The Organization of "Middlemarch" Hornback, Bert G Papers on Language and Literature; Spring 1966; 2, 2; Periodicals Archive Online pg. 169

·oblems of organization and sustainment of interest. Granted the rcumstantial nature of the proof that there was direct transmission ' idea from Macaulay through Taylor to Swinburne, the similarity the younger poet's achievement to the older poet's conception ·vertheless demonstrates how deeply immersed the sometimes radi- .l Swinburne was in the literary currents of his time.

The Organization of *Middlemarch*

BERT G. HORNBACK

.S RESPECTED A CRITIC as Walter Allen has suggested of George liot's *Middlemarch* that without "the story of Dorothea Brooke ınd] the story of Lydgate's marriage . . . the novel would be un- ıinkable." [1] The alternative thesis to Mr. Allen's is usually some- ıing like F. R. Leavis' proposal, that the novel is really and primarily A Study of Provincial Life," as George Eliot said it was.[2]

The novel does fall into two parts—or, rather, it can be separated ıto two parts, legitimately and significantly, and then put back to- ether. These two parts are not Dorothea's and Lydgate's stories, as Valter Allen holds, but Dorothea's and Middlemarch's. If Allen is ɔrrect in his judgment that Dorothea's and Lydgate's stories make ıe novel, then George Eliot has set for herself a reasonably easy task, nce the two characters can be brought together sympathetically at ıy time. They are set up in separate plots, so that the novel cannot egenerate into sentimental romance; but still they are mutually sym- athetic characters, essentially, and both tension and harmony can e achieved easily, simply, and safely by having their fates cross. Or, F. R. Leavis' thesis is correct, then *Middlemarch* is certainly an nbalanced, peculiarly shaped novel, dominated in a very unreal way –for a novel purporting to be "A Study of Provincial Life"—by an lealistic girl.

The novel is not in any significant way misshapen; it is indeed a :ory about Middlemarch and is much more ambitious than Mr. Allen

[1] Walter Allen, *The English Novel* (New York, 1958), p. 269.
[2] F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (Garden City, N.Y., 1954), p. 80.

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has suggested. What George Eliot attempts, in fact, is to set up as th contrary forces of the novel Middlemarch and the heroine who : outside Middlemarch. As the novel progresses toward its resolutior Dorothea is subtly brought into Middlemarch, into a realistic worlc into society. This accomplishment is no mean feat; and it is a measur of the artistic structuring of the novel and its valid dramatic evolu tion that the consolidation of the two parts succeeds so beautifully.

The Middlemarch which develops in the novel is a large and inclu sive, seemingly sprawling but tightly interconnected social structure. The creator of this structure is very conscious—perhaps even self conscious—about her work, and as she weaves characters and live and events together to make her very social world, she constantl sets up images of webs and weaving. The web traps almost everyone in the novel: Lydgate feels "the hampering threadlike pressure o small social conditions";[3] his "love-making" with Rosamond is callec "that gossamer web" (p. 253); suspicion of Dorothea and Ladislaw does its "weaving work" in Casaubon's mind (p. 307); Bulstrode i caught in the "spider web" of his past (p. 451); and our understand ing of Dorothea's situation begins with the adumbrative allusion tc "tangled circumstances" in the Prelude to the novel and then is continued through references to Dorothea as an Ariadne, to her being captured in labyrinthian ways. The traps that are set, the snares of webbing, are what pull the characters of the novel together in social tension and conflict.

Dorothea, however, is an exception to this statement for most of the novel. She has two parts to play, as it were, and one—the first—she must play by herself. Throughout the novel, Dorothea is fighting to get out of a prison. The prison, however, is not society, but herself and her idealism—which latter, of course, is what ties her to the almost nonexistent person, Casaubon. At the end, when Dorothea finally achieves a real social perspective, she is brought into Middlemarch, is made a part of its world, and becomes a part of its pattern.

In the opening of Chapter 27, the narrator relates "a parable," using an image of webbing to discuss the egotistical ordering of experience which is our human preoccupation:

Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumina-

[3] *Middlemarch* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), p. 133. All subsequent references to the novel are to the Riverside edition and are printed in the text.

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on, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the ratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle hich produces the flattering illusion of concentric arrangement, its light lling with an exclusive optical selection (pp. 194–95).

eyond what this statement says about George Eliot's method of creion and the necessity of weaving a web, it introduces us to the cenr of the Middlemarch section of the novel. The situation to be prented from this image is the meeting of Rosamond and Lydgate. The ourse the Middlemarch section of the novel takes from here is more id more a description of Lydgate's entrapment by Rosamond and y the society the worst virtues of which she represents.

Except when we are concentrating upon Dorothea's story, our ocus is now almost always directed in some way toward Lydgate. When we are concerned with Dorothea, we are usually concerned most singularly with her and tend to forget even the other characrs present in the scenes. We are really watching her in her scenes ith Celia, with Casaubon, with Ladislaw, and with Lydgate; they e her supports or her foils. And Dorothea's greatest moments are oments she spends alone. But when we look at Lydgate we are lookg into the heart of society, and suddenly all the rest of the characrs of the novel appear and become involved.

Lydgate is at the center of the action of the novel, and around him e intimately circled Mr. Vincy, Rosamond, Fred, the Garths, Mr. rooke, Ladislaw, Raffles, and Bulstrode. Each of them is related in ome important way to Lydgate, except for Mr. Brooke and Fred, hose relationships with him are indirect, through Casaubon and Mr. arebrother. Beyond their relationships with Lydgate, the characters n the outer circle also maintain significant relationships with their nmediate neighbors: Ladislaw with Brooke and Raffles, Raffles with adislaw and Bulstrode, Bulstrode with Raffles and Vincy. Still, the ost important relationships are with Lydgate, generally, and the ections of the web of the action become triangles, segments of a ircle at the center of which is the young doctor. It is almost as ough the rest of the characters of the novel, except for Dorothea, eed from this center, depending upon Lydgate for their action and volvement.

The drama which this diagram describes is that part of *Middlemarch* which can be called from the beginning of the novel "A Study f Provincial Life." Here, in working out the various lines of plot

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and action, in supervising the development of her characters, George Eliot is carefully intellectual in her approach. The characters are very much alive, and their existence, their actions and involvements, are real. Yet somehow their life is like that which one finds at a zoo, or in a laboratory. We watch them do what they are trained to do, it seems; they are placed in experience, and afterwards its effects are reflected as their various fortunes. They do not really develop as characters as much as they act or react, respond to stimuli, or progress in time. We are told, or shown, what their personalities are, and then we watch them perform in correspondence to those personalities. We are impressed by them, of course, because they are so very real; and we are impressed with their trainer, too—with our lecturer or guide—who is so knowledgeable, so accurate, so right in what she says about Middlemarch existence.

Dorothea is the only character in the novel who does not fit this Middlemarch kind of life, just as she is the only character who does not have a place in the web. All the rest of the people belong to Middlemarch, to the social structure of the town and its surroundings. Mr. Brooke, for example, belongs to Middlemarch, dramatizing attitudes toward reform; and the complexity of the idea of reform is demonstrated in his perplexity as to what must be done. Brooke's "looking into things" always goes only so far as his discovery of the ambiguity of those things, for the minor creature is not capable of responding satisfactorily to experiments of a higher subtlety than common simplicity.

What George Eliot says, then, about what is happening in the town is described in the relationships of its characters and in their fortunes. Lydgate is very much involved in the description of the attempt of a new age to unseat an old one. Bulstrode's fall is a similar lesson, written in terms of socio-morality rather than history. The settling in of Fred Vincy is an example of something similar, as is the slightly variable status of the elder Vincys, or that of the Garths or the Farebrothers or the Chettams. The whole action—the whole life, almost—of this part of the novel is in the economic and social world. The structure of the town is social, and it is this which the author sets out, she says, to "study."

Dorothea does not belong to this world, however, and consequently she has to be studied differently by her creator. An intellectual eye alone will not solve her character. She has the same kind of real and plausible life about her that the Middlemarch people have, but she

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ıctions on a level once removed from the plane of socioeconomics. ›rothea functions in isolation; she operates on a level of love and ırituality. Everything for her is personal rather than social. Even her gestures at reform, she is personal and spiritual in her orienta- ›n rather than social and moral. Her "plans" for cottages indicate s.

In her first attempt to join a real and relevant society, Dorothea mmits herself to Casaubon, who has tried to opt out of the world people only to discover, sadly and pathetically, that from the be- ıning he never existed significantly. As she goes through her brief e with Casaubon, Dorothea responds to its pain in her soul, not in r solar plexus; and as we observe this response, we realize that she s the only significant soul, the only spiritual existence in the novel. It is her spirituality, then, that separates Dorothea from George iot's great Middlemarch clinic. The problem, however, as was sug- sted at the beginning of this essay, is how to bring Dorothea into at society in some way, to some significant end. It has already been ggested that Dorothea shares the web and labyrinth images with ımerous other characters in the novel, and the same holds true of her images as well. She is brought part way into the pattern of the ›vel, into its general focus, and into its texture by means of the ructuring of its imagery. Subject to the same technique which is ;ed for the other characters, Dorothea is brought closer to their orld by this sharing; and as the images of web and water and yoke 'e used in reference to her as well as to Lydgate, the Vincys, Bul- rode, the Garths, she is made a part of the community of similar :periences.

Dorothea has one set of images, nevertheless, which is her own, ıd she is the only character with such a reference peculiar to herself. s one looks at the web, the water, and the yoke images of the novel, ıe suddenly sees the strange promiscuity of symbolic and imagistic :ference here. Save for Dorothea's place in it, however, the novel is ıe of society, not of an individual, and the organizing principle is gitimately one of coexistence and sharing.

The image which is Dorothea's alone is that of her myopia, her earsightedness, her blindness, her lack of vision. It is this which keeps er from seeing the world in Middlemarch or experiencing its reality. eing unable to see that reality, she dreams in blind exaggeration of ›mething more than the real. Celia, her foil, sees quite clearly, and rges her sister toward the real world—but it takes more than Celia's rging to move Dorothea. Because of her spiritual dimension and her

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consequent commitment to an ideality, Dorothea must in some wa be overthrown, must live through some real crisis or order to be re created.

Naturally enough, her crisis comes about as a result of her misjudg ment of what she sees—entering the room at Lydgate's, seeing Rosa mond and Ladislaw talking. After her long evening of trial and self questioning, Dorothea determines to act to save Rosamond's an Lydgate's marriage, in spite of the personal hurt it costs her. She ha been sympathetic to people before, but with a sympathy that wa mostly spiritual; she has been kind and understanding, too, and al ways generous from her heart. Now for the first time, however, sh acts, in the social world of Middlemarch, on a positively identifiabl moral plane. From this moment on, the novel turns toward its con clusion. It is now possible for Dorothea to join the world, to join i the community, the society of Middlemarch.

In addition to establishing an imagistic pattern which attract Dorothea to the Middlemarch community and carefully represent ing the dramatic movement through a spiritual crisis which finally enables her to join that community, George Eliot makes one othe attempt at uniting the two parts of the novel. This third attempt i interesting, not for its contribution to the success of the novel, bu for the near disaster which it causes. One easy way to tie Dorothea' story to the Middlemarch element of the novel would be to associat her with one of the central characters in Middlemarch. The obvi ous one, of course, would be Lydgate. But George Eliot is muc too sophisticated and sensitive to fall into either the sentimental tra of letting Lydgate's defeat be the means of Dorothea's salvation o of letting Dorothea's achievement appear as a successfully self redemptive act of sacrifice for Lydgate. What George Eliot does as it comes time to start bringing Dorothea into Middlemarch, is t place Ladislaw in the Middlemarch web and attempt to tie Dorothe to him. The result is that Ladislaw as a character is a failure, finally His artistic realization is made impossible by his necessary flirting back and forth between socioeconomic participation in the life o the Middlemarch laboratory, and some sort of idealistic companion spiritship with Dorothea. It is perhaps an indication, too, of just how much the original, visionary Dorothea does not belong to Middle march that the attempt to bring her in before her conversion almos splits another character in two, and leaves him at best thereafter bu a pleasant sort of dilettante.

The accomplishment of *Middlemarch* is finally in the reorientatio

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the romantic Dorothea and her successful submission to the reality life. The whole structure of common Middlemarch existence now comes more than laboratory life, to be looked at and admired for representative nature. Middlemarch is now, at the end of the novel the two parts are brought together, the place in which real life n be lived in the most significant way possible. We are informed this conclusion indirectly, as Dorothea becomes a part of a normal ality. Though it may be sad, it is in some very large way satisfactory at Dorothea now can join the common fate of common men, who 'e unheroic lives and rest at last in "unvisited tombs." That, after ., was the promise of the novel.

Determinism and Point of View in *The House of Mirth*

ANNE FRIMAN

. MINOR PUZZLE for some critics of *The House of Mirth* has been s supposed leaning toward naturalistic determinism, a philosophy ıconsistent with Edith Wharton's characteristic view of life. Irving Iowe remarks that the novel approaches "the heavy atmosphere of ıtality we associate with naturalism." [1] Blake Nevius and Marilyn ɔnes Lyde [2] both cite a passage from Book Two, Chapter II, as in-:rnal evidence of deterministic direction:

ıherited tendencies had combined with early training to make her the ighly specialized product she was: an organism as helpless out of its arrow range as the sea-anemone torn from the rock. She had been fash-ɔned to adorn and delight; to what other end does nature round the ɔse-leaf and paint the humming-bird's breast? And was it her fault that

[1] Irving Howe, "Introduction," Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (New York, 962), p. xi.

[2] Blake Nevius, *Edith Wharton* (Berkeley, Cal., 1953), p. 57; Marilyn Jones Lyde, *dith Wharton: Convention and Morality in the Work of a Novelist* (Norman, Okla., 959), p. 135.

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