanticism/symbolism	Play
Design	Chance
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Matery, logos	Exhaustion, silence
Art object, finished word	Process, performance
Distance	Participation
Creation, totalization	Deconstruction
Synthesis	Antithesis
Presence	Absence
Centering	Dispersal
Genre, boundary	Text, intertext
Semantics	Rhetoric
Paradigm	Syntagm
Hypotaxis	Parataxis
Metaphor	Metonymy
Selection	Combination
Depth	Surface
Interpretation	Against interpretation
Reading	Misreading
Signified	Signifier
Lisible (readerly)	Scriptable
Narrative	Anti-narrative

Whilst the work of Jacques Derrida has a number of influential admirers amongst scholars of management and organization (Jones, forthcoming) there remains a significant degree of skepticism about the utility of his work, especially perhaps amongst those who wish to change the world in ways they consider to be emancipatory (Feldman, 1998).

A superficial reading of Jane Austen's novel Emma might conclude that it is a bildungsroman with a subversive slant. While this designation is fitting to a degree, the readers contend that the novel operates on a more profound level as a textual brocade of deconstruction and feminist poststructural thought that serves a performative function as commentary on social and literary conventions.

Michel Foucault's work has accustomed us to seeing sexuality as the fallacious anchor of the modern subject's truth, the effect that most efficiently writes her into the discourses of power and knowledge. It would seem to follow that any narrative form (such as the novel) that takes fundamental inspiration from this "truth" would be ill-equipped to provide its consumer with insight into its factitious nature. The effects of sexuality may not be as imperially far-reaching as Foucault sometimes suggested. John Guillory claims that private reading is the primary remnant of those techniques of the self that Foucault so admired in classical culture and lamented as having been displaced in modernity by the reign of sexuality.

Contrary to some Anglo-American analytic philosophers, who seem to believe in the possibility of the existence and elaboration of a formal language that could deliver philosophy from the tribulations of metaphysics, Derrida thinks that such an escape from metaphysics is not feasible, since we do not possess a language, which would be free from metaphysical presuppositions, and within which a non-metaphysical discourse could be articulated . Derrida agrees with both Ludwig Wittgenstein, who writes, "[a] picture kept us captives. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably", and Nietzsche, who claimed that, "[w]e cannot change our means of expression at will". As Derrida remarks in "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966), "[t]here is no sense of doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language - no syntax and no lexicon - which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest" (WD 280/ED 412).

Readers anticipating a unified romance may lose themselves in the twisting ambiguities of a novel that does not strive for singular meaning. This feminine embrace of the infinite over that which is finite consequently challenges typical Western thought that "centralizes the world through the authority of its [man's] self-presence and subordinates other cognizable elements." Forced to choose between partial assimilation and utter domination, Emma chooses to assimilate and retain a limited simulacrum of masculine power. For this reason, Emma might be viewed as a blazon for the corruption of female otherness that occurs within a repressive, male-dominated society. One indicator of this corruption is the amount of deception that takes place in Emma, deception which often camouflages a character's intentions from society and the individual in order to preserve personal integrity and subjectivity. Emma herself frequently manipulates other characters like pieces on a chessboard, and her conceptions of reality and truth are tinged with the specter of deception for reasons that (like absolute truth) sometimes remain elusive.

Deconstruction and Derrida

Jonathan Culler refers to "Derrida's brilliant and scrupulous reading" of Saussure (Culler, 78), and Robert Strozier calls Derrida's critique of Saussure in Of Grammatology "incisive" (Strozier, 160). This list could easily be extended. But there have been other voices as well. Rorty himself has agreed with John Searle's statement that "a lot of Derrida's arguments ... are just awful" (Rorty 1984, 22 n. 12; cf. Searle 1983a); Strozier has argued that "Derrida . . . appears to place Saussure within a version of the metaphysical tradition that does more to obscure the workings of the Cours than to reveal the theory of that text'' (Strozier, 228); and John Ellis has recently argued that Derrida and the general discussion of Saussure inspired by Derrida's work perpetuate fundamental misunderstandings (Ellis, chap. 2).

Deconstructive criticism does not present itself as a novel enterprise. There is, perhaps, more of a relentless focus on certain questions, and a new rigor when it comes to the discipline of close reading. Yet to suggest that meaning and language.

Not very many philosophers have made it to the ranks of the notorious. Usually toiling away in abstraction, and having little impact on the university as a whole -let alone culture or politics -philosophers generally escape such villainizations. In other words, they tend to be too irrelevant to ever be notorious. The demonization of Jacques Derrida, then, could be taken as a sign of his impact and relevance beyond the narrow corridors of professional philosophy, spilling over onto the university as a whole - and beyond that to the worlds of art and design, politics, institutional life, and even popular culture. Beyond the influence of 'deconstruction' (that we'll employ, for now, as a shorthand for Derrida's work) on diverse disciplines such as literary theory, architecture, education, and theology, the lexicon of deconstruction has permeated popular discourse and practices -from music to cuisine.

Discussion and Conclusion In her essay, "'The Duty of Woman by Woman': Reforming Feminism in Emma," Devoney Looser hones in on this element of the novel when she portrays Emma as unsupportive of other female characters. For example, Emma mentors Harriet, but rather than this relationship being mutually beneficial, it only alleviates Emma's boredom and enables her selfish behavior (much to Harriet's misfortune). Looser even contends that Emma may ultimately become like the novel's bête noire, Mrs. Elton, if she is unable to change. It would be argued that Emma and Mrs. Elton are already similar, at least in one respect. Both women play the role of benefactor (Emma with Harriet and Mrs. Elton with Jane Fairfax) poorly. There is only a slim difference between the way in which Emma manipulates Harriet and the way in which Mrs. Elton seeks to control Jane. Though Emma operates under the guise of benevolence, her relationship with Harriet still resembles Mrs. Elton's inept handling of Jane.

Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment, Derrida calls for the recuperation of detachment as an ethical and critical strategy. In asking us to explore, rather than simply dismiss, the Victorian interest in disinterest, Derrida aims to make a contribution both to cultural history and to contemporary critical practice: deeper attention to the Victorians' understanding of detachment as a lived ambition, she argues, will help move us beyond the currently prevalent suspicion of impartiality as always and only a ruse of power. Detachment is instead a very real "attempt to enact and own the impersonal," Derrida contends, and it valuably affords us the "cultivated distance from conventions, norms, and habits" on which so much systemic social critique depends.

Middlemarch hero's struggle is that between self-definition and idealization in the public and private realm, and it remains unsettled.

Jacques Derrida's critique of phonocentrism' (1987, pp.161-184) and the 'Excursus on leveling (sic) the genre between philosophy and literature' (1987, pp.185-210). It is the (misleading) Habermasian allegations about Derrida's views, which according to him, lead to Derrida's

destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the deconstruction of all the significations … particularly the signification of truth (p.164) … [the] mystification of palpable social pathologies (p.181) … Derrida's recommendation, [that] philosophical thinking be relieved of the duty of solving problems. Habermas (1987, p.210)

The novel is subtitled as 'A study of Provincial Life' which is set in the imaginary town of Middlemarch which is thought to be at the territory of today's city of Coventry, a little town not far from Oxford.

There are many more characteristics that actually highlight the realistic events that the Victorian period uses as its unique features. Middlemarch puts together very fruitful elements that have made it a very precious work of literature even in the post-modern critic reviews announce. Characteristics that enhance the everyday life are part of the Victorian Literature and they mirrored the life of the 19th century.

Morality as a characteristic of Middlemarch - In order to understand Eliot's moral view, it is essential to know her understanding of religion. Eliot has been deeply influenced by a number of philosophers such as Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach, Auguste Comte, and Bernard Paris whose views differ from the conventional view of Christianity. "Feuerbach argues that God is the mirror of man because God may be understood as a projection or reflection of humanity's ideals.

Eliot represented female idealism (the idealized female of Victorian society was a woman placed at home, domesticity, motherhood and respectability were considered a sufficient emotional fulfillment) that is actually a failed idealism by one of the major characters such as Dorothea and followed by other secondary characters. An example of the idealism of the young being destroyed by the old is that of Dorothea. This can be seen by her continuing desire to "bear a larger part of the world's misery" or to learn Latin and Greek, both of which are continually thwarted by Casaubon, though this ends after his death, with her discovery of his selfish and suspicious nature, by way of the codicil.

Derrida was quite agnostic about the concepts like God and Religion. Just as a text did not have one fixed meaning and unleashed other possibilities of meaning inside. Similarly, no religion of this world has some fixed religious laws, rather all laws must be further interpreted and reinterpreted so that the origin of all religious laws can be unfolded without reference to God. Therefore, Derrida tried to say "Do not take God as an absolute being of all religions.

For Derrida, ethics should not be understood in terms of pure good and pure evil because there is no such concept of purity and impurity as human mind always strived to become pure in all spectrum of life. Being an epistemological relativist (Stocker, 2006, p.127), Derrida vehemently criticized Rousseau and Levinas for comparing good against bad, nature against society, natural against unnatural, and nonviolence against violence in order to claim their ethical/moral positions. But Derrida's ethical consideration went beyond the mere conception of good and evil. Further, he argued that in order to go beyond the notion of good and evil, one had to establish a relation with oneself (Derrida, 1973 and 1978), next, good could not exist without evil thus both were vice-versa.

The incompatible combination of Dorothea and Casaubon's gender presentation prohibits the sexual transformation of the virginal Dorothea to the ideal Victorian motherly image. Upon return home from their failed

honeymoon, Dorothea is associated with the color white, the color of virginal purity:

her throat had a breathing whiteness above the differing white of the fur which itself seemed to wind about her neck and cling down her blue-grey pelisse with a tenderness gathered from her own, a sentient commingled innocence which kept its loveliness against the crystalline purity of the out-door snow. (Eliot 273).

The close blending of Dorothea with white suggests that the repulsion of Casaubon to the masculine presentation of Dorothea's gender did not allow for her transformation into wife and mother to occur. Dorothea returns home a virginal being. The lack of a proper heir for Casaubon's estate is further proof that Dorothea's masculinized body remains unaffected by the touch of her husband.

Middlemarch suggests that the roots of idealization processes lie in cultural, literary, mythological and religious traditions. Clothed in the form of a literary convention or mode, as it can be found most remarkably in the poetry of Troubadour or dolce stile nuovo poets, idealization proves to be a burden for Middlemarch. A preconceived pattern for the organization of romantic love, it is oppressive and needs to be discarded by the protagonist for the sake of her development. However, Eliot's depiction of these patterns of idealization is ambiguous: while she is concerned with the failure of idealization and its impracticability in "real life", she constantly introduces these patterns to her narration, and implies that they determine her protagonist's life and that of others.

Idealization, Middlemarch suggests, can be based on delusion and can even be harmful, but it is represented as an unavoidable and even necessary characteristic of private (and social) relationships. Eliot's critical awareness of idealization as ambiguous expresses itself in the ways by which she revises the social and cultural ties, the patterns of idealization which are Middlemarch's doom throughout the novel. These patterns are not only grounded in medieval and Renaissance literary traditions, but they also reflect a discourse on Victorian ideals of femininity: Eliot depicts Middlemarch not only as a Renaissance Beatrice figure, but also as a dutiful daughter, well-educated girl, devoted wife, charitable woman of faith, philanthropic carer and loving.

There is the possibility to read the ending in a more positive light: the novel's affirmation of an alternative feminist model of social organization apart from that of the nuclear family could be seen as a redemptive feature. Middlemarch illustrates the inevitability of idealization in relationships, but also its function as an instrument helping human beings to understand and deal with experiences which affect them deeply.

George Eliot's Middlemarch is perhaps the single most important document of the nineteenth-century English novel's aspiration to intellectual seriousness. Famously praised by Virginia Woolf in 1919 as "one of the few English novels written for grown-up people," Middlemarch's critical status—indeed, its status as a kind of criticism in its own right—has only increased in subsequent years.

In Barbara Hardy's assessment, Eliot's masterwork is "the first English novel to analyze the psychology of historical consciousness," and James Buzard has more recently argued that the book embodies the "autoethnographic project of grasping an English culture in its densely integrated and self-regarding totality." But while Middlemarch is arguably the most perfect realization of the novel's ambition to present a historicized picture of the social whole, it is, more disturbingly, a book that seems reluctant to share these intellectual riches with its characters. The critical consensus as to Middlemarch's achievement is haunted by a sense that this is a distinctly punitive novel, one that purchases its intellectual and critical

authority at the expense of its fictional inhabitants. Miller, in a representative formulation, contends that "the narrator of [Eliot's] novels claims for herself precisely that all-embracing breadth of vision . . . which is denied to the characters."

Unlike any other heroine, Emma has also been "doing just what she liked" (1) for her entire life, and her constant and only concern is herself. Austen's other novels reserve such freedom and selfishness for unsympathetic characters. Robert Ferrars, in Sense and Sensibility, selfishly does just as he likes and remains a perennial favorite with his set. Elizabeth Elliot is, in fact, introduced in terms very similar to those describing Emma:

For one daughter, his eldest, [Sir Walter Elliot] would really have given up anything, which he had not been very much tempted to do. Elizabeth had succeeded, at sixteen, to all that was possible, of her mother's rights and consequence; and being very handsome, and very like himself, her influence had always been great, and they had gone on together most happily (37).

Austen's heroines, on the other hand, are usually characterized by restraint and self-effacement. Elinor Dashwood, Fanny Price, and Anne Elliot are quiet and decorous, while Elizabeth Bennet, though not usually self-effacing, is certainly restrained when among her superiors and much less concerned with herself; she is honestly capable of caring and working for someone else's welfare. Emma feels that her town "afforded her no equals" (2), an attitude Austen usually reserves for characters hopelessly incapable of regeneration. As long as Elizabeth believes that Darcy possesses this attitude, she abhors him. However, even Darcy has always admitted that he had equals—he only had to be convinced to admit Elizabeth among them.

Emma, like other characters who believe in their own superiority, feels justified in her condescension, especially towards Harriet, just as Ferrars condescends to Elinor, Lady Catherine to Elizabeth Bennet, Norris to Fanny, and Sir Walter Elliot to the Crofts. While other Austen heroines must suffer this type of condescension, Emma practices it. The pride of class is far from being accepted in any other Austen novel, nor does it characterize any other Austen heroine. Elizabeth Bennet is willing to accept Wickham as an admirer, and Anne Elliot marries beneath herself in terms of rank, while all the heroines marry up in financial terms. The basic plot of an Austen novel seems to involve a heroine who must attract her man, not because of her social position, but in spite of it. Her intrinsic merits must attract the man who can see through class markers or surface appearances; only one Austen heroine, Emma, has "sufficient resources to marry into the class into which she was born" (Thompson 140). Socially superior men and women also must prove their intrinsic worth in a classic Austen plot.

Emma has managed to charm everyone in the novel and most of the readers of the novel, but, as Mudrick points out,

Charm is the chief warning signal of Austen's world, for it is most often the signal of wit adrift from feeling. The brilliant facades of Emma and Frank Churchill have no door. Indeed the only charming person in all of Austen's novels whom both she and the reader fully accept is Elizabeth Bennet, and Elizabeth has obvious virtues. . . . The other heroines—Elinor Dashwood, Catherine Morland, Fanny Price, Anne Elliot—are presented in the quietest colors. And Willoughby, Wickham, Mary Crawford, Frank Churchill—the charming interlopers—always betray. (201)

Mudrick's perceptive account of charm has one flaw; Elizabeth Bennet, who seems so similar to Emma, is not charming. Bennet has wit, a quality of mind Darcy only gradually comes to appreciate. Her wit, intelligence, and good sense are very different from Emma's surface brilliance. While Elizabeth's

worth is gradually revealed to Darcy, Emma's shallowness is revealed to the reader, and to Knightley, but the latter is too charmed to notice. Emma claims that "till it appears that men are much more philosophic on the subject of beauty than they are generally supposed; till they do fall in love with well-informed minds instead of handsome faces, a girl, with such loveliness as Harriet, has a certainty of being admired and sought after" (42). Like many of Emma's statements, this one also applies more to herself than anyone else. When Austen turns from romanticism to realism, as she does in every novel, she admits that a good many men (and women) marry for beauty and/or money, and only a few marry for intrinsic worth. Emma has beauty, money, and charm, all she needs to be eminently successful in Austen's world. While such romances as Emma and Knightley's have usually been relegated to subplots in Austen's novels, this novel relegates the Fairfax "intrinsic worth" plot to the background and foregrounds the "realistic" relationship. But lest we think that life is always like this, Austen reminds us that it is not in almost every other marriage in the novel.

Derrida has criticized 'logocentric' approach of Plato by pointing to this kind of switchover from logic to mythology. Jacques Derrida in "Deconstruction and the Other",

I am not sure that deconstruction can function as a literary method as such. I am wary of the idea of methods of reading. The laws of reading are determined by that particular text that is being read. This does not mean that we should simply abandon ourselves to the text, or represent or repeat it in purely passive manner. It means that we must remain faithful, even if it implies a certain violence, to the injunctions of the text. These injunctions will differ from one text to the text so that one cannot prescribe one general method or reading. In this sense deconstruction is a method. (p. 124)

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